UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Department for the Study of Religions
Postgraduate Application Procedure

We offer an Honours, Masters by coursework, Research Masters and PhD in the Study of Religions.

Honours and coursework Masters programmes will require you to be physically present in Cape Town as you would be required to complete coursework and attend lecturers. Research Masters and PhD studies can be done remotely, but you would also need to come to campus to meet with your supervisor as and when required – while correspondence can happen via email, telephone and online meetings (MS Teams) you will need to have face-time with your supervisor during the period of your studies. We also have postgraduate seminars and events which would require your presence in Cape Town.

For more in-depth details of the actual programme you can contact the postgraduate convener Professor Sa'diyya Shaikh on Sadiyya.Shaikh@uct.ac.za / 021 650 3462

For any details pertaining to the application process and general programme details you can contact the postgraduate administrator Tasneem Wise on Tasneem.Wise@uct.ac.za / 021 650 5818

Should you be interested in pursuing your postgraduate degree in our department, please complete a formal application via the UCT online portal (see link below) and attach the below documents.

Link to the application portal
http://applyonline.uct.ac.za

Please ensure that you attach the following documents to your online application:

Documents required:

For Honours

- Academic Transcript
- CV
- Brief Motivation
- Once Academic Writing samples (English and referenced)
- International Students: English Proficiency Certification (e.g. TOEFL)

For Masters

- Academic Transcript
- CV
- Brief Motivation Letter
- Provisional Research Proposal (see attached guidelines)
- One Academic Writing Sample (English and referenced)
- International Students: English Proficiency Certification (e.g. TOEFL)

For PhD:

- Academic Transcript
- Referees Details
- CV
- Brief Motivation
- Provisional research proposal (see attached guidelines)
- Once Academic Writing samples (English and referenced)
- International Students: English Proficiency Certification (e.g. TOEFL)

Below are lists of links containing various useful information for PG studies at UCT.

Applying to UCT Postgraduate overview:
http://www.uct.ac.za/apply/applications/postgraduates/administration/

Online application page:
http://applyonline.uct.ac.za

Other links:
Fees - http://www.uct.ac.za/apply/fees/

Funding - http://www.uct.ac.za/apply/funding/postgraduate/applications/

International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO)

- Link: https://www.uct.ac.za/about/iapo/overview/welcome/
- Contact details
    - Postal Address
        - International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO)
        - University of Cape Town
        - Private Bag
        - Rondebosch
        - 7701
        - South Africa
    - Physical Address
        - International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO)
        - University of Cape Town
        - Masingene Building
        - Cross Campus Road
        - Rondebosch
        - South Africa
    - Fax: +27 21 650 5667
    - Tel: +27 21 650 2822 / 3740
    - Email: int-iapo@uct.ac.za

Please refer to following guideline documents to assist you with your application:

1. Postgraduate courses: list of courses that are required for each programme
2. Postgraduate curriculum & course details
3. Guide to Writing a Research Proposal

Postgraduate Courses

Honours Courses	Masters Courses	PhD Courses
**4 courses plus research project (REL4011H)*	**Masters by Coursework:* • *1st year (4 courses) and* • *2nd year Minor Dissertation (REL5003W)* **Research Masters:* • *Dissertation only (REL5000W)*	**Dissertation only (REL6000W)*
Research / Dissertation Courses		
REL4011H: Research Project/Essay	REL5003W (Minor Dissertation) REL5000W (Research)	REL6000W (PhD in the Study of Religions and Contemporary Society)
Lecture Courses		
Honours Courses	**Masters Courses**	***Note:*** *Courses in **bold** will be offered in 2028*
1. **REL4010F: Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 1 (compulsory)** 2. **REL4012S: Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 2 (compulsory)** 3. REL4110F: African Religious Movements 4. **REL4053F: Religion and Culture in Africa** 5. REL4049F: Islamic Studies 6. **REL4046S: Buddhism in Contemporary Society** 7. REL4091S: Spirituality and Ethics in Islam - Explorations in Sufism 8. **REL4054S: Religion, Gender and Sexuality: Exploring contested territories** 9. **REL4119S: Embodiment, Religion and Ethics**	1. **REL5117F: Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 1** 2. **REL5118S: Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 2** 3. REL5110F: African Religious Movements 4. **REL5116F: Religion and Culture in Africa** 5. REL5115F: Islamic Studies 6. **REL5114S: Buddhism in Contemporary Society** 7. REL5091S: Spirituality and Ethics in Islam - Explorations in Sufism 8. **REL5018S: Religion, Gender and Sexuality: Exploring contested territories** 9. **REL5119S: Embodiment, Religion and Ethics**	

REL PG curriculum/curricula

The Study of Religions [REL03]

The Department for the Study of Religions is committed to the study of religions which will contribute to public life in our local, regional, national and continental contexts. It is dedicated to:

- an open, plural, intercultural, and interdisciplinary study of religion in all its forms;
- the in-depth study of African religious traditions;
- the creative and critical analysis of religion as a force in personal, social, economic and political life;
- the promotion of quality education and research in the study of religion as a vital contribution to the transformation and development of South Africa.

The mission statement is implemented through degree specialisations that focus on the broad theme of religion, culture and identity. The Department offers a systematic study of religion in public life, its meaning and significance in South Africa in particular and Africa in general. This broad theme is explored in core courses team-taught by faculty members and also reflected in various research projects and institutes presently housed in the Department.

Core courses provide the thematic, methodological and theoretical foundations for all students who choose to pursue degrees in this department. Additional courses continue this focus within the established areas of specialisation: African Studies, Christian Studies, Comparative Studies, Islamic Studies, Jewish Studies, Buddhism and Critical Theory.

Courses in areas of specialisation

Hereunder follows a broad map of the courses offered in the areas of specialisation. Not all courses indicated below will be offered in any given year. However, they will follow the pattern outlined here.

African Studies
The courses in African studies explore the varieties of indigenous religious belief systems as well as the impact of global religions like Christianity (especially Pentecostalism) and Islam on the continent. Students will be prepared to do research on religion in Africa through different methodological and theoretical paradigms. A specialization in African studies can be pursued in combination with a focus on Christian and/or Islamic studies.

Buddhism
The department offers postgraduate study and supervision in Asian religious traditions with a special emphasis on Buddhism. Currently an Honours level course on Buddhism and Modernity and guided reading projects through Reading Religious Texts are offered. Research interests include the contemporary spread and transformations of Buddhism, Buddhism and Globalisation, conversion and socially and environmentally engaged Asian spiritualties, with a particular focus on Japan.

Christian Studies
The courses in Christian Studies focus mainly on the Sociology of Christianity and on the study of African Pentecostalism. The latter section debates the social impact and trajectories of Christian new religious movements and new forms of believing and being Christian as espoused by the Pentecostal-charismatic churches and ministries, their engagement with media (Internet use, religious broadcasting, production and reproduction of books, DVDs & podcasts, Pentecostal advertising: posters, billboards, handbills), fiscal and political practices.

Comparative Studies
The courses in Comparative Studies are divided into two categories: Issues in the Study of Religion and Religion in Contemporary Society. The first area includes courses in the Problem of Religion, Religion and Ritual, Sacred Space, Religion, Gender and Embodiment, and the History of Religions in Southern Africa. The second area includes courses in Religion and Popular Culture, Religion and Urban Culture and Religion, Education and Society in South Africa.

Islamic Studies
The courses in Islamic Studies explore Islam as religion, culture and civilization in particular contexts and themes. An Honours level course covers fundamental concepts within Islam from phenomenological and socio-historical perspectives. This course is indispensable for any student embarking on research relating to Islam at a post-graduate level. At the Master's level, we offer specialized courses on Sufism, Islam in Africa, Gender, Islam and Feminism.

Philosophy of Religion/Critical Theory
The courses in Philosophy of Religion, Critical Theory and Post-Structuralist Thought address contemporary issues in European philosophy, philosophy of religion, modern Jewish thought and post-colonial theory. Courses such as Philosophers on Religion, Critical Theory, and Levinas, Derrida and the "Other" explore how reason, religion, ethics and subjectivity constitute meaning and value and how our social and historical conditions also contributes to life and meaning formation.

Weekly seminars
In addition to the normal course requirements, students are required to attend the seminars hosted during the course of the year. The intention of the seminars is to expose all postgraduates to seminars delivered by staff members and visitors to the Department. Attendance at all colloquia is compulsory and students will be required to reflect knowledge of their content in examinations. Details of these events will be advertised during the course of the year.

The Study of Religions Honours and Masters degrees [REL]

Admission requirements:

a. Faculty requirements as set out under Rules FH3 and FM3 apply.
b. Specialisation requirements:
    - A major in the discipline or a cognate discipline.
    - Applicants with an initial qualification in another discipline may be required to complete certain courses to achieve equivalence with the requirements for a major in the Study of Religions.

Acceptance is on the recommendation of the Head of Department.

BA/BSocScHons specialising in the Study of Religions and Contemporary Society (126 NQF credits) – FULL-TIME PROGRAMME (1 year)

[REL03]

Programme Convener:
Professor S Shaikh

Prescribed curriculum:
Honours students are required to complete four taught courses at HEQSF level 8 (4000 level) and a research essay:

Compulsory (core) courses:

Code	Course	NQF Credits	NQF Level
REL4010F	Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 1	24	8
REL4012S	Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 2	24	8
REL4011H	Research Essay/Project.....	30	8

Elective courses: The remaining HEQSF level 8 courses may be selected from the list of electives set out below.

Code	Course	NQF Credits	NQF Level
REL4046FS	Buddhism in Contemporary Society.....	24	8
REL4049FS	Islamic Studies (Not offered in 2028).....	24	8
REL4053FS	Religion and Culture in Africa	24	8
REL4054FS	Religion, Gender and Sexuality: Exploring contested territories.....	24	8
REL4091FS	Spirituality and Ethics in Islam: Explorations in Sufism (Not offered in 2028)	24	8
REL4110FS	African Religious Movements (Not offered in 2028)	24	8
REL4112FS	Philosophers on Religion (Not offered in 2028)	24	8
REL4113FS	Issues in Contemporary Jewish Thought (Not offered in 2028).....	24	8
REL4119FS	Embodiment, Religion and Ethics	24	8

To progress to Master's level an overall average result of not less than 60% must be achieved.

BA/BSocScHons specialising in the Study of Religions and Contemporary Society (126 NQF credits) – PART-TIME PROGRAMME (2 years)

[REL04]

Programme Convener:
Professor S Shaikh

Prescribed curriculum:
Honours students are required to complete four taught courses at HEQSF level 8 (4000 level) and a research essay:

Compulsory (core) courses – Year 1:

Code	Course	NQF Credits	NQF Level
REL4010F	Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 1	24	8
REL4012S	Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 2	24	8
REL4011H	Research Essay/Project.....	30	8

Elective courses - Year 2: The remaining HEQSF level 8 courses may be selected from the list of electives set out below.

Code	Course	NQF Credits	NQF Level
REL4046FS	Buddhism in Contemporary Society.....	24	8
REL4049FS	Islamic Studies (Not offered in 2028)	24	8
REL4053FS	Religion and Culture in Africa	24	8
REL4054FS	Religion, Gender and Sexuality: Exploring contested territories.....	24	8

Code	Course	NQF Credits	NQF Level
REL4091FS	Spirituality and Ethics in Islam: Explorations in Sufism (Not offered in 2028)	24	8
REL4110FS	African Religious Movements (Not offered in 2028)	24	8
REL4112FS	Philosophers on Religion (Not offered in 2028)	24	8
REL4113FS	Issues in Contemporary Jewish Thought (Not offered in 2028)	24	8
REL4119FS	Embodiment, Religion and Ethics	24	8

To progress to Master's level an overall average result of not less than 60% must be achieved.

MA/MSocSc specialising in the Study of Religions and Contemporary Society (192 NQF credits) - FULL-TIME PROGRAMME

[REL03]

Programme Convener:
Professor S Shaikh

Prescribed curriculum:
Master's students are required to complete a minor dissertation and four taught courses of which no more than two can be at HEQSF level 8 (4000 level).

Compulsory (core) course:

Code	Course	NQF Credits	NQF Level
REL5003W	Minor Dissertation	96	9

The remaining courses may be selected from the list of electives set out below. The courses are subject to the approval of the supervisor and should be in the area of specialisation.

Code	Course	NQF Credits	NQF Level
REL5018FS	Religion, Gender and Sexuality: Exploring contested territories	24	9
REL5091FS	Spirituality and Ethics in Islam: Explorations in Sufism (Not offered in 2028)	24	9
REL5110FS	African Religious Movements (Not offered in 2028)	24	9
REL5111FS	Reading Religious Texts (May not be offered in 2027)	24	9
REL5112FS	Philosophers on Religion (Not offered in 2028)	24	9
REL5113FS	Issues in Contemporary Jewish Thought (Not offered in 2028)	24	9
REL5114FS	Buddhism in Contemporary Society	24	9
REL5115FS	Islamic Studies (Not offered in 2028)	24	9
REL5116FS	Religion and Culture in Africa	24	9
REL5117FS	Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 1	24	9
REL5118FS	Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 2	24	9
REL5119FS	Embodiment, Religion and Ethics	24	9

Subject to approval by the Head of Department, an elective offered by a cognate department may replace one or more of the listed electives. Please consult the supplementary elective handbook for descriptions of elective courses offered.

MA/MSocSc specialising in the Study of Religions and Contemporary Society (192 NQF credits) - PART-TIME PROGRAMME (2 years)
[REL04]

Programme Convener:
Professor S Shaikh

Prescribed curriculum:
Master's students are required to complete a minor dissertation and four taught courses of which no more than two can be at HEQSF level 8 (4000 level).

Elective courses – Year 1:

Code	Course	NQF Credits	NQF Level
	2 x electives from the list below	(2x24) 48	9

Compulsory (core) course – Year 2:

Code	Course	NQF Credits	NQF Level
REL5003W	Minor Dissertation.....	96	9
	AND.....		
	2 x electives from the list below.....	(2x24) 48	9

The remaining courses may be selected from the list of electives set out below. The courses are subject to the approval of the supervisor and should be in the area of specialisation.

Code	Course	NQF Credits	NQF Level
REL5018FS	Religion, Gender and Sexuality: Exploring contested territories.....	24	9
REL5091FS	Spirituality and Ethics in Islam: Explorations in Sufism (Not offered in 2028).....	24	9
REL5110FS	African Religious Movements (Not offered in 2028)	24	9
REL5111FS	Reading Religious Texts (May not be offered in 2027)	24	9
REL5112FS	Philosophers on Religion (Not offered in 2028)	24	9
REL5113FS	Issues in Contemporary Jewish Thought (Not offered in 2028).....	24	9
REL5114FS	Buddhism in Contemporary Society.....	24	9
REL5115FS	Islamic Studies (Not offered in 2028)	24	9
REL5116FS	Religion and Culture in Africa	24	9
REL5117FS	Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 124		9
REL5118FS	Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 224		9
REL5119FS	Embodiment, Religion and Ethics	24	9

Subject to approval by the Head of Department, an elective offered by a cognate department may replace one or more of the listed electives. Please consult the supplementary elective handbook for descriptions of elective courses offered.

Master's by dissertation (180 NQF credits) (HEQSF level 9)
[REL03]
REL5000W THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

PhD (360 NQF credits)
REL6000W THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Course Outlines:

REL4010F METHODS AND THEORY IN THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS 1
24 NQF credits at NQF level 8
Convener: Dr A Alhourani
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for an honours programme.
Course outline:
This course introduces students to the field and discipline of The Study of Religions as it has developed in the West and imposed itself in this and other departments for The Study of Religions. The main part of this course will be a critical reading of core texts describing and analysing the making of the discipline of The Study of Religions, focusing on laying bare the foundations, theoretical frameworks, disciplinary questions and central concerns of The Study of Religions that has dominated the academy. The course will critically interrogate some of the defining parameters, epistemological and political assumptions that have historically defined the discipline. Selected postcolonial and decolonial readings will be used to read against the dominant narratives to enable a creative rethinking of current possibilities in the field of The Study of Religions.
DP requirements: Submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates. Regular attendance and participation in class.
Assessment: Response papers (50%). Final essay of 4,000 words (50%).

REL4011H RESEARCH PROJECT / ESSAY
30 NQF credits at NQF level 8
Convener: Professor S Shaikh
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for an honours programme.
Course outline:
An appropriate research paper, on a topic chosen in negotiation with the Head of Department and written under the supervision of a staff member. The paper needs to be of approximately 15,000 words in length, and it must demonstrate the student's ability to engage with the theory and methodology of religious studies.
DP requirements: Submission of essay.
Assessment: Research essay 100%.

REL4012S METHODS AND THEORY IN THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS 2
24 NQF credits at NQF level 8
Convener: Professor E Porcu and Professor A Ukah
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for an honours programme.
Course outline:
This course focuses on applying the theoretical frameworks and methodologies introduced in Methods and Theories 1 to the research project in the Study of Religions in terms of research proposal, selection of methodological and theoretical frameworks, literature review, thesis development and data analysis.
DP requirements: Submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates. Regular attendance and participation in class.
Assessment: Response papers (50%). Research project of 4,000 words (50%).

REL4046FS BUDDHISM IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY
24 NQF credits at NQF level 8
Convener: Professor E Porcu
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for an honours programme.
Course outline:
This course will examine Buddhism as a living tradition in its relation to society and culture. Students will be exposed to different Buddhist traditions both in their historical and contemporary developments, their teachings and practices. We will, for example, explore issues of orientalism and hegemonic power in the construction of Buddhism, Buddhism and gender, Buddhism and popular culture, Buddhism, art and the media, and the transmission of Buddhism to the West and Africa, as well as Buddhism-based new religious movements. Particular emphasis will be placed on East Asian Buddhism.
DP requirements: Submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates. Regular attendance and participation in class.
Assessment: Class presentations (10%). 4 weekly response papers (40%). Final essay of 4,000 words (50%).

REL4049FS ISLAMIC STUDIES
24 NQF credits at NQF level 8
Convener: Dr A Alhourani
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for an honours programme.
Course outline:
This course provides postgraduate students with tools to study Islam as a religious tradition-spanning through changing historical context(s). Using the tools of the phenomenological and historical study of religion, the course enables the students to analyse the beliefs, practices and institutions of Islam in their variety, historical development and various contexts. Themes explored include the life of the Prophet Muhammad; the transmission of the foundational sacred texts of Islam (Quran and Hadith); the development of Islamic law and jurisprudence, the formation of schools of theology and philosophy;

Islamic mysticism (Sufism). Each of the above themes is addressed through a combination of phenomenological and critical historical method.
DP requirements: Submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates. Regular attendance of weekly seminars.
Assessment: Weekly response papers (50%) and one 4,000-word essay (50%).

REL4091FS SPIRITUALITY AND ETHICS IN ISLAM: EXPLORATIONS IN SUFISM
24 NQF credits at NQF level 8
Convener: Professor S Shaikh
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for an honours programme.
Course outline:
This course explores Islamic spirituality and its relationship to ethics. A significant manifestation of spirituality in the Islamic tradition is embodied in the way of the Sufis. Sufism is the name given to the mystical path (al-tariqa) of Islam and remains one of the most influential interpretations and practices of Islam. In this course we trace core developments within Sufi doctrine and practices including rituals, techniques for self-cultivation, music and poetry, as well as animating ideas of human subjectivity and diversity, and how these are embodied in communal life and social relations, both in the past and in the present. In its attentiveness to ethics, the course will also explore the implications and connections of Sufism to law and legal ethics.
DP requirements: Regular participation in weekly seminars; submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates.
Assessment: Attendance of, and preparation for, seminars; oral presentations (10%), seminar papers (45%) and a final essay of 4,000 words (45%).

REL4110FS AFRICAN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS
24 NQF credits at NQF level 8
Convener: Professor A Ukah
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for an honours programme.
Course outline:
With the coming of Islam and Christianity in Africa, new religious movements blossomed in the continent. This course examines some major theories in the history and the sociology of religious movements, and provides a critical investigation of selected case-studies of major religious movements within the three major religious traditions of Africa, namely, African Indigenous religions, African Christianities and African Islams.
DP requirements: Regular attendance at all seminars and timeous completion of all assignments and essays.
Assessment: Reading/essay assessments (30%) and a final essay of 4,000 words (70%).

REL4053FS RELIGION & CULTURE IN AFRICA
24 NQF credits at NQF level 8
Convener: Professor A Ukah
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for an honours programme.
Course outline:
This course is an exploration of African religions and culture. It will provide in-depth discussions of principal and fundamental issues and themes concerning African culture and African Traditional Religions, beginning with issues revolving around the academic study of African religions. Some concepts and worldviews that are ordinarily considered to be uniquely African will be analysed. We will also examine a select set of issues and historical developments in the cultural thinking of Africans about Africa. Selected case studies of Islamic and Christian religious culture in Africa will also be explored during the course.
DP requirements: Participation in all classes and a reading assessment to be submitted at the end of each class based on readings for that section.
Assessment: Reading assessments (50%) and one 4000-word final essay (50%).

REL4119FS EMBODIMENT, RELIGION AND ETHICS
24 NQF credits at NQF level 8
Convener: Dr A Alhourani
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for an honours programme.
Course outline:
This course critically examines various theories of embodiment and aesthetics and relates them to questions of ethics, the human body and religion. This course addresses the ethical implications of aesthetics and the embodiment of religion. This course initials an exploration into how the material culture of religion and its associated sensational experiences condition the human body and the cultivation of social norms and virtue ethics. Through close analysis of both religious primary texts and ethnographic case studies from different religious cultures, including Islam and African traditions, this course provides a comparative insight into the values and meanings of embodiment and ethics and aims to unpack and better understand the complexity of the world we live in.
DP requirements: Regular attendance and participation in weekly seminars, and submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates.
Assessment: Class participation (10%); Oral presentation (5%); Two response papers (1,000-1,500 words) (40%); Final essay (4,000 words) (45%).

REL4054FS: RELIGION, GENDER AND SEXUALITY: EXPLORING CONTESTED TERRITORIES
24 NQF credits at NQF level 8
Convener: Prof S Shaikh
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for an honours programme.
Course outline:
This course explores the dynamic interplay between gender, sexuality and religion. Using diverse feminist theoretical lenses, we examine how social norms, ethics, and symbols intertwine with sexuality and gender across different religious landscapes. With sensitivity, we navigate through the evolving landscapes of contemporary religious practices, laws, spirituality, texts, and interpretations. The course investigates the rich tapestry of gender theorizations, the evolving concept of personhood and subjectivities, ethics and social dynamics, across selected religious landscapes. Immersing ourselves in vibrant and shifting religious imaginaries, the course invites us to be both critical and constructive in thinking through the boundaries and transformations of gender and sexuality perspectives emerging in the contemporary period.
DP requirements: Regular participation to weekly seminars; submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates.
Assessment: Response papers/short essays (40%), oral presentation (10%), and final research essay, 3500 words (50%).

REL5003W MINOR DISSERTATION
96 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Professor S Shaikh
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
A dissertation completed under supervision which shows thorough practical and/or academic knowledge of the approved subject and methods of research, and evidence of independent critical power in the handling and interpretation of material already known or newly discovered, may embody such original work of others as may be pertinent, may include the candidate's own published material on the same subject, if the prior permission of the Senate has been obtained. The dissertation must be the candidate's own work and any contributions to and quotations in the dissertation must be cited and referenced.
DP requirements: Regular consultation with supervisor.
Assessment: A dissertation of no more than 25,000 words in length.

REL5091FS SPIRITUALITY AND ETHICS IN ISLAM: EXPLORATIONS IN SUFISM
24 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Professor S Shaikh
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
This course explores Islamic spirituality and its relationship to ethics. A significant manifestation of spirituality in the Islamic tradition is embodied in the way of the Sufis. Sufism is the name given to the mystical path (al-tariqa) of Islam, and remains one of the most influential interpretations and practices of Islam. In this course we trace core developments within Sufi doctrine and practices including rituals, techniques for self-cultivation, music and poetry, as well as animating ideas of human subjectivity and diversity, and how these are embodied in communal life and social relations, both in the past and in the present. In its attentiveness to ethics, the course will also explore the implications and connections of Sufism to law and legal ethics.
DP requirements: Regular participation in weekly seminars; submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates.
Assessment: Attendance of, and preparation for, seminars; oral presentations (10%), seminar papers (45%) and a final essay of 6,000 words (45%).

REL5110FS AFRICAN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS
24 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Professor A Ukah
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
With the coming of Islam and Christianity in Africa, new religious movements blossomed in the continent. This course examines some major theories in the history and the sociology of religious movements, and provides a critical investigation of selected case-studies of major religious movements within the three major religious traditions of Africa, namely, African Indigenous religions, African Christianities and African Islams.
DP requirements: Regular attendance at all seminars and timeous completion of all assignments and essays.
Assessment: Reading/essay assessments (30%) and a final essay of 6,000 words (70%).

REL5111FS READING RELIGIOUS TEXTS
(May not be offered in 2027)
24 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Dr A Alhourani
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
This course is designed to give students exposure to religious texts and their commentarial literature in the religious traditions studied in the department. It will introduce hermeneutical and analytical tools for reading these texts in translation or, skills permitting, in their original languages. With these tools, students will undertake a close reading of selected texts in

light of their social and religious contexts. They will also develop the skills to address relevant issues about canon, authenticity, orality and writing, intertextuality and interpretation. This course will prepare masters students for the critical contextual reading essential to undertake new research in these traditions.
DP requirements: Regular attendance at all seminars and timeous completion of all assignments and essays.
Assessment: Weekly seminar papers (50%). A final essay of 6,000 words (50%).

REL5114FS BUDDHISM IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY
24 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Professor E Porcu
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
This course will examine Buddhism as a living tradition in its relation to society and culture. Students will be exposed to different Buddhist traditions both in their historical and contemporary developments, their teachings and practices. We will, for example, explore issues of orientalism and hegemonic power in the construction of Buddhism, Buddhism and gender, Buddhism and popular culture, Buddhism, art and the media, and the transmission of Buddhism to the West and Africa, as well as Buddhism-based new religious movements. Particular emphasis will be placed on East Asian Buddhism.
DP requirements: Submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates. Regular attendance and participation in class.
Assessment: Class presentations (10%). 4 weekly response papers (40%). A final essay of 6,000 words (50%).

REL5116FS RELIGION AND CULTURE IN AFRICA
24 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Professor A Ukah
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
This course is an exploration of African religions and culture. It will provide in-depth discussions of principal and fundamental issues and themes concerning African culture and African Traditional Religions, beginning with issues revolving around the academic study of African religions. Some concepts and worldviews that are ordinarily considered to be uniquely African will be analysed. We will also examine a select set of issues and historical developments in the cultural thinking of Africans about Africa. Selected case studies of Islamic and Christian religious culture in Africa will also be explored during the course.
DP requirements: Participation in all classes and a reading assessment to be submitted at the end of each class based on readings for that section.
Assessment: Reading assessments (50%) and one 6000-word final essay (50%).

REL5115FS ISLAMIC STUDIES
24 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Dr A Alhourani
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
This course provides postgraduate students with the tools to study Islam as a religious tradition spanning Using the tools of the phenomenological and historical study of religion, the course enables the students to analyse the beliefs, practices and institutions of Islam in their variety, Themes explored include the life of the Prophet Muhammad; the transmission of the foundational sacred texts of Islam (Quran and Hadith); the development of Islamic law and jurisprudence; the formation of schools of theology and philosophy; Islamic mysticism (Sufism). Each of the above themes is addressed through a combination of phenomenological and critical historical method.
DP requirements: Submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates. Regular attendance of weekly seminars.
Assessment: Weekly response papers (50%) and one 6,000-word essay (50%).

REL5117FS METHODS AND THEORY IN THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS 1
24 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Dr A Alhourani
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
This course introduces students to the field and discipline of The Study of Religions as it has developed in the West and imposed itself in this and other departments for The Study of Religions. The main part of this course will be a critical reading of core texts describing and analysing the making of the discipline of The Study of Religions, focusing on laying bare the foundations, theoretical frameworks, disciplinary questions and central concerns of The Study of Religions that has dominated the academy. The course will critically interrogate some of the defining parameters, epistemological and political assumptions that have historically defined the discipline. Selected postcolonial and decolonial readings will be used to read against the dominant narratives to enable a creative rethinking of current possibilities in the field of The Study of Religions.
DP requirements: Submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates. Regular attendance and participation in class.
Assessment: Response papers (50%). Final essay of 6,000 words (50%).

REL5118FS METHODS AND THEORY IN THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS 2
24 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Professor E Porcu and Professor A Ukah

Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
This course focuses on applying the theoretical frameworks and methodologies introduced in Methods and Theories 1 to the research project in the Study of Religions in terms of research proposal, selection of methodological and theoretical frameworks, literature review, thesis development and data analysis.
DP requirements: Submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates. Regular attendance and participation in class.
Assessment: Response papers (50%). Research project of 6,000 words (50%).

REL5119FS EMBODIMENT, RELIGION AND ETHICS
24 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Dr A Alhourani
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
This course critically examines various theories of embodiment and aesthetics and relates them to questions of ethics, the human body and religion. This course addresses the ethical implications of aesthetics and the embodiment of religion. This course initials an exploration into how the material culture of religion and its associated sensational experiences condition the human body and the cultivation of social norms and virtue ethics. Through close analysis of both religious primary texts and ethnographic case studies from different religious cultures, including Islam and African traditions, this course provides a comparative insight into the values and meanings of embodiment and ethics and aims to unpack and better understand the complexity of the world we live in.
DP requirements: Regular attendance and participation in weekly seminars, and submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates.
Assessment: Class participation (10%); Oral presentations (5%); Three response papers (1,500-2,000 words)(40%); Final research essay (6,000 words) (45%).

REL5018FS: RELIGION, GENDER AND SEXUALITY: EXPLORING CONTESTED TERRITORIES
24 NQF credits at NQF level 9
Convener: Prof S Shaikh
Course entry requirements: Acceptance for a master's programme.
Course outline:
This course explores the dynamic interplay between gender, sexuality and religion. Using diverse feminist theoretical lenses, we examine how social norms, ethics, and symbols intertwine with sexuality and gender across different religious landscapes. With sensitivity, we navigate through the evolving landscapes of contemporary religious practices, laws, spirituality, texts, and interpretations. The course investigates the rich tapestry of gender theorizations, the evolving concept of personhood and subjectivities, ethics and social dynamics, across selected religious landscapes. Immersing ourselves in vibrant and shifting religious imaginaries, the course invites us to be both critical and constructive in thinking through the boundaries and transformations of gender and sexuality perspectives emerging in the contemporary period.
DP requirements: Regular participation to weekly seminars; submission of all prescribed assignments by due dates.
Assessment: Response papers/short essays (40%), oral presentation (10%), and final research essay, 5000 words (50%).

Guide to Writing a Research Proposal for Studies in The Department for the Study of Religions

The application for a Master, Research Masters or a PhD should contain a preliminary research proposal. If accepted, students then have six months from first registration to produce a full research proposal for submission to the Humanities Faculty office.

The Preliminary Research proposal

The preliminary research proposal is for the department's postgraduate application committee, who will use it in assessing your application. The aim of the assessment is to consider whether you have the necessary social science background and abilities to facilitate successful studies with us, and whether we have sufficient expertise in your area of interest to be able to supervise your research. The preliminary research proposal is a critical aid in helping us make that decision, and no application for a research-based degree will be considered without such a proposal.

We are aware that producing this proposal takes time. Further, we are also aware that many people do not have a clearly defined research project at the outset of their studies, and that typically the first few months of research aims to clarify just that. We thus do not hold you to following this preliminary research proposal. We ask you to provide one nonetheless, for three reasons. First, it allows us to assess your ability to conceive of a research project. Second, it provides us with a clear sense of your research interests. Third, the proposal will provide the basis for initial discussions with your research supervisor if you are accepted.

The preliminary research proposal is usually between 1-2 typed pages, and should include the following sections:

- **A title that gives a clear idea of what your thesis may be about.**
- **A statement of the research problem you have identified and wish to explore in the thesis.**
- **A rationale that explains why the research problem arises or is of interest.**
- **A sample bibliography that provides a sense of other scholars who have written in this area, whom you take to be relevant to your project.**

Before applying, check out the research interests of staff members listed in the Postgraduate Handbook. If there is no one listing interests in your area, then there is little point in applying. If there are, then please do not contact them directly at the outset. Rather, complete the preliminary research proposal along with your application. This will be assessed by a suitable staff member with expertise in this area, who will only contact you should they require further clarification.

The Full Research proposal

Within six months of registration, you will be asked to produce a full research proposal. This is submitted to the Faculty Office and the title is officially registered by the University. The Faculty have produced a formal guide for such proposals. Their guide is reproduced below:

A research proposal is a plan of action; it sets out the aims of your research project and how you intend to achieve these aims. The proposal for a Masters thesis is usually between 3 and 6 typed pages; that for a Doctoral thesis, between 6 and 12 pages. The following headings are intended to assist you in writing a proposal. You may find that in writing your proposal, you want to use different headings, and order your account differently. This is perfectly in order, as long as the basic issues set out here are covered.

1. TITLE: As indicated above, the title of your thesis will be registered, so the title needs to be brief and descriptive. It should provide a fairly clear idea of what your thesis is about.

2. RESEARCH QUESTION: A thesis or dissertation is the investigation of a problem. This research problem or question provides the focus for the entire project. What is it that you wish to investigate? Can you specify crisply the question (or problem) that your thesis sets out to address? You should aim to state a single research question, which you may then choose to flesh out through a number of sub-questions. Bear in mind that a dissertation (PhD, Masters, mini or full) should be a well-contained, tightly-focused and coherent piece of work that examines an issue in some depth.

3. RATIONALE: Having identified the question or problem you wish to address through your research project, you need to say something about how/why this question has arisen. For some students, the research project emerges out of a theoretical interest, for others it emerges out of issues of practice. Whatever the case, you should signal briefly why you have chosen the question that you have, and what contribution you think the completed research project might make to our understanding of the field.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW: When you have registered your proposal and got into the swing of the research project, you will need to undertake a thorough review of the literature pertaining to your research question. For the purposes of the research proposal, you need to have read sufficiently in the field to justify your research question (Why is it important? Have other academics taken up this question in the same or similar ways? How do current debates in your own field of study bear on your research question? Your literature review must assist you in addressing these issues. It will provide information on how your own, or related, research questions have been investigated by other academics in your own (and other, related) fields. It will also provide you with resources to build your own conceptual framework. The literature review thus has two broad aims, to familiarise you with both the theoretical and empirical work which can inform your study.

5. TIME LINE: Try and develop a plan of work for the completion of your thesis, so that you set aside time for conducting a literature review and writing up the report. This will assist you in pacing your progress through the thesis, and also in planning a manageable project.

6. SAMPLE BIBLIOGRAPHY: The last part of your research proposal should contain a sample bibliography. This provides a guide to reading you have already done, or plan to do, in developing your research project. Put down the key theoretical and methodological texts you have drawn on, or intend to draw on, as well as that literature, both theoretical and empirical, which bears on your own study. The sample bibliography should not be longer than a page.

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Duration: 2 Years

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- Embodiment, Religion and Ethics
- Religion, Gender and Sexuality: Exploring contested territories

Estimated Programme Cost (Tuition Only)

Home Students:

- **Honours R60 480**
- **Masters R79 455.60**
- **Research Masters R 40 802.40**
- **PhD R29 343.60**

International Students:

- **Honours (Non-SADC R130 464 / Other R151 956)**
- **Masters (Non-SADC R136 587.60 / Other R153 975.60)**
- **Research Masters (Non-SADC & Other R46 526.40)**
- **PhD (Non-SADC & Other R35 067.60)**



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POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

An **Honours full-time 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

An **Honours part-time programme** takes two years. Students complete the compulsory core courses in year 1 and the remaining electives are completed in year 2. Students are also required to 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

Honours courses:

- Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 1 (Compulsory)
- Methods and Theory in the Study of Religions 2 (Compulsory)
- Honours Project/Essay (Compulsory)
- Buddhism in Contemporary Society
- Islamic Studies
- Religion and Culture in Africa
- Religion, Gender and Sexuality: Exploring contested territories
- African Religious Movements
- Spirituality and Ethics in Islam: Explorations in Sufism
- Embodiment, Religion and Ethics

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

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

1) A **Masters by coursework** full-time takes two years. Students take four courses in year 1 and write a 25,000 word dissertation in year 2. A **Masters by coursework** part-time, students take four courses where the coursework is completed over 2 years 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
- African Religious Movements
- Reading Religious Texts
- Islamic Studies
- Buddhism in Contemporary Society
- Embodiment, Religion and Ethics

****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 September each year.

Registration takes place from January – February

For more information speak to Tasneem Wise
Tasneem.Wise@uct.ac.za

Staff research areas and possibilities available for postgraduate research:

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).
Email: Elisabetta.Porcu@uct.ac.za

Prof. Sa'diyya Shaikh (Postgrad Convener)
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.
Email: Sadiyya.Shaikh@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 (RICSA) 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.
Email: Asonzeh.Ukah@uct.ac.za

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

Vacant
Jewish Studies
Email: TBC

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

Check us out online:
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Come and talk to any of the teaching staff or contact:

Undergraduate information:
Megan Moen (Senior Secretary)

LS 5.40

T: (021) 650 3452

M: **Megan.Moen@uct.ac.za**

Postgraduate information:
Tasneem Wise (Admin Assistant)

LS 5.36

T: (021) 650 5818

M: **Tasneem.Wise@uct.ac.za**