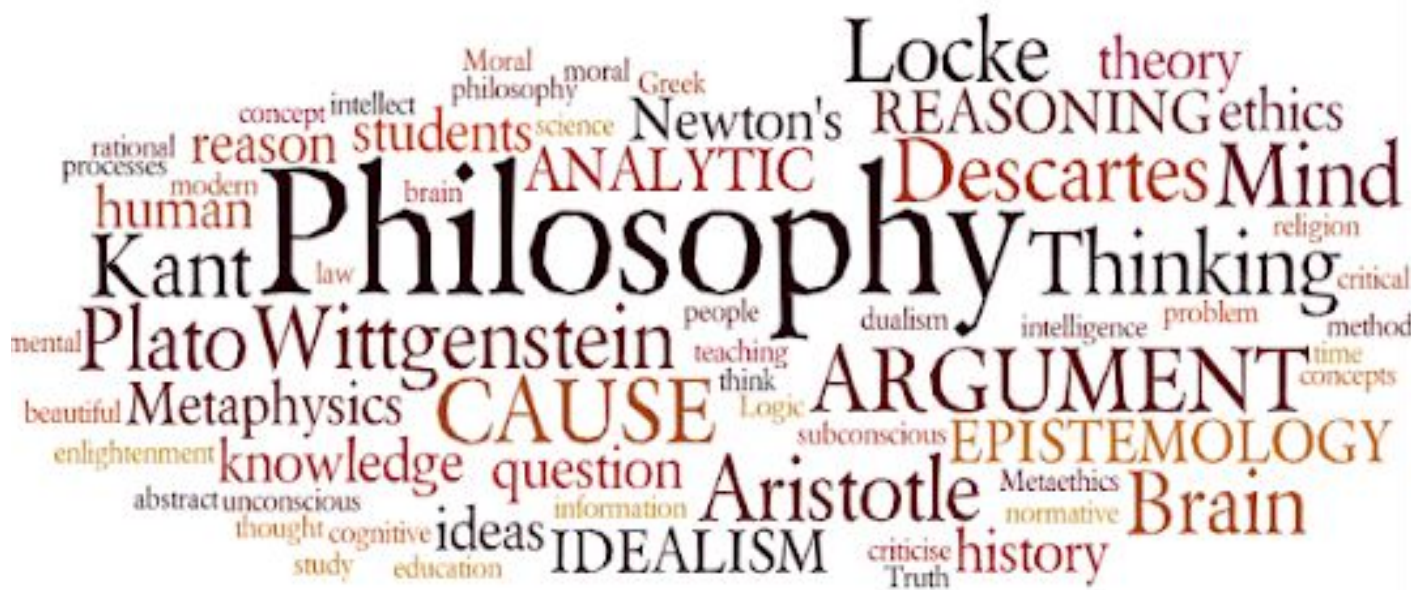


# Philosophy, Religion & Ethics

Transition Booklet  
Year 11 to Year 12



*"Wisdom begins with wonder"*

*Socrates*

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## **1. Introduction and Expectations:**

Dear student,

You obviously have extremely good taste in picking A level subjects! Philosophy is among one of the most popular choices among students at Cardinal Wiseman and in the wider post-16 sphere, with a number of students going on to study it at degree level. Congratulations on your choice to start a philosophical journey with us at Wiseman. We are really excited that you have chosen our subject and hope that you will develop a love and passion for the subject, as we did!

You may feel a little bit confused at the beginning of the course. A levels can be quite daunting at first but we are here to guide you through your worries. The jump from GCSE to A level can be a difficult one, but with hard work and a determination to succeed, at Wiseman sixth form we will support you to get the best possible grades you can.

This booklet contains all the information that you need to know regarding your course in Philosophy, Ethics and Development in Christian Thought. It contains (amongst other things) information on exam boards, syllabus areas, curriculum content, bridging activities/tasks and a wide-ranging reading list to support your lessons. You really must supplement the material we address with you in lectures with your own further independent reading.

Please do keep this document safe, it will be a useful reference booklet in your progression throughout your course in Year 12. If you have any questions regarding the Philosophy course or have any general worries, we believe ourselves to be caring and approachable and your experience to date with us should confirm this! Generally, the only way we find ourselves unable to help is if you do not communicate with us. We expect students to struggle at times and it is a real sign of character and commitment to talk to us about it as and when that happens.

The best form of contact is to use email as it can be more difficult to stop in corridors when both parties are busy etc. You can reach us at:

[mhowe@cwcscoventry.co.uk](mailto:mhowe@cwcscoventry.co.uk)

[dobrien@cwcscoventry.co.uk](mailto:dobrien@cwcscoventry.co.uk)

## **2.Course and Exam Overview:**

The **OCR A Level Religious Studies** course is divided into three components whose weightings are:

Unit Code	Unit Title	% of A level
H573/01	Philosophy of Religion	33.3%
H573/02	Religion and Ethics	33.3%
H573/03	Developments in Religious Thought (Christianity)	33.3%

### **Aims and learning outcomes**

OCR's A Level in Religious Studies will encourage learners to:

- develop their interest in a rigorous study of religion and belief and relate it to the wider world
- develop knowledge and understanding appropriate to a specialist study of religion
- develop an understanding and appreciation of religious thought and its contribution to individuals, communities and societies
- adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion
- reflect on and develop their own values, opinions and attitudes in the light of their study.

### **Exams and Assessment**

#### **H573/1:Philosophy of Religion:**

You will answer 3 essay questions from a choice of 4. **Exam:** 2 hour written exam. 120 marks

#### **H573/2:Religious Ethics:**

You will answer 3 essay questions from a choice of 4. **Exam:** 2 hour written exam. 120 marks

#### **H573/3:Developments of Religious (Christian) Thought:**

You will answer 3 essay questions from a choice of 4. **Exam:** 2 hour written exam. 120 marks

Full or part essays and knowledge tests on topics from the above components will feature frequently in this course. These will be self, peer or teacher assessed and feedback will be provided as required.

Please see below a specification overview which outlines the topics we will study throughout the course at AS and A Level:

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

### **Assessment Objectives:**

There are two Assessment Objectives in OCR A Level in Religious Studies. These are detailed in the table below. Learners are expected to demonstrate their ability to:

	Assessment Objective	
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</li><li>• influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</li><li>• cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</li><li>• approaches to the study of religion and belief.</li></ul>	40%
AO2	Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.	60%

### **Exam Board Links:**

#### **OCR A Level Religious Studies Homepage:**

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

#### **OCR A Level Religious Studies Specification:**

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242913-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-religious-studies-h573.pdf>



### 3. Summer Work/Bridging Activities

#### **Planning on starting A level Religious Studies next year?**

Religious Studies is a great subject to help you build a wide range of skills, including improving your skills as a writer, speaker and thinker.

Even though you haven't been able to finish your Year 11 course this year, you can still practice and develop Religious Studies skills at home. You can read, watch and listen to interesting ideas and think about the opinions expressed. How far do they match your own views? What might someone say if they had a very different opinion? Keep up your writing skills by putting your ideas down on paper – try, if you can, to handwrite, just to keep up the practice of handwriting so that your writing isn't completely illegible by the time you go back to school.

**Reading** good quality writing is the best way of improving your own writing. As you read a good writer, you will gain a better understanding of the meanings of new words and the ways in which carefully chosen words and punctuation can add real emphasis to someone's argument. Different writers express themselves in different ways, and by reading them you will develop your own 'voice'. Reading also helps with more basic skills such as spelling, because if you see a word written down often enough, you will know when it 'looks right' when you write the same word yourself.

**Thinking skills** can be developed if you try to take a questioning attitude to the things you watch, hear and read. Do you agree with what's being said? If you watch a film where people have different attitudes towards something, which do you agree with most, or least, and why?

Here are some different activities and exercises for you to try if you're learning from home. In Religious Studies, some of the topics can be quite sensitive, so if the activity involves an issue that might make you upset, choose a different one. These times are already difficult enough; nobody wants you to be upset when there's no teacher there to talk you through your feelings.

#### **Reading Activities:**

Here are some books and some online resources you could try, if you can get hold of them. *Don't worry if they're not available or you can't get on the computer for very long – you won't be at a disadvantage.*

Reading *anything* of good quality, even if it's a novel or a book about an entirely different topic, is always helpful for improving your skills, because you are practising your comprehension skills as well as practising understanding different ways in which writers express their ideas. Your own writing will improve, the more you read.

These are just *some* ideas – you don't have to choose any of these if you'd rather read something else, and there are so many good books in the world that this list could go on forever but it's a start:

**The Brothers Karamazov – 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 ...

**To Kill a Mockingbird - Harper Lee** - another classic and should be on everyone's 'must read' list

**The Puzzle of...** - **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.

**Candide - 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.

### **Critical Thinking Skills:**

Here are a couple of activities to try, to start you off, and then a selection of other directions you might like to take:

#### **Activity 1:**

This is the first episode of a documentary about attitudes towards homosexuality.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMPI25oraVc>

This is the first episode of Stephen Fry's series 'Out There', where he explores attitudes to homosexuality in different parts of the world.

Questions to think about and/or write about - try to support your answers with reasoning:

1. Do you think there is a 'right' attitude and a 'wrong' attitude towards homosexuality? What is it that makes these attitudes right or wrong?
2. Some people might argue that different cultures have different ideas about morality, and that these different cultural beliefs should be respected even if we don't agree with them. Do you think we should always respect the beliefs and attitudes of cultures different from our own, or should we try to persuade them to adopt our own beliefs instead?
3. What do you think are the aims of this television series? Do you think they are good aims? Do you think this first episode is successful in achieving its aims?
4. What religious reasons do people sometimes give for opposing homosexual relationships? How would you support or oppose these views?



## **Activity 2:**

Watch this documentary, 'Barra Boy'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhGX1YCsvAM>

1. Do you think the story provides convincing evidence for reincarnation? Why, or why not?
2. What do you think counts as 'convincing evidence' for life after death (e.g. scripture, near death experiences, nothing)? What makes evidence convincing or unconvincing?
3. 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)

Matthew 28:1 - 10

Mark 16: 1 - 8

Luke 24: 1 - 10

John 20: 1 - 18

4. Do you find these stories convincing? Why, or why not?
5. 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?

## **Activity 3:**

'Visit' the British museum online

<https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com>

Explore the collections at the Horniman Museum

<https://www.horniman.ac.uk/collections/explore-our-collections>

... and any other museums you can find online.

Questions:

How much can we tell about people's beliefs, from the objects they leave behind?

What makes an object a 'religious' object, rather than just a special one?

Why do religious people have sacred objects - what function do they serve?

Become a geek about one of the objects that takes your interest - find out more about the culture it comes from, what the people believed and how the object was used, as well as which questions remain unanswered.

#### Activity 4:

Scenario: I'm on school lunch duty and I see and hear a girl saying nasty things to another girl while they're eating their shepherd's pie.



Questions:

Why is it OK, and my duty, to tell her off for being unkind?

Why is it *not* OK for me to tell her off for eating meat (I'm vegetarian)?

And then:

Which, if any, of our beliefs are 'just a matter of personal preference' and which, if any, refer to some kind of absolute fact?

Should we leave others to their 'personal preference' in matters of religious belief, or are some religious beliefs right and others wrong in an absolute sense?

Is there an ultimate truth, an absolute right and wrong, about religious truth claims?

At what point, if any, does one culture have the right to tell another 'you're doing it wrong' over matters of religion and ethics?

To what extent, if at all, do people have an obligation to share their religious faith with others - or should we keep our beliefs to ourselves and try and respect the views of others even if we think they'll miss out on going to heaven?

### Activity 5:

There are all kinds of resources on line and in books to help you, if you want to start to learn a little more about some of the philosophers you will meet in your A level course.

Use Wikipedia as a starting point and follow some of the links in the articles. You could do some research about:

Plato  
Aristotle  
Aquinas  
Bentham  
Mill  
Hume  
Kant

Practice using a range of sources to find out about a single person. When you have gathered together a range of information, try to synthesise it into a single piece of writing of your own.

The BBC has some great podcasts available:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01f0vzr>

(They are quite long and heavyweight, don't worry if this activity isn't for you)

Practice your note-making skills by pausing and writing a summary of what you've heard so far. Think about whether you agree with what the philosopher is saying.

Listen to whatever takes your interest. For RS specifically, you could concentrate on the ones listed above, and/or move onto others from this list:

*Plato's Republic, St Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, The Ontological Argument, The Soul, Redemption, Relativism, Utilitarianism, William James, Nietzsche, Al-Ghazali, Duty, Good and Evil, Altruism, Feminism, Empiricism & Logical Positivism.*

### Now some books to help develop your thinking skills:

The pig that wants to be eaten - Julian Baggini

50 Philosophy Ideas you must know - Ben Dupre

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](http://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](http://philosophersmag.com)**

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

#### **Peped - [peped.org](http://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.

### Some things to watch and think about:

All kinds of films and series have philosophical and religious ideas in them, so follow your own interests! You could try these, or choose something else, but try and use them as a stimulus for thinking and writing, rather than just sitting in front of them:

The Good Place (Netflix)

The Matrix

Unorthodox (Netflix)

Twelve Angry Men

**TED talks** - these are usually wonderful, with plenty to stimulate your questioning and reasoning skills.

Some favourites:

Elizabeth Loftus - how reliable is your memory?

Dan Gilbert - why we make bad decisions

Richard Dawkins - militant atheism

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - We should all be feminists

Damon Horowitz - Philosophy in prison

There are loads of talks on here, so use the search engine to find topics that interest you. Practise note-taking; write notes as you listen, just as you would if you were listening to a real-life lecture, and practise the skill of jotting down key points at speed. Ask yourself questions when you get to the end: what were the speaker's key messages? Do you agree with the speaker? What might someone who disagreed say, and what might their reasons be?

#### 4. Further Reading & Resources:

Please see below a list of some further reading suggestions:

Books on Philosophy	Author	Cost
The God Delusion	Richard Dawkins	£2.14
Teach Yourself Philosophy of Religion	Mel Thompson	£2.69
The Philosophy Files	Stephen Law	£1.88
Philosophy A Graphic Guide	Dave Johnson and Judy Groves	£2.54
50 Philosophy Ideas	Ben Dupre	£5.14
		
		
Books on Ethics	Author	Cost
Teach Yourself Ethics	Mel Thompson	£6.82
A very short introduction to Ethics or Being Good...	Simon Blackburn	£2.81
The Moral Philosophers: An Introduction to Ethics	Richard Norman	£4.08
Puzzle of Ethics	Peter Vardy	£2.28
Ethical Studies	Robert Bowie	£2.81
		
		
		
		
		
Books on Development in Christianity	Author	Cost
Christianity – A Very Short Introduction	Linda Woodhead	£2.81
History of Christianity	Nick Page	£7.51
Teach Yourself Christianity	John Young	£2.81
The Story of the Book	Terence Copley	£2.79
The Shack	William Young	£1.87
		
		
		

#### Wider Watching and Listening:

Regularly accessing these resources will help develop your wider knowledge and understanding of some key areas within Religious Studies.

- Religious Studies revision - <http://www.rsrevision.com/contents/index.htm>
- Philosophy, Ethics & Christianity podcast - <https://thepanpsycast.com/>
- BBC Ethics - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/guide/>
- The Moral Maze (BBC Radio 4) - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qk11/episodes/player>
- In Our Time (BBC Radio 4) - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl/episodes/player>
- Everyday Ethics (BBC Radio Ulster) - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nrsmh/episodes/player>
- Philosophy Magazine (try the quizzes) - <https://philosophersmag.com>

I hope that you enjoyed working through these tasks and gaining an insight into A Level Religious Studies. Although there are some similarities the course is very different to GCSE study and requires dedication towards lesson attendance and independent completion of class notes / homework / wider reading / research tasks / revision etc... We really enjoy teaching RS and hope you have enjoyed getting stuck into the tasks. This is only the start of the journey!

Please do not hesitate to contact me or Mr O'Brien if you require any further assistance with any of the activities outlined in this booklet or if you have any questions related to the course itself. We look forward to seeing you in September!

Miss Howe: [mhowe@cwcscoventry.co.uk](mailto:mhowe@cwcscoventry.co.uk)

Mr O'Brien: [dobrien@cwcscoventry.co.uk](mailto:dobrien@cwcscoventry.co.uk)