Tapping into technology
Digital media helps shed light on the subject

New centre opens
The Centre for Bible, Ethics and Theology is launched

Graduate profile
Turning a degree into a career
Welcome to the Department of Theology and Religious Studies

We study a huge range of ideas and traditions spanning 3,000 years of human history, from the ethics of the Hebrew Bible to contemporary theology and economics. We are drawn together by one simple conviction, that questions about God, and all the associated philosophical, historical, moral and cultural issues, are crucial to our self-understanding and the discernment of truth. Humanity's most powerful, enduring and influential ideas and practices are theological and religious, hence our commitment to the discipline.

Theology and religious studies is perhaps the broadest humanities degree. Through engagement with an array of subjects and traditions, we hone students’ skills of analysis, understanding, interpretation and argument. This means that a qualification in our field is excellent preparation for a wide range of careers. Our department is large enough to offer a variety of exciting courses, but small enough to provide a supportive and friendly community of scholars and students. We are very proud of the outstanding success of our graduates who have pursued careers in diverse fields such as law, banking, the civil service and the arts. Our postgraduate students often proceed to doctoral studies or academic posts in the UK and overseas.

We hope you’ll visit soon and see for yourself.

Dr Simon Oliver
Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies

Cover image: Our Teaching Associate in Biblical Studies, Peter Watts, in Israel to film for the Bibledex video series.

Lord Dearing Award

Peter Watts, our Undergraduate Admissions Tutor and Teaching Associate in Biblical Studies, recently received one of the University’s prestigious Lord Dearing Awards. The scheme recognises staff whose outstanding achievements have enhanced students’ learning experience.

Peter teaches our introductory biblical language modules (Hebrew and Greek), co-teaches a second-year Greek module and has also introduced a new module called The Bible in Music, Art and Literature. The module looks at the use of the Bible in contexts ranging from Jewish synagogues and early Christian catacombs to contemporary films and music, including Mumford and Sons’ album *Babel*.

All the way from Canada

The department’s Firth Lecture series was this year given by Professor Charles Taylor, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at McGill University in Canada, on the topic of Philosophical and Theological Anthropology in the 21st-century.

The Firth Memorial Lecturer is appointed biennially by the Council of the University, on the recommendation of the Senate, to deliver a public lecture or lectures on some aspect of the Christian faith in relation to contemporary issues. The first person to hold the lectureship was the renowned theologian Paul Tillich; other eminent figures who have spoken include Jürgen Moltmann, Terry Eagleton and the former Bishop of Durham, Tom Wright.

Our X Factor star

Many of our students get involved in musical activities during their time with us. For one student this meant appearing on the *X Factor* and in a music video!

After winning the University Gospel Choir final in London, some of the Revival Gospel Choir, including Hannah Roy (BA Theology, 2014), were asked to appear as backing singers on the *X Factor* final. Hannah also successfully auditioned to appear in the music video for the single *Hopeful*, by Bars and Melody, *X Factor* finalists and anti-bullying campaigners.
One of the most basic ways of sharing information is when one person watches and listens to another individual or conversation. Traditionally, we have needed to be in the immediate vicinity of those speaking. However, with advancing technology, we are now able to share information with someone down the hall, across the country or even around the world.

The department has taken advantage of this and produced a variety of creative materials designed to offer students, or anyone interested in religion and theology, fresh perspectives on the subject.

Produced by the popular YouTube filmmaker Brady Haran, Bibledex is a video series that covers every book of the Bible, including the Apocrypha. The videos offer an intriguing assortment of academic insights into the most famous collection of books in history.

Recent Bibledex ‘specials’ include a discussion on the way the film Noah, starring Russell Crowe, draws not only on the Bible but on a range of other Jewish literature.

The Hollywood theme also pops up in earlier videos, including in a discussion of the biblical elements of The Shawshank Redemption and the theological themes in The Hobbit.

As well as Bibledex, the department has also created videos in which you can hear our staff discussing fundamental topics in theology and religion, the topics they teach and research, the beliefs and practices of Muslims, Christians and Jews – and even the everyday objects that interest them as theologians and scholars of religion.

Forthcoming videos include ‘Why Study Koine Greek?’ with Peter Watts and ‘Why Study Sufism?’ with Harith bin Ramli. Philip Goodchild will discuss ‘Love and Death’ in the Theologians in Conversation series, while the Sacred Calendars series will see additions on Harvest Festival and on The Prophet’s Birthday.

You can find all the videos, including the Bibledex series, at www.nottingham.ac.uk/theology/videos

New centre to integrate different disciplines

The department recently launched the Centre for Bible, Ethics and Theology (CBET), which seeks to integrate the historical and theological study of the Bible with the study of ethics and systematic and philosophical theology, and to promote the Bible as a vital contributor to contemporary ethical and theological discussion.

CBET is directed by Dr Carly Crouch (Hebrew Bible) and Professor Roland Deines (New Testament) with financial support from The Bible Society.

At the launch, guests had the opportunity to hear talks addressing the question ‘Why does the Bible matter?’ from biblical, historical and theological perspectives. A series of one-day workshops exploring specific ethical and theological issues will be held during 2014/15, the first in October 2014 looked at the ethical and theological implications of the treatment of the human body after death.

For more information, and recordings of the talks, see the CBET website: www.nottingham.ac.uk/go/CBET
Graduate profile:
Katy Lee, BA Theology (2006)

Theology and religious studies alumni pursue all kinds of interesting and unexpected careers. Katy Lee works in the creative industry as group account director at digital agency R/GA. She leads marketing activity for Unilever’s hair care brands and has previously worked with brands including Ben & Jerry’s and Cadbury Dairy Milk.

Katy highlights the communication and analysis skills she gained from her theology degree as especially useful: “It gives you experience in constructing strategic arguments… you always need to support your marketing recommendations and present them well. Theology also gives you an insight into the way other people tick, which is useful in both a professional and personal context!”

Katy chose to study theology at Nottingham because she had always been interested in theology and different religions: “I wanted to understand the reasons behind people’s thoughts and behaviours in relation to their beliefs, and I thought theology would give me a good insight into that.” She enjoyed learning about other religions – Buddhism, Islam, Judaism – partly because they were fascinating in themselves, but also because they helped her to develop her own faith in an informed way.

Her advice to students thinking about studying theology at Nottingham is: “Do it! It’s fascinating and Nottingham is a great place to study with excellent tutors and a real variety of courses and modules. Every year, I had a hard time deciding from the array of options!”

Our alumni return

We recently welcomed back three graduates to speak to current students about their career paths. Tim Lees (lawyer, White and Case), Dominique Dunsford (press officer, Citizens’ Advice) and Paul Kerensa (author, comedian and scriptwriter) all spoke about their roles and making the next step after university. Our students had the opportunity to ask plenty of career-related questions and even got to find out from Paul what it was like to work with Miranda Hart on her BBC sitcom.

Well done Dr Zellentin!

Congratulations to Dr Holger Zellentin, who has been promoted to Associate Professor in Jewish Studies. Dr Zellentin teaches classes on Talmudic Judaism, the cultural context of the Qur'an and theoretical approaches to religion. His research focuses on the triangle between Jews, Christians and the first Muslims.

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Produced November 2014. Course information is available at: www.nottingham.ac.uk/studywithus