

philosophy  
ethics  
theology

xaverian college

What is philosophy?

What is ethics?

What is theology?

What will I study?

How will I study?

What can I do next?

This resource has been written to give you a taste of philosophy, ethics and theology.

Together, these three topics make up A Level Religious Studies.

A Level Religious Studies is a popular subject at Xaverian College, taught by enthusiastic teachers with new resources.

This must be the strangest year we have ever experienced. This A Level looks at ancient and modern thinkers who have helped to explore some of the most difficult questions life raises ...

# What will I study?

## Year one:

### Philosophy

Ancient Greek philosophers:  
Socrates, Plato & Aristotle.

Are we just a body,  
or do we have a soul as well?

Can you prove God exists:  
using evidence from science?

Can you prove God exists:  
using evidence from philosophy?

The problem of evil and  
the problem of suffering.

Religious experiences,  
and scientific explanations.

### Ethics

Natural law ethics:  
some laws just have to be followed.

Situation ethics:  
every situation is different.

Kantian ethics: treat others  
as you want to be treated.

Utilitarian ethics:  
do what makes most people happy.

Euthanasia:  
is it right or wrong?

Business ethics:  
is capitalism right or wrong?

### Theology

Lust, selfishness and desire:  
can humans ever be good?

Heaven and hell:  
are they real?

God:  
can we know what God is like?

Jesus:  
can we know what Jesus is like?

Christianity:  
what is the Bible?

Christianity:  
Christians who stood-up to Hitler.

## Year two:

### Philosophy

God:  
what is God like?

Philosophy of language:  
is language just symbolic?

Twentieth century philosophy  
and modern interpretations.

### Ethics

What does it mean to be 'good'?  
Does everyone agree?

Do you have a conscience -  
religious and psychological views.

Sex.  
Homosexuality.

### Theology

Gender and  
Feminism.

Secularism and  
Karl Marx.

Multi-faith societies and  
Christianity.

one exam

one exam

one exam

= A Level Religious Studies

# What do former students say?

**“This is a really enjoyable subject with great teachers, great trips and great course content. Well worth taking!”**

**Rachel Ibram**

**“This has been an interesting and enriching course. The debates are always stimulating and it’s great to voice your views whilst also listening to the views of others.”**

**Lizzie Power**



# How will I study?

With lots of teacher attention in small classes and with differentiated materials you will have every opportunity to fulfil your potential as so many of our former students have done. You will have access to a superb collection of online resources and to the well-stocked college library.

You will also be able to explore this subject outside of the classroom:

- ▶ Courses at Manchester University.
- ▶ Visit to Liverpool Hope University.
- ▶ Oxford University summer school.
- ▶ Residential intensive revision trip to the Lake District.
- ▶ Trip to London and the British Museum.
- ▶ Visit to the enclosed order of Carmelite nuns in Wetherby.
- ▶ College Philosophy Club.
- ▶ Q&A with published theologian Sr Margaret Atkins.
- ▶ Visit to Manchester Buddhist Centre.
- ▶ Visit to British Muslim Heritage Centre.
- ▶ Visit to Jewish Museum.
- ▶ Visit to Liverpool Cathedral.

At the end of your course you will have a qualification that universities and employers value.

Universities and employers recognise our students as possessing an excellent analytical mind and the ability to reason and express themselves articulately.

The vast majority of our students progress to university. Former students have gone on to pursue varied careers, for example in journalism, publishing, marketing, management, nursing and teaching.

# Sample lessons

Here are three sample lessons  
to get you started!

# Ethics.

Look at the following situations. What would you do? Justify your decision.

1	<p>You witness a car crash. The wreckage is burning, but you may be able to save one of the two passengers. To your horror, you realise that one is a member of your family and the other is a famous cancer specialist on the brink of a breakthrough.</p>
	<p><b>What do you do?</b></p>
	<p><b>Why?</b></p>

2	<p>Your ship goes down and you're lost in the sea with two others in a life raft. You have no food. Without a supply of food, there's no hope of rescue before you starve to death. Two would survive by eating the third. Otherwise, all three will die.</p>
	<p><b>What do you do?</b></p>
	<p><b>Why?</b></p>

3	<p>You are a doctor when a healthy young man walks into reception and says that several members of his family are in danger of dying because they need organ transplants. One needs a heart, one needs a lung, two need kidneys and one needs a liver. He wants you to give him a painless but lethal injection, then take his organs and use them to save his relatives. If you don't, he says he will go abroad to a doctor who has agreed to 'have a go' at the operations for a small price.</p>
	<p><b>What do you do?</b></p>
	<p><b>Why?</b></p>



4

An empty train is fast approaching a junction. You are standing by the points. If you do nothing, the train will go straight on and will run over a baby who has crawled onto the line. If you alter the points, the train will be diverted and will run over a drunken old homeless man who is lying on the track.

**What do you do?**

**Why?**

5

You are on a business trip visiting a foreign country and, as part of your tour, your hosts show you around a local prison. You are shocked to find that the guards are about to execute six political prisoners. The prison governor explains that as today is a festival, in a gesture of goodwill to his important guest, he will let you shoot one of the prisoners dead and then release all of the others from prison.

**What do you do?**

**Why?**

- ▶ Were these easy decisions?
- ▶ Talk through the dilemmas with someone else you know.
- ▶ Are they generally in agreement with you? Or not?
- ▶ Why do you think this is so?
  
- ▶ Did you ever say 'it depends'?
- ▶ If so, you probably fall into the category of **moral relativist**.
- ▶ If you had very clear-cut answers, then you could well be a **moral absolutist**.

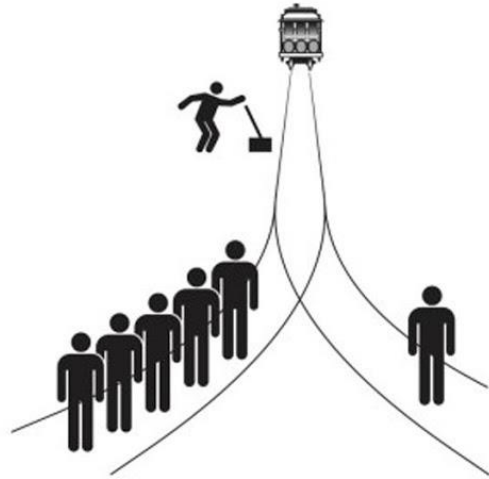


# Ethics on-line.

You could explore some of these on-line links by clicking on the box:



**Should Batman kill the Joker?**



**What would you do?**



**Who was Jeremy Bentham?**



**Would you let go?**

# Philosophy.

Is what you see all there is? Or is there more to life than that?

1



In 2018 Donald Glover released the single 'This is America' under his stage name Childish Gambino. Do you know the song? If not, go and watch it. The song and video are very powerful. They have a message.

**What do you think Donald Glover's message is?**



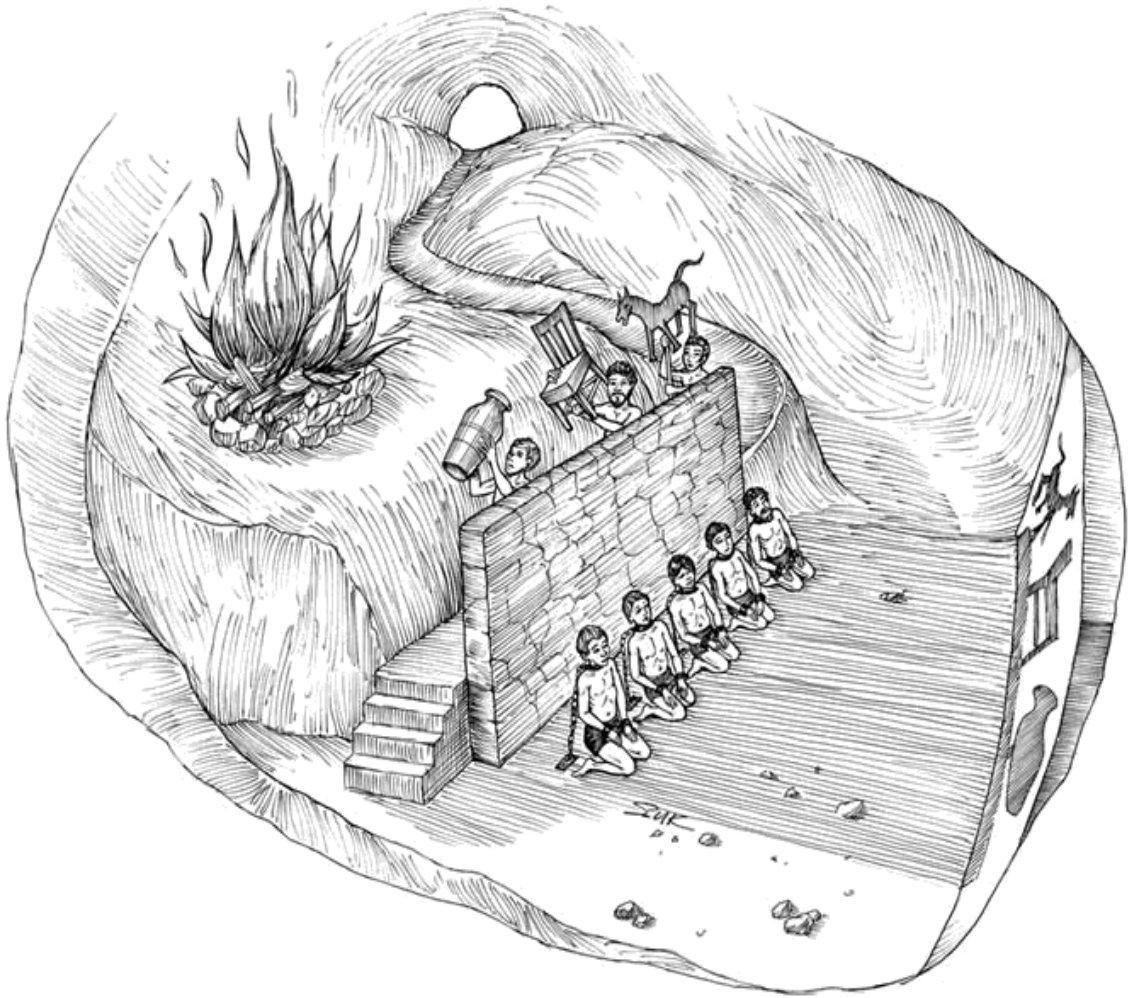
This is how the writer Ada Amoako has interpreted the work:

2

“One interpretation is a denunciation of the **distractions that keep many Americans from noticing how the world around them is** falling apart. Those diversions are represented by Glover and the schoolkids’ performances; their choreographed moves include at least 10 different popular dances, such as the shoot and the South African Gwara Gwara. Viral dances tend to be associated with frivolity and vapidness. Glover, however, subverts an uplifting communal activity to deliver a powerful indictment of the unsettling contradictions in American society.”

**What distractions keep people from noticing what’s really going?**

# 3



One of the most famous ideas in Philosophy is that we are all being distracted by the stuff going on around us, and that very few people notice what is really important. This idea was first put forward by the Greek philosopher **Plato** in his allegory called '**The Cave**'. In other words, we are all trapped in a cave, unaware of what's really going on. Donald Glover has updated this to say we are all trapped by popular dance and music crazes, unaware of what's really going on.

Learn about Plato's cave by clicking on the picture. Don't worry about what we've not studied yet. Instead, work out what you think these represent in the allegory:

**The prisoners:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The cave:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The shadows:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The sunlight:** \_\_\_\_\_



# Theology.



Listen to Stormzy sing 'Blinded by your grace'. Follow the lyrics.

"Lord, I've been broken  
Although I'm not worthy  
You fixed me, I'm blinded  
By your grace."

[CLICK HERE.](#)

Watch Usher sing 'Amazing Grace at Kobe Bryant's memorial. Follow the lyrics.

"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now am found  
Was blind but now I see."

[CLICK HERE.](#)



1

Grace is an important and comforting idea for Christians. Now that you have listened to these two songs, try the following question:

Imagine you are deciding what music to play at the memorial of a Christian. Say whether you think these would be good songs to play. Explain your answer.

Stormzy:

Usher:

2



The Christian idea of grace is linked to the life of Jesus. Jesus' message comforts people who feel 'broken' and 'not worthy' and 'lost'.

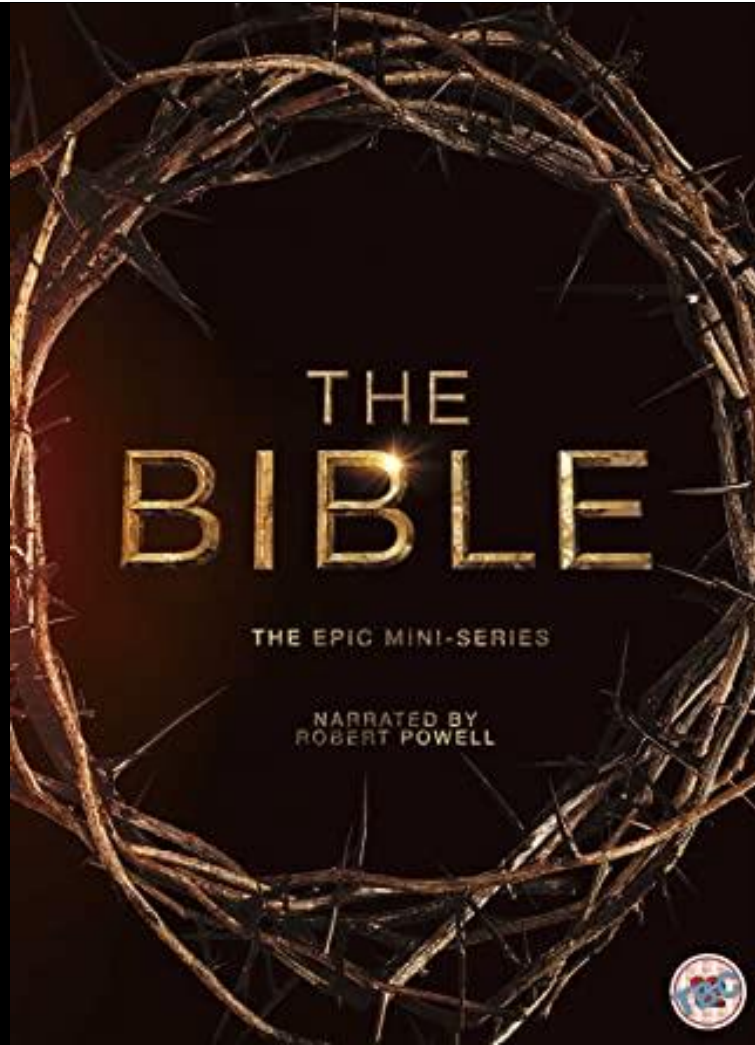
**Only one person in this London Underground railway carriage has noticed Jesus.**

**Who is it?\***

**Why do you think the artist has chosen to depict Jesus (who lived 2000 years ago) travelling on the London Underground today?**

\* Clue: how are the seats arranged on the London Underground?

3



The fastest-selling boxset in history wasn't 'Breaking Bad' or 'Fleabag'. It was 'The Bible'. Watch the clip above, showing the Christian Easter story.

**So, in this final activity, have a think about how Jesus brings help to his friends back then and to Christians today.**

**Depending on when you get this, it is highly likely we are still living in quarantine.**

**Write in this box three things you could try to do to be a bit more helpful around the house. Write them with the lid still on your pen, so only you know what you have written.**

1

2

3



**Keep safe, and we look forward to seeing you in September if you choose to do this subject.**