

Step up to A-Level Religious Studies (Philosophy, Ethics and Theology)

What will I study in this course?

A-Level Religious Studies covers three disciplines of study: philosophy, ethics and theology.



Philosophy is the study of the most important questions that human beings ask. You will explore questions such as: What is reality? What is knowledge? What does it mean to be human? What arguments might suggest that God exists? How effective are those arguments? What do religious experiences mean? Why is there evil and suffering in the world? What language can we use to talk about God?

Ethics is the study of morality. You will explore questions such as: What is goodness? Is there a natural law that we should all follow? Does morality change with different circumstances? Is euthanasia morally acceptable? Do businesses have a responsibility to society? How do different thinkers respond to premarital sex and homosexuality? What is conscience?

Theology is the study of religious teaching and belief. You will explore questions such as: Why is Jesus Christ important for Christians? What do Christians believe happens after death? What duties to Christians have towards the state? Is there only one path to heaven? Are all religions equal? Does religion oppress women? Should Christians adapt to a more secular world?

What skills will this course develop?

This is a subject without easy answers. You will learn to **listen** to other viewpoints, to **debate** and to come to your own conclusions.

You will develop your ability to **understand complex material** and **be reflective**.

You will gain **confidence** in **discussing ideas** and **presenting them to others**.

Studying Religious Studies helps you to **write persuasively** by **selecting relevant material** and **analysing and evaluating ideas**. These are vital skills for further study and the workplace.

What can I go on to study?

Religious Studies is a highly regarded academic qualification. This course is ideal preparation for a wide range of subjects at university including Law, Politics, History, Philosophy, Sociology, Theology and Philosophy.

Step up to A-Level Religious Studies (Philosophy, Ethics and Theology)



This is a menu of tasks to help you get ready to study Religious Studies at A-Level.

Try to choose a ‘balanced diet’ of activities each week; e.g. explore some of the shorter clips, listen to a radio programme, complete one of the written challenges, read part of one of the suggested books and watch one of the recommended films or TV programmes.



Short video clips (less than 10 minutes)

Each of these clips introduces an idea or theme that is relevant to the A-Level course. Write down what questions the clip raises and how you would respond to them.

Plato’s Cave

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/plato-s-allegory-of-the-cave-alex-gendler>

How do you know you exist?

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-do-you-know-you-exist-james-zucker>

Would you sacrifice one person to save five?

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/would-you-sacrifice-one-person-to-save-five-eleanor-nelsen>

The ethical dilemma of self-driving cars

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-ethical-dilemma-of-self-driving-cars-patrick-lin>

Would you opt for a life with no pain?

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/would-you-opt-for-a-life-with-no-pain-hayley-levitt-and-bethany-rickwald>

Who am I? A philosophical enquiry

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/who-am-i-a-philosophical-inquiry-amy-adkins>



Longer videos

These videos will get you thinking even more deeply about philosophical, ethical and religious ideas. Write down five key ideas from the talk and a list of questions that you will explore further.

Is religion good or bad? This is a trick question

https://www.ted.com/talks/kwame_anthony_appiah_is_religion_good_or_bad_this_is_a_trick_question

We need a “moral operating system”

https://www.ted.com/talks/damon_horowitz_we_need_a_moral_operating_system

What’s the right thing to do?

https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_sandel_what_s_the_right_thing_to_do



Radio programmes and podcasts

These challenging programmes are great for making you think hard. These have been chosen to stretch you so don’t worry if you find some parts difficult to understand. Write down what you learned about the topic of each programme. Which opinions do you agree with and why?

In our time: The soul

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00548g4>

The moral maze: Morality and the bottom line

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03dv38f>

In our time: Dietrich Bonhoeffer

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bkpjns>

The moral maze: The morality of business

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07dm2ps>

The Philosopher’s Arms: The experience machine

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0145x8b>

The public philosopher: Should we bribe people to be healthy?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01g5ztq>



Questions to debate

These questions may look simple, but there are no easy answers. Choose a question and try discussing it with somebody else. Then write at least 500 words exploring different possible responses and explaining your own opinion.

Can you be sure that the world is real and not an illusion?

Should people believe in God?

If there is a God, can he create a rock that is too heavy for him to lift?

Is Britain a Christian country?

How can you tell the difference between right and wrong?

Are miracles possible?



Books

These books are excellent introductions to the study of philosophy, ethics and religion. They are all available to buy and download as e-books. Write a short summary of a section of the book or a more detailed book review.

Sophie's World: A Novel About the History of Philosophy
by Jostein Gaarder

Christianity: An Introduction
by Alister McGrath

A little history of philosophy
by Nigel Warburton

The puzzle of Ethics
by Peter Vardy

Think
by Simon Blackburn

Christianity: A very short introduction
by Linda Woodhead



TV programmes and films

Lots of TV programmes and films are inspired by philosophical, ethical and religious questions. Here are a few that link to the A-Level course. If you get the chance, watch them and think carefully about the ideas which they explore.

The Good Place (series)

The Matrix (film)

The story of God with Morgan Freeman (series)

My sister’s keeper (film)

Lost (series)

Sliding doors (film)

Independent learning log

Use this log to keep a record of your preparation work. You can also upload your work to the Step up to A-Level Religious Studies Google Classroom. Find out more at <https://sites.google.com/thequestacademy.org.uk/stepup-rs>

[illegible]