Religion and Philosophy Department

Department Overview

Religion and Philosophy at Tiffin is an established, popular and successful subject. The Department not only plays a central role in the boy’s social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, it is also essential to the School’s aims to promote critical, reflective and empathetic thought across the curriculum.

It does so by focusing on “Three Rs”. That is to say “what is real?”, “what is right?” and “what is reasonable belief?” As such, particularly in the lower school, religion is taught as a concrete tool for theological and philosophical reflection in a tolerant, open and inclusive way. The subject provides students with the opportunity to inquire freely into a rich horizon of ideas that extend across the humanities, sciences and arts. We believe they leave the Department, and the School, with a relatively sophisticated knowledge of self and others, in addition to an advanced set of technical academic and vocational tools.

The Department currently has three experienced subject specialists.

Curriculum Overview

Key Stage 3

The Curriculum at KS3 has three overarching themes which could be roughly described as historical, metaphysical and ethical. In Year 7, we start with an introduction to the philosophy of religion and then historical depth studies of Judaism, Christian theology and Hinduism. In Year 8 we investigate Buddhism, mysticism, Plato, Aristotle and Descartes, the evolution of the Christian Church and logical fallacies. In Year 9 we critically examine materialists and sceptics (Marx, Nietzsche and Dawkins), Islamism and the sociology of religion, and normative ethics. The boys also complete critical thinking units.

GCSE

The AQA GCSE full course in Religious Studies (Theology, Philosophy of Religion and Ethics) is taken by all students. It provides them with an introduction to important issues at the heart of contemporary debates concerning theology, philosophy, ethics, politics and science. The major theme for Year 10 is the Philosophy of Religion and Theology. Here we cautiously interpret and evaluate arguments by Christian, Islamic and secular scholars concerning theology, cosmology, anthropology, eschatology and theodicy. The central theme of Year 11 is moral philosophy where we investigate Christian, Islamic and secular arguments concerning medical ethics, human rights issues, war, liberalism and communitarianism.

The five-year result average is 81% A\*-A at GCSE.

A Level

The OCR A Level Religious Studies (Philosophy of Religion, Theology and Ethics) specification is taught as a history of philosophy survey course. It provides an overview of the major currents of philosophical thought from Antiquity, the Middle Ages to Post/Modernity. In doing so, it explicitly focuses on metaphysics, theology, epistemology and ethics and the arguments of influential Western intellectuals. Examples include: the Pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, St Paul, Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas, Ockham, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Marx, Hegel, Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud, Wittgenstein, McIntyre, Putnam and Radical Orthodoxy.

The five year A Level result average is 84% A\*-B. On average there are between 20 to 40 students studying the subject at A Level. At least five students go on to read philosophy at Russell Group universities every year.

Resources

The Department has two dedicated classrooms which are equipped with interactive whiteboards, DVDs and enriched in-house text books for every student in every year group. The Learning Resource Centre has an excellent selection of philosophical texts and magazines. From September 2018 all students in Year 7-10 will have personal Chromebooks to support and enhance learning.

Wider Opportunities

In 2017 the Department ran trips to London, Oxford and the local Kingston area. We have a philosophy lunch-time club, led by A Level philosophy students.