

# GETTING AHEAD



HAVANT

Start to develop skills that are relevant to your course before you join HSDC this September!

## Religious Studies - A Level

### A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Which examination board and specification do you use?

We follow the OCR H573 Specification papers in the Philosophy of Religion, Religious Ethics and Developments in Christian Thought. This course is the most popular of the new Religious Studies specifications, with a good choice of textbooks and revision guides available. OCR has a good reputation for rigour and reliability in Religious Studies.

Does Religious Studies follow a "new" and "linear" specification?

Yes. A Level Religious Studies was "refined" by the DfE in 2014, trialing and standardising the course and making assessment more rigorous. Universities were involved in shaping the new course and they regard the changes positively.

Is Religious Studies regarded as a "facilitating subject"?

Yes. Religious Studies is so good as any facilitating subject. Both Oxford and Cambridge Universities list Religious Studies amongst their preferred subjects. The Russell Group booklet "Informed Choices" explains: "There are some advanced level subjects which provide suitable preparation for entry to university generally, but which we do not include within the facilitating subjects, because there are relatively few degree programmes where an advanced level qualification in these subjects would be a requirement for entry. Examples of such subjects include Economics, Religious Studies." Clearly, "facilitating subjects" include Maths and English, the Sciences, Languages and the Humanities, but Religious Studies is in good preparation for undergraduate study at these subjects.

What transferable skills will Religious Studies A Level develop in me?

The A Level course includes both Religious Studies and Philosophy, so it develops skills in analysis, evaluation and persuasive writing. For example, US GPC tests on 3-year undergraduate subjects in the two subjects showed that they have far better than average abilities in reading and writing - skills that are essential in postgraduate study and professional careers.

Do many people take Religious Studies A Level?

Yes. In 2017 there were 23,856 A Level entries, more than double the number recorded in 2001. Despite the recent changes to A Levels, such as linearity and reducing options from 8 to 3 subjects, Religious Studies remains the fastest growing Humanities subject at A Level. In fact, only Further Maths has grown faster in terms of numbers of A level entries in recent years.

Does Religious Studies A Level offer a route into the most competitive universities?

Yes. Surveys of successful applicants to Oxford University found that almost 21% of English applicants, 20% of PPE applicants and 13.9% of History applicants had a Religious Studies A Level, more than those with Economics, Physics and Business Studies. Studies suggest that graduates in Theology, Religious Studies and Philosophy are highly employable, with many going on working in careers such as the Law, Journalism, Marketing and Management.

Have I heard of anybody who has taken Religious Studies A Level?

Religious Studies is a popular subject to study at A Level and at University. Examples include:

- Malala Yousofzai (Nobel Peace Prize, earned an A in Religious Studies A level)
- Tove Lo (singer, earned a B in Religious Studies A level)
- Orlando Bloom (Hollywood Actor, earned a C in Religious Studies A Level)

Well known people who have taken related courses at university include both Jack and Maggie Gyllenhaal, Matt Damon ("The Big Bang Theory", the comedian Kay Brand (who studied Theology at Oxford University) and Jack Clewson - the actor behind Jeffrey Leaver of "Game of Thrones" fame - studied Theology after leaving from acting. This is not to mention world leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr!

What is real? Can I know anything at all?  
What is a good life? What is truth?  
What is proof? Is there any such thing as right or wrong?  
Is there a point to life?  
Can I mean what I say?  
What does it mean to be happy?  
Do I see the world the same as other people see it?  
How did everything begin?  
What do we even mean by God?  
Can it ever be right to kill someone?  
Why do 30% of people claim to have experienced God?  
Should we give more opportunities to poor people?  
Should business be all about profit?  
What does it mean to die?  
Do I decide what I meant? Did Jesus even exist?  
Does gender matter?  
Is faith anti-intellectual? What is faith?

FULFIL YOUR HUMAN POTENTIAL

RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
A LEVEL

OCR H573  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES:  
1. PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION:  
CAN WE KNOW GOD EXISTS?  
2. RELIGIOUS ETHICS:  
HOW SHOULD WE LIVE?  
3. CHRISTIAN THOUGHT:  
DID FAITH HAVE A FUTURE?

INFORMATION

The OCR A Level in Religious Studies will build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established at GCSE. Learners will be introduced to a more advanced approach to Religious Studies and will develop a deeper understanding of the beliefs, teachings, and philosophy they study. All learners will study three components: Philosophy of Religion (01), Religion and Ethics (02) and Developments in Religious Thought (03–07). Whilst components 01 and 02 are mandatory, the third will be chosen from the five available options: Christianity (03), Islam (04), Judaism (05), Buddhism (06) or Hinduism (07). In Philosophy of Religion, learners will study philosophical issues and questions raised by religion and belief. These include arguments regarding the existence or non-existence of God, the

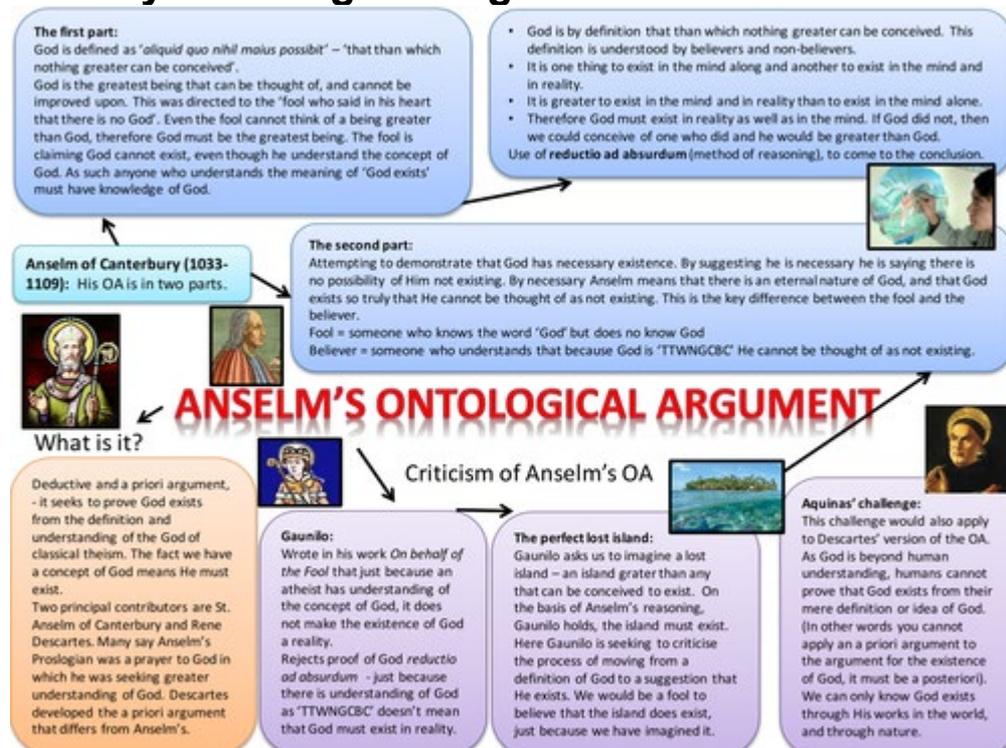
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nature and influence of religious experience and the problems of evil and suffering. They will also explore philosophical language and thought through significant concepts and the works of key thinkers, illustrated in issues or debates in the philosophy of religion. Religion and ethics are characterised by the study of ethical language and thought, with the exploration of key concepts and the works of influential thinkers. Ethical theory will also be applied to issues of importance: namely euthanasia, business ethics, and sexual ethics. Developments in religious thought provides an opportunity for the systematic study of one religious tradition. This will include the exploration of religious beliefs, values, teachings and practices that shape religious identity, as well as sources of wisdom and authority. Also central are the ways in which religious traditions have developed over time, and religious responses to challenges and significant contemporary social issues.

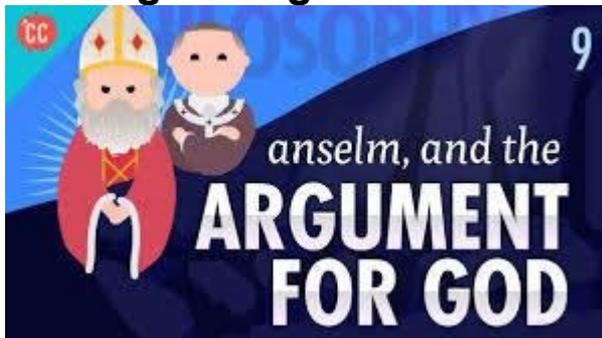
## Philosophy

### Activity: Ontological Argument



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Watch the following video and create a mind map for the ontological argument



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmTsS5xFA6k>

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## Ontological argument extras

1. Summarise the arguments highlighted in **yellow**
2. Choose the argument highlighted in **green** from the list and say how you go about researching it - try and research the argument and summarise it - say how you found your information (Spinoza is done as an example)

1078: **St. Anselm, *Proslogion***. Followed soon after by Gaunilo's critique *In Behalf of the Fool*.

1264: **St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa***. Criticises an argument which somehow descends from St. Anselm.

1637: **Descartes, *Discourse on Method***. The argument of Discourse 4 is further elaborated in the *Meditations*. The *Objections*—particularly those of Caterus and Gassendi—and the *Replies* contain much valuable discussion of the Cartesian arguments.

c1680: **Spinoza, *Ethics***. Intimations of a defensible mereological ontological argument, albeit one whose conclusion is not (obviously) endowed with religious significance.

I searched in Google for Spinoza ontological arguments - I found an article called Spinoza's Ontological Argument by Don Garrett in J Store ([https://www.jstor.org/stable/2184506?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2184506?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)) and I read an article page for Spinoza. From here I found a book

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on ontological argument where I found a summary of Spinoza ontological argument where he concludes that either nothing exists or God exists out of necessity. The source of wisdom is called *Ethics*.

here.

Joachim (1901:50) summarizes the Spinozistic argument as follows:

It belongs to the nature of Substance to exist: a Substance which is not, is not Substance at all. . . . Either then, you must give up the idea of Substance, or you must admit that Substance – i.e. God – necessarily exists. But, if you give up the idea of Substance, you must give up the idea of mode as well. Either, therefore, nothing exists, or God exists of necessity.

- 1709: **Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding***. Contains Leibniz's attempt to complete the Cartesian argument by showing that the Cartesian conception of God is not inconsistent.

- 1776: **Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion***. Part IX is a general attack on *a priori* arguments (both analytic and synthetic). Includes a purported demonstration that no such arguments can be any good.

- 1787: **Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason***. Contains famous attack on traditional theistic arguments. Three objections to "the ontological argument", including the famous objection based on the dictum that existence is not a predicate.

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1831: **Hegel, *Lectures of 1831***. In these lectures, Hegel says that “the ontological argument” succeeds. However, he does not make it clear what he takes the premises of “the ontological argument” to be and nor does he make it clear what it would be for “the ontological argument” to succeed. Some scholars have claimed that the entire Hegelian corpus constitutes an ontological argument.



1884: **Frege, *Foundations of Arithmetic***. Existence is a second-order predicate. First-order existence claims are meaningless. So ontological arguments—whose conclusions are first-order existence claims—are doomed.



1941: **Hartshorne, *Man’s Vision of God***. Defence of modal ontological arguments, allegedly derived from *Proslogion* 3.



1970: **Lewis, “Anselm and Actuality”**. A key critique of ontological arguments. All ontological arguments are either invalid or question-begging; moreover, in many cases, they have two closely related readings, one of which falls into each of the above categories.



1974: **Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity***. Plantinga’s “victorious” modal ontological argument.

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1995: Gödel, *Collected Works Volume III*. Gödel’s ontological argument.

2004: Sobel, *Logic and Theism*. Detailed critique of ontological arguments. See, especially, chapters 2–4, pp. 29–167.

### Ethics

Write in your own definition of each word below:

Agency	
Agent	
Anti- Realism	
Applied Ethics	
Analogy	
Autonomy	
Categorical imperative	
Cognitivism	
Non Cognitivism	

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Conclusion	
Consequentialist	
Deontological	
Descriptive	
Disposition	
Divine command Ethics (Theory)	
Duty	
Emotivism	
Empiricism/Empirical	
Empirical fact	
Error Theory	

Ethics	
Eudaimonia	
Fallacy	
Free Will	
Golden Rule	
Good	
Good will	
Hedonism	
Hume's Law	
Hypothetical imperative	

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Intuitionism	
Is-ought gap	
Judgement	
Kantian Ethics	
Maxim	
Liberty	
Meta-Ethics	
Moral Dilemma	
Moral Realism	
Moral Anti-Realism	

Naturalism	
Non-Naturalism	
Naturalistic fallacy	
Nihilism	
Normative ethics	
Partiality	
Person	
Practical ethics	
Preference utilitarianism	
Premise	
Prescriptivism	

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Proposition	
Rationalism	
Relativism	
Right actions	
Rights	
Statement	
Summum Bonum	
Utility	
Utilitarianism	

## Buddhism

Watch this video on a day in the life of a Buddhist Monk



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4n-X2Dj01AE>

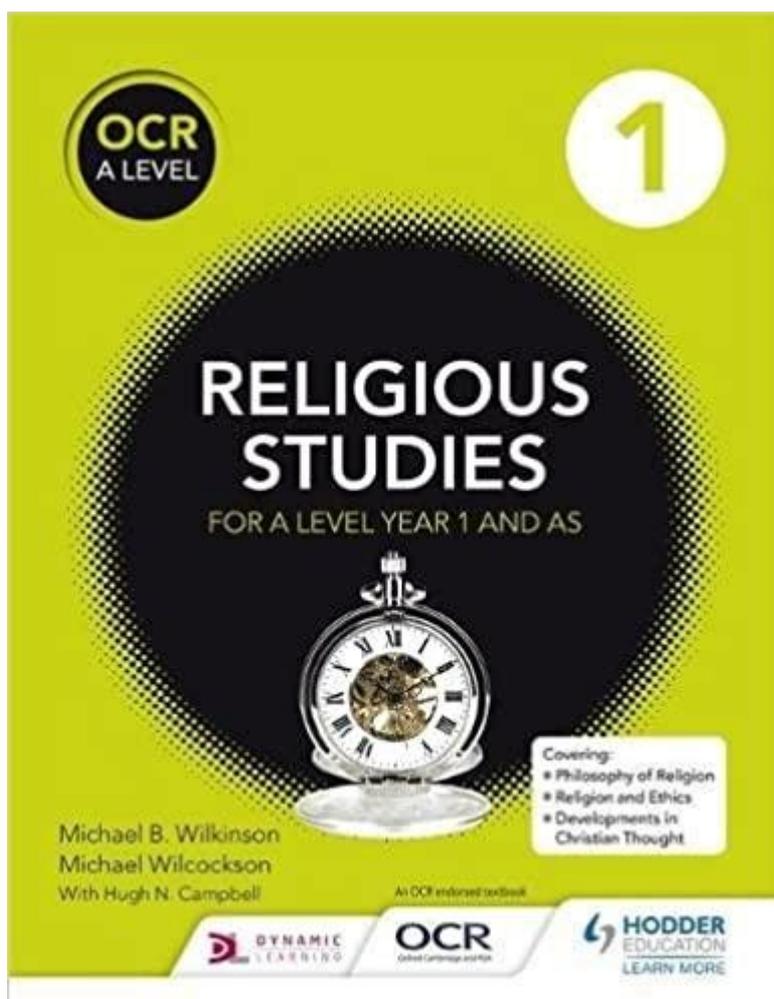
## Read

Get ahead and buy your textbook now available at -

<https://www.amazon.com/OCR-Religious-Studies-Level-Year/dp/1471866696>

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### **British Library Entry on Buddhist Canon**

**The Buddhist ‘canon’ is vast, complex, and difficult to define. Here Professor Tim Barrett outlines some of the key works for the different branches of Buddhism.**

Like the adherents of many other religious traditions, Buddhists have always considered that some writings are particularly important to them and have taken steps to preserve them as a separate group. Given the long time span and vast geographical range of Buddhist history, it is inevitable that both the structure and the contents of these collections of ‘the word of the Buddha’ have varied markedly.

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The Buddhist scripture was first compiled orally since writing was not in common use in the Buddha's time in India. Thus, his teachings were not written down, and a pattern of memorised discourses and other materials therefore constitutes the oldest layer that was handed down. The origins of this heritage are said to have begun with an assembly of monks immediately after the Buddha's death, at which his teachings were first recollected and recited. Secondly, everything he had said regarding the rules to be observed by the monastic community were recollected. Added to these was a third type of memorised material consisting of later analyses of the teachings by learned monks. This tripartite structure is central to all branches of Buddhism.

Read the full article here:

<https://www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/the-buddhist-canon>

## Did You Know?

**Job opportunities for Religious Studies students studying theology and religious studies allows you to explore how religious beliefs and practices shape and influence the world we live in.**

### Work experience

**It's important to get relevant work experience to boost your employability prospects. Talk to professionals in the field you're interested in and consider the different types of placements and work available.**

If you're thinking about work in a religious ministry, talk to local spiritual leaders and get involved in the life of your religious community to find out more about what's involved.

If you want to get into teaching, you will need to have a minimum of two weeks' experience working in a school with children of the age you want to teach. This will show you have the skills and motivation required.

Try to become involved with your local community if you'd like a role that involves working with people or look for work with charitable and volunteer organisations.

### Typical employers

As a theology and religious studies graduate, you could work in a variety of different roles in a range of employment sectors. Typical employers include:

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- national and local government, including the Civil Service and government agencies, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- schools, colleges, and universities (for teaching and research positions)
- charities, voluntary and not-for-profit organisations
- social services and other caring professions
- the church and other religious organisations
- financial and legal firms
- the National Health Service (NHS)
- PR, advertising, sales, and marketing companies
- media companies.

### **Skills for your CV**

Studying Theology and Religious Studies gives you a thorough understanding of the major world religions, their historical development, and their relationship with the world we live in. You'll gain insight into the theological, ethical, cultural, political and philosophical issues of religion.

You also develop skills that are valued by employers in a range of sectors. These include:

- research, analysis, and presentation skills
- critical thinking skills and the ability to interpret information, formulate questions and solve problems
- organisational and time management skills
- teamworking and communication skills
- writing skills, including accurate referencing and the ability to construct a reasoned argument
- IT skills
- empathy and the ability to understand people and take on board others' views
- the ability to work methodically and accurately
- independence of mind and the ability to think for yourself.

### **Further study**

You may choose to increase your knowledge of religion/theology through a postgraduate qualification such as a Masters or PhD. Areas of research include theology, religion and culture, ethics and religious conflict.

Or depending on the career you want, you may need to take a vocational postgraduate course in an area such as teaching, journalism, librarianship, or law.

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Postgraduate courses are also available in subjects such as marketing, finance, human resource management or business/management, so think about which direction you'd like your career to take.

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