

SUMMER LEARNING 2021

PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES A LEVEL

Hello and thank you for choosing our A level course. Philosophy, Ethics & 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. It is a challenging, engaging and wide-ranging course which has something for everyone, and we are confident that you will enjoy the journey ahead.

1. [VIEW OUR COURSES HERE](#)

2. [EXAM BOARD SPECIFICATION](#)



You can practise and develop skills needed over the summer. 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? Practise 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 and activities.

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

- Philosophy of Religion — the study of how religious believers relate to the world around them
- Religion and Ethics — the study of how and why we should be moral and exploring different theories and ethical issues

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- 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. Reading also helps 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?

3. SUGGESTED READING LIST, WEBSITES, PODCASTS AND FILMS:

Here are some books and some online resources you could try.

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.

- Read a quality newspaper such as The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Independent. The only one that is free online is The Guardian. Look for articles relating to ethical issues.

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- 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.
- A Little History of Philosophy — Nigel Warbuton. In short chapters, this book explores the philosophies of many different scholars.
- The Puzzle of Christianity – Peter Vardy. If you haven't studied Christianity or religion in general this is a good read. Gives you a very good understanding of the development of ideas in Christianity. Vardy has written other books in his Puzzle of series which can be found cheaply online.
- Sophie's World – Jostein Gardner. Philosophy retold through stories. A highly recommended text which you can dip in and out of.

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.

The Matrix — Good to understand the ideas of Plato

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



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Jesus of Nazareth — Youtube — entire series. If you are unfamiliar with Christianity, then watching this life of Jesus is will give you a good idea of the background.

Philosophy, Ethics & Christianity podcast

BBC Ethics

The Moral Maze (BBC Radio 4)

In Our Time (BBC Radio 4)

BBC A History of Ideas: Animated short clips exploring different philosophical ideas often with modern culture

TED talks

These are usually wonderful, with plenty to stimulate your questioning and reasoning skills.

Dan Gilbert — why we make bad decisions

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie — We should all be feminists

Damon Horowitz — Philosophy in prison

There are loads of talks on here, so use the search engine to find topics that interest you. Practise note-taking; write notes as you listen, just as you would if you were listening to a real-life lecture, and practise the skill of jotting down key points at speed. . Ask yourself questions when you get to the end: what were the speaker's key messages? Do you agree with the speaker? What might someone who disagreed say, and what might their reasons be?

If over the summer you have further questions drop us a message through our Instagram account, @notre_dame_pers_ and we look forward to seeing you in September!