

Department: Philosophy and Ethics



Our Curriculum Aims:

The Philosophy and Ethics department provides opportunities for students to critically engage with the big questions that really matter in life:

- How do we distinguish between right and wrong?
- Is there life after death?
- Why is there something rather than nothing?

These big questions provide a framework for a broad and balanced curriculum of Philosophy, Ethics and Religious Studies. Students explore the works of classic Philosophers such as Plato, Descartes and Kant together with more contemporary theorists such as Philippa Foot and Richard Swinburne. An integral part of the programme of study is to apply our understanding of philosophical theories and religious beliefs to significant ethical issues such as animal testing and our responsibility for the natural world.

We remain steadfast in our pursuit of exploring world religions in a thematic and academic manner, giving students an insight into the beliefs, practices and attitudes of others to ensure we promote inclusivity, tolerance and respect for all. This includes, for instance, exploring the worldviews of Muslims and Sikhs and considering how their faith might lead to activism for great social and political change.

As a department we believe that the course provides pupils with an invaluable opportunity to develop the critical thinking skills needed to be independent and successful learners in all their studies at AGSB.

Key Stage Three Curriculum Overview

Year 7 An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion

	Name of topic	Key Content of the Topic	Assessment points
HT 1	Unit 1) What are the origins of the world?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas about the origin of the universe: scientific, philosophical and religious approaches • The significance of myth in religion and folk-culture 	End of unit assessment: 'Genesis 1'
HT 2			
HT 3	Unit 2) Do we need to prove God's existence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introduction to religious literacy • Classical arguments for the existence of God 	End of unit assessment: 'Where is God?'
HT 4	Unit 3) What is real?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring the difference between knowledge, doubt and certainty in the philosophy of Descartes • A philosophical study of the meaning and significance of 'Plato's cave' 	End of unit assessment: 'Plato's cave'
HT 5			
HT 6	Unit 4) Is there life after death?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring questions of life after death in Christian, Buddhist and Hindu teachings 	End of unit assessment: 'What do Sikhs believe about life after death?'

Year 8 An Introduction to Moral Philosophy

	Name of topic	Key Content of the Topic	Assessment points

HT 1	Unit 1) What importance does ethics play in our lives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An introduction to ethical theory Deontological and Consequentialist ethical theory The Philosophy of Kant, Bentham and Mill The sanctity of life and the principle of Ahimsa Practical ethics case study (focus medical ethics) 	End of unit assessment: 'The case of the conjoined twins'
HT 2	Unit 2) Does religion help people to be ethical?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring the relationship between faith and ethical decision making Codes for living in Islam, Sikhism and Humanism Buddhism and the eight-fold path Is religion a force for good? Self – directed study task 	End of unit assessment: 'Does belief in God make you a good person?'
HT 3	Unit 3) What was so radical about Jesus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christology Messianic prophecies How can Jesus' actions inspire people today? Gender roles and the Church Pacifism 	End of unit assessment: 'Can violence ever be justified?'
HT 4			
HT 5	Unit 4) What is our responsibility for animals and the natural world?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical ethics case study (focus animal testing) Christian, Hindu and Muslim beliefs about animals and the environment Stewardship and Dominion Religious beliefs about eating meat Intensive farming 	End of unit assessment: 'Is it wrong to eat meat?'
HT 6	Unit 5) What's your worldview?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a worldview? Exploring Muslim and Sikh worldviews Worldviews and activism – 3 case studies: 1) Peter Tatchell, humanist campaigner for LGBTQ+ rights 2) Dr Vandana Shiva, Hindu ecofeminist from India 3) Riz Ahmed, a Muslim actor and activist from the UK 	End of unit assessment: Independent research assignment – Worldview interviews

Year 9 An Introduction to KS4: Philosophy and Ethics

	Name of topic	Key Content of the Topic	Assessment points
HT 1	Unit 1) The nature of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The language of God – 99 names of Allah Philosophical terms for describing God and the problems they raise e.g. the paradox of the stone Is the concept of God beyond human understanding? Philosophy focus: Descartes and Dostoevsky The concepts of Immanence and Transcendence The Trinity Miracles 	End of unit assessment: 'Explain Christian beliefs about the nature of God' AO1 (15 marks)
HT 2			
HT 3	Unit 2) End of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept of the soul in world religion Muslim and Sikh beliefs about life after death The resurrection Heaven, hell and purgatory The parable of the sheep and the goats The relationship between moral behavior and divine judgement 	End of unit assessment: 'There is no such thing as life after death'. AO2 (15 marks)
HT 4			
HT 5	Unit 3) Good and evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural and moral evil The logical and evidential problems of evil Theodicies: 1) The story of Job 2) The Devil 3) The soul making theodicy 	End of unit assessment: 'Without God anything is allowable' AO2 (15 marks)
HT 6			

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative explanations for the problem of evil: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1) The free-will defence • 2) Process theology 	
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What can parents do to support their sons?

To support your son's progress please encourage him to keep an open mind and to come to the lessons ready to discuss ideas and issues that he may find challenging. Whatever views your son may have, the primary focus in Philosophy and Ethics is to always respect the beliefs of others.

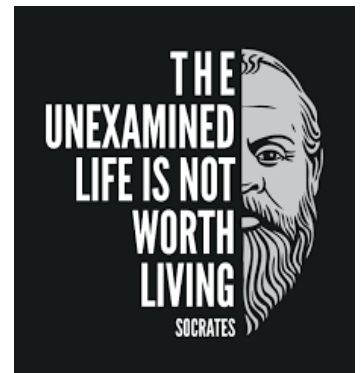
To support your son in his studies outside the classroom it would be beneficial to purchase 'Philosophy and Ethics for Key stage 3', Collins (ISBN 978000 8355029). This textbook provides a concise overview of many of the 'big questions' that will be explored at KS3.

GCSE Course Followed: AS Religious Studies

Specification: AQA ([Syllabus code 7061](#))

Why choose AS?

Why do we study Philosophy and Ethics? It is a statutory requirement for schools to provide Religious Studies for all students. Schools are able to interpret this for their individual contexts. At AGSB we have developed a Philosophy and Ethics curriculum from Year 7-11, that challenges students to consider some of the great philosophical, ethical and religious questions. As part of this curriculum, students are given the opportunity to study Religious Studies to AS level in Years 10 and 11. This course not only promotes critical thinking, but also encourages them to question the world around them. We believe that by studying at this higher level students are equipped with the academic skills needed to flourish in all aspects of their studies at AGSB.



What are the details of the course which we follow in P&E in Y10 & Y11 at AGSB?

At AGSB all students will study the AQA AS level Religious Studies course. This course focuses on selected topics in the philosophy of religion, ethics and religion and the study of a major world religion. The world religion we have chosen is Christianity. A download of the AS specification and specimen examination questions can be found in the P&E Department's pages on Office 365 via the school's website or alternatively you may wish to consult the specification details on the AQA website.

Why are we offering AS level rather than GCSE?

We believe it is a better course than the current GCSE.

Advantages:

- i. Good specification: subject content in keeping with our departmental ethos
- ii. An impressive qualification when achieved by students in Y11
- iii. Stretches the top students – however, content made accessible to all students
- iv. Promotes literacy skills
- v. Gives students more confidence in arts and humanities subjects
- vi. Promotes independent learning

- vii. Students develop critical and evaluative skills which are transferable to both higher education and the workplace

How will the course be examined?

Students are given the choice about whether they would like to be entered for the AS level qualification. This is an opportunity for our most able students to challenge themselves to achieve an AS level, if they feel they are coping well with the demands of the GCSE courses.

Why is the final examination optional?

We don't want to overburden pupils when faced with the pressure to maximise their GCSE grades. In addition, we do not feel it would be right to insist that a pupil should take an external examination in Religious Studies given the lesson time allocated to the teaching of the subject compared with the option subjects.

When do students make their choice about whether or not they are going to sit a final examination?

In January of Year 11 all students will receive an options letter, in which they must confirm whether they wish to be entered for the final examination. By then they will have experienced a year's foundation in Y9, a whole year's teaching in Y10 and a practice exam experience (at Christmas in Y11) and pupils will be able to make a decision that is right for them.

What happens to students who choose not to sit the final examination?

They will continue to attend lessons and do class work, but they will not be required to complete additional assignments outside of lesson time. Students will still benefit from the challenging and stimulating learning environment but without the additional demands of undertaking a formal examination in the subject.

Will the AS level count towards entry qualification for the sixth form?

Yes.

Key Stage Four Curriculum Overview

Year 10 Arguments for the existence of God. Religious Experience. Practical Ethics.

	Name of topic	Key Content of the Topic	Assessment points
HT 1	Unit 1) Arguments for the existence of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introduction to AS Religious Studies • An introduction to 'The Design Argument' • David Hume's 5 key criticisms 	End of sub unit assessment: A01 essay
HT 2	Unit 2) The Ontological argument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The attributes of God • The Ontological argument • Gaunilo's Island and Anselm's response • Kant's criticisms 	End of sub unit assessment: A02 essay
HT 3	Unit 3) The Cosmological argument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kalam argument • Aquinas' Cosmological argument • Hume and Russell 	End of unit assessment: A01 essay
HT 4	Unit 4) Religious experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introduction to religious experience • Visions, numinous and mystical experiences • Scientific responses to religious experience 	End of unit assessment: A02 essay
HT 5 - 6	Unit 5) Practical ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introduction to practical ethics: • Issues of human life and death • Issues of non-human life and death 	Trial Exam

Year 11 Ethical Theory

	Name of topic	Key Content of the Topic	Assessment points
HT 1	Unit 1) Natural Moral Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An Introduction to 'Natural Moral Law' (NML) theory• Primary and secondary precepts• Double effect and the principle of proportionality• Criticisms of NML theory	End of unit assessment: A01 essay
HT 2	Unit 2) Situation Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An introduction to 'Situation Ethics'• The significance of 'agape' in Fletcher's philosophy• Criticisms of situation ethics	End of unit assessment: A02 essay
HT 3	Unit 3) Virtue ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An introduction to Virtue ethics• Eudaimonia• The Golden mean• Criticisms of virtue ethics	End of unit assessment: A01 essay
HT 4	Unit 4) The study of Christianity (Part one)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sources of Wisdom and authority• The nature of Good (Y9 enrichment)• Self, death and the afterlife (Y9 enrichment)	End of sub unit assessment: A02 essay
HT 5	Unit 4) The study of Christianity (Part two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good conduct and key moral principles• Expressions of religious identity• Exam practice	End of unit assessment: A01 essay
HT 6	NA		GCSE exams

Recommended Revision Guides for AS

All students will be issued with revision guides and the necessary preparatory material for the examination. This includes model answers, revision checklists and topic descriptors. All resources used in lessons are available in the AS Religious Studies group folders on Office365. The following textbooks are recommended:

My Revision Notes AQA AS-level Religious Studies: Paper 1 Philosophy of religion and ethics
ISBN:9781510425873

My Revision Notes AQA AS-level Religious Studies: Paper 2 Study of Christianity and Dialogues

ISBN:9781510425880

Support available for AS students

There is an AS Religious Studies study club on Monday lunchtimes in S3 from 12:20 - 1:00

Twice weekly revision sessions run from Jan-May. Students will be informed of the day/times by their class teacher.