

Religion, Philosophy and Ethics (RPE):

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

There is an introduction to the A-Level Religious Studies Course that is free to sign up to and complete. This has come highly recommended and there is a certificate at the end of the course – [Why study A-level RS » Cogito Education](#)

In year 12 you will study a range of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics units. These include a study and application of different ethical theories such as natural law, utilitarianism. Philosophy units include Plato and Aristotle, Soul, Mind and Body, and Arguments for the existence of God. Development in Religious thought considers what it means to be human and later on issues concerning Gender.

At this stage though we want you to start with the basics! You will find that you have something to read, watch and listen to for religion, philosophy and ethics.

Why this work?

Before starting the course it is really useful to have some background knowledge about what philosophy and ethics is so the first preparation for sixth form study will focus on this to help you understand how the approaches and ways of thinking in this subject are very different to what you might be used to. You might find that people are using vocabulary that you have never heard and also ideas that you've never come across. Don't worry - remember we will go through all of this when we teach you! We just want you to begin to develop some knowledge and understanding in these areas.

Aim of the activity.

The aim of this activity is to give you some insight into what you might cover in A Level Religious Studies. The A-level course has three components: philosophy, ethics and Christianity, therefore, the tasks below are designed to give an insight into each element of the course.

While there is no expectation for you to formally submit your work it should give you a taste for the subject at sixth form and also widen your knowledge in preparation for September.

Where should I complete it?

Please complete any notes either on paper or google drive and save them to bring into school at a later date.

How long will it take?

The work should take you around 3-5 hours in total (approximately 1.5 hours each for philosophy, ethics and Developments in Christian Thinking), please do not feel you need to spend longer than this but if you get interested it is also fine to read more around the topic. You are welcome and pick and choose the tasks as well.

A-Level topic: An Introduction to Philosophy		TASK
Something to read	'The Man Who Asked Questions: Socrates and Plato' by Nigel Warburton, <i>A Little History of Philosophy</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Read the information from start to finish 2) Write a brief summary of what philosophy is about. 3) Write a list of 10 interesting things you've learnt about each Socrates and Plato
	<p>An introduction to philosophical questions</p> <p>Read this article on various philosophical questions.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Focus on question 1: 'should we kill healthy people for their organs?' 2) And question 4: 'did you really choose to read this article?' 3) Consider both these questions and jot down your ideas about how you would answer these questions, and if there are even answers to these questions! These questions link to some of the topics we will cover in the A-level such as determinism vs free will.
Something to watch	<p>What is Philosophy (Crash Course) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAKYt3GY</p> <p>Theory of Knowledge (Epistemology) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_Y3utleTPg</p>	
Something to listen to	<p>MM McCabe on the 'Socratic Method' [13 minutes]</p> <p>https://hwcdn.libsyn.com/p/0/9/4/094f2a0c73fbafff/M.M._McCabe_on_Socratic_Method.mp3?c_id=1779479&cs_id=1779479&expiration=1585146798&hwt=55c041ac4c5ff7be409fced6e23a095f</p> <p>If the link doesn't work, google 'Philosophy Bites' and search directly from there.</p>	<p>1) Listen to the podcast which deals with questions about what are the best ways to do practical ethics and work out how to behave? As you listen, write a list of possible answers to these questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Who was Socrates? b) How do we know about the life and views of Socrates? c) What is the socratic method? What was Socrates trying to show people through using this method? d) Why was the socratic method controversial to some people? e) What does McCabe think Socrates means when he says 'the unexamined life is not worth living?' f) What might be the problems with examining all aspects of life? g) Is there something we can learn from Socrates today? Why is questioning and reflecting important? h) Are there any problems? (e.g. with exams, courses).

A-Level topic: An Introduction to Ethics		TASK
Something to read	What is Ethics (handout)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Read the information from start to finish 2) Write a list of 10 interesting things you've learnt about ethics, trying to focus on any new vocabulary you have learnt.
Something to watch	Moral Relativism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RU7M6JSVtk Deontology: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWZi-8Wji7M Consequentialism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51DZteag74A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Watch each of the videos one at a time. We recommend watching it once fully without making notes and then a second time to be able to write things down that you found interesting. 2) Summarise the main ideas of each video in no more than 3 sentences. Make sure you include subheadings in your notes.
	An introduction to an ethical theory: Utilitarianism Watch this video about the 'trolley problem'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Consider the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Should you sacrifice one to save five? What arguments could support this stance? Any counter arguments? b) Is there a difference between pushing the lever and pushing the man? c) When it comes to making moral decisions, is it just about consequences? Or are actions important too? What should take priority? What would a utilitarian think? <p>Utilitarianism is a key ethical theory in this A-level so it will be really beneficial to have considered and investigated all these questions before September.</p>
Something to listen to	James Wilson 'Real World Ethics' [20 minutes] https://hwcdn.libsyn.com/p/3/5/3/353a0393c3b08eed/James_Wilson_on_Real_World_Ethics.mp3?c_id=52696484&cs_id=52696484&expiration=1585134153&hwt=14fbe132999e47a16eadc71efd13f114 If the link doesn't work, google 'Philosophy Bites' and is on the main home page.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Listen to the podcast which deals with questions about what are the best ways to do practical ethics and work out how to behave? As you listen, write a list of possible answers to these questions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) What are thought experiments? (Give an example). What is Wilson's view on the use of thought experiments? b) What is meant by real world ethics? c) How are real world problems different from thought experiments? d) Why does context matter when thinking about ethical issues (according to Wilson)? e) Aside from thought experiments, what other techniques or tools could be used to help make ethical decisions? f) What does Wilson think about the use of principles in ethics? (strengths/weaknesses)

A-Level topic: An Introduction to Development in Christian thinking		TASK
Something to read	<p>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)</p> <p>Matthew 28:1 – 10</p> <p>Mark 16: 1 – 8</p> <p>Luke 24: 1 – 10</p> <p>John 20: 1 – 18</p>	<p>1) Do you find these stories convincing? Why, or why not?</p> <p>2) Do you think the stories contradict each other, or are they just told from different points of view, in your opinion? What might account for the differences and the similarities between the stories?</p>
Something to watch	<p><u>The gender of God</u></p> <p>What issues or restrictions can our language have on God's gender? (this video may be a good place to start)</p>	<p>1) Does God have a gender?</p> <p>This question is a key question that will be covered in both year 12 and year 13.</p> <p>What evidence can you find that suggests God is male? female? or gender neutral? To help you investigate this question, consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What does the Bible say about God's gender? Can you find different passages that support different points of view? What about the Church? what is their official stance on God's gender? Has this stance changed over time? Do all the different denominations agree? Does the issue of God's gender have any links with arguments for why the Catholic Church does not allow females to be priests?
Something to listen to	<p>Augustine's Teachings on Human Nature https://thepanpsycast.com/dct-audiobook/chapter4 If the link doesn't work, google 'The Panpsycast PhilosophyPodcast'</p>	<p>1) Listen to the podcast which deals with Augustine's views on human nature. As you listen, write a list of possible answers to these questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Do we always act in our own best interests? How free are we to make our own decisions? Do people ever act in a totally unselfish way? Is pride necessarily bad? What positive and negative actions and behaviours result from pride? Do you agree with Augustine's view that friendship is ultimately superior to romance? Do men and women have the same human nature?

What next:

Films and TV shows

Listed below are some films and TV shows that link to the Religious Studies specification and so are worth watching:

- **The Good Place** (comedy): the main character has been sent to heaven by mistake and must be taught 'how to be good' by an ethics professor. This show covers many ethical theories and philosophers that are part of this A-level
- **The Invention of Lying** (comedy/drama): everyone in this film is unable to lie - except the main character, however, nobody else is aware of his ability to withhold the truth. Is it ever acceptable to lie?
- **Avengers: Infinity War** (action): Could it ever be acceptable to kill a few for the benefit of the whole society – even if this reduces 'pain' for others? Links to Utilitarianism.

Now some books to help develop your thinking skills:

The pig that wants to be eaten – Julian Baggini

50 Philosophy Ideas you must know -

Think – Simon Blackburn

The Blind Watchmaker, and/or The God Delusion – Richard Dawkins

These suggestions are only a few of the very many available, so don't worry if you can't get hold of these specific titles.

And some online resources:

The Philosophy Man - thephilosophyman.com

this website gives you lots of different ideas to think about. Some are for younger children but you could try the 'brainsqueezers'. These are good if you don't have too much time, or if you're finding it difficult to settle to anything more concentrated.

Philosophers Magazine – philosophersmag.com

Try the games on this website, and read the commentaries that go with them. Lots to think about!

Peped – peped.org

This website has a lot of good resources that you might use once you start you're a level course; you could dip in and start exploring some of the ideas you will meet next year.