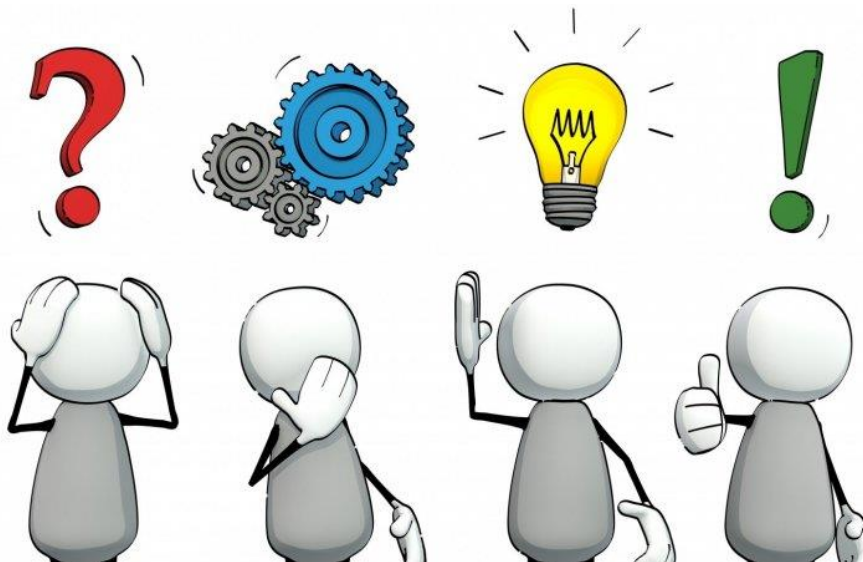


Introduction to Religious Studies A Level



Name: _____

Welcome to RS!

Religious Studies is a fascinating subject that develops a wide range of skills, including improving your skills as a writer, speaker and thinker.

It's really important to be organised in your studies and so your first task is an organisation one!

TASK 1: (15 minutes)

Course details: You are studying Religious Studies A-Level. The exam board is **OCR** and your main religion is **Christianity**. A brief overview of the course is here:

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/religious-studies-h173-h573-from-2016/specification-at-a-glance/>

You can look at the full specification here too.

Create a folder for your RS lessons. Use dividers to create the following three main sections:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Religion and Ethics
- Developments in religious Thought. [We call this DCT – Development of **Christian** Thought]



TASK 2: (40 minutes)

As you progress through the course, you will realise that many words and ideas we use in everyday life have much deeper and complex meanings, one of these words is '**proof**'.

- Read the information 'Methods of proving?' below
- Write out answers to the questions that are at the end of the sheet.

METHODS OF PROVING?

Over the centuries countless people have tried to prove that God exists because it matters to religious believers that their faith has credibility.

To prove something means to provide conclusive reasons for accepting it as true. Providing conclusive reasons for accepting the truth of God's existence has not been easy and philosophers have tried all the principle methods for proving

Essentially when someone is trying to prove something she/he is attempting to show that something is true. In other words she/he is trying to convince someone of something and a successful proof is one that removes any possibility of reasonable doubt. There are three main types of proof.

God and Proof. John Lee.

There are three types of proof used by philosophers to try to establish the truth of a statement:

- **direct proof** – a way of showing, in a direct and immediate way that something is true. It is based on empirical evidence.

One way in which someone may try to prove something is directly. Suppose, for example, that someone in England wanted to prove that pillar boxes are red. Generally it is agreed that this is obvious: it is self evident that pillar boxes are red. People observe (directly) that pillar boxes are

red. However, even though it is obvious this may still be considered to be a proof as it is not possible to rationally doubt what is being seen. This type of "proof" is obviously very basic, and would not necessarily be one that is used all that often, but if a similar proof of God's existence can be found, then God's existence would be proven as it would be shown to be obvious.

God and Proof p. 5

Some religious believers claim that religious experiences in which an individual "sees" or "hears" God would count as direct proof of the existence of God, - **the argument from religious experience.** :

- **deductive reasoning** - a process of reasoning in which the conclusion follows logically and inevitably from the premises (the propositions / points on which the argument is based.) The argument has a series of premises linked by logical steps so the argument has the power to be completely convincing. The premises are "*a priori*" (coming before experience).

Most arguments are based on a series of assumptions; these are called "premises". These premises form the basis of an argument and the statement that someone is attempting to prove is called the "conclusion". For example, suppose somebody wanted to prove that a dog called Sophie has fleas. An argument for this could be based on two assumptions: firstly that all dogs have fleas and secondly that Sophie is a dog (these are the premises). It could therefore be concluded that Sophie has fleas.

Thus the ideas of "premises" and "conclusions" are important. In logic a "successful" argument is one in which the conclusion is implied by the premises. This is often expressed as "if the premises are true, then the conclusion must also be true" or in other words the conclusion cannot be denied. Such successful arguments are known as "valid" arguments and the type of reasoning involved is called "deductive reasoning". (The conclusion is deduced from the premises.)

There is, however, another important aspect of logical arguments that needs to be kept in mind. Consider, for example, the following argument: All politicians are men, Mrs. Thatcher was a politician, therefore Mrs. Thatcher was a man. According to logic this is a valid argument:

the conclusion does follow on from the premises. However, it is clear that the conclusion is not true. This is because the premises on which the argument is based are not true; it is not true that all politicians are men. Thus even though the argument follows the laws of logic and is valid it is still possible to doubt the conclusion.

It is the implications of this that are important. In order to prove something by means of deductive reasoning not only is a logically valid argument required but it has to be an argument in which the premises are true. *God and Proof p. 6 ff.*

For centuries philosophers have struggled with the idea of finding a deductive argument for the existence of God that is both valid and has premises that can be shown to be true. If they were to succeed it would then be illogical for anyone to refuse to believe in the existence of God. **The Ontological argument** is a deductive argument that has been refined and refashioned many times.

Philosophers have also produced arguments for the existence of God based on inductive logic

- **inductive reasoning**. – a process of reasoning that reaches general conclusions from particular examples. This type of reasoning is often based on evidence of some kind, and so the premises of the argument are said to be "*a posteriori*" (following from experience.) Scientists commonly use inductive argument.

An inductive argument is one that attempts to make a general conclusion based on some evidence. This evidence is usually based on experience or experiment. An excellent example of the way an inductive proof might work can be found in science. A scientist might observe that when a piece of metal is heated it expands; she/he might then observe that another piece of metal also expands when it is heated. From this, and a series of other observations, the scientist might make the general conclusion that all metal expands when it is heated. In other words the conclusion has been based on experience and observation.

Science is clearly an excellent discipline that uses experiment to prove something. However, the idea of evidence is not limited to repeated experiment; proofs are found in other areas. Suppose, for example, that someone wishes to prove that Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492. This is an historical claim and it would not be possible to construct an experiment to try to show that it was true; rather evidence would need to be gathered from sources such as documents in Christopher Columbus' time. In order to establish a proof that Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492 it would be necessary to determine whether the evidence collected is convincing.

There are also other types of evidence that are often used as attempts to prove something. As an example suppose a company wanted to prove that its brand of washing-up liquid was the best. One way to try to do this would be through market research. A representative sample of people might be interviewed and if the company's washing-up liquid is judged the most effective and popular, then this might be seen as evidence that it is the best..... there is another important form of inductive argument and that is the argument from analogy. An analogy is a comparison of one thing to another to show how they are similar. This can be used as a proof of something if, for example, the two things that are being compared are very similar (or identical) in many ways and the first thing has a quality but it is not known whether the second thing has this quality: it could be concluded that it does since the two things are so similar in other ways.

Clearly one of the biggest problems with inductive arguments is that they do not, and indeed cannot, produce proofs that completely remove an element of doubt from the conclusion. In other words the conclusion does not necessarily follow from the premises. This is important to remember when considering "proofs" of God's existence: the idea of certainty can no longer apply.

God and Proof. p. 10 ff.

There have been a number of attempts to use evidence or observation as the starting point for arguments for the existence of God. These inductive arguments include the **Cosmological argument**, the **Design argument** and the closely related **Teleological argument** and also the **Moral argument**.

1. *What is meant by the term proof?*

2. *List the three methods for providing proof.*

3. *Explain how direct proof works – what is the weakness of this type of proof?*

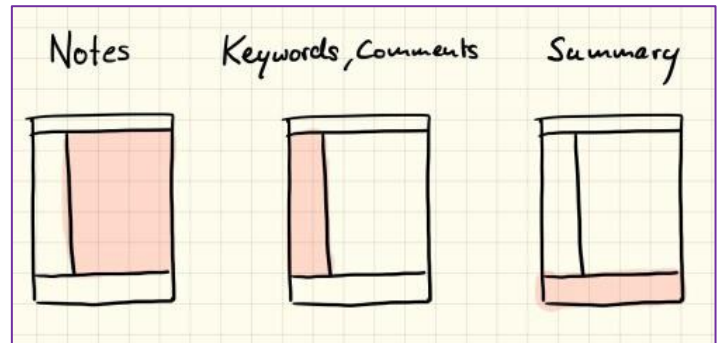
4. *What is deductive reasoning?*
5. *Explain how deductive reasoning leads to proof.*
6. *What makes a deductive argument valid?*
7. *Is a valid argument always convincing? – what is necessary to make it convincing?*
8. *What is inductive reasoning?*
9. *Explain how inductive reasoning leads to proof.*
10. *Why can this type of argument never lead to absolute proof / certainty?*

TASK 3 (15 minutes)

Watch this video clip from crash course philosophy (Youtube) and use this page to record your notes.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAkYt3GY&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNgK6MZucdYldNkMybYIHKR&index=2

Write notes to summarise your understanding. A good method for note taking is the **Cornell method**. [JetBrains IDEs - 50sec \(youtube.com\)](#) The picture and clip gives a brief overview of how to set up Cornell notes.



TASK 4 (1 hour)

This is an on line ethics text book, **Ethics for A Level by Mark Dimmock and Andrew Fisher**. It will be a useful support throughout your course, so add it to your favourites!

<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/639#page/1/mode/2up>

Read the **introduction** chapter and answer the questions at the end of the chapter. Use this page for your answers.

TASK 6 (15 minutes)

- You will study theology as part of your A-level. For this, it is helpful to know the story of the person of Jesus. To help with this, we recommend reading one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark (shortest!), Luke, John) or watching the Miracle Maker film! This link gives a short overview of Mark's Gospel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGHqu9-DtXk>

TASK 7 (1 hour research, 1 hour information page)

- In Religious Studies, you will be introduced to many scholars to support arguments you make in your essays. Choose one scholar and produce an information page/presentation on them.

In this you need to make sure you have completed the following success criteria:

- When were they alive?
- What key books did they write?
- What key issues did they write about?
- Are there any key quotes?
- Do you find their work convincing?

Choose from:

- Plato
- Aristotle
- St Augustine
- St Thomas Aquinas
- Richard Swinburne
- Mary Daly
- Joseph Fletcher
- Jeremy Bentham

Scholar information page:

Enrichment Reading List

The aim of wider reading is always to help develop your understanding and your critical reading skills. The wider reading will benefit you by 'filling in the gaps' in your knowledge, so that you understand the context of the topics and scholars you are studying. The following books are suggested as background reading:

The Puzzle of Ethics Peter Vardy and Paul Grosch

Ethics Matters by Charlotte Vardy and Peter Vardy

God Ethics Matters by Charlotte Vardy and Peter Vardy

The Puzzle of God Peter Vardy

The Puzzle of Christianity Peter Vardy

The Great Philosophers Stephen Law (Chapters on Socrates, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, Renee Descartes, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham, Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Marx, George Edward Moore, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, Simone de Beauvoir, A J Ayer, Peter Singer)

Sophie's World (Fiction) Jostein Gaarder

Philosopher Kings - <http://www.philosopherkings.co.uk/> this website is good for stretch and challenge. It is very detailed and if you wish to research topics or scholars in more detail this is a great place to start. It is NOT specific to our current Specification, it has been in existence since before the specifications were renewed in 2016, and some of the content reflects this.

Dialogue Magazine

RS Review magazine.

Recommended books by OCR

Catechism of the Catholic Church by Geoffrey Chapman

Situation Ethics – The New Morality by Joseph Fletcher

Causing Death and Saving Lives (Penguin) by John Glover

Practical Ethics by Peter Singer

Business Ethics by Andrew Crane

Utilitarianism by John Stuart Mill

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith by The Catholic Church

Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong by Louis Pojman

The Four Loves by C.S Lewis

Physics (Oxford World's Classics) by Aristotle

Consciousness; an introduction by Susan Blackmore

The Blind Watchmaker* by Richard Dawkins

Principles of Philosophy by Rene Descartes

Idea of the Holy by Rudolf Otto

An Introduction to Plato's Republic * by Julia Annas

The Concept of the Mind (Penguin) by Ryle Gilbert

God, Freedom and Evil by Alvin Plantinga

Intro. to the Philosophy of Religion by Brian Davies

The Question of God by Michael Palmer

Consciousness; an introduction by Susan Blackmore

The Blind Watchmaker* by Richard Dawkins

Principles of Philosophy by Rene Descartes

Idea of the Holy by Rudolf Otto

An Introduction to Plato's Republic by Julia Annas

The Concept of the Mind (Penguin) by Ryle Gilbert

God, Freedom and Evil by Alvin Plantinga

Intro. to the Philosophy of Religion by Brian Davies

The Question of God by Michael Palmer

The Pansycast – A podcast which shadows the OCR Philosophy, Ethics and Theology course specifically. Although the first few podcasts are not as good as the later ones, they should be your first 'port of call' for independent preparation and/or review of topics:
<https://thepansycast.com/home>
<https://thepansycast.com/episodes-by-category>

To help with your critical reasoning, these BBC podcasts will help you see how people create and criticise arguments, and then draw reasoned conclusions:
Sweet Reason
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bcf8sr/episodes/downloads> this debating programme sets out various arguments then comes to a judgement.

Morality in the 21st Century
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bh7jkg/episodes/player> this programme listens to various informed views, then engages 6th formers in debate and listens to their judgements.

'Philosophy Bites', 'Ethics Bites' and 'A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps' are all podcasts you can subscribe to, but they are vast and it may be better to wait and search by keywords or for scholars when you are on the course itself. Likewise the BBC Radio 4 'In Our Time' and 'The Moral Maze' radio programmes / podcasts. 'The Philosopher's Arms' (BBC) is a light-hearted look at philosophical issues, the earlier programmes may deal with more well-known philosophical issues. 'The Ferryhill Philosophers' (BBC Drama) is another one to listen out for, but these episodes are not currently available to playback.