

10. Key Research Areas of the Faculties and Subject Dedication of Professorships

10.1 Faculty of Catholic Theology

10.1.1 Objectives

In the 21st century, religious beliefs represent essential motives for actions in a society that is becoming increasingly globalised. Understanding religious dynamics and their transformations is thus decisive for critical insights into the way modern societies are functioning. The Faculty of Catholic Theology essentially contributes to such an understanding by taking interdisciplinary and global perspectives in the area of research on religion, which encompasses aspects of theology as well as of the study of religions, ethics and aesthetics. This is reflected in the participation of academics from all continents.

In cooperation with the Faculty of Protestant Theology and the Department of Islamic-Theological Studies as well as other departments of the University of Vienna, it examines the role of religion with regard to the origins of, and coping with, social crises and challenges. The exchange with secular positions is of particular importance in this respect, as is ecumenical, Christian-Judaic and interreligious dialogue, whose hermeneutic, discursive and historical bases are critically reflected on in an academic way.

As far as the transfer of knowledge is concerned, the Faculty focuses on the following fields in particular:

- interreligious dialogue
- intensive contribution to the media relations at the University of Vienna
- activities in teacher education (education and training)
- adult education in religion
- training of decision makers in the global South, Eastern Europe and Austria
- advisory activities (experts in Austrian and international bodies, academic input into church-related development processes).

10.1.2 Key Research Areas

The Faculty of Catholic Theology focuses on the following key research areas:

Interdisciplinary research on religion

Research on religion at the Faculty of Catholic Theology pursues an interdisciplinary orientation.

The Faculty essentially contributes to the pooling of expertise from different academic disciplines involved in research on religion at the University of Vienna, thus particularly enhancing the visibility of research on religion at the international level and highlighting its social relevance. This interaction of different disciplines of research on religion constitutes a unique feature by international comparison.

Interdisciplinary research on religion studies the question as to what extent religions have formed, and are being changed by, the narratives, horizons of meaning and of life, the values, aesthetics and institutions of society. In addition, it looks into the way in which religions, and particularly religions to be met locally in Vienna and Austria, respond to global challenges of our time, and how they can be understood in the context of historical developments. This is particularly reflected in the loss of traditions and identity, debates on diversity and particularly gender, climate change, limited ecological resources, the dialectics of processes of enlightenment, migration and multiculturalism, religious pluralism, religious fundamentalism, urbanisation, digitalisation, new use of church

buildings and diversification of the landscape of religious buildings, inequality and injustice, the religious justification of war etc.

It addresses exit strategies with regard to phenomena of global crisis as well as personal crises related to the meaning of life, and their consequences for ethics, politics, education, law and aesthetics. For instance, transformative processes in the religious cultures of modern-day Austria are studied, e.g. in the context of migrant groups and in educational and school settings, as well as in fields of action of religious communities.

Specific attention is paid to the transformation of the question of God and of religious motives, which has become apparent in art, in contemporary literature and in religious practice, not least with regard to its potential for examining current social developments. Additional emphasis is laid on the transformation of Christianity's self-understanding from its contact with Judaism and Islam, the world of millenarian and apocalyptic beliefs, new and alternative religious developments, as well as the hermeneutics of religious texts and practices in their normative, ethical, aesthetic and legal implications.

Catholic theology and Catholicity in contemporary discourses

The Catholic Church has been the largest institutionalised religious community in the world up to the present day. This is also reflected at the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Vienna, where students and teachers from all continents are pursuing academic activities. Many decision makers in the global South have been educated at the Faculty of Catholic Theology. In addition, students of Teacher Education and pastoral staff obtain their specific qualifications here.

The Faculty contributes its hermeneutics and methodology in order to elucidate – in its wide range of disciplines – the fundamentals of a Catholicity of global reach. For this purpose, it first of all faces the question of how to conceive of human beings, the world and history against the horizon of the question of God. It also critically reflects on the influence of Catholicity on global society and politics and studies their biblical, historical, theological, philosophical and legal foundations, as well as their aesthetic, institutional and practical expressions. They are analysed with regard to their effects on modernity's struggle to achieve human autonomy and respect for others. However, social developments are also critically appraised and discussed. This key research area is reflected both in the research of the individual disciplines and in the wide range of subjects taught at the Faculty. Its interdisciplinary diversity offers numerous connections to other faculties in order to study the essential contribution of Christianity to the historical and contemporary forms of occidental concepts, ideas and institutions.

The ecumenical perspective plays an important role in this regard. The Faculty can look back on a long tradition of academic approaches particularly to the Eastern Churches. Establishing a bachelor's and master's programme in Orthodox Religious Education has been a unique step in Western Europe, from which the interdenominational dialogue in Austria, as well as all over Europe, will directly benefit.

The considerable rise in the number of Orthodox Christians in Austria, resulting from migration, is taken into account in the subjects of teaching and research in order to enable critical academic expertise in the area of Orthodoxy. This expertise encompasses not only the area of Orthodox theology and religious education but the entire field of Eastern Church studies, i.e. including Oriental and Catholic Eastern Churches (particularly from a historical theological perspective). With regard to the war against Ukraine, peace ethics is another focal theme of topical relevance.

Ethical challenges and education in global society

The Faculty examines numerous ethical questions in the areas of bioethics (climate crisis, medical ethics, health care), technology and ethics (artificial intelligence and robotics, modern medical and media technologies) as well as social ethics (migration and poverty, gender equality, political ethics). Intercultural ethics constitutes a further all-embracing area.

Since 1990 the Faculty has been part of the European Values Study Group and meanwhile has, by establishing interdisciplinary cooperation, become an outstanding place of interdisciplinary research on human values which is unique in its kind at the international level, as it combines empirical and hermeneutic disciplines.

Based on an anthropology that is conveyed against a Christian and generally religious background, the research area of ethics – with its expertise in the disciplines of philosophy, social and religious studies, as well as social and theological ethics – provides considerable input to the academic reflection on the major social challenges of our time. By contributing interdisciplinary perspectives and methodologies, the Faculty fosters the discussion of ethical problems in society that require expert knowledge, ethical know-how and awareness of diversity in society, and contributes to a sustainable resolution of social challenges.

Its profile in this context is characterised by a sensitive approach to questions of religion and spirituality, as well as to the question as to what makes us human. Interculturality and interreligiousness are of key relevance here and will continue to be focal topics.

10.1.3 Professorships as of 1 October 2023

For a better overview, all professorships (including any professorships initially financed by the ministry responsible for science and research) existing as of 1 October 2023 (section 98 and section 99, para. 3, section 99, para. 4 and section 99a of the 2002 Universities Act) are listed here. The list below shows the situation at a certain point in time and does not predetermine any future subject dedication of professorships, nor the ones dealt with in the following section.

- Old Testament Studies
- Christian Philosophy
- Dogmatics
- Fundamental Theology
- Church History
- Ecclesiastical Law and Law of Religion
- Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology
- Moral Theology
- New Testament Studies
- Pastoral Theology
- Religious Education and Catechetics (joint appointment with the Centre for Teacher Education)
- Study of Religions
- Social Ethics
- Theology of Spirituality
- Eastern Christian Studies

10.1.4 Subject Dedication of Future Professorships and Status of Implementation

Dedication of professorships in line with research profiles and with the need to teach fundamental subjects

Subject dedication of professorship: **Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Anthropology**

Time of appointment: following vacancy of the Professorship of Christian Philosophy (presumably as of 1 October 2025)

Subject dedication of professorship: **Religious Education and Catechetics**

Time of appointment: following vacancy of the Professorship of Religious Education and Catechetics (presumably as of 1 October 2027)

Subject dedication of professorship: **Church History**

Time of appointment: following vacancy of the Professorship of Church History (presumably as of 1 October 2028)

Subject dedication of professorship: **Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology**

Time of appointment: following vacancy of the Professorship of Liturgical Studies and Sacramental Theology (presumably as of 1 October 2030)

Subject dedication of professorship: **Moral Theology**

Time of appointment: following vacancy of the Professorship of Moral Theology (presumably as of 1 October 2030)

Subject dedication of professorship: **Pastoral Theology**

Time of appointment: following vacancy of the Professorship of Pastoral Theology (presumably as of 1 October 2030)

In addition, tenure track positions can be advertised.

As things stand, it is planned to advertise the following tenure track positions in particular:

- Theories of Religion
- Intercultural Philosophy of Religion