

PhD Studentship

History of Religion and Education

Closing date: Sunday 2nd April 2017

Interview date: April/May 2017 (date TBC)

The University of Worcester is seeking to grow its research capacity in Education, especially its strength in the History of Religion and Education.

To this end, the University of Worcester is offering a full time PhD studentship in these broad areas to be focused on one of the following topics:

1. The classroom history of Religious Education: spaces, textbooks, artefacts, visual and auditory culture
2. The origins of non-denominational Religious Education in England, 1870-1902
3. The history of religious education in non-school settings e.g. the domestic context, Sunday Schools or Madrasa
4. An historical and contemporary study of the work of the International Bible Reading Association

Applicants are advised to indicate which of these is of interest to them, and to orient their applications to this preference as appropriate.

1. **A classroom history of Religious Education: spaces, textbooks, artefacts, visual and auditory culture**

Changes to the content, nature and purpose of Religious Education curricula from the 1960s and 1970s have been a focus of research of late. However, there is a notable lacuna in research on everyday religious education in classrooms themselves to which a study in this area has the potential to contribute. A systematic study of textbooks, audio-visual aids, religious and other artefacts of practice, as well as classroom spaces, offer opportunities to understand how religion was construed for children at particular times and in specific places in the past, bringing into awareness how the religious was conceived of, and how children were positioned in relation to it. Similarly, the role and function of religious education teachers and teaching would be illuminated by a study of the means of practice. Research could be focused upon a particular place (locally or nationally) or time (from the nineteenth century onwards), but some awareness of available sources should be demonstrated in any proposal.

2. **The origins of non-denominational Religious Education in England, 1870-1902**

Given its significance to the contemporary scene in schools, the character of Religious Education in the era post-1944 has oft been the focus of accounts of the history of Religious Education in state-maintained schools. What the historiography has hitherto tended to neglect are the precursors to, and complexities of RE prior to this, not least from the foundations of state-maintained schooling, 1870 onwards. More recent research has sought to remedy this, and this studentship theme offers the opportunity to

explore the pre-1944 scene, at a local and national level, focusing specifically upon the period between the 1870 and 1902 Education Acts, a formative period for non-denominational RE.

3. The history of religious education in non-school settings e.g. the domestic context or Sunday School

Religious education happens in informal domestic and religious contexts outside of schooling. This studentship theme offers the opportunity to focus upon these other contexts of religious education in historical perspective. Sunday schooling, for example, was culturally significant in shaping the life of generations of children, working class in particular, but there are aspects of this history at various points in time which remain worthy of consideration (e.g. the life and work of individual religious educators, pedagogies in informal religious educational contexts). Likewise, religious education in non-Christian contexts is a much neglected focus of research, particularly as it might be seen from the perspective of children themselves. This studentship theme offers the opportunity to contribute to a relatively new area of research, one potentially focused upon any religious tradition.

4. An historical and contemporary study of the work of the International Bible Reading Association

The International Bible Reading Association (IBRA) was founded by the Sunday School Union (SSU) under the leadership of Charles Waters in 1882. Since then the International Bible Reading Association has circulated annually a list of daily Bible readings and commentary notes across the world. At its peak in 1910 IBRA had a million subscribers. This project would engage the PhD research in reconstructing the complex and international history of IBRA using the extant sources held by the Cadbury Research Library and IBRA's host organisation, Christian Education. Additionally, IBRA's ongoing work and impact will be critically evaluated.

Supervisory Team

The successful applicant will be supervised by Professor Stephen Parker, who will act as Director of Studies and Dr Rob Freathy (University of Exeter), who will act as co-supervisor:

[Professor Stephen G. Parker](#), Institute of Education, University of Worcester

[Dr Rob Freathy](#), Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter

The University of Worcester

Research at the University of Worcester has grown significantly over the last 10 years. This growth is most clearly shown in the outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014). Worcester was the most improved University in the UK based on Research Fortnight's "Research Power" measure, reflecting a more than four-fold increase in the number of staff submitted compared to RAE 2008 and a commensurate increase in the quality of the research. As a consequence of its REF 2014 submission, Worcester's QR income for 2015-16 is up by 341% from 2014-15.

The University is committed to further developing its research profile in the coming period, through a strategic approach to its support for and investment in research. As part of this investment it is funding a number of full-time PhD studentships in its areas of particular research strength.

The Institute of Education

The Institute of Education is developing a national and international reputation for research in Education and related disciplines and areas. Staff engage in research activity as part of thematic Research Interest Groups (RIGs) including; Social psychology of education, Interprofessional learning, Innovative pedagogies, Social justice, Early Childhood, Lifelong Learning, and the History of Religion and Education.

The History of Religion and Education is a particular area of strength in research within the Institute of Education at the University of Worcester. Led by Professor Stephen Parker, a very successful submission to REF2104 was made under this heading. Currently, Professor Parker is leading a Leverhulme Trust-funded project on the history of religious education broadcasting in Britain. As a research student in the history of religion and education you would be joining a group of other doctoral students working on a range of topics in the field. Moreover, you will become part of our dynamic and engaged research student body in Education as a whole.

Research School

The Research School is a focal point for all our research students. It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

Details of the studentship

During the period of your studentship you will receive the following:

- a tax free bursary of £13,863 for a period of 3 years
- a fee-waiver for 4 years at the UK/EU fee rate
- a laptop
- use of the Research Student Study Space in Research School
- access to the Research Student Support Scheme to cover costs and expenses related to your research

Qualifications required

Essential:

Applicants should have or be able to evidence:

- A First Class Honours Degree/or an Upper 2.1 (or expect to receive one by October 2016), with evidence of first class achievement in a dissertation on a relevant topic;
- Demonstrable and excellent understanding of religious education and/or Modern History, or Theology and Religious Studies;
- A very good understanding and experience of appropriate research methods and skills;
- Computer literacy;
- Ability to organise and meet deadlines;
- Good interpersonal skills;
- Ability to work independently and contribute to a team;
- Commitment and an enthusiastic approach to completing a higher research degree.

Desirable:

- Education to Masters Degree level in a relevant area.
- Ability to contribute to research study design;
- Willingness and availability to travel in the UK for research.

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience.

Application Process

Completed applications forms, and a draft research proposal of no more than 1000 words, clearly indicating which theme the applicant is applying to research, should be submitted to the Research School by the closing date.

Successful applications will demonstrate familiarity with the body of existing research, and clearly articulate how the planned research will make an original contribution to this developing field of study.

The Interview

The interview will provisionally be held April/May 2017, date to be confirmed. All successful applicants will be interviewed. You will be asked to make a short presentation on a topic related to the study. You will also be asked to provide an example of your written work (e.g. a dissertation) ahead of the interview.

For further information or an informal discussion on these projects, please contact Professor Stephen Parker (Director of Studies) via email at s.parker@worc.ac.uk

Application forms are available at:

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/researchstudentships>

Completed application forms should be sent by email to: research@worc.ac.uk or sent via post to: Research School, Jenny Lind Building, Henwick Grove, St Johns, Worcester, WR2 6AJ