

# Religious Studies

Religious studies at A Level is a thought provoking and highly academic course that not only looks at religious beliefs but also philosophy and ethics. Boys will gain a wider understanding of religion in the world around us and also undertake a critical analysis of the key ideas and theories behind Christianity and those that shape modern Christian thought. The A level comprises of three papers, which are outlined below.

## Paper 1: Philosophy of Religion

This paper starts with ancient Greek influences ranging from Plato's world of the forms to Aristotle's understanding of reality. Whilst not specific to any modern-day religion, the early Philosophers underpin many beliefs in the Abrahamic faiths so are key to being able to critically analyse modern faith.

This leads into a study of soul, mind and body which poses questions such as 'Is the mind separate from the body?' and 'If there is a soul, how can it experience an afterlife without the senses?' Through a study of Descartes and various other philosophers, students will gain an insight into many questions people take for granted regardless of creed or religion.

Following on from this is a study of philosophical arguments for God and also his place in the world. Can cause and effect prove God? Is the universe designed? Questions such as these are examined through the work of Anselm, Descartes and Aquinas.

Finally, there is a study of the qualities of God, the problem of evil and religious language.

## Paper 2:

This is a study of ethics through religion and looks at both normative ethics (how should we act) and meta-ethics (what does it mean to say something is good or bad).

Religious approaches to ethics are looked at through Aquinas' natural law, an absolute theory of ethics that aims to say exactly what you should do regardless of circumstances. This is then countered with Situation Ethics, in which, you should take the best course of action according to the situation.

Other approaches studied include Kantian ethics and Utilitarianism. Boys are encouraged to engage critically with the material and to be able to compare and contrast their positives and negatives by applying them to real world situations such as medical, sexual and business ethics.

This is followed by a study of 'meta-ethics' which is a study of whether there can be moral absolutes in reality, do ethics exist separate to us in the real world or are they all in our head.

## Paper 3:

Paper 3 is a study of development in Christian thought. How has the church changed in recent history, what is the relationship between faith and reason, who was Jesus?

Students will consider whether the bible can be a source of wisdom and authority and what relationship a Christian can have with God.

Students will examine critically the evidence for and against an afterlife and how this has changed over history

This leads on to a study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and modern-day moral principles, how should Christians act in the face of modern challenges in areas such as feminist theology, religious tolerance and modern secularism.

Religious studies is examined in three two hour papers at the end of the Upper Sixth. Should you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me or anyone else in the department.

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