



Step Up to Religious Studies A Level

There are 3 A-Level teachers in the department:

Miss K Charles - Head of Department

Miss S Ullah

Miss N Haque

A study of a Religion, Philosophy and Ethics

The study of religion, Philosophy and Ethics gives candidates the opportunity to explore these spiritual, moral and cultural questions by encouraging you to reflect upon your own attitudes, and those of others. The course explores questions such as: Why do people believe in God? Is there a God? Is love the foundation of ethics? Is moral behaviour learnt or does it come from within?

Exam Board

EDUQAS-you can access the specifications online

Summary of Assessment

Component 1: Islam

Component 2: Philosophy of Religion

Component 3: Religion and Ethics

Three Written Exam: All 2 hours

Each exam is 33⅓% of qualification

There is no coursework and all exams are sat at the end of the two year course.



What can you do to prepare for the course?

Even though you haven't been able to finish your Year 11 course this year, you can still practice and develop Religious Studies skills at home. You can read, watch and listen to interesting ideas and think about the opinions expressed

- How far do they match your own views?
- What might someone say if they had a very different opinion?
- Keep up your writing skills by putting your ideas down on paper – try, if you can, to handwrite, just to keep up the practice of handwriting so that your writing isn't completely illegible by the time you go back to school, writing in timed conditions is always a factor that holds students back in exams

Literacy Skills. Reading good quality writing is the best way of improving your own writing.

- You will gain a better understanding of the meanings of new words and the ways in which carefully chosen words and punctuation can add real emphasis to someone's argument.
- Different writers express themselves in different ways, and by reading them you will develop your own 'voice'.
- Reading also helps with more basic skills such as spelling, because if you see a word written down often enough, you will know when it 'looks right' when you write the same word yourself.

Cognitive Skills. Thinking skills can be developed if you try to take a questioning attitude to the things you watch, hear and read.

- Do you agree with what's being said?
- If you watch a film where people have different attitudes towards something, which do you agree with most, or least, and why?

Here are some different activities and exercises for you try while learning from home. In Ethics, some of the topics can be quite sensitive, so if the activity involves an issue that might make you upset, choose a different one.

Reading Activity



Pick one of the following articles and answer the following question:

- [Freewill and Determinism](#)
- [Religious Experience](#)
- [Being Virtuous](#)

1. What is the main argument/point/purpose of the article?
2. What are the varying opinions?
3. What are the reasons for the varying opinions?
4. What is the most interesting thing you've learnt from the article?
5. What is your personal opinion on the topic?

[Other Things to Read](#)

Here are some books and some online resources you could try, if you can get hold of them. *Don't worry if they're not available or you can't get on the computer for very long – you won't be at a disadvantage.*

Reading *anything* of good quality, even if it's a novel or a book about an entirely different topic, is always helpful for improving your skills, because you are practising your comprehension skills as well as practising understanding different ways in which writers express their ideas. Your own writing will improve, the more you read.

The Brothers Karamazov – Fyodor Dostoevsky: a huge and important 'classic' book, which takes time and effort and is well worth both. Raises issues of God, evil, rivalry, loyalty ...

To Kill a Mockingbird – Harper Lee



The Puzzle of... - Peter Vardy – this series of non-fiction books is about issues in religion and philosophy, very readable and you don't have to be an expert to enjoy them. You can dip in and out of different chapters rather than having to start at the beginning and work through to the end.

Candide – Voltaire – another 'classic', this one takes a philosophical view of people's approaches to evil and natural disaster. It's a great book but the topics might be too difficult for you to cope with in the current circumstances, so try it if you want to but save it for more stable times if you don't.

'Sophie's World' Jostein Gaarder-gives a great introduction to philosophical ideas that we will look at in the first term

'Through a glass darkly' Jostein Gaarder-again a good philosophy introduction to the idea that there is something other than just 'us'

'The Shack' William P Young-also a film, a very good book and not a difficult read. Quite sad the beginning but well written and some lovely ideas

'5 people you meet in heaven' Mitch Albom-a witty and lighthearted book that investigates philosophical ideas and the questions about whether life has a meaning/purpose

[Critical Thinking Activities](#)



Activity 1.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMPI25oraVc>

This is the first episode of Stephen Fry's series 'Out There', where he explores attitudes to homosexuality in different parts of the world. A really interesting documentary, raises lots of questions and highlights inequality for people in the LGBTQ community globally.

Questions to think about and/or write about – try to support your answers with reasoning:

1. Do you think there is a 'right' attitude and a 'wrong' attitude towards homosexuality? What is it that makes these attitudes right or wrong?
2. Some people might argue that different cultures have different ideas about morality, and that these different cultural beliefs should be respected even if we don't agree with them.
Do you think we should always respect the beliefs and attitudes of cultures different from our own, or should we try to persuade them to adopt our own beliefs instead?
3. What do you think are the aims of this television series? Do you think they are good aims? Do you think this first episode is successful in achieving its aims?
4. What religious reasons do people sometimes give for opposing homosexual relationships? How would you support or oppose these views?

Activity 2



Watch this documentary, 'The Boy Who Lived Before'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhGX1YCsvAM>

1. Do you think the story provides convincing evidence for reincarnation? Why, or why not?

2. What do you think counts as 'convincing evidence' for life after death (e.g. scripture, near death experiences, nothing)? What makes evidence convincing or unconvincing?

3. Read the accounts in the gospels of the resurrection of Jesus (you could use biblegateway.com if you don't have a Bible at home or just put the reference into Google and it will come up)

Matthew 28:1 – 10

Mark 16: 1 – 8

Luke 24: 1 – 10

John 20: 1 – 18

4. Do you find these stories convincing?



5. Do you think the stories contradict each other, or are they just told from different points of view, in your opinion? What might account for the differences and the similarities between the stories?

Activity 3

Watch this TED talk 'Philosophy in Prison'

Philosophy in Prison

1. How do you know the difference between right and wrong?
2. Is there a point where a person can never be good again?
3. Do you think Philosophy lessons should be available in prisons? Why?

Other Critical thinking Material

All kinds of films and series have philosophical and religious ideas in them, so follow your own interests! You could try these, or choose something else, but try and use them as a stimulus for thinking and writing, rather than just sitting in front of them:

- The Good Place
- The Matrix
- Unorthodox
- Twelve Angry Men



TED talks – these are excellent, with plenty to stimulate your questioning and reasoning skills. You can look them up online via TED talks or on YouTube or you could listen to them as a podcast. They vary in length from about 6 minutes long to an hour.

Some recommendations, we cover all of these topics over the course:

Elizabeth Loftus – how reliable is your memory?

Dan Gilbert – why we make bad decisions

Richard Dawkins – militant atheism

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie – We should all be feminists (a very good listen)

Damon Horowitz – Philosophy in prison

There are loads of talks on here, so use the search engine to find topics that interest you.

- Practise note-taking; write notes as you listen, just as you would if you were listening to a real-life lecture, and practice the skill of jotting down key points at speed.
- Ask yourself questions when you get to the end: what were the speaker's key messages?
- Do you agree with the speaker?
- What might someone who disagreed say, and what might their reasons be?



Research Activity

Research and make a fact file or presentation on any black, female, Islamic or LGBTQ Philosopher. You must include:

- Biographical information
- Main contributions to philosophy
- Quotes
- Pictures if possible
- The reason you chose them.

Please feel free to message Miss Charles on Google Classroom if you have any questions.