

Project title*Religion and Beliefs*

We all have beliefs and assumptions about the world which guide our day-to-day moral choices. We all must grapple with ‘big questions’ about our existence. Some of these beliefs are religious or spiritual, some are philosophical ideas, some moral or political convictions. These ways of navigating the world can all be encompassed by the term ‘Worldviews’.

Under UK law, through the Equality Act, Religion and belief is a protected characteristic. In fact, “freedom of religion” has been a central tenet of liberal democracies for centuries, protecting the right of individual beliefs within a secular state. Religion and other kinds of belief can impact many aspects of our lives, from the cradle to the grave. When our children go to school, uniform policies, canteen food, and school calendars need to respect different religions and beliefs. When we start employment, can we do our jobs without being unfairly disadvantaged? And when we get ill, our carers need to ensure that we are treated in a way that respects our personal beliefs and cultural practices. So far, so straight forward. But how do we decide what qualifies as a belief? Should, for example, vegetarianism fall into that category, or nationalism, or atheism? This is especially important in situations where “religion and belief” clashes with other protected characteristics, like sexual orientation, or rules about safeguarding or health and safety. How do we find the right balance? These are important questions with an impact on our day to day lives. The Open Learn Religion, Belief and Worldviews Hub is designed to help us think these complicated issues through—both individuals who need to know their rights, and employers and public sector workers who need to recognise them. Our worldviews shape our identities in complex and often subtle ways and get to the heart of who we are as human beings. The protection of religion and belief is important to making sure that society does not unfairly disadvantage some people—the religious and the non-religious alike.