



Year 12 Syllabus in a nutshell

A Level PRE





Year 12 Syllabus in a nutshell – A Level PRE

Philosophy of Religion

Philosophical Language and Thought		Tick if confident
Ancient philosophical influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The philosophical views of Plato, in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understanding of reality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plato's reliance on reason as opposed to the senses. ○ The Forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The nature of the Forms and the hierarchy of the Forms. ○ The analogy of the cave: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The details of the analogy, its purpose and relation to the theory of the Forms. • The philosophical views of Aristotle, in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understanding of reality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aristotle's use of teleology ○ The four causes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The material, formal, efficient and final causes. ○ The Prime Mover <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The nature of Aristotle's Prime Mover and connections between this and the final cause <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comparison and evaluation of Plato's Form of the Good and Aristotle's Prime Mover • A comparison and evaluation of Plato's reliance on reason (rationalism) and Aristotle's use of the senses (empiricism) in their attempts to make sense of reality 	
Soul, mind and body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The philosophical language of soul, mind and body in the thinking of Plato and Aristotle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plato's view of the soul as the essential and immaterial part of a human, temporarily united with the body. ○ Aristotle's view of the soul as the form of the body; the way the body behaves and lives; something which cannot be separated from the body. • The metaphysics of consciousness, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Substance dualism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The idea that mind and body are distinct substances. ▪ Descartes' proposal of material and spiritual substances as a solution to the mind/soul and body problem. ○ Materialism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The idea that mind and consciousness can be fully explained by physical or material interactions. ▪ The rejection of a soul as a spiritual substance. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The materialist critiques of dualism, and dualist responses to materialism. • Whether the concept of 'soul' is best understood metaphorically or as a reality. • The idea that any discussion about the mind-body distinction is a category error. 	



The Existence of God		
Arguments based on observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teleological argument: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Details of this argument including reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aquinas’ Fifth Way. ▪ Paley. • The cosmological argument: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Details of this argument including reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aquinas’ first three ways. • Challenges to arguments from observation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Details of Hume’s criticisms of these arguments for the existence of God from natural religion. ▪ The challenge of evolution. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether a posteriori or a priori is the more persuasive style of argument. • Whether or not teleological arguments can be defended against the challenge of ‘chance’. • Whether cosmological arguments simply jump to the conclusion of a transcendent creator, without sufficient explanation. • Whether or not there are logical fallacies in these arguments that cannot be overcome. 	
Arguments based on reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ontological argument: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Details of this argument including reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anselm. ▪ Gaunilo’s criticisms. ▪ Kant’s criticisms. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether a posteriori or a priori is the more persuasive style of argument. • Whether or not existence can be treated as a predicate. • Whether or not the ontological argument justifies belief. • Whether or not there are logical fallacies in this argument that cannot be overcome. 	
God and the World		
Religious experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature and influence of religious experience, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mystical experience and Conversion experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examples of mystical and conversion experiences and views about these, including the views and main conclusions of William James. • The different ways in which individual religious experiences can be understood: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As union with a greater power. ○ Psychological effect such as illusion. ○ The product of a physiological effect. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether personal testimony or witness is enough to support the validity of religious experiences. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether or not corporate religious experiences might be considered more reliable or valid than individual experiences. • Whether or not religious experience provides a basis for belief in God or a greater power. • Whether or not there are logical fallacies in this argument that cannot be overcome. 	
<p>The problem of evil</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The problem of evil and suffering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The different presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Logical - the inconsistency between divine attributes and the presence of evil ▪ Evidential - the evidence of so much terrible evil in the world ○ Theodicies that propose some justification or reason for divine action or inaction in the face of evil: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Augustine’s use of original perfection and the Fall. ▪ Hick’s reworking of the Irenaean theodicy which gives some purpose to natural evil in enabling human beings to reach divine likeness. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether or not Augustine’s view of the origins of moral and natural evils is enough to spare God from blame for evils in the world. • Whether or not the need to create a ‘vale of soul-making’ can justify the existence or extent of evils. • Which of the logical or evidential aspects of the problem of evil pose the greater challenge to belief. • Whether or not it is possible to successfully defend monotheism in the face of evil. 	
<p>Theological and Philosophical Developments</p>		
<p>The nature or attributes of God</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments in the understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Omnipotence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Divine power and self-imposed limitation. ○ Omniscience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Divine knowledge and its interaction with temporal existence and free will. ○ (Omni)benevolence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Divine benevolence and just judgement of human actions, including Boethius’s argument relating this to divine foreknowledge, eternity and free will. ○ Eternity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Divine eternity and divine action in time, including Anselm’s four-dimensionalist approach as an extension of Boethius’s view ○ Free will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extent to which human free will reasonably coexists with these attributes. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The above themes in reference to alternative possibilities presented by Boethius, Anselm and Swinburne. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether or not it is possible, or necessary, to resolve the apparent conflicts between divine attributes.• Whether Boethius, Anselm or Swinburne provides the most useful understanding of the relationship between divinity and time.• Whether or not any of these thinkers are successful in resolving the problems of divine knowledge, benevolence, justice, eternity and human free will.• Whether the attributes should be understood as subject to the limits of logical possibility or of divine self-limitation.	
--	--	--



A-Level PRE Religion and Ethics

Normative Ethical Theories		Tick if confident
Natural Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquinas' natural law, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Telos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Origins of the significant concept of telos in Aristotle and its religious development in the writing of Aquinas ○ The four tiers of law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What they are and how they are related: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eternal Law: the principles by which God made and controls the universe and which are only fully known to God. 2. Divine Law: the law of God revealed in the Bible, particularly in the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. 3. Natural Law: the moral law of God within human nature that is discoverable through the use of reason. 4. Human Law: the laws of nations ○ The precepts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What they are and how they are related. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key precept (do good, avoid evil). ▪ The five primary precepts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of life, Ordering of society, Worship of God, Education of children, Reproduction. ▪ The Secondary precepts <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether or not natural law provides a helpful method of moral decision-making. • Whether or not a judgement about something being good, bad, right or wrong can be based on its success or failure in achieving its telos. • Whether or not the universe as a whole is designed with a telos, or human nature has an orientation towards the good. • Whether or not the doctrine of double effect can be used to justify an action, such as killing someone as an act of self-defence. 	
Kantian Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kantian ethics, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Duty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Origins of the concept of duty (acting morally according to the good regardless of consequences) in deontological and absolutist approaches to ethics. ○ The hypothetical imperative. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What it is (a command to act to achieve a desired result) and why it is not the imperative of morality. ○ The categorical imperative and its three formulations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What it is (a command to act that is good in itself regardless of consequences) and why it is the imperative of morality based on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formula of the law of nature (whereby a maxim can be established as a universal law) 2. Formula of the end in itself (whereby people are treated as ends in themselves and not means to an end) 3. Formula of the kingdom of ends (whereby a society of rationality is established in which people treat each other as ends and not means) ○ The three postulates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What they are and why in obeying a moral command they are being accepted: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Freedom 2. Immortality 3. God <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether or not Kantian ethics provides a helpful method of moral decision-making. • Whether or not an ethical judgement about something being good, bad, right or wrong can be based on the extent to which duty is best served. • Whether or not Kantian ethics is too abstract to be applicable to practical moral decision-making. • Whether or not Kantian ethics is so reliant on reason that it unduly rejects the importance of other factors, such as sympathy, empathy and love in moral decision-making. 	
<p>Utilitarianism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilitarianism, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The use of the significant concept of utility (seeking the greatest balance of good over evil, or pleasure over pain) in teleological and relativist approaches to ethics. ○ The hedonic calculus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What it is (calculating the benefit or harm of an act through its consequences) and its use as a measure of individual pleasure. ○ Act utilitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What it is (calculating the consequences of each situation on its own merits) and its use in promoting the greatest amount of good over evil, or pleasure over pain. ○ Rule utilitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What it is (following accepted laws that lead to the greatest overall balance of good over 	



	<p>evil, or pleasure over pain) and its use in promoting the common good.</p> <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether or not utilitarianism provides a helpful method of moral decision-making.• Whether or not an ethical judgement about something being good, bad, right or wrong can be based on the extent to which, in any given situation, utility is best served.• Whether or not it is possible to measure good or pleasure and then reach a moral decision.	
--	---	--



A-Level PRE
Developments in Christian thought

	Insight	Tick if confident
Augustine's Teaching on Human Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human relationships pre- and post-Fall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Augustine's interpretation of Genesis 3 (the Fall) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The state of perfection before the Fall and Adam and Eve's relationship as friends. ▪ Lust and selfish desires after the Fall • Original Sin and its effects on the will and human societies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Augustine's teaching that Original Sin is passed on through sexual intercourse and is the cause of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human selfishness and lack of free will. ▪ Lack of stability and corruption in all human societies. • God's grace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Augustine's teaching that only God's grace, his generous love, can overcome sin and the rebellious will to achieve the greatest good (<i>summum bonum</i>). <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether or not Augustine's teaching on a historical Fall and Original Sin is wrong. • Whether or not Augustine is right that sin means that humans can never be morally good. • Whether or not Augustine's view of human nature is pessimistic or optimistic. • Whether or not there is a distinctive human nature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Death and the Afterlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian teaching on Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Different interpretations of heaven, hell and purgatory, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heaven, hell and purgatory are actual places where a person may go after death and experience physical and emotional happiness, punishment or purification. ▪ Heaven, hell and purgatory are not places but spiritual states that a person experiences as part of their spiritual journey after death. ▪ Heaven, hell and purgatory are symbols of a person's spiritual and moral life on Earth and not places or states after death. • Christian teaching on Election. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Different Christian views of who will be saved, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited election (that only a few Christians will be saved). ▪ Unlimited election (that all people are called to salvation but not all are saved). ▪ Universalist belief (that all people will be saved). 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The above to be studied with reference to the key ideas in Jesus’ parable on Final Judgement, ‘The Sheep and the Goats’ (Matthew 25:31–46). <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whether or not God’s judgement takes place immediately after death or at the end of time. ● Whether or not hell and heaven are eternal. ● Whether or not heaven is the transformation and perfection of the whole of creation. ● Whether or not purgatory is a state through which everyone goes. 	
<p>Knowledge of God’s Existence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Natural knowledge of God’s existence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As an innate human sense of the divine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As all humans are made in God’s image they have an inbuilt capacity and desire to know God, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human openness to beauty and goodness as aspects of God. ▪ Human intellectual ability to reflect on and recognise God’s existence. ○ As seen in the order of creation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What can be known of God can be seen in the apparent design and purpose of nature. ● Revealed knowledge of God’s existence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Through faith and God’s grace: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As humans are sinful and have finite minds, natural knowledge is not sufficient to gain full knowledge of God; knowledge of God is possible through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Faith. ● Grace as God’s gift of knowledge of himself. ● Through the Holy Spirit. ○ Revealed knowledge of God in Jesus Christ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full and perfect knowledge of God is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The life of the Church. ● The Bible. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whether or not God can be known through reason alone. ● Whether or not faith is sufficient reason for belief in God’s existence. ● Whether or not the Fall has completely removed all natural human knowledge of God. ● Whether or not natural knowledge of God is the same as revealed knowledge of God. ● Whether or not belief in God’s existence is sufficient to put one’s trust in him. 	
<p>The person of Jesus Christ</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jesus Christ’s authority as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Son of God. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jesus’ divinity as expressed in his (with reference to Mark 6:47–52 and John 9:1–41): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of God. • Miracles. • Resurrection. ○ A teacher of wisdom: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jesus’ moral teaching on (with reference to Matthew 5:17–48 and Luke 15:11–32): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repentance and forgiveness. • Inner purity and moral motivation. ○ A liberator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jesus’ role as liberator of the marginalised and the poor, as expressed in his (with reference to Mark 5:24–34 and Luke 10:25–37): ▪ Challenge to political authority. ▪ Challenge to religious authority. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether or not Jesus was only a teacher of wisdom. • Whether or not Jesus was more than a political liberator • Whether or not Jesus’ relationship with God was very special or truly unique • Whether or not Jesus thought he was divine. 	
Living		
<p>Christian moral principles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The diversity of Christian moral reasoning and practices and sources of ethics, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Bible as the only authority for Christian ethical practices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As the Bible reveals God’s will, then only biblical ethical commands must be followed. ○ Bible, Church and reason as the sources of Christian ethical practices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Christian ethics must be a combination of biblical teaching, Church teaching and human reason. ○ Love (agape) as the only Christian ethical principle which governs Christian practices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jesus’ only command was to love and that human reason must decide how best to apply this. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether or not Christian ethics are distinctive. • Whether or not Christian ethics are personal or communal. • Whether or not the principle of love is sufficient to live a good life. • Whether or not the Bible is a comprehensive moral guide. 	
<p>Christian moral action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching and example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Duty to God and duty to the State. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bonhoeffer’s teaching on the relationship of Church and State including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obedience, leadership and doing God’s will. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justification of civil disobedience. ○ Church as community and source of spiritual discipline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bonhoeffer’s role in the Confessing Church and his own religious community at Finkenwalde. ○ The cost of discipleship. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bonhoeffer’s teaching on ethics as action, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Costly grace’. • Sacrifice and suffering. • Solidarity. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether or not Christians should practise civil disobedience. • Whether or not it is possible always to know God’s will. • Whether or not Bonhoeffer puts too much emphasis on suffering. • Whether or not Bonhoeffer’s theology has relevance today. 	
Society		
Gender and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effects of changing views of gender and gender roles on Christian thought and practice, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Christian teaching on the roles of men and women in the family and society. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Including reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ephesians 5:22–33</i>. • <i>Mulieris Dignitatem 18–19</i>. ○ Christian responses to contemporary secular views about the roles of men and women in the family and society. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ways in which Christians have adapted and challenged changing attitudes to family and gender, including issues of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motherhood/parenthood. • Different types of family. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether or not official Christian teaching should resist current secular views of gender. • Whether or not secular views of gender equality have undermined Christian gender roles. • Whether or not motherhood is liberating or restricting. • Whether or not the idea of family is entirely culturally determined. 	
Gender and theology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reinterpretation of God by feminist theologians, including the teaching of Rosemary Radford Ruether and Mary Daly on gender and its implications for the Christian idea of God. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ruether’s discussion of the maleness of Christ and its implications for salvation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jesus’ challenge to the male warrior messiah expectation. ▪ God as the female wisdom principle. ▪ Jesus as the incarnation of wisdom. ○ Daly’s claim that ‘if God is male then the male is God’ and its implications for Christianity, including: 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Christianity's 'Unholy Trinity' of rape, genocide and war. ▪ Spirituality experienced through nature. <p><u>Issues discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comparison of Ruether's and Daly's feminist theologies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexism and patriarchy in Christianity, as it has developed in the mainstream Churches. • Whether Christianity can be changed or should be abandoned. • Whether or not Christianity is essentially sexist. • Whether or not a male saviour can save women. • Whether or not only women can develop a genuine spirituality. • Whether or not the Christian God can be presented in female terms. 	
--	---	--

Skills Tick List

What should my (e)file look like?

<u>Checklist</u>	<u>Tick if complete</u>
Detailed class notes per topic	
'Philossary' (key words) clearly listed (and used!) per topic	
An essay per topic	
Additional reading per topic	

What should I be able to do by the end of my L6th?

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Tick if able</u>
Take on board constructive feedback from my essays and incorporate this into my next piece of work	
Understand that a Philosophy essay is a vehicle for making an argument, not telling a story	
Contribute to class discussions without being called upon (be a participant)	
Understand that essays take a WEEK and plan accordingly	
Devote an appropriate amount of time to reading AROUND & OUTSIDE of the topic we are in	
Feeling increasingly confident with timed essays (although this is a work in progress)	
Take detailed notes from my teacher and my classmates WITHOUT being prompted	
Be familiar with, and use, the mark scheme	
Know precisely what is required for AO1 and AO2; be familiar with the mark-scheme	

Who should I am to be by the end of my L6th?

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Tick if true</u>
An engaged and active member of all class discussions	



Interested in the world around me and thirsty for more!	
A student who prioritises thinking independently over rote learning, and begins to grasp the nature of a Philosophy essay	
A student who recognises that my voice matters, and consequently, feels EMPOWERED!	
A student who readily accepts the amount of work and effort needed to be a successful Philosopher, and someone who is prepared to step up to the mark	
An individual who nurtures their natural curiosity and continues to ask the WHY questions	
An individual who is increasingly comfortable with the grey areas of life, and who is ready to embrace nuance	
A person who values the perspectives of others and who listens with empathy	
A student who is receptive to feedback and eager to improve	

What if I can't tick off these bullet points?

- Take ownership of my own learning and work to add to my files/understanding in the topics I am 'light' on.
- Take ownership of my own learning and make an appointment with my teacher.