Religion and Belief Guide
Welcome

Welcome to Goldsmiths, whatever your background, whether you have a faith and are looking for resources, or simply wish to understand the practices of your fellow students and staff, this guide is for you. This booklet contains a basic introduction to the faith expressions you may come across at Goldsmiths, as well as information on how you can get involved or find out more.

Our community at Goldsmiths is a global one and sometimes that requires us to work towards understanding each other. Goldsmiths Chaplaincy seeks to embody a positive model of openness and enquiry that creates space for conversation and engagement.

Religion and belief have entered a new space over the last decade, incorporated into equality legislation, and more visibly lived by a number of our faith communities, questions around faith have started to find a voice in our traditionally secularised universities. At Goldsmiths we are at the forefront of this changing landscape, our Religious Literacy Leadership Programme (p6-7) leads the way enabling traditionally secular universities to have open discussions about faith.

As Coordinating Chaplain I oversee the work of a team of chaplains and faith advisors, covering all the major faiths. We are not limited by this, anyone can speak to a chaplain, and I have a particular responsibility within the college to act as an advocate for the spiritual and religious life for all students and staff. I welcome conversations with you, whether you need to get something off your chest, talk something through, or have questions you want to explore. Chaplaincy is about the wholeness of the person, regardless of faith or belief.

Goldsmiths is a unique place to study, characterised by the warmth of its welcome and the strength of its community.

Whoever you are, wherever you have come from, the Chaplaincy is a resource for you.

We have Chaplains available on campus most days of the week. During term-time there is usually a Chaplain in the Chaplaincy on Laurie Grove around lunchtime if you want to drop in, or you can make an appointment by filling out an online form or emailing the chaplaincy.

The first part of this booklet introduces the Chaplaincy, the Religious Literacy Leadership Programme and the spaces set aside for quiet contemplation and prayer around the college, the second part gives a brief outline of the major faith traditions as well as an introduction to atheism, Humanism and secularism. Finally there is information about some resources that are available to you both through the Chaplaincy and more widely around the college.

I hope you will find this booklet helpful, and that the Chaplaincy will be an important aspect of your time here. May you be successful in your studies and grow into the full stature of your humanity.

Revd Adele Rees
Coordinating Chaplain (Anglican)
E: a.rees@gold.ac.uk
T: 020 7717 2953
W: gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy
Finding peace on a busy campus

Sometimes it can seem as if wherever you go you are surrounded by the pressures of college life, fortunately there are still pockets of calm that can offer respite. Two of those spaces fall under the care of the Chaplaincy.

Multi Faith Prayer Room
The Multi-Faith Prayer Room is situated in the Richard Hoggart Building in Room 2.106 on the first floor, next to the Chesterman Rooms. It is designed to be a welcoming and accessible space for people of all faiths and traditions, but because of the range of religious and cultural traditions involved this inevitably requires all users to accept some infringement of their religious sensibilities.

Please read these guidelines, and take care to be aware of the religious sensibilities of others, which may be very different to your own.

Availability:
• The Multi-faith Prayer Room is divided by a curtain to enable men and women to pray separately, for Muslims and others where this is part of their tradition. When the room has not been booked in advance by any group the ‘male users’ side may also be used by mixed gender groups of other traditions. Please maintain the ‘female users’ side as a women only space.
• The Prayer Room may be booked for communal prayers or worship by any group. Small groups may book the ‘male users’ side. Larger groups may book the whole space which may be used by drawing back the dividing curtain.
• All requests for booking should be made at least seven days in advance to the Chaplaincy – T: 020 7717 2953 or E: chaplaincy@gold.ac.uk
• All bookings will be listed and displayed outside the Multi-faith room
• In general (when no booking has been made), the room is available for private prayers and devotions – please keep silence and maintain an atmosphere of respect.

Chaplaincy Centre 31 Laurie Grove
Goldsmiths Chaplaincy Centre has a new home! We now have a lovely space at 31 Laurie Grove. Here you will find a light warm space where you can just sit and relax. We have comfy chairs, nice pictures and some resources for those who want to explore their spirituality. We keep a small library of books that can be borrowed, topics include spirituality, meditation, and living in London (a deposit of £5 is required and returned to you when the book is returned to us). This space can also be used for small gatherings for discussions or just for fun.
Religious Literacy Leadership Programme

Faith is no more or less important an identity than any other. But there are factors which make faith hard to explore: it is often viewed with suspicion or distaste; there is a widespread public awareness of religion yet with a limited public vocabulary; and it has become more prominent as a line of debate and anxiety in recent years. A multi-faith society presents important challenges for understanding differences within and between faith traditions and for working beyond religious traditions with wider society to maximum effect. This requires us all to be ‘literate’ about the faiths we encounter.

The Religious Literacy Leadership Programme is a national programme based in the Faiths & Civil Society Unit at Goldsmiths. It aims to assist university leaders to develop outlooks and strategies that engage positively with faith, promoting universities as places that can lead and shape informed responses to faith in wider society. A central question is the extent to which universities should reflect or challenge a public role for faith in what is often assumed to be a largely secular society. How universities lead on the status, role and shape of faith in public spaces will be highly influential to how it unfolds in wider society – and how it develops under the future leadership of today’s graduates and staff.

Religious Literacy Leadership in Higher Education is about:
• Supporting the best experience for students and staff of all faith backgrounds and none
• Limiting ‘equalities’ challenges and litigation relating to religion and belief
• Supporting international students and staff from a range of faith and cultural backgrounds with sensitivity and skill
• Addressing good campus relations, especially in the context of freedom of speech
• Considering how faith communities might contribute on issues such as unemployment, poverty, social justice and the environment.

Adam Dinham
Professor of Faith & Public Policy, Head of Community Studies & Head of Research (Social, therapeutic and Community Studies)
Beliefs
Buddhism teaches that life is unsatisfactory. Life can be experienced as painful and frustrating, impermanent and fleeting, or insubstantial. When we experience life as unsatisfying, we tend to crave pleasant experiences and avoid disappointing ones. We do this more or less habitually. Our habits tie us into a reactive cycle of craving and aversion. This exhausting cycle can be broken, when our experience is fully aligned with Reality. The Buddha taught that a way to break this cycle is to practise ethics and meditation, and to cultivate wisdom, which is a deep understanding and acceptance of things as they are. The Triratna Buddhist Community (and Order) was established 45 years ago by Ven. Urgyen Sangharakshita, an Englishman who was ordained as a Buddhist monk in India and practised there for 20 years before coming back to Britain. He created a new kind of Buddhist movement, which translates traditional Buddhist teachings into forms of practice appropriate for the modern world. The Order emphasises equal ordination for men and women irrespective of their lifestyle. Commitment to spiritual practice is primary. Other key emphases are an ecumenical approach to traditional Buddhist teachings, spiritual friendship, and appreciation of the arts.

Meditation practices can be divided into samatha and vipassana practices. Samatha practices develop calm, concentration and positive emotion and are practised as Mindfulness of Breathing and Development of Loving Kindness (Metta Bhavana). Vipassana practices aim at developing insight into Reality. Developing and cultivating wisdom happens through studying and reflecting the Dharma, the Buddha’s teaching. Through study and reflection we deepen our understanding of what Reality is and how we can best live our lives according to that understanding. Buddhist ethics is an ethics of intention in which the key principle is non-violence. Buddhists celebrate a number of festivals timed to the full moon: Parinirvana Day in February, Buddha Day (Wesak) in May, Dharma Day in July, Padmasambhava Day in October and Sangha Day in November. All are important events to celebrate together and to contemplate key teachings of the Buddha.

Practical information
Our Buddhist Faith Advisor is:
Mr David Woodger (Nichiren Buddhist)
E: d.woodger@gold.ac.uk  T: 020 7919 7827

Goldsmiths does not currently have an active Buddhist Society. If you would be interested in starting one please contact the Students Union.

We do offer meditation in several forms through the Chaplaincy, for more information go to the Chaplaincy webpages
www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/meditation

To find your nearest Buddhist place of worship visit
www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/local-worship

“Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love; this is the eternal rule.”
Siddhartha Gautama Buddha
Christianity

Beliefs
Christians believe that God became fully present in the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. A Jew himself, he summarised the law as loving God and neighbour. But he extended the message of God’s redemption to all people and Christians believe that in dying on the Cross, he made himself a sacrifice to reconcile all humanity with its creator. They believe he rose from the dead and has sent the Spirit of God to renew and inspire people in the world today. Consequently, Christians have a distinctive understanding of God as a trinity: Father (Creator), Son (Redeemer), and Holy Spirit (Sustainer), while still emphasising the unity of God. Their scriptures consist of four different accounts of the life of Jesus (gospels), an account of life among the earliest disciples, a prophecy about the future, and a number of letters to early Christian communities. Many of these letters were written by St Paul, a former opponent of Jesus’ early followers who had a powerful conversion experience and went on to expound much of Christian thought and practice. These different books comprise the New Testament which Christians add to the Hebrew scriptures of the Jewish faith.

Customs and practices
Somebody becomes a Christian through Baptism (immersion in water) which symbolises a sharing in the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is an initiation into the life of the Church which Christians believe to be the body of Christ in the world today. Christians pray, worship and read the Bible together. They also follow Jesus’ instruction of taking bread and wine, and declaring it his body and blood offered in sacrifice for all. Jesus was poor and homeless, and was criticised for associating himself with others who were socially outcast. So Christians believe that as well as teaching others about Jesus they should work for peace and social justice. The principal Christian festivals are Christmas (celebrated on 25 December by most Christians), when the birth of Jesus is remembered, and Easter (which varies according to the lunar calendar) when Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is celebrated.

Practical information
Look out for our regular lunchtime events including: Holy Communion; Quaker Meetings; Lectio Divina; Intentional lunches; Meditation; and silent prayer. For up to date information go to our webpages www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/events

Romantic Catholic Chaplains
Sr Lynne, Sr Rita and Sr Anouska
This year we have three new Catholic Chaplains from the community ‘Faithful Companions of Jesus’, a Jesuit order. There will be a weekly Mass as well as the opportunity for spiritual support and ‘Daily Life’ retreats.
For more information go to www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/events
E: l.baron@gold.ac.uk
r.mcloughlin@gold.ac.uk
a.robinson-biggin@gold.ac.uk
T: 020 8692 6931
W: www.fcjsisters.org
Blog: http:/fcjsisters.wordpress.com/

Chinese Language Chaplain
Revd Taiming Pang
“I am a Chinese Pastor from the local church (East London Alliance Church) in Deptford. I have lived in and around London and I am particularly keen to support Chinese students at the University. I am very positive person and I enjoy other people’s company, but I also value being by myself from time to time. I enjoy good books and movies, the countryside and nature, as well as things that make me laugh.”
E: t.pang@gold.ac.uk
T: 07717893113

Quaker Faith Advisor
Rachel Parry
Rachel will be returning from maternity leave in January 2014. Rachel runs our monthly Quaker service and is available to answer questions about Quakerism.
E: chaplaincy@gold.ac.uk

Christian Union
Goldsmiths has an active CU that meets weekly on Thursday evenings from 5-7pm.
E: cugoldsmiths@googlemail.com
Find the Goldsmiths CU on Facebook

To find your nearest Christian place of worship visit www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/local-worship
Hinduism

Beliefs
The term “Hinduism” was coined as recently as the 19th century to cover a wide range of ancient creeds, textual traditions and religious groups. Thus Hinduism has no single founder, doctrine or religious authority. Hinduism is best understood as a complete way of life, a path of sanctification and discipline that leads to a higher level of consciousness. This path is known as Dharma, the ancient law. Hindus are often thought to be polytheists but most claim to believe in one supreme god who is incarnated in many forms. Hindus revere a body of texts as sacred scriptures known as the Vedas. Veda is a Sanskrit word meaning knowledge and many of these scriptures are concerned with Dharma. Other important texts include the great epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. The Bhagavad Gita (part of the Mahabharata) is very popular in the West. Hindus believe that existence is a cycle of birth, death and rebirth, governed by Karma, a concept whereby beneficial effects are derived from past beneficial actions. Hindus believe that the soul passes through a cycle of successive lives and its next incarnation is always dependent on how the previous life was lived.

Customs and practices
Hindus follow the lunar calendar and particular days are set aside during the week and month to honour particular manifestations of God. The main festivals are celebrated in different ways by different communities. The most commonly celebrated festivals are Diwali, the Festival of Lights, and Navrathi, nine nights which celebrate the triumph of good over evil. This takes place twice a year.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”
Mahatma Gandhi

Practical information
Our Hindu Faith Advisor is:
Mr Siva Pillai
E: s.pillai@gold.ac.uk  T: 020 7919 7316

Goldsmiths does not currently have an active Hindu Society. If you would be interested in starting one please contact the Students Union.

To find your nearest Hindu place of worship visit www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/local-worship
Islam

Beliefs
Islam is an Arabic word which means willing submission to God. The root of the word Islam comes from a word meaning peace and Muslims believe it is the way of peace as laid down in the Quran. The Arabic word Allah means One God, and at the heart of the Muslim faith is belief in the unity and universality of God. Muslims also believe in the unity of mankind, under one father, Adam, and have a strong sense of the Muslim community or Ummah and an awareness of their solidarity with all Muslims worldwide. Muslims believe that God has sent a succession of prophets such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses and Jesus, and see Mohammed as the last and final prophet. Mohammed was born in Mecca in 570 CE and received revelations from God through the Angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years. These were recorded in Islam’s Holy Book known as the Quran, which is regarded as the literal word of God. Muslims are taught to recite the Quran in Arabic as any translation of the Holy Book is seen as inadequate. Around one fifth of the world’s population practises Islam.

Customs and practices
Islam has five pillars that represent the foundation of Islamic worship and practice: Shahadah: “There is no God but the one true God and Mohammed is his messenger”. Reciting this with intention three times makes someone a Muslim.
Salat: Prayer five times a day at given times.
Zakat: Two and a half percent of a Muslim’s assets over a given specified amount is given in welfare tax to benefit the poor.
Hajj: An annual pilgrimage to Mecca which is a requirement at least once in a lifetime for those who can afford it.
Sawm: During the month of Ramadan (the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar), Muslims are required to abstain from food, drink and sexual acts from dawn until sunset. The end of Ramadan marks the beginning of the festival of Eid ul-Fitr when Muslims visit the Mosque, give charity, exchange presents and cards, and celebrate with family and friends. Eid ul-Adha coincides with the completion of the Hajj and unites the whole Islamic community.

“Let yourself be drawn by the stronger pull of that which you truly love.”
Jalal ad-Din Rumi (13th century Sufi poet)

Practical information
Prayer Facilities for Goldsmiths staff and students are in the Richard Hoggart Building Multi Faith Prayer Room 2.106. If this is in use it is also possible to use the quiet space in the Chaplaincy.
Jummah prayers run from 12.30pm on Fridays in the Multi Faith Prayer Room.

Islamic Society
Goldsmiths has both sisters and brothers groups which run a number of activities including: Weekly Circles, Charity Week, Islamic Awareness Week, Annual Dinner, plus much much more!!!
E: info@goldisoc.org W: www.goldsmithsisoc.co.uk Twitter: @GoldISOC

To find your nearest Islamist place of worship visit www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/local-worship
Beliefs
The Jewish people believe themselves to be descended from a Semitic tribe that originated in the land of Canaan in the Middle East. Their early history is told in the Hebrew scriptures which recount how God promised to Abraham, a trader and leader of a nomadic tribe, that his descendants would be the father of a great nation. Abraham’s grandson Jacob had twelve sons who became ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. They were enslaved in Egypt and the book of Exodus tells how they were liberated under the leadership of Moses. For many years they wandered in the wilderness, during which time God revealed to Moses the Torah, or Law, which constitutes the Jewish way of life. After Moses’ death the tribes eventually conquered the Promised Land with the help of God.

Study and interpretation of the Torah is an integral part of Jewish life. It covers family relationships, social interaction and good commercial practice, as well as setting out the religious rituals that are still celebrated today. In the modern world the vast majority of Jews are less than fully observant and there is a broad spectrum within the Jewish community from orthodox, to reform, to entirely secular.

Customs and practices
The Jewish Sabbath begins on Friday evening at sunset and is an important time when families gather for the Shabbat meal. Orthodox Jews will not drive or carry out domestic chores. There are five festivals on which observant Jews are forbidden to work. The New Year (Rosh Hashanah) falls in the autumn and is followed ten days later by the most solemn day of the year, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). The other major festivals are known as the three pilgrim festivals: Passover (Pesach) in the spring, Pentecost (Shavuot) which occurs seven weeks later and Tabernacles (Sukkot) which takes place in the autumn. Jewish food laws are highly complicated, prohibiting certain animals and shell fish. Acceptable animals must be slaughtered in such a way as renders them kosher.

Practical information
Our Jewish Faith Advisor is:
Rabbi Dovid Cohen
E: dovid@chabadslc.com  T: 07801 491386

Jewish Chaplain for London Rabbi Gavin Broder is available for one-on-one chats and welfare support, and works with the Jewish Society and the UJS helping to support and run student events.
T: 020 7388 1976  E: rabbibroder@mychaplaincy.co.uk
Facebook: Gavin ‘Rav Gav’ Broder

Goldsmiths Jewish Society
The society exists to promote Judaism in a social setting for those Jewish and those interested in Judaism in an informal, social and educational setting. The types of events we are likely to host this year include weekly Lunch & Learns, Monthly social events (I.e. pub crawls, bowling) and one weekend get together every term
E: goldsmithsjsoc@gmail.com   Facebook: www.facebook.com/goldsmiths.jsoc

To find your nearest Jewish place of worship visit www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/local-worship
Beliefs
The Sikh faith was revealed through the teachings of the ten Gurus, the first of whom was Guru Nanak Dev Ji, born in 1469 CE in the Punjab. In 1708 the tenth and the last Guru in human form, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, vested spiritual authority in the Holy Sikh scriptures known as the Guru Granth Sahib Ji and temporal authority in the community of initiated Sikhs, the Khalsa Panth.

Sikhs strictly believe that there is one God. While being absolute and beyond human comprehension, God can be realised and experienced through contemplation and service. The object of a Sikh’s life is to develop God consciousness and ultimately to receive God’s grace.

A Sikh’s way of life is guided by the principles of remembering God at all times (Naam Simran), earning a living by honest means (Kirat Karna), and sharing with the poor and needy (Wand Shakna). Sikhs try to avoid the five vices that make people self-centred and build barriers against God in their lives: lust, covetousness, attachment to things of this world, anger and pride.

Customs and practices
The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh Ji, abolished distinctions of caste, colour, race and religion. He made it obligatory for initiated Sikhs to share Amrit (holy water), to adopt the same religious name of Singh (lion) for men and Kaur (princess) for women, and to wear five articles of faith, commonly known as the five K’s: Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha (a small wooden comb), Kara (an iron/steel bangle), Kirpan (a short sword for defence) and Kachhera (special shorts). Although not mentioned in the five articles of faith, the Daastar (turban) is an essential accompaniment, which is worn to maintain the sanctity of Kesh and is treated with utmost respect. The Guru instructed Sikhs to abstain from tobacco drugs and intoxicants. The Guru also instructed Sikhs to contribute a minimum one tenth of their wealth, mind and body for religious purposes or to the needy.

Practical information
Goldsmiths does not currently have an active Sikh Society. If you would be interested in starting one please contact the Students Union.

To find your nearest Sikh place of worship visit www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/local-worship

Without contentment, we are never fulfilled. Like vapid dreams, our goals and efforts are in vain.”

Guru Nanak
Atheism is the absence of belief in supernatural or divine beings. Atheists believe that anyone is entitled to their own religious and non-religious beliefs. As atheists usually trust to the scientific method when it comes to understanding how the universe works, they think that it is not up to them to disprove the existence of God, but up to theists to provide a rationale for theism. Agnostics, irreligious or religious sceptics share a general doubt about the existence of supernatural beings with atheists.

Most atheists and many theists are secularists, in that they think that beliefs are something private and personal that should not be imposed on anyone, especially not through public institutions, before which each human being should be equal. Their belief in the importance of the human rights of each individual connects atheists and secularists to humanism.

Humanism is a set of moral and ethical standpoints that constitutes a belief in the advancement of humanity through its own efforts. Humanists endorse ideals that promote the peaceful co-habitation of all beings on earth such as fairness, compassion, tolerance, reason, empathy, and a concern for human beings and other sentient animals.

Atheists, secularists and humanists (ASHs) think that an ethical way of life comes from within all of us and extends to all people, irrespective of their chosen lifestyles or personal decisions. Therefore, customs and practices of ASHs are determined on a personal basis, with the foundations of reason and compassion at the centre. Thus, there are no practices that make someone more or less of an ASH.

Nevertheless, ASHs think that human beings can act to give their own lives meaning by seeking happiness in this life and helping others to do the same. For this purpose, many ASHs meet regularly to talk, learn and share ideas, to discuss and campaign on social and moral issues, and to socialise and celebrate life and significant events. For instance, registered Humanist Celebrants conduct ceremonies to observe life rites (e.g., birth, coming of age, marriage, death). Some ASHs celebrate Darwin Day on 12 February.

“"My country is the world, and my religion is to do good.”

Thomas Paine, The Rights of Man, 1791

Practical information

Goldsmiths does not currently have an active Atheism/Humanism/Secularism Society. If you would be interested in starting one please contact the Students Union.
Finding Support

University can be a stressful place, even when you are enjoying it. Goldsmiths takes the mental and emotional health of its students as seriously as it does your academic endeavours.

Spirituality is largely about awareness of ourselves and awareness of our relationship to the world around us. Our spiritual health is compromised to the extent that a lack of awareness leads us to have an inaccurate understanding of reality. In order to increase our awareness we need to spend time examining, reflecting and assessing our understanding of ourselves, our relationships and the world around us.

To help you think about your spiritual health why not take the Spiritual Health Check? www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/spiritual

If you are looking for a local place of worship there are a number listed on the Chaplaincy webpages: www.gold.ac.uk/chaplaincy/local-worship

We are always looking for recommendations, so if you have had a good experience of somewhere email the chaplaincy (@gold.ac.uk) so we can update our information.

Sometimes you may find that you need a little bit more support than usual. As well as the Chaplaincy there are lots of places around Goldsmiths where you can access additional support:

Goldsmiths Counselling Service:
Offering both one to one sessions with a qualified counsellor and workshops to support you during your time at university.
T: 020 7919 7472   E: counselling-service@gold.ac.uk
20 Laurie Grove New Cross SE14 6NH
www.gold.ac.uk/counselling

Disability Team:
T: 020 7717 2292   E: disability@gold.ac.uk

Student Union Advice:
T: 020 8692 1406   E: advice@goldsmithssu.org

External help can also be sought via the following:

Samaritans:
T: 08457 90 90 90

Nightline (6pm-8am):
T: 020 7631 0101   E: listening @nightline.org.uk

Supportline:
T: 01708 765 200   E: info@supportline.org.uk

HOPEline UK:
T: 0800 068 41 41   E: pat@papyrus-uk.org
“...The contemporary religious landscape of the UK should be seen as exhibiting contours that are ‘Christian, secular and religiously plural’. Thus, the contemporaneity socio-religious reality of England and the UK might be described as ‘three-dimensional’ in contrast with a more ‘one-dimensional’ Christian inheritance or the ‘two-dimensional’ religious-secular modifications made to that self-understanding during the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries”