

Institution: University of Kent
Unit of Assessment: 33 Theology and Religious Studies
<p>a. Overview</p> <p>The Department of Religious Studies, based within the School of European Culture and Languages, has achieved substantial change and growth since RAE2008, assisted by strong support from the University's senior management. The Department has significantly expanded, recruiting 6.75 FTE new staff (three at Professorial level), and consolidated its position as a research unit specializing in social, cultural and philosophical approaches to the study of religion. This has been accompanied by a significant rise in research grant income and the Department's number of research council doctoral studentships. Building on the award of two AHRC national training grants, the Department is developing a role in providing methods training to doctoral students at other universities nationally and internationally. From this strengthened position, the Department has become a leading partner for the inclusion of Religious Studies as a subject area within the successful AHRC BGP2 application by the CHASE consortium. This environment statement sets out both the key developments and the achievements since RAE2008, as well as indicating the strategy for consolidating and developing the Department's work in the coming REF cycle.</p>
<p>b. Research strategy</p> <p><u>Development and achievement of research strategy since 2008</u></p> <p>During this period, the Department anticipated changes in national theological training and re-directed resources away from local theological education towards building up its work on sociological, cultural and critical theoretical approaches to the study of religion. This has led both to the renewal of the Michael Ramsey Chair within the Department (Gordon Lynch replacing Robin Gill in this post in 2011), as well as the creation of five new posts and the appointment of a senior research fellow. Under the strategic leadership of the Head of Department, Jeremy Carrette, staff recruitment has been targeted to ensure that the Department has expertise across all aspects of the theory and method of the study of religion, cultivating a department with a unique range of research specialists in biblical studies, modern theology, and the psychology, philosophy, sociology and anthropology of religion. The intention is for the Department to be an environment in which these sub-fields operate not as isolated specialisms but are brought together in an integrated conversation which generates new foci and insights for the theoretical and empirical study of religion through a critical and multi-disciplinary approach. An emphasis was therefore placed on the recruitment of staff able to sustain such inter-disciplinary engagement. Jessica Frazier was appointed in 2011 and in the summer of 2012 approval was given for the appointment of three senior staff from the University of Glasgow (Richard King, Yvonne Sherwood and Ward Blanton). In addition, a 0.2 contract was given to Abby Day, which supplemented her externally funded research fellow position. In 2012, Anna Strhan was also awarded a three-year Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, with the University agreeing to extend this into an open-ended lecturer contract on completion of the Leverhulme award. These appointments have meant that the staffing profile of the Department is now made up of established senior researchers (at Professorial and Reader level) combined with outstanding early career researchers.</p> <p>The Department has also exceeded expectations set out in its RAE2008 strategic plan through achieving a significant increase in the number and total value of its external research grant awards, with 8 awards totalling £772,140 made to the Department (or transferred into it with staff appointments) since RAE2008. This achievement should be read in the context of most staff having been in post in the Department for less than half of the REF cycle. There has also been a notable increase in AHRC-funded doctoral studentships, with the Department receiving two AHRC CDAs and two transferred AHRC BGP awards with staff appointments. Combined with internal awards of three University and School-funded doctoral studentships (at research council fees and maintenance rates), this has made it possible to build a stronger doctoral research culture around a nucleus of fully-funded students.</p>

Research strategy for 2014-19

In the context of the University's [broader strategic research plan](#), over the next five years we will:

1. nurture creative cross-disciplinary research within the Department, using the Department's weekly research seminar and additional themed symposia as a structure for focused discussions involving Departmental staff, research students and external colleagues. Areas to be addressed within these symposia will include religion and capitalism, globalization, blasphemy, religion and the law, and religion and the city.
2. convene major conferences that will allow staff and research students within the Department to shape discussions in wider networks, including the biennial International Media, Religion and Culture conference (2014), and the annual conference of the British Association for the Study of Religions (2015).
3. use the Leverhulme Visiting Professorship and the internally-funded KIASH Visiting Experts schemes to support a programme of senior visiting scholars who will be able to have extended engagements with the Department's staff and research students through seminars, workshops and informal conversations, including Tomoko Masuzawa and Donald Lopez (Michigan), Winifred Sullivan (Indiana), David Morgan (Duke), Johanna Sumiala (Helsinki), Wellington Zangari (Sao Paulo) and Kathryn Lofton (Yale). KIASH funding for Lofton's visit in 2014 has already been agreed.
4. work with our partners in our CHASE consortium (at the Open University, the Courtauld Institute, Goldsmiths College, and the universities of Sussex, Essex and East Anglia) to develop high calibre cross-institutional doctoral supervision and training in the study of religion.
5. continue to build our base of AHRC doctoral awards through our BGP2 consortium, as well as through CDA and CDP applications. The Department has already had a proposed project on the Magdalene Laundries accepted for submission by Kent as one of its two institutional applications for the 2014 CDA round.
6. undertake and complete major projects on mystical literature and thought in a comparative perspective (King), religious subjectivity (Frazier), religion, psychology and neuroscience in its socio-political context (Carrette), religion and public scandals of institutional child abuse (Lynch), Evangelical approaches to childhood (Strhan), religion and political power (Blanton), the Bible and colonial conquest in the New World (Sherwood), women in later life in the Christian churches (Day), and the cultural meanings of Christmas (Deacy).

This will be supported by the general research strategy of the School of European Culture and Languages over the next REF cycle, in which key priorities are to:

1. re-structure teaching and administrative work in the School in ways that maintain quality whilst allowing greater blocks of time for staff to focus on research.
2. provide additional resources for teaching buy-out to enable staff who have undertaken significant teaching and administrative loads to have terms free of teaching in addition to their standard research leave.
3. advertise one doctoral studentship each year for each of the four REF units of assessment within the School with a 4-year full-time (or equivalent part-time) maintenance grant, which will enable students to have either a year after submission of their thesis to produce publications and prepare substantial post-doctoral funding applications and/or to undertake a major placement related to their research during their period of registration.
4. provide bursaries to enable outstanding early career researchers to undertake short-term visiting fellowships (up to 3 months) to enable them to contribute to research activities and receive support and mentoring for their own research.
5. double the current levels of funding available to support staff in attending conferences and to provide seed funding for research activities not covered by existing external grant schemes.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

The investment in recruiting staff described above is supported by an institutional structure that enables them to continue to develop as researchers through different stages of their career. The University has won a European Commission HR Excellence in Research Award for its [institutional arrangements for achieving the key principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#). Within this institutional framework, all staff undergo an annual

appraisal with a trained appraiser of their choice, in which they reflect on their previous year's work, and identify key plans for their work and wider professional development. They also participate in an annual research planning meeting with the Head of School and School Director of Research in which they review their personal research development, identify specific targets and discuss ways in which the School can support them with this work. This also provides an opportunity to link emerging staff research and public engagement interests with established expertise within the School and Faculty, as well as identifying external funding sources that could support their work. During this REF cycle these appraisal and support structures have enabled Carrette to be promoted to Professor and Deacy to Senior Lecturer, then Reader. The School also offers a voluntary research mentoring scheme in which staff are able to have more regular discussions of their research with an experienced researcher in their subject area.

ECRs undergo a period of probation for which they develop a plan (usually for three years) in consultation with a senior colleague and are provided with a mentor to advise them through this period. During probation, workload in the areas of teaching (at 50% in year 1; rising to 75% in year 2 and 100% in year 3) and administration is adjusted to allow probationers to undertake training within the PGCHE programme and to consolidate and develop their research. Frazier successfully completed her probationary period in 2011-12. With support from the University, the Department has been able to invest in supporting the career development of its post-doctoral researchers. It has committed to the longer-term development of Anna Strhan by offering her an open-ended lectureship on completion of her Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, and Abby Day has been awarded a 0.2 contract to provide on-going support for her work as a senior research fellow. Research fellows participate as full members of the Department, undertake the same annual appraisal and research planning meetings and are able to apply for the same forms of research support from the School and Faculty as are available to staff in lecturer posts (see section (d) below). The University also runs a widely-used Early Career Researchers network, providing relevant training workshops by senior academic staff as well as other social meetings.

All Lecturers, Readers and Professors (including part-time and fixed-term contract staff) are entitled to take a term of research leave after seven terms in line with University policy. Staff may request to take their leave in advance of the period of seven terms if there is a strategic reason for doing so. In addition to School initiatives designed to protect staff research time alongside teaching and administrative duties, staff in the Department work together to allow the standard term of staff research leave to be accompanied by a lighter administrative load during the preceding or following term. This makes it possible for individual members of staff to concentrate primarily on research activities for the whole academic year of their study leave. During this REF cycle, the School has also run a scheme in which staff can apply for an additional year-long period of research leave, paid at 75% of their normal salary to cover costs for teaching replacement. This scheme will continue into the forthcoming REF cycle. All staff are supported in their research activities by the wide range of internal funding and other support mechanisms described in section (d) below. Staff benefit from the range of support provided by the Faculty and School for the development of larger and more complex grant applications, including resources for teaching relief (£1200 per grant application) and pilot funding (for up to £10,000).

The Department is committed to employing and supporting excellent researchers across all stages of their careers in accordance with good practice in equal opportunities. At an early stage in the staff recruitment process described above, the Department was concerned that its staff were predominantly male and worked with Human Resources to use the appointments process appropriately to address this gender imbalance. This led to the appointment of four female staff, one at professorial level, with women now making up nearly half of the Department staff. Staff involved in developing this REF submission have undergone equality training to ensure appropriate approaches to decision-making about staff selection for the REF. An internal audit has shown that the Department has achieved a far more representative staff submission across characteristics protected under equality legislation than was the case for the HE sector in general for RAE2008.

The Department strongly encourages staff to build and sustain relationships with non-academic partner organizations, and a number of examples of this are given in the REF 3a template attached to this submission (e.g. Day's AHRC Placement Fellowship with the British Council).

ii. Research students

Since RAE2008, the Department has significantly developed its provision for doctoral supervision and training. Its postgraduate research students participate in a theory reading seminar, an annual work-in-progress workshop with a senior external scholar and in the wider programme of symposia and workshops run by the Department. This has included a series of institutionally-funded workshops on religion and embodiment involving doctoral students at Kent and the African-American religion programme at Rice University held in both Canterbury and Houston, Texas. The Department is the only one in its subject area to have received two national-level doctoral training awards from the AHRC. An AHRC CRT award ('Advanced Methods in the Study of Religion') has led to the development of an intensive week-long methods training course which is open to students at Kent as well as other universities, and has attracted participants from institutions across the UK and continental Europe. This intensive methods training programme will continue to be offered by the Department annually over the next REF cycle. A training website has also been launched in 2011 (www.kent.ac.uk/religionmethods) which has since become a leading international training resource. The Department was also awarded an AHRC Skills Development award to deliver an inter-disciplinary training programme on 'Researching the Contemporary Moral Landscape' in conjunction with the RSA, which attracted delegates from sixteen institutions, including Yale University and New York University.

By recruiting strong doctoral students, particularly through its internally and externally funded studentships, the Department has created a doctoral training environment marked by high achievement and effective career development. For example, one of our doctoral students, Anna Strhan, has been able to secure a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship at Kent (unusually being allowed to hold this at the institution at which she took her doctorate) and another, Ruth Sheldon, was invited to be a visiting doctoral fellow in the Centre for Cultural Sociology at Yale University in autumn 2012. Since 2008, our doctoral students have also:

1. published monographs, articles in peer-reviewed journals such as *Religion*, *Material Religion*, *Culture and Religion*, and the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, co-edited two books and contributed chapters to other edited books.
2. won two separate AHRC Skills Development grants (student-led scheme) as PI's, which have delivered training workshops on digital methods in museum evaluation (in conjunction with the British Museum) and peer-to-peer supervisory praxis (in conjunction with the RSA).
3. convened, or presented on, panels at major international conferences such as the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, the American Academy of Religion, the Society for the Anthropology of Religion (ASA) and the bi-annual international conference on Media, Religion and Culture, and received an AHRC International Placement Fellowship award to undertake research at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.
4. convened a new monthly research seminar on the Anthropology of Christianity (in conjunction with the LSE).
5. undertaken a range of national-level public impact activities (discussed further in REF3a).
6. succeeded in securing academic appointments in a range of disciplinary areas following completion of their doctorates, including Mei (Dundee), Lewin and Williams (both Liverpool Hope), Lewis-Anthony (Virginia Theological Seminary), and Strhan (Kent).

Students are supervised by a team, including first and second supervisors and an additional supervisory Chair if required. The Department makes active use of cross-Department and cross-School supervision arrangements where this benefits the multi-disciplinary training of the student. The School's Graduate Studies Committee is responsible for monitoring student progress, approving the recommendations of review and examination panels, and mediating in the cases where panels are unable to reach a consensus. Each postgraduate research student undertakes an induction review to establish initial goals and training needs, a probation review (after 3 months), end-of-year reviews and a submission review (3 months before the end of the minimum registration period). Mid-year reviews may also be held in cases where there are concerns about progress, and continuation year reviews (after the end of the minimum registration period) are also held if necessary.

Students' professional development is supported both by the University's Graduate School, which offers a researcher career development and broader methodology training programme, and by the

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Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. The Department and School are committed to the development of PGRs as University teachers. In addition to teaching opportunities offered to other postgraduate research students, the School annually offers up to 7 fully-funded fees and maintenance doctoral studentships (at research council rates) which include 4 hours' teaching per week as associate lecturers working alongside an experienced module convenor. All students have access to the Associate Teacher Accreditation Programme, consisting of two modules, which are compulsory for GTAs.

Each research student is allocated up to £150 per annum to attend a conference at which they are giving a paper, plus an additional £500 towards research expenses over the course of their registration. Exceptional research expenses (such as specialized training, the presentation of papers at overseas conferences, and visits to overseas archives) are supported from the Faculty PhD Support Top-Up Fund (which, for example, supported Sheldon's visiting fellowship at Yale). Postgraduate students are also able to apply to KIASH funding schemes listed in section (d) below with the support of their supervisors. It has been possible to support all internal funding requests made by the Department's research students during this REF cycle.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Since RAE2008, staff now within the Department have won the following awards as PI. As the majority of staff within the Department have joined since 2011, this list includes awards made to staff whilst at previous institutions to give a more realistic indication of their grant success over the course of a whole REF cycle. Awards made directly to the Department, or transferred into it, are marked (K):

- J. Carrette, 'Religious Non-Governmental Organizations and the United Nations in New York and Geneva', £419,327 (AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society large grant) (K)
- Y. Sherwood, 'Between Abraham and the Modern: Religion, Secularity, Authority, Critique', British Academy Research Development Award, £112,528
- A. Strhan, 'The Faithful Child: Evangelicals and the Formation of Children in Modern Britain', Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, £87,000 (K)
- A. Day, 'A Longitudinal Study of Belief and Identity', ESRC small grant, £81,189
- A. Day, 'The Death of the Female Christian Generation A: Social, Religious and Economic Impacts', ESRC small grant, £80,069 (K)
- G. Lynch, 'The Sacred in the Modern World: A Psychosocial Approach', AHRC Fellowship, £54,933 (K)
- G. Lynch, 'Researching the Contemporary Moral Landscape: Concepts, Methods and Public Engagement', AHRC Skills Development Grant, £43,662 (K)
- A. Day, '"Belief" in Cultural Relations', AHRC/ESRC Public Sector Placement Fellowship, £42,643.00 (K)
- G. Lynch, 'Advanced Methods for the Study of Religion', AHRC Collaborative Research Training Grant, £36,518 (K)
- G. Lynch, 'Religion, the Sacred and Changing Cultures of Everyday Life', AHRC Research Network grant, £30,566
- G. Lynch, 'Young People and the Cultural Performance of Belief', AHRC Research Network grant, £24,950
- G. Lynch, 'Sacred Conflict and Journalistic Practice', AHRC Religion and Society Youth Impact award, £7988 (K)
- G. Lynch, 'Seeing the Sacred in the Museum', AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award for a project in collaboration with the British Museum (K)
- G. Lynch, 'Negotiating the Religious and the Secular in UK Higher Education', AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award for a project in collaboration with the National Union of Students (K)

Staff research is supported by a range of internal funding mechanisms provided by the School of European Culture and Languages and the Faculty of Humanities. Through the Kent Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (KIASH), the Faculty makes £71k of internal grant awards annually available to support cross-disciplinary collaborative initiatives, visiting senior scholars, and public engagement and impact activities. It also provides substantial funding (up to £10k) for

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preparatory work necessary for the submission of major research grants, as well as a scheme to provide £1200 towards teaching buy-out for the preparation of research grant applications for awards in excess of £200k. In addition to this, the School of European Culture and Languages provides a further £12k per annum to support research activities within the School, and more than £6k per annum to support conference attendance for staff within the Department of Religious Studies. Staff within Religious Studies have benefited significantly from these internal funding sources during the last REF cycle, receiving more than £30k from School and Faculty awards. Staff also benefit from an excellent range of support structures provided centrally by the University's Research Services office. These include a regular workshop programme on developing grant applications, supporting early career researchers and identifying possible research impact, as well as a Faculty Research Support officer who works with applicants to identify suitable schemes and with internal peer reviewers to refine grant applications. This range of support, developed significantly since RAE2008, is yielding strong results. In 2011/12, the University had a 46% success rate for grant applications to the AHRC, and across all research funders, the School of European Culture and Languages had a success rate of 45.4%.

The University continues to invest substantially in its research infrastructure. In 2008 it completed a £27m project to create Woolf College, which provides accommodation for 544 graduate students and a base for the University's Graduate School. In 2013-16 it will spend £27m on a major redevelopment of the University Library, leading to a new dedicated postgraduate study area (in addition to space already available within the School), a new exhibition space and a new special collections archive. The University has also made a significant commitment to funding doctoral studentships by allocating £6.5m towards its 2015 Anniversary studentship programme. In addition to the £17m of AHRC BGP2 funding made to the CHASE consortium from 2014 onwards, the University will also maintain similarly high levels of investment through providing match-funded studentships through the CHASE AHRC BGP2 consortium and the new [Eastern ARC](#) network.

e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base**Research outputs**

Since January 2008, staff now within the Department produced 12 monographs, 12 edited books, 41 articles in peer-reviewed journals, and 56 book chapters. Sherwood's monograph *Biblical Blaspheming* was short-listed for the American Academy of Religion Award for Excellence in Textual Studies in 2013.

Invited keynotes and lectures

In the last REF period, staff now within the Department have given 127 keynote lectures and other invited presentations, including King's Presidential Panel Keynote Address at the American Academy of Religion (San Francisco, 2011), Carrette's delivery of the prestigious William James lecture at Harvard University (Cambridge, MA, 2013), Sherwood's keynote at the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (Munich, 2013), King's keynote at the annual meeting of the European Association of Asian Studies (Manchester, 2008), Lynch's keynote for the annual conference of the European Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion section (Potsdam, 2012), Carrette's keynote at the Brazilian National Conference of the Working Group on the Psychology of Religion (Brasilia, Brazil, 2012) and Day's keynotes at the annual meeting of the Nordic Conference for the Sociology of Religion (Stockholm, 2012) and the annual conference of the Donner Institute (Turku, 2011). Carrette's book, *Religion and Critical Psychology*, was the subject of a panel convened by the Psychology, Culture and Religion group at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in 2011, with Carrette the invited respondent. Staff have delivered other invited plenary presentations at the annual meeting of the North American Association for the Study of Religion and the European Association for Biblical Studies/ International Society of Biblical Literature (Sherwood), the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society programme's launch conference for its Religion and Youth phase and its conference on Innovative Methods for the Study of Religion (Lynch), and the Vatican Council for Social Communications (Deacy). Staff have also delivered invited international lectures and seminars at the universities of Berlin (Blanton, Sherwood), Bochum (Carrette, King), Chicago (Sherwood), Copenhagen (Lynch), Heidelberg (Carrette, King), Helsinki (Day), NYU (Lynch), Oslo (Lynch, Sherwood), Potsdam (Sherwood), Tel Aviv (Sherwood), Uppsala (Day, Lynch, Sherwood), Warsaw (Lynch), Yale (Lynch), and Zurich (King).

Contribution to professional bodies and research councils

King has been co-chair of the Cultural History of the Study of Religion group, and Lynch co-chair of the Religion, Media and Culture group, within the American Academy of Religion. Sherwood has also been a founding member and steering committee member of the Bible, Theology and Postmodernism section within the American Academy of Religion. Blanton has been co-chair of the Social History of Biblical Scholarship seminar within the European Association of Biblical Studies. Gill, Lynch and Day have served as the last three chairs of the British Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion study group (with Day the current chair). Day is also a trustee and member of council for the British Sociological Association. Blanton has also been chair of the Paul seminar for the British New Testament Conference. Lynch and Day have been members of the ESRC Peer Review College representing the sociology of religion. Lynch served on the steering committee for the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society programme. Day was one of six UK researchers invited to participate in a workshop in Washington, D.C. on the place of community in pluralist societies run as a consultation exercise by staff from the AHRC and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In addition to serving as peer reviewers for the AHRC, ESRC and British Academy, staff have also acted as external reviewers for the European Science Foundation (Blanton), Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (Carrette, Sherwood), the NWO Council for Humanities (Blanton), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Deacy), the Polish Science Foundation (Lynch) and the Estonian Research Council (Sherwood).

Editorial work

Frazier is the co-founder and managing editor of the *Journal of Hindu Studies*, published by Oxford University Press. Sherwood is co-editor of the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. Staff currently serve on the editorial boards of the *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, *The Bible and Critical Theory*, *Biblical Interpretation*, *Foucault Studies*, the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, the *Journal of Hindu Studies*, *Religion and Society*, *Sikh Formations*, *Political Theology*, *Postscripts: Sacred Texts and Contemporary Worlds*, *Religion and Theology* and the *Journal of Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*. King is senior co-editor for the Studies in the History of Religions monograph series (Brill). Sherwood is series co-editor for Brill's Biblical Interpretation monograph series. She has also served on the Library of Hebrew Bible and Old Testament Studies monograph series (T&T Clark) and the Bible in the Modern World monograph series (Sheffield Phoenix). Blanton is series co-editor for the Bible in Theory with Equinox Press.

Other external research roles

Lynch has been a visiting research fellow at the universities of Uppsala and Yale, and is currently a Faculty Fellow of the Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale University. Lynch has served on the scientific advisory panel, and Day as an external evaluator, for the Centre of Excellence at Abo Akademi University on Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape, funded by the Academy of Finland. Research advisory work has also been undertaken with the British Museum (Lynch), INFORM (Day), the Guggenheim Museum (King), the RSA (Lynch) and the World Economic Forum (Carrette).

Conference and workshops

In this REF period, staff now within the Department have organized 24 conferences, symposia and workshops. Within the past year, these have included an international symposium on 'What does it mean to believe?', organized in conjunction with the British Council as well as symposia on 'Mapping Mysticism', 'Religion and Childhood' and 'Issues in Global Anglicanism'. Staff have convened special panels for the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion on progressive religion in the West (2008), the mediatization of religion (2009), and new directions in material religion (2012), and for the annual conference of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion on belief (2012).

Researcher training and development

114 doctoral and post-doctoral students from universities across the UK, continental Europe, and America have attended training events run by the Department through its AHRC CRT and Skills Development awards. Since its launch in September 2011, www.kent.ac.uk/religionmethods has attracted over 16,000 visitors, of whom a high proportion have downloaded its training materials. Staff have also run training workshops for doctoral students at the universities of California (Berkeley), Utrecht, and Uppsala, as well as for the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society programme, the Higher Education Academy and the Finnish Association for the Study of Religion.