Three things cannot be long hidden: the Sun, the Moon, and the Truth.

Gautama Buddha
Philosophy, Ethics & Religion offers students an exciting opportunity to experience in-depth study of three branches of Religious Studies: Philosophy of Religion, Ethics and Buddhism.

Philosophy of Religion covers arguments for the existence of God; challenges to religious belief; the nature and validity of religious experience; and analysing the meaning and function of religious language.

In Ethics classes, we explore the nature of ethical language and thought; whether morally good actions involve following rules or considering consequences; and to what extent we possess free will.

2,500 years ago, the Eastern sage, Siddhartha Gautama, claimed to have discovered the truths of human reality, so becoming an ‘awakened one’ or Buddha. During the past century, Buddhism has gained popularity in the West, with concepts such as ‘nirvana’, ‘karma’, ‘samsara’, and the practice of meditation being widely used, but often misunderstood. Buddhism is studied through themes covering religious figures and sacred texts; religious concepts and religious life; social and historical developments in religious thought; and religious practices/identity.

How will I be assessed?

The essay is the major form of assessment and regular essays are set throughout the course. A major task for all students is to learn to develop the skill of expressing complex ideas in writing.

There are three exams at the end of the second year. Each exam is designed to assess your investigation of, and response to, the many issues explored in the course. Synoptic links are formed across the course ensuring that students have a range of knowledge and skills.

What can I do with this subject?

The A Level qualification you will gain has a long pedigree and is a highly respected subject so a better question might be: What can’t I do with it? Employers and universities know that this subject teaches people to think clearly and to express themselves coherently; the skills that you will develop in analysis and argument are valuable in a range of careers. Former students are accountants, personnel officers, solicitors, criminal psychologists, speech therapists, nurses, teachers and too many more to mention!

Carmel College has been a great place to do my A Levels. I’m thoroughly enjoying all of my courses and the PER course in particular has been a wonderful addition to my studies.

Every topic covered offers a new and interesting insight into the way we think about the world around us. It really encourages you to think from a different perspective both in the classroom and in everyday life.

I’ve been very grateful for the support and encouragement of my tutors. They have enabled me to develop confidence in my academic ability, not only to achieve the best possible grade I can, but also to enjoy the unique challenge of studying a range of different philosophical issues.

Studying at Carmel has helped to open up some fantastic opportunities and I’m very excited to be progressing onto studying English Literature and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia next year.

Alix Fenney
St Helens College 14-16 Academy
Studying: Philosophy, Ethics & Religion, Sociology, English Lang & Lit
Student Voice

“Philosophy, Ethics & Religion is my favourite subject and I'm now looking to study Philosophy and Theology at university.”

“I'd given up on God and the whole religion thing. But at the end of this course I'm more open-minded and prepared to consider alternative points of view – I've really enjoyed exploring the case for atheism, but even this has its weaknesses.”

“The course has given me a chance to choose a topic that I had become interested in because of Psychology. I read and researched about the mind in order to answer a question on something called 'dualism'. Sounds impressive, but it's really dealing with these questions: Are we just machines? What is consciousness? Is the mind the same as the brain? Do we have souls? What did Plato mean by the soul? So I've enjoyed doing something that has not only improved my essay writing skills but has expanded my knowledge in two A Level subjects!”

What support will I receive?

The department is proud of its reputation for helping and supporting students. From beginning to end, staff are there to help you to achieve your full potential. Different teaching approaches are designed to bring out the best in you and if you want help and support outside class time, tutorials can be arranged to provide you with individual attention. You will find the course challenging – that's to be expected from a subject preparing you for university – but you are never expected to struggle on your own!

What is the department like?

Philosophy, Ethics & Religion students study in the West Park building which provides a modern and spacious, state-of-the-art learning environment. Facilities include well resourced classrooms equipped with interactive white boards, multi-media projectors and wireless internet connection. Students also have access to a computer suite and study areas within the building.

What else will I do?

There are annual visits to university departments and a major Buddhist Centre in the UK. An exciting overseas trip is also being planned for the course. Extra-curricular activities take place regularly in the department, including a ‘Royal Institute of Philosophy’ certificated ‘Philosophy: The Classics’ course; and the student-run Philosophy Society, featuring discussions, films, and guest speakers.
What are the entry requirements for this course?
You will need a grade 5 in GCSE Religious Studies (if studied) and grade 5 in either GCSE English Language or English Literature.

How successful are Carmel’s Philosophy, Ethics & Religion students?
Our students are high achievers and the department is proud of its results:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Pass Rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>A Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
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Buddhist Centre in the Lake District

Greg Hunter
Rainford High
Studying: Philosophy, Ethics & Religion, Psychology, Economics

Carmel has been a great place for my development both personally and academically.

I’m satisfied with all my A Level subjects, particularly the PER course. It offers a wide variety of topics that allow you to develop an insight into our diverse world. The different aspects of the course give you a wide range of skills that are transferable to all subjects. In particular, the course improves your ability to think abstractly and enables you to make rational decisions, which are important skills.

The staff are extremely supportive and make the lessons engaging. There are also many extracurricular activities offered in which to develop your skills as well as make new friendships. Overall, the course has improved my academic and sociological development immensely.

When I leave college, I wish to attend the University of St Andrews to study Philosophy and Psychology.

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