

Religious Studies

Brief Overview of the Course

Religious Studies allows students to explore questions posed by philosophers throughout history, from Plato to Richard Dawkins, concerning the purpose and meaning of existence and the reasons why we have an ethical system. Studying this subject will enable students to develop a range of skills including those of analysis and evaluation. It will encourage objective reasoning through examination of a variety of perspectives in order to reach a justified and informed conclusion.

(For further details, please see our Sixth Form Prospectus

[Sixth Form Prospectus • Sir Thomas Rich's School \(strschool.co.uk\)](https://www.strschool.co.uk/sixth-form-prospectus))

Exam Board: OCR

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

Topics Covered: Year 12

Philosophy of Religion

- Plato and Aristotle
- Body and Soul
- Arguments for the Existence of God
- Religious Experience
- Problem of Evil

Religion and Ethics

- Natural Law Ethics
- Situation Ethics
- Utilitarianism
- Kantian Ethics
- Euthanasia
- Business Ethics

Developments of Christian Thought

- Augustine's view of Human Nature
- Death and the Afterlife
- Knowledge of God's Existence
- The Person of Jesus
- Christian Moral Principles
- Christian Moral Action

Topics Covered: Year 13

Philosophy of Religion

- Nature of God
- Religious Language

Religion and Ethics

- Meta Ethics
- Conscience
- Sexual Ethics

Developments of Christian Thought

- Pluralism: Theology and Society
- Gender: Theology and Society
- Secularism
- Liberation Theology and Marx

Please follow the instructions in the boxes below. The aim of these activities is to introduce you to the study of this subject at Advanced Level by:

- reinforcing your core knowledge and understanding of your chosen subject;
- encouraging you to think more deeply about your subject;
- supporting you to develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for your subject as an academic discipline.

Core Knowledge and Understanding Task

Whether you have studied this subject before or not, there are elements of core knowledge and understanding that you must have prior to starting the A Level course.

Please provide a written answer to each of the following questions. These are very open questions and we are more interested in your own thoughts and the reasons for them. The links later on will give you information about how others have approached the questions.

- Who am I?
- What does it mean to be human?
- Why am I here?
- Where have I come from?
- How do I know I exist?
- Where am I going when I die?
- How should I behave?
- Where do these rules come from and why should I keep them?

Now try this more structured activity:

Watch this documentary, 'Barra Boy'

<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)

Matthew 28:1 – 10

Mark 16: 1 – 8

Luke 24: 1 – 10

John 20: 1 – 18

4. Do you find these stories convincing? Why, or why not?

Links to support:

<https://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/philosophy/a2/life-after-death/>

<https://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/christian-thought/death-and-afterlife/>

The Bigger Picture Task

As well as reinforcing your core knowledge and understanding, our A Level curriculum will expose you to what are called the 'established orthodoxies' within each subject, which can include key research, important people who have contributed to the field, as well as broader methods and theories that exist within the subject.

Prior to starting the A Level course, it is important that you are aware of the following themes and topics so that you can develop an understanding of how they contribute to some of the established orthodoxies within Religious Studies

We would like you to research one of the key thinkers in the subject and to begin to understand the contribution that he made. Please choose any figure from the list below:

Plato
Aristotle
Augustine
Aquinas
Bentham
Mill
Hume
Kant

Think about:

The context in which he lived (period of time, culture)
How did he become interested in the subject?
What were the key ideas that he contributed?

What were his major works called?

What was his impact? (This may be tricky to answer but is something that you will be evaluating throughout the course.)

Links to support:

<https://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/revision/#>

<http://rsrevision.com/Alevel/ethics/theories.htm>

<http://rsrevision.com/Alevel/philosophy/index.htm>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01f0vzr>

<http://www.philosopherkings.co.uk/godandcreation.html>

<https://thepanpsycast.com/panpsycast>

<https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/magazines/magazines-extras/rs-review-extras>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qk11/episodes/downloads>

Recommended Reading List and the Department's 'Top Pick' Title

As an A Level student, we want you to value academic endeavour (scholarship) and develop a thirst for learning in your chosen subject. Our curriculum will help you to understand that scholarship is not just about learning facts, it is about nurturing powerful knowledge.

We will help you with this by directing you to resources that will not only deepen your knowledge and strengthen your understanding of the A Level content, but also broaden it beyond that of the exam board specification.

Please find the full subject reading list alongside our prospectus on the Sixth Form section of the STRS website here: <https://strschool.co.uk/sixthform/prospectus>. We would encourage you to explore as many of these titles as you can.

From the published reading list, the most highly recommended book(s)/article(s) to read before September are:

- Julian Baggini – 'The Pig That Wants To Be Eaten: And 99 Other Thought Experiments'

Once you have read the recommended book/chapter/article, consider the following:

- What did you learn from the reading?
- Have you identified any patterns or made any connections?
- What unanswered questions has the reading left you with?
- Did you agree entirely with what you have read? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Are there any themes or topics that you would like to explore further?

Other Recommended Activities

Please find below a selection of suggested additional activities that the department feel it would be useful for you to explore prior to starting the A Level course in September.

Our subject is concerned with every aspect of human existence and the material studied will often be explored through art, literature and film. There are many films that we recommend you watch to help you think about some of the themes that the subject examines. As you watch the films, try to identify these themes and the questions they raise.

- The Matrix
- The Truman Show
- Inception
- Contact
- Minority Report
- After Dark
- Dead Man Walking
- The Island
- Cry Freedom
- Vera Drake
- My Sister's Keeper
- Batman
- Million Dollar Baby
- The Founder

Other useful links:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/WirelessPhilosophy/featured>

<https://www.ted.com/talks?sort=relevance&q=philosophy>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04bwydw>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNgK6MZucdYldNkMybYIHKR>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGzvAG1oDa8>

<https://philosophynow.org/>