

Join an innovative and interdisciplinary taught Masters programme
at
Trinity College Dublin:

The new MPhil in Intercultural Theology & Interreligious Studies*

Applications are now welcome from prospective participants in TCD's ground-breaking MPhil course in **Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies**. You can follow the course over one year (full-time) or two years (part-time); as a postgraduate diploma or a Master's degree; or you can make a selection of modules as part of a semester's sabbatical programme. A highlight of the course is the core module 'Translating God(s),' which is offered as an Erasmus Intensive Programme, enabling course-participants to engage in a week of funded, intensive study in one of a number of participating universities: in 2010-11 the venue is Istanbul (June 2011).

Why study Intercultural Theology & Interreligious Studies at Trinity College Dublin?

Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies (ITIS) is an increasingly significant field of specialization emerging from theological and religious studies scholarship.

Building on concerns that have traditionally been developed in missiology and Ecumenics, this new combination of fields:

- forges extended, interdisciplinary, relationships with history, philosophy and other traditional dialogue partners of classical 'faith and order' ecumenism;
- enables a creative, internationally-competitive re-making and paradigm shift of the traditional areas themselves, situating them in a dynamic relationship with the evolving new fields of World Christianity Studies and Intercultural Theology;
- connects with various new disciplines of interreligious learning in theology and religion (especially comparative theology); as well as with new developments in religions and international relations and in global ethics.

Who studies Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies?

A wide variety of students - from all over the world – study at the Irish School of Ecumenics. They come from all sorts of backgrounds:

- from education, e.g., secondary-level teachers of the Junior/Leaving Cert/GCSE/A Level Religious Studies courses;
- religious professionals and lay pastoral workers, particularly those with responsibility for ecumenical and interreligious relations;
- those working in support of global civil society, e.g., workers in the NGO sector, particularly Development Aid and Human Rights workers dealing with policy issues relating to religious articulations of difference;
- plus those preparing for doctoral studies in TCD or elsewhere.

How do course-participants benefit from their studies?

Course participants will be challenged and encouraged to develop a range of different abilities:

- to identify and analyse pivotal theological and cultural issues raised in interreligious relationships, within and between the religions.
- to apply a multidisciplinary range of theoretical interpretative strategies to interreligious and intercultural relationships in the interests of furthering and sustaining critical, mutually-enriching, ethically-complex interrelationships among a plurality of religions, cultures and value-systems.
- to synthesize insights drawn from in-depth case studies with theoretical approaches to interpreting difference, division and reconciliation.
- to refine academic research skills as well as transferable analytic, synthetic and practical skills, relevant to a wide variety of employment possibilities; and especially relevant to those working in fraught interreligious contexts and in situations of religiously politicized difference.
- to learn the skills of reflective practitioners in intercultural dialogue and ecumenical engagement, including critical self-awareness of their own biases and theological, cultural and political assumptions
- to harness the fruitful potential of correlating theoretical research and practical ecumenics

How is this course organized?

This course is designed as a series of **4 tracks**, from which students choose **one**:

- Christian Ecumenical Theologies
- World Christianity and Intercultural Theology
- Comparative Theology and Interreligious Studies
- Religions and Ethics in a Pluralist World

Each track shares **2** common core modules;

- Translating God(s): Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies
- Research and Methods
- plus a third – and track-specific – core course that defines the track's subject-matter and explores its key texts, contexts and cultures.

Each track also offers a range of optional modules – or **concentrations** – from which students choose **three**.

What modules might students be offered?

TRACK A: Christian Ecumenical Theologies

THREE CORE MODULES:

Translating God(s): Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

The module offers students a comprehensive introduction to the fields of Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies in Europe. Taking its departure from Europe's increasing crosscultural and interreligious identity, students will explore the ecumenical, crosscultural and interreligious challenge in Europe for theology and religion today, including the following areas: (1) ecumenism as a source for Intercultural Theology *vis-à-vis* the divergent cultures of faith, and cultural as well as conceptual religious boundaries between Eastern and Western Europe; (2) the impact of interreligious encounters and tensions on European theology and religion, in particular the challenges between Islam and Christianity as well as Asian religions and Christianity; (3) phenomena of fluid religions *vis-à-vis* traditions' search for integrity and authenticity, with special attention to the Eastern Orthodox traditions; (4) the impact of the above areas for naming and thinking God in Europe today.

The exploration of these areas will prepare students for the new academic disciplines of intercultural theology, comparative theology, and the various fields of interreligious studies. The module will be carried out as a European Intensive Programme.

Research and Methods

Dr Andrew Pierce

This module equips students to pursue their coursework and research with due reference to required competences in a range of theological and interdisciplinary methods. Attention will be paid to the role of hermeneutics in relation to substantive religious traditions in their texts, contexts and cultures, acknowledging their uniqueness and interaction with other belief systems. Various types of research methods – deductive, inductive, analytic, action-based, social, participative, for example, will be investigated as to their usefulness in research development, with particular attention to the challenges raised by research activity in the interests of peace. Students will also be helped to conduct a needs-analysis towards the fruitful pursuit of their studies. This will include choosing appropriate modular pathways; research writing (essays and thesis), seminar presentation, fieldwork, library resources, study skills, peer interaction and supervision.

Authority, Tradition, Experience: Ecumenics as Intercultural Theology

Dr Andrew Pierce

Participants attend to the methodological implications of theological ecumenicity, and, in particular; examine the historical emergence of the ecumenical movement and pivotal moments of its developing tradition; reflect on recurrent *topoi* of divergence (e.g., how unity is to be modeled, the ecclesial status of ecumenical instruments such as the World Council of Churches); evaluate the ecumenical potential of contemporary proposals (e.g., the Princeton Statement, or recent Faith and Order documents on both hermeneutics and ecclesiology).

THREE OPTIONAL MODULES, SELECTED FROM THE FOLLOWING CONCENTRATIONS:

Concentration i. Unity, Faith and Order

Nature, Grace and the Triune God

Dr Andrew Pierce

This module analyses the contentious relationship in Christian tradition between understanding the mystery of God on the one hand, and the human person on the other. This relationship is pivotal to the experience of ruptured communion amongst Christians; between East and West, between the churches and communities of the Western Reformations, and more recently between North and South. Focusing on the paired theological themes, Nature and Grace, participants interrogate to what extent existing tensions may be addressed in the context of ecumenical convergence, closely focusing on the on-going reception of the paradigmatic Lutheran-Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999).

Developing Doctrine: Identity and Change in Christian Tradition

Dr Andrew Pierce

Traditions change; how, then, is a tradition's identity to be expressed? And how should it understand another's tradition? Taking as its starting point the theological interpretation of historic change and identity offered by Newman's *Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (1845), this course focuses on the principal hermeneutical issues involved in the ongoing work of defining Christianity's sense of its identity. How does this task relate to traditional expressions of Christian doctrine? And what is the contribution of doctrinal criticism to ecumenical theology?

Interpreting Ecumenical Ecclesiology

Dr Andrew Pierce

Despite significant theological work, ecclesiological consensus remains elusive. This course engages critically with recent proposals, and in particular with the notion of ecumenical ecclesiology itself. Both the quest for an ecumenical ecclesiology, as well as its frustration, are presented in the context of an accelerating fascination with identity. The course examines a number of extra-theological theories of identity as a means of sketching out the cultural horizons against which ecumenical ecclesiology is to be situated. It examines a number of the classic *topoi* of ecclesiology: the nature of the eschatology/church relationship, the dialectic of tradition and reform, tensions between ideal and real, the church's mission and ministry, the Church and the churches. Turning from classical ecclesiology, the course examines a number of current proposals: first, the current work of the Faith and Order Commission in its study on *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*; second, the trans-confessional turn to *koinonia* (e.g., Ratzinger, Volf, Zizioulas), and third, attempts to account for ecclesial being in which experience is stressed over institutional fidelity (e.g., Hodgson, Mudge).

Concentration ii. Ecumenical Theology as Intercultural Engagement

An Ecumenics of Loss: Religion, Modernity, and Reconciliation

Dr Geraldine Smyth

The central claim of this course is that the way of transformation turns upon the acceptance of loss and the courage to mourn. Texts from the fields of grief and trauma studies, postmodern theories of cultural bereavement and psychoanalytic discussion of attachment, loss and change will be critically juxtaposed with insights from

theological anthropology of death, and with theologies of memory, kenosis, reconciliation, embodiment and New Creation.

Related doctrinal implications will be analysed in terms of the regulative principles of chaos and creation, death and remembrance, faith in the resurrection of the body, and the (un)meaning of “eternal life”. The methodology will be theoretical and contextual, investigating psychological and theological analogues and ambivalences within and between cultures and religious traditions of attachment, rupture and reconciliation. The signification of personal and collective mourning will be demonstrated as key to the rediscovery of meaning, the reconfiguration of security, and the embrace of the unfamiliar ‘Other’.

Creation, Cosmology and Ecotheology

Dr Geraldine Smyth

This course takes its entry point in the current drama of the ecological crisis, and the challenge to churches and theologians to re-evaluate the religious and ethical dimensions of climate change, over- consumption, and sustainability of the fragile earth in its diverse and vulnerable ecosystems. This reappraisal will take account of changing epistemological paradigms, dialogue between religion and the new science, and of the rupture and potential reclamation of revelatory discourse and deep symbols of creation in the wake of modernity. Deconstructive, narrative, creative and practical interpretations of key topics – creation *ex nihilo*, chaos, goodness, embodiment, sin, covenant and holiness will be elucidated, and the contested anthropological hegemony in prevailing models of human-earth relationship probed (e.g., care-taker? servant? companion? poet? *homo sacer*? inhabitation?). A one-day study visit to *An Tairseach* (The Threshold) Ecological Learning Centre and Organic Farm in Wicklow will ground and expand the analytic parameters of the course.

Engaging Religious Fundamentalism

Dr Andrew Pierce

So-called ‘religious fundamentalism’ continues to receive critical attention from many sectors. Christian theology, however, seems reluctant to engage in the discourse. This course, therefore, explores religious fundamentalism from an explicitly theological perspective, and with a concern (though not an exclusive concern) for Christian expressions of fundamentalist religiosity. Challenges facing module-participants include: defining fundamentalism; methodology in fundamentalist studies; and dialogue with the fundamentalist other.

Crosscultural Ministry and Interreligious Encounter

Dr Geraldine Smyth (Module co-ordinator) with adjunct lecturers.

The module prepares students for crosscultural ministry, i.e. for settings of ministry whose cultural/social contexts and the ideological or faith convictions encountered are normally not those of the students (immigrant churches, global ministry, chaplancies in multicultural contexts, mission, etc.). The module elaborates theologies that address the realities of migration, crosscultural encounter of differing faiths, religious pluralism, and interreligious challenge and helps students enhance competences in intercultural communication and interreligious dialogue.

TRACK B: World Christianity and Intercultural Theology

THREE CORE MODULES:

Translating God(s): Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

The module offers students a comprehensive introduction to the fields of Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies in Europe. Taking its departure from Europe's increasing crosscultural and interreligious identity, students will explore the ecumenical, crosscultural and interreligious challenge in Europe for theology and religion today, including the following areas: (1) ecumenism as a source for Intercultural Theology *vis-à-vis* the divergent cultures of faith, and cultural as well as conceptual religious boundaries between Eastern and Western Europe; (2) the impact of interreligious encounters and tensions on European theology and religion, in particular the challenges between Islam and Christianity as well as Asian religions and Christianity; (3) phenomena of fluid religions *vis-à-vis* traditions' search for integrity and authenticity, with special attention to the Eastern Orthodox traditions; (4) the impact of the above areas for naming and thinking God in Europe today.

The exploration of these areas will prepare students for the new academic disciplines of intercultural theology, comparative theology, and the various fields of interreligious studies. The module will be carried out as a European Intensive Programme.

Research and Methods

Dr Andrew Pierce

This module equips students to pursue their coursework and research with due reference to required competences in a range of theological and interdisciplinary methods. Attention will be paid to the role of hermeneutics in relation to substantive religious traditions in their texts, contexts and cultures, acknowledging their uniqueness and interaction with other belief systems. Various types of research methods – deductive, inductive, analytic, action-based, social, participative, for example, will be investigated as to their usefulness in research development, with particular attention to the challenges raised by research activity in the interests of peace. Students will also be helped to conduct a needs-analysis towards the fruitful pursuit of their studies. This will include choosing appropriate modular pathways; research writing (essays and thesis), seminar presentation, fieldwork, library resources, study skills, peer interaction and supervision.

World Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

Lectures address major developments in world Christianity, including (1) contexts and constants in the crosscultural historical process of Christianity leading to World Christianity; (2) the demographic shift of the Christian world to the Southern hemisphere and its consequences for theological thinking; (3) the challenges posed for an emergent world Christianity by globalization with its various cultural-societal modes; and (4) Christianity's intensified encounter of world religions, refiguring formative historical interreligious experiences *vis-à-vis* contemporary religious pluralism in various contexts. The accompanying seminar studies core texts, important authors and major trajectories in the fields of World Christianity Studies, Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Dialogue.

THREE OPTIONAL MODULES, SELECTED FROM THE FOLLOWING CONCENTRATIONS:

Concentration i. World Christianity Studies

Christian Seeds in Hindu Soil: Christianity in South Asia

Dr Jude Lal Fernando

This module investigates the crosscultural history of Christianity in South Asia, from its earliest pre-colonial contacts with Indian cultures and traditions to the more complex interactions in colonial and modern periods. It explores the major trajectories of Indian Christian theologies from the 20th century onwards, especially as developed in intercultural encounters with the social, religious and cultural realities of the Hindu polytheistic mould of South Asia.

The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christianity in the World of Islam

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

The module explores the inextricably intertwined history of Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam. It studies Christianities and Christian theologies which emerged in the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Syria), the Caucasus, Pakistan and Indonesia. Of interest are also the varieties of Oriental Christianity, on which recently were grafted new forms of Catholicism, Protestantism and Pentecostalism, representing World Christianity in both its local and global manifestations.

Concentration ii. Intercultural Theology

On Being Human: Theological Anthropology in Crosscultural Perspective

Dr Geraldine Smyth

This module explores the issues raised by and for theological anthropology in cross-cultural perspective. It examines, critiques, and enlarges Christian anthropologies in light of the emerging world Christianity, and light of developments in cultural and indigenous psychologies and post-colonial critique. It gives participants an opportunity to explore issues in their own theological anthropologies.

The Many Faces of Jesus: Christology and Cultures

Dr Andrew Pierce

The module locates theological issues in contemporary christologies by a close study of crosscultural translation and construction of christologies, including the interreligious perception of Jesus. It assesses christological imagery, concepts and movements in word Christianity and evaluates critically the development of christologies within cultural processes. It engages in a personal search in order to compose and communicate effectively a Christology across cultures.

Concentration iii. Crosscultural Ethics and Ministry

Comparative/Interreligious Ethics

Prof Linda Hogan and adjunct lecturers

The past several decades have witnessed the emergence of an interdisciplinary literature revolving around the question of how to assess the similarities and differences among the world's religio-moral traditions and systems. The goal of comparative/interreligious ethics is to help provide a basis for both scholarly

understanding and conflict resolution by investigating 1) what common ground unites diverse traditions, 2) what differences separate them, and 3) what is at stake in their disagreements. Some of the central questions encountered in this field are: How are “religion” and “morality” related to one another? In what ways do ethical systems aspire to universality, and in what ways are they particularistic? Is there a common morality? What methodological approaches best lend themselves to the task of cross-cultural and interreligious comparisons in ethics? In exploring these questions, the module will proceed at two levels. At one level, it will seek to gain a sense of the world’s moral diversity by acquainting ourselves with the central moral beliefs of a range of communities and traditions of world religions. At another level, it will survey and critique a number of different media, methods and critical perspectives for comparing the ethical systems of different groups. The primary writing requirement will be a final essay defending and applying a methodology for the comparison of two or more ethical traditions.

Crosscultural Ministry and Interreligious Encounter.

Dr Geraldine Smyth and adjunct lecturers.

The module prepares students for crosscultural ministry, i.e. for settings of ministry whose cultural/social contexts and the ideological or faith convictions encountered are normally not those of the students (immigrant churches, global ministry, chaplancies in multicultural contexts, mission, etc.). The module elaborates theologies that address the realities of migration, crosscultural encounter of differing faiths, religious pluralism, and interreligious challenge and helps students enhance competences in intercultural communication and interreligious dialogue.

TRACK C: Comparative Theology and Interreligious Studies

THREE CORE MODULES:

Translating God(s): Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

The module offers students a comprehensive introduction to the fields of Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies in Europe. Taking its departure from Europe’s increasing crosscultural and interreligious identity, students will explore the ecumenical, crosscultural and interreligious challenge in Europe for theology and religion today, including the following areas: (1) ecumenism as a source for Intercultural Theology *vis-à-vis* the divergent cultures of faith, and cultural as well as conceptual religious boundaries between Eastern and Western Europe; (2) the impact of interreligious encounters and tensions on European theology and religion, in particular the challenges between Islam and Christianity as well as Asian religions and Christianity; (3) phenomena of fluid religions *vis-à-vis* traditions’ search for integrity and authenticity, with special attention to the Eastern Orthodox traditions; (4) the impact of the above areas for naming and thinking God in Europe today.

The exploration of these areas will prepare students for the new academic disciplines of intercultural theology, comparative theology, and the various fields of interreligious studies. The module will be carried out as a European Intensive Programme.

Research and Methods

Dr Andrew Pierce

This module equips students to pursue their coursework and research with due reference to required competences in a range of theological and interdisciplinary methods. Attention will be paid to the role of hermeneutics in relation to substantive religious traditions in their texts, contexts and cultures, acknowledging their uniqueness and interaction with other belief systems. Various types of research methods – deductive, inductive, analytic, action-based, social, participative, for example, will be investigated as to their usefulness in research development, with particular attention to the challenges raised by research activity in the interests of peace. Students will also be helped to conduct a needs-analysis towards the fruitful pursuit of their studies. This will include choosing appropriate modular pathways; research writing (essays and thesis), seminar presentation, fieldwork, library resources, study skills, peer interaction and supervision.

Comparative Theology: Meaning and Practice

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

This module outlines the fundamentals, approaches, core texts, and methods of the emerging discipline of Comparative Theology as a new field of interreligious learning in the 21st century. It situates the discipline within both, the academic study of religion and theology, and elaborates its relationship to the fields of interreligious dialogue and the theology of religions. Students learn further to employ various historical and systematic models as hermeneutical tools by which to reconstruct and interpret historical and systematic interreligious case studies. These will be explored also as the arena within which students learn to appreciate the importance of the larger world religious scene and as the context in which theologians and religious studies scholars from various faith traditions seek to do their work in this century. The module consists of lecture and seminar. The seminar offers an advanced reading of core texts and recent studies with emphasis on comparative projects arising from the encounter of Indic, Islamic and Christian theological traditions. Comparative focus varies on such topics and motifs as God(s)/ultimate reality, tradition, revelation, scripture, nature, human condition, gender, sacred life, love, religious truth, etc.

THREE OPTIONAL MODULES, SELECTED FROM THE FOLLOWING CONCENTRATIONS:

Concentration i. Comparative Theology

Muslim God, Christian God: Islam and Muslim-Christian Comparative Theology

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God? Why do they so often seem to talk past each other when it comes to the nature of God and how God is revealed in the world? One problem encountered in Muslim-Christian dialogue on God is that Christianity has often been introduced independent from the Islamic concept of God and the Muslim perception of Jesus. At the same time, few Muslims have heard an unclouded presentation of who God is according to Christianity. This graduate module seeks a) to give an advanced introduction to Islam b) explore the vital differences in the Muslim and Christian concepts of God, and how to address them via comparative theology for a mutually fruitful dialogue of faiths.

Hindu God, Christian God: Hinduism and Hindu-Christian Comparative Theology

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

Designed as in-depth introduction to Hinduism and to Hindu-Christian comparative theology, this module studies connecting points between religion, literature and the arts in the context of classical and modern Hindu cultures, on the one hand, and between Hindu and Christian theologies, on the other. It introduces the students to Indian religious wisdom in the Bhagavadgita, the Upanishads, devotional literature, Indian philosophy and theology. The module explores comparatively the many ways in which Hindus and Christians visualize and theologize about the divine, and its manifestations in the world, drawing on mythic stories, images used in worship, explanations of the nature of the soul and the body in relation to the divine, and the belief in living, human embodiments of God. While reading Hindu and Christian theological key texts comparatively, the approach is sharpened by attention to performative, social, visual dimensions, and through contemporary theological insights.

Concentration ii. Study of Religions' Interrelations

Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations

Dr Peter Admirand

This module seeks to present an overview of Judaism and examine some of the key areas of dialogue and disagreement in the context of Jewish-Christian relations. The primary aim is to facilitate an engagement with Judaism through a selection of Jewish texts or studies about Judaism from the Biblical, Rabbinic, Medieval, Enlightenment, Post-Enlightenment, Shoah, and post-Shoah periods. Building upon this background, students learn to access the history of Jewish-Christian relations, particularly some of the major strides that have been made since the horrors of the Shoah and to recognise the most promising areas for improved dialogue as well as the best approaches to stating and accepting key areas of disagreement.

Issues in Buddhist-Christian Dialogue

Prof John May

The module studies Buddhism as a specific historical, geographical and ethical-religious tradition that represents one of the strands within the Indic Religions. Buddhism's diverse doctrinal, political and ideological interpretations, and interactions with primal traditions in Asia are explored in appreciating its heterogeneous nature (including its later Western variant). Issues arising from Buddhism's encounter with Christianity within colonial and postcolonial settings are identified in an attempt to understand the challenging complexities in Buddhist-Christian dialogue. The course is structured in such a way that the students will be equipped with the disciplinary and methodological tools to correlate issues in Buddhist-Christian dialogue and the public sphere of present day globalization.

Concentration iii. World Christianity in Interreligious Contexts

Christian Seeds in Hindu Soil: Christianity in South Asia

Dr Jude Lal Fernando

This module investigates the crosscultural history of Christianity in South Asia, from its earliest pre-colonial contacts with Indian cultures and traditions to the more

complex interactions in colonial and modern periods. It explores the major trajectories of Indian Christian theologies from the 20th century onwards, especially as developed in intercultural encounters with the social, religious and cultural realities of the Hindu polytheistic mould of South Asia.

The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christianity in the World of Islam
Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

The module explores the inextricably intertwined history of Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam. It studies Christianities and Christian theologies which emerged in the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Syria), the Caucasus, Pakistan and Indonesia. Of interest are also the varieties of Oriental Christianity, on which recently were grafted new forms of Catholicism, Protestantism and Pentecostalism, representing World Christianity in both its local and global manifestations.

TRACK D: Religions and Ethics in a Pluralist World

THREE CORE MODULES:

Translating God(s): Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

The module offers students a comprehensive introduction to the fields of Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies in Europe. Taking its departure from Europe's increasing crosscultural and interreligious identity, students will explore the ecumenical, crosscultural and interreligious challenge in Europe for theology and religion today, including the following areas: (1) ecumenism as a source for Intercultural Theology *vis-à-vis* the divergent cultures of faith, and cultural as well as conceptual religious boundaries between Eastern and Western Europe; (2) the impact of interreligious encounters and tensions on European theology and religion, in particular the challenges between Islam and Christianity as well as Asian religions and Christianity; (3) phenomena of fluid religions *vis-à-vis* traditions' search for integrity and authenticity, with special attention to the Eastern Orthodox traditions; (4) the impact of the above areas for naming and thinking God in Europe today.

The exploration of these areas will prepare students for the new academic disciplines of intercultural theology, comparative theology, and the various fields of interreligious studies. The module will be carried out as a European Intensive Programme.

Research and Methods

Dr Andrew Pierce

This module equips students to pursue their coursework and research with due reference to required competences in a range of theological and interdisciplinary methods. Attention will be paid to the role of hermeneutics in relation to substantive religious traditions in their texts, contexts and cultures, acknowledging their uniqueness and interaction with other belief systems. Various types of research methods – deductive, inductive, analytic, action-based, social, participative, for example, will be investigated as to their usefulness in research development, with particular attention to the challenges raised by research activity in the interests of peace. Students will also be helped to conduct a needs-analysis towards the fruitful pursuit of their studies. This will include choosing appropriate modular pathways;

research writing (essays and thesis), seminar presentation, fieldwork, library resources, study skills, peer interaction and supervision.

Religions and Ethics in a Pluralist World

Prof Linda Hogan

Religion has re-emerged as a significant force in the public square bringing with it a host of challenges to the manner in which social, political and cultural issues are debated and decided. This module examines the changing role of religion in contemporary society by drawing on historical and recent debates in theology, philosophy, sociology and politics. It explores the relationship between religion and ethics in societies that are at once secular and multi-religious, and considers how political deliberation on issues of critical moral global concern can be pursued. Having analysed the key points of reference in historical and contemporary debates this module will then focus on the concept of justice as it has been understood, theorised and debated in different religious and philosophical contexts with the objective of identifying the prospect of shared values in a globalised world.

THREE OPTIONAL MODULES, SELECTED FROM THE FOLLOWING CONCENTRATIONS:

Concentration i. Peace and International Development

Conflict Resolution and Nonviolence

Dr Iain Attack

This module investigates theories of nonviolence; nonviolence and political action; official and unofficial mediation processes; culture and conflict resolution.

The Politics of Development

Dr Iain Attack

This module explores the evolution of development theory; gender and development; the impact of militarism on developing countries; the debt crisis; sustainable development; development ethics.

Gender, War and Peace

Dr Gillian Wylie

This module explores gender as biological or as socially constructed; masculinity; analysis of war and peace through gendered lenses; religion and the gender order; challenging the gender order.

Creation, Cosmology and Ecotheology

Dr Geraldine Smyth

This course takes its entry point in the current drama of the ecological crisis, and the challenge to churches and theologians to re-evaluate the religious and ethical dimensions of climate change, over-consumption, and sustainability of the fragile earth in its diverse and vulnerable ecosystems. This reappraisal will take account of changing epistemological paradigms, dialogue between religion and the new science, and of the rupture and potential reclamation of revelatory discourse and deep symbols of creation in the wake of modernity. Deconstructive, narrative, creative and practical interpretations of key topics – creation *ex nihilo*, chaos, goodness, embodiment, sin, covenant and holiness will be elucidated, and the contested anthropological hegemony

in prevailing models of human-earth relationship probed (e.g., care-taker? servant? companion? poet? *homo sacer*? inhabitation?). A one-day study visit to *An Tairseach* (The Threshold) Ecological Learning Centre and Organic Farm in Wicklow will ground and expand the analytic parameters of the course.

Northern Ireland: Conflict, Religion and the Politics of Peace

Dr Geraldine Smyth

This module analyses the causes and changing modes of conflict and peace in Ireland through a series of hermeneutical frameworks – historical, colonial, religious, cultural, political-constitutional and conflict analysis. It focuses critically on the zero-sum politics of antagonistic identities in mutual deterrence and cyclical reiterations of violence, and on politico-theological justifications and churchly institutionalization of sectarianism. The Belfast Agreement (1998), its background, gradual impact and status of power-sharing, and the ambivalence, North and South towards Irish unity, will be interrogated, together with the influence of political, civic and religious leadership in working through cruxes and modes of “dealing with the past” and building peace. Comparative lessons will be drawn *vis à vis* the interplay of formal political and civic processes of post-conflict reconciliation, and sources and models for an integrated framework of peacebuilding will be evaluated.

Concentration ii. Religion, Ethics and International Relations

Religions and International Relations

Dr Bill McSweeney

In recent years religion has re-entered the field of international relations in ways previously unimagined. However, scholars working in the field are struggling to construct models that give an appropriate place to religion in such settings. Drawing on the major authors and experiences in this emerging field, the module explores the evolving role religions in international politics, and focuses particularly on its potential in the creation of more humane models of governance on the international scene. Special attention is given to how international relations can adhere to the mobilizing potential of religion and its resonance with the deep roots of a society; to the ethos of solidarity religion can provide, when showing its inclusivist face; to the normative horizons that affirm humanity even in the midst of fragmentation and diversity; to the transformative nature of faith and ideals, particularly as they are related to struggle and self-sacrifice; to religion’s sense of limits, growing out of an awareness of finitude and the capacity of human beings for evil; to religion’s sense of identity that is not achieved through affinity to the state, but rather in reference to a spiritual journey; to religion’s concern for reconciliation and the need for forgiveness.

Ethics in International Affairs

Prof Linda Hogan

Although the issue of ethics in international affairs has become more prominent in recent years, nonetheless ethical questions continue to be dealt with piecemeal, as and when problems arise. The aim of this module is to provide a sustained analysis of the diverse and intricate nature of ethical conflicts as they arise in the international context. In the first instance a number of the major theoretical perspectives that have a bearing on the possibilities for ethics in political contexts will be examined. Following from these theoretical investigations the module will consider a number of key problematic in the contemporary context including historical injustices and the

ethics of restitution; atrocities and the ethics of accountability; the ethics of humanitarian intervention; just war reasoning and the ‘war on terror’; globalisation and the ethical imperative; media ethics and international affairs.

Human Rights in Theory and Practice

Dr Etain Tannam

The theoretical and practical contexts in which the discourse and politics of human rights is situated; the relationship between democracy and human rights; the significance of national sovereignty; the development of international human rights law; an examination of human rights atrocities, the culture of impunity in which they seem to flourish and the recent initiatives designed to construct a system of accountability.

Comparative/Interreligious Ethics

Dr Norbert Hintersteiner

Recent decades have witnessed the emergence of an interdisciplinary literature revolving around the question of how to assess the similarities and differences among the world’s religio-moral traditions and systems. The goal of comparative/interreligious ethics is to help provide a basis for both scholarly understanding and conflict resolution by investigating 1) what common ground unites diverse traditions, 2) what differences separate them, and 3) what is at stake in their disagreements. Some of the central questions encountered in this field are: How are “religion” and “morality” related to one another? In what ways do ethical systems aspire to universality, and in what ways are they particularistic? Is there a common morality? What methodological approaches best lend themselves to the task of cross-cultural and interreligious comparisons in ethics? In exploring these questions, the module will proceed at two levels. At one level, it will seek to gain a sense of the world’s moral diversity by acquainting ourselves with the central moral beliefs of a range of communities and traditions of world religions. At another level, it will survey and critique a number of different media, methods and critical perspectives for comparing the ethical systems of different groups. The primary writing requirement will be a final essay defending and applying a methodology for the comparison of two or more ethical traditions.

How is the MPhil Course in Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies assessed?

A combination of assessment methods is used: in courses where the assessment is based on a single form of assessment, this will typically total 4,000 words of coursework per module. Modules may have some or all of the assessment through a comparable task or a portfolio of work determined by the Course Committee.

Students must achieve a mark of at least 50% in taught module assessments totaling 30 credits – that is, on 3 modules – and at least 40% in the other taught module assessments in order to proceed to dissertation, and must receive a mark of at least 40% in the dissertation to be eligible for the degree of M.Phil. Those who achieve at least 40% on all taught module assessments, but do not achieve 50% on at least 30 ECTS may, at the discretion of the Court of Examiners, be recommended for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies without further assessment.

Students can be awarded the M.Phil. with Distinction if they achieve a mark of Distinction (70%+) on their dissertation, together with a mark of Distinction (70%+) on taught module assessments totaling 40 ECTS together with a mark of at least 60% in their other two module assessments.

A 30 ECTS research dissertation (15,000-20,000 words) will be supervised by an appropriate member of staff, and must be submitted by 15 August.

A student who does not wish to submit a research dissertation and be considered for the degree of M.Phil. may instead opt to be considered for a Postgraduate Diploma in Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies. They should inform the Course Co-ordinator, in writing, by 1 April. Such students are required to achieve a mark of at least 40% on each of their 6 module assessments. Any student who is awarded the Postgraduate Diploma, automatically forfeits progression to the M.Phil. at a later stage.

What are the admissions criteria for the MPhil in Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies?

Applicants should hold an upper Second Class Honours Bachelor's Degree or 3.2 GPA. Students not meeting these requirements may exceptionally be considered at the discretion of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Pending the final approval of the MPhil in Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies by College Council, please apply for a place *via* the existing MPhil in Ecumenics code on the PAC online application system.

*Subject to approval by Council