

A Level Philosophy of Religion and Ethics

You might not be quite sure what Philosophy is. Don't worry, many people aren't! In a general sense, Philosophy, Religion & Ethics addresses some of the big questions that face human beings, such as:

What is the purpose of life?
What can I know?
How should I live?
Why should I do what is right?
What are my obligations to other people?

Why choose this course?

We try to take these big questions seriously and explore different ways of finding answers to them. This means applying rigorous logic, finding the right types of evidence and evaluating possible approaches. It is not about sharing opinions; it is about the meticulous analysis of the problem and scrupulous attention to detail.

Our classes often involve lots of discussion, but in order to be able to discuss these ideas we have to read short but challenging texts. If you are the type of person who is accused of thinking too much, if Google can't answer your questions and if you like spending time wondering whether your real life is the one in your dreams and that you are reading this introduction in your sleep, then this course might be for you.

We will approach the course from a philosophical perspective. You will need to be prepared to take viewpoints seriously even if you disagree with them. It will be important for you to listen to points of view which you may not share and approach them with both a critical and respectful attitude.

The course has some topics which lead on from the GCSE in Philosophy and Ethics or Religious Education but we do not assume that you know any religious traditions in detail. No previous knowledge of the Christian religion is required. You certainly don't have to be religious to study for this qualification; it is equally suitable for students from all religious traditional and none. The course leads to the EDUQAS A Level in Religious Studies.

You must be prepared to undertake at least four hours of independent study per week. You are encouraged to read widely, your lecturer will help to guide your reading and will supply extensive reading lists. You are expected to make cross curricula links with your other courses and stay up to date with ethical issues in the news.

What will I learn?

The course will explore three areas of study:

The Philosophy of Religion - In this unit we will consider the types of evidence that are offered for belief in God, we will evaluate both this evidence and evidence offered for rejection of religious belief. We will also consider the nature of religious argument by considering a number of possible approaches. An important part of the work is to think about the basis of peoples' beliefs. Some philosophers believe that we can only rely upon the evidence of our senses but others point out that our senses can deceive us and search for something more certain.

Ethics - In this unit we will learn how to evaluate a number of different ethical theories as well as considering the extent to which we are free to make our own moral choices and are responsible for our actions. We will consider whether religious faith is at the heart of ethical theories or whether we can form completely secular ethical theories. We will evaluate these contrasting approaches while considering the place of reason in ethical thought.

Christianity - We learn about Christianity in some detail, studying religious figures, sacred texts and how religious practices shape religious identity. We will explore the extent to which the Bible is viewed as a guide to living and for understanding the purpose and meaning of life. We consider the historical and contemporary views of the nature of God and key moral principles. We will also learn about different types of Christianity and the history of Christian practice. We will begin our study of Christianity by thinking about the central ideas of the Nature of God, religious life and religious practice as well as looking at the life of Jesus before moving onto a consideration of key texts and

concepts. Later we will undertake a detailed investigation of the challenges faced from science and investigate Christianity in the U.K and the development of Feminist Theology.

Assessment Arrangements

This course is assessed in 3 exams at the end of the second year. One exam on each component, in which you are expected to write extended essays explaining and evaluating topics that you have studied.

Your achievement in this subject is dependent upon excellent attendance, punctuality and effort. You will learn in a friendly atmosphere, using a variety of assessment methods:

You will be assessed regularly on written essay work that is conducted either as homework or under timed conditions in class and given feedback on your progress.

Discussions are a vital part of our assessment process and you will be expected to contribute to those and to do the reading necessary for that contribution.

You will review your own performance in 1:1 sessions with your tutor.

You will undertake mock examinations in advance of your final exams.

Where will it take me?

This course can be combined effectively with almost any subject especially Law, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology, Sociology and History.

Philosophy of Religion & Ethics is recognised as a respected entrance qualification by all universities, and employers are aware that it helps to develop an individual's ability to communicate, work with others and solve complex problems. Given the emphasis on ethics in this course it might be useful for those considering careers in Law or Medicine.

Information & Support

You are encouraged to read widely in support of your studies. Your lecturers will help to guide your reading and will supply extensive reading lists. You are expected to make cross-curricular links with your other courses of study and stay up-to-date with ethical issues in the news.

What do I need?

You need to achieve Five GCSEs at grade 4 or above (to include English Language or Literature and ideally another humanities subject at grade 6). It is not a requirement to have taken Religious Studies or PRE at GCSE. You will need to be a confident reader, able to write fluently and have good factual recall. Above all you should have a real interest in the subject.

Additional Information

It is a very good idea to attend an open event to discuss the course. If this is not possible please contact the course leader (Beccir@callywith.ac.uk) who will advise you and direct you to more information.

Awarding Body:

Eduqas – Religious Studies