



Summer School

Religious Studies



Summer activities – Religious Studies

Religious Studies is also known as Philosophy and Ethics although many students call it Philosophy for short. Philosophy and Ethics sums up the course content, from ancient philosophers such as Plato to modern ethical questions around say sex and relationships. The course is very broad and not easy to pin down. In some ways it is a critical thinking course, it is about giving you the skills to think clearly and evaluate difficult ideas from different perspectives. Many of these questions are clearly religious in nature, but you don't have to have any particular beliefs in order to do the course, rather be willing to engage with them for yourself. The course is delivered by interactive lessons, the students are the most valuable learning resource, as well as the top priority! There are 3 modules in the course:

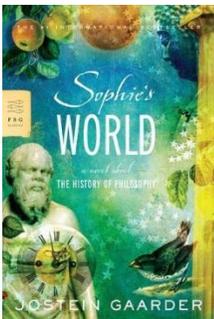
Philosophy of Religion
Religious Ethics
Developments in Religious Thought

Each module is assessed by a 2 hour exam, in which you write 3 essays from a choice of 4. No one I have taught has ever failed the course and with commitment and engagement students do well, most achieve or exceed their target grades and the value added is positive for the course.

What makes a good Religious Studies student?

The most important characteristic here is the willingness to engage openly with the course content and views which might be very different to your own. Whatever your current perspective you will find the course challenging. A good student will build up a body of knowledge and arguments which could be used to respond to different questions. This will involve developing both language and critical thinking skills which are useful for so many things in the future. Religious Studies students have gone on to many different careers, teaching, social work, police, media, journalism, medicine and many others.

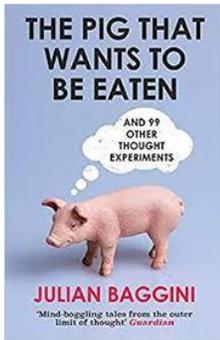
Additional reading



Sophie's World by Jostein Gaarder

When 14-year-old Sophie encounters a mysterious mentor, who introduces her to philosophy, mysteries deepen in her own life. Why does she keep getting postcards addressed to another girl? Who is the other girl? And who, for that matter, is Sophie herself? To solve the riddle, she uses her new knowledge of philosophy, but the truth is far stranger than she could have imagined.

The Pig That Wants to Be Eaten by Julian Baggini



Is it right to eat a pig that wants to be eaten? Are you really reading this book cover, or are you in a simulation? If God is all-powerful, could he create a square circle? Here are 100 of the most intriguing thought experiments from the history of philosophy and ideas - questions to leave you inspired, informed and scratching your head, dumbfounded.

Content

1. An interesting and easy place to start the course would be to watch the film 'The Truman Show', which is widely available. We usually watch the last 15 minutes of the film in the first lesson, because it questions how we know if the world is real and the struggle for us to be 'true', (Truman!) ourselves. Try making a list of questions which you think the film addresses, there might be more than you think!
2. The Truman Show has links with Plato's cave allegory. Do some research on the cave story. You could then try to write about what you think it is about and what interests you in it. Try to engage with it for yourself as this is a fundamental course skill. If you are artistic you could try drawing the cave and perhaps labelling it or trying to show its meaning in other ways.
3. Look out for ethical issues in the news or the world around you. There are many questions you could think about. Here are some of the questions we will look at in the first year:

Should we legalise voluntary active euthanasia?

Is human life valuable in itself?

Should businesses encourage whistle blowers?

Is the environment only valuable when people benefit?

You could take any of the questions above and write out your thoughts on it, or perhaps create your own little 'podcast' that you could listen to later when we are doing the topic.

4. Another way of developing your thinking is to write your own poem or short story which has a philosophical or ethical twist.