

# Should christian schools require students to take a religion course?

[Business](#)



“ This class will be a unique experience to all of you, and you will learn valuable lessons, which can not be found in any other subject. Here, you will try to answer some deep questions regarding spirituality, true happiness, and the meaning of life interpreted in your very own way. Finally, during this course, try to learn more about yourself, and what is truly inside you.” Each year at my school, which is a Christian school that requires Religious and Biblical Studies, the teacher began the first day of religion with a statement along those lines. In the beginning, I was actually excited to find out more about myself, and to develop what the teacher claimed as “ spirituality”.

However, I was always soon disappointed each year. Instead of receiving the answers to the questions that the teacher had promised, we were being assessed on our knowledge about the origins of Hinduism, or were working on things like memorizing lines from the Bible. Furthermore, it seemed like the high school religion curriculum was almost a repetition of the middle school one. This led me to question the course. Is the religion curriculum truly productive, unique, and meaningful enough to require three semesters’ worth of our high school career? Let us think about how the majority of the high schools today determine and distinguish their required courses. A category of required subjects is typically composed of the subjects that will develop the students’ basic skills that are crucial to continuing education in college.

These subjects typically include mathematics, science, and English. On the other hand, there are some subjects that do have direct connections to college, but still help students learn something special, such as about various societies, citizenship, and social skills for the future. This includes <https://assignbuster.com/should-christian-schools-require-students-to-take-a-religion-course/>

some liberal arts courses such as Psychology and Philosophy. I began to wonder, why are these required subjects grouped in this way? Students, parents, and teachers will agree that college education is one of the greatest influences on one's future. The National Center for Education Statistics states that someone with a college degree from a school with a strong education system has more than twice the chance of getting employed than someone without one.

This is caused by the substantial increase in the competition for jobs since the last decade. But what does life in high school have to do with going to a college? According to National Association for College Admission Counseling, the amount of success in high school is the deciding factor of a student's admission into a college. In addition, around 90% of the colleges especially look at how well each student did in their core subjects. For example, according to the Wall Street Journal, University of California recalculates the GPA including grades only from core courses. The University of Pennsylvania is another example of a prestigious school that only counts "solid-level courses," such as math, English, social studies, foreign languages and science.

Thus, high schools must provide the students with sufficient opportunities by teaching and requiring the core subjects that are defined by the colleges as important. If not, they should at least take on the role of teaching students something like citizenship or general education, as mentioned earlier. If so, which category of required subjects above does religion go under? If the goal of the religion course were to teach us knowledge that would help us

continue education in college, it would probably look more like the other subjects, such as math, science, or Humanities (English and History).

However, most of the academic value that we get from religion is probably from facts about history, which is similar to what we cover in Humanities.

The religion teachers themselves claim that the course will provide valuable lessons dealing with deeper level questions and spirituality.

This suggests that religion is more leaning toward the second category of required subjects. But will each semester of religion in schools really offer a non-repetitive way to help us build our character, citizenship, and social skills? Two years ago, my school increased its religion requirement from one credit to 1.5 credits. Now that the course takes up so many credits, some students who want to take more core subjects, AP classes, or other elective courses of their interest are having to give up their desires. In order to prevent this, a considerable amount of students are sacrificing at least a quarter of summer vacation to take the religion summer program.

Even the middle school religion teachers were recruited to teach the course, because the number of classes had to be increased to fit the number of students. This not only uses up the students' valuable time, but also forces them to pay extra fees to the school. My sister, who is a junior in the high school, also went to this program. She says that what she learned there was exactly the same as what she learned during Biblical Studies in middle school. For example, her teacher from middle school taught her again, and the same exact videos, worksheets, and homework were given out.

She realized that the program was not very meaningful either, because the school had to compress the one-semester course into a portion of the summer. Unfortunately, the repetition of course materials is not only a problem specific to summer programs. Back in the middle school, we had to take Biblical Studies and World Religions already, but the same exact courses are required in high school. In addition, the curriculum seems to focus more on simply memorizing small details than challenging us to open our eyes to a “deeper meaning” as described by our teachers. Therefore, our religion course does not seem to be satisfying the elements of both categories of required subjects. Then what could it possibly be providing us? Has our religion course lost its initial purpose? Some people could argue that the course is not necessarily helping students build citizenship, social skills and character, but is still providing us with a greater understanding of the world by connecting through religion, or is arousing interest toward different cultures.

However, our school, which is international, is already an ideal place for people from all over the world to connect with each other. There are students coming from over 38 countries, and families believing in various religions. Like it or not, students are obliged to mix with other people from diverse cultural backgrounds in order to blend into our school’s community. If this is already happening naturally outside of the classroom, why would we need to require students to take a course that mostly instigates this type of learning? Is the school helping the students spend their time wisely by requiring religion? According to Rasmussen College, how students spend their time during the high school leaves a huge impact on the rest of their

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lives. When I calculated how much time we would actually have to spend sitting in class for religion before we graduate, I got exactly 180 hours excluding homework.

If religion became an elective course, I can assure that some motivated students will utilize and spend that time very productively. We can study more for the core subjects prioritized by most colleges, finish up homework, work on a few more SAT problems for college preparation, or even get a few extra minutes of rest to relieve ourselves from the stress accumulated through the huge workload that we receive. For the few students that have a true passion for religious studies and want to find a career related to religion in the future, an elective course is sufficient for their needs. The school could even make religion more productive and meaningful for their time by making the course more intense and challenging. However, for the majority of the students that are taking the course because it is required, religious studies at its current state might be placing more of a burden on their time than seriously benefiting them. Quoting my teacher, religion would give me “valuable lessons, which can not be found in any other subject”.

But I am still curious and unsatisfied, because I have failed to find them over the past three years. Even if such lessons do exist, they are probably not something that everyone should be required to learn, especially through three semesters of class.