

Solarity: Materials in Support of out-of school-hours Religion and Philosophy Clubs

Introduction for Group Leaders

The materials presented in this section of the Sea of Faith Network website are intended for use by secondary school teachers or youth group leaders wishing to run out-of school-hours religion and philosophy clubs.

The sessions can be used in lunchtimes or after school or in holidays and are designed to be used in a variety of ways.

Group leaders can follow the programme in the order presented here, or select sessions as seem appropriate to them. Alternatively, the topics can be presented to students in the group and they can select the ones they are most interested in.

There are sufficient sessions presented here for one session a week over a whole school year, or the sessions can be mixed in with ideas brought in by students themselves and made to last for a much longer period, perhaps two or three years.

The sessions are aimed at students aged about 11-14, though they are appropriate, perhaps with a little tweaking, for older students too. They should supplement and add interest to examination courses in religious studies and philosophy and ethics, or provide an introduction to further studies. They might also be used to support post-16 provision for religious education, depending on the type of syllabus or enrichment programme being followed by a particular school, college or academy.

In general, the sessions themselves are presented with the instructions for group leaders in brown text, and titles, questions and other information to be presented to students in blue.

Since most of the sessions depend on stimulus material found on the web, it will be important for the group to meet in a room where there is internet access and an audio system to play films and music.

Why 'Solarity'?

The term 'solarity' comes from an idea spelled out in Don Cupitt's 1995 book, 'Solar Ethics', involving a continual outpouring of the self into the world.

'Solar living' is the art of living extrovertly, that is, 'giving it all you've got'; living out your life in an ethically defensible and justifiable way, with emphasis on concern for others and for the world rather than self-advantage. This includes support for such humanitarian movements that are opposed to slavery, racism and cruelty to living beings.

In the term 'solarity' we represent the struggle to live the best possible life we can in the context of our temporality, finitude and contingency. The sun warms, but can burn. How can we live well, and 'give all we can', in this light? How can we say 'yes' to life; with joy and without resentment?

The Solarity sessions provided here are in keeping with these ideas of 'solarity' and of The Sea of Faith Network, which 'explores and promotes religious faith as a human creation'. Nevertheless, they are presented in an open and investigative way, making no assumptions about the answers that students might arrive at. There is no intention to persuade students of any particular religious or philosophical point of view; rather, it is hoped that the topics will encourage independent thought and reflection, enabling students to deepen their knowledge and understanding of some of the most interesting issues and dilemmas of the contemporary world.

Who wrote the sessions?

The sessions were written between July 2013 and July 2014 by Ed Pawson, Jonny Lawson and Katie Snook (teachers of Religion and Philosophy at the King's School, Ottery St Mary, Devon), and Dave Francis (an RE consultant and one of the Sea of Faith Network trustees).

Are there more sessions planned?

No more sessions for this age group are currently in the pipeline, but the Network is keen to hear from anyone, including students themselves, who would like to offer new contributions, in the style of the ones provided here.

It is also possible that a similar scheme could be provided for primary age pupils. Do let us know if you think that would be of interest.

To contribute new sessions to our editors or to comment on the current scheme, please contact us at: webmaster@sofn.org.uk