A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES (Philosophy and Ethics)

Exam Board: OCR

Sixth Form

Where do I start from?

For this subject you will need a minimum Grade 4 in GCSE Mathematics, Grade 6 in English Language or English Literature and a Grade 6 in GCSE History or Geography if Religious Studies has not been studied at GCSE. You do not have to have studied Religious Studies before, but if you have, you need a minimum Grade 6. It is essential that you are able to approach issues in a logical, clear-thinking manner. You also need to be aware that essay writing is a key to success at A Level.

What will I study?

The new OCR Religious Studies course is designed to build upon the OCR GCSE course and provides a natural progression for students, although it is not essential that you have completed the GCSE course first.

There are three units of study in this course. The Philosophy of Religion unit will cover the influences of Ancient Greek philosophy and arguments for God's existence and other major philosophical debates. It will also look at a range of philosophical arguments for the existence of God, drawing on philosophers ranging from Bertrand Russell to Kant and David Hume.

In the Religious Ethics part of the course, you will study a range of ethical theories, from Kant's Categorical Imperative to Aquinas Natural Moral Law. We will also consider what it means to talk about ethics and whether or not ethics can be considered either relative or absolute.

To complete the A Level, you will study further topics in Y13 such as Religious Language and Experience, as well as applied ethical theories and concepts of conscience.

The final part of the A Level concerns developments in Christian religious thought. Here you will look at how Christian beliefs and values have developed over time. This will include looking at how religious scriptures have been composed and interpreted, as well as the challenges of modern Christianity to an established faith. This will include such topics as liberation theology, feminist theology and a detailed study of the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

How will I be assessed?

There are termly assessments and internal examinations throughout the course. There are three external written papers at the end of the course. Each paper lasts two hours and requires students to answer 3 out of 4 extended response questions.

Literacy

Religious Studies includes a wide range of subject specific terms that you will be expected to learn and use in both written assessments and oral work. You will be expected to develop, and use, a glossary of key words and phrases to use in your work throughout the course. A successful Religious Studies student is a student with highly developed literacy skills.

How will I study?

Lessons will vary in style and will use a wide range of resources, including texts, audio and video. A great emphasis is placed upon your ability to contribute to discussions and to write fluently. To achieve at a high level in this subject, you need to have read widely. The greater your understanding of different philosophical and ethical concepts, the more mature and successful your own responses will be.

What does the subject combine well with?

This is the sort of subject which combines well with most other choices. Since there are philosophical disciplines in sociology, science, mathematics and politics (amongst others) it is possible to transfer many of the concepts you study to your other subjects.