



Religious Studies: Philosophy & Ethics Key Stage 5 Curriculum 2022/24

	Topic/Big Question	Focus
Year 12	Philosophy	
	Ancient philosophical influences	
	How did Plato and Aristotle understand the nature of reality?	Students start this unit by studying the Philosophical views of Ancient Greek Philosophers Plato and Aristotle. Students are also given an opportunity to evaluate the thoughts of these two philosophers.
	What is the point of thinking philosophically?	Through the study of two Philosophers from ancient Greece students come to understand the history and development of philosophy.
	How did Christianity come to shape its doctrines using ideas from ancient Greek thought?	Students explore the way Plato and Aristotle have had profound influence on the development of Christian doctrine, Christian Philosophy and Christian ethics, as well as other world religions and philosophies.
	Soul, mind and body	
	What does it mean to speak of the soul, the mind and the body?	Students examine the philosophical language of soul, mind and body in the thinking of Plato and Aristotle.
	Are the human mind and the human body separate and distinct from each other?	Students study the metaphysics of consciousness, including: substance dualism looking in particular at the work of Descartes. They will then contrast this with materialism.
	How coherent is the view that the mind is more than just the result of chemical reactions in the brain?	Here students examine materialist critiques of dualism, and dualist responses to materialism
	Arguments based on observation	

Can the existence of God be demonstrated through drawing conclusions from our observations?	Students start this unit by examining Natural theology which seeks to understand the existence and nature of God through looking at the things we can observe in the world around us.
Does the natural world provide evidence for the existence of God?	Students take their learning further by studying the teleological argument and cosmological argument.
How successful are the traditional teleological and cosmological arguments for the existence of God?	Students are given the opportunity to assess the challenges to arguments from observation, with particular focus on Hume.
Arguments based on reason	
Can the existence of God be demonstrated through reason and logic?	Students study ontological argument by Anselm
How successful are traditional ontological arguments in demonstrating the existence of God?	Students examine the criticisms of the Ontological arguments by Gaunillo, Aquinas and Kant.
What, if anything, do the ontological arguments show about the nature of God?	Students examine whether God's existence and nature can be deduced from Anselm's definition.
How do 'a priori' arguments compare with 'a posteriori' arguments?	Students assess which is the more persuasive kind of argument for the existence of God: 'a priori' or 'a posteriori'.
Religious experience	
What defines a religious experience?	Students examine the definition of the term religious experience as it can mean different things to different people.
Should religious experience be taken seriously?	Students study the nature and influence of religious experience, including mystical and conversion experience.
How can religious experiences be explained?	Students finish the unit by studying the ways in which religious experience can be understood.

The problem of evil	
If there is an all-loving, all-powerful God, why is there evil and suffering in the world?	The problem of evil presents a powerful logical challenge to belief in the kind of God described by Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Students start this unit by examining different presentations of the problem of evil and responses to the problem of evil through the study of theodicies from Augustine and Irenaeus.
If we have an inclination to do wrong, is that our fault, or the fault of our creator?	Students evaluate Augustine's views of whether the origins of moral and natural evil is enough to spare God from blame for the evil of the world.
Does the existence of evil the world demonstrate that God does not exist?	Students finish by discussing the problem of evil by examining which of the logical or evidential aspects of the problem of evil pose the greatest challenge to belief and whether it is possible to defend monotheism successfully in the face of evil
Ethics	
Is ethics more about the actions or consequences?	The students start the unit by learning the difference between making an ethical decision based on absolutist morality and on relativist morality. They look into the way ethics is split into two; the deontological approach and teleological approach and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
Natural law	
Do all human beings share a common nature or purpose?	Students explore how Aquinas developed the concept of Natural Law from Aristotle's ideas, with particular focus on the concept of 'telos.'
Does it matter if we do good for bad motives?	Students examine Aquinas principle of double effect and the significance of intention.
Is morality about reason or emotion?	The students learn how Aquinas used reason to interpret Natural law. Here they examine the four tiers of law and what Aquinas meant by Real and Apparent good.
Does Aquinas' Natural Law work?	Students examine how Aquinas understood Natural Law would work in practice through the precepts. They then consider the strengths and weaknesses of this ethical theory in making moral decisions.
Situation ethics	
Might doing the right thing involve breaking the rules?	Students start this unit by examining Fletcher's three ways of moral thinking: legalistic, antimonion and situational. Students are introduced to Fletcher's situation ethics - all laws, rules and principles and ideals and norms are only contingent if they happen to serve love in any situation. Throughout this unit the students compare Situation ethics to rule based ethics.
Is love the heart of ethics?	Students explore the concept of 'agape' love and its origins in the New Testament and it's religious developments in the writing of Fletcher. They then examine what Fletcher suggests to keep in mind when making a decision by looking at the Six propositions and how the law of love can be applied by examining the four working presuppositions. They then look at the conscience as a verb.

Does the morality of an action depend on the situation?	Students finish this unit by evaluating this ethical theory and examining whether or not the rejection of absolute rules by situation ethics makes moral decision-making entirely individualistic and subjective
Kantian ethics	
Should emotions or reason guide moral choices?	Students learn what led Kant to formulate his ethical theory and what he understood by the moral law, duty and good will.
Are moral rules universal?	Students examine what Kant means by the categorical imperative and hypothetical imperative and his various formulations of the Categorical imperative.
What must exist for Kant?	Students learn the three postulates: freedom, immortality and God.
Are Kantian ethics too abstract to be applicable to practical moral decision-making?	Students evaluate Kantian ethics and consider the ease of applying it to situations.
Utilitarianism	
Do the ends justify the means?	Students learn about Bentham's principle of utility - the choice that brings about the greatest good for the greatest numbers is the right choice.
Is there a mathematical method for decision making?	Students examine Bentham's Hedonic Calculus and evaluate whether it is possible to measure good or pleasure and reach a moral decision.
Must an ethical way of life be more than self-interested decision-making?	Students examine and assess the way John Stuart Mill developed Bentham's theory. They examine the difference between rule and act utilitarianism.
Is doing good about considering the preferences of everyone's equality?	Students examine the preference utilitarianism developed in the twentieth century with Philosophers such as R.M Hare and Peter Singer.
How useful is utilitarianism in the modern world?	Students assess whether utilitarianism provides a helpful method of moral decision making by applying it to different ethical issues and comparing it to other ethical theories.
Applied ethics: Euthanasia	
Should life be preserved at all costs?	Students consider what is meant by the sanctity of life, the religious origins of sanctity of life and its relevance to the modern world.
Is life ever not worth living?	Students consider the ethical issues raised by euthanasia and examine arguments about the quality of life in relation to euthanasia. They explore the concept of 'personhood' and autonomy and the right to die.

Does the value of life include the power to choose the manner and time of its end?	Here students will investigate the difference between voluntary and non voluntary euthanasia. They then consider what people mean by having the right to life and whether a person has the right to choose the time and manner of their death. They will get the opportunity to examine real life case studies.
How do we apply ethical theories to arguments about euthanasia?	Students consider the way Natural law, Kantian ethics, Situation ethics and Utilitarianism react to euthanasia.
Applied ethics: Business ethics	
Do businesses have any responsibilities other than making a profit?	Students examine business responsibilities and why businesses take on corporate social responsibilities. They explore the businesses responsibilities towards stakeholders and examine Kantian and utilitarian responses to corporate social responsibility.
Should businesses base their decisions on ethics?	Students examine whistle blowing and whether it is ethical or ever unethical. The students will then assess the idea that good ethics is good business- that good business decisions are good ethical decisions. This is further assessed by examining Kantian and utilitarian approaches.
Can businesses afford to be ethical in a globalised economy?	Students study what globalisation is, its impact on stakeholders and the Kantian and utilitarian approaches.
Developments in Christian thought	
Augustine	
How are we all affected by Original Sin?	How convincing is Augustine's teaching about original sin? Do the sins of our forefathers have any bearing on our own sinfulness? How did the human relationship with God change after the fall?
Is God's Grace the only means of salvation?	How does Augustine's teaching about sin lead inevitably to his understanding of grace? Can human beings ever earn a place in Heaven without God's grace and is this reflected in the teachings of Jesus?
Is Augustine's view of human nature essentially pessimistic?	Is Augustine realistic, pessimistic or essentially optimistic in his view of sin? Is he still relevant in modern day society with his views of men and women?

Death and Afterlife	
Is the concept of an afterlife coherent in Christian thinking?	How influenced are Christians by the ancients and by Judaic teachings? Does Jesus teach conclusively on the topic of an afterlife? Does the resurrection of Jesus help us to understand the afterlife? What is the teaching of the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats?
How does the Bible express	To what extent is the concept of Heaven/Hell explored by Jesus? Is it a material state of being, a spiritual state of being or a

ideas about Heaven and Hell?	psychological way of thinking?
Did Dante invent Purgatory?	Is our understanding and visualisation of the afterlife primarily influenced by Dante? What is the purpose and origins of such a teaching and how does this affect Christians?
God	
Can we have any real knowledge of God?	Is it possible to know an unknowable God? Can we have empirical knowledge of the divine? What are our "God given" methods of understanding the nature of God?
Is Natural Theology the only way a human can know anything of an invisible God?	Is the most obvious way of understanding God to observe his Creation and our part in it? Have we an innate understanding of God and is nature a mirror of the almighty?
Are faith and grace essential routes to God?	Is it by faith that God is known? Does grace precede faith or faith grace? What does St Paul teach us of these concepts and are they coherent?
Jesus	
Is Jesus man or God?	Is Jesus aware of his godhead? Does he make this plain throughout his life and teachings and should we focus more fully on Jesus the man or Jesus Son of God?
Is the figure of Jesus primarily a moral teacher of God's wisdom?	Is the Sermon on the Mount the most important Christian teaching and why? How does Jesus teach his followers and is this his primary purpose?
Could we consider Jesus to be a liberator of mankind?	What is meant by liberation in Christian theology and do liberationists fully understand what Jesus meant by liberation from sin. Does Jesus liberate us in this life or the next?
Christian Morality	
Is costly discipleship the way to being a true Christian?	Should a Christian be expected to give their life for their faith? Is it more useful to live on or sacrifice oneself for Christ?
How should a Christian live?	How does Jesus expect his followers to live and where do we ascertain the path by which Christians may live. Looking at the writings of Bonhoeffer and his interpretation of Christian scripture.
Is the thinking of Bonhoeffer only relevant to the world and time in which he lived?	Can we only expect a Christian to live as Bonhoeffer prescribed in a situation such as that of 1940s Germany? Is it in any way relevant to modern Christian life?

Year 13

	Topic/Big Question	Focus
Year 13	Philosophy	
	The nature and attributes of God	
	What do people mean by the term 'God'?	Students will examine how philosophy of religion has, over time, influenced and been influenced by developments in religious beliefs about the nature of God
	Do the different attributes traditionally ascribed to God, such as omnipotence and omniscience, make coherent sense?	Students will study developments in the understanding of omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, free will and eternity.
	Religious language: negative, analogical or symbolic	
	How can people use normal everyday language to communicate ideas about God?	Students study the difficulty of describing God in human language – univocal language with its tendency to anthropomorphism, equivocal language with its tendency towards mystery/agnosticism. They examine The Via Negativa and then The Via positiva. This unit enables students' understanding of religious language in terms of analogy, with reference to: Aquinas's analogy of attribution and analogy of proper proportion. It develops students' understanding of the language of religious expression in terms of symbol, with reference to: Tillich's view of theological language as almost entirely symbolic.
	Religious language: twentieth-century perspectives and philosophical comparisons	
	Are all attempts to discuss supernatural ideas ultimately meaningless?	The students finish the course with logical positivism and the impact of the verification principle on the use of religious language, with reference to Ayer's approach to verification. They study Wittgenstein's views on language games and forms of life and how language games may permit religious language to be deemed meaningful yet not cognitive. Finally, there is discussion about the factual quality of religious language in the falsification symposium, and the varying arguments, with their associated parables, put forward in relation to theological language by: Flew, Hare and Mitchell in their contributions to the symposium
	Ethics	
	Meta-ethics	
	What does the language of ethics really mean?	Students study meta-ethical theories and how ethical language in the modern era has changed over time. Students examine and assess the theories: Naturalism, intuitionism and emotivism.
Conscience		

What is the best way of explaining having a sense of right or wrong and feelings of guilt?	Students study significant ideas in religious and moral thought, through comparison of the works of two key scholars from the field of religion and ethics. They examine Aquinas' theological approach and Freud's Psychological approach to the conscience. Students are given the opportunity to assess the two approaches by comparing Aquinas and Freud on guilt; on the presence or absence of God within the workings of the conscience and super-ego and on the process of moral decision making.
Sexual ethics	
Why should sex be exclusive within marriage? Does sexual orientation have any bearing on the structure of modern marriage?	Students study three areas in sexual ethics - premarital sex, extramarital sex and homosexuality . They examine the influence of developments in religious beliefs and practices on debates about the morality, legality and tolerability of these areas of sexual ethics. They are given the opportunity to examine secular thinking on sexual ethics.
Are normative theories useful in what they say about sexual ethics?	The unit finishes with the application of ethical theories: Natural law, Situation ethics, Kantian ethics and utilitarianism
Developments in Christian thought	
Religious pluralism and theology	
What is meant by Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism?	The teachings of Kraemer, Barth, Brunner, Rahner, Hick and Pannikar. Biblical teaching on Pluralism. The concept of Truth.
Does pluralism undermine Christian faith?	DOes a pluralist view lead to religious and cultural relativism and the undermining of faith?
Religious pluralism and society	
What should the Christian response be in a multicultural society?	Is there any object to interfaith dialogue? How should it be conducted?
What is the Roman Catholic view of pluralism?	How does Redemptoris Missio serve a culturally diverse society? How does it differ from Protestant views?
Does the Christian Church have a mission to convert?	C of E versus Catholicism- Meeting God in friend and stranger. How can this be achieved?

Gender and society	
Does Patriarchy stem from Christian values?	Are we socialised to become our roles or is it how God intends us to be?
What are the traditional roles of men and women in society and from where do those ideas emerge?	Does the Bible and Church doctrine impose the traditional roles of men and women on our society and what should our response be to those roles? Can a male dominated clergy impose rules on women and refuse to allow a female priesthood? Are all genders equal in worth?
Is the idea of the family culturally determined?	Is the family undermined by human values and feminist demands? Should the Church bend to the beliefs of society?
Gender and theology	
Does Sexism in Christianity begin with the Fall or the teachings of the Church?	Has society made God in their own image and is it time for women to reject those patriarchal stereotypical views?
Is Christianity Phallogocentric or misinterpreted?	Do such forward thinkers as Daly or Radford Ruether offer the only possible views on Christianity and feminism or do the views of the more traditional merit further examination?
Should women develop their own spirituality?	What is meant by the unholy trinity and can women better experience spirituality through nature?
The Challenge of Secularism	
Is God an illusion?	Is God merely wish fulfilment and should we encourage it?
Is Religion and the teaching of religion in schools harmful?	Is religion a source of harm or wellbeing? Does it help us evolve or hold us back from evolving?
Is Christianity a source of social problems?	Should the state and religion be separate or intertwined? Are spiritual values just human values? Does a secular model of society allow Christianity to develop in a different and more positive way?
Liberation and Marx	
Is Christianity better than Marxism at tackling social problems?	Is Christianity a religion of human liberation? Should Christian ethics engage with liberation theology or other secular ideologies? What is the preferential option for the poor? Does the Church exploit the poor as Marx implies?