Humanism: A Very Short Introduction

Stephen Law

Humanism: A Very Short Introduction explores how humanism uses science and reason to make sense of the world, looking at how it encourages individual moral responsibility and shows that life can have meaning without religion. Are atheism and humanism ‘faith positions’? Without God is there morality? Without God do we have a purpose? Religion is currently gaining a higher profile. The number of faith schools is increasing, and religious points of view are being aired more frequently. As religion's profile rises, those who reject religion can find themselves misunderstood and misrepresented. This VSI examines the arguments about the existence of God, and explores the role humanism plays in moral and secular societies.

Paganism: A Very Short Introduction

Owen Davies

This Very Short Introduction explores the meaning of paganism from the ancient world to the present day through a chronological overview of attitudes towards its practices and beliefs. Despite the expansion of Christianity and Islam, Pagan cultures continue to exist around the world, whilst in the West new formations of paganism constitute one of the fastest-growing religions. Focusing on paganism in Europe, but exploring the nature of paganism globally, this VSI looks at how Europeans discovered new cultures through colonial expansion, missionary work, and anthropological study. Contemporary social paganism can be a liberating and social force, and the idea of a global Pagan theology is now on the religious map.

Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction

Philip Sheldrake

This Very Short Introduction explores spirituality from the ancient world to the present day. Spirituality is the subject of ancient religious writings and much of modern psychology. It is often used when discussing the meaning and purpose of life, and is particularly prominent in discussions about death. This VSI explores the meaning and purpose of spirituality in human life and its relevance to the modern era.
Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction explores the historical foundations of spirituality and considers how it came to have the significance it is developing today. It has been suggested that ‘spirituality’ has become a word that ‘can define an era’. Why? Because paradoxically, alongside a decline in traditional religious affiliations, the growing interest in spirituality is a striking aspect of contemporary western cultures. Spirituality refers to the deepest values and sense of meaning by which people seek to live. Sometimes these values are conventionally religious. Sometimes they are associated with what is understood as ‘the sacred’ in a broader sense — that is, of ultimate rather than merely instrumental importance.

Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction
Malcolm Gaskill

Witchcraft: A Very Short Introduction explores why witches still feature so heavily in our cultures and consciousness. From childhood most of us develop a sense of the mysterious, malign person, usually an old woman. Tracing the history of witchcraft from the ancient world to contemporary paganism, this VSI reveals how it has meant different things to different people and that in every age it has raised questions about the distinction between fantasy and reality, faith and proof. It uses stories, court records, and myths to examine the witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and explores the reinvention of witchcraft — as history, religion, fiction, and metaphor.