



Religion as a New Minor Subject

Details for the Academic Year 2026/27

Why take this New Minor Subject?

Religion plays a significant role in history, politics, the arts and contemporary searches for meaning in diverse cultural and social contexts. Religious worldviews, values and symbols play a critical role in shaping cultural norms, traditions and practices. In this new minor subject you will:

Study the world's religions

Approach the study of a number of the world's religions with an academic eye. Using cultural studies and comparative techniques, you will explore theories of religion, material culture of religions, atheism and non-religion, and interreligious encounters. You will study Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, and Christian sources, and examine the place of religion in the world today.

Explore biblical studies and religions in antiquity

Study the origins of Judaism and Christianity, and learn about history, ancient literature, and languages. Discover the diverse cultures of the ancient Mediterranean world. Use archaeology and ancient texts as windows to the religious pasts that continue to shape the civilisations of our world.

Discover theologies for today's world

Theology explores the key questions from different eras about God's existence and agency. It relates the significance of Jesus Christ in Christianity to questions of human freedom and meaning, history and cultural expression. In a pluralistic and non-denominational context, theology asks what role faith plays in the public realm and in debates on justice, science, ecology, and inter-religious dialogue. Modules offered that cover historical theological approaches alongside feminist, liberation, and queer theological approaches.

Debate the big ethical and political issues of the day

Questions of ethics and politics are major concerns for our time. How have different religious and humanist traditions understand what it means to be an ethical or moral human being through history and in our time? What does it mean to think ethically about unprecedented problems like artificial intelligence, animal ethics, technology, or climate change? What do religious traditions say about sex and gender, politics, war and peace, the common good and human dignity?

What will I learn?

In your first year of study, modules help to immerse you in this diverse and dynamic field of study. Biblical Studies is introduced in its historical contexts through study of the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament. You will have the opportunity to study Judaism, Islam, or the Dharmic religions. You will be introduced to ethics and the study of religion, as well as theology through an engagement with some major thinkers, texts and methods.

In your second year and beyond, you continue to learn more about Biblical Studies and Late Antiquity, Theological Studies, Ethics, and the study of the World's Religions through a number of possible modules such as: The Historical Jesus; Power and Politics; Creaturely Ethics: Humans and Other Animals; Medieval Theology; Cosmology, Religion and Science; Ethics in Sport and Media; Philosophical and Theological Approaches to God; Reformation and Enlightenment; Theo-Ethics of Climate Change; Religion, Gender and Human Rights; Life of Muhammad; New Religious Movements; Religion and Media, Hinduism and Buddhism, etc.

What will I do?

A minor in Religion will greatly enhance other approaches and studies. You will have a greater understanding of the impact of religious texts, practices, and worldviews on history, literature, the arts, politics, and culture. You will analyze real-life cases and acquire skills in the analysis of texts, visual media and public debates.

Graduates from our School acquire skills in assessing matters of public interest and build cultural competence to navigate a pluralistic world. They have entered a wide range of professions, including: law, education (primary and secondary), information technology, news media, the civil service, creative arts, publishing, accountancy, as well as continuing on to academic careers in Ireland and abroad.

How will this be assessed?

The range of assessments reflects the goal of enhancing student education through inclusivity and quality of experience. This course highly values continuous assessment, with a diversity of approaches. While some modules are assessed by end-of-semester exams combined with summative essays, others rely exclusively on essays; others require the creation of a portfolio of short assignments; others include in-class tests.

Contact Hours and Indicative Workload

The modules are organised according to the guidelines of the European Credit and Transfer System, 1 ECTS = 20-25 hours. Contact hours per module: 22; self-study and the willingness to read are essential.

Contacts

All questions can be directed to the Religion Course Coordinator, Prof. David Shepherd shepherd@tcd.ie or SRUndergrad@tcd.ie