# **Department of Theology & Religion**

# **Module Descriptions 2024/25**

# **Level H (i.e. 3rd Yr.) Modules**

Please be aware that all modules are subject to availability.

For many of these modules, some experience of studying Theology may be required, and you should remember this when choosing your modules. If there is another module that you need to have studied before taking this, it will be stated in the module description.

Please note that at the time this document has been prepared (February 2024) the following information is provisional, and there may be minor changes between now and the beginning of 2024/25 academic year.

**Please note: Forms of assessment are currently undergoing review for 2024/25, and as a result the assessment information listed within this handbook may be subject to change.**

# **SEMESTER 1 MODULES**

## **LH Christmas and Ethical Consuming**

Module Code: 29805

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 1

Prerequisites: None

**Module Description**

The module introduces key ideas and themes of ethical consuming within a framework of investigation of the practices of Christmas. Specifically, the module addresses the complexity of debates over the religious character of Christmas, as well as the commercialization of Christmas and other religious festivals. This complexity is enhanced by the wider cultural concern with sustainability, fair trade, environmental impact and other aspects of an ethical approach to consumption. There is a focus on the overlap between consumer society and capitalism, ethical consumption, popular culture, and religious belief and practice.

Assessment

1 x 2500 word essay (60%)

1 x 1500 word critical response (40%)

## **LH Historical and Contemporary Approaches to the Holocaust**

Module Code: 37066

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 1

Pre-requisites: Students must have taken one of the following:

* 09 28668 LI Auschwitz in History and Memory
* Successful completion of Stage I and Stage II of SH/JH History
* The equivalent in terms of having some background knowledge of the Holocaust (by agreement with the module tutor).

**Module Description**

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 conceptualized, interpreted and studied, both as events were unfolding and subsequently.

Examples of the debates and controversies studied will vary from year to year, but could include the emergence of different national approaches to the history and commemoration of the Holocaust; the adequacy and possible overlap between categories such as ‘victim’, ‘bystander’ and ‘perpetrator’; complicity, ‘privilege, the ‘grey zone’ and ‘choiceless choices’; approaches to survivor testimony; the nature of resistance during the Holocaust; Holocaust education; representing the Holocaust on film.

Assessment

1 x 3000 word essay (50%)

1 x 2500 word review of a key text (50%)

## **LH Buddhism**

Module Code: 39957

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 1

Prerequisites: None

**Module Description**

This module will provide an overview of the Buddhist tradition, covering historical backgrounds and subsequent development; key concepts and teachings, including the Four Noble Truths, concepts of 'no-self', emptiness, rebirth and enlightenment; the diversity of traditions; and practice. Contemporary movements and issues will be explored, and there will be an opportunity to engage with Buddhist communities in the West Midlands.

Buddhism has a unique position for learners who wish to examine the definition and boundaries of religion.

First, Buddhism is frequently described as a philosophy, or as a spirituality, rather than as a religion. Studying concrete forms of Buddhism will offer new insights along this line of discussion. The topics investigated in this class will range from assessing whether Buddhists deny any kind of transcendent reality, including that of a Supreme Being or God, as well as their stance on gods, demons, rituals, priests, monks, nuns, festivals, prayers, shrines, and sacred relics.

Second, religion has floating borders inasmuch as religious practices regularly seem to tell more about societal values than about anything else. Buddhism is a religion that spread from as early as the 2nd century CE across deeply different cultures and was transformed accordingly. It is therefore a strong case study from which to reflect on this state of affair.

By the end of the module, students will have developed a nuanced understanding of what Buddhism is and is not, and they will have gained a new perspective on what it means to be a human being by rigorously engaging the Buddhist answers to life's most profound questions.

**Assessment:**

1 x 1500 word 'critical reflection' (40%)

1 x 2500 essay (60%)

#  **SEMESTER 2 MODULES**

## **LH Gender, Sexualities and Religion**

Module Code: 36089

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 2

Prerequisites: None

**Module Description**

This module explores the complicated and often heated relationship between LGBTQ movements, feminist movements and religion/spirituality. It investigates how social and political constructions of gender and sexuality are challenged, both by those who attempt to reform religious traditions from within and those who break away to invent new forms of spirituality.

Cannot normally be taken with LM Gender, Sexualities and Religion

Assessment

1 x 2250 word essay (50%)

1 x 2250 word essay (50%)

## **LH Ancient Roots of Yoga and Meditation**

Module Code: 39956

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 2

Prerequisites: None

**Module Description**

The aim of this module is to investigate different forms of meditation and, from this, to explore the ways in which meditation seeks to modify the use of attention, and to bring about forms of long-term transformation of consciousness and body.

Students following this module will be able to identify basic features of meditative practices across cultures; and they will have a grasp on the way in which meditative practices share hybrid features with other types of practice, such as ritual and devotional practices. Texts like the Hindu scripture Bhagavad Gita where three paths of yoga are offered – action, devotion, and knowledge – will offer a springboard to reflect on the value of practice versus doctrine.

The cross-fertilization of meditative practices and techniques in different traditions has characterized these meditative traditions for centuries. It has been argued that the development of yogic practices in South Asia has influenced Jewish Mysticism such as the Kabbalah, the Islamic tradition of Sufism, and an Eastern Orthodox Jesus prayer. More recently, these ancient meditative practices have become a global phenomenon, which has in turn influenced many types of contemporary spirituality.

The module will introduce students to different techniques of meditation across this vast spectrum, from repetitive recitations and visualizations to body and breath techniques; and different receptions of these practices of transformation of the Self, including contemporary scientific and popular interest in these ancient practices. Students will explore the contexts from which different practices emerged, including philosophical and religious presuppositions, as well as pertinent social and cultural backgrounds.

Finally, students will be given firsthand experience of practitioners leading meditative sessions. This module will notably draw on the spiritual practices of Jainism, one of the world's oldest religions, with roots in India from at least 2,500 years ago. Jain nuns (samani) are specialists of a form of meditation called \"preksha dhyana\" which has as its goal to achieve an integrated personal development through behavioral adaptations.

At the end of the module students will be able to develop a self-reflection on their experience.

**Assessment:**

1 x 1500 word 'critical reflection' (40%)

1 x 2500 essay (60%)