



Theology and religion is a diverse subject area, employing a wide variety of methodological approaches in its discourse. It is not only growing in academic significance, but it is also a living, active area of study that engages communities of faith, politicians and those working in non-academic contexts. This programme reflects this complexity and is designed to prepare you for professions which depend upon an advanced awareness of issues of theology and religion, and allow you to better appreciate the significance of these issues in contemporary society. It also provides ideal preparation for further research.

**[Study here and find out why the University of Birmingham was awarded The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2013-14 \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx)**

### Course fact file

**Type of Course:** Taught

**Study Options:** Full time, part time

**Duration:** 1 year full-time, 2 years part-time

**Start date:** September

### Contact

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**[School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion \(/schools/ptr/index.aspx\)](/schools/ptr/index.aspx)**

### Details

Depending on your module choices you could become critically acquainted with the 'sources' of theology, such as scriptural writings, historical traditions and theologies and ethics issues. You will also examine the importance of the sociological and cultural background; for example, in terms of new 'readings' of theology that have emerged out of gendered and ethnic contexts, and new insights into biblical scholarship which have arisen from contemporary culture.

You will also be encouraged to interrogate and critically analyse your own, and others', presuppositions and approach your studies in ways that show sensitivity to the multi-disciplinary nature of the issues under discussion.

You will study one core module - Research Methods - and five optional modules, in addition to completing a 15,000-word dissertation.

You will choose your optional modules from the following (see further module information below):

- Bible and Sacred Space
- Christian-Muslim Relations: Origins and Issues
- Classic Problems in the Philosophy of Religion
- Contemporary Issues in Sikhism
- Contemporary Sufism
- Feminism in Islam
- Historical and Contemporary Debates on the Holocaust
- Islam in Britain
- Islamic Philosophy
- Political Islam
- Problems of Religious Diversity
- Religion and Peacebuilding
- Religion in Contemporary Politics I and II
- Sikh Perspectives on Interreligious Relations
- The Dead Sea Scrolls: Texts and Context

## Modules

You will study one core module - Research Methods - and choose five optional modules from a range which includes:

### Bible and Sacred Space

This module will examine spatial concepts within biblical texts (primarily the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, with some reference to other Second Temple and early Christian literature) and critique them using spatial-critical theory. There will be an emphasis on the original settings of the texts and related archaeological findings, and also on the history of their interpretation in different contexts, with a focus on contemporary interpretation (including virtual sacred space). Key spatial themes may include, but will not be limited to: land, temple, city, country/agricultural space, and empire. The module will also deal with the ethics of examining biblical space in light of contemporary political conflicts (Israel/Palestine and Jerusalem in particular).

### Christian-Muslim Relations: Origins and Issues

The module comprises weekly seminars divided between the development of mutual attitudes between Christians and Muslims in the early centuries of the Islamic era and the legacy of historical attitudes as reflected in present-day relations.

### Contemporary Issues in Sikhism

This module will explore the workings of the Sikh religion in the contemporary world with particular reference to Sikhs in the Diaspora and in the Punjab. Examples of issues to be discussed include: attitudes towards caste, dowry and arranged marriages; questions of adaptation and dialogue in a new environment with particular emphasis on second and third generation Sikhs; and changing traditions. Legal case studies affecting the diasporic Sikh community; Kirpan and Turban will be looked at. The consequences of the play Behzti will be considered. The new religious, ethical and moral issues confronting Sikhs, e.g. abortion, homosexuality will be looked at.

### Contemporary Sufism

This module aims to examine the diverse beliefs and practices of contemporary forms of Sufism. It will examine the historical and cultural antecedents of Sufism, discussing various interpretations and understandings of Sufi origins and practice and will focus on how these are expressed in differing contexts in the contemporary world. The module will particularly focus on Sufi tariqas, examining the social and theological formulations of the different traditions, such as the Naqshabandiyya, Shadhiliyya, Qadiriyya and Mawlawiyya, as well as more heterodox orders such as the Bektashiyya. Consideration will be given to the different methodological approaches to the study of these tariqas, such as the ethnographic and sociological, in both Islamic and Western contexts, and how these approaches might be applied to other mystical and esoteric traditions.

### Feminism in Islam

The course explores the historical development of feminism in the Muslim world, in particular the feminist movements in such countries as Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. It considers feminist aims and objectives and their impact on Muslim societies. Also, it evaluates the different views and strands of feminism and the forces which hinder or aid the progress of feminism in the Muslim region.

### Historical and Contemporary Debates on the Holocaust

The module introduces students to a range of historical and contemporary debates on the Holocaust. The focus is methodological, focusing on how this historical period is conceptualised, interpreted and studied, both as events were unfolding and subsequently. The module begins by considering when these events began to be spoken of and conceptualised as 'the Holocaust'; the range of possible definitions of 'the Holocaust' (e.g., in relation to the experience of non-Jewish victims of Nazi persecution), and issues relating to language, terminology and the naming of these events. Consideration will be given to evaluating the range of possible perspectives and sources (often conceptualised as those of 'victims', 'survivors', 'perpetrators', 'bystanders', etc.), and whether it is possible to construct an 'integrated' history of the Holocaust. We will explore some ongoing controversies relating to the history and memory of the Holocaust relating to the identity and motives of the perpetrators (both German and non-German), the nature and extent of resistance, the role of survivors and their testimony in Holocaust-related trials.

### Islam in Britain

This module will study contemporary Muslim communities in Britain with a view to understanding the key sociological and theological dynamics of these communities in terms of how they interact and relate to each other and wider British society within the context of Europe. The module will explore the historical establishment and settlement of British Muslims, from the nineteenth century onwards; the cultural and theological dimensions to religious identity and engagement of British Muslims; issues relating to education, social provision and political involvement; the development of community services such as halal food and halal regulation, mosques and funeral services. The module will also explore particular issues relating to popular perceptions and media portrayal of Islam and the social, psychological and theological impacts on Muslim communities post 9/11. There will be a series of fieldtrips to mosques and Muslim organisations within Birmingham to help facilitate student engagement in discussion of issues raised on the module, with Muslims in the city.

### Political Islam

This module is a detailed study and critique of the rise and development of political Islam or Islamism in the Muslim world and beyond. As such, it critically examines and evaluates the origins, roots, theory and history of Islamism. The module assesses the impact and effects of this trend on contemporary Muslim thought. Also, it investigates the causes that have led to the emergence of political Islam, its nature, agendas and role in domestic, regional and international politics. Special emphasis will be placed on the distinction between the worldviews of political Islam and moderate Islam. The course will be approached from three angles: governments and their Islamic oppositions, Islamism in power, and the global aspect of political Islam.

### Problems of Religious Diversity

This module aims to focus on a range of key perspectives and models on inter-religious engagement taken from selected theologians/philosophers, thinkers from different world religions and some non-religious perspectives. There will be an evaluative overview of the structure of the presuppositions and worldviews underlying the various responses to religious diversity. Attention will be given to discussing the theology and philosophy of religions, models of dialogue, and contemporary issues facing the future of religion and dialogue.

### Religion and Peacebuilding

This module provides you with an understanding of contemporary theories and practices in the area of religion and peacebuilding. A wide range of education programmes, non-governmental organisations, new forms of diplomacy, conflict resolution efforts and post-conflict reconstruction engage with religious actors, responding to the increased relevance of religious factors in national and international conflicts. Examples of leading scholars (e.g. John Paul Lederach, R. Scott Appleby, Volker Rittberger) will be analysed and case studies of diverse localities as well as of institutional settings (e.g. political institutions) will provide the contemporary background.

### Religion in Contemporary Politics I

This module provides you with an advanced understanding of the theoretical and conceptual debates about the role of religion in contemporary global politics. Traditionally the study of political science and international relations has framed the understanding of religion within the context of secularisation and the nation-state. This interpretation is being contested by the impact of globalisation and the rise of anti-secular movements. The module critically examines the secularisation thesis as applied to the 'West' (developed countries) and the 'East' (underdeveloped countries) and evaluate the impact of globalisation on collective religious identities.

### Religion in Contemporary Politics II

This module examines the public policy responses to the global religious revival since 1989. Although traditionally organised religions have been viewed as the source of intractable political conflicts, of introducing a 'cosmic dimension' into normal political life, in the last decade there has been an increasing recognition of the need to manage religious differences, to utilise religious resources for conflict resolution. Theoretically and conceptually this departure is anchored in the inter-related debates on multiculturalism, pluralism and the need for religious dialogue among the world's great religion.

## Sikh Perspectives on Interreligious Relations

This module will begin by looking at key concepts within Sikhism: God, Guru, Gender Equality, Salvation and Liberation. These concepts will be considered in relation to attitudes to other religions and, what might be called 'alien contexts'. There will be a special concentration on Sikhism in diasporic contexts, particularly in the British context.

Plus:

- Classic Problems in the Philosophy of Religion
- Islamic Philosophy
- The Dead Sea Scrolls: Texts and Context

## Fees and funding

### Scholarships and studentships

Scholarships to cover fees and/or maintenance costs may be available. To discover whether you are eligible for any award across the University, and to start your funding application, please visit the University's **Postgraduate Funding Database** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/FundingFilter.aspx>).

International students can often gain funding through overseas research scholarships, Commonwealth scholarships or their home government.

## Entry requirements

A 2:1 Honours degree in Theology or a related discipline is normally required.

Learn more about **entry requirements** (</postgraduate/requirements-pgt/index.aspx>)

Learn more about **entry requirements** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/index.aspx>)

### International students

#### Academic requirements

We accept a range of qualifications; our **country pages** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx>) show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

#### English language requirements

You can satisfy our English language requirements in two ways:

- by holding an **English language qualification** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/index.aspx>) to the right level
- by taking and successfully completing one of our **English courses for international students** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/english-courses.aspx>)

## How to apply

### Before you make your application

You may wish to **register your interest with us** (<https://bham.hobsons.co.uk/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=postgraduate>) to receive regular news and updates on postgraduate life within this Department and the wider University.

### Making your application

When clicking on the Apply Now button you will be directed to an application specifically designed for the programme you wish to apply for where you will create an account with the University application system and submit your application and supporting documents online. Further information regarding how to apply online can be found on the **How to apply pages** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/apply-pg/index.aspx>)

**Apply now** (<https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CAL143.htm>)

## Learning and teaching

As well as the taught modules you take on this programme, the **Department of Theology and Religion** (</schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/index.aspx>) has a busy programme of research seminars, conferences and workshops which you can attend, so you'll be able to gain insight from a range of academics and peers from across the department.

You will also become part of, and contribute to, the vibrant international community of the College of Arts and Law Graduate School, which offers dedicated research resources and a supportive working environment. Our team of academic and operational staff are on hand to offer support and advice to all postgraduate students within the College.

### Support with academic writing

As a postgraduate student in the College of Arts and Law, you have access to the **Academic Writing Advisory Service (AWAS)** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/opportunities/awas/index.aspx>) which aims to help your transition from undergraduate to taught Masters level, or back into academia after time away. The service offers guidance on writing assignments and dissertations for your MA/MSc programme with individual support from an academic writing advisor via tutorials, email and the provision of online materials.

International students can access support through the **English for International Students Unit (EISU)**

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## Employability

The University of Birmingham has been ranked 8th in the UK and 60th in the world for post-qualification employability in the latest global survey of universities commissioned by the International Herald Tribune.

Your degree will provide excellent preparation for employment and this will be further enhanced by the employability skills training offered through the College of Arts and Law Graduate School.

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Birmingham's Theology graduates develop a broad range of transferable skills including: familiarity with research methods; the ability to manage large quantities of information from diverse sources; the ability to organise information in a logical and coherent manner; the expertise to write clearly and concisely and to tight deadlines; critical and analytical ability; the capacity for argument, debate and speculation; and the ability to base conclusions on statistical research.

Over the past five years, over 92% of our postgraduates were in work and/or further study six months after graduation. Many of our graduates go into careers in churches of various denominations. For those in further study, teacher training courses remain a popular choice. Other students use their transferable skills in a range of employment sectors, including local government, education and charities. Employers that our graduates have gone on to work for include: British Council; Church of England; Institute of Education; International Greek New Testament Project; Quaker Homeless Action; Queens Ecumenical Theological College; and University of Birmingham.

