



Notre Dame
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A Level Philosophy, Ethics and Religious Studies

1. View our courses [here](#)

2. Exam board specification:

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/>

3. Suggested reading list, websites, pod casts, films etc.

Religious Studies is a great subject to help you build a wide range of skills, including improving your skills as a writer, speaker and thinker.

Even though you haven't been able to finish your Year 11 course this year, you can still practice and develop Religious Studies skills at home. You can read, watch and listen to interesting ideas and think about the opinions expressed. How far do they match your own views? What might someone say if they had a very different opinion? Keep up your writing skills by putting your ideas down on paper – try, if you can, to handwrite, just to keep up the practice of handwriting so that your writing isn't completely illegible by the time you come to Notre Dame

To support your transition from year 11 to first year study at A level please find a short explanation of the course and some suggested reading, activities that could help support you.

The course

At Notre Dame we study OCR Religious Studies which consists of three main areas.

1. Philosophy of Religion – the study of how religious believers relate to the world around them
2. Religion and Ethics – the study of how and why we should be moral and exploring different theories and ethical issues
3. Development of Christian Thought – understanding the different approaches in what Christians believe and why they believe it

Reading good quality writing is the best way of improving your own writing. As you read a good writer, you will gain a better understanding of the meanings of new words and the ways in which carefully chosen words and punctuation can add real emphasis to someone's argument. Different writers express themselves in different ways, and by reading them you will develop your own 'voice'. Reading also helps



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with more basic skills such as spelling, because if you see a word written down often enough, you will know when it 'looks right' when you write the same word yourself.

Thinking skills can be developed if you try to take a questioning attitude to the things you watch, hear and read. Do you agree with what's being said? If you watch a film where people have different attitudes towards something, which do you agree with most, or least, and why?

Here are some different activities and exercises for you try if you're learning from home. In Religious Studies, some of the topics can be quite sensitive, so if the activity involves an issue that might make you upset, choose a different one. These times are already difficult enough; nobody wants you to be upset when there's no teacher there to talk you through your feelings.

Reading activities

Here are some books and some online resources you could try, if you can get hold of them. *Don't worry if they're not available or you can't get on the computer for very long – you won't be at a disadvantage.*

Reading *anything* of good quality, even if it's a novel or a book about an entirely different topic, is always helpful for improving your skills, because you are practising your comprehension skills as well as practising understanding different ways in which writers express their ideas. Your own writing will improve, the more you read.

These are just *some* ideas – you don't have to choose any of these if you'd rather read something else, and there are so many good books in the world that this list could go on for ever but it's a start:

1. **Read a quality newspaper** such as The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The I. The only one that is free online is The Guardian. Look for articles relating to ethical issues. Consider the point of view of the writer and any of the different arguments and ideas expressed.

See two articles below.



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<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/18/death-on-demand-has-euthanasia-gone-too-far-netherlands-assisted-dying>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/10/sunbathing-park-deep-moral-questions-philosophers-coronavirus-individual>

2. **The Sage Train** – Nicky Hansell. This book explores in an imaginative way the lives and thought of some of the philosophers we will be studying
3. **A Little History of Philosophy** – Nigel Warbuton. In short chapters, this book explores the philosophies of many different scholars
4. **The Puzzle of... - Peter Vardy** – this series of non-fiction books is about issues in religion and philosophy, very readable and you don't have to be an expert to enjoy them. You can dip in and out of different chapters rather than having to start at the beginning and work through to the end.
5. **The Diving Bell and the Butterfly** -Jean Dominique Bauby. Deals with a man living with 'locked in syndrome' and his fight to live. We use him as a case study for the topic of euthanasia
6. **Philosophy A Graphic Guide** Dave Johnson and Judy Groves
7. **History of Christianity** Nick Page
8. **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe** CS Lewis
9. **The pig that wants to be eaten** – Julian Baggini
10. **The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy** – A novel by Douglas Adams

Some things to watch, listen and think about:

All kinds of films and series have philosophical and religious ideas in them, so follow your own interests! You could try these, or choose something else, but try and use them as a stimulus for thinking and writing, rather than just sitting in front of them:

The Good Place – the students at Notre Dame really recommend this show to help them understand ethics.



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The Matrix – Good to understand the ideas of Plato

My Sister's Keeper – useful in terms of many philosophical issues

The Truman Show – Free will, relationship between a 'creator and the created'

Jesus of Nazareth – Youtube – entire series. If you are unfamiliar with Christianity then watching this life of Jesus is probably going to give you a good idea of the back ground.

Crash Course in Philosophy [10 minute explanation on Youtube]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAkYt3GY

Beyond Belief – BBC radio on belief – lots of different programmes to choose from

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006s6p6/episodes/player>

BBC A History of Ideas <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04bwydw> Animated short clips exploring different philosophical ideas often with modern culture

The Philosopher's Arms – Discussion of philosophical problems in a pub with a live audience

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b014b73y>

The Philosophy Man – brain riddles to help thinking skills

https://www.thephilosophyman.com/brainsqueezers?fbclid=IwAR1CJjNcJlr1Tq27er7RVcSlvRngrksfKUBywitecy9P3JD1PP3e_rgeu7Y

TED talks

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie – We should all be feminists

Damon Horowitz – Philosophy in prison

Critical thinking skills

Watch this documentary, 'Barra Boy'



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhGX1YCsvAM>

1. Do you think the story provides convincing evidence for reincarnation? Why, or why not?
2. What do you think counts as 'convincing evidence' for life after death (e.g. scripture, near death experiences, nothing)? What makes evidence convincing or unconvincing?
3. Read the accounts in the gospels of the resurrection of Jesus (you could use biblegateway.com if you don't have a Bible at home)

Matthew 28:1 – 10

Mark 16: 1 – 8

Luke 24: 1 – 10

John 20: 1 – 18

4. Do you find these stories convincing? Why, or why not?
5. Do you think the stories contradict each other, or are they just told from different points of view, in your opinion? What might account for the differences and the similarities between the stories?