

Teaching and learning approach

Using multidisciplinary approaches to examine worldviews

This book offers ways into thinking about worldviews, including models using religious studies and sociology. In this case it is legitimate to talk about putting on disciplinary *lenses* – we are deliberately looking at the content through these disciplines, adopting their questions and methods and exploring their findings.

Religious studies uses diverse methods to examine religion(s) and, increasingly, non-religion. It is open-minded in approach, methodologically agnostic, trying, as Denise Cush writes, ‘to see what the believer sees, without (at least initially) endorsing or rejecting the believer’s standpoint’, but also offering critical evaluation. ‘Seeing what the (non-)believer sees’ can easily apply to understanding worldviews. (See Investigator File pp. 30-31).

Sociology starts from a naturalistic (essentially atheistic or non-theistic) perspective. It assumes that the features and functions of society arise from within human individual and societal behaviour and experience – it is not looking for supernatural explanations. (See Investigator File pp. 16-17). It applies different methods to find out not only explicit beliefs and behaviours but also those that are implicit and hidden.

Kinds of knowledge

This book distinguishes between ‘substantive’ knowledge and ‘disciplinary’ knowledge. These terms are increasingly present in educational discourse, although they are not consistently applied. In these books, **substantive knowledge** concerns the subject content being studied, in terms of the core concepts, truth claims, teachings and practices of traditions (mainly religious, but it applies to non-religious worldviews too), and the behaviour and responses of adherents within traditions, noting that boundaries may be blurred and that much of this knowledge is contested. **Disciplinary knowledge** concerns the methods by which the substantive knowledge is reached. For example, this book explores how sociology looks at evidence of religious adherence, affiliation and practice and seeks to understand and explain what is going on in society, and how it changes over time.

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As with *Studying God*, book 1 in this series, the resources in *Studying Worldviews* seek to enable teachers and students to look *through* a range of disciplinary lenses at the substantive content of religious and non-religious worldviews, and also to look *at* these disciplinary lenses or methods. A third purpose is to open students’ eyes to the lenses that they are already wearing as they look at the world – to recognise that they encounter the content of RE from within their own worldviews, and to become aware of how that shapes their own responses and understanding.



Teaching and learning approach: Rob Freathy’s summary suggests a three-strand approach, where RE explores the: **Object of study, Methods of study and Subject.**

These three strands can be discerned behind the approaches that follow in this series.

Rob Freathy’s model can be found in various publications, including Rob Freathy & Helen C. John (2018), ‘Religious Education, Big Ideas and the study of religion(s) and worldview(s)’, *British Journal of Religious Education*, vol 41 issue 1