Religious Studies (OCR)

(Philosophy, Ethics and Religion)

Course Content

The OCR Religious Studies A Level allows learners to think rigorously about the fundamental questions in life regarding truth and human understanding. It introduces learners to the academic study of Philosophy of Religion, Ethics and Christian Theology. Students delve into the academic study of some of the world's greatest philosophers and theologians and examine how their ideas and theories have influenced our western intellectual heritage. The course offers authentic stretch and challenge opportunities with the use of supporting primary materials and a Socratic-style approach to both discussions and examination technique.

Philosophy of religion sees learners study philosophical issues and questions raised by religion and belief. These include arguments regarding the existence or non-existence of God, the nature and influence of religious experience and the problems of evil and suffering. They will also explore philosophical language and thought, through significant concepts and the works of key thinkers.

Religion and ethics is characterised by the study of ethical language and thought, with exploration of key concepts and the works of influential thinkers, including Kant, Aquinas, Bentham and Freud. Ethical theory will also be applied to issues of importance; namely euthanasia, business ethics, and sexual ethics.

Developments in religious thought provides an opportunity for the systematic study of Christianity. This will include the exploration of religious beliefs, values, teachings and practices that shape religious identity. Students study how traditions have developed over time and religious responses to contemporary social issues such as gender theology, secularism and Marxism.

Skills

- Prepares learners thoroughly for the study of either Philosophy or Theology in higher education, or any other subject which requires rigorous thinking and the analysis of complex ideas.
- Encourages the critical examination and evaluation of evidence and arguments, and develop the ability to construct, develop and maintain a clear and coherent argument.
- Facilitates students to develop an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion, specifically Christianity.
- Provides opportunity for students to establish a holistic understanding and appreciation of religious thought and its contribution to individuals, communities and societies
- Develops Socratic-style dialogue skills through debates and discussions.
- It is recommended that candidates have attained communication and literacy skills an A level equivalent to IGCSE/GCSE at grade 6/7 (A/B) or above in English

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Syllabus

Paper 1: Philosophy of religion

Exam: 2 hours 33.3% of overall grade
Topics Covered:
- 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.

Paper 2: Ethics

Exam: 2 hours 33.3% of overall grade
Topics Covered:

- 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 inreligious beliefs.

Paper 3: Developments in Religious Thought

Exam: 2 hours 33.3% of overall grade
Topics Covered:
- 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 varywithin a tradition.
- Significant social and historical developments in theology and religious thought.

Careers

Students who go on to study Philosophy or Theology at a higher level can gainaccess to a variety of careers, from journalism, TV and politics to teaching, civil service and charity advisory roles.