



Philosophy, Religion & Ethics

Why Choose Philosophy, Religion & Ethics (PRE)?

PRE at Norwich School aims to facilitate critical thinking, enable understanding and promote intellectual curiosity through collaborative learning to broaden personal development. It gives pupils a chance to explore their own response to different approaches to life and different perspectives on some of the big questions which all human beings face. It enables them to consider complex moral, philosophical and religious questions in a structured, justified and intelligent way and, at the same time, gives them an ability to understand and appreciate alternative and equally valid points of view.

Which is more important – the ending of pain and suffering, or the increase of pleasure?

How far can religion support the idea of equality?

Do humans have a right to life, and a right to choose to die?

How free are human actions and choices?
If we are not free, can we be held responsible for our actions?

Because religious teaching is rooted in history, is it ever relevant to people today?

Should science be controlled by ethics, and, if so, which ethical system?

Can religious experience show that God probably exists?

What is the relationship between religion and mental health?

Is it possible to talk meaningfully about God?

Has science 'discovered' something that mystics knew all along?

Do Near Death Experiences provide reasonable grounds for belief in the afterlife?

Key Information

Pupils will be taught by two teachers.

Exam Board: AQA

Exams: Two papers (3 hours each), each worth 50%.

Component 1: Christianity and the Philosophy of Religion

Section A – God, life after death, the challenge from science, the nature and role of religion and sources of wisdom and authority

Section B – Arguments for the existence of God, evil and suffering, religious experience, religious language, miracles, self, death and the afterlife and the nature and function of religion.

Section C – The dialogue between philosophy and religion.

Component 2: Christianity and Ethics

Section A – Key moral principles, religious identity, religion and sexual identity and religious pluralism.

Section B – Ethical theories, issues of human life and death, issues of animal life and death, meta-ethics, free will and moral responsibility, conscience, Bentham and Kant.

Section C – The dialogue between ethical studies and religion.

Further information about the AQA specification can be found at:
<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/as-and-a-level/religious-studies-7062>



Component 1: Christianity and the philosophy of religion

Section A: Study of religion

- God: monotheism and the Trinity, anthropomorphic descriptions of God, the qualities of God, God in Process Theology.
- Self, death and the afterlife: the nature of the soul, death, spiritual and physical resurrection, judgement, heaven and hell, objective immortality in process theology, the meaning and purpose of life.
- The challenge from science: response of Christians, how far Christian belief is compatible with a scientific world view.
- The nature and function of religion: secularisation, Freud and Marx, liberationist thinking.

Section B: Philosophy of religion

- Arguments for the existence of God: design (Paley's argument, Hume's criticisms), ontological (Anselm's argument, Gaunilo and Kant's criticisms), cosmological (Aquinas' argument, Hume and Russell's criticisms).
- Evil and suffering: natural and moral evil, the logical and evidential problem of suffering, responses - including their strengths and weaknesses - from Hick, the free will defence, Griffin's process theology.
- Religious experience: visions, numinous experiences, mystical experiences, verifying religious experiences including the challenges of doing so, the challenges from science and religious responses to these.
- Religious language: the verification and falsification principles, eschatological verification, 'blik', language games, symbolic and analogical language, the Via Negativa.
- Miracles: realist and anti-realist views, violation of natural law or event, Hume and Wiles on miracles. Self, death and the afterlife: the nature of the soul, the body/soul relationship, continuing personal existence after death.

Section C: The dialogue between philosophy and religion

Questions will test pupils' ability to explain, analyse and evaluate the way philosophy of religion has influenced, and been influenced by, developments in religious belief with reference to and of the issues specified above.

Component 2: Christianity and ethics

Section A: Study of religion

- Key moral principles: God as the Good/morally perfect and the source of moral values, their significance and influence to racial equality, the able-bodied and disabled, allocation of medical resources, theft, truth-telling and lying.
- Religious identity: the role of faith, works and rituals, denominational, traditional and liberal views, expressions of Christian identity, the role of the Christian community in society.
- Sexual identity: marriage, divorce, adultery, celibacy, homosexuality, the changing role of men and women, Christian feminism.
- Religious pluralism: the impact of migration on religious and non-religious worldviews, exclusivism and pluralism, teaching concerning tolerance and respect for non-Christian views.

Section B: Ethics and religion

- Normative ethical theories: deontological, teleological and character-based, the application of these to lying and theft and their strengths and weaknesses for moral decision making.
- The application of natural moral law, situation ethics and virtue ethics: to issues of human life and death (the status and rights of the embryo, embryo research, cloning, 'designer' babies, abortion, voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide, capital punishment), issues of non-human life and death (animals as food, intensive farming, cloning, blood sports, as a source of organs for transplants).
- Introduction to meta-ethics: Divine Command Theory, Utilitarianism, Intuitionism and the strengths and weaknesses of these ideas.
- Free will and moral responsibility: right and wrong, libertarianism, hard determinism, compatibilism, reward and punishment.
- Conscience: the nature and role of the conscience with reference to lying and breaking promises, the value of the conscience.
- Bentham and Kant: comparing the key ideas of Bentham and Kant and their consistency with religious moral decision making.

Section C: The dialogue between ethical studies and religion

Questions will test pupils' ability to explain, analyse and evaluate the way ethical studies have influenced, and been influenced by, developments in religious belief with reference to and of the issues specified above.