

We seek to use lively minds, to work hard, to develop all our talents and to grow through sharing, to be the best version of ourselves



**A LEVEL
RE
TRANSITION
MATERIAL**

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Here are some ideas/resources to help you prepare for you're a Level:

Firstly take a look at the course overview and if you get chance look to read some of the things found on the Reading list.

After that the best thing to do to help give you a head start is to keep watching the news (in particular any new found scientific discoveries (that could contrast or even compliment faith) e.g. Genetic engineering, origins of the universe, etc.

You can also watch some of these introductory videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAkYt3GY

What is Philosophy? (Crash Course philosophy videos – Give a decent idea of issues, not the best though).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDiyQub6vpw>

Plato (School of Life videos – Again, ok, not always explained as well as they could be).

Also read the sheet:

A Brief Guide to the world of Philosophy of Religion

Finally:

This might seem strange, but try and watch the following films (even if it is just one):

- The matrix (1999) – Don't bother with the sequels.
- The Truman show (1998) – Sir's favourite of the 3.
- Total recall (1990 or 2012) – Classic Arnie movie or not so good version with Colin Farrell.

All of this, or even just some of it, will give you a really good background into some of the topics/theories/ideas we will look at over the next two years of the course.

Thanks and enjoy.

Mr. Hay

Component 1 – Philosophy of Religion and Ethics

3.1.1 Section A – Philosophy of Religion

Arguments for the existence of God

Design

- Presentation: Paley's analogical argument.
- Criticisms: Hume

Ontological

- Presentation: Anselm's a priori argument.
- Criticisms: Gaunilo and Kant.

Cosmological

- Presentation: Aquinas' Way 3. The argument from contingency and necessity.

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- Criticisms: Hume and Russell

Students should study the basis of each argument in observation or in thought, the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments, their status as 'proofs', their value for religious faith and the relationship between reason and faith.

Evil and suffering

The problem of evil and suffering.

- The concepts of natural and moral evil.
- The logical and evidential problem of evil.
- Responses to the problem of evil and suffering.
- Hick's soul making theodicy.
- The free will defence.
- Process theodicy as presented by Griffin.
- The strengths and weaknesses of each response.

Religious experience

The nature of religious experience.

- Visions: corporeal, imaginative and intellectual.
- Numinous experiences: Otto, an apprehension of the wholly other.
- Mystical experiences: William James; non sensuous and non-intellectual union with the divine as presented by William Stace.

Verifying religious experiences

- The challenges of verifying religious experiences.
- The challenges to religious experience from science.
- Religious responses to those challenges.
- Swinburne's principles of credulity and testimony.

The influence of religious experiences and their value for religious faith.

Religious language

- The issue of whether religious language should be viewed cognitively or non-cognitively.
- The challenges of the verification and falsification principles to the meaningfulness of religious language.

Responses to these challenges:

- eschatological verification with reference to Hick
- language as an expression of a Blik with reference to R.M.Hare
- religious language as a language game with reference to Wittgenstein.

Other views of the nature of religious language:

- religious language as symbolic with reference to Tillich
- religious language as analogical with reference to Aquinas
- the Via Negativa.
- The strengths and weaknesses of the differing understandings of religious language.

Miracles

Differing understandings of 'miracle'

- realist and anti-realist views
- violation of natural law or natural event.

Comparison of the key ideas of David Hume and Maurice Wiles on miracles.

The significance of these views for religion.

Self, death and the afterlife

- The nature and existence of the soul; Descartes' argument for the existence of the soul.
- The body/soul relationship.
- The possibility of continuing personal existence after death.

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3.1.1 Section B – Ethics and Religion

Normative ethical theories

- Deontological: natural moral law and the principle of double effect with reference to Aquinas; proportionalism.
- Teleological: situation ethics with reference to Fletcher.
- Character based: virtue ethics with reference to Aristotle.
- The differing approaches taken to moral decision making by these ethical theories.
- Their application to the issues of theft and lying.
- The strengths and weaknesses of these ways of making moral decisions.

The application of natural moral law, situation ethics and virtue ethics to:

Issues of human life and death:

- embryo research; cloning; ‘designer’ babies
- abortion
- voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide
- capital punishment.

Issues of non-human life and death:

- use of animals as food; intensive farming
- use of animals in scientific procedures; cloning
- blood sports
- animals as a source of organs for transplants.

Introduction to meta ethics: the meaning of right and wrong

- Divine Command Theory – right is what God commands, wrong is what God forbids.
- Naturalism: Utilitarianism – right is what causes pleasure, wrong is what causes pain.
- Non-naturalism: Intuitionism – moral values are self-evident.
- The strengths and weaknesses of these ideas.

Free will and moral responsibility

- The conditions of moral responsibility: free will; understanding the difference between right and wrong.
- The extent of moral responsibility: libertarianism, hard determinism, compatibilism.
- The relevance of moral responsibility to reward and punishment.

Conscience

Differing ideas, religious and non-religious, about the nature of conscience.

The role of conscience in making moral decisions with reference to:

- telling lies and breaking promises
- adultery.

The value of conscience as a moral guide.

Bentham and Kant

- Comparison of the key ideas of Bentham and Kant about moral decision making.
- How far these two ethical theories are consistent with religious moral decision making

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Component 2 – Study of Religion and dialogues – 2.B Christianity

Students are required to study those aspects of the religious beliefs, teachings, values and practices of Christianity specified below and the different ways in which these are expressed in the lives of individuals, communities and societies.

Section A: Christianity

Sources of wisdom and authority

- The Bible: different Christian beliefs about the nature and authority of the Bible and their impact on its use as a source of beliefs and teachings, including the Bible as inspired by God but written by humans beings.
- The Church: the different perspectives of the Protestant and Catholic traditions on the relative authority of the Bible and the Church
- The authority of Jesus: different Christian understandings of Jesus' authority, including Jesus' authority as God's authority and Jesus' authority as only human; implications of these beliefs for
- Christian responses to Jesus' teaching and his value as a role model with reference to his teaching on retaliation and love for enemies in the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:38-48.

God

- Christian Monotheism: one God, omnipotent creator and controller of all things; transcendent and unknowable; the doctrine of the Trinity and its importance; the meaning and significance of the belief that Jesus is the son of God; the significance of John 10:30; 1 Corinthians 8:6
- God as Personal, God as Father and God as Love: the challenge of understanding anthropomorphic and gender specific language about God: God as Father and King, including Christian feminist perspectives.
- The concept of God in process theology: God as neither omnipotent nor creator.

Self, death and afterlife

- The meaning and purpose of life: the following purposes and their relative importance: to glorify God and have a personal relationship with him; to prepare for judgement; to bring about God's kingdom on earth.
- Resurrection: the concept of soul; resurrection of the flesh as expressed in the writings of Augustine; spiritual resurrection; the significance of 1 Corinthians 15: 42-44 and 50-54.
- Different interpretations of judgement, heaven, hell and purgatory as physical, spiritual or psychological realities; objective immortality in process thought.

Good conduct and key moral principles

- Good conduct: the importance of good moral conduct in the Christian way of life, including reference to teaching about justification by works, justification by faith and predestination.
- Sanctity of life: the concept of sanctity of life; different views about its application to issues concerning the embryo and the unborn child; the just war theory and its application to the use of weapons of mass destruction.
- Dominion and stewardship: the belief that Christians have dominion over animals; beliefs about the role of Christians as stewards of animals and the natural environment and how

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changing understandings of the effects of human activities on the environment have affected that role.

Expressions of religious identity

- Baptism: the significance of infant baptism in Christianity with particular reference to the Catholic and Baptist traditions; arguments in favour of and against infant baptism.
- Holy Communion: differing practices associated with Holy Communion, and differing understandings of Holy Communion and its importance, in the Catholic and Baptist Churches; different Christian understandings of the significance of Jesus' actions at the last supper, Luke_22: 17-20.
- The mission of the Church: developments in Christian ideas of 'mission' from the early 20th century to today.

Christianity, gender and sexuality

Historical and social factors that have influenced developments in Christian thinking about these issues including: the development of Biblical criticism, especially in the 19th century, and the resulting freedom to challenge traditional readings of passages such as 1 Tim 2:8-15; the changing roles of men and women in society outside of religion; the rights given to women by secular governments.

Developments in Christian thought, including feminist approaches:

- Debates about female ordination in the Church of England up to and after 1994, the continuing debate today.
- A comparison of the significant ideas of Daphne Hampson and Rosemary Radford Ruether about the patriarchal nature of Christianity including Hampson's view that Christianity is irredeemably sexist and Ruether's ideas about the androgynous Christ and her view that the female nature is more Christlike than the male.
- Different Christian views about celibacy, marriage, homosexuality and transgender issues.

Christianity and science

How and why science has influenced Christianity and how Christianity has responded, with particular reference to: emphasis on evidence and reason in science; specific scientific discoveries; science as a stimulus to Christian ethical thinking.

Developments in Christian thought:

- How scientific explanation has challenged Christian belief with reference to the 'God of the gaps'; 19th century Christian responses to Darwin's theory of evolution and contemporary responses to the Big Bang theory, including reference to creationist views.
- The belief that science is compatible with Christianity with reference to the views John Polkinghorne.
- Different Christian responses to issues raised by science: genetic engineering.

Christianity and the challenge of secularisation

This topic may be studied with exclusive reference to the British context.

The challenge of secularisation including the replacement of religion as the source of truth and moral values; relegation of religion to the personal sphere; the rise of militant atheism: the view that religion is irrational.

Developments in Christian thought:

- Responses to materialistic secular values: the value of wealth and possessions.
- McGrath's defence of Christianity in 'The Dawkins delusion'.
- Emergence of new forms of expression, such as Fresh Expressions and the House Church movement. Emphasis on the social relevance of Christianity including liberationist approaches as supporting the poor and defending the oppressed.

Christianity, migration and religious pluralism

How migration has created multicultural societies which include Christianity, with particular reference to the diversity of faiths in Britain today; freedom of religion as a human right in European law and religious pluralism as a feature of modern secular states. The influence of this context on Christian thought.

Developments in Christian thought:

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- Christian attitudes to other faiths: Exclusivism with reference to John 14:6; Inclusivism with reference to the concept of 'anonymous Christians'; how Christian denominations view each other.
- Pluralism with reference to John Hick; its implications for interfaith and interdenominational relations.
- Christian responses to issues of freedom of religious expression in society.

Section B: Dialogues

This section of the specification is focused on the connections between various elements of the course and requires students to develop breadth and depth in their understanding of the connections between the knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the specification. There are two areas for study, firstly the dialogue between Christianity and philosophy: how developments in belief have, over time, influenced and been influenced by philosophical studies of religion, secondly the dialogue between Christianity and ethics: how developments in belief have influenced and been influenced by ethical studies.

The dialogue between Christianity and philosophy

Beliefs and teachings about:

- God
- soul and life after death
- the authority of scripture
- the authority of religious experience
- the relationship between scientific and religious discourses
- the truth claims of other religions
- miracles.

The following issues, and the impact of the discussion on religious belief past and present, should be considered:

- How far the belief is reasonable – that is based on reason and/or consistent with reason.
- How meaningful the statements of faith are, and for whom.
- How coherent the beliefs are, and how consistent they are with other beliefs in the belief system.
- The relevance of philosophical enquiry for religious faith, with particular reference to the debate about the nature of faith as 'belief in' or 'belief that'.

The dialogue between Christianity and ethics

- Christian responses to the following approaches to moral decision-making in the light of key Christian moral principles:
 - Deontological, with reference to Kant.
 - Teleological and consequential, with reference to Bentham.
 - Character based.
- How far Christian ethics can be considered to be deontological, teleological, consequential, or character based.
- Christian responses to: the issues of human life and death and issues of animal life and death prescribed for study; theft and lying; marriage and divorce; homosexuality and transgender issues; genetic engineering.
- Christian responses to issues surrounding wealth, tolerance and freedom of religious expression.
- Christian understandings of free will and moral responsibility, and the value of conscience in Christian moral decision-making.

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A Brief Guide to the world of Philosophy of Religion

Philosophy is said to be the mother of all disciplines. It is the oldest of all disciplines and gave rise to modern science as we know it today as both social and natural sciences have their roots in philosophy. Modern sciences either directly emerged from philosophy or are very closely related to philosophical questions. Understanding philosophy and of course, the way problems are addressed by philosophers is therefore the key to understanding of science as we know it today.

Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophers

The “love for wisdom” (English translation of the Greek word philosophia) dates back to the ancient times in both the East and West. Although the fundamental questions of philosophy have been dealt with very early, the history of the Western philosophy begins with the ancient Greek philosophers in Asia Minor in the 6th century BC. Thales of Miletus who is regarded as the first ancient Greek philosopher had profoundly influenced other Greek thinkers, encouraging them to search for the answers in nature rather than supernatural world. The next centuries saw the rise of philosophical schools throughout Greece and emergence of some of the greatest thinkers of Western philosophy including Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato and of course, Aristotle.

Ancient Greek philosophy continued to flourish in the Western world throughout the Roman period in the form of Hellenistic and then Greco-Roman philosophy that was dominated by Greco-Roman philosophers of Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch and Plotinus, to mention only a few. The late Roman period, however, also saw the rise of Early Christian philosophers such as Augustine of Hippo (also known as St. Augustine) who profoundly influenced medieval philosophy that was completely dominated by theological questions.

Medieval Philosophers

The fall of the Western Roman Empire marked the end of the Greco-Roman philosophy and many of the greatest philosophical works have been lost. But in contrary to the common misconception, medieval philosophers were not only dealing with questions such as how many angels can stand on the head of a pin nor completely ignored the works of Greco-Roman philosophers. At the same time, the works that have been lost in the West after the fall of Rome found their way back to Europe through Muslim conquests and later the Crusades. Medieval philosophers, although preoccupied with theological questions, did not reject the Greco-Roman philosophy but worked on how to reconcile it with the Christian reasoning, especially the Aristotle’s logic. This was finally achieved by St. Thomas Aquinas who is considered one of the most important medieval philosophers.

Modern Philosophers

The Late Middle Ages and Early Modern period were marked by an increased interest in ancient philosophy independently from the Christian Church and scholasticism that dominated the medieval thought. Renaissance movement that would eventually spread throughout Europe emphasised rationalism and empiricism which in turn gave rise to the Age of Reason and modern philosophy. Erasmus, Niccolo Machiavelli, Galileo Galilei and

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Francis Bacon marked the beginning of departure from the medieval approach to fundamental philosophical questions which was furthered by the 17th century philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, Blaise Pascal, Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, John Locke and George Berkeley, to mention only a few of the greatest names of the 17th century philosophy.

The works of the 17th century philosophers have profoundly influenced the next generation of thinkers such as Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Thomas Paine and Adam Smith who laid the foundation to the so-called Enlightenment, while many also played an important role in the far-reaching political changes that took place in the 18th century including the American Revolution and the French Revolution.

The 19th century philosophers, although greatly influenced by the Enlightenment ideas, introduced a number of new concepts including idealism (the German schools), utilitarianism (Britain), Marxism, existentialism, pragmatism and positivism. Some of the greatest names of the 19th century philosophy include Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Friedrich Nietzsche and Auguste Comte who is also regarded as the founder of the modern discipline of sociology.

Contemporary Philosophers

Contemporary philosophy refers to period from the beginning of the 20th century until the present-day. The 20th century saw the professionalisation of the discipline. Some of the most prominent philosophers of the 20th and 21st centuries are Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Claude Levi-Strauss,.

Eastern Philosophy

Eastern philosophy which encompasses Chinese, Japanese, Indian and other Far Eastern philosophies as well as Jewish and Islamic philosophies (although the latter two are sometimes also considered as a part of Western philosophy) developed independently from Western philosophy. Generally, Eastern philosophers were not as occupied with questions relating to the nature of God although both Jewish and Islamic philosophers were just as focused on reconciling new ideas with Judaism and Islam as their western colleagues. Far Eastern philosophers mostly dealt with the questions of ethics, morality, justice, etc. rather than religious truths. But some such as Confucius and Tao for instance, gave rise to religions and state ideologies.

The difference between theology and the Philosophy of Religion

Theology involves clarifying religious beliefs and expanding on them, seeing how they relate to each other and spelling out their implications for believers in the context of religious life. Within Christianity, theological debate might include questions of whether those who live on after death in a spiritual form can see what is going on in the physical world they have left behind; questions of how Jesus could be both God and human at the same time; questions of the true meaning of scriptural terms, and discussions of how they might be applied in a culture different from the one in which they were written. Sometimes, theological study involves or overlaps with the philosophy of religion, but often the two are distinct.

Philosophy of religion concerns itself with exploring religious beliefs and concepts to see whether they can stand up to rational argument. Different beliefs about religious ideas

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(including beliefs in atheist ideas as well as theistic belief) are examined, using logic and reasoned criticism, in an attempt to deepen understanding, to separate the true from the false where possible, and to clarify the implications of committing to particular choices of faith. The philosophy of religion involves raising many different questions, for example:

- Does the concept of 'God' make rational sense?
- Are there good reasons to believe that God exists?
- Is it possible to talk of God in a meaningful way?
- Is religious belief compatible with other kinds of belief, such as belief in the claims of science?
- Does it make sense to suggest that God acts in the world through miracles?
- Does it make sense to talk of life after death?

Some religious believers object to the idea of subjecting their beliefs to philosophical scrutiny. They argue that the truths of religion are given by God and can therefore be trusted completely with faith; questioning them suggests that we know better than God and might be able to prove God wrong. They suggest that if we have difficulty understanding religious truths, then the fault lies with our own intellectual limitations. Others, however, argue that it is impossible to have faith in something without understanding it, and that beliefs which do not stand up to philosophical investigation are not worth holding.

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