



A Level Religious Studies

“The Unexamined Life Is A Life Not Worth Living”

Socrates

What is the course about?

■ The course is split in three sections: The Study of a Religion; Ethics; and Philosophy.



The specification can be found by clicking on this link

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/religious-studies-h173-h573-from-2016/>

How Is It Taught?

- Over the 9 lessons total per fortnight, all students have the equivalent 3 Philosophy lessons, 3 Ethics Lessons and 3 Religious Studies lessons.
- We use a range of teaching activities to develop a wide range of skills in our students including; debates, presentations, essay writing, ICT based investigations, the use of sources, and other active learning ideas.

The Study of Religion

Which Religion will we be studying?

Currently we are studying Christianity, however, we are happy to consider teaching a different religion, for example, Buddhism. This is dependent upon what are students wish to study. We can be flexible.



Why Christianity?

- It is an fascinating religion which has had a profound impact on our world today.
- It links in well with the Philosophy and Ethics side of the course.
- The Theology and Christology of Christianity is intellectually rigorous and challenging.
- It links in well with issues that are of interest to many young adults today; for example, feminism, liberation theology and pacifism.



A Level Philosophy

Literally ~ the love of knowledge.

Greek Philosophy ~ focusing on Plato and Aristotle

Arguments for the existence of God ~ The Cosmological, Ontological and Teleological Arguments; do they conclusively prove God's existence?

Religious Experience~ What are religious experiences? Miracles, near death etc. What can we learn from them?

Religious Language~ How can we describe God using everyday language? Is it possible?

Different understandings of life after death~

Religious and non religious understandings of:

- A) What is the value and nature of Human life.
- B) What happens after death.
- C) What evidence there is for an afterlife.
- D) Eschatology~ the end of the Universe.

A Level Ethics



In our contemporary society ethical boundaries are continually being pushed.

For example, the development of brain organoids; genetic modification; business practices in Technology and social media; and euthanasia, are all continuing to cause ethical concerns and debates.

Questions around issues such as these will be explored in the ethics units via different ethical theories - both secular and religious.

Some of the Units that will be covered include:

Utilitarianism~ Is living by what makes you happy a good guide to life?

Natural Law ~ are people naturally inclined towards

Situation Ethics~ Can living by what is loving be a good guide?

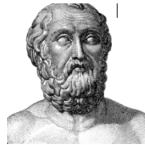
Applied Ethics: Business Ethics and Euthanasia~ What are the issues and the potential answers? How should society explore these issues.

Meta-ethics ~ what do we actually mean by the terms 'good', 'evil', 'right' and 'wrong'?

Conscience ~ What is it and where does it come from?

Relationships and sexual behaviour~ What are sexual ethics? Are there behaviours we should all avoid or condemn?

Some examples of student work

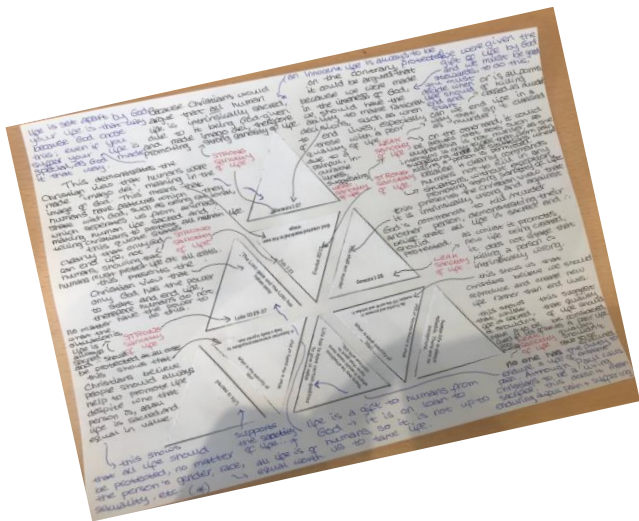


ARISTOTLE

Aristotle (born 384 BCE, died 322 BCE), was an ancient Greek philosopher and scientist, one of the greatest intellectual figures of Western history.

- Aristotle's intellectual interests were wide, covering most of the sciences and many of the arts, including biology, botany, chemistry, ethics, history, logic, metaphysics, rhetoric, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, physics, poetics, political theory, psychology, and zoology.
- He is known as a "towering figure" in Greek philosophy due to his contributions that are still embedded in modern western thinking.
- Most of Aristotle's published works were not published by Aristotle himself but were from notes and writings.
- Major works include:
 - Categories, Organon, Physics, Metaphysics, Nicomachean Ethics, Politics, Rhetoric, and Poetics.
- Aristotle came to Athens as a teenager and studied with Plato for 17 years. After Plato's death in 347 BCE, he traveled widely and ended up in Macedonia where he served as the private tutor of Alexander the Great.
- In 335 he returned to Athens and founded his own school, called the Lyceum.
- He was forced to leave in 323 because of the death of Alexander allowed free reign to anti-Macedonian sentiment and Aristotle was too close to the Alexanders to dare stick around.

"Be a free thinker and don't accept everything a truth. Be critical and evaluate what you believe in" -Aristotle



Introduction to Meta Ethics

<p>What sort of questions does it ask?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is morality? What is the nature of morality? Is morality an objective thing? Is morality a preference? An opinion? A set of cultural conventions? Is morality a preference? An opinion? A set of cultural conventions? 	<p>Explain the Burglar analogy. How might it help us with deciphering our own moral view point?</p> <p>A burglar breaks the window of an old woman's house, intending to steal from her. He sees her lying face down on the floor and runs away, believing she is dead. However, the woman is actually unconscious due to a carbon monoxide leak; the burglar, in his smashing of the window, inadvertently saves the old woman's life. Depending upon how we answer the following questions, we can determine where our moral sensibilities lie: Did the burglar do a good thing? Does he deserve praise? Should he still be blamed even though he didn't steal?</p>
<p>What is Moral Realism? What might be some of the issues with moral realism?</p> <p>Moral Realism is the belief that there are moral facts, in the same way that there are scientific facts. Any moral proposition can only be true or false.</p> <p>Issues: Where do these moral facts come from and how do we know what they are? Are they testable or falsifiable? If morality is based on facts, why are there so many disagreements regarding which acts are moral and which acts are not?</p>	<p>What are the different types of Moral Realism?</p> <p>Moral Absolutism – there are absolute standards against which moral questions can be judged.</p> <p>Moral Relativism – more than one moral position on a given topic can be correct.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive cultural relativism – people's moral beliefs differ from culture to culture. Normative cultural relativism – it's not your beliefs, but moral facts themselves that differ from culture to culture.
<p>What is the grounding problem?</p> <p>The grounding problem of ethics is the search for a foundation for our moral beliefs, something solid that would make them true in a way that is fact, objective, and unmovable.</p>	<p>What is Moral Anti-Realism?</p> <p>The belief that moral propositions don't refer to objective features of the world at all – that there are no moral facts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moral Subjectivism – moral statements can be true and false – right or wrong – but they refer only to people's attitudes, rather than their actions. <p>Pressing injustice is an essential activity. Racial injustice, social injustice, it's all important. People can't just sit back and let it happen because of the pandemic. If something isn't done now, when will it? George Floyd marked the catalyst of the Black Lives Matter movement all over the world. Enough is enough and although it's unlikely that anything will change immediately given the man in charge, that doesn't mean people can ignore it and move on. For some African Americans, they're more likely to be shot by a police officer than to catch Corona. Abortion bans are a refusal to adhere to a woman's right to do what she wants with her own body. Spikes of Corona seems to happen, protests or none, but the epidemic of injustice doesn't seem to end.</p> <p>To conclude, it is understandable that some may think that it is unethical to protest in such close proximity to other people during a pandemic, which could lead to an even greater spread and increase of cases, but how can it be ethical to just allow these injustices to happen? It could be argued that there was some unethical behaviour if the protestors showed no regard for the illness, but while there was no social distancing, people made sure to wear masks or other safety measures. In my opinion, fighting for human rights should never be classed as unethical, despite that it happens in</p>

Did Tony Martin use excessive force and under the Principle of Double Effect was his actions self-defence or manslaughter?

Someone who is a believer of the principle of double effect (i.e. Aquinas), would likely consider Tony Martin as manslaughter and thus guilty of committing an intrinsically evil act. Under the Doctrine of Double effect, and thus guilty of committing an intrinsically evil act, defence preservation of one's life as opposed to harming someone is not the intention, but in Tony Martin's case the motive is ambiguous at best and murderously violent at worst. This is evident by the fact that he had used an illegal firearm in order to shoot the burglar thus raising the question, why would someone be in possession of a device which its sole purpose is to cause mass destruction and death, if they never had the intention to use it? This is the doctrine of double effect as Aquinas stated the intention to do good is not the intention to do harm. Moreover, the motive should be focused on the good effect should not be the intention to do harm. Burglars were fleeing in a way that was fatal proving that he wasn't focused on good effect because as the burglars were fleeing they wouldn't have posed a risk to his life hence choosing any good intentions. In addition, it would've required little cognitive ability to choose to shoot the burglar in the foot. Just enough to not seek revenge rather than protecting himself. This was a pre-calculated murder mission as it wasn't as if Martin had developmentally grabbed an iron (like a bat or sumpcan) and can be seen by his blatant development of hatred for burglars caused by frequent trespassing on his property. Furthermore, his lack of concern for the preservation of human life is fundamentally apparent by the fact he admitted that he felt no remorse for the life of the boy he took when visiting his grave implying he has major concerns for 'saving of life' which should be the intention of the act.

In my opinion, I agree that the force used was unnecessary and that violence was always what Martin sought, as evident by his continual possession of firearms with obvious reason for ownership. Many journalists describing that case note that Martin had seen burglars for at least 10 years and he had adequate time to consider a burglar from afar and could've thus phoned the police and he had adequate time to consider a burglar from afar. I view his acts as wholly wrong. I would deem Martin as not inherently evil due to the fact he was later diagnosed with paranoid personality disorder as well as antisocial. Although an icon for a law-abiding citizen and could've caused him to behave in a way which could've disproportionately harmed for his reason and could've caused him to behave in a way which could've requires adequate support to prevent him being a danger to himself and others and the media should take responsibility by not giving him an outlet and presenting him as the 'voice of reason'.

There is no evidence to suggest that Jesus thought of himself as divine. Discuss - Essay Plan

- Introduction**
- The statement is flawed; there is evidence to suggest that Jesus thought of himself as divine, although this does not necessarily prove in itself that he was divine.
- Paragraph 1**
- Jesus stated that he was divine multiple times.
 - The seven "I am" statements
 - "I am the light of the world" – Jesus is dispelling the darkness of sin
 - "I am the bread of life" – Jesus acts as spiritual nourishment for humanity.
 - "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30)
 - This would be blasphemous if Jesus was not divine.
 - The meaning of this is little open to interpretation, it is clear that Jesus is making a link between himself and God.
 - Counter – Just because Jesus said he was divine doesn't necessarily mean that he was.
 - Jesus doesn't seem to be connected to God prior to his crucifixion (Matthew 27:46).
 - Overall, those statements show that Jesus thought of himself as divine, but they do not necessarily fully prove that he was actually divine.
 - Saying something doesn't mean it is true.
 - They are strong claims but they show that there is biblical evidence to suggest that Jesus thought of himself as divine.
- Paragraph 2**
- Some of Jesus' attributes contradict the previous Jewish expectations of the Messiah.
 - The Messiah was expected to be a military leader/warrior king.
 - Isaiah 11:4 – "He will slay the wicked".
 - Beatitudes – "blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God".
 - Counter – Reza Aslan proposes that Jesus was involved in a much more confrontational resistance than is presented in the New Testament.
 - Just because some of Jesus' characteristics don't ultimately fit with the Old Testament prophecies (or even if they have been cast aside by the authors of the New Testament), his message of love reflects the omnibenevolence associated with God, suggesting that Jesus may indeed have thought of himself as divine.
- Paragraph 3**
- Jesus' miracles suggest he thought of himself as divine.
 - Healing of the blind man.
 - John 9:3 – "If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."
 - Jesus' healing of the blind man on the Sabbath portrays confidence in his divine nature as he is breaking the sabbath laws set down by the sabbath leaders.
 - Counter – Reimarus argued that Jesus did not perform miracles and the story of the restoration was made by disciples who stole the body. This is supported by David Strauss and Reza Aslan.
 - The fact that Jesus is recorded as performing these, regardless of how they are land perhaps could be argued not all of them would have been fabricated, shows his desire to present himself as more than a mere mortal.
- Paragraph 4**
- As humans, we cannot fully understand God and thus we may not completely understand Jesus' perception of himself as divine.
 - Layers of understanding – Jesus may have had personal insights into his divine nature that we are unable to access, and this restriction is extended by the length of time between Jesus' life and our own.
 - Counter – Collins argues that studying the inner world of Jesus is difficult and thus, even if Jesus did perceive himself as divine, this would be hard to determine.
 - However, since he was still a human being, Jesus would have had at least some of a similar psychology to our own. Furthermore, it can be seen through Jesus' teachings and actions that he appears to have thought of himself as divine.

Where Can Religious Studies Lead?

Philosophy and Ethics students go on to a wide range of jobs and courses.

These include:

Teaching, Law, Government, Medicine, Midwifery and Nursing, Counselling, The Police, Archivist, International Development/Aid etc.

Universities are also very keen on Religious Studies with many universities listing it as a desired or facilitating subject.