



## Preparing for Sixth Form and Post-16 study

### Subject: Philosophy, Religion and Ethics

#### Key skills in **Philosophy, Religion and Ethics** for A-level/Post-16 study:

**Problem solving** - Philosophy, Religion and Ethics provides the opportunity to use your problem solving skills and creative thinking to recognise problems and their causes, identify a range of possible solutions and then assess and decide the best way forward.

**Communication** - You will develop listening and persuasive skills as you listen to different points of view and form arguments for and against different views and beliefs that are held.

**Analysis** - In Philosophy, Religion and Ethics you will be collecting and examining information about different viewpoints to help you to arrive at a conclusion to a key question or to make an informed decision. This course will encourage you to develop an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to philosophy, religion and ethics.

**Develop your own values** - By studying Philosophy, Religion and Ethics you will reflect on and develop your own values, opinions and attitudes towards issues of morality and religion.

#### Suggested background reading that will help you to understand the context of this subject post-16:

##### Useful books to read:

##### **Non-fiction books:**

Title and author	Central themes/issues
A Little History of Philosophy By Nigel Warburton	Philosophy begins with questions about the nature of reality and how we should live. These were the concerns of Socrates, who spent his days in the ancient Athenian marketplace asking awkward questions, disconcerting the people he met by showing them how little they genuinely understood. This engaging book introduces the great thinkers in Western philosophy and explores their most compelling ideas about the world and how best to live in it. In forty brief chapters, Nigel Warburton takes us on a chronological tour of the major ideas in the history of philosophy. He provides interesting and often quirky stories of the lives and deaths of thought-provoking philosophers from Socrates, who chose to die by hemlock poisoning rather than live on without the freedom to think for himself, to Peter Singer, who asks the disquieting philosophical and ethical questions that haunt our own times. Warburton not only makes philosophy accessible, he offers inspiration to think, argue, reason, and question in the tradition of Socrates. "A Little History of Philosophy" presents the grand sweep of humanity's search for philosophical understanding and invites all to join in the discussion.
Plato's Republic: A Biography (A Book that Shook the World) (BOOKS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD)	Plato is perhaps the most significant philosopher who has ever lived and the "Republic", composed in Athens in about 375BC, is widely regarded as his most famous dialogue. Its discussion of the perfect city

By Simon Blackburn	- and the perfect mind - laid the foundations for Western culture and, for over two thousand years, has been the cornerstone of Western philosophy. In this book, Simon Blackburn explains the judicial, moral and political ideas in the ""Republic"" and examines its influence on the modern world. He shows why, from St Augustine to twentieth - century philosophers such as Whitehead and Bergson, Western thought is still conditioned by this most important of books.
The Puzzle of Ethics by Peter Vardy	Is it possible to talk about 'right' and 'wrong'? Are 'virtues' part of a bygone era which no longer make sense in the modern world? How do we decide how to behave and how to set our standards? The Puzzle of Ethics poses key ethical questions and explores their consequences for society. are all human beings of equal value? Do animals have the same rights as people? Is abortion justifiable? What is the difference between assisted suicide and legalised murder? Is there any morality in war? How do we find an ethical approach to the environment? Peter Vardy threads his way through the complex moral maze, introducing major philosophers of influence today.

### Fiction books:

Title and author	Central themes/issues
Sophie's World by Jostein Gaarder	This book leads you through a history of the great philosophers' right through to the modern age. With Sophie, the reader is encouraged to question the world around themselves. The teacher-pupil structure enhances the plot, whose mysteries will keep you wondering to the last page.
Life of Pi By Yann Martel	After the tragic sinking of a cargo ship, a solitary lifeboat remains bobbing on the wild, blue Pacific. The only survivors from the wreck are a sixteen year-old boy named Pi, a hyena, a zebra (with a broken leg), a female orang-utan and a 450-pound Royal Bengal tiger. The scene is set for one of the most extraordinary and best-loved works of fiction in recent years.
The Poisonwood Bible By Barbara Kingsolver	An international bestseller and a modern classic, this suspenseful epic of one family's tragic undoing and their remarkable reconstruction has been read, adored and shared by millions around the world. This new edition for 2017 features a cover design by award-winning fashion designer, Tina Lobondi. This story is told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them everything they believe they will need from home, but soon find that all of it - from garden seeds to Scripture - is calamitously transformed on African soil

### Useful websites:

Link	Description
<a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UcTOLJIWPWAcxFa37iQOUtOA">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UcTOLJIWPWAcxFa37iQOUtOA</a>	MrMcMillanREvis YouTube channel for A Level RS. Mostly useful for Philosophy. This may not be for your

	exam board – so use your specification to check that you are learning relevant material.
<a href="http://www.rsrevision.com/contents/index.htm">http://www.rsrevision.com/contents/index.htm</a>	A collection of revision materials – not exam board specific and so you need to check which information is relevant.
<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl">http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl</a>	In our Time is a Radio 4 programme which looks at influential ideas and people. It often takes complex ideas and makes them easy to understand. As well as watching out for new episodes the archives are useful. There is a religion section and a philosophy section.
<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09v6xx3">http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09v6xx3</a>	The Moral maze is particularly useful for Ethics and Theme 3 Christianity. Each week a panel discusses an ethical issue. The archives are full of useful episodes.
<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006s6p6/episodes/player">https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006s6p6/episodes/player</a>	Beyond Belief is radio 4's weekly programme that looks at faith in the modern world, probably most useful for the Christianity side of the course.
<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/b007zpll?suggid=b007zpll">https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/b007zpll?suggid=b007zpll</a>	The Big Questions is on every Sunday morning, an audience discuss moral issues. Mostly relevant to Ethics and Christianity.
<a href="https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/a-level/subjects/religious-studies/">https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/a-level/subjects/religious-studies/</a>	The Student Room has lots of information about Philosophy and Ethics including information about the exam boards. Check with the 6th Form you are attending which exam board specification they follow.
<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/topics/Ethical_theories">https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/topics/Ethical_theories</a>	This section of the BBC website has discussions about different ethical ideas and ethical theories.

### Relevant films/videos to watch:

Films and videos	Description
The Matrix	This is a sci-fi adventure about a man who comes to believe that his everyday world is the product of a computer-driven digital matrix that feeds on humans.
The Minority Report	In a future where a special police unit is able to arrest murderers before they commit their crimes, an officer from that unit is himself accused of a future murder.
<a href="#">Does God Exist? William Lane Craig vs. Christopher Hitchens - Full Debate [HD]</a>	On April 4, 2009, William Lane Craig and Christopher Hitchens met at Biola University to debate the question of God's existence. Craig is one of the world's foremost Christian apologists. Hitchens, is a leading spokesman for the "new atheism" movement.
I, Robot	A future, 2035, when robots have become man's best friend. Employed by everyone to do the manual tasks that everyone hates to do, a servile underclass..Detective Del Spooner is investigating the death of a scientist. He hates robots and thinks that the suspicious death involved a robot.

### Suggested activities:

#### 1. Watch the film The Matrix

In at least 1000 words explore in an essay the arguments for and against taking the red or blue pill before reaching your own justified conclusion.

Things to include:

- a) Is it better to live in blissful ignorance?
- b) Is it better to know the truth even if that is painful?
- c) In your experience are people honest with themselves or do we hide painful truths?
- d) Is there one truth for everyone, or is it more subjective than that?

Your essay is called

**“ Should we choose the red or blue pill?”**

#### 2. Watch the film The Minority Report

In at least 1000 words, explore in an essay the arguments for and against punishing criminals for the crimes you know that they are going to commit - before they actually commit the crime. Your essay must include your own justified conclusion.

Things to include:

- a) Does it benefit the rest of society to punish criminals before they can do harm
- b) Do you think that we can predict who the criminals in society will be?
- c) Do criminals freely choose to commit crimes or are they victims of their own circumstances?

Your essay is called

**“ If we know that somebody is going to commit a crime should we punish them before they have a chance to cause harm to others”**

#### 3. Research Judith Jarvis Thompson views about abortion.

In at least 1000 words, explore the arguments for and against Judith Jarvis Thompson’s views.

Things to include:

- a) What are the main arguments about abortion that are presented?
- b) Are these arguments strong or weak arguments?
- c) After reading the argument, what is your reaction to the arguments presented?

#### 4. Choose a fiction book to read.

Write a report about the philosophical, ethical or religious issues raised in the book.

Things to include:

- a) Is the book presenting a philosophical, ethical or religious issue? How do you know?
- b) What is the issue that is being presented?
- c) Who are the main characters and what is their role in the book?
- d) What conclusions do you draw about the issue at the end of the book?