



International Centre for Spiritual Studies

**Islamic University of
Science & Technology
Kashmir**

Ph.D. Coursework Syllabus

ICSS, IUST, Ph.D. Coursework Overview

The coursework for the Ph.D. program in Spiritual Studies will consist of the following courses, which should be successfully completed prior to commencing the thesis writing phase.

1. One Course on **Research Methodology**
2. One Course on **Advanced Trends in Spiritual Studies**
3. One Course on **Research and Publication Ethics**
4. One Course as **Research Area Specific**

Course Code	Course Title	L	T	P	S	Hours Per Week	Credits
4476- ICSS-RM	Research Methodology	3	1	0	0	4	4
4477- ICSS-ATSS	Advanced Trends in Spiritual Studies	3	1	0	0	4	4
To be assigned in accordance with the research scholar's area of research.	Research Area Specific Course (To be designed in consultation with the supervisor and approved by the SRAC)	4	0	0	0	4	4
RPE-900-C	Research and Publication Ethics (Offered by Department of Philosophy, IUST)	2	0	0	0	2	2

Course Code	Course Title	Credits	Max. Marks
4476-ICSS- RM	Research Methodology	4	100 Each unit carries equal marks

Course Description

This course offers a comprehensive engagement with the principles and practices of research within the humanities and social sciences, designed to help emerging scholars navigate the landscape of academic inquiry with clarity and confidence. It explores the conceptual foundations of research, from the formulation of questions and hypotheses to the development of coherent research designs and methodological frameworks. Students will engage with both qualitative and quantitative approaches, learning how to collect, interpret, and analyze data through examples drawn from world religions and diverse cultural settings. The course also emphasizes the craft of academic writing—guiding participants through each stage of thesis preparation, from literature review and methodology to analysis, discussion, and conclusion. Special attention is given to referencing conventions, the effective use of citation tools like Zotero, Mendeley, and EndNote, and the maintenance of academic integrity through ethical research practices and plagiarism detection systems such as Turnitin. By the end of the course, participants will not only have a strong grasp of research methodologies but also the confidence to produce original, well-argued, and ethically grounded scholarship that meets international academic standards.

Course Objectives

- To introduce foundational concepts and purposes of research within the humanities and social sciences.
- To familiarize research scholars with qualitative and quantitative research approaches and their practical applications.
- To develop the ability to formulate research problems, questions, hypotheses, and structured research designs.
- To provide exposure to data collection methods and analytical techniques using case-based examples from world religions.
- To equip research scholars with the skills required for effective academic writing, including thesis structuring, referencing, and use of citation tools.
- To instill a deep understanding of academic integrity, plagiarism, and ethical research practices.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, research scholars will be able to:

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of research principles and their relevance to the humanities and social sciences.
- Formulate researchable questions, hypotheses, and design methodologically sound research plans.
- Apply qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection and analysis, using examples from religious and cultural contexts.

- Critically evaluate and select appropriate research designs and justify their methodological choices.
- Structure and write a research thesis, including literature review, methodology, data presentation, and conclusion.
- Employ standard referencing and citation styles using tools like Zotero, Mendeley, and EndNote.
- Demonstrate proficiency in academic writing, editing, and formatting in accordance with institutional guidelines.
- Understand and apply ethical standards in research, including recognizing and avoiding plagiarism using tools like Turnitin.

Unit I: Foundations of Research Methodology

- i) Research: Concept, Scope and Purpose
- ii) Understanding Research in Humanities and Social Sciences
- iii) Research Questions
- iv) Hypotheses

Unit II: Research Design and Methodological Framework

- i) Concept and Need of Research Design
- ii) Features and Types of Research Design
- iii) Description and Justification of the Chosen Research Approach and Design
- iv) Developing a Research Plan
 - a) Identifying the Research Problem
 - b) Formulating Synopsis

Unit III: Research Methods and Data Analysis

- i) Characteristics and Significance of Research Methods
 - a) Qualitative Research
 - b) Quantitative Research
- ii) Data Collection Methods:
 - a) Qualitative Methods: Interviews, Focus Groups, Ethnography, Participant Observation, Case Studies, and Document Analysis (examples from Abrahamic religions)
 - b) Quantitative Methods: Survey Design and Sampling Methods
- iii) Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis and narrative analysis (examples from Indian religions)
- iv) Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive and inferential statistics

Unit IV: Thesis Writing Process

- i) Structuring and Chapterization of the Thesis
 - a) Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology
 - b) Data Analysis and Results
 - c) Discussion and Conclusion
- ii) Referencing and Citation in Humanities and Social Sciences
 - a) Citation Styles

- b) In-text Citations and Reference Lists
- c) Using Reference Management Software (Introduction to tools like EndNote, Zotero, and Mendeley)
- iii) Writing and Editing Techniques
 - a) Academic Writing Style
 - b) Editing and Proofreading
 - c) Thesis Formatting and Submission
- iv) Avoiding Plagiarism
 - a) Understanding Plagiarism
 - b) Best Practices for Academic Integrity
 - c) Using Plagiarism Detection Tools e.g., Turnitin

Suggested Readings

1. Bryman, Alan. *Social Research Methods*. London: Oxford University Press, 2016.
2. Barone, Tom, Michael D. Ungar, and Yvonne M. Connelly, eds. *Advancing Qualitative Research in Religion and Education: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. New York: Routledge, 2024.
3. Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2012.
4. Činčala, Petr, David Penno, Pavel Zubkov, and Safary Wa-Mbaleka, eds. *Quantitative Research for Practical Theology*. Berrien Springs, MI and Cooranbong, NSW: Department of World Mission, Andrews University and Avondale Academic Press, 2023.
5. Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2018.
6. Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2018.
7. Flick, Uwe. *Introducing Research Methodology: A Beginner's Guide to Doing a Research Project*. New Delhi: Sage, 2017.
8. Iyadurai, Joshua. *Social Research Methods: For Students and Scholars of Theology and Religious Studies*. Chennai: Marina Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Religion, 2023.
9. Kothari, C. R. *Research Methodology: Methods & Techniques*. 2nd revised ed. New Delhi: New Age International Publishers, 2009.
10. Panneerselvam, R. *Research Methodology*. Delhi: Prentice Hall India Learning Private Limited, 2013.
11. Patton, Michael Quinn. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2015.
12. Petts, Richard J., James S. Fish, and Sarah L. M. Martin, eds. *Religion, Culture, and Quantitative Methodology: Bridging Tradition and Innovation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025.
13. Silverman, David, ed. *Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications, 2020.
14. Silverman, David. *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage Publications, 2005.

15. Vieira, Edward T., Jr. *An Introduction to Applied Statistics: With Step-By-Step SPSS Instructions*. New York: Routledge, 2025.
16. Young, David R., and Craig Dykstra, eds. *Faith, Practice, and Research: Quantitative Methods for Contemporary Religious Studies*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2023.

Online Resources

1. **Research Methods for the Study of Religion**
<https://research.kent.ac.uk/religion-methods/>
2. **Religious Studies: Getting Started: Reference Works**
https://guides.library.yale.edu/religion_research/ref_works
3. **Religious Studies: Overview of databases, reference works and websites for research in religious studies**
<https://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl/subject-guides/religious-studies>
4. **Methods Resources**
<https://socialstudies.fas.harvard.edu/methods-resources>
5. **Sage Research Methods Community**
<https://researchmethodscommunity.sagepub.com/>

Course Code	Course Title	Credits	Max. Marks
4477- ICSS-RM	Advanced Trends in Spiritual Studies	4	100 Each unit carries equal marks

Course Description

This course offers a comprehensive and interdisciplinary study of spirituality through the lens of Religious Studies, engaging research scholars in the academic exploration of humanity's diverse spiritual traditions. It introduces the foundational theories and methodological approaches employed in the study of religion, drawing on historical, philosophical, sociological, anthropological, psychological, and phenomenological perspectives. Through comparative analysis of major world religions—including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—the course examines key spiritual concepts such as *Mokṣa*, *Nirvāṇa*, *Qabbalā*, Christian mysticism, and *Taṣawwuf*, emphasizing their philosophical depth and lived expressions. Scholars will also explore the dynamic interface between spirituality and science, addressing questions concerning cosmology, the origins of life, bioethics, and the ethical challenges arising from artificial intelligence. The contemporary segment of the course highlights emerging trends such as perennialism, interfaith dialogue, spiritual ecology, and the quest for holistic healing and well-being. By integrating critical inquiry with ethical reflection, the course aims to develop research scholars who approach religion as both an academic discipline and a living dialogue shaping the human condition in an interconnected world.

Course Objectives

- To introduce research scholars to the academic foundations and multidisciplinary approaches in the field of Religious Studies.
- To explore historical, philosophical, sociological, anthropological, psychological, and phenomenological approaches to spirituality.
- To engage research scholars in the spiritual perspectives, philosophies and practices of major world religions—both Indian and Abrahamic traditions.
- To develop comparative and critical thinking skills by analyzing similarities and differences in spiritual teachings across religions and cultures.
- To examine the evolving relationship between science and spirituality, especially around cosmology, life, ethics, and emerging technologies like AI.
- To familiarize research scholars with contemporary movements and trends in spirituality, including ecological consciousness, interfaith dialogue, and holistic healing.
- To prepare research scholars to think ethically, critically, and compassionately about the role of spirituality in contemporary global challenges.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, research scholars will be able to:

- Demonstrate a foundational understanding of the key theories and interdisciplinary approaches used in the academic study of religion.
- Articulate the core spiritual goals and pathways in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam with clarity and contextual awareness.
- Analyze and compare spiritual concepts, such as *Mokṣa*, *Nirvāṇa*, *Qabbalā*, Christian

mysticism, and *Taşawwuf* across different traditions.

- Critically examine the historical and philosophical interface between science and spirituality, including discussions on cosmology, the origin of life, and AI ethics.
- Engage in informed reflection on contemporary issues such as eco-spirituality, spiritual healing, interfaith dialogue, and perennialist perspectives.
- Apply theoretical insights to real-world ethical and spiritual questions, including environmental responsibility and human well-being.
- Cultivate an inclusive and dialogical mindset, critically analyzing diverse worldviews and their relevance in today's pluralistic societies.

Unit I: Foundations and Theoretical Frameworks in Religious Studies

- i. Religious Studies: An Overview
- ii. Historical and Philosophical Approaches
- iii. Sociological and Anthropological Approaches
- iv. Psychological and Phenomenological Approaches

Unit II: Spirituality in Major World Religions

- i. Spirituality in Hinduism: *Mokṣa* in Vedānta and Kashmir Shaivism
- ii. Spirituality in Buddhism: *Nirvāṇa* in Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism
- iii. Spirituality in Judaism and Christianity: Jewish *Qabbālā* and Catholic Mysticism
- iv. Spirituality in Islam: *Taşawwuf*

Unit III: Interaction Between Spirituality and Science

- i. Spirituality and Science: A Historical Overview
- ii. Spiritual Perspective on:
 - a) Origin of Universe
 - b) Origin of Life
- iii. Ethical Issues in Artificial Intelligence
- iv. Bioethics

Unit IV: Contemporary Trends in Spiritual Studies

- i. Perennialism
- ii. Interfaith Dialogue, Syncretism and Pluralism
- iii. Spiritual Ecology and Eco-feminism
- iv. Islamic Psychology, Psychotherapy and Spiritual Healing

Suggested Readings

1. Awaad, Rania, and Merve Nursoy-Demir. *Maristāns and Islamic Psychology: A Historical Model for Modern Implementation*. London: Routledge, 2024.
2. Brown, Adam. *The Religion Is Easy: Inspiration for Those New to Islam*. London: Wisdom Publications, 2025.
3. Connolly, Peter, ed. *Approaches to the Study of Religion*. London & New York: Continuum, 2006.

4. Douthat, Ross. *Believe: Why Everyone Should Be Religious*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2025.
5. Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. London: Harcourt, Inc., 1957.
6. Gupta, Akhilesh Krishna. *Bridges Across Humanity: Exploring Spiritual Unity in World Religions*. New Delhi: Routledge India, 2024.
7. James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2023 edition.
8. Jung, Carl G. *Man and His Symbols*. New York: Anchor Press, 1964.
9. Kunin, Seth D., ed. *Theories of Religion: A Reader*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006.
10. Malik, Shoaib Ahmed. *Islam and Evolution: Al-Ghazālī and the Modern Evolutionary Paradigm*. London: Routledge, 2021.
11. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
12. Rassool, G. Hussein, ed. *Foundations of Islamic Psychology: From Classical Scholars to Contemporary Thinkers*. London: Routledge, 2024.
13. Sanchez, Adriel. *Praying with Jesus: Getting to the Heart of the Lord's Prayer*. Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2025.
14. Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions, Revised and Updated: A Concise Introduction*. London: HarperOne, 2009.
15. Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *The Meaning and End of Religion*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022 edition.
16. Ünal, Ali, ed. *Islamic Perspectives on Science: Knowledge and Responsibility*. USA: Light, 2007.
17. Waardenburg, Jacques. *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods and Theories*. Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 1999.