



INDEPENDENT STUDY MODULES

At CMCS Oxford, you can take an independent study module accredited by your home university.

Typically, this will be taught through one-on-one or small group tutorials, with students required to research and write essays in preparation. Assessment will be according to the home university requirement, and will typically require one research paper for undergraduate and two for post-graduate modules. The assessment can either be completed in Oxford or can be supervised and completed at a distance after the student has returned home.

Suggested modules and sample essay titles:

1. History of Christian-Muslim dialogue

1.1 Focus on chosen periods of history

- What can we know about Muhammad's conversations with Christians?
- What are the main were elements of dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the 9-11th century debates?
- What were the main factors contributing to the growth of hostile polemics between Muslims and Christians in the Iberian peninsula between 732 and 1492?
- What new trends entered Christian-Muslim dialogue during the 20th century?

1.2 Focus on people/primary texts

- What was John of Damascus' view of Islam?
- What was Ibn Hazm's view of Christianity?
- What were the main points at issues in *The Dialogue of Patriarch Timothy I with Caliph Mahdī*?
- How did the context of the Crusades affect Francis of Assisi's attitudes to Muslims?

1.3 Focus on topics

- How useful is the understanding of Jesus as the word of God in providing common ground for Muslim-Christian dialogue?
- To what extent is the use of the other's Scriptures effective in communication between Muslims and Christians?
- What were the recurrent topics of Muslim-Christian dialogue up to 1900 and why?

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- In what ways have Christians attempted to explain the Trinity to Muslims, and how effective have they been?

2. The Qur'an and the Bible (this module would include practical experience of Muslims and Christians comparing texts together).

2.1 Focus on 'biblical' material in the Qur'an

- What is the Qur'an's view of the Bible?
- In what ways does the Qur'an use the story of Noah?
- How does the Qur'an's treatment of Adam relate to Jewish discussions about Adam?
- How far is the qur'anic Jesus the same as the Jesus of Luke's Gospel?

2.2 Focus on comparison

- What are the significant differences between the biblical and qur'anic accounts of Adam?
- What can be learnt from a comparative study of the biblical and qur'anic accounts of Jonah?
- How far does a comparison of the biblical and qur'anic accounts of Abraham support the idea of seeing Islam and Christianity as 'Abrahamic faiths'?

2.3 Focus on topics

- Compare the challenges facing Muslims and Christians as they deal with passages about violence in their Scriptures.
- Compare the biblical and qur'anic views of God as Creator.
- What are the similarities and differences in the ways that Muslims and Christians handle scriptural passages about the relationship between husbands and wives?

3. Understanding Islam

3.1 Focus on the study of religion

- Write a critical review of any one introduction to Islam.
- In what ways do Muslims seek to honour Muhamamad and why?
- What place does the Qur'an have in Islamic thinking?
- In what sense do the five pillars support Islam?

3.2 Focus on Islamic societies

- What is the relationship between Islamic religion and Middle Eastern culture?
- In what ways do beliefs in jinn affect everyday life in Pakistan?
- How far is it true to say that men and women are equal in Islam?
- 'Islam is not a religion of violence, but it is a religion of power' (M. Ayoub). Discuss.

3.3 Focus on Islamic law



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- What is *shari'ah*?
 - Analysis of a particular *fatwa*.
 - What is the position of Christians in Islamic law?
 - What problems might Muslim communities face in living according to the *shari'ah* in the USA?

3.4 Focus on regions

- What are the main challenges facing Muslim teenagers growing up in Britain today?
- Why might a Muslim wish to have *shari'ah* courts in Britain?
- What is 'Boko Haram', and why has it emerged in 21st century Nigeria?
- What are the main issues at stake in Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya?

4. Christian responses to Islam

4.1 Focus on theology

- In what ways have Christians responded to the claim that Muhammad received direct divine revelation?
- Can Christians call God 'Allah'?
- How far is it possible for Muslims and Christians to pray together?
- What reasons might there be for believing that God answers the prayers of sincere Muslims?

4.2 Focus on the Bible

- In what ways might the parable of the 'Prodigal Son' be illuminated by reading it with a Muslim?
- What relevance has Jesus' interaction with Samaritans for Christian-Muslim relations today?

4.3 Focus on mission

- What are the main issues currently under discussion in relation to 'insider movements' amongst Muslims?
- In what ways do Christians use the Qur'an in seeking to explain the Gospel to Muslims?
- What are the main challenges facing a Muslim who decides to follow Jesus as Lord?

4.4 Focus on dialogue

- What can be achieved by dialogue between Christian and Muslim leaders?
- Review a particular example of Christian-Muslim dialogue

4.5 Focus on socio-political engagement

- How far is it true to say that Muslims and Christians should work together in challenging secular world-views?
- How should Christians respond to religious 'extremism'?

