

St Bede's Catholic College

Year 11 into 12 Transition Work

RS

Philosophy of Religion



Exam board: Edexcel

Course length: Two years

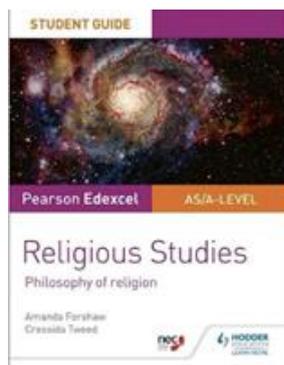
Specification: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/religious-studies-2016.html>

Exam structure:

Course content	Assessment Overview
Philosophy of Religion (33.3%)	2 hour written exam 80 marks
Religion and Ethics (33.3%)	2 hour written exam 80 marks
New Testament Studies (33.3%)	2 hour written exam 80 marks

Useful textbooks:

Philosophy:



Product details

Paperback: 120 pages

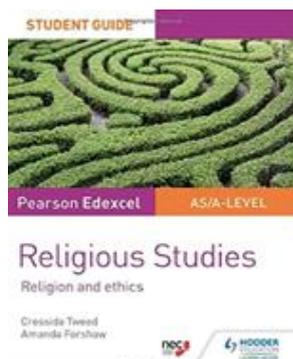
Publisher: Hodder Education (30 Aug. 2019)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1510433392

ISBN-13: 978-1510433397

Ethics:



Product details

Paperback: 120 pages

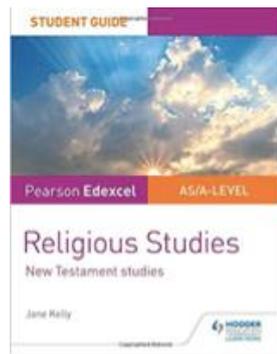
Publisher: Hodder Education (27 Sept. 2019)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1510433406

ISBN-13: 978-1510433403

New Testament:



Product details

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: Hodder Education (22 Feb. 2019)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1510433422

ISBN-13: 978-1510433427

Useful websites:

<https://revisionworld.com/a2-level-level-revision/religious-studies-level-revision/rs-level-past-papers/edexcel-level-rs-past-papers>

<http://www.rsrevision.com/contents/index.htm>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiNbJlqcJo&list=PLO9sTSBHwEDZ39WU0WUQI2Hc3Hgy5wdA3>

Sample/past papers:

https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/Religious%20Studies/2016/Specification%20and%20sample%20assessments/SAMs_GCE_A_Level_in_Religious_Studies.pdf

Transition work:

Before getting started on the work below, it is important to think about organisation of your work. This will help with confidence and revision as we progress through A Levels. For RS, either keep a separate file for Philosophy, Ethics and New Testament (I recommend this) or keep one big file divided into three sections.

Philosophy is often mistaken as a subject consisting of abstract thought and arguments. Abstract ideas are often encountered, particularly within our study of *philosophy of religion*. Philosophy is however, concerned with the pursuit of knowledge, hence it's name philosophy, from the two Greek words *philos* (love) and *sophia* (wisdom). Rather than mere abstract thinking, philosophy consists of logic and reason.

Task 1:

First of all, ask yourself what you think a study of Philosophy will consist of. What type of questions are likely to be asked? What type of problems might you encounter?

Watch the following brief introduction to Philosophy. You may wish to make notes as you watch. Good practice is to constantly make notes. If you are like me, you'll most likely need to read many Philosophical writings at least twice before they begin to make sense!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAkYt3GY&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNgK6MZucdYIdNkMybYIHKR&index=2

Task 2:

Thinking back to your Religious Studies at GCSE, you may recall three key categories of thought associated to belief in God. These are Theist (people who believe in God), Agnostic (people unsure whether God exists) and Atheist (People who believe there is no God).

One of the major challenges that we will observe in our study is the differing arguments between theists and atheists. Consider the following

A little old Christian lady comes out onto her front porch every morning and shouts, "Praise the Lord!"

And every morning the atheist neighbour next door yells back, "There is no God!"

This goes on for weeks. "Praise the Lord!" yells the lady. "There is no God!" responds the neighbour.

As time goes by, the lady runs into financial difficulties and has trouble buying food. She goes out onto the porch and asks God for help with groceries, then says, "Praise the Lord!"

The next morning when she goes out onto the porch, there are the groceries that she asked for. Of course, she shouts, "Praise the Lord!"

The atheist jumps out from behind a bush and says, "Ha! I brought those groceries. There is no God!"

The lady looks at him and smiles. She shouts, "Praise the Lord! Not only did you provide for me, Lord, you made Satan pay for the groceries!"

Now this is obviously just an attempt at a philosophical joke. There are however, some key ideas raised. What reasons can you provide to support the conclusion of:

- i) The old lady (the theist)
- ii) The neighbour (the atheist)

To simply propose that the atheist seeks evidence may not provide us for an adequate solution. In the instance above, that fact that the neighbour went out

and brought groceries may well be considered evidence. After all, Saint Mother Theresa taught that "prayer in action is love and love is action is service". Who's to say that the action of the neighbour wasn't service?

Other options to consider:

- Are we making an assumption that the actions of the neighbour are associated to the old lay's prayer?
- What would constitute as sufficient evidence that the lady's prayer was answered? She did end up with groceries in the end...
- How are the two characters approaching the situation? DO you think they both have the same idea of what God is?

Task 3: Western Philosophy

As you may recall from the initial introduction video, science and mathematics were both incorporated into philosophy. In his superb work 'A History of Western Philosophy', Bertrand Russell (1872 – 1970) provides an in-depth overview of who knowledge developed over the centuries. The book helps to show how different ideas of the time influenced thinking.

Western philosophy in this sense stems from the work of Ancient Greek philosophers (800BC) and is still influential in the work of philosophers today.

A good way to quickly introduce yourself to some of the most influential people of western philosophy is by studying 'The School of Athens' by the Italian Renaissance artist, Raphael.



The two characters at the centre of the fresco are Plato and Aristotle; considered by many to be the two most influential thinkers of western philosophy.

Watch the following commentary on the fresco:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/early-europe-and-colonial-americas/renaissance-art-europe-ap/v/raphael-school-of-athens>

i) What is the difference between the thinking of Plato and Aristotle?

ii) How do these differences influence Raphael's painting?

Task 3: Plato c.428-347BC

Although Plato does not directly feature in this exam, there are multiple references to Platonic ideas throughout, particularly Dualism, the distinction between body and mind. Developing a brief understanding of Plato's key ideas will place you into a strong starting position for the A Level.

Plato was a pupil of Socrates, an Ancient Greek philosopher who called into question our understanding of true knowledge. We do not have any books of Socrates today, rather, he features within the work of Plato. Based on Plato's accounts, Socrates was sentenced to death in 399BC.

Despite his teachers' death, Plato continued to question the appearance of the world around us. He proposed that the world we see around us is just an illusion created by our senses (sight, sound, touch etc...). As these senses are deceived by appearances, they are therefore unreliable (something that later caused a problem for Descartes).

Plato believed that true knowledge can only be gained through the use of our minds, by the power of rational thought. This enables us to access the realm of true reality, which lies beyond the senses. The philosopher for Plato, tries to seek the knowledge of this true reality. Perhaps Plato's most famous works to help us understand this idea is his allegory of the cave. Watch the following two video clips that summarise the allegory:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RWOpQXTItA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWIUKJIMge4>



Following the summary videos, consider the following:

- i) Who might be the prisoners?
- ii) What do the shadows represent?
- iii) How does this relate to the world in which we perceive on a daily basis?
- iv) What role does the sun play in this analogy?
- v) Why is the philosopher symbolised by the character who breaks free from the cave/

The allegory of the cave helped to elaborate on Plato's theory of Forms. If you find this type of **idealism** interesting, you may want to also read up on Plato's theory of Forms (although it is not directly required for the course, you'll certainly see how Plato has influenced the work of others).

An introduction to the Theory of Forms:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgotDFs6cdE>

Task 4: Aristotle c. 384-322BC

Aristotle was a student of Plato. If you think back to Raphael's 'School of Athens' painting however, you may recall that Aristotle's philosophy was very different from that of Plato. Aristotle was more of a biologist, less concerned with the 'idealistic world' and more of the biological world that we observe. Some of Aristotle's most well-known and influential works have been on 'cause and purpose' and the 'body and soul'.

**Both Platonic and Aristotelian Philosophy has influenced Christian Theology and Philosophy over the centuries, so if you recognise any ideas mentioned, you've probably made a connection!*

Cause and Purpose:

You may remember the cosmological argument from GCSE (cause and effect theory). Cause and purpose have been very influential aspects of Aristotle's philosophy.

Aristotle explained that movement from potential to actual in terms of the causes that act on all things. He suggested there were 4 causes:

1. Material Cause
2. Formal Cause
3. Efficient Cause
4. Final Cause

Watch the following video clips and try to explain briefly each cause.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQd-ba-jV0>

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

<https://academyofideas.com/2015/11/introduction-to-aristotle-knowledge-and-the-four-causes/>

(Causes in the 3rd video are about 4 mins into the clip)

Material	
Formal	
Efficient	
Final	

Where does God fit?

For Aristotle, there was a 'common source' of substance (the explanation of what we mean by substance requires far more discussion. However, where did you hear that word substance used in your GCSE?). In the instance of the causes, God, or this common substance, was at the beginning of all things.

Task 5: How do we approach the topic of God?

Paul Tillich was a Theologian and Philosopher (1886 - 1965). He proposes a difference between the philosophers search for God and the Theologian's search for God (remember, a theologian is a person of faith who studies scriptures).

The philosopher pursues the truth about God and God-stuff as objectively as possible, while the theologian is already "grasped by faith" and engaged and committed. In other words, the philosopher of religion looks at God and religion from the outside, whilst the theologian looks at them from the inside.

(T. Catchcart and D. Klen, 2007, 'Plato and a Platypus walk into a bar' Abrams image, p.104)

- i) List 10 attributes (qualities or characteristics) that best define God for you.
- ii) Which of these would you say are personal attributes?
- iii) Which are impersonal (i.e. does this attribute of God relate to humans in any way?)
- iv) Which of these attributes can humans experience? What would your evidence be?

Task: Religious experience?

Watch the video clip. What questions would you ask?

IS there any way that you could verify (prove true) or falsify (prove false) these claims?

Task 6: Key word glossary

Creating a key word or glossary list in your notes is important. There is lots of challenging vocabulary throughout the course.

You may want to create an electronic glossary and then print it out at the end of each topic, or create one for the whole course.

Some words that I would like you to get started with: (please define them!)

Theist	Atheist	Agnostic	Omnipotent	Omniscient
Omni-benevolent	Empirical	Contingency	A Priori	A Posteriori
Deductive	Inductive	Infinite Regress	Synthetic (statements)	Analytic (statements)

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