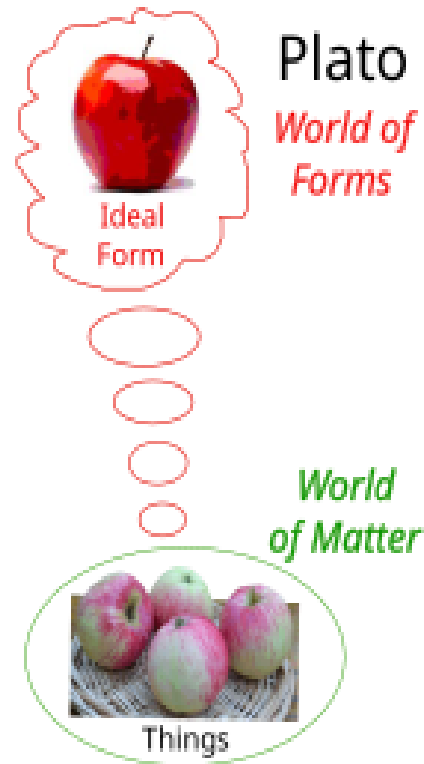
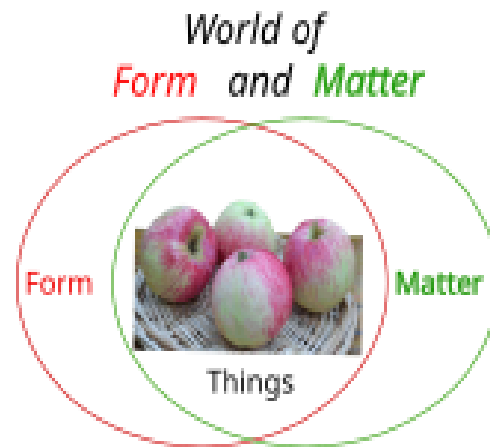


OCR Philosophy and Ethics - A-Level Summer Work



Aristotle



Welcome to A-Level Philosophy and Ethics!

- Over the summer, you'll complete three short introductory tasks to help you prepare for the key areas of study: Philosophy of Religion, Ethics, and Development of Christian Thought. Each task should take no more than 1–1.5 hours, and together they will give you a head start on understanding some foundational thinkers and concepts.
- Please complete all three tasks before the first lesson in September.
- Bring your notes and responses to discuss in class.

TASK 1: PHILOSOPHY – Plato and Aristotle (Reading & Note-taking)

Objective:

- To introduce you to two of the most important philosophers who shaped Western philosophical thought.

Instructions:

1. Research who Plato and Aristotle are.
2. Make notes on the following:
 - Plato's theory of the Forms and the Analogy of the Cave.
 - Aristotle's view of reality, including the Four Causes and the Prime Mover.
 - The key differences between their views on how we gain knowledge (rationalism vs empiricism).

3. Stretch Task (Optional):

Watch the following video:

CrashCourse Philosophy – Plato & Aristotle: YouTube Link:
<https://youtu.be/rhOfxJkvL44>

TASK 2: ETHICS - Introduction to Utilitarianism (Research & Podcast)

Objective:

To explore a major ethical theory - Utilitarianism - and consider how it applies to real-life issues.

Instructions:

1. Listen to this podcast episode: BBC Radio 4 - Ethics Bites: Utilitarianism (30 mins) Available here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02tfvgn>
2. Research and answer the following questions (bullet point answers are fine):
 - What is the basic principle of Utilitarianism?
 - What are the differences between Act and Rule Utilitarianism?
 - Who are the key thinkers associated with this theory?
 - Give one strength and one weakness of Utilitarianism.
 - Can you think of a modern issue (e.g., environmental ethics) where utilitarian reasoning might be applied?
3. Extension (Optional):
 - Try to research preference utilitarianism and the name of a philosopher who supports it.

TASK 3: DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT – The Role of Jesus (Video & Reflection)

Objective:

To consider how Jesus is viewed in Christian theology: as teacher, liberator and Son of God.

Instructions:

1. Watch the following short video (10 mins): "Who was Jesus?" by The Bible Project: [Gospel of the Kingdom Biblical Theme](#)
2. Read: Gospel extracts: Luke 4:16–21; John 1:1–14; Matthew 5:1–12 (Sermon on the Mount). Use a Bible or a reputable online version (e.g., Bible Gateway).
3. Reflect and answer the following questions:
 - What do these passages tell us about Jesus' role?
 - How is Jesus presented differently across these texts?
 - Why might some Christians focus more on Jesus as a moral teacher, while others emphasise his divinity?
 - In what ways might Jesus be considered a "liberator"?

Submission:

Please bring handwritten or typed notes/responses from all three tasks to your first lesson.

- You may be asked to discuss your answers in small groups or contribute to a class discussion.
- Remember: there are no 'right' answers yet – just thoughtful engagement!

Extra reading and textbook suggestions

Course Books

These books are specifically written with the course in mind. Price included if you wish to get own copies

NEW OCR A level Religious Studies: Philosophy of Religion (Dean, Waterfield & Eyre) £16 *

NEW OCR A level Religious Studies: Religion and Ethics (Eyre, Dean & Waterfield) £16 *

NEW OCR A level Religious Studies: Developments in Christian Thought (Waterfield, Eyre & Dean) £16 *

New glossy textbooks written by the current principal examiners divided into modules

Oxford Christianity, Philosophy and Ethics AS and year 1: (Ahluwalia and Bowie) £25 **

Oxford Christianity, Philosophy and Ethics A Level year 2: (Ahluwalia and Bowie) £25 **

In depth textbooks divided into year 1 and Year 2 course

OCR A Level Religious Studies Year 1 and AS: (Wilkinson, Wilcockson & Campbell) £25 ***

OCR A Level Religious Studies Year 2 and A level: (Wilkinson, Wilcockson) £25 ***

Challenging in depth textbooks written by former senior examiners

Revision Guides

My Revision Notes: Philosophy of Religion (Eyre & Waterfield) £9 *

My Revision Notes: Religion and Ethics (Eyre & Waterfield) £9 *

My Revision Notes: Developments in Christian Thought (Eyre & Waterfield) £9 *

Old Spec but still useful

OCR AS Religious Studies – Philosophy and Ethics (Taylor, Eyre & Knight) *

OCR's official textbook for the previous spec mainly covers Y1 topics.

OCR A2 Religious Studies- Philosophy & Ethics (Eyre, Knight & Rowe) *

OCR's official textbook for previous spec – mainly covers Y2 topics.

OCR Philosophy of Religion for AS and A2 (Taylor) ***

Excellent and thorough guide to the old OCR course.

Philosophy of Religion for AS Level (Wilkinson & Campbell)***

Textbook written by former principal examiners for old spec. Intending to support the more able and giving substantial extracts from original texts. Mainly Year 1 Philosophy of Religion
in here

WEBSITES –

www.thatrswebsite.com Good and fairly readable summaries of most of the philosophy and ethics topics

www.bbc.co.uk religion and ethics section as well as GCSE bitesize area for RS contains useful and topical material.

www.philosopherkings.co.uk Has detailed notes on most of the philosophy and theology topics that we study as well as other interesting material that is related to the topics.

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/departments/theology-and-religious-studies> The Theology and RS department at Chester University are producing excellent material and there are videos of their A level Webinars available

VIDEO

www.rsrevision.com and www.thatrswebsite.com both have some videos on there

Youtube site but these are still developing MrMcMillanRE – which you may have used at GCSE now has a few A level videos largely about the arguments for and against the existence of God.

Amy Horsley's Youtube channel – I think therefore I teach – is excellent and has a video or two for each of the 28 topics as well as good exam advice.

Crash Course Philosophy series on Youtube is generally pretty good

<http://philosvids.wordpress.com/>

From Dr David Webster formerly of University of Gloucestershire – producing lots of interesting videos on and around our syllabus

You can also follow the Australian produced '3 minute philosophy' series but please do not do so if you are easily offended.

PODCASTS and TWITTER

'Philosophy Bites' David Edmonds and Nigel Warburton – lots of old podcasts are areas directly relevant to our studies

'History of Philosophy without any gaps' Peter Adamson's epic journey through the history of philosophy. He is almost 400 episodes in and has only just reached the 1700s

Course Content & Assessment

Philosophy of Religion

- 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

Religion and Ethics

- Normative ethical theories:
- Natural Law (Catholic ethics)
- Situation Ethics (liberal Christian ethics)
- Kantian Ethics (deontological ethics)
- Utilitarianism (non-religious ethics)
- Applied Ethics:
- Medical Ethics
- Business Ethics
- Meta-ethics (ethical language)

Developments in Christian Thought

- **Augustine and Human Nature**
- **Death and the Afterlife**
- **Knowledge of God's Existence**
- **The Person of Jesus Christ**
- **Christian Moral Principles and Action**
- **Liberation Theology and Karl Marx**
- **Gender, Theology and Society**
- **Pluralism, Theology and Society**
- **The Challenge of Secularism to Religion**

How is it assessed?

- In terms of formal assessment, you will sit three exams in total, each two hours in length, at the end of your second year. There is no coursework. Each formal exam involves writing three papers on the topics covered over a two year period. Papers are awarded up to 40 marks each, and are usually expected to be between 700 and 1000 words in length. Therefore, each exam is given a mark out of 120, leading to an overall possible score of 360.
- You will be assessed internally with a timed paper at the end of every module. This will involve you preparing a topic in advance and writing an essay in timed conditions in the classroom. You will receive feedback on each of these essays that will help you improve your written skills over time.

Career Opportunities

- Most professions today require an ethical dimension to their practice. Many philosophers end up pursuing careers in medicine, law, social work, psychiatry, journalism, business, finance, teaching and academia. The course will equip you with critical thinking skills as well as improving your written communication and your confidence in expressing your own thoughts.

Summary

- Should you take Religious Studies? As mentioned above, if you have a genuine love of reading, if you enjoy writing argumentatively about difficult topics and if you are ready to question, challenge and defend your beliefs, then we would be very lucky to have you. As with all things in life, think carefully and reach your own conclusion. The answer is entirely up to you.