

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. The course includes three different sections: Philosophy, Ethics and Developments in Christian Thought

You can 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?

Below are three activities to complete to help you prepare for each section of the course.

Philosophy

This section explores big questions about God, life, death, and whether religious beliefs are reasonable. It examines arguments, evidence, and challenges to belief.

Activity 1: Watch the following video titled '**Does God Exist? William Lane Craig vs. Christopher Hitchens - Full Debate [HD]**' from 13:00 – 53:42. Now, using arguments from the video to develop an informed opinion, describe whether you believe God exists or not. Your paragraph should include references to academic arguments and be no less than 200 words long.

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tYm41hb48o>

Ethics

This section looks at how people decide what is right and wrong. It applies different moral ideas to real-world issues such as euthanasia, business practices, and relationships.

Activity 2: Read through the book ‘**An Introduction to Ethics**’ from page 1-11. Then, answer the following questions:

1. Why are ethical questions different from scientific questions like whether life exists on Mars?
2. In the story of the lost purse, why might someone choose to keep the money instead of returning it?
3. What does Thrasymachus say about justice and honesty?
4. How do Glaucon and Adeimantus change or add to Thrasymachus’ idea using the Ring of Gyges story?
5. What is the difference between rules a society follows and moral rules based on reason?

Book:

<https://icavcu.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Cambridge-Introductions-to-Philosophy-John-Deigh-An-Introduction-to-Ethics-Cambridge-University-Press-2010.pdf>

Developments in Christian Thought

This section focuses specifically on Christianity, examining how Christian beliefs have developed and responded to modern challenges.

Activity 3: Watch the following the video titled ‘**Did Jesus Even Claim to be God? Bart Ehrman Says No...**’ from 12:50 – 35:41. Now watch the video titled ‘**Jesus DID Claim to be God: The Evidence**’ from 1:20:31 – 1:57:21. Now, using arguments from the videos to develop an informed opinion, describe whether you believe Jesus identified himself as God in human form or as a human prophet. Your paragraph should include references to academic arguments, Bible passages and be no less than 200 words long.

Videos:

<https://youtu.be/2STiabRV8TE?si=Bf6xpMbdd8Y1oYnX>

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