

Religious Studies Curriculum Overview

Why is *Religious Studies* important?

Religion, Philosophy and Ethics/Religious Studies ensures that students become aware of different faiths and issues within the world. Students will be able to analyse key contentious issues such as crime and punishment, abortion, euthanasia and genetic engineering and apply different world faiths to these. Students will also be able to assess different religious practices and how faith can impact an individual life and how they live their life and draw comparison to those without faith. Students will develop analytical, evaluative and application skills throughout the course and consistently develop their communication skills. These skills will help in the vast majority of career paths but primarily with careers working with the public i.e. teaching, social work, counselling, police, law etc. The content of the GCSE and A-level has clear links with the careers mentioned as there are elements of law, psychology, politics, history, geography and medicine used within the courses.

Summary of the Department

Jenna Alston curriculum leader of RPE and PD.

Rebecca Ivison teacher of RPE and PD.

Key Stage 3

In Key Stage 3 students will study RPE alongside PD and will have three units of RPE and three units of PD which will alternate half-termly. Students are not set and will be taught in form groups. Students will be assessed throughout the units with end of unit tests/exam-style questions, targeted questioning, quizzes, recap questions and mini-assessments.

Year 7

Year 7 start with an introduction to philosophy where they investigate philosophical questions, and begin to develop their communication skills by debating particular philosophical questions and gain an understanding of the complexity of philosophy. Students will then apply these skills that they have gained from discussing philosophical questions to analyse the Christian and Hindu creation myths and whether there can be any truth found within these stories. A comparison will then be drawn with the Big Bang Theory to establish which the students believe to be the most reliable based on the evidence and assess whether science and religion can be viewed as compatible.

Students will then complete an introduction to world religions to establish a foundation of knowledge for each of the major world religions. This will allow students to compare the beliefs

between all of the major world religions and begin to analyse how religious belief can impact how an individual lives their life.

Finally, students will complete a unit on forgiveness. This unit will allow students to consider the difficulty of forgiveness and evaluate to what extent religious belief can help to forgive what appears unforgivable. Students will look at two case studies the Stephen Lawrence murder and the Mengele Twins. Students will look at how faith has impacted Stephen Lawrence's parents in their attitude towards the murderers, and whether it is easier to forgive a wrong that impacts you rather than a loved one.

Year 8

Students will begin to deepen their knowledge this year and develop the knowledge and skills from the previous year. As a result, students start by looking at religious practices and festivals. Students will look initially at a variety of coming of age ceremonies including Bar/Bat Mitzvah's and Hindu Sacred thread ceremony. They will look at the ages that they become adults and compare this with tribal coming of age ceremonies. They will consider why these may differ and judge why they may need to be different. Following on from coming of age ceremonies, students will study marriage as rite of passage and question whether marriage is losing significance in the 21st Century. Finally, students will study Diwali and Christmas. Students will analyse the importance of these events and consider how these festivals impact faith and practices.

Students then study a unit on life after death. Students will evaluate different theories on what happens after death and look at case studies to establish the validity of these beliefs. Students will look at people who believe they have lived before to consider the possibility of reincarnation. They will then compare this evidence with people who have had near-death experiences and believe that they have experienced heaven. Finally, students will look at hell and why this appears to have implications for an omnibenevolent God or whether it is justified to have a place of eternal damnation.

Finally, students will study a unit on war, crime and punishment. Students will start this unit by looking at key events that are evil in nature and look at the concept of 'Just War'. They will then look at two key issues (the holocaust and the dropping of the Atomic Bombs) within the Second World War and question the morality of these events. Students will then begin to analyse the use of Capital Punishment and continue to apply religious beliefs to these issues to establish well-rounded views on these issues.

Year 9

Students start with a unit on the Problem of Evil. This unit brings together elements that students have learnt in Year 7 and Year 8 as it is looking at one of the key issues with religious belief; the existence of evil. Students will assess examples of evil and suffering in the world to consider whether there is justification for these events and if not how these events impact religious belief. Students will then study the concept of freewill and evaluate the implications of God removing all evil if this were possible.

Students then complete a unit on ethics whether they study abortion and euthanasia. Students will analyse the law regarding these two issues and the religious beliefs that impact the law. Students will consider religious beliefs, non-religious beliefs and case studies to make a decision on whether they feel these should be legal/legalised.

Finally, students will continue with ethics for their final unit and will investigate IVF treatment and Genetic Engineering. Students will learn about IVF treatment, the religious views on the use of IVF and unused embryos. Students will then look at genetic engineering and the implications of this and to what extent it is justifiable to use genetic engineering.

Key Stage 4

WJEC Eduqas Religious Studies

Religious Studies is an in-depth study of two religions and non-religious groups in their attitudes towards key issues within the world today, and issues that are adapting and changing with modern society. Students will start their study with Christian beliefs and practices to allow a strong foundation of knowledge to be able to apply these beliefs to the issues that will be studied (see below), this allows for effective analysis and evaluation of the issues while comparing to non-religious views. Students will then study issues of life and death, followed by relationships, Buddhist beliefs, good and evil, human rights and finally Buddhist practices.

Students will be given regular exam-style questions alongside knowledge tests, kahoot quizzes, key term bingo, mini-assessments and regular recall and retention strategies.

Religious, philosophical and ethical studies in the modern world (50% of the course, 2-hour exam)

- ❖ **Issues of human rights** (*equality, freedom of speech, censorship, prejudice and discrimination, wealth and poverty*)
- ❖ **Issues of life and death** (*afterlife, funerals, origin of existence including the Big Bang Theory and evolution, sustainable environment, abortion and euthanasia*)
- ❖ **Issues of good and evil** (*crime and punishment, death penalty, forgiveness and retribution, the problem of evil and suffering*)
- ❖ **Issues of relationships** (*marriage, sexual relationships, polyamory and homosexual relationships, contraception and gender equality.*)

A study of Christianity (25% of the course, 1-hour exam)

- ❖ The nature of God, creation, Jesus' life and the afterlife.
- ❖ Forms of worship, festivals, celebrations and other areas of Christian tradition

A study of Buddhism (25% of the course, 1-hour exam)

- ❖ The Buddha, his birth, life and becoming the 'enlightened one'.
- ❖ The three marks of existence, the Four Noble Truths, the concepts of destiny, karma, and the cycle of life, death and rebirth.
- ❖ Buddhist practices and traditions i.e. meditation, festivals and rites of passage.

Religious Studies provides skills that are applicable to most aspects of further education and job opportunities because of the skills gained. RS will provide the skills for many jobs but

mainly the jobs where you would be required to work with the public these include: law, social work, teaching, management, counsellor, journalist, police and youth workers.

Key Stage 5

WJEC Eduqas Religious Studies

Students cover three components within this course. Component one: A study of Christianity.

Component two: Philosophy of Religion. Component three: Religion and Ethics.

In AS students will sit three exams that are 1 hour and 30 minutes each. They are weighted equally at 33.3%.

In A2 students will sit three exams that are 2 hours each. They are weighted equally at 33.3%.

Students will be given regular exam-style questions alongside knowledge tests, kahoot quizzes, key term bingo, mini-assessments and regular recall and retention strategies.

Component one: A study of Christianity. This broken down into four themes.

1. Religious figures and sacred texts.

This unit unpicks the key events in Jesus' life including the birth narratives and the resurrection. There is a consideration of the modern understandings of these events and the challenges that are posed due to modern understandings of science. The Bible is also studied as a source of wisdom, authority, comfort and everyday guide for Christians. Students will then assess the initiation of Christianity and how Jesus can be understood. Whether he is a social revolutionary or the true Messiah.

2. Religious concepts and religious life

Students will evaluate key concepts within Christianity including the concept of a suffering God and the implications that this has for God's nature. The concept of feminist theology and the implications that Christianity has had in the treatment of women. The Trinity and how this helps or hinders understanding of how God works in the world. The atonement theories and how the use of sacrifice has changed throughout time and how Jesus can be understood as the ultimate sacrifice for original sin. Students will then analyse whether it is faith or works that is important and debate how humans become justified. Students will then assess how Christians live their life and how the Bible impacts on this.

3. Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Students will consider significant issues that face the world today with a consideration of wealth and poverty and the impact this has on how people live. This is followed by a consideration of the migration and immigration crisis that is occurring and how religious people would view this. There is then another investigation into feminist theology and the treatment of women. Students will then look at some of the key challenges to Christian belief from the rise in secularism and the key challenges from advances in science. Finally, students will analyse whether Christianity is inclusivist, exclusivist or whether it is possible to have universal pluralism suggesting that no religion is correct but all have a fraction of the ultimate truth.

4. Religious practices that shape religious identity

Students will assess how baptism, Eucharist and religious festivals: Christmas and Easter shape their identities as Christians and influence their actions. Students will then study the idea of ecumenicalism and how this can lead to unity, the charismatic movement and the concept of coming together in response to poverty.

Component 2: Philosophy of Religion

1. Arguments for the existence of God – inductive AND deductive

Students will analyse arguments from Aquinas, Craig, Paley, Tennant, Anselm, Descartes and Malcolm as arguments for God's existence. These will use evidence in the world through the ideas of cause and effect or through observation of apparent design within the universe. Other scholars argue for God's existence based on reasoning and the definition of God to prove his existence. Students will then evaluate the challenges to these arguments from Hume, the Big Bang Theory, evolution and Dawkins, they will then analyse which arguments are strongest.

2. Challenges to religious belief – the problem of evil and religion as a product of the mind

Students will initially study evil and suffering as a logical and empirical proof for God's non-existence and consider which of these appear strongest. They will then analyse the theodicies put forward in an attempt to allow God to continue to exist alongside evil, without it impacting his nature. Again, strengths and challenges of these will be considered to draw a conclusion on this. Then students will study two key psychologists: Freud and Jung. They will consider their position that religious belief is the product of the mind and is caused by the Oedipus complex/primal horde or as a result of archetypes.

3. Religious Experience

Students will do an in-depth study of different types of religious experience in this unit. They will look at visions, conversions, prayer, mysticism and miracles. They will also consider how these religious experiences have had a significant impact on religious belief and practice and led to the formation of each of the major world religions. Students will analyse how these religious experiences impact individuals and their communities in terms of their actions and their ways of life. Students will look at the counter arguments that challenge religious experience and consider which arguments appear to be most valid.

4. Religious language

Finally, students will study religious language where they will consider whether you can ever talk about religion in a valid way due to the unknowable nature of the divine and ultimate beings. This unit questions how religion can be spoken about meaningfully or whether this can never be achieved. This unit also considers the different ways that religious language is spoken about i.e. through metaphors, symbols and language games and which of these is most effective.

Component 3: Religion and Ethics

1. Ethical thought

Students will look at Divine Command Theory, Virtue Theory and Ethical Egoism to question where our morality comes from. They will consider whether it was given by God's commands, whether it comes from our actions or whether we should act in a way that benefits ourselves and nothing else. Students will analyse these theories and consider the key criticisms of these arguments and assess

which (if any) is most valid. Students will then study the meta-ethical approaches of intuitionism, emotivism and naturalism. This will look at whether objective moral laws exist and if they do, where do they come from? Do we intuitively know them, or do we learn them through our observation of nature?

2. Deontological ethics - Natural Law

Students will learn about classical and modern developments of natural law in this unit and they will apply these ideas to abortion, euthanasia, immigration and capital punishment. They will consider whether Natural Law is natural because it is God-given or whether it is something that is intuitively known by all humans and whether this explains why we behave the way that we do. Through application they will be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the classical and modern theories.

3. Teleological ethics – situation ethics and utilitarianism

Students will look at two forms of teleological ethics. One which has religious influence but is considered non-religious and one which is considered non-religious throughout. These ethical theories suggest that it is the end result that must be considered when choosing how to behave in a particular situation e.g. acting in the most loving way (SE) or doing 'the greatest good for the greatest number' (Util). These theories will be applied to homosexual and polyamorous relationships and vivisection and capital punishment respectively. Students will be able to consider whether it is better to have rules or conscience when making moral choices.

4. Freewill and determinism

Finally, students will study whether humans have been determined or whether humans do have genuine freewill. Students will study the concepts of theological, philosophical, psychological and biological determinism to consider whether humans make any free choices at all or whether humans are fully determined in their choices regardless of whether they feel free. This will be countered with arguments from philosophy, psychology and science on the concept of freewill. Students will analyse both perspectives and decide which argument is most convincing.
