



Theology

Explore faith, yourself and the world ...

"The awesome privilege of studying the deeper questions of life and faith with teachers who deeply care cannot be overstated. I will never underestimate the life-long skills and profound formation in my Christian faith that I have received studying Theology at Otago University. Come study here and experience it too."

Lisa Barlow, studying towards a Bachelor of Theology

To study Theology is to engage with the deepest questions of life. What can we say about God? Who is Jesus? What does it mean to be human? How should we live in this world? Where do we find meaning and identity? Theology will equip you to think through these questions – and many others like them – in ways that are consistent and coherent. The Department offers a nurturing environment in which you can explore answers in light of the biblical writings, the rich history of the Christian faith, the thinking of past and living theologians, and contemporary practice – gaining the skills and knowledge you need to address the questions that really matter.

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Why study Theology?

Christianity has been a major force in the development of western civilization, helping to shape the world in which we live today, and it is increasingly a global presence. So there is enormous value in coming to an informed understanding of the Christian faith, and that is the main task of Theology.

Of course, many students undertake theological study to inquire further into their own faith. They find that it can enrich their understanding of the Gospel and open new horizons, even as it follows ancient paths. There is always more to learn about such essential matters as the nature of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the place of the Bible, the story of Christianity across two millennia, the practice of contemporary ministry and the responsibility to live ethically in a world that is increasingly socially aware.

The Department assumes no particular denominational or theological perspective in this inquiry. The learning process includes a proper methodology and a detailed exploration of the ways in which complex questions have been addressed by others, pointing out what are sometimes provocative possibilities. All this will equip you to formulate Theology and to think these questions through for yourself in ways that are aware of the community of other thinkers – past and present – and alert to the realities of our contemporary society.

Theology is about more than just vocational training. It is about life, meaning, belief and identity at the deepest level. We carry these with us wherever we go, whatever we do. There is, then, no end to the value gained from a few papers or a whole degree in Theology.

Background required

All you need to study Theology is a sense of curiosity about the world and human experience. You do not need to have a faith of your own to find compelling the issues raised by Theology. Students of all or no religious persuasions are welcome.

Careers in Theology

Theology graduates go places. Our students regularly find employment in areas such as teaching, social work, journalism and media work, administration, and the public services. Because Theology involves you in intellectual discovery, sound thinking and writing, and creative discovery, you will develop skills that are foundational to any number of careers. While many Theology graduates enter some form of Christian ministry after their studies, this is by no means true of all. You will find Otago Theology graduates in widely varying occupations all over the world!

Theology at Otago

Drawing on a rich heritage of more than sixty years the Department of Theology and Religion is well regarded both nationally and internationally. Its courses are taught by committed staff who are accomplished teachers and scholars. The Department offers a vibrant and friendly community known for its good relationship between staff and students. You will enjoy a positive and healthy environment in which to learn.

The discipline of Theology is divided into three main areas:

1. **Biblical Studies:** exploring the historical and cultural world of the Bible and interpreting the texts from which Christian ideas have developed.
2. **Christian Thought and History:** studying the history, beliefs, and values of Christianity – their origins, development, and varying contexts.
3. **Pastoral Studies:** reflecting on Christian spirituality and the practice of Christian ministry, worship, and mission.

You will engage with the breadth of these areas at the same time as going deeper in one of them.

How will you study?

It is possible for students to take up to five papers outside their Major in most degrees within the University, so if you are studying a different subject you can still include some interest papers in Theology.

Theology can also be done as either a Bachelor of Theology or a Bachelor of Arts degree. Both of these take three years full-time. A Bachelor of Theology is the normal choice if you are pursuing a vocation in ministry or aiming at further study in Theology. You can have your Bachelor of Theology endorsed in any of the three areas of Biblical Studies, Christian Thought and History, or Pastoral Studies. A Bachelor of Arts Major can be taken in either Biblical Studies or Christian Thought and History.

You can also complete your Bachelor of Theology by distance study. The Department has an excellent distance programme that connects with students living from one end of the country to the other. Such teaching is based on course books and is delivered by videoconferences and a teaching day, or in a week-long intensive format.

If you already have a degree in another subject and you would like to deepen your understanding of Theology, the Department is part of the University of Otago's Diploma for Graduates programme, which involves a shorter and more intense course of study in Theology.

The Department also has a very strong postgraduate programme with high student numbers. We offer a Bachelor of Theology with Honours, a Master of Theology, a Master of Ministry, a Master of Chaplaincy, and a PhD.

PROFILE

Madeleine Baughen

Studying towards a Bachelor of Theology

I come from a Catholic background so Christian ideas were always familiar to me but it was studying Theology and Philosophy in my senior years at school that introduced the study of faith as an academic discipline.

I decided to pursue a Bachelor of Theology at Otago because I finally felt like someone was teaching me the things I really wanted to know!

I have always had a lot of questions about God and how to interpret the Bible and engage with the Church; my papers with the Department have given me the tools to effectively ask those questions and set about finding some answers.

One of the best resources for those answers are my lectures and professors - our Department is a fairly small one and it's lovely to feel safe discussing and debating all kinds of issues in our classes.

Our Western society is awash with theological ideas and Biblical allusions so an understanding of the religious traditions behind those symbols

helps me interpret the art, music, history, politics and philosophy I find myself surrounded by in popular culture.

Studying Theology helps me frame the important things in my life. It helps me deepen not only my personal faith but my comprehension of history and all the various expressions of Christianity through history and across the globe.

I am no longer afraid of questioning what I've heard at Church or read about because my Theology classes have taught me how to articulate and explain what I believe and how to engage with different arguments and ideologies. What I learn in class helps me to express my faith and better understand what it feels like to be a Christian woman in the 21st century.



For questions about
Theology
otago.ac.nz/theology

