

## POSTGRAD PROGRAMMES IN THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

### WHY STUDY RELIGION?

*Religions is the foundation of Society, Politics, Culture and Ethics.*

*Religion is a powerful force in society, politically and in the lives of the majority of people in the world.*

*Find out more about....*

*the tradition you grew up in,*

*about other religions,*

*about the role of religion in today's society, its interplay with politics, the media, gender, and much more.*

*Be at the forefront of solving problems and developing a better South Africa and the world.*

### POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

We offer Honours, Masters and PhD in the Study of Religions

#### Honours Specialising in the Study of Religions

*Duration: 1 Year*

#### MA / MSocSc Specialising in the Study of Religions

*Duration: 2 Years*

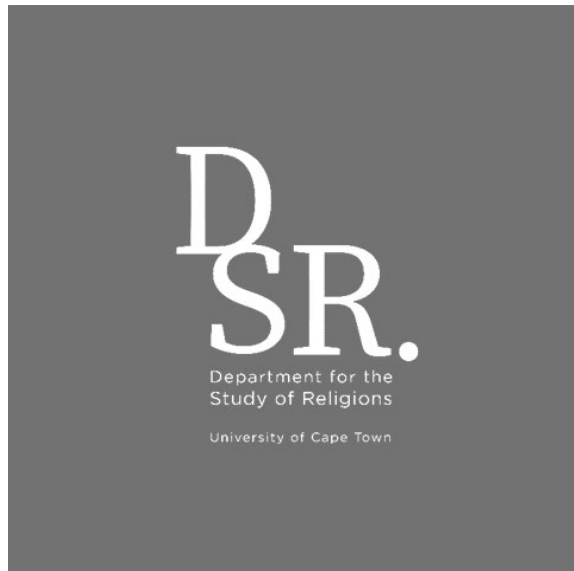
#### MPhil Specialising in Islam, Gender and Sexuality (*not offered in 2025*)

*Duration: 2 Years*

#### PhD Specialising in the Study of Religions

*Duration: Minimum registration 2 years*

## Department for the Study of Religions



### **Honours, Masters & PhD in the Study of Religions**

*We offer an Honours, Masters by coursework, Research Masters and PhD in the in the Study of Religions and Contemporary Society, as well as an MPhil specialising in Islam, Gender & Sexuality*

## POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

An **Honours programme** takes one year. Students complete four semester courses and write a short dissertation (15,000 words). Students are admitted into an Honours programme if they achieve an average of approximately 65% in the final year of their UG degree

The Department also offers the **Honours programme** on a part-time basis over 2 years. As per the below excerpt from the Handbook 9b Faculty Rules for Postgraduate Qualifications, the part-time honours is completed over 2 years and fees are charged per course.

FH5 Period of Registration:

5.2 *Part-time study*

- (a) A two-year programme may be offered for *bona fide* part-time students by any department in the Faculty which offers an Honours course, at the discretion of the Head of Department concerned. Applications from students for a two-year programme shall be submitted, together with the evidence that the applicant is a *bona fide* part-time student, by the Head of the Department concerned to the Faculty for approval.
- (b) A part-time candidate shall attend and complete the prescribed work for the degree within two years of part-time study.

#### **Honours courses:**

- ❖ Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 1 (Compulsory)
- ❖ Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 2 (Compulsory)
- ❖ Buddhism in Contemporary Society
- ❖ Islamic Studies
- ❖ Religion and Culture in Africa
- ❖ Religion, Gender and Sexuality: Exploring contested territories
- ❖ Issues in Contemporary Jewish Thought
- ❖ African Religious Movements
- ❖ Spirituality and Ethics in Islam: Explorations in Sufism
- ❖ Philosophers on Religion

*\*\*\*Please contact the Department to confirm which courses will be offered*

The department offers two types of **Masters Degrees**.

- 1) A **Masters by coursework** takes two years. Students take four courses and write a 25,000 word dissertation.

#### **Masters courses:**

- ❖ Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 1
- ❖ Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 2
- ❖ African Religious Movements
- ❖ Spirituality and Ethics in Islam: Explorations in Sufism
- ❖ Religion, Gender and Sexuality: Exploring contested territories
- ❖ Philosophers on Religion
- ❖ African Religious Movements
- ❖ Reading Religious Texts
- ❖ Issues in Contemporary Jewish Thought
- ❖ Islamic Studies
- ❖ Buddhism in Contemporary Society
- ❖ IGS: Research Methods

*\*\*\*Please contact the Department to confirm which courses will be offered*

- 2) A **Masters by research** does not involve coursework. Students write a substantial 50,000 word dissertation

**Phd:** The PhD is by dissertation only, and involves original research. The thesis should be in the region of 80,000 words and takes at least 3 years to complete.

If you are interested in a research masters or PhD, it would be best to contact one of the staff below to discuss possible thesis topic and supervision.

#### **Due Dates for applications:**

Application for postgraduate programmes open in April and closes end October each year.

**Registration** takes place from January – February 2025

For more information speak to Tasneem Wise

[Tasneem.Wise@uct.ac.za](mailto:Tasneem.Wise@uct.ac.za)

#### **Staff research areas and possibilities available for postgraduate research:**

##### **Dr Louis Blond Jewish Thought**

Louis Blond is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town since 2010. He completed a PhD (2006) at the University of Edinburgh with a dissertation, *The Relationship Between Metaphysics and Nihilism in the Work Of Martin Heidegger*.

While my teaching focus often encompasses Jewish religion and contemporary political spaces, my research interests are grounded in European philosophy, Critical Theory, Jewish Philosophy and their intersection with Post/Decolonial Theory.

After researching Emmanuel Levinas's attempt to escape the framework provided by Heidegger's ontological turn, I have come to a fruitful impasse when engaging a postcolonial critique of Levinas's ethical landscape. The failure of the ethics of otherness to establish a working social theory has led me to contemporary Critical Theory and its attempt to resurrect and modify Marx's philosophical anthropology and alienation diagnostic in the search for a socially-embedded emancipatory force. However, when some of these theories are applied to or thought in a racialised society such as South Africa, the assumptions and possibilities of the struggle for recognition and an alienation diagnostic are seriously challenged. I am currently asking, what manner of philosophical anthropology and alienation diagnostic can fruitfully engage postcolonial space without falling into the familiar traps of a Eurocentric project.

**Email:** [Louis.Blond@uct.ac.za](mailto:Louis.Blond@uct.ac.za)

##### **Assoc. Prof. Elisabetta Porcu** (Head of Department)

##### **Asian Religions, Japanese Religions, Religion and Society**

Elisabetta Porcu is an Associate Professor of Asian religions and Head of the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Cape Town. She is a South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF) B2-rated researcher.

Before moving to South Africa, she worked at various universities in Japan (2004-2010) and taught Japanese religions at the University of Leipzig (2010-2014). She has been Visiting Research Scholar at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto (2013-2014), Numata Visiting Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hawaii (2013), and Visiting Professor at Kyushu University (2016-2017). Among her publications are the monograph *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture* (Brill, 2008), the volume *Matsuri and Religion: Complexity, Continuity, and Creativity in Japanese Festivals* (co-edited with Michael D. Foster, Brill

2020, 2021); and various articles and book chapters, including “Gion Matsuri in Kyoto: A Multilayered Religious Phenomenon” (2020); “Religion, Second Modernity and Individualization in Japan” (2018); “Contemporary Japanese Buddhist Traditions” (2017); and “Pop Religion in Japan: Buddhist Temples, Icons and Branding” (2014).

Elisabetta is the founding director of the Center for the Study of Asian Religions (CSAR) at the University of Cape Town; the founding editor of the Journal of Religion in Japan (Brill); and has served on the executive committee of the Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa (2017-2023, ASRSA President 2021-2023).

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### **Prof. Sa'diyya Shaikh**

#### **Islamic Studies, Feminist Theory**

Sa'diyya Shaikh (PhD Temple University, 2004) is Professor in the Study of Religions at the University of Cape Town. She specialises in the study of Islam, gender ethics, and feminist theory. She has published on gender-sensitive readings of Muslim textual traditions, including Qur'an, hadith and Sufi texts; theoretical and political debates on Islam and feminism, religion and gender-based violence; Sufism and Islamic Law; contemporary Muslim women's embodied, experiential and everyday modes of understanding Islam and negotiating religious teachings; and marriage, sexuality and reproductive choices amongst South African Muslim women. Her current work is focussed on developing constructive research and artistic projects around egalitarian ethics, spirituality and imagining inclusive, justice-based Muslim futures.

Sa'diyya is active on a number of community fora for the empowerment of Muslim women, and contributes to feminist knowledge building projects of Musawah, a global movement for justice and equality in the Muslim family, and has presented talks at the Claremont Main Road mosque regularly.

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### **Dr Ala Alhourani**

#### **Islam, Religion and Ethics**

Dr Ala Alhourani is a senior lecturer in the Department for Study of Religions. His PhD research is on the aesthetics of Islam and Muslim performances of citizenship, conviviality, and differences in South Africa's post-apartheid secular state. His post-doctorate research explores the aesthetic of religion and everyday ethics in public life. His research foregrounds aesthetic experiences of religion as embodied ethics, knowledge, power, and traditions. His research interests are Islam in Africa, Sufism, anthropology of religion, Islamic Studies, secularisation, art and aesthetics. He is a writer and a filmmaker.

**Email:** [Ala.Alhourani@uct.ac.za](mailto:Ala.Alhourani@uct.ac.za)

### **Prof. Asonzeh Ukah**

#### **Christianity in Africa, African Religions**

Professor Asonzeh Ukah is a renowned scholar specializing in Christianity and African Religions, holding a position in the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Cape Town. Since 2021, Prof. Ukah has served as the director of the African Centre for Religions, Ethics, and Society (A.C.R.E.S) and previously directed the Research Institute for Christianity and Society in Africa (RICSAs) between 2014 and 2022. With nearly thirty years of experience, Prof. Ukah has been instrumental in researching and documenting the dynamics of socio-religious change in Africa, with a particular emphasis on Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and emerging religions. Fieldwork has taken him to various African and European countries, including England, Germany, Nigeria, Ghana, Lesotho, South Africa, Uganda, and Cameroon. Prof. Ukah boasts an extensive publication record, encompassing 50 book chapters, 24 peer-reviewed articles, and other contributions, covering diverse fields such as the sociology of Pentecostalism, the history of African indigenous religious traditions, the intersection of religion and media, sacred urbanism, and African new religious movements. From 2014 to 2020, Prof. Ukah served as an editor of Brill's Studies of Religion in Africa series and, since 2019, as a co-editor of Africa: Journal of the International Africa Institute. Trained as a historian of religion and sociologist of religion, Prof. Ukah's multidisciplinary approach informs their ongoing research on "Miracle Cities" or Prayer Camps across Africa, exploring the intersection of Pentecostal urbanism and religious market competition in evolving cityscapes. Teaching African Religions and Pentecostalism at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, from 2005 to 2013, Prof. Ukah has been affiliated with the University of Cape Town since 2013, offering instruction and guidance to graduate students in areas such as African Religions, the History of Christianity, Sociology of Pentecostalism and the media, and Theory and Research Methods in the Study of Religions.

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The **Department for the Study of Religions** is on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the Leslie Social Sciences Building, Upper Campus

Check us out online:

Website: [www.religion.uct.ac.za](http://www.religion.uct.ac.za)

Email: [religions@uct.ac.za](mailto:religions@uct.ac.za)

Find us on Facebook: Religious Studies at UCT.

Come and talk to any of the teaching staff or contact:

**Undergraduate information:**

Abdulkhikim Nsohya (Senior Secretary)

LS 5.40

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**Postgraduate information:**

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