

This module is intended to help you look beyond library research in the study of religion. While library-based research is indispensable for research into virtually any topic on religion, this kind of research can fruitfully be complemented by other methods, some of which enable the researcher to encounter, experience, and explore religion in its myriad 'everyday', 'lived' forms.

Traditionally, the study of religious texts has been the major focus in the study of religion. It is only as late as the 20th century, and thanks largely to the contribution of disciplines like anthropology and sociology, that scholars of religion have begun to look beyond the study of texts and ask how religion manifests in the everyday lives of adherents, how individuals and groups 'practise' their religion, what kinds of rituals and customs they observe, and what kinds of material artefacts they use in their religious lives. This module provides you with the means to ask these kinds of questions and equips you with the skills, resources and methods you will require in order to try and answer them.

Aims

- To provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the nature of empirical research.
- To assess critically the methodologies and tools available to conduct qualitative (fieldwork-based) research in the field of Religious Studies.

Objectives

By the end of this module students should be able to:

- present a comprehensive research proposal demonstrating systematic understanding of the use of fieldwork-based research methods in the study of religion;
- display critical awareness of the advantages and limitations of different methods in fieldwork-based research;
- demonstrate comprehensive understanding of the ethical implications of conducting a fieldwork-based research project;
- design a research project using methods appropriate to the chosen topic, and demonstrate an awareness of the researcher's responsibilities;

- evaluate in some depth the relevant scholarship in the chosen field as preparation for the dissertation in part II of the MA programme.