



Philosophy and Ethics

A level Philosophy and Ethics involves the study of 3 disciplines of wisdom: Philosophy, Moral Philosophy (Ethics) and Theology. It is a study of the big questions such as “why are we here?” or “indeed are we actually here?”, “how does a person act morally?” or “is there such a thing as right and wrong moral action?”, “is a person saved or damned before they are born?” or “is there actually a hell?”.

We follow the OCR Religious Studies A-level course you can explore it in depth by clicking on the following link: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/beta/as-a-level-gce-religious-studies-h173-h573-from-2016/>

Please email Mr Makokha with any questions: lmakokha@cardinalnewmanschool.net

Compulsory Ethics Task

1. Read both sources that discuss the two broad approaches to making decisions about what is right and wrong when it comes to human actions. (This is what ethics is – the philosophical study of what is good and bad). These are attached separately.
P8-19 Oliphant *OCR Religious Ethics for AS and A2*
P11-20 Bowie *Ethical Studies*
2. Watch the two clips that can be reached by clicking on the links below. The utilitarian’s would be relativists – they look at outcome relative to a situation. Kant would be an absolutist, he argues that you always do the same thing regardless of the situation – there is an absolute moral value – never lie.
Trolleyproblem
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOpf6KcWYyw&list=RDx_uUEaeqFog&index=2
Kant’s Axe https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_uUEaeqFog&list=RDx_uUEaeqFog&index=1
3. Once you have read the material please write a **1000 word** response to the following statement:

“All moral decisions are relativist” Do you agree?

Structure:

- You will need an introduction that sets out your overall argument – that you agree or disagree with the statement and what you will discuss.
- You will need to provide arguments that demonstrate how moral decisions are relativist
- You will need to provide arguments that demonstrate how moral decisions are linked to moral absolutes.
- Draw on evidence and philosophers ideas from the sources. Quoting them to support your arguments.
- You will need a conclusion that sums up your overall argument – that you agree or disagree with the statement and give you best reason for that belief.

Introduction sentence starter (only if you need it):

Throughout the course of this discussion it will be argued that it is on balance fair/unfair (delete as necessary) to conclude that all moral decisions are relativist. In order to reach this position the following will be considered....

Want to challenge yourself? Complete the tasks at the end of each chapter in the textbook; they will sharpen and start to develop your ability to think philosophically!

Compulsory Theology Task: Background to Augustine(354AD -430AD) and the influences on his thinking

St Augustine is often depicted as having a negative impression of human sexual nature. Many comment that this might be as a result of his own struggles and experience. Indeed, the Church does not adopt all of Augustine's teaching on sex. Watch these videos and outline what you think on this matter (**Note:** You are answering in essay form. Some guidance is given below). You may conduct your own research on St Augustine of Hippo's life. This same question has been put below as an Exam Question. You also have some points to enable you answer the question.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZHdjRqiHH4> (Part 1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpJdPXnx7-A&t=883s> (Part 2)

As you listen to the video / conduct your research, pay particular attention to the following influences on Augustine :

His mother Monica. • Manicheism. • Pelagius. • Augustine's own experience of the power of human sexuality and the impact on human nature • Augustine's interpretation of Genesis 2–3.

“Critically assess Augustine's analysis of human sexual nature” [40]

There are two things that will be essential to this essay:

- 1) Knowledge – what is Augustine's analysis of human sexual nature?
- 2) Assessment / evaluation – what do I / others think about it?

The assessment will include how much sense it makes, how valid you find it, what challenges there are to it, and what its strengths are.

Structuring the essay:

- There is limited time in the Exam (40mins) so get straight to the point of answering the exact question – don't give a long introduction full of background knowledge that doesn't relate to the specific question

There are two formulas you could use:

- Formula a) mix 1+2 together throughout (the benefit of this is that it is economical on words – you avoid repeating knowledge in order to assess it)
- Formula b) present 1 first and then 2 (benefit is it can avoid you getting muddled and is easier)
- Quotes must be included throughout (they can be brief but must be present)
- Because this is an evaluative essay and not just asking for knowledge you must have a conclusion of some sort – it is best to have an idea of what this will be from the start – in the above question, the issue is clearly, “Is this a bad analysis of human sexual nature or a good one?”

Wider Reading/Further Resources, Scholarly Views, Academic Approaches and Sources of Wisdom and Author

A McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader* 3rd Ed (Blackwell: Oxford , 2007) pp 401-487

T Wiley, *Original Sin: Origins Developments, Contemporary Meanings* (Paulist: New York, 2002) pp 56–/6

A McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (6th Edition available September 2016:

<https://www.wiley.com/en-gb/Christian+Theology%3A+An+Introduction%2C+6th+Edition-p-9781118869574>

Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church Part 3 Chapter 1 Article 8 (**Find Online**)

Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church Part 3 Chapter 3 Article 2 (**Find Online**)

The Examined Life: What is Human Nature? M. Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings* (**Search Online**)

