



Interview with an Undergrad

Hina Khalid

What degree are you taking in the Divinity Faculty?

I have just completed the Theology and Religious Studies Tripos, beginning in October 2014 and finishing in June 2017.

It is sometimes said that studying religion presents special opportunities and special challenges to students who identify with a particularly religion themselves. Do you think that's true?

As a Muslim student, I can certainly say that studying three years of theology at Cambridge has allowed me to look at my own faith through a different lens. This has been formative in my study of both Islam and Qur'anic Arabic.

As well as this, I have delved into the study of other religions and ways of approaching the world that are very different to my own.

In my first year, I was both nervous and excited to study Christian doctrine, particularly as it was so unfamiliar to me. I found myself enjoying it so much - (especially the first year Christology paper -) that in even within my second and third year papers, I focused on Christian doctrine (for instance, in the Theology and Science paper).

Throughout my three years, I have also had the opportunity to study papers a bit closer to home – namely, Qur'anic Arabic and the two Islamic theology and philosophy papers.

Being personally committed to my faith, it has often been difficult to approach Islamic theology from a purely academic perspective. Reading Western critiques of Islamic feminism was especially challenging, particularly as so much of what I was reading forced me to reconsider (- or at least critically reflect on) - the ideas I had grown up believing from childhood. Being able to assess Islamic theology both objectively and critically has been a skill I have nurtured and developed over my past two years at Cambridge – and it is through this that I have come to a renewed understanding of my own faith tradition.

What was one of your favourite papers and why?

Professor Janet Soskice's third year paper, 'Love and Desire'. Although this paper centres on Christian doctrine and theological reflections on love and desire (both between humanity and God and within human relationships), I found that the insights gained from class discussions and readings slowly began influencing the way I approached my own personal relationships, and made me aware of something profoundly sacred and fulfilling in nurturing those relations that make us who we are. Before this year, I had enjoyed all my papers from an academic and educational point of view, but this paper had the added personal dimension that gave the readings a special kind of vibrancy.

What would you say to someone who is thinking about studying theology and religion at Cambridge?

Go for it! The theology and religious studies course at Cambridge is so brilliantly diverse, that no matter where your interests lie – philosophy, systematic theology, sociology of religion – you will be able to tailor your own 'path', and maybe even discover new interests along the way!

Hina Khalid completed the undergraduate Tripos in 2017 and is now working with St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace on an interfaith activist programme, working with refugee communities across the UK and Europe.