Tutorials: Theology

THEOLOGY HAS BEEN STUDIED AT OXFORD for many centuries. The traditional focus on biblical studies (including the study of biblical languages), church history, and church doctrine is now complemented by work on other religions and new ways of considering religion influenced by sociology and psychology.

The descriptions below are mainly copyright University of Oxford and cover tutorial courses offered by the University to matriculated undergraduates. SCIO students follow such courses as closely as is practicable, though there may be scope for minor variation to take into account students' previous experience. Students will not necessarily cover all the material cited in the description (especially when they take the course as a secondary tutorial). A few tutorials are shaped round SCIO tutors' special areas of expertise but demand the same intellectual rigour as the others listed here. All tutorials involve in-depth study: where the title might suggest a survey course, the content of the tutorial will involve focused study on part of the syllabus.

Tutorial list

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The Narrative World of the Hebrew Bible

This course explores the rich and diverse world of biblical narrative, particularly in light of various methods of approaching narrative, coping with divergent sources behind narratives, investigating the often loaded way in which language and quotations are used in narratives, exploring aspects of cultural borrowing within narratives, and looking at multiple narratives in multiple genres within the exilic and post-exilic periods.

The set texts focus on the stories of primeval times that were seen as shaping the world (Genesis 1–11) and on the accounts of the last days of the kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 24–25; 2 Chronicles 36). Students will focus on close readings of these chapters, and there will also be an opportunity to comment on the Hebrew text of Genesis 6–8. The course will develop and refine students' understanding of the various ways in which narratives operate in terms of sources, editing, and cultural borrowing, and equip students with a range of heuristic lenses through which to understand and contextualize biblical texts. Students have the opportunity to study texts in Hebrew if they already read the language, but this is not a requirement.

The Poetic World of the Hebrew Bible

This course investigates the poetic traditions of the Old Testament, including prophetic, liturgical, and wisdom literature. Consideration is given to such topics as the nature of Hebrew poetry, prophecy and particular prophets, psalmody and the Psalms, wisdom and the wise, the relation of these writings to ancient Near Eastern culture, and the reception of the biblical poems and songs in Jewish and Christian traditions.

The textual focus is on the Book Four of the Psalter (Psalms 90–106) and the poems/songs of 'Second Isaiah' (Isaiah 40–55). Students will focus on close study of these chapters in English, and there will also be an opportunity to comment on the Hebrew text of Psalms 93–99.

The course will enable students to acquire a knowledge of the poetic traditions in the Old Testament, and to develop critical understanding by introducing them to basic issues of method, with particular reference to the study of two major Old Testament texts.

The Gospels

The Gospels course will introduce students to foundational understanding of the Gospels of Matthew and John as exemplifying early Christianity's two most influential normative expressions of the Jesus tradition. While offering an introduction to the backgrounds and origins of the Gospels, and to leading scholarly theories about literary relationships between them, the primary aim will be to develop familiarity with the historical, critical, theological, and interpretative issues raised by the Gospels of Matthew and John in their canonical form. The course will also aim at least selectively to illustrate the Gospels' place within the wider biblical context, and to show how their exegesis and/or reception bears on issues of Christian history, doctrine, and relations with other religious traditions.

Set Texts (to be studied in English and/or Greek)

- Matthew 2–3, 5–9, 17, 26–28
- John 1, 5–6, 8, 11, 17, 19–20

History of Doctrine

Christianity is a practical religion, but most Christians hold that it cannot be practised alone. Christian life is grounded in the faith and worship of distinct communities, or churches, and, since faith and worship both presuppose belief, these churches (or denominations) are typically distinguished by their doctrines. Some of these are held in common with other Christians, while others are peculiar to one or a few denominations; in either case they are usually presented as deductions from texts which are universally recognized as scriptures. The language in which they are formulated, however, is often technical, and it is not uncommon for particular creeds or articles to be expressed with a minuteness and complexity that puzzles even insiders. Historical study is generally the best way of ascertaining what believers have understood, and why they differ, regarding such terms as revelation, *creatio ex nihilo*, Trinitarianism, incarnation, atonement, sacrament, ecclesiology and eschatology.

This course is designed to introduce students to the history of such terms, and thus to explain the genesis of the doctrines to which they refer. Students will consider the biblical evidence which has supported and informed the promulgation of these doctrines; they will also acquire an appreciation of contingent factors, both intellectual and historical, which have shaped the ecumenical

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formulations of Christian doctrine and have led to the emergence of distinct communities, churches, or traditions.

Ethics I: Christian Moral Reasoning

This course is designed to introduce students to Christian ethics — its concepts, its variety, its history, its major figures, some of its classic texts, and its practical significance. The aim of the course is to develop a capacity for moral reasoning, specifically in terms of the Christian moral tradition. Students are invited to criticize what they find in this tradition, but they are advised to do so only after they have first acquired a sound understanding of it. Students are, of course, always free to advance their own convictions.

The course aims to cover a large amount of theoretical, practical, and historical territory. Students will focus on methodological issues and concepts such as love, natural and revealed law, the supreme good, divine command, freedom, conscience, virtues, justification, faith and grace; and on concrete moral issues in sexual ethics, healthcare ethics, and political ethics.

Themes in Nineteenth-Century Theology and Religion

The course addresses key themes in theological thinking and the study of religion in Europe and North America during the long nineteenth century. These include biblical interpretation, the nature of authority, faith and reason, ecclesiology, Christology, romanticism, literature and imagination, spirit and history, secularization, reductionism, religious experience, and the encounter with world religions and the natural sciences. The topics will be addressed through seminal or representative texts. Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Newman, and Coleridge are especially significant thinkers whose work or influence will normally be studied.

Themes to be studied include spirit and history, reductionism, religious experience, and literature and religion.

Key Themes in Systematic Theology

This course will develop the student's knowledge in, and understanding of, four key areas of Christian doctrine introducing sources, fundamental ideas, methods, controversies, and major historical as well as contemporary positions: the Triune God; creation and anthropology; Christology and soteriology; and pneumatology and the church.

The course will also explore their interrelatedness and thereby introduce students to the ordering and arrangement of the key doctrines in theological systems or summae, the reason for such an ordering, and its theological implications. In this way, students will learn the craft of theological thinking.

Set Texts
Students will focus on some or all of the following:

- Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, part III, 2, 264–314
- Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God*, part I, 3–112
- Rosemary Radford Ruether, 'Ecofeminism: First and Third World women', in *Theology and feminism*, ed. Diana Lipton and Janet Soskice
- James Cone, *A black theology of liberation*, chap. 5, 'The human being in black theology', 40th Anniversary Edition, 87–115
- Sergei Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 342–410, on the work of Christ
- Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the key*, 247–73, 'Death and sacrifice'
- Graham Ward, *Christ and culture*, 29–59, 'Christology and mimesis'
- *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II documents
- Stanley Hauerwas, *The peaceable community*, 96–115, 'The servant community', and John Milbank, *Theology and social theory*, 382–442, 'The other city'

History and Theology of the Early Church (64–337 AD)

Students taking this course will be able to observe the evolution of Christianity from a community of disciples to an organized church which spanned the whole of the Mediterranean world. For convenience, the term 'church' in the present rubric embraces all professing Christians in the period from 64 to 337 AD, though it is expected that students will become aware of the difficulties which attend the use of this term.

Part A consists of the history of the church as an institution. Students may address the themes of the growth of the church and the meaning of conversion; the relation of Christianity to Judaism; the diversity of early Christian communities; the

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causes, scope, and effects of persecution; patterns of Christian ministry (including the origins of the threefold hierarchy and of the title Papa or Pope); ecclesiastical discipline and the beginnings of monasticism; schisms caused by Judaizers, Gnostics, Montanists, Novatianists, and Donatists; the development of orthodoxy and synodical government; the evolution of the biblical canon; the role of Christianity in the Constantinian Empire.

Part B consists of the theologies of this period. Students may consider the views of the following: Ignatius of Antioch; the Gnostic understanding of creation and redemption; Justin Martyr; Athenagoras; Theophilus of Antioch; Irenaeus of Lyons; Tertullian of Carthage; Clement of Alexandria; Hippolytus of Rome; Origen; Cyprian of Carthage; Novatian; Dionysius of Alexandria; Eusebius of Caesarea; Lactantius; Arius; the Nicene Creed; Athanasius of Alexandria. Students will consider a theologian's intellectual background and the historical conditions which prompted and shaped his activity as a theologian.

Medieval Religions

This course aims to introduce students to a number of major topics concerning the institutions, thought, and practice of medieval Christianity as it interacted with Judaism and Islam. The course will study Christianity (including its confrontation with Paganism) in the framework of its encounters with Judaism and Islam in the medieval West. Students will be encouraged to explore areas of similarity in the thought of the three Abrahamic religions, while recognizing the distinctiveness of each. They will study key medieval Christian, Jewish, and Muslim thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon), and Averrroes (Ibn Rushd). In considering how the adherents of different religions identified themselves, they will address the extent to which religious intolerance and persecution related in medieval societies to fear of 'the other'. Treatment of the religions will interlock in order to demonstrate the many facets of the various interactions between Christians, Muslims and Jews in the Middle Ages. Students will learn to distinguish between the institutions of the medieval church and its teachings, as well as to distinguish between learned theology of the elite and religious expression of the laity.

Early Modern Christianity 1500–1648

The course offers an opportunity to acquire an understanding of the late medieval church, the work and thought of the leading reformers — particularly Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin — together with the radicals, and the impact of the Reformation on European society. Students will also be introduced to varieties of renewal and reaction in the Roman Catholic Church, and to the religious changes in England from the Henrician reforms to the reign of Charles I and the civil wars in his kingdoms. They will gain an integrated view of the historical and doctrinal developments which led to ruptures in the Western Latin church and will sample the full range of the period which extended from the last decades of the undivided Western Church through to the wars in Europe in the early seventeenth century, appreciating the extent to which these wars were related to religious conflict.

Formation of Rabbinic Judaism

This course offers an analysis of the origins and development of rabbinic Judaism from the first century CE to the early modern period. It aims to acquaint students with the main evidence for the development of rabbinic Judaism in this period and the main factors which influenced that development. Students will consider the nature and origin of key rabbinic texts (in translation and/or the original, depending on prior experience) from this period and learn to relate the ideas and attitudes expressed in these texts to the religious lives of Jews in these centuries.

Islam in the Classical Period

This course covers the historical origins and development of the theology, law, and mysticism of Islam, from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries. It covers questions on the Prophethood of Muhammad; the Qur'an; the Hadith; Shi`ism; Islamic theology (*kalam*); Islamic law (*shari`a*); Sufism (*tasawwuf*); and classical Muslim authorities. Students will consider the various interpretative methods relating to Muslim Scripture, the main debates and historical controversies of the Islamic tradition, and of contemporary methodologies in philosophy of religion. References to other religious traditions may be included.

Foundations of Buddhism

The course deals with the main doctrines and practices of mainstream (pre-Mahāyāna) Buddhism, as reflected by the surviving literature of the various schools. Students will be able to discuss and analyse the main topics dealt with during the course, and thereby develop a critical perspective on the subject and the relevant scholarship. They will be

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encouraged to relate this to any knowledge they may already have of other religions.

Hinduism: Sources and Formations

This course offers a thematic and historical introduction to the sources and development of Hindu traditions from their early formation to the medieval period. Students will explore the formation of Hindu traditions through textual sources, such as the Vedas, Upaniṣads, and Bhagavad Gītā, along with the practices and social institutions that formed classical Hindu traditions. Students will learn critically to assess scholarly debates about the origins and development of Hinduism.

Modern Judaism

This course aims to acquaint students with some of the self-understandings of Judaism that have emerged during its critical passage into the modern world and beyond. A selection of the different theological responses that have developed in Modern Judaism will be studied, focusing on the theological and practical implications for Jews and Judaism of such topics as: individual autonomy, religious authority, revelation, gender, the Holy Land, and the Shoah. Students will learn to develop the skills critically to assess the theological development of contemporary Judaism.

This course aims to give students some insight into the development of Modern Judaism. It aims to demonstrate how Judaism adapted to relate to the surrounding cultures with which it came to experience increasing contact and especially how it has responded to the challenges associated with ideas linked to modernity and postmodernism. It seeks to help students to develop a conceptual understanding of the thought and practice that underpin the Jewish worldview and acquire an understanding of Judaism as the historic and evolving religious expression of the Jewish people. Students will become acquainted with and analyse the contents of major historical documents such as the Answers to Napoleon of the Jewish Assembly of Notables (1806), the rabbinic critique of nascent Reform These are the words of the Covenant (1819), and the various Platforms of the Central Conference of American (Reform) Rabbis.

Islam in Contemporary Society

The course examines Islam against the background of recent history, including such topics as: Islamic reformism in the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries; various Islamic movements including the anti-Hadith faction and Wahhabism; women and Islam; democracy and Islam; violence and war in Islam; and various modern Muslim thinkers. There is a particular focus on how Muslims have responded to the challenges of the modern world. Students will also study the impact of colonization on Muslim religious discourse and Islamic reformism.

Buddhism in Space and Time

This course deals with Buddhism as it developed and changed in space and time, focusing on the main doctrines and schools of Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle) Buddhism and the transmission and transformation of Buddhism in some of the main areas where it continues to exist in the modern world. It is hoped that students will be able to develop a critical perspective on the subject of the course and the relevant scholarship.

Modern Hinduism

Taking up from where Classical Hinduism left off, this course traces the development of Hinduism from the medieval period through to modernity. Students will examine Hindu scholasticism, devotional and tantric traditions, and modern Hindu thought and will explore themes of liberation, the soul and the divine, tantra and meditation, devotional literature, and the formation of modern Hindu identity. They will have the opportunity critically to assess the development of religious, philosophical, and social ideas and to become familiar with key texts, schools of thought, and traditions of practice.

Science and Religion

There is presently considerable interest in the relation of science and religion in the academy, church, and wider culture. The course focuses on the historical interaction of Christian theology and the natural sciences, and also considers more recent debates, including some arising from the New Atheism — such as the role of evidence in determining beliefs in science and religion, and the place of science in contemporary culture, as well as issues raised for theology by cosmology, evolutionary theories, including the works of Darwin, and the cognitive science of religion.

Students will learn to develop a rigorous and critically informed understanding of historical debates in the field, as well as of contemporary discussions of issues of major importance, including

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models and narratives for relating science and religion.

Hebrew of the Hebrew Bible

This course is intended for students who have already studied biblical Hebrew and wish to consolidate and broaden their knowledge. Students will gain further competence in the language and an ability to independently read, translate, and grammatically understand biblical Hebrew prose and verse texts, thereby furthering their reading skills and gaining an in-depth understanding of the texts' morphological, syntactical, and textual issues. They will have the opportunity to study several prose and verse texts from different biblical genres in detail.

Set Texts

- Exodus 12 and 15
- 1 Kings 11–12
- Ezekiel 37
- Ecclesiastes 3

Paul and Pauline Tradition

This course enables students to obtain a sound grasp of Paul's life and letters, a detailed knowledge of Pauline theology with special reference to Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians, and a broader understanding of the theological, ethical, literary, and historical problems raised by studying the Pauline corpus in the New Testament. The course offers students the opportunity to engage in advanced work in Pauline studies and to apply and refine the historical, literary, and theological interpretive skills. They will have the opportunity to study the following texts (language facility permitting):

- In Greek: Corinthians 5–7; Ephesians 1–3
- In English: Romans 511; 1 Corinthians 17, 15; and Ephesians

Biblical Interpretation: Perspectives from the Social Sciences

This course explores, with scholarly examples, the use of the social sciences in biblical interpretation. Students will gain knowledge of recent movements in the field and will develop a broad understanding of the methodological issues and critical issues at stake when utilizing the social sciences for biblical interpretation. They will progress through a variety of biblical texts and genres and will examine the merits of interdisciplinary scholarship in biblical studies. Topics will include ethnicity, migration, marriage, rape, kinship, prophecy, physical and mental illnesses, and shame and honour. The set texts, from the Old Testament, may be studied in Hebrew or English.

A central aim of the course is to develop an understanding of the plurality of analytical approaches to the biblical material and the ways in which the social sciences can be most effectively used in interpretation. Students will have the opportunity to develop their interpretational skills and their awareness of the wider context of the Old Testament in the history of ideas, and to reflect upon the current state of Old Testament and cognate scholarship and future possibilities for research.

Gender and Power in Biblical Texts

This course treats issues of gender and power in the biblical world, considering a variety of perspectives including historical, literary, theological, and ideological approaches. Students will engage with close reading of a selection of biblical and extra-biblical texts including narrative, law, and, poetry. They will have the opportunity to employ and develop theoretical approaches to ancient texts such as cultural anthropology, gender theory, archaeology, and the comparative method. They will explore the intersections of gender, power, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and social class in the ancient world, as well as considering and developing the conceptual tools to engage in contemporary debates concerning these issues.

Students will gain familiarity with biblical texts concerning issues of gender and power in their social and cultural contexts, considering how biblical women and other marginalized figures operated within as well as challenged the expectations placed upon them.

Analytic Philosophy and Christian Theology

Does it make sense to say that God is both three and one? Or that Christ is both fully human and fully divine? How can God speak to human beings through scripture? And what's going on in the eucharist? In the history of Christian thought, questions like these are perennial, but the intellectual resources with which we try to address them constantly evolve. For this course, students will draw on the methods of contemporary analytic philosophy to assess the meaning, coherence, and truth of key Christian doctrines and practices. No background in analytic philosophy is required, and students will also have an opportunity to consider

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whether analytic philosophy really is useful for theological reflection.

'Analytic' philosophy is a style of philosophy that prizes structured, logical reasoning and transparent arguments. It is sometimes distinguished from 'continental' French and German philosophical traditions like phenomenology or deconstruction. Students will be able to become familiar with the tools and methods of contemporary analytic philosophy, as well as studying the development of doctrine and the resources of the Christian tradition in detail.

Kierkegaard

Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) has been variously characterized as 'the melancholy Dane', 'father of existentialism', 'the great anti-Hegelian', 'precursor to the theology of crisis', and 'prophet of postmodernism', among many other things. He preferred to characterize himself as 'a Christian poet and thinker'. Such catchphrases, however, merely gesture to dimensions of a searching philosophical and theological legacy that addresses an entire range of important topics, many of which remain salient in our own time. Kierkegaard's sustained reflections on the deeper implications of Christianity's central doctrinal claims stand today as some of the most penetrating in the theological tradition, and his thinking surfaces regularly in discussions concerning the relationship between faith and reason. Yet beyond such considerations, Kierkegaard also insisted that Christianity cannot be fully understood through its creeds and doctrines, but that faith is a response to an 'existence communication' enacted more in a way of life than in institutional affiliation, and this too remains relevant in an increasingly secular age. This course addresses these matters and more, situating Kierkegaard's writings both in their own context and in their history of reception, to enable a critical understanding of their potential significance for the contemporary era.

Set Texts (page references refer to the Princeton University Press (Kierkegaard Writings) editions:

- *Fear and trembling*, 27–53
- *The concept of anxiety*, 155–62
- *Concluding unscientific postscript*, 189–224
- *Two ages*, 68–96
- *Works of love*, 5–16
- *The sickness unto death*, 15–21
- *Practice in Christianity*, 23–66

From Nicaea to Chalcedon

Christianity is regarded as one of the three great monotheistic faiths. In contrast, however, both to Judaism and to Islam, it teaches (in its traditional form) not only that there is a single God, but that this God is identical with three subjects — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit — and that one of these subjects, the Son, became identical with the man Jesus of Nazareth, which cannot be understood without some study of the theological reflection and teaching which led to the expression of Christian faith in two of most important ecumenical documents of Christendom, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 and the Chalcedonian Definition of 451. The first is the foundation of all subsequent Trinitarian thinking, the second of all subsequent Christological reflection.

The period stretching from the Council of Nicaea (325) to the Council of Chalcedon (451) was also a decisive one for reflection on questions surrounding the nature and working of Divine Grace, which proved to be the focus of debates on human nature, the Fall and free will in the context of the Pelagian controversy in the West.

As well as looking at the development of conciliar theology, this course will encourage students to get to grips with the works of those theologians — Orthodox, as well as those judged heretical – who were most instrumental in debating these fundamental aspects of the Christian faith: Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers, Cyril, and Augustine of Hippo, will therefore be studied along with Arius, Eunomius, Apollinaris, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius, and Pelagius. The course will also introduce students to the historical, philosophical, social, and cultural contexts which influenced these writers. In particular, early Christian reflection on the Trinity, Christology and grace will be examined against the background of fourth/fifth century Christian life and devotion, with attention being given to Christian asceticism (including female religious life); Christian worship, devotion and art; Christian exegesis and preaching.

Eastern Christianities from Constantinople to Baghdad

In the centuries from 450 to 900, the political and ecclesiastical landscape of the Near and Middle East underwent a dramatic transformation. Here the period began with a single Greek-speaking church, for the most part contained within the Eastern

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Roman Empire ruled from Constantinople; but it ended with a proliferation of rival churches each with their own distinct theologies, sacred languages, and traditions, and all living under, or within the shadow of, the Islamic caliphate ruled from Baghdad. This course investigates this transition. It explores the gradual fragmentation of eastern Christendom following the divisive Council of Chalcedon (451), and the subsequent efflorescence of distinct Christian churches and theological cultures in Egypt, Syria, Armenia, and Mesopotamia. It then considers the changing theologies, narratives, and situations of these various Christianities in the transition from Roman to Islamic rule, focusing both on those Christians still outside the nascent caliphate (in the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire) and on those within it. It looks at the contribution which Christianity made to earliest Islamic thought and culture (and vice versa), and explores the emergence of Arabophone Christianity in the eighth and ninth centuries. Students will be introduced to the most prominent post-Chalcedonian theologians within the imperial Church (e.g. Maximus Confessor, John of Damascus), but also to some leading lights of the various anti-Chalcedonian churches (e.g. Severus of Antioch, Babai the Great), and the first Christian thinkers writing in Arabic (e.g. Theodore Abū Qurrah). At the same time students will be encouraged to situate such persons within the liturgical, exegetical, and material cultures within which they operated, and to understand how their theologies related both to Christian culture more broadly, and to the shifting social and political contexts in which it was produced. The course encourages students to move beyond the traditional Latin-Greek and Eurocentric focuses of medieval Christian history and offers a better comprehension of the modern ecclesiastical landscape, and of the dialogues both between different Eastern churches and between Christians and Muslims.

Varieties of Judaism, 100 BCE–100 CE

The course examines the evidence for different kinds of Judaism in the late Second Temple period and its immediate aftermath. Tutorials give students the opportunity to come to grips with some of the set texts and to learn how to approach these texts as sources for religious history.

Set Texts

- The following texts in English translation, taken from the edition indicated:
- Qumran Community Rule, MMT (Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah) (Some observances of the Law) and Commentary on Habakkuk, in G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Allen Lane/Penguin, 1997)
- Josephus, *Jewish War* II (Loeb, 1956); *Antiquities* XVIII, 1–119 (Loeb, 1965); *Against Apion* II, 145–296 (Loeb, 1956)
- IV Ezra, ed. B. M. Metzger, in J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament pseudepigrapha* (2 vols., Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983–5)
- Wisdom of Solomon (New Revised Standard Version)
- Philo, *Migration of Abraham*; *Life of Moses* I, 1–84 (Loeb, 1958)
- Mishnah, Berakoth, Bikkurim, and Aboth, chap. 1, trans. Danby (Oxford University Press, 1933)
- Psalms of Solomon XVII, trans. S.P. Brock, in *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, ed. H.F.D. Sparks (Oxford University Press, 1984)
- I Enoch 92–105, trans. M.A. Knibb, in *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, ed. H.F.D. Sparks (Oxford University Press, 1984)

The Nature of Religion

This course examines the main classical and contemporary approaches to the study of religion, and the emergence of Religious Studies as an academic discipline. Candidates will be introduced to major theorists from the field, and are required to engage critically in examining the comparative study of religions, the relations between religious belief and religious practice, and the central roles of phenomena myth, symbol, and ritual in theoretical discussions of religion over the course of the twentieth century. Students are encouraged to take an informed view of the place of religion in the modern world, through engaging with primary theoretical texts. They will consider a number of major debates in the field of religious studies, e.g. the outsider/insider problem, religious pluralism, the construction of identity, gender issues, religious violence, phenomenology, post-colonialism, and the benefits and limits of comparison, and will be enabled to make critical use of these theoretical discussions in their study of different religions.

Psychology of Religion

The course introduces the main psychological theories that have been used to understand human religious experience, cognition, and behaviour. The

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distinctive nature of psychological concepts and methods, especially their reliance on empirical data, will be made clear throughout. A range of theoretical approaches are considered: depth psychologies; social psychology; cognitive psychology; evolutionary psychology; health and clinical psychology. Topics covered include continuity and change of religious faith over the lifespan; religious conversion; mystical experience; religion and social identity; the influence of religion on moral behaviour; the relationship between religion and mental and physical health and wellbeing. An interest in interdisciplinary perspectives on religion is desirable. Students are encouraged to apply the course material to theological study and reflection.

Sociology of Religion

This course will enable candidates to acquire an understanding of the major figures in the development of the sociology of religion, with particular reference to Western Europe, North America, and other regions as announced. The course aims to develop a critical understanding of how religion relates to contemporary societies, and how the discipline of sociology has contributed to our contemporary understanding of religion.

Set Texts
Students will study at least one of the following in detail:

- Karl Marx, *Marx on religion*, ed. John Raines (Temple University Press, 2002), together with *Capital*, chaps. 1 and 13 (Penguin Books, 1990)
- Durkheim, *The elementary forms of the religious life* (Allen and Unwin, 1976)
- Weber, *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (Harper Collins, 1991)
- Troeltsch, *The social teaching of the Christian churches* (2 vols., J. Knox, 1992)
- Talcott Parsons, *Action theory and the human condition* (New York, 1978)
- Robert Bellah and Stephen Tipton, *The Robert Bellah reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006): part 2, 'American Religion', 221–376

Mysticism

Students taking this course will study theoretical issues relating to the definition and interpretation of mysticism as well as important examples of mystical literature and traditions. The course aims to encourage reflection on the concepts of mysticism, spirituality, and religious experience, to acquaint students with cardinal texts in one or more mystical traditions, and to promote enquiry into the relation between mystical thought and historical context.

Philosophy of Religion

The purpose of this course is to enable you to examine claims about the existence of God and God's relationship to the world. What, if anything, is meant by them? Could they be true? What justification, if any, can or needs to be provided for them? The course is concerned primarily with the claims of Western religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), and with the central claim of those religions, that there is a God. God is said to be omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, a source of moral obligation, and so on. But what does it mean to say that God has these properties, and are they consistent with each other? Could God change the past, or choose to do evil? Does it make sense to say that God is outside time? You will have the opportunity to study arguments for the existence of God — for example, the teleological argument from the fact that the universe is governed by scientific laws, and the argument from people's religious experiences. Other issues are whether the fact of pain and suffering counts strongly, or even conclusively, against the existence of God, whether there could be evidence for miracles, whether it could be shown that prayer 'works', whether there could be life after death, and what philosophical problems are raised by the existence of different religions. There may also be the opportunity to look at some specifically Christian doctrines — does it make sense to say that the life and death of Jesus atoned for the sins of the world, and could one know this? There is abundant scope for deploying all the knowledge and techniques acquired in other areas of philosophy. Among the major philosophers whose contributions to the philosophy of religion you will need to study are Aquinas, Hume, and Kant.

Introductory reading: Peterson and others, *Reason and religious belief: an introduction to the philosophy of religion* (1991)

Bonhoeffer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a German Lutheran pastor and theologian. Bonhoeffer's work covers a wide range of ethical and doctrinal material. However, much of it is a response to his context within Germany under Nazi rule, and his active involvement within both the Confessing Church

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and, finally, the German resistance. He was executed just weeks before the end of the war for his role in the attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler. Despite his early death, Bonhoeffer wrote a wide range of works, from academic monographs, lecture series, to texts that have become spiritual classics, including *Discipleship*, *Life Together*, and his *Letters and Papers from Prison*. This course will look at the breadth of his work within its context, and consider the ways in which Bonhoeffer remains a figure of importance to our own ecclesial context and political climate.

Set Texts

Discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works (DBW) 4, Minneapolis 1996, pp. 41-76; 281-288

Creation and Fall, DBW 3, Minneapolis 1996, pp. 60-102

Life Together – Prayer Book of the Bible, DBW 5, Minneapolis 1995, 25-47.

Ethics, DBW 6, Minneapolis 2005, pp. 76-102, 388-408

Letters and Papers from Prison, DBW, Minneapolis 2009, pp. 37-52, 361-367, 383-390, 424-432, 454-461, 473-482, 499-504