**Theme 1: Arguments for the existence of God – inductive, AS**

**A. Inductive arguments – cosmological**

* Inductive proofs
* the concept of ‘a posteriori’.
* Cosmological argument: St Thomas Aquinas’ first Three Ways
  1. motion or change
  2. cause and effect
  3. contingency and necessity
* The Kalam cosmological argument with reference to William Lane Craig (rejection of actual infinities and concept of personal creator)

**B. Inductive arguments – teleological**

* St Thomas Aquinas’ Fifth Way - concept of governance
* archer and arrow analogy
* William Paley’s watchmaker - analogy of complex design
* F. R. Tennant’s anthropic and aesthetic arguments - universe specifically designed for intelligent human life

**C. Challenges to inductive arguments**

* David Hume - empirical objections and critique of causes (cosmological)
* David Hume - problems with analogies
* rejection of traditional theistic claims: designer not necessarily God of classical theism;
* apprentice god;
* plurality of gods;
* absent god (teleological).
* Alternative scientific explanations including Big Bang theory and Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection.

**Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as:**

* Whether inductive arguments for God’s existence are persuasive.
* The extent to which the Kalam cosmological argument is convincing.
* The effectiveness of the cosmological/teleological argument for God’s existence.
* Whether cosmological/teleological arguments for God’s existence are persuasive in the 21st Century.
* The effectiveness of the challenges to the cosmological/teleological argument for God’s existence.
* Whether scientific explanations are more persuasive than philosophical explanations for the universe’s existence.

**Theme 1: Arguments for the existence of God – deductive, AS**

**D. Deductive arguments - origins of the ontological argument**

* Deductive proofs;
* the concept of ‘a priori’.
* St Anselm - God as the greatest possible being (Proslogion 2).
* St Anselm - God has necessary existence (Proslogion 3).

**E. Deductive arguments - developments of the ontological argument**

* Rene Descartes - concept of God as supremely perfect being;
* analogies of triangles and mountains/valleys.
* Norman Malcolm - God as unlimited being:
* God's existence as necessary rather than just possible.

**F. Challenges to the ontological argument**

* Gaunilo, his reply to St Anselm;
* his rejection of the idea of a greatest possible being that can be thought of as having separate existence outside of our minds;
* his analogy of the idea of the greatest island as a ridicule of St Anselm's logic.
* Immanuel Kant’s objection - existence is not a determining predicate: it cannot be a property that an object can either possess or lack.

**Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as**

* The extent to which ‘a priori’ arguments for God’s existence are persuasive.
* The extent to which different religious views on the nature of God impact on arguments for the existence of God.
* The effectiveness of the ontological argument for God’s existence.
* Whether the ontological argument is more persuasive than the cosmological/teleological arguments for God’s existence.
* The effectiveness of the challenges to the ontological argument for God’s existence.
* The extent to which objections to the ontological argument are persuasive.

**Theme 2: Challenges to religious belief - the problem of evil and suffering, AS**

**A. The problem of evil and suffering**

* The types of evil: moral (caused by free will agents) and natural (caused by nature).
* The logical problem of evil: classical (Epicurus) - the problem of suffering.
* J. L. Mackie’s modern development - the nature of the problem of evil (inconsistent triad).
* William Rowe (intense human and animal suffering) and Gregory S. Paul (premature deaths).

**B. Religious responses to the problem of evil (i)**

**Augustinian type theodicy**

* Evil as a consequence of sin
* evil as a privation
* the fall of human beings and creation
* the Cross overcomes evil, soul-deciding
* challenges to Augustinian type theodicies: validity of accounts in Genesis, Chapters 2 and 3
* scientific error - biological impossibility of human descent from a single pair (therefore invalidating the ‘inheritance of Adam’s sin)
* moral contradictions of omnibenevolent God and existence of Hell
* contradiction of perfect order becoming chaotic - geological and biological evidence suggests the contrary.

**C. Religious responses to the problem of evil (ii)**

**Irenaean type theodicy**

* Vale of soul-making
* human beings created imperfect
* epistemic distance
* second-order goods
* eschatological justification
* challenges to Irenaean type theodicies: concept of universal salvation unjust
* evil and suffering should not be used as a tool by an omnibenevolent God
* immensity of suffering and unequal distribution of evil and suffering.

**Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as**

* The extent to which the classical form of the problem of evil is a problem.
* The degree to which modern problem of evil arguments are effective in proving God's nonexistence.
* Whether Augustinian type theodicies are relevant in the 21st Century.
* The extent to which Augustine’s theodicy succeeds as a defence of the God of Classical Theism.
* Whether Irenaean type theodicies are credible in the 21st Century.
* The extent to which Irenaeus’s theodicy succeeds as a defence of the God of Classical Theism.

**Theme 2: Challenges to religious belief - Religious belief as a product of the human mind, Year 2**

**D. Religious belief as a product of the human mind – Sigmund Freud**

* Religion as an illusion and/or a neurosis with reference to collective neurosis
* primal horde
* Oedipus complex
* wish fulfilment and reaction against helplessness.
* Supportive evidence including reference to redirection of guilt complexes and reference to instinctive desires deriving from evolutionary basis (Charles Darwin).
* Challenges including lack of anthropological evidence for primal horde
* no firm psychological evidence for universal Oedipus complex
* evidence basis too narrow.

**E. Religious belief as a product of the human mind – Carl Jung**

* Religion necessary for personal growth with reference to: collective unconscious
* Individuation
* Archetypes
* the God within
* Supportive evidence including recognition of religion as a source of comfort and promotion of positive personal and social mindsets arising from religious belief.
* Challenges including lack of empirical evidence for Jungian concepts and reductionist views regarding religious belief arising from acceptance of Jung’s ideas.

**F. Issues relating to rejection of religion - Atheism**

* Rejection of belief in deities; the difference between agnosticism and atheism
* the rise of New Atheism (antitheism)
* its main criticisms of religion: non-thinking
* infantile worldview
* impedes scientific progress.
* Religious responses to the challenge of New Atheism: rejection by religious groups of New Atheist claims regarding incompatibility of science and religion
* increase in fundamentalist religious activity relating to morality and community
* increase in religious apologists in media.

**Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as**

* How far religious belief can be considered a neurosis.
* The adequacy of Freud’s explanation of religious belief.
* The extent to which Jung was more positive than Freud about the idea of God.
* The effectiveness of empirical approaches as critiques of Jungian views on religion.
* The success of atheistic arguments against religious belief.
* The extent to which religious responses to New Atheism have been successful.

**Theme 3: Religious Experience, AS**

**A. The nature of religious experience with particular reference to:**

**Visions**

* Sensory
* Intellectual
* Dreams

**Conversion**

* individual/communal
* sudden/gradual

**Mysticism**

* Transcendent
* Ecstatic
* Unitive

**Prayer**

* types and stages of prayer according to Teresa of Avila.

**B. Mystical experience**

* William James’ four characteristics of mystical experience:

1. Ineffable
2. Noetic
3. Transient
4. Passive

* Rudolf Otto – the concept of the numinous
* mysterium tremendum
* the human predisposition for religious experience.

**C. Challenges to the objectivity and authenticity of religious experience**

* With reference to Caroline Franks Davis (description-related; subject-related and object-related challenges).
* Claims of religious experience rejected on grounds of misunderstanding
* Claims delusional - possibly related to substance misuse, fantastical claims contrary to everyday experiences
* Challenges: individual experiences valid even if non-verifiable
* Claims could be genuine - integrity of individual
* one-off experiences can still be valid even if never repeated

**Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as**

* The impact of religious experiences upon religious belief and practice.
* Whether different types of religious experience can be accepted as equally valid in communicating religious teachings and beliefs.
* The adequacy of James’ four characteristics in defining mystical experience.
* The adequacy of Otto’s definition of ‘numinous’.
* The extent to which the challenges to religious experience are valid.
* The persuasiveness of Franks-Davis’s different challenges.

**Theme 3: Religious Experience, Year 2**

**D. The influence of religious experience on religious practice and faith**

* Value for religious community including: affirmation of belief system
* promotion of faith value system
* strengthening cohesion of religious community.
* Value for individual including faith restoring
* strengthening faith in face of opposition
* renewal of commitment to religious ideals and doctrines.

**E. Miracles, the definitions of**

* St Thomas Aquinas (miracles different from the usual order)
* David Hume (transgression of a law of nature)
* R.F. Holland (contingency miracle)
* Richard Swinburne (religious significance)
* Consideration of reasons why religious believers accept that miracles occur: evidence from sacred writings
* affirmation of faith traditions; personal experience.

**F. A comparative study of two key scholars from within and outside the Christian tradition and their contrasting views on the possibility of miracles**

* David Hume – his scepticism of miracles including challenges relating to testimony based belief
* credibility of witnesses
* susceptibility of belief
* contradictory nature of faith claims
* Richard Swinburne – his defence of miracles, including definitions of natural laws and contradictions of Hume’s arguments regarding contradictory nature of faith claims and credibility of witnesses.

**Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as**

* The impact of religious experiences upon religious belief and practice.
* Whether religious communities are entirely dependent on religious experiences.
* The adequacy of different definitions of miracles.
* How far different definitions of miracles can be considered as contradictory.
* The effectiveness of the challenges to belief in miracles.
* The extent to which Swinburne’s responses to Hume can be accepted as valid.

**Theme 4: Religious language, Year 2**

**A. Inherent problems of religious language**

* Limitations of language for traditional conceptions of God such as infinite and timeless
* challenge to sacred texts and religious pronouncements as unintelligible
* challenge that religious language is not a common shared base and experience
* the differences between cognitive and non-cognitive language.

**B. Religious language as cognitive, but meaningless**

* Logical Positivism - Verification (A. J. Ayer) – religious ethical language as meaningless
* there can be no way in which we could verify the truth or falsehood of the propositions (e.g. God is good, murder is wrong)
* falsification nothing can counter the belief (Antony Flew)
* Criticisms of verification: the verification principle cannot itself be verified
* neither can historical events
* universal scientific statements
* the concept of eschatological verification goes against this
* Criticisms of falsification: Richard Hare – bliks (the way that a person views the world gives meaning to them even if others do not share the same view)
* Basil Mitchell – partisan and the stranger (certain things can be meaningful even when they cannot be falsified)
* Swinburne – toys in the cupboard (concept meaningful even though falsifying the statement is not possible)

**C. Religious language as non-cognitive and analogical**

* Proportion and attribution (St Thomas Aquinas) and qualifier and disclosure (Ian Ramsey)
* Challenges including how far analogies can give meaningful insights into religious language
* A consideration of how these two views (Aquinas/Ramsey) can be used to help understand religious teachings.

**Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as:**

* The solutions presented by religious philosophers for the inherent problems of using religious language.
* The exclusive context of religious belief for an understanding of religious language.
* The persuasiveness of arguments asserting either the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of religious language.
* How far Logical Positivism should be accepted as providing a valid criterion for meaning in the use of language.
* To what extent do the challenges to Logical Positivism provide convincing arguments to nonreligious believers.
* Whether non-cognitive interpretations are valid responses to the challenges to the meaning of religious language.

**D. Religious language as non-cognitive and symbolic**

* Functions of symbols (John Randall)
* God as that which concerns us ultimately (Paul Tillich)
* *Challenges including whether a symbol is adequate or gives the right insights.*
* *A consideration of how these two views (Randall/Tillich) can be used to help understand religious teachings*

**E. Religious language as non-cognitive and mythical**

* Complex form of mythical language that communicates values and insights into purpose of existence.
* Supportive evidence – different forms of myths to convey meaning: creation myths
* myths of good against evil
* heroic myths.
* Myths help to overcome fears of the unknown
* myths effective way of transmitting religious, social and ethical values.
* *Challenges: problem of competing myths*
* *meanings of myths change over time as they reflect the values of society as societal constructs*
* *demythologisation of myths results in varying interpretations*
* *myths often incompatible with scientific understanding of the world*

**F. Religious language as a language game**

* Meaningful to people who participate in same language game (Ludwig Wittgenstein)
* Supportive evidence – non-cognitive language provides meaning to participants within language game
* consider use of language not meaning; language games fit with coherence theory of truth
* religious language as expressions of belief
* *Challenges, including rejection of any true propositions in religion that can be empirically verified*
* *does not allow for meaningful conversations between different groups of language users*
* *does not provide adequate meaning for the word ‘God’*

**Issues for analysis and evaluation will be drawn from any aspect of the content above, such as**

* The effectiveness of the terms non-cognitive, analogical and mythical as solutions to the problems of religious language.
* The relevance of religious language issues in the 21st Century.
* The extent to which language games provide a suitable way of resolving the problems of religious language.
* Whether symbolic language can be agreed as having adequate meaning as a form of language.
* How far the works of Randall and Tillich provide a suitable counter-challenge to Logical Positivism.
* Whether the strengths of language games outweigh the weaknesses