Overview

Religion is central to many social, political and ethical controversies, and many people think of the ‘spiritual’ dimension of their life as the most important. Around 70% of people in the UK, and over 80% worldwide, identify with a religious group. Understanding how people live their different faiths is crucial to navigating a globalised world. Being able to communicate effectively on these matters will give you an edge in the job market and the workplace: graduates in this area are good communicators with enquiring minds.

The Religious Studies pathway enables you to gain a deep understanding of the ideas, beliefs and practices of some of the major world religions – such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism – including their historical development and engagement with the contemporary world. It explores these traditions from a multi-disciplinary perspective that brings together philosophy, theology, psychology, sociology, phenomenology and media studies. As well as being of intrinsic interest, this approach complements other Humanities disciplines, such as History, Literature, Philosophy and Media Cultures. Modules are designed to interest students of all faiths and none. Whether or not you identify with any religion, you will find that your perspective on the world is enriched, as we explore questions on the meaning of life that go to the core of what it is to be a human being.

The Religious Studies pathway is equally appropriate to students who have not previously taken the subject and those who have studied it before and desire to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

“Religion is an integral part of many of the humanities subjects … The religious studies pathway has an independent appeal, but additionally has the potential to enrich students’ understanding of their other subjects.”

Alex Lloyd
Recent Graduate
Career Paths
The study of religion develops a combination of intellectual flexibility, rigour, empathy and imaginative insight. It provides students with capacities of religious literacy and cultural agility that are valuable in any profession that involves dealing with the public. Important career skills such as team-working and capacities in oral presentation are also developed in several modules. The skills of analysis, synthesis, sensitivity of interpretation, communication and persuasion serve graduates in religious studies in all sorts of graduate-quality employment, all the way up the career ladder. Graduates are equipped for a variety of careers including:

- Any profession with strong inter-personal, public-facing or customer care components
- Any profession with a strong international or multicultural component
- Teaching and Education
- Journalism and the media
- Service industries
- Advertising, sales and marketing
- General management
- The Civil Service
- Local Government

What is it like to study Religious Studies?
Religious Studies is taught in a variety of ways, ranging from lectures, to smaller seminar groups allowing for in-depth discussion amongst students, to one-to-one discussions with your tutor. All teaching staff have strong research and publication records. Outside classroom hours, as well as studying privately, you will deepen your understanding by debating the issues with fellow students.

Assessments will help you develop life-long intellectual, practical and transferable skills, including developing your abilities to formulate and express your own ideas clearly and precisely. Three modules include assessed group presentations, helping you to work collaboratively and effectively in a group and to gain confidence in presenting ideas orally as well as in writing.

Year one module
Introduction to Religious Studies
Semesters A and B
Assessment: 70% Coursework and 30% Exam
This two-semester module introduces you to the study of religion at university level and what is distinctive about the Religious Studies approach. You will consider how different academic disciplines – such as philosophy, theology, psychology, sociology, phenomenology and media studies – have examined religion and spirituality. You will then apply these insights as you explore major ideas in some of the world’s main religions. Finally, you will consider how religion impacts - and is impacted by - some important contemporary controversies, such as those concerning gender, sexual practices, the environment and climate change, including their representations in the media.

Year Two and Three modules go on to explore issues in the philosophy of religion (from the perspective of different traditions); religion and ethics; religious thought from the Reformation to the present day (including the rise of secularism); and religion, media and popular culture.

Year two modules
Philosophies of Religion
Virtues, Vices and Ethics

Year three modules
Religion and Modern Thought
Media and the Sacred: Religion and Popular Culture

Religious Studies
As a student of Religious Studies, your university experience will be enriched by a variety of co-curricular activities. These might include:

- Working in an inter-disciplinary environment that draws expertise from lecturers and researchers coming from a variety of subjects
- Engaging with talks given by visiting religious thinkers and leaders
- Debating the religious dimensions of ethical or other problems as part of the Philosophy Research Seminar and student Philosophy Society
- Discussing media representations of religion, and religious uses of the media, with guest speakers at the Media Industry Speaker Programme
- Getting involved in interdisciplinary community projects with students from other Humanities disciplines
- Engaging with the activities of the University’s inter-faith chaplaincy

Entry Requirements:
280 UCAS points. GCSE Maths and English Language at grade C or above.

Contact:
Professor John Lippitt
Professor of Ethics and Philosophy of Religion
j.a.lippitt@herts.ac.uk