

STUDY WITH US

Applications to the PhD and MPhil programs are now open for domestic and international Higher Degree Research candidates commencing in 2021. Intended research topics should align with the IRCI's areas of expertise in New Testament studies, early Christianity from late antiquity to Byzantium, medieval and early modern studies, and religion and theology. Particular research areas might include:

- The social, intellectual, and cultural history of religion in all its forms, particularly Christianity (e.g. texts, organizations, identities, experiences, theology, philosophy, technology, material culture, popular culture, history of science, music, ritual, and literature)
- Christianity and its relations to Judaism, the religions of Mediterranean antiquity, and Islam, as well as its global contexts (Europe, Africa, Asia) from antiquity to the Enlightenment
- Theology and religious thought, in all their dimensions, including ethics, aesthetics, ritual, philosophy of religion, cross-cultural engagements, Catholicities, Vatican II studies, systematic theology, political theology, comparative theologies, Global Christianity, ecumenism

Successful applicants will be fully immersed in the intellectual life of the IRCI, at ACU's St Patrick's Campus in Fitzroy, Melbourne, participating in seminars, conferences, and reading groups, and working collaboratively with our team of world-class scholars across our three research programs in [Biblical and Early Christian Studies](#), [Medieval and Early Modern Studies](#), and [Religion and Theology](#). There is also the possibility of involvement with one of ACU's overseas partner universities as well as activities at ACU's Rome Campus.

Successful applicants are eligible for financial support through one of the University's competitive research scholarships. Financial support includes a stipend scholarship, a fee-offset scholarship or a tuition fee waiver (as appropriate). Full details are found in the University's research scholarships website [here](#).

At ACU the PhD is a three-year degree, while the MPhil is a two-year degree. A PhD thesis must make an original contribution to the field, whereas an MPhil thesis is required to display mastery of its field. See more information about HDR/graduate degrees at ACU [here](#).

The closing date for applications for stipend scholarships is Sunday 18 October at 11:59pm.

Applications must follow the instructions on the [ACU Become a Research Candidate Page](#).

Contact info:

For further details contact eo.irci@acu.edu.au

Website:

<https://www.acu.edu.au/research/our-research-institutes/institute-for-religion-and-critical-inquiry/study-with-us>

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR RELIGION AND CRITICAL INQUIRY

The Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry (IRCI) promotes collaborative research on religion and critical thought from multiple disciplinary perspectives, including theology, history, literature and philosophy, to advance understanding of our world and imagine ways to improve it. Working in partnership with leading scholars from around the globe, IRCI researchers explore the inter-relationships between philosophy, religion, and their cultural contexts, and contribute to contemporary theological, philosophical, social, and political debates.

Founded in 2014, the Institute has three established research programs: Biblical and Early Christian Studies, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, and Religion and Theology. Each program includes full-time researchers and research students. In addition, researchers contribute to ACU's Node of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions.

The IRCI has established research partnerships with leading institutions in Europe, the UK, and North America, and presents a series of research seminars each year at ACU's Rome Campus. It sits within the Faculty for Theology and Philosophy, the largest such Faculty in Australia, which offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses and higher research degrees through its campuses across the country. In the recent Excellence in Research for Australia 2018 assessment, the University was ranked at above world standard in Religion and Religious Studies and in Philosophy, placing it among the best universities in Australia in these fields. In historical studies, ACU's research ranked as world standard. Since 2018, the creation of the Dianoia Institute of Philosophy and the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences has provided a significant boost to ACU's research in history, literature, politics, and philosophy. IRCI researchers and research students work alongside researchers in these other Institutes, resulting in lively intellectual exchange between a critical mass of scholars in cognate areas.

Below are some sample areas of research which can be supervised by members of the Institute and further details about the different research programs to which they are connected.

ABOUT BIBLICAL AND EARLY CHRISTIAN STUDIES IN IRCI

The Research Program in Biblical and Early Christian Studies pursues research on Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic Christian traditions up to c.1000 CE.

In keeping with the foundational importance of the texts that came to form the canon of Christian scripture, one of the Program's main areas of focus is the discipline traditionally known as biblical studies. The Program aims to put these texts in a wider historical context by examining less mainstream Christian traditions, as well as the reception of biblical texts in the late-antique period and beyond.

A further aim of the Program is to examine the way in which Christian traditions from the first century onwards interacted with the religious and cultural matrices out of which they emerged, especially the Jewish and Greco-Roman heritages. A related important area of research is exploring the processes associated with, and ramifications of, Christianity's growing power in the ancient world, and the transformation of the Roman Empire into Byzantium in the East and medieval Christendom in the West.

Topics studied by our researchers include:

- the interaction of canonical and non-canonical literature, and the formation of the canon itself
- Hellenistic Judaism, including Philonic studies
- textual criticism and the history of the book

- contested concepts and practices between Christians and non-Christians including divination and deification
- Christian attitudes towards medicine
- experimentation with literary genres such as the dialogue
- Christian practices and theologies of asceticism
- the development of doctrine during this period
- Christian responses to the rise of Islam from the seventh century onwards

Our research also aims to advance conversations with other areas of contemporary theology, hermeneutics, and religious studies. From 2017 to 2021 the program is running two large-scale collaborative projects involving researchers from around the world at institutions including Durham, Notre Dame (USA), KU Leuven, Cambridge, and Humboldt University of Berlin: [Modes of Knowing and the Ordering of Knowledge in Early Christianity](#) and [Texts, Traditions, and Early Christian Identities](#).

ABOUT MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN STUDIES IN IRCI

Each member of the MEMS team has a record of participating in research at the highest level of international excellence. This includes publication with world-leading journals and publishers and relationships with colleagues and programs at leading institutions across the world (e.g. Berkeley, Harvard, London, Cambridge, KU Leuven, Stanford, the University of London, Durham, Toronto, Berlin). The MEMS Program has strong collaborations with ACU's Institute for Humanities and Social Science, and especially its Centre for Gender and Women's History. The team combines separate interests and specializations to study many dimensions of medieval and early modern cultures, including:

- religion, politics, and culture
- gender and sexuality
- theology, literature, and intellectual history
- liturgy, music, visual art, devotion, and popular culture
- religious conflict and reform
- spirituality
- time
- the papacy and the institutional church
- religious orders
- material culture
- the history of biblical interpretation
- the reception of ancient learning
- preaching

Research in the MEMS program is focused and rigorous but intends to examine and reconfigure basic concepts in the history of Europe and the world. These basic concepts include medieval Christendom, Renaissance, Reformation, the Enlightenment, modernity, Europe and the West, secularization, civilization, colonialization and world Catholicism, missions, cultural exchange, time, sexuality, the environment, gender, the subaltern, and the nature and relationship of minority-majority identities. The program is animated by the belief that a comprehensive study of life in the past sheds precious light on the present, helping scholars have a fuller appreciation of the entanglement of social groups and civilizations across the earth. The program views its work as "ecological" in the broadest sense. It helps people in the present have a clearer understanding of the nature and variety of religious and cultural identities, the interdependence of those identities, and the entanglement of human life, thought, and reflection with physical, social, economic, and political conditions and environments. We believe that by uncovering in the past the connections between ethical, aesthetic, and scientific habits of mind and heart, our research and its outcomes contribute to the cultivation of equity and the well-being of people in the present. Many of these interests

are folded into a new five-year research initiative on Religious Mobilities: Europe and the Medieval and Early Modern World.

ABOUT RELIGION AND THEOLOGY IN IRCI

The Religion and Theology Research Program supports constructive work in theology and the study of religion that incorporates a wide range of methodologies.

The Program includes research in religious studies that draws upon religious thought in order to address issues of widespread concern. Work in this area combines detailed attention to particular religious traditions with theoretical resources from the fields of ethics, politics, cultural studies, social theory, and philosophy.

The Program also includes research in theology that addresses questions within Christian thought concerning belief in the divine and the nature of humanity. Theology at the IRCI is open to diverse approaches, and it has a particular strength in the Catholic intellectual tradition, which proceeds in the conviction that faith and reason are not at odds.

Research projects in the Program currently include:

- [Redeeming Autonomy: Agency, Vulnerability, and Relationality](#), a collaboration between ACU and scholars from Durham, KU Leuven, Boston College, and Yale.
- Construing Catholicities: Forms of Interconnection in a Fractured Cosmos
- Religion and theology in Australia and beyond
- religion and the arts
- religion and environmental justice
- the theology and politics of hope
- theological exegesis of the Bible
- modern forms of Thomism
- charity and violence
- theologies of the body and suffering

The Program has a strong connection with the Centre for Vatican II Studies in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy.

ACU NODE, ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR THE HISTORY OF EMOTIONS

ACU's Node of the Australian Research Council [Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions](#) approaches the study of emotions from the perspective of religion, philosophy, history, health humanities and literature from antiquity to today. We ask how emotions have been understood and performed, and how they have shaped and continue to affect intellectual and cultural life.

Our researchers are expert in intersections between emotions research and analytic philosophy, religious ethics, systematic theology, New Testament studies, early Christianity, late-antique and Byzantine studies, medieval and early modern history and literature, and modern history and politics. We welcome students across all these sub-disciplines.

Recent ACU research includes: emotion and isolation; the affective contours of healthcare communication in antiquity; emotions cultivated in institutions of education; asceticism and emotion; liturgical emotions; medieval and early modern sound, senses, and time; objects and emotion; affect and political change; populism; emotion and environmental ethics; wellbeing, human flourishing and emotion; and intersections between emotions and analytic epistemology.

Research in the ARC Centre of Excellence is ordered into [four research programs and associated research clusters](#): Change, Meanings, Performance, and Shaping the Modern. While much research associated with the Centre has been focused on the time period 1100–1800, ACU’s Node is expanding the Centre’s temporal reach and strengthening the Centre’s engagement with theological and philosophical traditions.

PhD researchers based in ACU’s Node will also have the opportunity to interact with scholars and research students from other lively Programs in ACU’s [Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry](#), [Dianoia Institute of Philosophy](#), and the [Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences](#).

ACU Melbourne St Patrick’s Campus

ACU’s Melbourne Campus (St Patrick’s) is conveniently located on the fringe of the Melbourne Central Business District. The popular retail strips of Brunswick Street and Smith Street, with their variety of cafes, shops and art galleries, are just a short walk away. Some of Melbourne’s finest parks, gardens, and recreational facilities are also within easy walking distance of the campus. [Melbourne and Olympic Parks](#) host sporting events such as the Australian Open Tennis Grand Slam, Cricket (national and international), Football



(Australian Rules and Soccer), Rugby (League and Union), Netball and Basketball, as well as music concerts and shows. Alongside other CBD attractions, and also within walking distance of the Melbourne Campus, are [The National Gallery of Victoria](#) (NGV International and NGV Australia), [The Arts Centre](#) Theatres and Concert Hall, the [Melbourne Recital Centre](#), and [Fitzroy Gardens](#) and the [Royal Botanic Gardens](#).
Melbourne’s St Patrick’s Campus

Living in Melbourne

A multicultural city of 5 million people from over 200 different countries, Melbourne topped the [Economist’s Global Liveability Index](#) for seven consecutive years (2011-2017) and has remained in the top three since the index began in 2002. The index is generated from a range of quantitative and qualitative factors measuring stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure. Mercer’s 2019 [Quality of Living Index](#) ranked Melbourne 17th of 231 cities across 10 socio-economic measures. The 2020 [Social Progress Index](#) judges Australia among the most socially progressive nations in the world (8th overall; 1st in Asia).

Information about Melbourne and Victoria

[Live in Melbourne](#): Information about Melbourne, including places to live with interactive maps, education and childcare, healthcare and medical services, public transport and driving, housing and property, cost of living, and relocation checklists.

[Visit Victoria](#): The Victorian Government’s tourism site, with information about what you can see and do in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

[What’s on in Melbourne](#): Like any other global city, Melbourne boasts a range of festivals, exhibitions, and major events; find further information here.

[Public Transport](#): Information on trams, trains and buses in Melbourne and across the state. Information on cycle routes and programs can be found [here](#).

[Churches in Victoria](#): Links to members of the Victorian Council of Churches.