

# MA in Theology, Imagination and Culture

## Validated by the University of Winchester

### PROGRAMME DESCRIPTOR 2014/15

Please read the following carefully.

#### Dates and Times

The MA is completed part-time over a minimum of two years and a maximum of five years. Students at Sarum College usually complete the degree within three years (two years for the taught part and a further year for the dissertation). Students who satisfactorily complete three taught modules (60 credits), and exit, obtain a Postgraduate Certificate. Students who satisfactorily complete six taught modules (120 credits), and exit, obtain a Postgraduate Diploma. Students who satisfactorily complete six taught modules and a dissertation (180 credits) gain an MA awarded by the University of Winchester. Further details of student registration and progression are available in the University of Winchester's *Common Academic Regulations for Taught Masters Programmes*.

Most students will begin the MA in September. Students attend six **3½ day intensive modules** at Sarum College supplemented by **preparatory reading, individual study, tutorial support, access to the Sarum College Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)** and assessed **written work**. Students are also required to attend a **research skills training course** in the spring term of their second year of study, prior to beginning their dissertation.

All taught modules are worth 20 credits. Students are expected to complete the Core Module (compulsory) and five Optional Modules. This may include any one module from another Sarum MA programme.

For a list of module dates, please refer to the 'Academic Diary 2014-16' document.

#### Hospitality Costs

Students are not required to stay at Sarum College during a Module, or take up any of the meals. However, if they choose to do so, the hospitality rates are: £212 (residential, en-suite), £170 (residential, standard) and £47 (non-residential).

The residential charge (whether en-suite or standard) covers: bed and breakfast from Monday to Thursday, lunch from Tuesday to Thursday and supper from Monday to Wednesday, plus refreshments throughout.

The non-residential charge covers: supper on Monday, lunch Tuesday to Thursday, plus refreshments throughout.

As noted above, students can opt out of the hospitality element entirely and are very welcome to bring in their own meals and refreshments.

**(Note:** occasionally, in the case of bank holidays etc, a Module may run from Tuesday to Friday. All meals referred to in the above would then be shifted along one day e.g. the first evening's supper would be on the Tuesday etc.)

## LIST OF MODULES

### CORE MODULE

#### **Theology and Human Culture (20 Credits)**

This module will engage with the 'texts' and practices of human culture and encourage students to explore the nature of the relationship between theology and culture through creative and critical perspectives. Students will be given the opportunity to refine and update their knowledge of theologians and key theological debates as they relate to human culture, show how central themes in theology are expressed through different forms of culture in history and today, and be given the opportunity to critically reflect on human culture through a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives. Students will be introduced to the interface between the divine and human culture and become familiar with the distinct methodological approaches taken within the sociological, philosophical, and theological studies of culture. Students will attend to the interdisciplinary nature of the study of culture from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day and as such gain an appreciation of the creative interactions between different ways of understanding culture. As the core module, students will also be introduced to relevant research methods and skills as part of their induction to the programme.

### MANDATORY MODULE

#### **Text, Interpretation and Imagination (20 Credits)**

The images, stories, myths and teachings of the Bible have served as a foundation for the Western cultural imagination. The Bible, when read in each new cultural context, both challenges the readers' cultural assumptions and is challenged by new ways of reading which spring forth from the readers' distinct perspective. The discipline, art and craft of hermeneutics require that one become sensitive to both the reading of the text and the act of being read by the text. Students will engage in critical and creative hermeneutics as well as a deeper and closer reading of the Biblical texts themselves, and see how these texts inform, and are informed by human creativity. Students will pursue inter textual analysis and offer the opportunity to make comparisons between different types of text (sacred and otherwise) and be encouraged to explore a variety of original and imaginative interpretations of certain biblical texts.

### OPTIONAL MODULES

The MA at Sarum College offers an exceptionally wide range of Optional Modules. Each module runs every other year and the dates of the Optional Modules will be available two years in advance to help students plan their programme of study. For an up-to-date list of module dates, please see the *Academic Diary*.

#### **Re-imagining Church in a Changing Culture (20 Credits)**

Much has been written about the dramatic decline in Church membership and attendance as evidence of 'the death of Christian Britain' since the 1960s to the present day, raising questions about the future of the institutional church in particular and 'organised religion' in general. This module aims to go beyond such 'headlines' to equip students to understand and critique patterns of decline and growth which are characteristic of the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century using both theological and sociological tools. The Church in the UK will be 'read' in the wider context of social, religious and cultural change, and compared with the situation in Europe, America and the developing world. Both the challenges facing the contemporary church, and the responses offered, will be critically examined; with particular reference to patterns of community, mission and ministry. This module will enable students to acquire the necessary tools to understand the Church in mission in contemporary culture. It will offer the opportunity to appraise new ways of being Church and assess different types of Church growth both past and present. Students will be

encouraged to learn about different cultures and explore different theologies in relation to mission e.g. liberation theologies, black theologies green theologies and the contemporary missional conversation.

### **Theology and Film (20 Credits)**

This course will explore the growing field of theology and film. Students will become conversant in the language and history of cinema, noting specifically the unique ways in which film uses technology, editing, framing, and sound to convey meaning. After a brief introduction to film studies, students will then explore the historical relationship between theology and film, with specific reference to the reception (ranging from prohibition to utilisation) of film by the Christian Churches. Students will spend considerable time looking at and studying selected films, allowing students to develop the critical skills helpful for film interpretation and explore possible theological approaches to film criticism. Students will investigate the claims that contemporary film provides an alternative site or location for religion in the context of modern consumer societies.

### **God, Beauty and Imagination: Theological Aesthetics (20 Credits)**

The aim of this course is to explore how God, beauty and the imagination have found expression in art, literature and music and how these themes have been reflected in theology. In so doing the module will provide an introduction to some major art-historical epochs and subjects and examine how artists have engaged with and have rendered Christian dogmas, such as the life, death and resurrection of Christ, the Trinity, Mary, the church etc through various means from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. How to interpret works of art, literature and music from a theological perspective will be a central feature in the course. Students will read and discuss relevant writings by contemporary and past theologians relating to themes in theological aesthetics, such as imagination, beauty, divine revelation, truth and meaning, and artistic forms as a *locus theologicus*.

### **The Bible: Cultural Critique and Transformation (20 Credits)**

The study of the bible and its various theological forms and genres in the past two centuries has been dominated by questions of historical veracity, reliability and credibility rather than the imaginative construction of reality that many of the biblical texts contain. In this module we will seek to explore the relationship between the way in which certain biblical texts, stories and forms present their own distinctive portrayals of reality and how such portrayals can be appropriated in our current cultural context. Attention will be paid to the various forms of 'public theology' that are lodged in specific areas of the biblical literature and texts. The module will also investigate what is meant by the modern phrase the 'social construction of reality' and how this compares with theological alternatives and/ or similarities that are present in the biblical texts. The question of how such portrayals of reality are critically received and interpreted in differing historical and cultural contexts will also be explored. The module will also consider what is meant by contemporary theological and philosophical notions of reality and the role played by metaphor and the imagination in such conceptual awareness.

### **Mass Culture: Theological Engagement and Spiritual Practice (20 Credits)**

This module considers the phenomenon of mass consumer technological culture as the backdrop to spirituality and 'doing' theology in our age. Students will explore and analyse powerful contemporary habits of leisure and lifestyle in relation to older classical ideas of leisure with its inherent relation to the dynamic of spiritual life and romanticism. The module will examine ways in which leisure and lifestyle activities take over and mimic religious modes of orchestrating emotion and producing identity, examining the writings of sociologists, social anthropologists, social critics and theologians that seek to address and/or interpret this situation. The module will trace the emergence of different ways of interpreting the phenomenon of the 'modern'; especially the different and diverse ways in which mass culture has been understood throughout the genesis and development of modern culture.

### ***From the MA in Christian Liturgy***

### **Worship, Art and Architecture (20 Credits)**

The space in which Christian worship takes place is influenced by the culture of the age and place as well as ecclesiology. This module will investigate church buildings and their art in significant historical periods in order to highlight the way each artefact is the result of a confluence of variables. The theoretical notion of 'sacred space' will be explored and students will be encouraged to reflect upon the use of liturgical space in specific contexts. There will be a guided tour of the architectural features of a church (e.g. Salisbury Cathedral).

### **Liturgy and Culture (20 Credits)**

This module will investigate the relationship between liturgy and its changing cultural contexts. This is a topic that has become increasingly important for churches as they reassess their relationship to society and for liturgical studies as churches and scholars recognise the significance of cultural context for liturgical development. The module will introduce students to different ways of understanding the relationship between culture and liturgy, and the implications and theological assumptions of each approach. Reflection on these issues will be in relation to liturgical examples and policy documents of the church and their critics. Students will be encouraged to reflect critically on the implications of the material discussed for their own liturgical context.

### **INDEPENDENT STUDY**

Students may elect to take one independent study module as one of their optional modules. There are two options for guided independent study to choose from:

#### **Guided Reading Study (20 Credits)**

This module provides the student with an opportunity to engage with a topic of their choice. Tutors are assigned and guided reading provided; the amount of tutorial time is increased as there are no lectures. Tutors will be assigned according to expertise.

#### **Guided Artist Study Module (20 Credits)**

This module provides the student with an opportunity to engage with the study of a single artist's body of work in relationship to theological study. Students may choose to examine the work of a particular film maker, author, musician, painter, poet, sculptor or any other 'artist' deemed appropriate and theologically relevant by the Programme Leader. Tutors are assigned and guided reading provided; the amount of tutorial time is increased as there are no lectures. Tutors will be assigned according to expertise.

#### **Dissertation Skills Training** – not for credit but all students are expected to attend

This 2 day training session will provide students from across the Sarum College postgraduate academic programmes to further develop their research skills. Students will become familiar with a variety of research methodologies and techniques, become conversant in the regulations associated with the planning, research, writing, and submission of their dissertation, and engage in small group activities designed to support the initial stage of dissertation topic-selection and planning.

#### **Dissertation (60 Credits)**

This module allows students to research in depth, in consultation with a designated supervisor, a topic of their own choosing, documenting it appropriately and putting into practice, in a sustained piece of work, the research methods and skills they have developed. The preliminary stage of writing a proposal is supported by the Dissertation Skills Training course (see above).

### **ADDITIONAL MODULE INFORMATION**

Most modules begin on Monday\* afternoon and then run from 9.30 am until 5.15 pm on each full day over the next three days. Students may be residential or non-residential. On the first afternoon there is an important induction session and the first class takes place on the Monday evening. On each of the

following days there will be two classes in the morning and two in the afternoon, each lasting 1½ hours. Each intensive course will thus involve 20 classroom hours. In classroom sessions, learning will occur through a variety of methods, including lectures, discussion groups, and student-led seminars. During the residential portion of the course there will also be time for meeting with tutors and use of the library. There is an 80% attendance requirement at modules. Tutorial support (by visits, skype, telephone or email) for each module will be available until the completion of the assessed written work. Students receive further support through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which will offer students access to key reading materials, discussion groups, module-specific knowledge bases, and formative assessment exercises.

Each taught module (20 Credits) is completed over a three month period: three weeks of pre-course reading; the intensive at Sarum College and a further two months to complete the assignment(s).

\*Except in the instance of a bank holiday week, and not in the case of the Dissertation Research Skills Training

*Please note:*

This course demands a real time commitment for individual reading, study and written work. This involves preparatory reading prior to each intensive and significant work afterwards to complete the additional reading and written work.

**How to choose your Optional Modules**

Please note that apart from the Compulsory and Mandatory Modules, four Optional Modules are needed to complete the taught part of the MA course and qualify for a Postgraduate Diploma. With prior approval from the Programme Leader, these may be obtained in the following ways.

1. Choosing four of the Optional Modules offered in the Theology, Imagination and Culture programme at Sarum College.
2. Substituting one Optional Module from one of the three other MA pathways at Sarum College.

**Attending Modules as General Study Courses (normally referred to as Auditing)**

Students may attend modules in addition to those which they are studying for credit, by permission of the Programme Leader. The hospitality rates will be the usual student rates of £212 (residential, en-suite), £170 (residential, standard) and £47 (non-residential), with an added administration fee of £20. Please note that students must give clear information on whether they are attending modules as part of their accredited study in advance of attendance. Should the module be oversubscribed, preference will be given to students taking the module for credit.

**Library, Information Technology & Bookshop**

Registered Certificate/Diploma/MA students will have membership of the College library for the duration of their course and access to the Virtual Learning Environment. They will also have access, when the College is open, to the IT facilities. The Sarum College Bookshop is a unique theological resource. Students registered for the MA automatically receive a discount. Books may be purchased by mail order.

**Fees and Methods of Payment**

Please see the separate document 'Fees and Methods of Payment 2014/15' for full information about fees and payment methods.

**Withdrawal from Study**

Students withdrawing from the course will be charged the full year's fees for the number of years of study that have been commenced, plus any additional modules over and above three modules in year 1, six modules in year 2 and six modules and the dissertation in year 3. The date of withdrawal will be the date of receipt of a formal notification of withdrawal by Sarum College.

**Period of Study**

The fees are calculated on the basis that the Masters degree will be completed within three years of commencing the course, the Postgraduate Diploma will be completed within two years of starting the course and the Postgraduate Certificate will be completed within one year of starting the course. Students who take longer to complete their studies will be charged £525 per year of continuing study.

Continuation fees will be applied as follows:

- Postgraduate Certificate – continuing beyond 1 September 2015.
- Postgraduate Diploma –continuing beyond 1 September 2016.
- Masters – continuing beyond 1 September 2017.

**Application Procedure**

Application for the course is made through the written application form. Please refer to the Application Checklist towards the back of the Application Form for full instruction on requirements. Interviews are normally held in the spring and summer before the commencement of the course. Candidates will be notified by either the Academic Administrator or the Programme Leader when a suitable time has been arranged. After interview the Programme Committee will consider all applications and students will be notified of their decision as soon as possible after that meeting. Owing to the demand for places, on being offered a place we require that students send us a £100 registration fee to secure their place. The course will run subject to satisfactory student recruitment.

**Students with Disabilities and/or Special Needs**

Sarum College has an equal opportunities policy and welcomes students with disabilities onto its courses. The suitability of college facilities will be discussed during the application process separately from other discussions. Please fill in the necessary parts of the application form to facilitate this process.

**Non-UK/EU students**

Sarum College is presently unable to sponsor non-EU students and are therefore not able to accept non-EU applicants onto its postgraduate programmes.

*Academic Administrator, February 2014*