

HUMANITIES DIVISIONAL BOARD

Title of Programme

Master of Studies in Study of Religions

Brief note about nature of change: Corrigendum: this corrects a change published in the Gazette of 26 March 2015 as HDB(14)92.

Effective date

With effect from 1 October 2015 (for first examination in 2016)

Location of change

In *Examination Regulations* 2014

Detail of change

^{1.8} *Syllabus*

^{1.9} Candidates must offer the paper on the Nature of Religion and two papers selected from papers on the major texts and doctrines of (a) Buddhism, (b) Christianity, (c) Islam, (d) Judaism, or (e) Hinduism, or (f) any other paper that may from time to time be approved by the Board of the Faculty of Theology and Religion.

^{1.10} The paper on one of the candidate's two chosen religions will consist of a dissertation of 10,000–15,000 words. Essays and dissertations on the relations or comparisons between two religions, or approaches taken from one view towards others, are also welcomed, so long as they do not overlap with work done for any other elements of this degree. Decisions on the suitability of titles for both dissertation and essays will be taken in consultation with the Chair of Examiners for that year.

1.11 The paper on the other religion will consist of two essays of up to 5000 words.

1.12 Candidates will not normally be allowed to substitute a long essay or two short essays for the paper on The Nature of Religion. Any candidate who believes that he or she has special grounds for seeking a dispensation must present a case to the Graduate Studies Committee, with the supervisor's approval, before the fifth week of Hilary Term.

1.13 *The Nature of Religion*

1.14 This paper will require that students demonstrate an advanced understanding of the main classical and contemporary approaches to the study of religions. It will cover the work of some of the most important scholars in the field, and consider the history of the field of the study of religion, through its methods and theories, over the 20th century up to the present. The paper will also assess the work of these theoretical and methodological approaches as they influence our understanding of contemporary religious developments in the modern world.

- 1.15 (a) *Buddhism*

1.16 The paper will require that students investigate the fundamental aspects of Buddhist thought, mainly as reflected by early Buddhist teaching. It will also explore the ways in which Buddhism has changed during the course of its history, adapting to diverse cultural contexts in the pre-modern and modern world.

- 1.17 (b) *Christianity*

1.18 For this paper, students may study any aspect of Christian life or thought at any period of the Common Era and in any part of the world. Christianity is here understood to encompass groups and systems that are commonly deemed heterodox or heretical, together with those that are commonly regarded as offshoots of Christianity (e.g. Manichees, Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses). Topics may be historical, sociological or theological, but students taking theological texts as their principal subject are strongly encouraged to take account of the historical and social background.

- 1.19 (c) *Islam*

- 1.20 The paper is a broad investigation of the historical origins and development of the theology, law and mysticism of Islam, from the classical to the modern period. Specific topics will be established in consultation with students; possible subjects include: Prophethood of Muhammad; the Qur'an; the Hadith; Shi'ism; the theologies of the Mu'tazilis, Ash'aris, and Hanbalis; Islamic law (shari'a) and the Sunni schools of the Hanafis, Malikis, Shafi'is, and Hanbalis; Sufism (tasawwuf) and the major Sufi orders; Islam and other religions.

- 1.21 (d) *Judaism*

- 1.22 ~~Jewish religion and thought since 70 ce with reference both to its historical development~~

and to Judaism in the modern world. Selections from the texts listed in the student handbook will be assigned by the course tutor by the beginning of Michaelmas Term. This paper will develop students' understanding of Judaism as the evolving religious expression of Jews, particularly examining how it has developed in the modern period. The core of the paper assumes that students develop a conceptual understanding of the thought and practice that underpin Judaism.

- ^{1.23}(e) *Hinduism*

^{1.24}~~This paper, for which the source material lies in Sanskrit texts read in English translation and in the context of reliable secondary sources, will be concerned with the main components of the brahminical tradition which, though of ancient origin, are still relevant today. Key areas include Vedic religion, nondualism, and traditional (smarta) ritual practice. Particular attention will be paid to leading ideas developed in the listed primary texts read in translation, though the secondary sources provide necessary context. No attempt will be made to cover later theism or Hindu sects.~~ This paper offers a thematic and historical approach to Hinduism. It will explore textual sources, categories, practices, and social institutions that formed Hindu traditions and consider seminal debates on caste, ritual, and politics. It will conclude with a consideration of Hinduism and modernity. The paper will approach the study of Hinduism through anthropological, Indological and theological methods.

Explanatory Notes

- (i) The syllabus has been updated.
- (ii) There are no vested interests.
- (iii) There are no resource implications.