SCHOOL OF RELIGION, THEOLOGY, AND PEACE STUDIES
Short Courses 2022-2023

Contents
Introducing the New Testament: Texts and Contexts ........................................... 2
Introducing Theology: Key Questions ................................................................. 2
Introducing Theology: Key Texts and Methods ................................................. 3
Ethics Matters: Global Questions, Ethical Responses ......................................... 4
Approaches to the Study of Religion ................................................................. 4
Jewish Thought and Practice ............................................................................. 5
Religions in the Ancient Mediterranean .......................................................... 6
Paul and Palestinian Judaism ............................................................................. 6
Reformation and Enlightenment ..................................................................... 7
Christianity in the Cultures of Late Antiquity .................................................. 8
From Invasion to Exile: The Ancient Histories of Israel and Judah ..................... 8
Researching Religion: New Religious Movements .......................................... 9
Religion, Gender and Human Rights ............................................................. 10
Medieval Theology ......................................................................................... 11
The Historical Jesus and the Gospels .............................................................. 11
Book of Kells ................................................................................................. 12
Qur’an: Scripture, History and Literature ....................................................... 13
Introducing the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible ................................................. 13
Love and Justice: Intersections in Theology and Ethics ................................... 14
Introducing Islam ......................................................................................... 15
Philosophical and Theological Approaches to God ......................................... 15
Cosmology, Religion and Science ................................................................. 16
Words to the Wise: Israelite and Jewish Wisdom Literature ............................ 17
Power and Politics: Liberation, Contextual, and Post-Colonial Theologies ......... 17
God and Human Freedom .............................................................................. 18
Environmental and Technology Ethics ........................................................... 19
Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere ............................................................ 19
**Introducing the New Testament: Texts and Contexts**

The writings included in the canon of the New Testament have been composed by different authors over a relatively long period of time. Translated in countless languages, the stories and ideas found in the New Testament have played a major role in shaping socio-political, ethical and religious discourses across the centuries and in different cultures and have been a constant source of inspiration in art, music and literature. In this module, students will learn about the most relevant scholarly approaches to the study of the New Testament and its background in Second Temple Judaism and in the Graeco-Roman world, examine the variety of literary genres and the diversity of sources and traditions, which contributed to the development of early Christianity and to the formation of new religious and cultural realities in the Graeco-Roman world, and be introduced to the history of interpretation of the New Testament in antiquity and in contemporary culture.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Daniele Pevarello

**How to Apply**

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**Fee**

The fee per module is €150. A concession rate of €100 is available to second and third level students, unemployed persons and those in receipt of a social welfare pension.

**Time and Place**

**Day-time course:** This lecture-only module has two, one-hour lectures per week. For exact times of particular modules please see the ‘Current Student Page’ – Course Timetables at this link.

The classes all take place on the Trinity College Dublin campus, either in the School of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies, ISE/Loyola Building or theatres nearby.

**Duration**

Michaelmas (Autumn) term runs from week starting 12th September to 28th November 2022.

Note: no lectures during reading week starting 24th October 2022.

**Introducing Theology: Key Questions**

The module will offer an introduction to theology by means of contributions from a number of teaching staff from their own expertise and interests. Key questions will be addressed, such as the doctrine of God and creation, theodicy, theology in a liberative mode, and the problem of religion and violence, as well as the inclusion of theology as a subject into the modern university. The module examines key questions according to the expertise and interests of the individual lecturers. This will give an introduction to the rich variety of ‘theology’ as a discipline, while addressing the question of the nature of theology as an academic subject within the university.

**Lecturer:** Dr Michael Kirwan

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Introducing Theology: Key Texts and Methods

The course will introduce the students to the concepts of textuality and method, studying classical definitions of theology from Gregory of Nyssa, Anselm and Aquinas through to, and concentrating on, more recent formulations of theology’s task from modern theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann, Elizabeth Johnson, and Willie James Jennings. The different methodological approaches to the study of religion will be introduced, and the different ways of conducting the task of theology will be too. In the course of the module, attention will be drawn to patterns of continuity or discontinuity, agreement and conflict in the texts studied. The purpose is to train students to integrate critical, conceptual and historical skills in the reading of theological texts.

Lecturer: Prof. Kevin Hardagen

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**Ethics Matters: Global Questions, Ethical Responses**

The module will begin with a consideration of the nature of ethics argumentation and investigation, and the importance of bringing an ethics analysis to bear on a range of contemporary issues. Students will be introduced to schools of ethics in philosophy and theology (virtue autonomy, utility), the scope and limits of obligations (cosmopolitan and communitarian), professional ethics, and national and international agreements and conventions, with examples drawn from across the globe: dam building in India; migration, international food security; sustainable transport; biodiversity conservation and (smart) technologies; artificial intelligence and the future of work; and genetic ‘enhancement’ of future generations and ‘advance directives’ in dying.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Cathriona Russell

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**Approaches to the Study of Religion**

Religion as a cultural phenomenon is interrelated with possibly all aspects of human life, such as the formation of social communities; identity building; politics; healing practices; or art and literature. Hence, studying the role of religions in their cultural context requires a broad range of approaches and methods.

After a brief introduction to the history of the Academic Study of Religion and its colonial, philosophical and religious context the module gives an overview of the major approaches to the Study of Religion, both the “classical” approaches of a sociology, anthropology and psychology of religion and the more recently developed such as the economy or the aesthetics of religion.

Examples taken from different religious traditions and from the students’ own field observations provide the basis for experiencing the relationships between religion and culture and how they can be studied.

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**Jewish Thought and Practice**

This module introduces key social, cultural, and religious aspects of Jewish thought and practice from antiquity to our own time. The focus of this module is on Judaism as a major world religion that has shaped Western Civilization. Rabbinic textual traditions that underpin Jewish religious thought—especially the Mishnah, Talmud, and Midrashim—are explored. Calendar, festivals (esp. Day of Atonement, New Year, Festival of Booths, Passover, Hanukkah), and rites of passage (e.g., birth, circumcision, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, marriage, divorce, death) are studied both within the classroom as well as, when appropriate, in visits to local Jewish synagogues. Contemporary Jewish movements and the history of their traditions (e.g., Modern Orthodoxy, Reform, Conservatism) come into view along with their different beliefs and practices (e.g., kashrut, Sabbath, worship, prayer). National movements within modern Judaism (e.g., Zionism, diaspora nationalism) are also considered.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Benjamin Wold

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Religions in the Ancient Mediterranean

Employing literary sources as well as inscriptions, funerary art and ancient iconography, and other archaeological finds, this module investigates the religious beliefs and practice of the various peoples and civilisations of the ancient Mediterranean from ancient Egypt to Imperial Rome, focusing on the study of ancient rituals (e.g., burial customs, animal and human sacrifice) and on Mediterranean myths and mythologies (e.g., dying-and-rising deities in Egypt, Syria and ancient Greece). Students will reflect about the methodological challenges of studying ancient religions, focusing on the problem of interpreting fragmentary evidence, understanding ancient definitions of religion and magic, and distinguishing between private and public devotion in ancient societies. The course will help students to think about such questions as did people in antiquity believe in their myths? Why did the Egyptians mummify their dead? What is the significance of the ancient myths of Osiris, Gilgamesh and Baal? Did the ancient Phoenicians and Carthaginians practice human sacrifice?

Lecturer: Prof. Daniele Pevarello

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Paul and Palestinian Judaism

The aim of this module is to evaluate the aPost / emaille Paul within and beyond the so-called “New Perspective,” which is concerned with Paul’s letters in their Palestinian Jewish context.

This module explores the question whether Paul’s writings and ideas are reflective of, or discontinuous with, Jewish thought in the context of ancient Palestine. The ramifications of Paul’s relationship with Judaism has had a profound impact on how Christian communities in the following millennia related to Jewish communities, often with dire consequences. Who was Paul from Tarsus and what were the cultures and intellectual movements that shaped his thinking? What tools are available for the historical study of this man and his writings? Key themes and
current debates that have come to define Pauline Studies in the last decade, especially the so-called “New Perspective on Paul” (i.e., Paul’s relationship to Palestinian Judaism), are given significant attention.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Benjamin Wold

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**Reformation and Enlightenment**

This module will pursue key theological themes in Christian anthropology, doctrine of God, Christology and ecclesiology from late medieval Nominalism through the Reformation to modernity. It will analyse current assessments of the connections of Luther’s theology with, and its discontinuities from, the preceding eras. The Enlightenment comprising Kant’s critiques of reason, German Idealism and Romanticism as the context for Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard as thinkers of God in relation to human subjectivity and freedom will be treated and their reception in 19th and 20th century theology discussed. The module will conclude with the hermeneutical questions raised by a new consciousness of language and history, traditions and their transformations.

**Lecturer:** TBD

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**Christianity in the Cultures of Late Antiquity**

Using literary sources as well as material evidence (archaeological finds, artwork, inscriptions), this module explores customs, beliefs, institutions and identities of the early Christians within the social, political, religious and cultural context of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity. The course will help students to think about central questions in the study of early Christianity such as: who were the early Christians? How did they articulate their identities across different languages and in different areas of the late antique world? How and where did they eat, pray and live? How did they understand their beliefs and interact with the cultures around them? What did their Roman, Greek or Syrian neighbours think about them? Students will reflect on different models of cross-fertilisation between emerging early Christian identities and the cultures and religious phenomena which characterised the later stages of the life of the Roman Empire.

**Lecturer:** Dr Daniele Pevarello

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**From Invasion to Exile: The Ancient Histories of Israel and Judah**

This module aims to facilitate students’ deeper acquaintance and critical engagement with the narratives from Joshua through 2 Kings.

This module offers an opportunity for critical engagement with some of the most famous texts of the Hebrew Bible including those concerned with the Israelite conquest, the stories of the Judges, the rise and fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the careers of royal figures such as David,
Solomon, Ahab and Jezebel. Reflection on the historiographical value of these traditions will be facilitated by situating them within the context of the material culture and historiographical traditions of the Ancient Near East, while particular emphasis will be paid to the interface of power and violence within the traditions.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Neil Morrison

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**Researching Religion: New Religious Movements**

This module combines two goals: it introduces students to the field of New Religious Movements developing from the 19th to the 21st century; and helps students to develop research skills for studying religion as a cultural practice. Often labelled as ‘cults’ and ‘sects’, cases such as Scientology, modern Islamic groups, romantic Occultism or spiritual environmentalism bring up more general questions about how to study religion: How do religions evolve? Why did they emerge as a response to modernity, colonialism, and globalisation? Are these groups more ‘dangerous’ than traditional religions? What is the role of terms such as ‘doomsday cult’ in public discourse and cultural politics?

By studying different aspects of these movements, students will become familiar with classical and contemporary approaches and will be able to analyse relations between religion and violence, gender, body politics, or the “invention of traditions”. They will choose a research case (either historical or contemporary) and will learn to apply different research methods and concepts. For students who find empirical work interesting, this module builds up skills that will help to develop a research question and choose a method as is required in the final dissertation.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Alexandra Grieser

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**Religion, Gender and Human Rights**

The relationship between religion and human rights is controversial and contested. On the one hand is the claim that human rights require a religious grounding. This module aims to explore the complex connections between religion and human rights, both in terms of the evolution of the contemporary human rights regime, and in relation to the specific disputed issue of gender. ng, and have their antecedents in religious traditions, while on the other hand is the view that human rights provide a necessary antidote to the prejudices and inequalities that are characteristic of religion.

The module will begin with a consideration of contemporary understandings of human rights, of the role of religion in the evolution of the language, values and norms of human rights; and of contemporary debates about orientalism, colonialism and Post / email-colonialism in the articulation and implementation of human rights. The second section considers debates about the nature and politics of gender, the role that different religions play in the construction and maintenance of gender norms, and the manner in which different religions deal with the issue of women’s rights. Key contemporary debates will be considered in depth including debates about conceptualisations of gender equality, embodiment, complementarity, and heteronormativity; about LGBTQ rights and religion; sexuality, reproduction, and the role of family; and gender and religious practices. The module will conclude with a consideration of freedom of religion and the limits of accommodation, with a focus on how states should deal with religiously-motivated values and conduct that offend democratic values.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Linda Hogan

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**Medieval Theology**

The purpose of this module is to survey the political, cultural and religious context in which Catholic theology developed in the medieval period. An important aim will be to introduce the student to some representative figures in the theology of the period. This period was particularly fruitful in the formation of theology in the Catholic tradition. The course will study:

- The theology of the Monastic and Cathedral schools
- The emergence of the University
- The significance of Aquinas’ work
- The role of women in the medieval period
- The early Irish medieval church

**Lecturer:** Prof. Fáinche Ryan

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**The Historical Jesus and the Gospels**

Who was the historical Jesus – the Jewish Galilean whose activities and death resulted in the emergence of Christianity? This module explores questions about Jesus the man, his world, his social and literary environment, his disciples, and their literary activities. The history of research on the historical Jesus (i.e., the so-called “three quests”) orient this module before turning to a sustained study of the earliest witness to his life and those of his followers, namely the synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. When studying the context of Jesus and the gospels their
environments and social milieu are introduced vis-à-vis material culture and archaeology. Key themes, particularly ancient Jewish “Messianism” as it relates to the portrayal of Jesus as “Christ,” are considered in light of Qumran Discoveries (e.g., so-called “4QMessianic Apocalypse”). Students are also inducted to the various historical and literary methods and approaches used when studying the synoptic gospels.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Benjamin Wold

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**Book of Kells**

The Book of Kells, one of the greatest treasures of Trinity College, is perhaps the most renowned illustrated manuscript of the early medieval period. This module, benefiting from several recent scholarly contributions, will enable the students to learn both the theology and the iconography of this wonderful manuscript. The module will also introduce the students to the world in which this manuscript was created, and to some other aspects of insular art. The module is designed to be accessible to students coming from all disciplines who have an interest in the Ireland of the early medieval world.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Fáinche Ryan

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**Duration**

Hilary (Spring) term runs from week starting 23rd January to 10th April 2023.

Note: no lectures during reading week starting 6th March 2023.

**Qur’an: Scripture, History and Literature**

This module aims to introduce students to the Qur’an: its structure, style and main themes and context. It will also familiarise students with the reception history of the Qur’an, and its biblical subtext. Islamic tradition regards the Qur’an as the revealed word of God, sent down to earth to the prophet Muhammad through the mediation of the angel Gabriel. This course explores the structure and main characteristics of the Qur’an; discusses its principal themes; its reception history; and its close relationship with the Bible.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Zohar Hadromi-Allouche

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**Introducing the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible**

The variety of terms used to designate the ‘Hebrew Bible’ (e.g., Old Testament, Hebrew Scriptures, Tanak) indicate the richness of traditions related to these writings, the various ways that they are viewed, and also their life within different communities at different times. This module will orient students to the literary and theological contours of the Hebrew canon, introducing them to the rich variety of genres within. The lectures will focus on the formation and transmission of the text and how it grew out of the context of the ancient Near East. It will also invite the student to encounter the primary texts of various sections of this great ‘library’ including the Pentateuch, the historiographical literature, the prophets, the Psalms and the Wisdom literature. Students will also be introduced to the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls and how their discovery contributes to our understanding of the text and ‘canon’ of the Hebrew Bible in the Second Temple Period.
Lecturer: Prof. Benjamin Wold

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Duration
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Note: no lectures during reading week starting 6th March 2023.

Love and Justice: Intersections in Theology and Ethics
Theological ethics, as the focus of this module, is a genre of ethics that asks how diverse Christianities imagine everyday ethical principles and moral value. How does the way one imagines God shape ethical imaginations? This module serves as an introduction to theological ethics (or theo-ethics), through—in the first half of the module—the sources often called upon by theologians in ethical discernment, and—in the second half—engaging some of the major themes and styles in contemporary theo-ethics.

Lecturer: Prof. Jacob Erickson

How to Apply
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Fee
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Duration
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Introducing Islam

This module surveys the emergence, development, beliefs, and practices of Islam, from 7th century to present. This module aims to

- Provide an overview of Islamic history
- Present and discuss Islamic scriptures, doctrines and rituals
- Demonstrate the significance and development within Islam of concepts such as prophethood, revelation, jihad, theology, law and gender
- Develop an understanding of the contribution of Islamic civilization to human culture
- Examine various scholarly approaches to the study of Islam

This module surveys the emergence, development, beliefs, and practices of Islam, from 7th century to present.

Lecturer: Prof. Zohar Hadromi-Allouche

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Philosophical and Theological Approaches to God

This module critically reviews a range of approaches to the question of God’s existence and nature, drawing both on the history of Christian theological reflection and on philosophy in the Western traditions. This module explores a number of key philosophical and theological landmarks in the debates about God in Christianity and western philosophy: does God exist? Is natural theology possible? What is meant by the notion of revelation? Is ‘religious language’ different to other language games?

Lecturer: Prof. Michael Kirwan

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Cosmology, Religion and Science
Cosmology traces developments in the mythological and natural-scientific study of the universe in its complex history. This module presents these developments as they have been interpreted from biblical, theological and philosophical perspectives and how they conflict or converge with cosmologies from the natural sciences particularly since the 16th century.

It explores how specific cosmologies emerged and in turn impacted on theology, science and culture, in astronomy, thermodynamics, emerging universe models, evolutionary theory and the return to narrative in the natural sciences. It includes implications for anthropology: the human person as created in the image of God (imago Dei); as embodied and free, contingent and subject to frailty and failure (‘sin’); as steward of creation; and inhabitant of the future earthly cosmopolis.

Lecturer: Prof. Cathriona Russell

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**Words to the Wise: Israelite and Jewish Wisdom Literature**

This module represents an opportunity to explore the richness of the Wisdom Literature found in the Hebrew Bible and later Jewish traditions. Following an introduction to the Wisdom tradition, the module will offer a close and critical reading of the books of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes and how wisdom themes have influenced other parts of the Hebrew canon. There will also be a focus on the divergent strands which emerge within this corpus and the historical context in which these works were produced. Seminar discussions will explore key themes such as divine justice, attitudes to wealth and work and the representation of women. The module will also consider the coherence of each individual book, the nature of the relationship between Hebrew wisdom and other sapiential traditions and will examine to what extent the Wisdom tradition diverges from other perspectives within the Hebrew Bible.

**Lecturer:** Dr Neil Morrison

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**Power and Politics: Liberation, Contextual, and Post-Colonial Theologies**

The aim of this module is that students would exit with a complex understanding of issues of power in relation to theology. Through its course, students should gain a thorough understanding of theology’s role in political movements in general and the conceptualisation of gender, race, class, disability, protest and wealth in particular.

The Shoa/Holocaust meant that Theology could not carry on as it did before. Theology had to respond to this atrocity, to the “death of God” it brought, and to the demands of Post / email-war church-goers that it offer a vision capable of preventing Christian collusion in such horrors in the future. This module will look at the ways that Modernity’s very tenets were revised in this theological effort – first via Barth and Rahner, then via Moltmann and Metz. Then, it will examine Theology’s part in the political movements of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.
**Lecturer:** Prof. Kevin Hardagen

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**God and Human Freedom**

This module studies what it means to be human from the perspective of theology. The study begins within the horizon of Jewish experience as articulated especially in the early chapters of the book of Genesis. The themes of the human reality as the Imago Dei, of sanctification, of deification, as well as the theme of deep-seated human alienation, are studied. In the Western tradition grace became a key concept in the articulation of the interplay of divine and human in history. The module studies its deployment through the centuries. Running through the module is the question, the debate, as to whether there are resources in theological anthropology for an understanding of human nature which have been lost in modern culture.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Fúnche Ryan

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**Environmental and Technology Ethics**

This module explores key concepts and debates in environmental and technology ethics: productionism and the ‘tragedy of the commons’; instrumental versus intrinsic value; demographics and consumption; food security and related aspects of animal agriculture; justice and sustainable development; environmental citizenship and the future of work. It will examine key ethics responses rooted in hermeneutics, in philosophical and religious traditions (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Daoism) and characterise the role of the ethicist in ‘expert’ cultures and in policy development in Ireland, the EU and internationally.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Cathriona Russell

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**Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere**

Religion is prominent in public debates, in the media, and in the cultural imaginary of people’s daily life, no matter whether they see themselves as believers or not. In turn, religions also ‘make use’ of media and mediation when creating influential symbols and intense and extraordinary experiences. They do so by means of architecture and music, images and narratives, through clothes, body practices or the TV and the internet.

The module focuses on how the relationship between religion and media can be studied and how this helps to better understand the (often conflictive) role of religion in the public sphere and how worldviews develop and change. Our concept of media will include but reach beyond social media and the mass media; scripture and dance, money and microphones are means of mediating religion as well. We will ask, what is a medium, how are religions depicted in the media, how do religions respond to new media, and how can religion be understood as mediation while often
claiming to provide “immediate” experiences? Students will sign up for an “expert group” on one of the weekly readings and develop a case study over the course of the semester.

**Lecturer:** Prof. Alexandra Grieser

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