

Programme Specification

Award and title: BA (Hons) Religion, Philosophy and Ethics

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>School:</i> | Humanities |
| <i>Subject area:</i> | Religion |
| <i>Entry from academic year:</i> | 2025-26 |
| <i>in the month(s) of</i> | September |
| <i>Awarding institution:</i> | York St John University |
| <i>Teaching institution:</i> | York St John University |
| <i>Delivery location:</i> | York St John University |
| <i>Programme/s accredited by:</i> | N/A |
| <i>Exit awards:</i> | Certificate of Higher Education Religion Diploma of Higher Education Religion BA (Ord) Religion, Philosophy and Ethics |
| <i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i> | |
| <i>Joint Honours combinations:</i> | History Literature |
| <i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i> | Theology and Religious Studies 2019 |
| <i>Mode/s of study:</i> | Full-time for three years Part-time for six years |
| <i>Language of study:</i> | English |
| <i>Paired with Foundation Year</i> | Yes |
| <i>Study abroad opportunities:</i> | Yes |
| <i>Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity:</i> | Yes |

Introduction

Religion, philosophy and ethics are closely related, and converge on some of the deepest and most problematic issues that concern us today. Religious traditions have played an important role in shaping the way that we approach ethical questions like 'what is justice?' or 'how should humans treat the natural world?'. Equally, philosophy has had a huge influence on the development of religious and ethical thought throughout history, as philosophers have asked questions about the existence of God, the possibility of free will, or the meaning of death.

This award will give you a clear understanding of the complex relationship between religion, philosophy and ethics, both historically, and in contemporary contexts. It will also encourage you to explore more advanced issues in these areas by conducting your own research, so as to develop your own informed responses to some of the questions that might be raised, for example: how is it possible to believe in God after the Holocaust? Is religion compatible with science – and if so, how? What do feminist thinkers have to say about religious belief? At York St John we see philosophy not just as an intriguing intellectual pursuit, but also as a way of engaging with the world around us, and the problems it presents us with – and we encourage you to take your own thinking seriously.

This programme will equip you to think in an attentive, critical and rigorous manner, to investigate a diverse range of beliefs with curiosity and respect, and to articulate your own views clearly, confidently and effectively. As well as having their own intrinsic worth, these abilities will also prepare you well for working

in a range of occupations. Students completing the programme will take with them generic transferable skills such as: research competence; analytical clarity; effective written and oral communication; self-management; teamwork; effective use of IT.

Special features

The Religion, Philosophy and Ethics degree has a range of special features:

- Annual away days in each year of the programme help to develop academic skills and foster a sense of community (at the university's expense, non-staff budget permitting).
- Many modules include trips to relevant sites, like convents, mosques, galleries or local archives (at the university's expense, non-staff budget permitting).
- Optional research modules in the final year allow students to focus on their own areas of interest.
- The programme includes focus on career and the development of work-related skills. A compulsory second-year module includes a work-placement and support from the careers service.
- Members of the staff team are closely connected to the prestigious Ebor Lectures, hosted by York Minister, where prominent public intellectuals give lectures on topics like science and religion, global justice, immigration or austerity.
- You will be taught by members of the staff team who are active researchers in exciting, contemporary issues, and who have published articles and books in a range of topics, including: religion and gender; peace-building and reconciliation; public theology and global justice; the problem of evil; psychology and religion.
- The opportunity to study abroad during the second year for a semester or a year.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the minimum entry requirements which are published on the programme specific webpage. In addition, if your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

The aims of the programme are to:

1. Encourage students to develop a sophisticated understanding of religious traditions across the world, as well as the complex role they play in philosophical, ethical and political discourses;
2. Inspire students to pursue their own philosophical and/or theological questions in a lively, informed and disciplined way, based on self-directed research and respectful learning from and about others' perspectives;
3. To cultivate a community of learning that encourages open, rational discussion, and which promotes qualities of respect, ethical sensitivity, social responsibility, and global awareness.

Programme learning outcomes

Level 4

Upon successful completion of level 4 students will be able to:

- 4.1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key figures, sources or texts relevant to the study of religion, philosophy and ethics (e.g. Thomas Aquinas; the Talmud; Hume's *Dialogues*)

- 4.2 Identify and explain central themes, concepts and debates relevant to religion, philosophy and ethics (e.g. the nature of religion; arguments for the existence of God; the meaning of ethical language) using primary and secondary sources.
- 4.3 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs, institutions and practices, showing awareness of their wider social and cultural contexts.
- 4.4 Present arguments to support their own views, whilst representing the beliefs and arguments of others fairly and accurately, demonstrating sensitivity and respect.
- 4.5 Communicate with clarity and precision of expression, whilst adhering to academic conventions and demonstrating a basic proficiency in essential study skills relevant to the subject area.

Level 5

Upon successful completion of level 5 students will be able to:

- 5.1 Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of key figures, sources or texts relevant to religion, philosophy and ethics
- 5.2 Analyse central themes, concepts and debates relevant to a range of contexts within religion, philosophy and ethics (e.g. climate change, politics, literature) whilst making critical use of primary and secondary sources
- 5.3 Demonstrate knowledge and critical understanding of religious beliefs, institutions and practices, showing detailed awareness of their wider social and cultural contexts.
- 5.4 Compose coherent and effectively structured arguments, whilst representing the beliefs and arguments of others fairly and accurately, demonstrating sensitivity and respect.
- 5.5 Communicate with clarity and precision of expression, whilst adhering to academic conventions and demonstrating competence in a range of study skills relevant to the subject area.
- 5.6 Work collaboratively through fieldwork and placement experiences to demonstrate the development of skills in preparation for the workplace, (e.g. dialogue, encounter and observation) and generic skill building (e.g. teamwork, problem-solving and communication)

Level 6

Upon successful completion of level 6 students will be able to:

- 6.1 Demonstrate detailed knowledge and systematic understanding of selected figures, sources or texts relevant to religion, philosophy and ethics, informed by recent scholarship at the forefront of relevant fields
- 6.2 Critically evaluate scholarly interventions in range of discussions relevant to religion, philosophy and ethics, whilst making effective critical use of a wide range of primary and secondary sources.
- 6.3 Critically apply detailed knowledge and systematic understanding of religious traditions to a range of discussions within the contemporary understanding of religion, showing sensitivity to their social, political and global contexts. (e.g. feminist ethics, globalisation, film, genocides, public sphere).
- 6.4 Construct rationally persuasive, balanced arguments within religion, philosophy and ethics, drawing critically on independently gathered primary and secondary sources, and in dialogue with other disciplines as appropriate (e.g. politics, social theory, peace studies).
- 6.5 Communicate complex material with clarity and precision of expression, whilst adhering to academic conventions and demonstrating effective use of a range of study skills relevant to the subject area.
- 6.6 Design and undertake a piece of extended independent research that demonstrates an in-depth knowledge, understanding and analysis of a specialised area within religion, philosophy and ethics.

Programme structure

| Code | Level | Semester | Title | Credits | Module status | |
|--|-------|----------|--------------------------------------|---------|--------------------------------|---|
| | | | | | Compulsory (C) or optional (O) | non-compensatable (NC) or compensatable (X) |
| Level 4: Take SIX compulsory modules (with THREE modules per semester) | | | | | | |
| REL4013M | 4 | 1 or 2 | Foundations of Christian Theology | 20 | C | X |
| REL4020M | 4 | 1 or 2 | Religion Peace and Conflict | 20 | C | X |
| REL4015M | 4 | 1 or 2 | Philosophy and Religion | 20 | C | X |
| REL4017M | 4 | 1 | Studying Religion | 20 | C | X |
| REL4018M | 4 | 1 or 2 | Values and Virtues | 20 | C | X |
| REL4019M | 4 | 1 or 2 | World Christianity | 20 | C | X |
| Level 5: Take THREE compulsory modules and choose THREE optional modules (with THREE modules per semester) | | | | | | |
| REL5024M | 5 | 1 or 2 | From Descartes to the Death of God** | 20 | C | X |
| REL5025M | 5 | 1 or 2 | Matters of Life and Death** | 20 | C | X |
| REL5026M | 5 | 1 or 2 | Problems of Evil** | 20 | O | X |
| REL5027M | 5 | 1 or 2 | Religion and Literature | 20 | O | X |
| REL5028M | 5 | 1 or 2 | Religion and Politics | 20 | O | X |
| REL5029M | 5 | 1 or 2 | Religious Mapping | 20 | O | X |
| REL5030M | 5 | 1 or 2 | Theology and the Environment | 20 | O | X |
| REL5031M | 5 | 1 or 2 | Work Related Learning | 20 | C*** | X |
| REL5032M | 5 | 1 or 2 | Sociology of Religion | 20 | O | X |
| Level 6: Choose FOUR modules plus long dissertation (with TWO optional modules per semester); or choose FIVE modules plus short dissertation (with TWO optional modules in semester 1 and THREE optional modules in semester 2) | | | | | | |
| REL6023M | 6 | 1 or 2 | Great Philosophical Texts** | 20 | O | X |
| REL6024M | 6 | 1 or 2 | Feminist Ethics and Religion** | 20 | O | X |
| REL6025M | 6 | 1 or 2 | Theology and Ethics through Film** | 20 | O | X |
| REL6026M | 6 | 1 and 2 | Long Dissertation | 40 | C* | NC |
| REL6027M/ REL6028M | 6 | 1 or 2 | Negotiated Study | 20 | O | X |
| REL6035M | 6 | 1 or 2 | Religion and Genocides | 20 | O | X |
| REL6029M | 6 | 1 or 2 | Spirituality and Public Life | 20 | O | X |
| REL6030M | 6 | 1 or 2 | Religion and Globalisation | 20 | O | X |
| REL6031M | 6 | 1 or 2 | Religion and Myth | 20 | O | X |
| REL6033M | 6 | 1 or 2 | Religion and Visual Culture | 20 | O | X |
| REL6032M | 6 | 1 or 2 | Religion in the Public Sphere | 20 | O | X |
| REL6034M | 6 | 1 | Short Dissertation | 20 | C* | X |

Please note that not all options will be available every year as they depend on student demand and staff availability.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the table above as non-compensatable. A non-compensatable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level (with a mark of 40 in order to progress).

*Students must choose either the short or the long dissertation (and cannot choose both).

** Students are not barred from taking modules where they have not taken the pre-requisite, so long as they are prepared to undertake background reading and they understand the risks involved. The following modules have pre-requisites:

- From Descartes to the Death of God – pre-requisite is Philosophy and Religion

- Matters of Life and Death – pre-requisite is Values and Virtues
- Problems of Evil – pre-requisite is Philosophy and Religion
- Great Philosophical Texts – pre-requisite is From Descartes to the Death of God
- Feminist Ethics and Religion – pre-requisite is Matters of Life and Death
- Theology and Ethics through Film – pre-requisites are Values and Virtues and Foundations of Theology

*** Students may be exempt from the work-related learning module; for example, if they are taking the degree programme after retirement.

Learning, teaching and assessment

The Religion team aims to provide you with a stimulating and supportive environment in which you can achieve your potential during your degree. Academic support is provided in a range of ways. Module tutors will be available to consult with you regarding particular topics or pieces of assessed work. You will also be assigned a personal/academic tutor, who will meet with you throughout your degree to discuss your progress, to respond to any concerns you may have, and point you in the direction of more specialised support if necessary. Academic staff are all experts in their fields, and work hard to ensure that your lectures and seminars are clear, accessible, lively and thought-provoking. We also encourage our students to challenge, inspire and support each other as they learn. At some point in each year you will take part in an away-day/writing retreat with the whole year group, which aims to develop and strengthen the sense of community within the group, and gives opportunities for learning in a different environment.

Modules of study are based on a number of different forms of learning, including: formal class contact (lectures, seminars or workshops); group activity (e.g. discussions, preparing presentations or posters); independent study (reading, note-taking, research, preparing assignments). You will be given opportunities to actively participate in the teaching sessions and to develop your confidence through learning activities such as group discussion and presentations. This will enable you to develop both independence and collaborative skills as you learn both with and from your peers. Your tutor will guide you in preparing for these activities. In addition, there are also additional trips attached to some modules (for example, to local sites of religious significance), and a work placement that forms part of our 'work-related learning' module. Throughout your degree you will be given 'formative' opportunities to practice the skills needed in your assessment (for example, constructing an argument, or researching a new topic). This means that you will be continually reflecting on your progress, and working with tutors as you improve your academic skills.

Your degree will be based on a variety of forms of assessment, ranging from traditional essays to posters, commentaries, presentations and portfolios. This will ensure that you develop a range of skills that will be valuable to you as you prepare to leave university: research competence; argumentative skill; communicative clarity; cultural sensitivity, etc. At the same time, we ensure that you are given chances to develop and hone your abilities through repeated efforts at the same kind of task. In your final year you will refine these skills as you write your dissertation, which offers you the chance to independently research a topic of your own choice, whilst supervised by an expert in your area of study.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's [general regulations](#) for undergraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University mission and values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements 2019](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

Date written / revised:

Programme originally approved: