

Philosophy and Ethics

Examination Board: OCR
Qualification: A level
Teacher Contact: Mrs Lewis

Entry Requirements: You will need a grade 6 in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics GCSE. If you have not studied the subject at GCSE, you will need to have achieved a grade 6 in English Literature.

What will I study?

The A level course involves study in three areas:

Philosophy

Philosophy teaches critical thinking, close reading, clear writing and logical analysis. Different areas of philosophy are distinguished by the questions they ask. Do our senses accurately describe reality? What makes wrong actions wrong? How should we live? These are philosophical questions, and philosophy teaches the ways in which we might begin to answer them.

Ethics

To study ethics we need to examine theories; different approaches to making moral decisions. In this unit we will study the greatest thinkers of our time. These theories make assumptions about life and how we think and act. Once we understand a theory we can ask what it does to make moral decisions easier and what it misses out that makes moral decisions harder?

We will explore theories by applying them to particular issues. Do they provide compelling answers to moral problems of our time, like whether it is right to give people the chance to decide the manner and timing of their own death (euthanasia), or whether certain kinds of business decisions are wrong (business ethics)? Ethics is a practical subject, about making sense of decisions, consequences, human behaviour and, ultimately, human life.

Developments in Religious Thought

Theology is a branch of philosophy which looks at the world strictly through the lens of religion. It looks at the role that religion plays in modern society, and how modern culture has been influenced by religion.

At a time when religion is debated and challenged in the world, it seems important to explore questions raised by and about religions. To study theology is to attempt to look at religion from the inside, using methods, the language and the view of the world from the insider's perspective. It explores the doctrines, dogmas and teachings that Christians live by.

During this unit you will explore many concepts and ideas from death and the afterlife, the diversity of Christian moral reasoning, who the person of Jesus Christ was, to the changing views of gender and gender roles within Christian thought and practice.

How will I be assessed?

The course is assessed entirely by examination. There are three written papers each year, Philosophy of Religion, Religious Ethics and Christianity. All exams are 2 hours long.

Am I suited to this course?

Above all you need to be a person who constantly asks why and who is interested in the answers that other people give, even if you do not agree with them. It will develop individuals who can think independently and have the skills to empathise with opposing viewpoints. By studying Philosophy and Ethics you will learn how to evaluate to an academic standard, how to weigh up evidence, deconstruct an argument and how to write to argue – all of which are invaluable skills. The development of these critical thinking skills allows you to gain the essential essay-writing skills needed to study successfully at university.

What other subjects does it complement?

Philosophy and Ethics complements the study of History, Psychology and English. However, it is also valuable for students studying Mathematics and the Sciences. Many of the philosophers we study were contemporaries of the people who wrote the mathematical and scientific theories you will study.

Where can it lead?

An A level in Philosophy and Ethics is excellent preparation for a university degree in Philosophy or Theology. It is a highly regarded discipline at university and is considered hugely beneficial when applying to study Law, Politics or Medicine. Students who study the subject benefit from building strong writing and communication skills that are great for media, publishing, marketing, HR, finance, legal, and many more professions.