

PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS AND CHRISTIAN  
THOUGHT  
A LEVEL

ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

TRANSITION BOOKLET

**OCR**

Oxford Cambridge and RSA

## Philosophy, Ethics and Christian Thought

This document contains all the information that you need to know regarding your course. It contains (amongst other things) information on exam boards, syllabus areas, curriculum content, and a comprehensive reading list to support your lessons.

Please do keep this document safe, it will be a useful reference booklet in your progression throughout your course. If you have any questions regarding the course or have any general worries, we can be contacted via email:

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## Content Overview

## Assessment Overview

### Philosophy of religion

Learners will study:

- 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.

### Philosophy of religion (01)

120 marks

2 hour written paper

**33.3%**  
of total  
A Level

### Religion and ethics

Learners will study:

- 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 in religious beliefs.

### Religion and ethics (02)

120 marks

2 hour written paper

**33.3%**  
of total  
A Level

### Developments in religious thought

Learners will study:

- 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 vary within a tradition
- significant social and historical developments in theology and religious thought
- key themes related to the relationship between religion and society

in the context of one religion chosen from Christianity (03), Islam (04), Judaism (05), Buddhism (06) or Hinduism (07).

### Developments in religious thought (03–07)

120 marks

2 hour written paper

**33.3%**  
of total  
A Level

## 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>

## 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 you're 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 please let the teacher know.

## TASK 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 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?

## TASK 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?

## TASK 3:

You should write a detailed answer and use paragraphs, quotes, and examples to illustrate. When answering the questions below and remember to include the following:

Describe how religion is linked to the issue.

Explain how religion is linked to the issue.

Analyse a real example of the issue to explain your view point.

Evaluate the issue.

### Question 1.

Does Religion Lead to Terrorism?

Explain your answer referring to Acts of Terrorism comparing the acts of terrorism with each other and suggest whether you believe Religion is to blame for terrorist attacks.

### Question 2.

'God doesn't exist'. Discuss.

Explain your answer showing both sides of the argument, and reaching a reasonable conclusion.

## RESOURCES

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:**

### [OCR Religious Studies A Level Year 1 and AS Student Book](#)

**Author:**

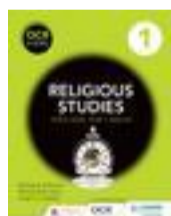
Michael B. Wilkinson, Michael Wilcockson, Hugh N.Campbell

**ISBN:**

9781471866692

**Publisher:**

Hodder Education



Help students to build their subject knowledge and understanding with guidance and preparation from a team of subject specialists; brought to you by the leading Religious Studies publisher and OCR's Publishing Partner for Religious Studies.

### [OCR Religious Studies A Level Year 2 Student Book](#)

**Author:**

Hugh N.Campbell, Michael B. Wilkinson, Michael

Wilcockson

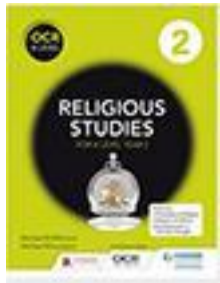
**ISBN:**



9781471866746

**Publisher:**

Hodder Education



Help students to build their subject knowledge and understanding with guidance and assessment preparation from a team of subject specialists; brought to you by the leading Religious Studies publisher and OCR's Publishing Partner for Religious Studies.

### [Oxford A Level Religious Studies for OCR: AS and Year 1](#)

**Author:**

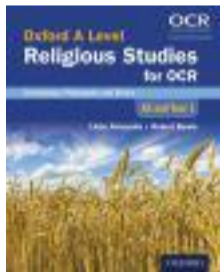
Libby Ahluwalia and Robert Bowie

**ISBN:**

9780198392859

**Publisher:**

Oxford University Press



Developed and written by renowned authors Libby Ahluwalia and Robert Bowie, Oxford A Level Religious Studies for OCR: AS and Year 1 supports a deep engagement with philosophy, ethics and the study of Christianity. The Student Book provides comprehensive coverage of the new specification and includes case studies, assessment support, practice questions and essay-writing guidance.

### [Oxford A Level Religious Studies for OCR: Year 2](#)

**Author:**

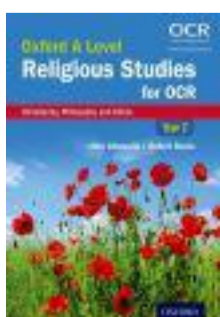
Libby Ahluwalia and Robert Bowie

**ISBN:**

9780198375333

**Publisher:**

Oxford University Press



Developed and written by renowned authors Libby Ahluwalia and Robert Bowie, Oxford A Level Religious Studies for OCR: Year 2 student book supports a deep engagement with philosophy, ethics and the study of Christianity using language and an approach accessible to all students.

### [Philosophy of Religion for OCR](#)

**Author:**

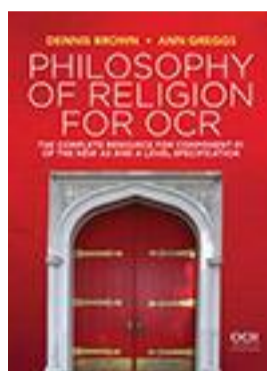
Dennis Brown & Ann Greggs

**ISBN:**

9781509517985

**Publisher:**

Polity



Philosophy of Religion for OCR is an ideal guide for students taking the Philosophy of Religion component of the OCR Religious Studies AS and A Level course. Brown and Greggs provide a clear, accessible and comprehensive introduction to each of the topics on the course.

### [Religion and Ethics for OCR](#)

**Author:**

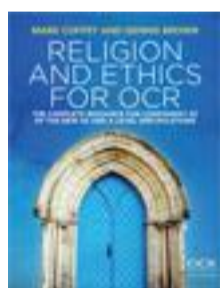
Dennis Brown, Mark Coffey

**ISBN:**

9781509510160

**Publisher:**

Polity Press



An ideal guide for students taking the Religion and Ethics component of either the new AS or A Level. Written with clarity and attention to detail, the book's user-friendly style will assist all students to achieve their best.

### **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?

**Further Reading & Resources:** Please see below a list of some further reading suggestions:

**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>
- Religious Studies revision - <https://ithinkthereforeiteach.com/>
- 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>