

Scheme of work – Philosophy of religion and ethics

This scheme of work for AS Religious Studies (7061) is designed to help you plan your teaching.

Assumed coverage

This scheme of work is based on 180 guided learning hours.

Arguments for the existence of God

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Learning activities** | **Resources** |
| 1–4 | Ensure the following aims are covered for each argument:* faith: as intellectual assent – the belief that God exists
* faith: ‘belief in’ a personal relationship with God – not necessarily based on reason and ‘reasons’ may not be offered for it
* reason: as justification and defence of something people have already come to believe by other means
* reason: as basis of faith (belief that)
* proof: deductive proof, inductive argument – ‘personal proof’, ie an argument that convinces/establishes beyond reasonable doubt but does not entail truth of the conclusion.

The arguments may be: * aimed at non-believers to persuade them of the truth of the beliefs
* aimed at believers to give them ammunition against critics
* a reflection on faith to deepen understanding of, test, or confirm, what is already believed.

Dialogues: these would all be useful in Dialogues. The evaluation of whether beliefs are reasonable is vital. | Handout covering basic philosophical concepts for development during the course. |
| A handout with an explanation of the steps of the argument could be useful – but the process of working through those steps in discussion makes the reasoning clearer.A ‘borrowing’ chain as an analogy of a chain that cannot start without someone first having the money to lend can be a good analogy.Discuss strengths and weaknesses of the argument: students to look at the stages of the argument and finding weaknesses in each one. It is likely that they will raise points developed by Hume and/or Russell. These could be assessed as a 300-word AO1 answer. For AO2, students will need to be able to debate these criticisms. Students create a chart of strengths and weaknesses, leaving space to add contrasts and counters from the other arguments as they go through, eg the particular strengths of ‘a posteriori’ reasoning over ‘a priori’ etc. Explain the value for faith: Including the distinction between the ‘God of philosophy’ and ‘the God of faith’ Apply understanding of the concept of faith and, where relevant, understanding of the concept of God studied for Component 2. Dialogues: the above is useful.Extension: the problem of induction and drawing conclusions that go beyond the evidence available; impossibility of empirical proof for an immaterial being and the nature of inference from observation to the explanation of that observation both in science and in religion.  |  |
| Starter activities: images of workings of a watch/cogs and wheels etc, diagram of eye/butterfly’s wings – students to compare. Also ask students to look out of window and spot things that are designed, look at each other’s eyes, own thumbs etc. Summarise Paley’s watch argument from *Natural Theology*, the exact wording of Paley’s conclusion after observing the watch is worth using to elicit discussion and evaluation.Hume’s text (an extract from *Dialogues concerning natural religion*) is fairly accessible, but students may need help in organising their ideas by way of a chart or mind map.For discussion: two sets of criticisms may be found: * of the reasoning supporting the claim that the universe has been designed
* from the reasoning that leads to the conclusion that the designer is God.

Consider the strengths and weaknesses of the argument and value for faith. Students could add to their chart from Cosmological. Extension: the ambiguity of the ‘evidence’ can be taken as support for the idea of a ‘hidden’ God who preserves human freedom by making his presence sufficiently clear to allow humanity to believe in him, but conceals it sufficiently for it not to be coercive. This will link to the epistemic distance of Hick’s theodicy. The whole topic anticipates the Problem of Evil debate. | Paley, *Natural theology*, OUPHume, *Dialogues concerning natural religion* |
| Identify the two forms of the ontological argument in Anselm’s Proslogion. The first form in Proslogion 2, the second in Proslogion 3. Dialogues: does faith require a basis in logic/reason? Would the argument have any impact on faith? Discussion of Gaunilo’s criticisms – links to second form of the argument.Discussion of Kant’s criticisms.Consider value for faith: Aquinas rejected the argument; the only characteristic of God considered is necessary existence so Anselm’s argument does not on its own show what kind of being may have that quality or explain why it/he may be worthy of worship. Extension: consider whether omnipotence, omniscience, consciousness (personal nature) could be argued to be necessary qualities of the GCB and the extent to which this God is the God of philosophy rather than of faith.Dialogues: the extension work also links.Students can add a section on Ontological to their chart, emphasise the strengths and weakness of the three arguments and how they can be used to critique each other etc. Dialogues: the evaluation of types of reasoning, value for faith, etc, is useful. | [Proslogion](http://www.logoslibrary.org/anselm/proslogion/) [Article – objections to the Ontological argument](http://www.existence-of-god.com/ontological-objections.html)  |

Evil and suffering

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Learning activities** | **Resources** |
| 5–6  | Explanations of natural and moral evil, and presentations of arguments. In groups, students could mind map as many as possible and classify them; use newspapers etc. Then the examples of natural and moral evil can be used to ‘test’ the claims of the logical and evidential problems. Each student/small group of students should be able to explain the two problems of evil with reference to different examples. Summarise Hick’s soul-making: ‘the encounter with ‘evil’ is the way to maximise human potential’ and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses when applied to the problems of evil.  | [Internet encyclopedia of philosophy – the evidential problem of evil](http://www.iep.utm.edu/evil-evi/#H2) [YouTube – free will defence](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJYycge3eFc) Useful extension material: [philosophy.lander.edu/intro/articles/dostoevsky-a.pdf](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Ckbird%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CTemporary%20Internet%20Files%5CContent.Outlook%5C3N9IPAY4%5Cphilosophy.lander.edu%5Cintro%5Carticles%5Cdostoevsky-a.pdf) Jordan, Lockyer and Tate, *Religious Studies: Philosophy of Religion*, process thought, Nelson Thornes |
| Discuss key ideas of the free will defence, use examples such as Swinburne’s ‘toy world, Genesis 3, Hick’s robots etc. Identify and evaluate strengths and weaknesses of FWD.  |
| Key ideas of process theodicy according to Griffin.Consider the strengths and weaknesses. Summarise the three theodicies as responses to the problems of evil. Students could complete an AO1 style question explaining each theodicy or problem. In small groups plan AO2 responses evaluating the success of each theodicy, or whether evil means there is no God etc. Get students to use the mark schemes to self-assess their answers.  |

Religious experience and Verifying religious experiences

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Learning activities** | **Resources** |
| 7–8 | Visions: students can identify examples and explain the classification of each. They could write, or plan in detail, an AO1 essay on visions. Numinous experiences: explanation of each aspect. Mystical experiences: explanation of each aspect. (Passive and noetic are often the least well understood).Discuss the challenges of verification, science and the responses to the challenges. Students could work in groups and critique a variety of examples of experiences from the perspectives of science and other atheist/theist views, eg Teresa of Avila, Pam Reynolds, Moses and the burning bush, Mohammad’s night journey, the Buddha’s enlightenment, Davey Falcus, John Wesley etc.It is recommended, but not required, that students study the influence of religious experiences solely on the religion they are studying for Component 2. Dialogues: the above will also be useful.Discuss the influence of religious experiences.To avoid generalisations this needs to be specific, eg:* source of knowledge of/about God
* motivation, including conversion
* ‘proof’ of divine credentials.

Discuss the value for religious faith: contrasting views could consider the positive contribution of such experiences both past and present and scepticism among believers today, both about the experiences of others from within their faith and the experiences of those from other faiths. The problem of contradictory revelations. Dialogues: include discussion. | [Britannica – Otto](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rudolf-Otto#ref226756) Search mysterium, tremendum et fascinans [The mystical experience registry](http://www.bodysoulandspirit.net/mystical_experiences/learn/define.shtml)James,W *The varieties of religious experience*Cole, P. *Religious Experience* |

Normative ethical theories

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Learning activities** | **Resources** |
| 16 | Introduction to ethics – focus on the debate between actions being intrinsically right and wrong and actions being wrong only because of their consequence, eg drinking alcohol. Students could create a handout summarising the view that drinking alcohol is intrinsically evil and the view that it may or may not be ‘good’ depending on the consequences. Use examples to illustrate two views of ‘duty’ the duty to obey the moral/ divine law, the duty to avoid harm to self or others, eg the killing of Bin Laden by US forces.Natural moral law – understandings of the concepts of Eternal law and Natural moral law from Aquinas. What is our purpose? Students could list ideas, or consider examples such as a pen, chair etc.Aquinas: ‘all those things to which man has a natural inclination are naturally (seen) by reason as being good.’ Evaluate this view as a class. Note: Aquinas treats the precepts as three – many sources list them as five. * Self-preservation – a natural inclination humans share with all things.
* Those things that nature has taught all animals such as the inclination to sexual intercourse and education of offspring.
* To know God and to live in society – these inclinations are natural to human beings as rational beings.

Dialogues: Natural moral law theory is conventionally described as deontological but like other theories may also be considered a hybrid system of ethics. Classroom activities could include:* students to suggest secondary precepts following from primary precepts already identified. Examples of secondary precepts given by Aquinas – he regarded the following as wrong in themselves (intrinsically wrong) regardless of their consequence: masturbation; adultery; fornication; theft; lying; killing the innocent (murder). Most of the secondary precepts devised by Aquinas are absolutist, but he allows that there will be debate about what the primary precepts require people to do, the secondary principles ‘may be changed in some particular cases of rare occurrence’
* justifying your answer with reference to the primary precepts, why might it sometimes be right not to return to someone something they put into your care for safe keeping?
* how would natural moral law apply to theft and lying? (could the example above could be considered theft?)
* construct a revision guide for the question ‘Explain what Aquinas believed was the difference between a good and an evil action’ which must include case studies (which may be related to the ethical issues that follow). Students can demonstrate their understanding of the four conditions by applying them to the case studies
* create a scenario in which lying might be justified by proportionalism. Refer to the value of lying for those involved, the intention of the moral agent and the disvalue. Repeat for a scenario involving ectopic pregnancy and double effect.
 | [Introduction to ethics and types of ethics](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/)Jordan A, *AQA AS Religious Studies: religion and ethics*, Nelson Thornes[Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*](http://lonang.com/library/reference/aquinas-summa-theologica/) [Doctrine of double effect](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/double-effect/)[Proportionalism](http://www.thetablet.co.uk/student-zone/ethics/natural-law/proportionalism)  |
| 17 | Fletcher’s situation ethics as an example of teleological ethicsCreation of mind map/revision aid/mnemonic for concept of agape and how Fletcher justifies it as the ruling norm of Christian moral-decision making; contrast with natural law ethics. Apply the examples of lying and theft to show objections to following the law in specific situations and how a ‘loving’ decision is made and how that decision could be different in other circumstances. Also consider the following in groups:* how would someone using situation ethics make a decision in the following scenario? A group of shipwrecked sailors in a lifeboat. One has been fatally injured, is unconscious, and obviously dying of his wounds. All in the boat are starving and will also die if they do not eat soon. Someone has suggested that they should kill the dying man and eat his flesh
* explain why theft may be right in some situations but not in others according to situation ethics.

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of situation ethics.  | Jordan A, *AQA AS Religious Studies: religion and ethics*, Nelson ThornesFletcher J, *Situation ethics: the new morality* |
| 18 | Discuss: * what are the purpose(s) of education and how may these be seen to aim at happiness; is ‘happiness’ the ultimate goal/purpose in life?
* why pleasure, money and honours given by society may not be seen as ultimate goals in life
* a working definition of happiness
* Aristotle’s context in classical Greek society – the idea of being judged by one’s character etc (clips of films like *Troy* could be useful).

‘Have a go hero’: a man steps in when he sees a man with a knife threatening a woman. Looking at the description of a ‘virtuous person’ above explain why this may or may not be a virtuous act.Doctrine of the mean: students can create scenarios in which they can apply various virtues and illustrate the mean. Role plays could be used. Devise scenarios in which lying is a possible course of action – the group should decide if lying can be justified by virtue ethics in those situations. Strengths and weaknesses of virtue ethics. Create a revision sheet with the three theories and their evaluations on; this can be used to complete an AO1 style question on the features of the theories, or their strengths and weaknesses. Students to self-assess which theory they need to practise the most, complete a question, then this could be peer-assessed using the mark schemes. | Jordan, Lockyer and Tate, *AQA A2 Religious Studies: ethics*, OxfordAristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*[Article – ethics](http://www.iep.utm.edu/aris-eth/) [Free handouts – ethics](http://www.alevelphilosophy.co.uk/resources/free-handouts-library/handouts-library/ethics/)  |

The application of natural moral law, situation ethics and virtue ethics

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Learning activities** | **Resources** |
| 19–20 | Review the approach each theory takes to moral decision-making, imagined as a general list for decision-makers. Students could create a ‘crib sheet’ for use when applying each theory to each ethical issue to aid scaffolding of answers. For each issue, students need to be aware of intended benefits and of the relevant ethical issues that need to be addressed; then, using this key information, they need to apply the theories. This can lead to evaluation work using questions such as: does the application to ‘real’ issues show any strengths and weaknesses of the theories? Do they lead to definite answers? Does the teleological approach work best? and so on.Dialogues: issues of human and animal life and death including analysis of ethical theory responses and those from the religion studied. | [Ethics resources](http://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/ethics/) [Free handouts – ethics](http://www.alevelphilosophy.co.uk/resources/free-handouts-library/handouts-library/ethics/) [Podcasts and articles – ethics](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/whats-on/ethics-bites)[Article – animal ethics](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/animals/) [Compassion in world farming website](https://www.ciwf.org.uk/)Extension:[Academia.edu](http://academia.edu/) [Foot P, *The problem of abortion and the doctrine of double effect*](http://pitt.edu/~mthompso/readings/foot.pdf)[YouTube – Hursthouse, virtue, theory and abortion part 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fic5rHRt7A) [YouTube – Hursthouse, virtue, theory and abortion part 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jijfTiuMNXE) Hursthouse R, *Applying virtue ethics to our treatment of other animals* |