

Subject specific vocabulary

The following subject specific vocabulary provides definitions of key Component 2: thematic studies terms used in our GCSE Religious Studies Spec A (8062) specification.

Your learners should be familiar with, and gain understanding from, all these terms.

Theme A: Relationships and families

Cohabitation

A couple living together without being married/in civil partnership.

Compassion

Sympathy and concern for the suffering of others.

Contraception

Precautions taken to prevent pregnancy and to protect against contracting or transmitting STIs (sexually transmitted infections).

Divorce

The legal ending of a marriage.

Extended family

Family unit comprising parents and their children, but also grandparents, cousins etc.

Family planning

Planning when to have a family and how big a family to have by use of birth control practices and/or contraception.

Gender discrimination

Acting on prejudices against someone because of their gender.

Gender equality

Belief that all genders have equal status and value, so discrimination against any is wrong.

Gender prejudice

Negative thoughts, feelings or beliefs about a person or group based on their sex or gender identity. Commonly associated with beliefs about the differing status of men and women.

Heterosexuality

Being physically/sexually attracted to persons of the opposite sex.

Nuclear family

Family unit made up of two parents and their child(ren).

Polygamy

The practice of having multiple spouses (wives and/or husbands).

Procreation

Having a child; seen as a duty in many religions.

Remarriage

Marriage for the second time, after divorce ending an earlier marriage.

Same-sex relationship

Being in a physical/sexual relationship with someone of the same sex, commonly referred to as lesbian or gay relationships.

Vows

Promises made during a marriage ceremony.

Theme B: Religion and life

Abortion

The deliberate ending of a pregnancy.

Afterlife

Beliefs about what happens to 'us' after our body has died; in many religions this relates to life after death or immortality in some form.

Animal experimentation

The use of animals for medical research and product testing.

Awe and wonder

Sense of wonderment at nature; often linked to the feeling that God is involved/revealed through it.

Big Bang theory

Scientific theory about the origins of the universe; belief that the universe began almost 14 billion years ago with a reaction of particles from a singularity followed by a process of inflation and expansion.

Death

The end of the physical, bodily life.

Dominion

Belief that humans have been given control/charge of the world.

Environment

The world around us; this can be made up of natural or artificial surroundings.

Euthanasia

Assisting with the ending of life for a person who is terminally ill or has degenerative illness; often known as assisted suicide.

Evolution

Scientific theory of the development of species which involves a process of natural selection and survival of the fittest.

Natural resources

Resources which are found in nature. For example, fossil fuels (e.g. coal, oil, natural gas etc) and plants.

Pollution

Contamination of an environment with harmful substances.

Quality of life

The standard of health, comfort and happiness/fulfilment experienced by a person or group.

Responsibility

Having a duty or obligation to act in a certain way.

Sanctity of life

Belief that life is sacred/special because it was created by God, or because we are each unique individuals.

Scientific

Knowledge based on what can be observed (e.g. regularities in nature) and experimentation.

Stewardship

Duty given by God to humankind to look after the created world, and all life within it.

Theme C: The existence of God and revelation

Design argument

An argument suggesting that proof of God's existence can be seen through the evidence of 'design' in the world; also known as the teleological argument.

Enlightenment

A state of spiritual awakening and the gaining of a deeper understanding of reality.

Evil

A cause of suffering; the moral opposite of good. Believed by some to be contrary to the will of God.

First cause argument

An argument suggesting that God's existence can be proved by logical argument and the evidence of a universal chain of causes and effects. Therefore, the universe requires an uncaused cause at the start, which must be God.

General revelation

Indirect revelation; the idea of being able to see something of God through nature and scriptures which are readily available in everyday experiences.

Immanent

A characteristic of God; the belief that God is present and involved in the world (e.g. through special revelations/miracles).

Impersonal

A characteristic of God; the belief that God is beyond human understanding.

Miracle

An event that contradicts the laws of nature, and is usually thought to be impossible (e.g. being raised from the dead).

Omniscient

All-knowing; believed by theists to be an attribute of God.

Omnipotent

All-powerful; believed by theists to be an attribute of God.

Personal

A characteristic of God; belief that humans can build relationships with God.

Revelation

When God is revealed to humans; can be special or general.

Science

The collection of knowledge from observation and testing.

Special revelation

Direct revelation; God being revealed directly to an individual or group through experiences such as visions.

Suffering

An effect of evil; undergoing pain and hardship.

Transcendent

A characteristic of God; belief that God is outside space and time.

Ultimate reality

Belief in a supreme and fundamental power in the universe. In Hinduism, Brahman is often referred to as the ultimate reality and supreme cosmic power.

Vision

An experience of seeing/experiencing something in the imagination or through a dream.

Theme D: Religion, peace and conflict

Conflict

Dispute between sides; can be between individuals, groups or nations.

Forgiveness

Letting go of blame against a person for wrongs they have done; moving on.

Holy war

War that is believed to be sanctioned by God.

Justice

Bringing fairness back to a situation.

Just war

Set of rules for fighting a war in a way believed to be justified and acceptable to God.

Nuclear deterrence

Having nuclear weapons with the aim of deterring/preventing other states attacking for fear of retaliation and nuclear war (possibly leading to mutually assured destruction).

Nuclear weapons/war

A weapon of mass destruction which causes widespread damage and loss of life. Nuclear war would be a war fought using these weapons.

Pacifism

The belief of people who refuse to take part in war and any other form of violence.

Peace

The opposite of war; harmony between all in society.

Peace-making

Working to bring about peace and reconciliation.

Protest

A statement or action to express disagreement; can be an organised event to demonstrate disagreement with a policy or political action.

Reconciliation

Restoring harmony after relationships have broken down.

Retaliation

To pay someone back for their harmful actions.

Terrorism

Use of violence and threats to intimidate others; used for political purposes to build fear in the ordinary population and to secure demands from Government.

Victims of war

Those who are harmed during a war, for example those killed, injured or left homeless.

Violence

Behaviour involving physical force which intends to hurt, kill or cause damage.

War

Armed conflict between two or more sides.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Weapons which cause widespread, indiscriminate damage (e.g. nuclear, chemical, biological etc).

Theme E: Religion, crime and punishment

Addiction

Being addicted to/dependent on a particular substance; can be a cause of crime (e.g. stealing money to pay for illegal drugs).

Community service

Punishment involving the criminal doing a set number of hours of physical labour/work in their local community.

Corporal punishment

Punishment in which physical pain is inflicted on the criminal.

Crime

Action which breaks the law; can be against the person (e.g. murder), property (e.g. vandalism), or the state (e.g. treason).

Death penalty

Capital punishment; the execution of a criminal which is sanctioned by the state.

Deterrence

Aim of punishment; the threat of punishment as a way to put a person off committing crime (e.g. knowing they could go to prison if they steal).

Evil intentions

Having the desire to deliberately cause suffering or harm to another.

Forgiveness

Letting go of blame against a person for wrongs they have done; moving on.

Greed

Reason for committing crime; wanting or desiring something or more of something.

Hate crime

A crime committed because of prejudice views about a person or group.

Prison

Imprisonment is a form of punishment where a criminal is locked in a secure guarded building (prison) for a period of time.

Law

The rules a country demands its citizens follow, the breaking of which leads to punishment.

Mental health problems

A health condition that can cause changes to a person's behaviour and emotions; could lead to committing crime.

Murder

Unlawfully killing another person.

Poverty

The state of being without the things needed for a reasonable quality of life; could lead to committing crime.

Principle of utility

The concept of acting out of the greater good for the majority of people (e.g. removing a dangerous criminal from society in order to protect others).

Reformation

Aim of punishment; helping the criminal see how and why their behaviour was wrong, so that their mindset changes for the better.

Retribution

Aim of punishment; getting the criminal back for their crimes.

Sanctity of life

Belief that life is sacred/special because it was created by God, or because we are each unique individuals.

Theft

Taking something without the owner's consent.

Unjust law

A legal requirement within a society that is believed to be unfair; a cause of crime if a person believes they cannot follow (or must act against) a law they believe is unjust.

Upbringing

The environment a child lives in, and the instructions they receive, while they are growing up.

Theme F: Religion, human rights and social justice

Charity

Voluntarily giving time or money to help a cause in need.

Discrimination

Actions that come from prejudice attitudes.

Equality

Belief that everyone is equal in value and worth.

Exploitation

Treating and paying people unfairly; benefitting disproportionately from the work they've done.

Fair pay

Payment that is appropriate for the work done.

Freedom of religious expression

The right to freely practice religion without discrimination or punishment. For example, being able to freely attend your place of worship or being allowed space/time to pray in the workplace.

Human rights

The rights a person should be entitled to simply because they are a human being, e.g. education, fair treatment etc.

Interest

Money paid back on loans in addition to the original amount borrowed.

Justice

Fairness; working to fix an unfair situation.

Loan

Amount of money borrowed from a lender, usually paid back in instalments with interest.

People trafficking

Illegal transport of people from one country or area to another, often resulting in forced labour or sexual exploitation.

Positive discrimination/action

Positive discrimination is favouring a person or group to try and rectify negative treatment in the past; it is unlawful in the UK according to the Equality Act 2010. Positive action is putting things in place to help overcome disadvantage groups/people, or to meet the needs of protected groups/people with protected characteristics, in order to help them fully participate in an activity or workplace.

Poverty

The state of being without the things needed for a reasonable quality of life, so that day-to-day living is a struggle.

Prejudice

Negative thoughts, feelings or beliefs about a person (prejudging them) based on a characteristic they have, e.g. their sexuality or ethnicity.

Racial discrimination

Acting on prejudices against someone because of their ethnicity/skin colour.

Racial prejudice

Negative thoughts, feelings or beliefs about a person or group based on their ethnicity/skin colour.

Responsibility

Duty, e.g. the responsibility to work; to earn money for oneself.

Same-sex relationship

Being in a physical/sexual relationship with someone of the same sex, commonly referred to as lesbian or gay relationships.

Social justice

Bringing justice to society so that all people have the same opportunities, and can take advantage of them; includes projects to improve the life situation of those who may be disadvantaged, e.g. by educational support.

Wealth

Money and possessions a person has.

Theme G: St Mark's Gospel – the life of Jesus

Christ

Means 'the anointed one'/Messiah. The belief that Jesus was the promised saviour.

Crucifixion

The death of Jesus; a form of the death penalty used by the Romans.

Historicity

Whether something (e.g. a gospel text) is considered to be historically authentic.

Miracle

An event that contradicts the laws of nature, and is usually thought to be impossible (e.g. being raised from the dead).

Passion

The suffering of Jesus in his final days (which he foretold several times).

Resurrection

Being raised from the dead; the event three days after the crucifixion when it is believed that God raised Jesus from the dead.

Secular

Non-religious beliefs, practices and sources of authority.

Son of David

A title for Jesus used in Mark's Gospel, showing his descent from a Jewish king.

Son of God

A title for Jesus used in Mark's Gospel, emphasising his divinity.

Son of Man

A title that Jesus used for himself, which refers to both his suffering as a human and to the authority given to him by God.

Transfiguration

When Jesus' appearance was changed into a more spiritual form; Peter, James and John saw his transfigured form talking to Moses and Elijah.

Trial

A criminal proceeding that takes place before a judge, involving questioning and evidence relating to the crime committed; Jesus faced trials before Pilate and the Jewish authorities during his Passion.

Theme H: St Mark's Gospel as a source of spiritual truth

Anointing

Religious ritual action which involves being touched or marked with oil/other sacred substances; the event in Mark 14 when a woman poured expensive perfume on Jesus' head.

Ascension

Going or being taken up; the event in Mark 16, 40 days after the resurrection when Jesus returned to glory in heaven.

Commandment

A law or rule that must be followed.

Commission

Being given a job or duty; the event in Mark 16 when the risen Jesus told his disciples to preach the good news throughout the world.

Denial

To state or claim that something is not true; the event in Mark 16 when Peter stated three times that he did not know Jesus.

Discipleship

Following Jesus.

Disregarded

To be ignored or excluded.

Faith

Having complete belief, trust and confidence in something; having belief in God and Jesus.

Haemorrhage

The escape of a large amount of blood, often the result of an injury or illness.

Kingdom of God

The reign of God over the earth.

Leprosy

Infectious skin disease; in biblical times people with leprosy were made to live outside the towns and cities.

Parable

A story about everyday life that Jesus told to teach a religious truth.

Secular

Non-religious beliefs, practices and sources of authority.

Widow

Person whose spouse (husband or wife) has died. In the Bible the term refers to women whose husbands have died as this would have a huge impact on their place in society.