

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

“Wisdom begins with wonder”

Socrates

Current Teaching Staff:

Mrs D. Bloomfield - Head of Department

Ms R. Thompson, Ms K. Williams

Examination board and syllabus: Eduqas RS

Entrance requirement: There is no need to have studied GCSE RS. An interest in the subjects covered is the key requirement.

Do you want a subject that requires rigorous thought? Do you want to critically evaluate a diverse range of issues that challenge us as humans, and that are relevant to a wide variety of careers? Do you want a subject that is multi-disciplinary, looking at issues from a philosophical, theological, sociological, and psychological perspective? If so, then A level religious studies is for you.

Course outline:

Component 1: Buddhism

In this unit, you will acquire and develop knowledge and a critical understanding of some of the key beliefs and features of Buddhism. You will have the opportunity to visit Buddhist centres and evaluate such issues as:

- How useful is mindfulness in health care, education, and business?
- Is Buddhism a religion?
- Why might Buddhists feel that social activism is important?
- Why does the condition and treatment of women in Buddhism differ so widely across the world?
- Why is Buddhism popular in Britain?

Component 2: Philosophy of Religion

In this unit, you will learn about different types of philosophical arguments and how they can be challenged. In particular you will focus on arguments for and against God's existence, considering questions such as:

- Is God the best explanation for the existence of the universe?
- Are religious experiences, including miracles, proof of God or are they better explained psychologically?
- Is it possible to successfully defend belief in God in the face of evil?
- Is religious belief a product of the human mind?

Component 3: Religion and Ethics (Moral philosophy)

In addition to reflecting on the extent to which humans are really free to make their own choices, in ethics you will evaluate how useful different moral theories (such as utilitarianism and situation ethics) are for dealing with the following contemporary issues:

- Abortion and voluntary euthanasia
- Immigration
- Capital punishment
- Homosexual and polyamorous relationships
- Animal experimentation for medical research
- The use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent

How will I learn?

Classes have three teachers in each year, each one specialising in one of the components above. Many different teaching methods are used, including group work, debates, and presentations. There is a sustained focus on examination skills practice. Homework will include watching videos, listening to podcasts, preparing presentations, reading around the subject and completing practice questions.

Students will have opportunities to enhance their learning through visiting speakers and visits to Buddhist centres. Additionally, we hope to offer an overseas trip. We have developed good links with Exeter University and aim to visit the university and/or have speakers from there to support our studies and future pathways.

Number of Units	% of A2	Examination	Length of Time	Examination
Buddhism	33%	Examination	2 hours	June at end of Year 13
Philosophy of Religion	33%	Examination	2 hours	June at end of Year 13
Religion and Ethics	33%	Examination	2 hours	June at end of Year 13

Students will need to:	Compulsory	Optional
Attend extra sessions before Examinations		X
Read widely around the subject	X	
Make extensive notes	X	
Carry out detailed revision for regular tests beyond public examinations	X	

CAREERS

Most professions today require an ethical dimension to their practice. Students can go on to a wide range of careers including: medicine/ healthcare – journalism/broadcasting – politics – law – social work – academia – police/ fire officer – NGO/charity work – PR – accountancy – hospitality – civil service.

Many ex-students have reported back that they are doing modules on moral philosophy as part of their degree and that studying ethics at A level gave them a solid foundation for these units.

“As a religious studies graduate, you’ll have plenty of valuable skills to offer an employer and will be equipped to enter professions such as education, law, or journalism, or for more pastoral work, such as counselling, mediation and negotiation or social work. Graduates are also found in charity work, teaching, personnel and accountancy”

The Guardian

The Russell Group of universities has made it clear that religious studies provides “suitable preparation for university” and Oxford and Cambridge include them in their top-level list of “suitable arts A levels”.

A level religious studies works well with a wide range of subjects such as psychology, English, art and history. As an essay-based subject, it also complements science-based A levels, showing a versatility of skills.