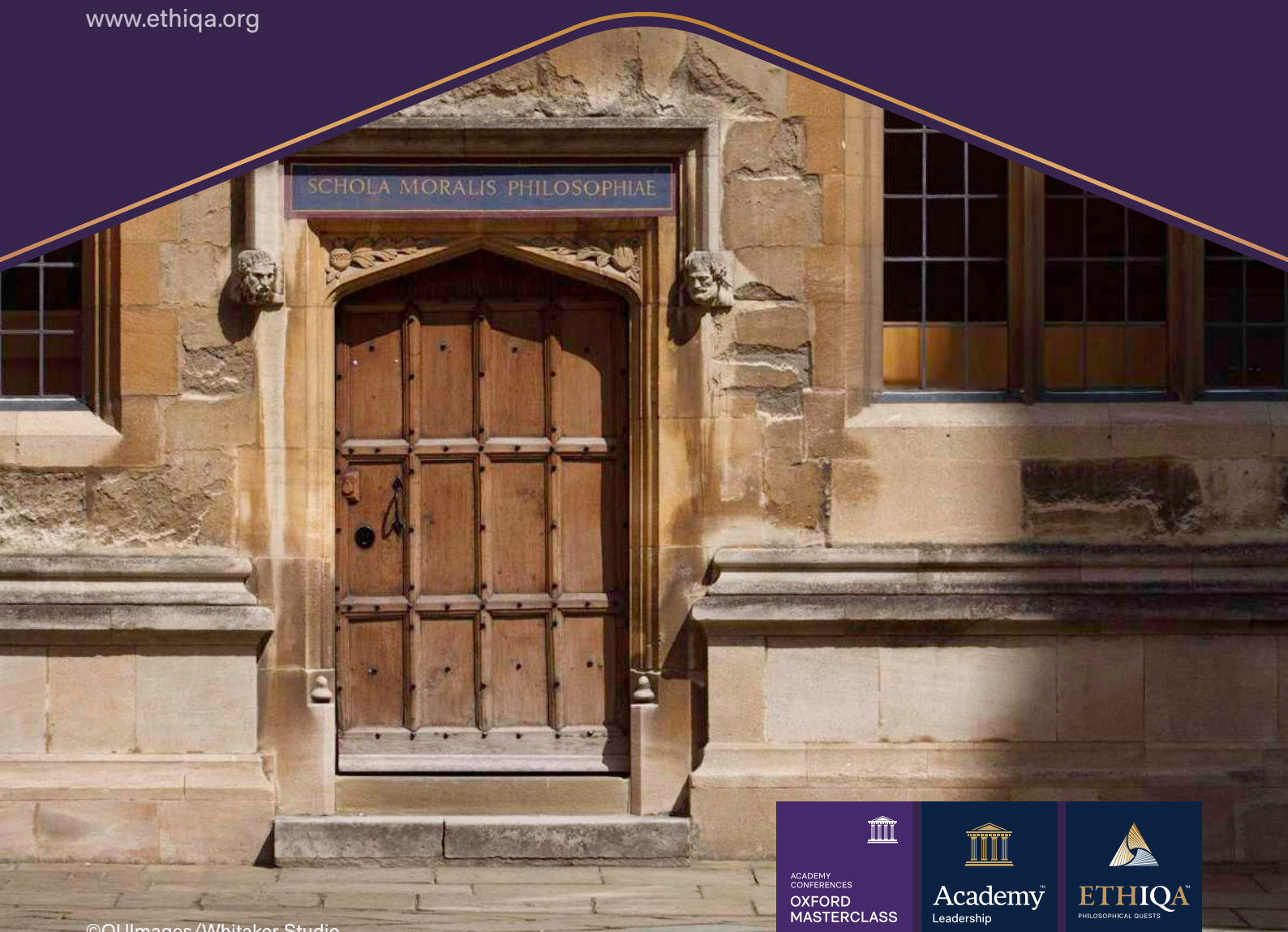


A-Level Lectures

2026

PHILOSOPHY · ETHICS · RELIGION
OXFORD · LONDON · CAMBRIDGE

University scholarship for
ambitious A-Level students.
www.ethiqa.org





Dates

Oxford

Tuesday 24th November
Town Hall

London

Wednesday 25th November and
Thursday 26th November
Bloomsbury Baptist Church

Cambridge

Tuesday 8th December
Lady Mitchell Hall

For further information, visit:

<https://ethiqa.org/conferences/a-level-rs-2026>

About the Conference

The Academy Learning EthlQa A-Level Philosophy, Ethics and Religion Masterclass is designed to deepen understanding, strengthen subject knowledge, and help students excel in their A-Level studies. Bringing together leading academics and renowned scholars, the event offers students the opportunity to engage with key topics from the curriculum in a challenging, accessible and memorable way.

Suitable for students studying AQA, OCR, Eduqas and Edexcel specifications, the Masterclass complements classroom learning while exposing students to the wider scholarship and debate that underpin the subject.

Students will:

- Hear directly from leading academics and subject specialists
- Deepen their understanding of key A-Level topics and debates
- Encounter scholarship that strengthens high-level evaluation
- Receive detailed notes and resources to support revision
- Develop greater confidence in analysing and discussing complex ideas
- Meet like-minded students from schools across the country

Teachers consistently tell us that students return from these events more motivated, more confident, and better prepared for the demands of A-Level study and university-level thinking.

University Scholarship

Hear directly from internationally recognised philosophers, theologians and ethicists as they explore the ideas, arguments and debates that shape contemporary academic discussion.

Designed specifically for ambitious A-Level students.

What to expect

Each study day offers your students:

- A programme of lectures from multiple speakers and perspectives
- Opportunities to encounter contemporary scholarship and current debates
- Structured notes and resources to support classroom and exam preparation
- Inspiration for deeper, self-directed learning beyond the textbook

The result is an intellectually stimulating day that exposes students to new ways of thinking while reinforcing the relevance and excitement of the subject.



Oxford Programme

09:00	Registration
09:50	Introduction and welcome
10:00–10:50	Julie Arliss
Free Will – Or Just the Feeling of It?	Every day we experience ourselves as free. We weigh reasons, make choices and hold ourselves and others responsible for what we do. But what if that experience is an illusion? If every event has a cause, are our decisions simply the inevitable outcome of genetics, upbringing and brain chemistry? And if we are not truly free, can anyone be morally responsible for their actions? In this thought-provoking session, students will explore one of the most enduring debates in philosophy and theology. Drawing on the work of thinkers such as Augustine, Aquinas, Hume and contemporary philosophers, they will examine the competing claims of libertarianism, determinism and compatibilism, and consider what modern neuroscience may contribute to the discussion. Along the way, students will confront some unsettling questions. Could you ever have chosen differently? Is freedom compatible with an all-knowing God? Can punishment, praise and blame be justified if our actions are determined? And what becomes of morality if free will turns out to be an illusion? This session offers a rigorous introduction to one of the most important questions in philosophy, ethics and religious thought: are we genuinely free, or do we simply feel as though we are?
10:50–11:40	Professor Brad Hooker
Why Rules Matter: Can Utilitarianism Answer Its Critics?	Most students encounter utilitarianism through Bentham, Mill and the familiar objections about justice, rights and the treatment of minorities. But are these criticisms decisive? In this lecture, Professor Brad Hooker introduces Rule-Consequentialism, one of the most influential developments in modern ethical theory and a theory with which his name is closely associated. Drawing on decades of research, he explores whether moral rules can help utilitarianism respond to its critics while remaining committed to promoting the good. Students will gain an insight into contemporary philosophical debate that goes well beyond the A-Level specification, giving them access to ideas, arguments and examples that can bring greater sophistication, originality and depth to both examination answers and university applications.
11:40–12:00	Break
12:00–12:50	Professor Alister McGrath
Science, Religion, and the Rationality of Faith: The Case of C. S. Lewis	Drawing on his latest book, Professor Alister McGrath uses the thought of C. S. Lewis to explore one of the most important questions in contemporary philosophy and theology: can belief in God still be considered rational in a scientific age? The lecture examines the relationship between science and religion, the role of faith and reason, the challenge of scientism, and the ways in which religious belief seeks to make sense of reality. An engaging exploration of themes that lie at the heart of Philosophy of Religion and Developments in Christian Thought.



12:50–13:30

The Big Debate

This House Believes That Intentions Matter More Than Consequences

What matters most when judging an action: what a person intended, or the results of what they did?

If someone acts with the best of motives but causes harm, have they acted well or badly? If a lie saves a life, is it justified? Should we judge actions by the principles behind them, or by the outcomes they produce?

In this lively and interactive debate, students will grapple with one of the central questions in moral philosophy. Drawing on ideas from Kant, Natural Law and Virtue Ethics, as well as Utilitarianism and contemporary Rule-Consequentialism, they will explore competing answers to a question that lies at the heart of ethical decision-making.

Students will be invited to vote, challenge arguments, and defend their own positions as the debate unfolds. A stimulating and thought-provoking conclusion to the day, this session brings ethical theory to life and demonstrates why questions first raised by philosophers centuries ago continue to shape debates about morality today.

13:30–14:15

Lunch

14:15–15:05

Professor Daphne Hampson

Symbols, Language, Truth

A symbol is two things thrown together – Greek sym (together) ballein (to throw). Reality is caught up in the symbol for us, as also shaped through symbolic language. Therefore it is imperative that we get our symbols right, commensurate both with what we know today to be the case and at one with our ethical beliefs.

With this in mind we shall look at Christian symbolism which stems from the past through the lens of the present. We shall consider the Creation stories, Christology, Mariology in its implications for Christology, and those symbolic actions that are called sacraments. Are there ways of conceptualising that which is God which are at one with what we might want to say today?



London Programme

09:30	Registration
10:20	Introduction and welcome
10:30–11:20	Julie Arliss
Free Will – Or Just the Feeling of It?	Every day we experience ourselves as free. We weigh reasons, make choices and hold ourselves and others responsible for what we do. But what if that experience is an illusion? If every event has a cause, are our decisions simply the inevitable outcome of genetics, upbringing and brain chemistry? And if we are not truly free, can anyone be morally responsible for their actions? In this thought-provoking session, students will explore one of the most enduring debates in philosophy and theology. Drawing on the work of thinkers such as Augustine, Aquinas, Hume and contemporary philosophers, they will examine the competing claims of libertarianism, determinism and compatibilism, and consider what modern neuroscience may contribute to the discussion. Along the way, students will confront some unsettling questions. Could you ever have chosen differently? Is freedom compatible with an all-knowing God? Can punishment, praise and blame be justified if our actions are determined? And what becomes of morality if free will turns out to be an illusion? This session offers a rigorous introduction to one of the most important questions in philosophy, ethics and religious thought: are we genuinely free, or do we simply feel as though we are?
11:20–12:10	Professor Brad Hooker
Why Rules Matter: Can Utilitarianism Answer Its Critics?	Most students encounter utilitarianism through Bentham, Mill and the familiar objections about justice, rights and the treatment of minorities. But are these criticisms decisive? In this lecture, Professor Brad Hooker introduces Rule-Consequentialism, one of the most influential developments in modern ethical theory and a theory with which his name is closely associated. Drawing on decades of research, he explores whether moral rules can help utilitarianism respond to its critics while remaining committed to promoting the good. Students will gain an insight into contemporary philosophical debate that goes well beyond the A-Level specification, giving them access to ideas, arguments and examples that can bring greater sophistication, originality and depth to both examination answers and university applications.
12:10–12:30	Break



12:30–13:20

Dr Tim Mawson

What Would God Have to Be Like?

If God exists, what sort of being could God be?

Could God know every future choice you will make and yet leave you genuinely free? Could God suffer, change, or respond to prayer? Is God in time, or beyond it altogether? And can the idea of an all-powerful being even make sense?

Drawing on some of the most fascinating debates in philosophy of religion, Dr Tim Mawson explores the traditional attributes of God through a series of classic philosophical puzzles and paradoxes. Students will grapple with questions about omnipotence, omniscience, eternity and perfect goodness, discovering why philosophers have spent centuries debating what it would mean for God to be the greatest conceivable being.

This session offers a thought-provoking introduction to one of the central questions of religious thought: what would a perfect being actually have to be like?

13:20–14:10

Lunch

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15:00–15:45

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Bookings and admin

Bookings are made online on behalf of pupils by their teacher [here](#).

These events fill quickly but we appreciate that some schools need time to organise their students. We are keen to help.

- If you need more time
- If your group is smaller than five
- If you are studying online and do not have a teacher

Please get in touch with us: headoffice@academy-ltd.com

Arrival and Registration

Oxford and Cambridge arrival from 9:30. The programme begins promptly at 9:50 and concludes at 15:15.

London arrival from 9:45. The programme begins promptly at 10:30 and concludes at 16:00

Study Day Fees

Student: £38.50

Staff: £38.50. One free place with every 12 students

Unaccompanied teachers attending for PD: £220

Please bring your own refreshments.

How to book

Bookings are completed online at EthlQa.org where you have the choice to pay online or request an invoice.

Full terms and conditions may be found here: thrivingminds.org/legal/terms-of-use

Please inform us of access requirements. Academy Learning reserves the right to make alterations to the programme.

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Speakers



Julie Arliss is an educator, speaker and founder of Academy Learning, where she has spent more than two decades developing intellectually ambitious programmes for students, teachers and school leaders across the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. A Farmington Scholar at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, Julie has worked closely with leading academics to make some of the biggest questions in philosophy, theology and ethics accessible to young people. Known for her engaging presentation style and thought-provoking approach, she challenges students to think critically, weigh competing arguments and engage seriously with profound questions about truth, morality, human nature and the meaning of life.



Professor Daphne Hampson is a systematic theologian who works on the boundaries of theology, Continental philosophy and Feminist Theory. She holds doctorates in Modern History from Oxford and in Theology from Harvard. Daphne spent most of her career at the University of St Andrews, where she was given a personal Chair in Post-Christian Thought. In her retirement she is an Associate of the Department of Theology and Religion at Oxford University. She is the author of *Theology and Feminism* (1990), *After Christianity* (1996/ 2002) as well as books on Kierkegaard and on the structure of Lutheran and Catholic thought. Her forthcoming *Religion as Gender Politics: Theology, Feminism and Continental Philosophy* will be out shortly.



Professor Alister McGrath is Professor Emeritus of Science and Religion at the University of Oxford and one of the world's leading scholars in theology, philosophy of religion, and the dialogue between science and faith. Uniquely qualified in both the natural sciences and theology, he holds doctorates in molecular biophysics, theology, and intellectual history from Oxford, and has spent his career exploring some of the most important questions about reason, belief, meaning and human understanding.

A named scholar on a number of A-Level Religious Studies specifications, McGrath's work is widely studied by students exploring issues such as science and religion, religious language, natural theology, faith and reason, and the challenge of secularism. His books and ideas have shaped contemporary discussions about whether religious belief can be intellectually credible in a scientific age.

An acclaimed author and speaker, Professor McGrath has written more than sixty books, including influential works on C. S. Lewis, Christian theology, apologetics, and the relationship between science and religion. Renowned for combining academic rigour with exceptional clarity, he remains one of the most engaging and respected voices in contemporary theology.

What students say

"I am so glad I got to go to this conference. Speaking to others, we all agreed that it allowed us to see our course in a different and broader context. It was lovely engaging in our subject in a way that goes beyond our textbooks. Listening to speakers who knew about Philosophy and were passionate about it, reminded me why I chose to study RS".

"I found the conference to be very interesting and enriching – both for the content and philosophy as a whole. It rejuvenated our passion for philosophy and I am so grateful I had the opportunity to attend. Thank you very much!"

"LOVED IT! It was amazing and really useful. Julie Arliss' talks linked in with what we've been doing, and all the speakers were so interesting!"

"I enjoyed how the speakers were so enthusiastic about their subjects and came up with interactive analogies that people could relate to."



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Dr Tim Mawson is an Oxford philosopher specialising in philosophy of religion, metaphysics and ethics. He is Edgar Jones Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy at St Peter's College, Oxford and the author of numerous books and articles exploring some of the deepest questions in philosophy, including the nature of God, human freedom, morality and the meaning of life. Known for his clarity, wit and ability to make complex ideas accessible, Tim is a popular speaker who combines rigorous philosophical argument with engaging thought experiments and real intellectual curiosity. His book *The Divine Attributes* offers a compelling exploration of the traditional characteristics ascribed to God and the philosophical puzzles they generate.



Professor Brad Hooker is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Reading, Distinguished Research Fellow at the Uehiro Oxford Institute for Ethics, and Honorary Fellow of St Anne's College, Oxford. He is internationally recognised as one of the world's leading moral philosophers and is the foremost contemporary advocate of Rule-Consequentialism, a theory that has reshaped modern debates about utilitarian ethics. His book *Ideal Code, Real World* is widely regarded as one of the most important works in contemporary normative ethics. In this session, students will have the opportunity to engage directly with ideas at the forefront of current philosophical research and to discover how utilitarianism continues to develop beyond the versions encountered in most A-Level courses.



Professor Daniel Moulin is Associate Professor of Education at the University of Cambridge. His research explores religion, values, identity and the role of faith in contemporary society. A widely published academic and engaging speaker, Daniel is known for making complex ideas accessible and encouraging students to think critically about some of life's deepest questions. Combining philosophical reflection with contemporary scholarship, he invites students to engage thoughtfully with the enduring questions that lie at the heart of religious belief.

What teachers say

"The calibre and quality of speakers is exceptional and the content challenging and inspirational. It enabled my students to think philosophically beyond the classroom. The notes are also brilliant and a great resource for the students' independent, extended learning."

"The presentations are first-rate, fun, lively, and at times humorous. The speakers are balanced and it helped my pupils. Thank you for organising."

"My students were inspired by the speakers, who were excited to meet some key thinkers. It was all pitched at the right level for my students and they were buzzing about the talks on the journey home."

"Thank you for making us feel so welcome. The feedback from our students was overwhelmingly positive; the talks continue to stimulate lots of discussion and a number of them have engaged in further research based on the lectures."



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