

Religion, Philosophy & Ethics

A Level: Bridging Unit

What will you be learning?

You will be studying OCR Religious Studies. I would advise looking over the specification to familiarise yourself with the upcoming content here: [OCR A Level Religious Studies H573 Specification](#)

Content Overview		Assessment Overview	
Philosophy of religion Learners will study: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ancient philosophical influences• the nature of the soul, mind and body• arguments about the existence or non-existence of God• the nature and impact of religious experience• the challenge for religious belief of the problem of evil• ideas about the nature of God• issues in religious language.		Philosophy of religion (01) 120 marks 2 hour written paper	33.3% of total A Level
Religion and ethics Learners will study: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• normative ethical theories• the application of ethical theory to two contemporary issues of importance• ethical language and thought• debates surrounding the significant idea of conscience• sexual ethics and the influence on ethical thought of developments in religious beliefs.		Religion and ethics (02) 120 marks 2 hour written paper	33.3% of total A Level
Developments in religious thought Learners will study: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• religious beliefs, values and teachings, their interconnections and how they vary historically and in the contemporary world• sources of religious wisdom and authority• practices which shape and express religious identity, and how these vary within a tradition• significant social and historical developments in theology and religious thought• key themes related to the relationship between religion and society in the context of one religion chosen from Christianity (03), Islam (04), Judaism (05), Buddhism (06) or Hinduism (07).		Developments in religious thought (03–07) 120 marks 2 hour written paper	33.3% of total A Level

What do I need to do over the summer?

The following tasks aim to introduce you to the different elements of the RPE course. They should be completed by the start of term and brought to your first RPE lesson.

These tasks are designed to help you develop some of the knowledge and skills that you will need to study A Level RPE – specifically, the ability to take notes effectively, research information from a variety of sources, identify and summarise key points, evaluate, and write clearly and concisely.

Some of the tasks focus mainly on note-taking whereas the Ethics task also requires a written piece of work to be completed and handed in in September. This will build on the work that you did in Transition week when you were introduced to Utilitarianism and it will help us gauge what level you are currently working at and whether you need some additional support.

There are also optional extension activities under each task and these are, as stated, optional. It is your choice whether you want to take your learning further by completing one or more of them and they should go directly into your folder, you do not need to bring them to your lessons in September.

Task 1: Philosophy – Cornell Note-Taking

Watch the following video which gives instructions on how to take notes effectively at A Level using the ‘Cornell Notes’ method: [How To Take Cornell Notes Properly \(Video\)](#)

In May 2020 the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Chester launched a series of live A level Webinars, broadcast every Tuesday lunchtime. Each lecture was streamed live from the homes of specialised guest speakers and lecturers. They covered a huge range of topics across religion, philosophy and ethics aimed at supporting A Level students throughout the pandemic. Due to the success, and popularity, of the lectures, Chester University have continued to produce them during 2021 and 2022.

1. Watch a Philosophy webinar of your choosing using this link: [TRS Chester A Level Webinars | Outreach | University of Chester](#) (preferably one related to something on the A Level specification linked above)
2. Use the Cornell method to make notes on the webinar.
3. Write a personal response to the lecture (no more than 400 words) expressing your personal opinion on the topic being discussed. What were the strongest arguments? Why? Was there anything you were not convinced by? Why? How might different people respond to the points raised?

Task 2: Ethics

For this task, you are going to watch some introductory videos by Julia Markovits at Cornell University, explaining the theory of Utilitarianism; some of its strengths and some of the potential problems.

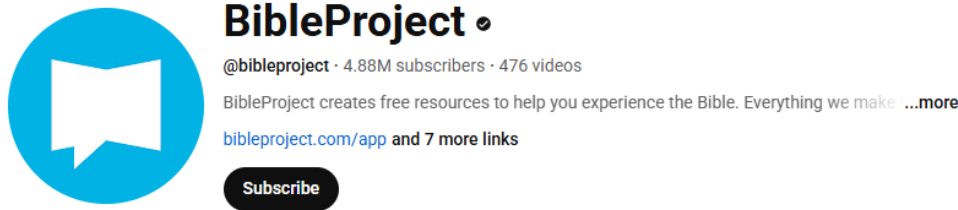
1. Utilitarianism Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvmz5E75ZIA>
2. Utilitarianism Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGDk23Q0S9E>
3. Utilitarianism Part 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoCuVa9UeR4>

Once you have made notes from these (you may decide to use the Cornell method again), carry out some further research. A good starting place is the Peter Vardy book ‘The Puzzle of Ethics’ (which we recommend that you buy – more details regarding recommended reading can be found in the Year RPE Handbook), as it has a chapter on Utilitarianism. You will also find lots of good resources online. Use your research to produce about 750-1000 words in answer to questions (a) and (b) combined.

- a. Explain the key ideas of Utilitarianism.
- b. To what extent is Utilitarianism a good ethical theory?

Task 3: Christianity

Our studied religion on the A Level RPE course is Christianity. We consider it in more depth than at GCSE and all of the topics are really meaty and interesting. To prepare for this, good background basics are useful. This final task involves note taking and answering comprehension questions. The Bible Project Series on YouTube will help you with this.



[BibleProject - YouTube](#)

I would recommend the Biblical Themes playlist which is about 1 hour 30 minutes long if you watch every video

Use these videos and your own additional research to find out about the following Biblical stories, events or characters. For each topic below you need to answer the questions and you may want to also complete a Cornell Notes template.

1. The Story of the Fall?

- What happens?
- How does this story link with Christian ideas about Jesus?

2. The story of Exile

- Where, when and why were the Israelites exiled to?
- What does the prophet Jeremiah teach about exile in Babylon?
- What is the link with Jesus?

3. The Suffering Servant passages of Isaiah

- Who was Isaiah?
- What is the background to Isaiah's writings?
- What does Isaiah write about the suffering servant?
- What is the link with Jesus?

4. The Prophets (there is a Bible project video called prophets)

- What do prophets do? Who are they?
- What do they teach about the covenant?
- What is the Day of the Lord? What is the link with Jesus?

5. The Messiah

- What does the Old Testament teach about the Messiah?
- Why do Christians believe that Jesus was the Messiah?
- What Jewish expectations of the Messiah does Jesus not fulfil?

6. Jesus

- What are the main events in Jesus' life?
- What does Jesus teach in the Sermon on the Mount?
- What does Jesus mean when he calls himself the Son of Man?
- What is the Day of the Lord?

Extension Tasks: Useful resources and recommended reading:

- [Teacher and Student Schools Resources | The School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)
- [Religion | The RE Podcast](#)
- [Christian worldview traditions - RE:ONLINE \(reonline.org.uk\)](#)
- [Resource library – Theology and Religious Studies UK \(trs.ac.uk\)](#)
- [History & The Arts - All content - OpenLearn - Open University](#)
- [MASSOLIT – Playlists](#)
- [\(140\) WESTERN PHILOSOPHY – YouTube](#)

Recommended Reading	
<i>The Brothers Karamazov</i> by Fyodor Dostoevsky	A huge and important 'classic' book, which takes time and effort and is well worth both. Raises issues of God, evil, rivalry, loyalty...
<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> by Harper Lee	Another classic that should be on everyone's 'must read' list. Through the young eyes of Scout and Jem Finch, Harper Lee explores with exuberant humour the irrationality of adult attitudes to race and class in the Deep South of the 1930s. The conscience of a town steeped in prejudice, violence and hypocrisy is pricked by the stamina of one man's struggle for justice. But the weight of history will only tolerate so much.
<i>The Puzzle of...</i> series by Peter Vardy	This series of non-fiction books is about issues in religion and philosophy, very readable and you don't have to be an expert to enjoy them. You can dip in and out of different chapters rather than having to start at the beginning and work through to the end.
<i>Candide</i> by Voltaire	Another 'classic', this one takes a philosophical view of people's approaches to evil and natural disaster. It's a great book but the topics might be too difficult for you to cope with in the current circumstances, so try it if you want to but save it for more stable times if you don't.
<i>The Pig that wants to be Eaten</i> by Julian Baggini	Is it right to eat a pig that wants to be eaten? Are you really reading this book cover, or are you in a simulation? If God is all-powerful, could he create a square circle? Here are 100 of the most intriguing thought experiments from the history of philosophy and ideas - questions to leave you inspired, informed and scratching your head, dumbfounded.
<i>50 Philosophy Ideas you really need to know</i> by Ben Dupré	In a series of accessible and engaging essays, this book introduces and explains the problems of knowledge, consciousness, identity, ethics, belief, justice and aesthetics that have troubled the minds of great thinkers for centuries, from the ancient Greeks to the present day.
<i>Think</i> by Simon Blackburn	This is a book about the big questions in life: knowledge, consciousness, fate, God, truth, goodness, justice. It is for anyone who believes there are big questions out there but does not know how to approach them.
<i>The Blind Watchmaker, and/or The God Delusion</i> by Richard Dawkins	Biologist turned philosopher, Dawkins first addresses the science of evolution as the only explanation to hold as to why we are here, before putting the notion of God squarely in his sights.
<i>The Dawkins Delusion?</i> by Alister McGrath	A retort to Dawkins' book from renowned Christian apologetics professor Alister McGrath, tackling some of the claims made in Dawkins book. Worth a read alongside the other to draw your own conclusions.
<i>If This Is A Man and/or The Drowned and the Saved</i> by Primo Levi	An Italian Jew, and survivor of the Holocaust recounts his experiences and understanding of human nature, evil and suffering and what it takes to forgive someone that has committed atrocities against you, your country and your religion.
<i>The Plague</i> by Albert Camus	A fictional novel about a plague epidemic in the large Algerian city of Oran exploring the notion of existential philosophy and the meaning of life.
<i>The Trial</i> by Franz Kafka	The Trial is the chronicle of that intervening year of K.'s case, his struggles and encounters with the invisible Law and the untouchable Court. It is an account, ultimately, of state-induced self-destruction. Yet, as in all of Kafka's best writing, the "meaning" is far from clear.