

Theology and Religious Studies at Cambridge

An interdisciplinary degree with diverse career options

philosophy languages history literature sociology



“Apply! I never expected to study Theology and Religious Studies at Cambridge but it has been such a fun and rewarding experience!”

Heather, a recent graduate

Welcome to Cambridge

As Chair of the Faculty of Divinity I am delighted that you are considering studying Theology and Religious Studies.

There is much more to such a choice than "Religion is important in contemporary society" - although that is true. I am confident that as you explore further you will find why teachers and students in the Faculty are so enthusiastic about what they are doing. If you are visiting us, or are planning to do so, you will also receive from us a warm welcome.

Professor Judith Lieu
Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity and
Head of the Faculty



Why Theology and Religious Studies?

Highly relevant

Religion is playing an increasingly important role in state politics, international relations, financial markets and non-governmental organisations. The fostering of religious understanding has immense implications for individual, national and international well-being.

Develop your thinking

Whether your focus is an individual search for meaning, or fundamental issues of war and peace, freedom and bondage, good and evil, this degree is about the relentless pursuit of a deeper, truer understanding. You do not have to be religious to study for this degree: our undergraduates belong to all religions and none. We are looking for applicants who passionately believe in the significance of religion to past and contemporary societies and who wish to develop their thinking, formulate cogent arguments and express their views with clarity and conviction.

Interdisciplinary subject area

Religion intersects with numerous other disciplines across the academic spectrum.

This is reflected in the Cambridge degree which enables you to combine an interest in religion with Philosophy, History, Sociology, Literature, Anthropology, Languages or Science. The breadth of disciplines it encompasses allows you to follow your passions and sample new subject areas. By choosing to study Theology and Religious studies you will develop a range of transferable skills associated with subjects across the arts and humanities such as textual analysis, learning a language, selecting and analysing information and developing cogent arguments. All of these will give you exceptional career prospects.

"If you want to do a humanities subject that mixes up lots of different disciplines – philosophy, sociology, literature, history, languages – then you should do Theology and Religious Studies."

Emma
Second year undergraduate

Why study it at the University of Cambridge?

Broad degree programme

Our undergraduate degree allows you the freedom to sample the full range of teaching across the programme or to choose papers which focus on particular elements of our teaching including Philosophy of Religion, Ethics, Religious Traditions of India, Islamic Studies, Jewish Studies, Biblical Studies or the History of Christianity.

This autonomy stands in contrast to the courses offered at other institutions where you may have to take a significant number of compulsory modules or pre-select a programme that precludes you from sampling the full variety of what is on offer. Our approach allows you to build on your strengths while developing your interests or to follow a completely different path to the one which you intended.

Faculty community

The teaching staff includes experts in a variety of faith traditions and in the study of religion and religious practice. In addition to the 24 members of teaching staff we are fortunate to be able to draw on a range of specialists across the Cambridge colleges. These world-class academics, along with students and researchers, comprise a supportive and enriching Faculty community. We have around 150 undergraduates, and over 100 masters and doctoral students. On weekday mornings we provide coffee for the whole Faculty to give you the opportunity to meet with staff and students in a relaxed environment.

At Cambridge you will receive a great deal of individual attention through the supervision system. This means that in addition to lectures and classes you will spend dedicated time with an expert in small groups of one or two to develop your ideas, critical thinking, and writing skills. This type of teaching is rare in the UK and enables you to make swift progress in a highly supportive setting.

Exceptional resources

The award-winning Faculty building has lecture and seminar rooms and is fully equipped with state-of-the-art audio visual facilities. As a student here you will benefit from exceptional resources including access to Faculty, College and University libraries. These contain specialist texts and manuscripts including the *Codex Bezae*, an important early version of the Gospel, and the Genizah collection, a globally significant source for medieval Judaism.

More information is available at www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/library

“A brilliant opportunity to develop your interests (even ones you didn't know you had) in a supportive environment with the best resources available.”

Kirsty
Second year undergraduate



What can I study?

Wide-ranging course

Theology and Religious Studies develops a variety of skills by covering a broad range of intellectual pursuits relating to its study including the analysis of scripture, critical examination of the works of great thinkers, the history of particular periods of human civilisation and consideration of the latest scientific theories.

The course allows you to choose papers (the Cambridge word for modules) relating to a range of religious traditions enabling you to pursue your interests in these and other areas from an historical, philosophical or comparative perspective.

Teaching is provided through lectures, classes and supervisions. You can expect up to nine hours of classes and lectures a week as well as a weekly supervision. Assessment is mainly by three-hour written examinations, but some papers are assessed on the basis of coursework.

Year One

This is known as Part I and is a foundation year. All students study a scriptural language, usually from scratch. You can choose from Hebrew, New Testament Greek, Sanskrit or Qur'anic Arabic. This gives our students additional insights into the texts and helps them appreciate the impact of translations on understanding scripture. You take four other papers from a choice of seven.

Sample Part I paper **Understanding Contemporary Religion**

This paper introduces students to the ways in which sociologists have sought to analyse religion as a source of social order, meaning and identity. In particular, it enables students to acquire a broad familiarity with theoretical debates rooted in an appreciation of the work of Max Weber and Émile Durkheim; explore issues of contemporary interest in the study of religion, such as fundamentalism, the relationship between religion and politics or that between religious identity and gender; and consider the main developments in Britain since 1945.

Year Two

Part IIA builds on the knowledge and skills acquired in Part I. You choose four papers from a total of 18, covering a wide variety of topics so that you can tailor the course to your own particular interests.

Sample Part IIA paper **Ethics and Faith**

This course introduces students to the main lines of the tradition of moral philosophy, through study of primary texts, including works by Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Montaigne, Hume, Kant, Nietzsche, Bradley and Wittgenstein. The main concern of the course is to raise questions about the nature, form and justification of morality. What does morality require of us, and why? And what difference, if any, does religious belief make to the answers to be given to these questions?

Year Three

Part IIB allows you to develop a detailed knowledge of specialised areas within the subject by concentrating on four papers. You can choose to be assessed for a dissertation and/or extended essays for up to 50% of your work.

Sample Part IIB paper **The Doctrine of God**

This seminar-based paper is concerned with the Christian doctrine of God, focusing on 'love and desire'. Using primary readings taken for the most part from Antiquity to the Renaissance period we consider the love of God (both human love of God and divine love for the world), love of neighbour and love of self. The four main topics considered are Love of God, Marriage, Friendship, and Love and Justice. Students enjoy considerable freedom in their essays to apply current critical theory to classic texts and considerations.

Information on all our papers is available at
www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/courses/paper-descriptions

Recent dissertations have included

Religion and Revolution: What made the Muslim Brotherhood so successful in the Egyptian Arab Spring?

Can the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979 be regarded as a Christian Revolution?

Metrical Psalmody in England and Wales, 1530-1630.

The Tragedy of Faith in 'The Brothers Karamazov'.

Exploring the relationship between religion, myth and society in Hindi cinema with particular reference to Mother India (1957), Jai Santoshi Maa (1975) and Lage Raho Munna Bhai (2006).

Happiness as 'The Realisation of Desires' in Anna Karenina.

Halakhah and Organ Transplantation: Past and Present Perspectives and Debates.

Religious aspects of delusions in schizophrenia.

Conflict or Conciliation? The Visual Theology of Northern Irish Sectarian Folk Art.

Grappling with God: A reappraisal of Elie Wiesel's 'protest theology' through an exploration of narrative form.

“Look at Theology in relation to other courses - it offers a wealth of options which other courses, and indeed Theology courses at other universities, do not offer.”

Oli

Second year undergraduate



Flexibility and choice

You may wish to follow a pathway through the papers which matches your interest in a specific area such as Philosophy of Religion, Ethics, Islamic Studies, Jewish Studies, Religious Traditions of India, Biblical Studies, History of Christianity or Christian Doctrine. These pathways are optional and non-binding for the duration of your degree but they can provide a useful way of approaching the papers.

However, many students enjoy sampling the breadth of teaching on offer, choosing a deliberately diverse range of papers to ensure that they end up with a profound knowledge of the subject area.

The flexibility of the course at Cambridge means that you are not bound to follow one of these routes at any stage of your degree.

What do our students do next?

Theology and Religious Studies graduates are highly employable, offering multidisciplinary and inter-disciplinary skills much valued by employers, and detailed knowledge of diverse world views and issues. This means that graduates go on to a strikingly broad range of jobs as well as options in further education.

Some graduates make direct use of the course content. We live in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. The skills of vision, creativity and religious sensitivity, which are developed through the study of Theology and Religious Studies, will be at a premium in such a world.

Because the Cambridge Theology and Religious Studies degree also covers elements from other valuable disciplines such as Philosophy, History, Sociology, Literature, Anthropology and Languages, you leave university with a grounding in a broad range of subjects and the skills which they cultivate.

Other graduates apply the transferable skills that they have developed here to gain employment in another area.



By studying Theology and Religious Studies you will be able to:

- Sift, select and retain complex information and identify key issues
- Express ideas clearly through essay writing and discussion
- Tackle new languages from scratch
- Use imagination and creativity
- Critically approach contemporary issues
- Take a disciplined approach to problem solving
- Improve your investigative, analytical and critical evaluation skills
- Understand and take a sensitive approach to different cultures and beliefs
- Demonstrate a genuine curiosity in people and world cultures

Our course inspires a significant proportion of students to undertake options in further education after three years of study. Over the last five years we have had an average of **39% of our graduates going on to study masters and research degrees** in Theology and Religious Studies or related disciplines, or undertaking training to follow a career in teaching or law.

“I'm not sure what I want to do at this stage but the time management skills and work ethic that I've gained and the ability to gather and analyse difficult evidence will be invaluable.”

Agnes
First year undergraduate

“The academic rigour, sensitivity and confidence I gained from Theology and Religious Studies was useful preparation for work on international policy issues where I regularly need to appreciate different perspectives, assess evidence and make coherent arguments.”

Primrose
Undergraduate 2006-2009
now working at the Foreign and
Commonwealth Office

Theology and Religious Studies graduates from the University of Cambridge are particularly employable. Over the last five years we have had consistently high levels of employment for our graduates, with an average of **93% entering the job market or going on to further education within six months of graduating**. This is higher than the average for the University of Cambridge as a whole, and many other Theology and Religious Studies courses in the UK.

By studying our degree you will develop valuable transferable skills and a breadth of understanding giving you endless possibilities, whichever path you choose.

Recent graduate destinations

Non-governmental organisations

Crisis Action (New York), Advocacy Associate
Bede House Association, Assistant Domestic
Violence Caseworker
The Retinoblastoma Society, National
Co-ordinator

Teaching

University of California, Teaching Assistant
University of Oxford, Lecturer
Teach First, Teacher of Religious Education
Hills Road Sixth Form College, Lecturer

Public sector

Crown Prosecution Service, Case Progression
Officer
HM Treasury, Civil Service Fast Stream
London Borough of Islington, Social Worker
House of Parliament, Entry Researcher

Business

HSBC Bank, Executive Management Trainee
Eversheds, Trainee Solicitor
EON, Corporate Management Graduate
Trainee

Religion

St Georges Church, Pastoral Assistant
The Methodist Church, Probationer Minister
London School of Economics, Chaplain

Arts

Evangelical Alliance, Head of Media
Film, television and stage Actor



www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/outreach

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Typical offers require

A Level A*AA

IB 40-41 points, 776 at Higher Level

Other qualifications Contact the Admissions Office: admissions@cam.ac.uk

No specific subjects are required to study Theology and Religious Studies but it is useful to have AS/IB Standard Level or above in some of the following: Philosophy and Ethics, English, History, Modern Languages, Classics, or Religious Studies.

Available at all colleges except Churchill.

Open Days We would be delighted if you visited us to find out more about Theology and Religious Studies in Cambridge and to meet academic staff and current students. For dates and to book places see www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/outreach/open-days

Cambridge Bursaries No UK or EU student studying for their first degree should be prevented from applying here by cost alone. More information is available at www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/cambridgebursary/

All information correct at time of print. Please see the Faculty web site for up to date information.

For leaflets in alternative formats, please contact the Faculty Office.

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