

### Unit Overview

#### Title

Modern Worldviews

#### Duration

6 – 12 sessions

#### Background

The unit of work Modern Worldviews draws its content and title from international sources and the Australian Curriculum (ver 9.0). Wherever possible, it aligns with the QCAA, ACT Government Education and Victorian Curriculum (VCAA).

A widely acknowledged gap in our local curriculum led academics, teachers and researchers to collaborate, design and develop this customised Worldviews Australian Curriculum. Its approach includes content for multi-modal pedagogical and student-led learning, with a very strong focus on critical thinking, ethical understanding and historical knowledge, skills and understandings.

Learning about the principles of worldviews, including secular humanism, is an important part of a contemporary school curriculum in Australia. It enables students to be more informed and engaged at a local and a global level, supporting an understanding of diverse local communities and the beliefs and practices of diverse traditions. It assists students to recognise and appreciate areas of commonality and difference between religious and non-religious worldviews and among secular perspectives.

Teaching resources for Modern Worldviews have been designed for secondary students in Australian schools. They align closely to content descriptors and standards in History, Civics and Citizenship and the general capabilities of Critical and Creative Thinking, Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding, and Personal and Social capability.

Lessons are multimodal and take the form of slideshows, videos, and student hand-outs. Each slideshow includes detailed notes for teachers with suggestions for use.

**The approach to learning** about worldviews in the Australian Curriculum 7–10 is based on:

- learning about worldviews contextualised in broader learning programs (e.g. History and Civics & Citizenship)
- opportunities to practise Critical and Creative Thinking, Intercultural Understanding and other general capabilities
- the opportunity to study in depth a non-religious worldview to compare with religious worldviews.

**Modern Worldviews** leads students to review the relationship between historical concepts, skills and understanding of the modern world, ethical concepts, principles and reasons why beliefs may differ between people and groups (History, Ethical Capability and Critical & Creative Thinking).

They consider how secular humanism has contributed to the making of the modern world, ways of life, changes to society, significant events, ideas, beliefs.

Students apply and further develop their learning as to why ethical concepts and principles may be shared but nevertheless result in different actions by considering the influence of culture, philosophical thought and worldviews.

## Modern Worldviews: Unit Overview

**This unit has been developed** by the Rationalist Society of Australia and the Victorian Humanists, drawing upon material developed by the National Secular Society (UK) and Humanists UK.

The curriculum is intended to provide students with knowledge of the origins and long history of secular humanism, an understanding of the principles of secular humanism, and how these principles have been applied in the past to effect progressive social reforms and can still be applied to contemporary social issues.

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority summarises secular humanism in this way:

*Humanism and Rationalism have arisen out of philosophical inquiry dating back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. They gained modern form after the 18th century Age of Enlightenment which focused on the powers of human reason and science.*

*Rationalists and Humanists draw on collective experience, empirical evidence and reason to establish ethical principles, based on a sense of common humanity and aimed at enhancing human wellbeing.*

*These principles include affirming human dignity and individual freedom, compatible with the rights of others, and form the basis of practical moral decision-making.*

*There is a natural universe independent of human experience, thought and language and this natural universe is the ultimate reality.*

*The universe and everything in it, including people, were not created by a god or gods.*

*Every person has only one life, which ends in death.*

*Purpose and meaning are generated by people, not received from god or any religious text. People are therefore responsible for how they live and treat others, including non-human species, and the environment.*