



# A-Level Philosophy and Ethics

## Introduction

Welcome to the philosophy and ethics A-level course ([Edugas GCE](#)).

To enjoy an A-level in philosophy and ethics you must have an inquisitive mind, an interest in religion and a desire to examine some of the most important questions which face humankind. You do not need to have a personal religious belief, although it's fine if you do have one. The A-level course – like the GCSE – is not a training course for religious leaders!

This course will offer you an exciting opportunity to fuse the study of philosophy, ethics and religion into one subject.

You will cover a wide range of topics such as:

- different approaches to considering moral and ethical issues
- issues in contemporary society, such as medical and environmental ethics
- the psychology of religious belief

We will examine the issues of euthanasia and the right to die, and explore the arguments surrounding the rights of non-human animals. We will also explore the psychology of belief in religious phenomenon, including an exploration of symbolism and myth in religious practices.

The course focuses two thirds of your learning on philosophy and ethics and one third on the sociological aspects of Christianity.

## What is Philosophy?

The word philosophy is derived from Greek for 'love of wisdom', but that is not particularly helpful in understanding how the word is used now. Philosophy is a subject at the core of most humanities courses. It focuses on abstract questions such as:

- Does God exist?
- Do we have genuine freedom of choice?
- Why should we act in a moral fashion?
- What is the mind?

Your challenge is to look at the suggested answers to these sorts of questions, analyse them and reach your own conclusions!

## What is Ethics?

At its simplest, ethics is a system of moral principles. They affect how people make decisions and lead their lives. Ethics is concerned with what is good for individuals and society. The term is derived from the Greek words 'ethos' which can mean custom, habit, character or disposition. Ethics covers the following dilemmas:

- How to lead a good life?
- How should we treat others?

It is the philosophy of moral decisions – of deciding what is good and what is bad. Our concepts of ethics have been derived from religions, philosophers and cultures. They infuse debates on topics like abortion, human rights, law and punishment.

## **What skills will I learn?**

- analysing and evaluating the views of others and substantiating your own
- being challenged to seek answers to the mysteries of life and death
- testing the views of others, including scholars
- challenging the evidence and the testimonies
- being aware of the historical, social and cultural influences on the way ideas have developed and of how the past influences the future
- facing the challenge of exploring questions that have no answers

## **How will I be assessed?**

### ***Component 1: a study of Christianity***

Written examination: 2 hours / one third of qualification

There will be four themes within each option: religious figures and sacred texts; religious concepts and religious life; significant social and historical developments in religious thought; religious practices and religious identity.

### ***Component 2: philosophy of religion***

Written examination: 2 hours / one third of qualification

There will be four themes within this component: arguments for the existence of God; challenges to religious belief; religious experience; religious language.

### ***Component 3: religion and Ethics***

Written examination: 2 hours / one third of qualification

There will be four themes within this component: ethical thought; deontological ethics; teleological ethics; determinism; free will.

## **What do I need to master?**

### ***A01***

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:

- religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching
- influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies
- cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice
- approaches to the study of religion and belief

### ***A02***

Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

You need to develop the following abilities:

- recall, select and deploy knowledge
- identify, investigate and analyse questions and issues arising from it
- use appropriate and correct language and terminology
- interpret and evaluate relevant concepts
- communicate, using reasoned argument substantiated by evidence
- make connections between areas of study and other aspects of experience

## Subject expectations

The following year will provide you with the opportunity to explore some of the biggest unanswered questions in the universe. The course offers you the opportunity to evaluate, discuss and argue your way through emotive and religious arguments. We have high expectations of students and expect you to:

- attend all lessons
- complete all homework/assessments set for the appropriate deadlines
- discuss any concerns/questions you have with your teachers
- take part in lessons, written work, discussions and presentations
- take responsibility for your own learning
- keep a folder, keep it organised, and keep a record of all assessment results

## What should you do if you miss a lesson?

If you know you will be absent for a lesson then out of courtesy we expect you to inform the relevant member of staff, either the lesson before or by email. You **will** be expected to catch up on any work missed and are responsible for asking for notes or collecting notes from other students.

## Staff

Subject Leader: Ms R Green

email: [r\\_green@taverhamhigh.org](mailto:r_green@taverhamhigh.org)

Teacher: Ms V Phillips

email: [v.phillips@taverhamhigh.org](mailto:v.phillips@taverhamhigh.org)

## Reading material

There is a wide range of textbooks appropriate for the teaching of this specification. Students are expected to read widely. It is recommended that students are aware of current religious events and issues reported in newspapers and on television. There is an increasingly wide range of information available on the internet as well as books, the news and from voluntary organisations.

If eligible for the post 16 bursary, materials for the course can be ordered by the school on your behalf via bursary funding. Please ask in the sixth form office for details.

There is information about the course here

<http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/religious-studies/as-a-level/>

There are currently five text books produced by the board which can be purchased either from Illuminate Publishing or Amazon:

WJEC/EDUQAS *Religious Studies for A Level Year 1 & AS - Philosophy of Religion & Religion & Ethics*  
by Richard Gray and Karl Lawson (ISBN 978-1908682994)

WJEC/EDUQAS *Religious Studies for A Level Year 1 & AS – Christianity*  
by Gwynn ap Gwilym (ISBN 978-1908682956)

WJEC/EDUQAS *Religious Studies for A Level Year 2 Philosophy of Religion*  
by Peter Cole and Karl Lawson (ISBN 978-1911208655)

WJEC/EDUQAS *Religious Studies for A Level Year 2 Christianity*  
by Gregory A Barker (ISBN 978-1911208655)

WJEC/EDUQAS *Religious Studies for A Level Year 2 Religion and Ethics*  
by Peter Cole and Richard Gray (ISBN 978-1911208666)

There are also revision guides published by Hodder Education and Illuminate publishing. Have a look on their websites if you are interested in these resources. Your teachers will also upload relevant material, links and work onto Teams throughout the course.

## Further suggested reading

Ethics Made Easy	Mel Thompson
Understanding Philosophy of Religions	Libby Ahluwalia
Ethical Studies	Bob Bowie
The Puzzle of God	Peter Vardy
The Puzzle of Ethics	Peter Vardy
Think	Simon Blackburn

## Internet

<a href="https://www.philosophersmag.com/games">https://www.philosophersmag.com/games</a>	Philosophy games
<a href="http://www.philosophybites.com/">http://www.philosophybites.com/</a>	Philosophy bites
<a href="http://www.philosophers.co.uk/">http://www.philosophers.co.uk/</a>	Guide to the world philosophers
<a href="http://www.philosophypages.com/">http://www.philosophypages.com/</a>	Philosophy pages

## Links to careers and Higher Education

"A degree in philosophy? What are you going to do with that then?"

Philosophy students will tell you they've been asked this question more times than they care to remember.

"The response people seem to want is a cheery shrug and a jokey 'don't know'," says Joe Cunningham, 20, a final-year philosophy undergraduate at Heythrop College, University of London. A more accurate comeback, according to the latest statistics, is "just about anything I want".

Figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency show philosophy graduates, once described as unemployable layabouts, are in growing demand from employers. It is in the fields of finance, property development, health, social work and the nebulous category of "business" that those versed in Plato and Kant are most sought after. Philosophers have always come in handy in the workplace with their grounding in analytical thinking. Why, only now, are they so prized by employers?

Lucy Adams, human resources director of Serco, a services business and a consultancy firm, says: "Philosophy lies at the heart of our approach to recruiting and developing our leadership, and our leaders. We need people who have the ability to look for different approaches and take an open mind to issues. These skills are promoted by philosophical approaches."

Deborah Bowman, associate dean for widening participation at St George's, University of London, which offers medicine and health sciences courses, says philosophers are increasingly sought after by the NHS: "Graduates of philosophy who come in to graduate-entry medicine, or to nursing courses, are very useful. Growth areas in the NHS include clinical ethicists, who assist doctors and nurses. Medical ethics committees and ethics training courses for staff are also growing. More and more people are needed to comment on moral issues in healthcare, such as abortion."

Jonathan Lowe, professor of philosophy at Durham University, agrees that courses concerned with the real world have accelerated in the past five years. "It's probably because of the new financial arrangements for students that courses have had to prove they are applicable to real world issues" he says.

Source: *"I think therefore I earn"*

## **Potential Careers**

Administration in local government  
Advertising  
Higher Education teaching & research  
Human resources officer  
Information management  
IT consultant  
Journalist  
Member of Parliament  
Personnel manager  
Social worker  
Solicitor  
Teacher

## **Universities are now offering courses such as:**

BA English literature and philosophy  
BA philosophy and economics / business studies  
BA philosophy and film studies / media  
BA philosophy and history  
BA philosophy and politics  
BA philosophy and language and communications skills  
BA philosophy, economics and politics  
BA philosophy with social policy  
BA philosophy and art history  
BA philosophy and theology  
BA philosophy and cultural studies  
BA philosophy and music  
BA English and philosophy  
BA philosophy and creative writing  
BA philosophy  
BA theology  
BSC physics and philosophy  
BA ethics, religion and philosophy  
BA philosophy and sociology

## Preparation for September

### Compulsory – hand to Miss Green in September

As you approach the beginning of your studies, I would like you to undertake a private research task to gain some valuable insight into what you will study over the next year.

Use resources (internet, bookshop, library etc.) to answer the following three questions:

- 1. *Philosophy***  
Who were Plato & Aristotle & how did they influence the philosophy of religion?
- 2. *Ethics***  
Research Aquinas & Kant – what influence did they have on ethics?
- 3. *Research either utilitarianism or situation ethics***  
What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of each theory?

You should aim to produce either a written document/booklet or perhaps something more creative (a video or an app perhaps). Use colour and pictures to enhance. Ensure you have as much information as possible – you should come back **full** of knowledge!

Bring the work to your first class in September. I do not expect any cut and pasted work – please make sure it is in your own words!

Looking forward to seeing you!

