

Religion in the Humanities¹

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Abstract

Founded in 2000, and conceptualised in a consciously positioned postapartheid paradigm, the relatively new undergraduate Programme in Religion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has been offered at the Howard College campus since 2005. This article provides a brief background for the programme, and then proceeds to analyse a selection of the first and second level modules, focusing on the steady growth experienced, 2005 – 2010. This is followed by an analysis of the home disciplines of students and the reasons why they enrolled for RELG101 and RELG106. Finally, the article deals with the interdisciplinary potential this focus on the programme in Religion reveals. The assumption is that such analyses reveal observable trends that need to be taken into consideration in the further offering and developing of the modules – as well as the programme more broadly speaking.

Keywords: Programme in Religion, first and second level modules, home disciplines, electives, newly constructed BA major in Religion

Following the government decision to merge institutions of Higher Learning on 9 December 2002², the former Universities of Durban-Westville and Natal in the province of KwaZulu-Natal started with preliminary discussions on the

¹ The first draft of the paper was delivered at the Thirty-second Annual Congress of the Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa, Unisa, Pretoria, 2010.

² Cf. 'Terms of Reference and Approach' in the Council on Higher Education (CHE) document, *The Governance of Merger in South African Higher Education* (Hall, Symes & Luescher 2004).

merger in 2003. The major cross-site relocation, movement and merging of departments and disciplines took place in 2004 – 2006, with final post-merger consolidation of disciplines in 2008³. One of the major decisions was to make the main campus of the former University of Durban-Westville, the campus that would specialize in Information Technology, Management Studies, Business Administration and Science. The campus of the former University of Natal, Howard College campus, Durban, would house all the Humanities disciplines, Engineering, and Law. This meant that the Faculty of Humanities of the former University of Durban-Westville would merge with its equivalent at the former University of Natal and as a whole move to the Howard College campus site. This move would also for the first time bring the Religion discipline with its programmes and modules as options to the Howard College site⁴.

Approved by SAQA in 1999, the Religion discipline is founded on social science approaches to the study of Religion. It was offered at the former University of Durban-Westville as part of the programmes in the newly-founded School of Religion and Culture in the then newly-founded Faculty of Humanities (2000 – 2003). A few years later, the programme⁵ was moved to the Howard College Campus and established amongst all the other

³ Four new institutions came into being with effect from January 2004 (Cf. Hall, Symes & Luescher 2004: iv): KwaZulu-Natal University: From the former University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville; North-West University: including Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education and the University of the North-West; University of South Africa: Including the former UNISA, Technikon SA and Distance Education Campus of Vista University – as a dedicated distance education institution; and Tshwane University of Technology: From the former Pretoria Technikon, Technikon Northern Gauteng and North-West Technikon.

⁴ A secular Jewish Studies programme with religious components was offered during the 1980s and 1990s.

⁵ For a cursory overview of a selection of the rationales as well as the nature and systems related to the three main programmes in Religion – the undergraduate Programme in Religion and the two postgraduate programmes, the Programme in Religion and Social Transformation and the Programme in Religion Education – cf. Smit ([2014]).

Humanities disciplines and their qualifications in the new Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (HDSS). By 2005, it has phased out its offerings at the Westville campus while having started its offerings at the Howard College site simultaneously. In July 2008, it moved from its temporary site at Howard College to its current location in the Memorial Tower Building (MTB). This new location is significant because the discipline is located within the same building as the disciplines of isiZulu, English, Linguistics, Philosophy, Psychology, Environmental Sciences, History, Anthropology, Gender Studies, Sociology and Labour Studies amongst others. Furthermore, the MTB is located between the Law Faculty building on its southern side and the Engineering buildings on its northern side. As is characteristic of residential campuses, geographical proximity provides students from these two faculties with the option to also enrol for their cross-faculty electives in Religion.

Taking these developments into consideration, this article addresses the enrolling of students from within the Faculties of Humanities, Law and Engineering for Religion modules as electives. On the one hand, we need to take cognizance of the fact that there is a specific interest of students from within our fellow Humanities disciplines to enrol for modules in Religion, as well as for students from the faculties of Law and Engineering. By establishing the degree to which there are certain trends in these uptakes of Religion modules, one could develop secondary elements⁶ in modules and offerings in such a way that they could more consciously articulate with the disciplinary, career and existential or ‘meaning’ expectations among students from these disciplines and faculties⁷. On the other hand the developing of the curriculum of the Religion discipline itself in terms of current socio-economic and related contextual imperatives, as well as the critical scrutiny

⁶ The most prominent is to build in choices between interdisciplinary focuses in learning as well as skills developing activities – e.g. for semester papers.

⁷ Seeing that South Africa is a developmental state – still very much engaged in social transformation processes away from determinations by its colonial and apartheid pasts – this observation is important (cf. the divergent views on South Africa as Developmental State, in Stiglitz 2001; Rodrik 2006; Turok 2008; Poon 2009; Fine 2010).

of these articulations⁸, could assist in gaining an improved understanding of the challenges the discipline faces. It could also open possibilities for innovative developments for both its undergraduate as well as postgraduate programmes⁹.

Against this very brief historical and contextual background, this paper seeks to accomplish three objectives. *Firstly*, it briefly overviews the enrolment figures of select modules offered for the period 2005 – 2010 as electives to students across the disciplines at the Howard College site. The objective is to represent these figures in line and column graphs so as to get a sense of the actual enrolment figures in the modules for these six years.

Secondly, it provides an analysis of the home disciplines and programmes of students who enrolled for RELG101 Introduction to Religion and RELG106 Religion and Conflict as electives. To this is added a cursory analysis and interpretation of the reasons why students from the Faculties of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (HDSS), Law and Engineering did so. Such analyses will not only reveal the trends with regard to the home disciplines of the students enrolling for the modules, but also the trends in the rationales of students taking the different modules.

This is, *thirdly* followed by a brief analysis and interpretation of the significance of the articulations of these two modules with the home disciplines from which students came. This focus will enlighten on some of the content dynamics the interaction of the disciplines with the specific module bring to the fore and how this may feed into the broader paradigm of Comparative Religion Studies which frames the school's programmes.

⁸ The main overall challenge is to continue to develop a bouquet of Humanities programmes that not only provide students with the most excellent scholarly, knowledge and skills education but also prepare them for careers and a job market in which there are high expectations that graduates perform excellently career-wise.

⁹ These challenges form part of the general challenges faced by the Humanities the world over. For South Africa, see the recently published *Report Commissioned by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences* (Sitas *et al.* 2011) and the *Consensus Study on the State of the Humanities in South Africa: Status, Prospects and Strategies* (Jansen & Vale 2011).

For this, the article then *firstly*, provides the figures and numbers; the second, the home discipline trends and rationales with regard to the two first level modules; and the third, some insight into the dynamics of the interaction of the Religion modules with the respective disciplines – where in future, similar studies can lead to a closer development of the modules to also link up with issues addressed in the home disciplines of students within the broader paradigm of Comparative Religion Studies.

I

Enrolment Figures: Electives in Religion (2005 – 2010)

Since 2005, we have offered a wide variety of modules at Howard College campus. The most popular among students taking electives, have proven to be first and second level modules from the Comparative Religion stream. The main reason is that students normally pick up electives at first and second levels and not necessarily third levels¹⁰. Even though the first level modules, RELG101 Introduction to Religion and RELG106 Religion and Conflict, form part of the BA Major in Religion, they are also very popular with students from other disciplines enrolling for them as electives. The data for these two modules together with other popular second level Comparative Religion level modules is as follows¹¹.

¹⁰ Final year students normally concentrate on completing their studies, and may still pick up outstanding electives at first and second levels but not third levels – except when they do this out of their own curiosity, interest, or desire to include some of our third level modules in their bouquet of undergraduate studies.

¹¹ The second level Comparative Religion modules offered during this time, were: RELG207 Religion, Migration and Urbanization; RELG209 Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa; RELG214 Women, Religion and Culture; and RELG217 Religion and the Media. Due to their technical nature, modules from the Religion-specific stream are not as popular as the Comparative Religion ones.

	Years					
Modules	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
RELG101	34	161	182	161	136	180
RELG106	104	122	73	99	89	114+
RELG207	40	66	70	116	125	53+
RELG209	-	-	-	43	79	100
RELG214	61	46	49	86	96	41+
RELG217	-	20	-	145	95	40+

Table 1: Popular second level Comparative Religion modules

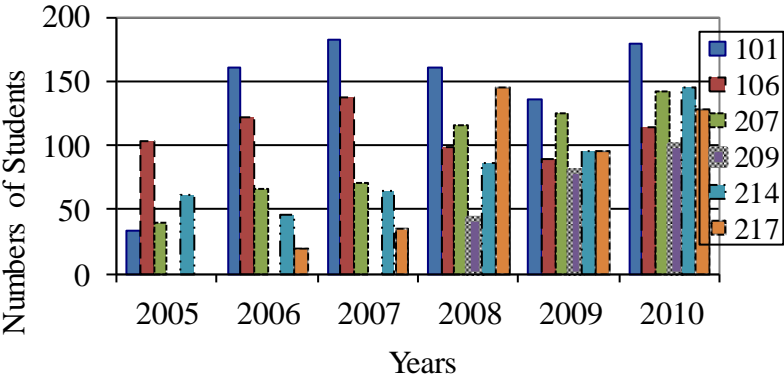


Figure 1: Column Graph:- Selection of Electives: 2005 – 2010

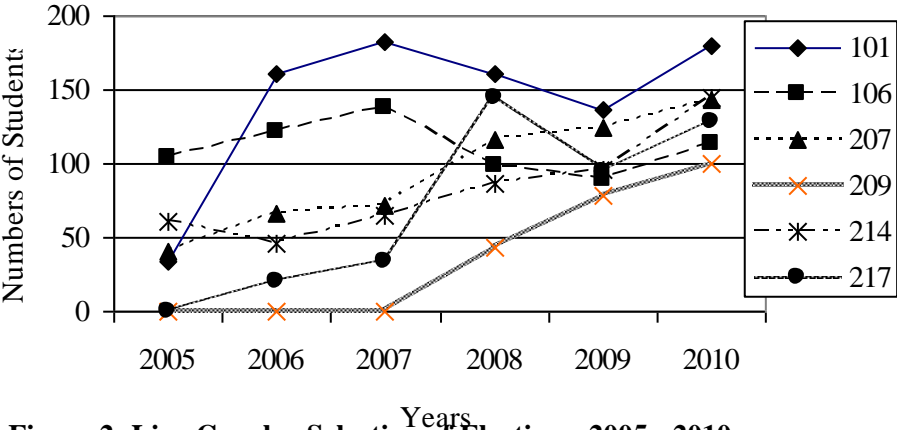


Figure 2: Line Graph:- Selection of Electives: 2005 - 2010

The line graph clearly shows the upward movement of the numbers in all modules towards the latter part of the period covered. RELG209 and RELG217 were only offered from 2008 and 2006 respectively.

The pie-chart below gives an indication of the progressive growth in student numbers in electives in percentages per annum over a six year period since the university introduced the offering of Religion at Howard College campus.

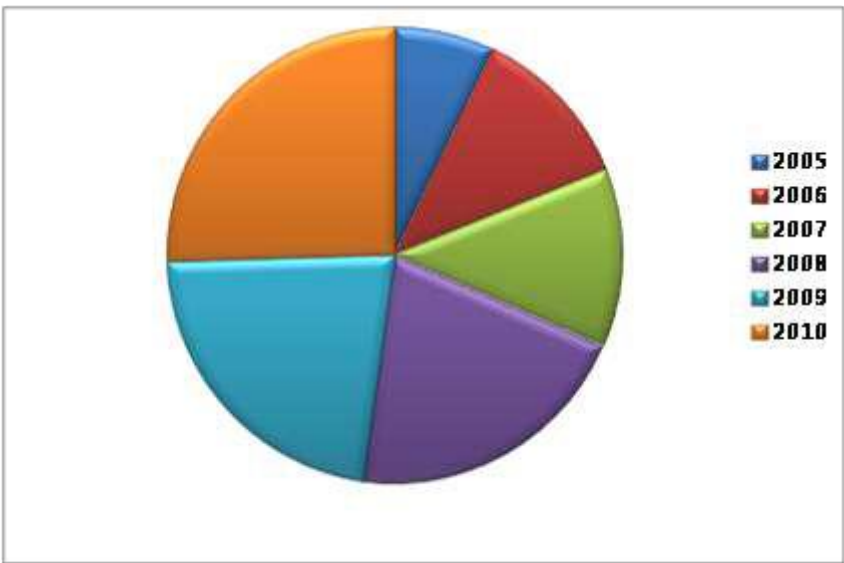


Figure 3: Pie-chart of progressive increase in Undergraduate Religion modules: 2005 – 2010

It is evident that there has been a steady annual increase of students taking the Religion modules as electives, indicating the growing popularity of these modules at the Howard College campus.

In what follows, we provide a brief overview of the selected Comparative Religion modules in line and column graph form that were offered as electives over the six year period. In these graphic representations, one can clearly see the upward movement of the enrolments over the years with regard to each of the individual modules.

RELG101 Introduction to Religion

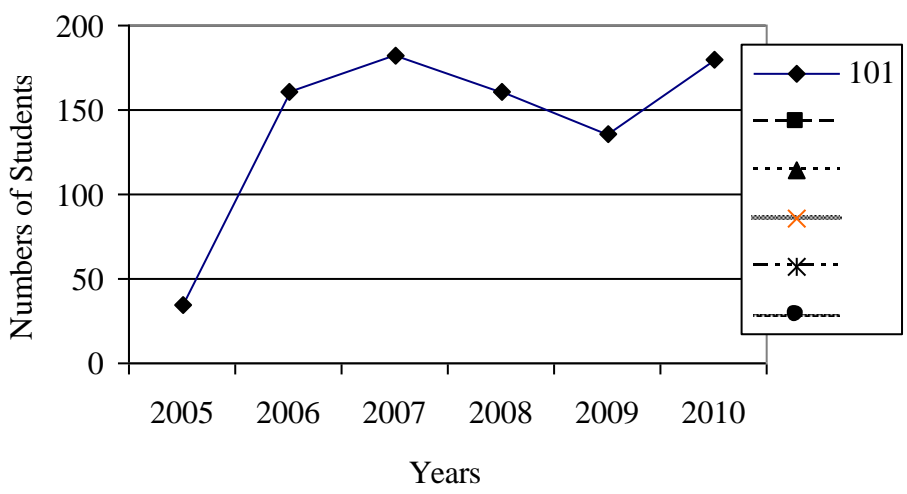


Figure 4: Line graph:- RELG101 Introduction to Religion

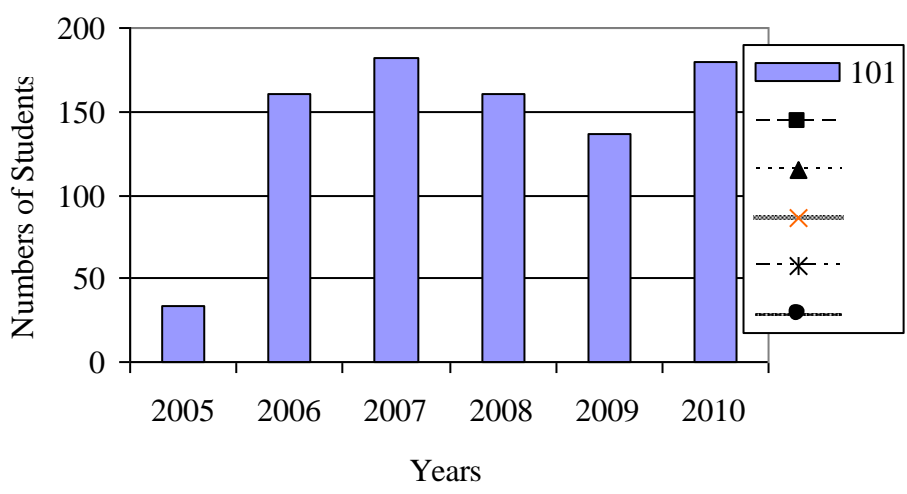


Figure 5: Column graph:- RELG101 Introduction to Religion

RELG 106 Religion and Conflict



Figure 6: Line graph:- RELG106 Religion and Conflict

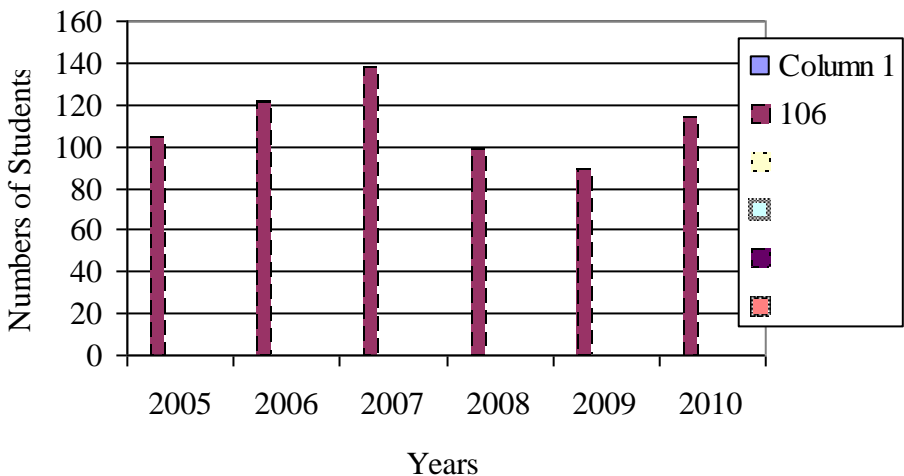


Figure 7: Column graph:- RELG106 Religion and Conflict

RELG207 Religion, Migration and Urbanization

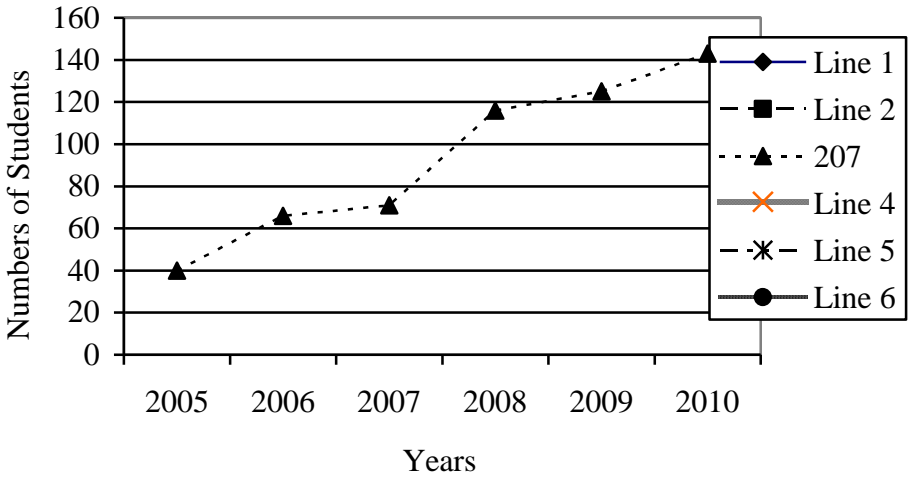


Figure 8: Line graph:- RELG207 Religion, Migration and Urbanization

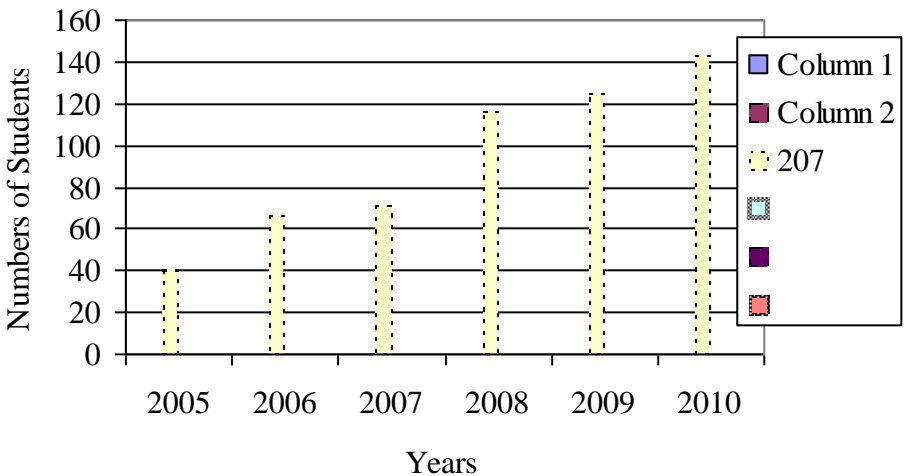


Figure 9: Column graph:- RELG207 Religion, Migration and Urbanization

RELG209 Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa

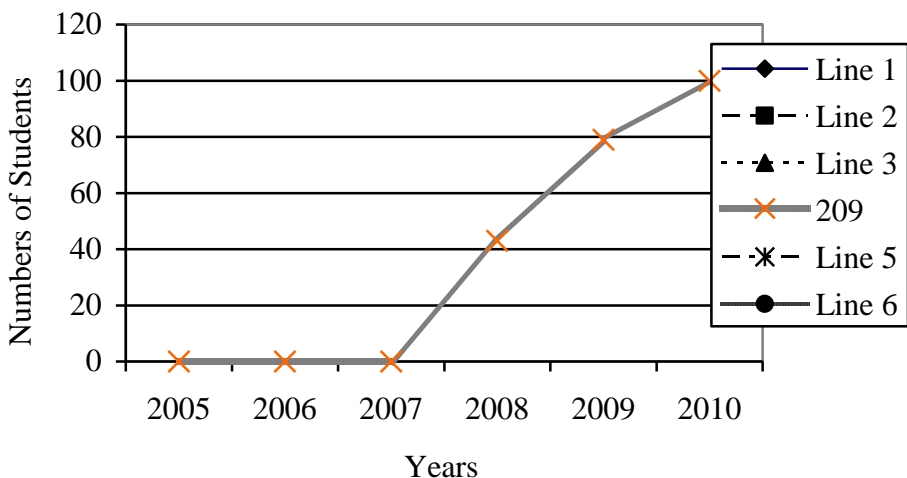


Figure 10: Line graph:- RELG209 Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa

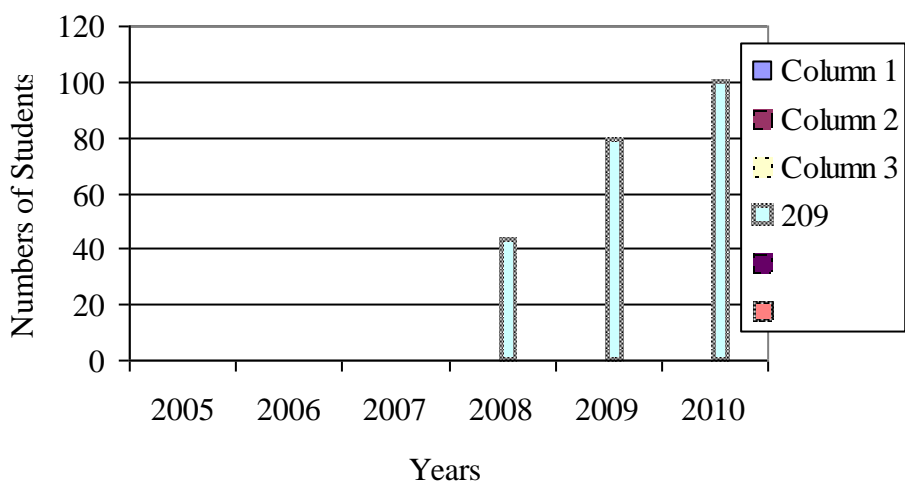


Figure 11: Column graph:- RELG209 Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa

RELG214 Women in Religion and Culture

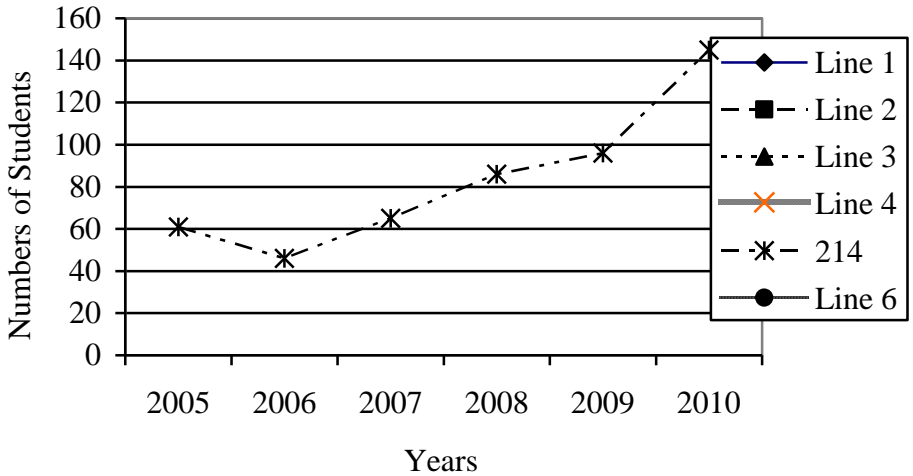


Figure 12: Line graph:- Women in Religion and Culture

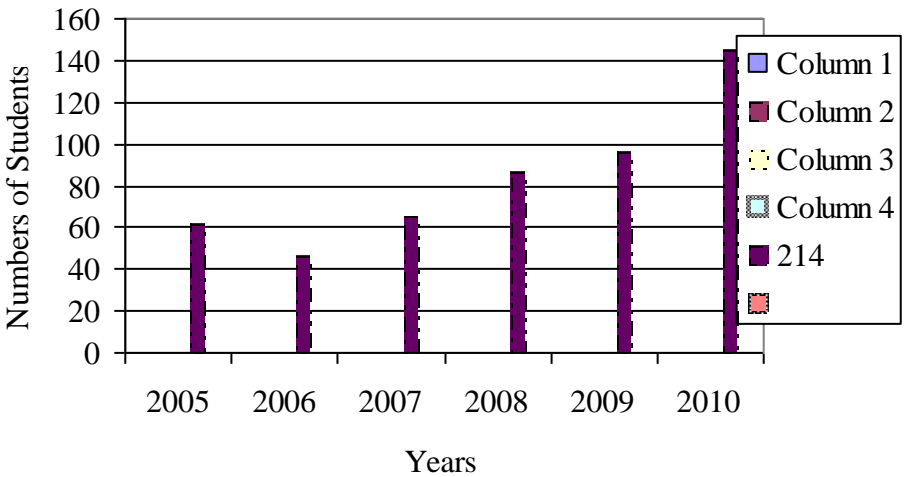


Figure 13: Column graph:- Women in Religion and Culture

RELG217 Religion and the Media

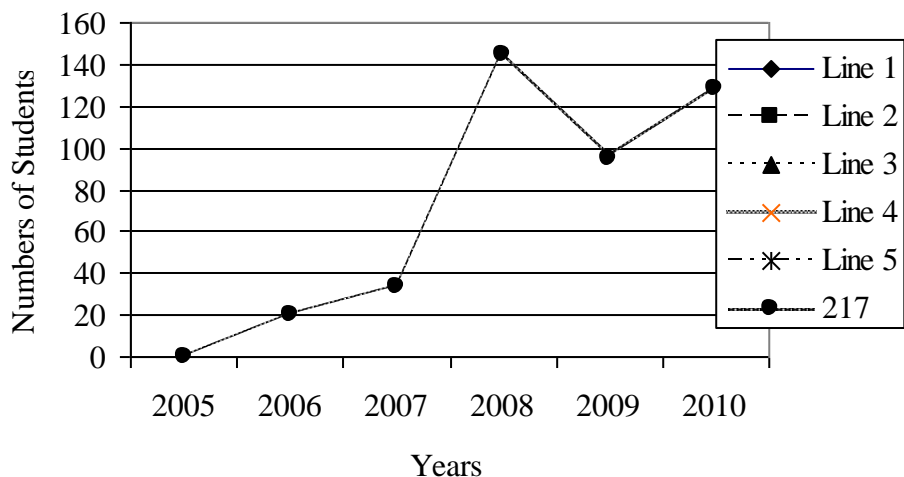


Figure 14: Line graph:- RELG217 Religion and the Media

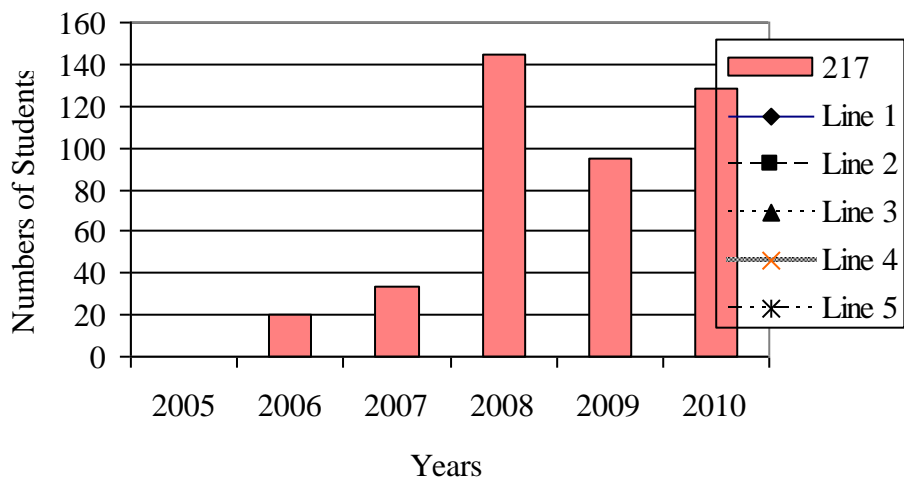


Figure 15: Column graph:- RELG217 Religion and the Media

II

Module Trends (2008 – 2010)

Against the background of the overview of 1st and 2nd level data presented in line and column graphs in the previous section, this section only focuses on the tracing of trends in the two first level modules, RELG101 Introduction to Religion, and RELG106 Religion and Conflict. The rationale is that these two modules would provide some basic indication as to the general trends in the student enrolments for the electives at the undergraduate level in Religion¹².

1 Research Instrument

The data for this section of the article is gleaned from the internal registration form that all students are expected to complete in the first lecture of each semester. The main purpose of the form is to gather some basic contact information of the student before it has been made available by the university administration. In addition, it also requires students to enter their main qualification or programme, major(s) and electives, followed by a question that reads: ‘Why have you chosen this module?’ with a blank space next to it. With regard to the interpretation of the responses to this question, there are four aspects of the form we need to keep in mind.

- Since students enrolling for the BA major in Religion mostly just state that they take it because it is a programme requirement for the BA major in Religion, these responses are not included in this study.

¹² What is not covered in this more detailed analysis, is that students from the Social Sciences and students from Development Studies mostly enroll for RELG207 Religion, Migration and Urbanization; students from the Faculty of Law, for RELG209 Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa; a general mix of HDSS and Law students enrol for RELG214 Women, Religion and Culture; and students in programmes in Media, for RELG217 Religion and the Media.

- Students from other disciplines and faculties normally have to think about choosing a specific module and the question allows for them to furnish their reasons for taking the module.
- The single question with a blank space also allows for the student's un-coerced response.
- Since module registrations and change of curriculum still continue for another two weeks, experience has shown that not all students complete the form at this first meeting of the class. Data is as follows.

	2008 Forms Completed	2008 Final Student Number	2009 Forms Completed	2009 Final Student Number	2010 Forms Completed	2010 Final Student Number
RELG101	138	161	91	136	72	177
RELG106	91	99	70	89	112	113

Figure 16: Comparison of the sample with the total number of enrolments for the year

Except for RELG101 (2010), the sample of student numbers are substantial enough to provide representative samples for revealing the trends sought in the study.

2 Home Disciplines and Rationales

An analysis of the forms submitted over the three years (2008 – 2010), shows that the students that have enrolled for the electives in Religion are from the following qualifications or programmes¹³: 1) BA; 2) BSocSc; 3) Law; 4)

¹³ Theology is not offered at the Howard College campus in Durban, so there is no data for its undergraduate degree on this campus. Even so, cf. Whaling's (1995) chapter on 'The Study of Religion in a Global Context' for his arguments regarding the distinction between the study of Religion and Theology for instance.

BSocSc (Psychology); 5) Engineering; 6) Community Development; 7) Management; 8) Social Work; 9) Geography; 10) Tourism.

The responses to the question, ‘Why have you chosen this module?’, were categorized in terms of one of six categories. These were not imposed on the data but derive from the responses of the students themselves, which remarkably could be grouped into any of the following six categories.

- 1) No information (item left blank);
- 2) Learn more about Religion;
- 3) Sounds or looks interesting;
- 4) Elective (needs credits);
- 5) Existential reasons/ love religion/ want to explore religion for myself; and
- 6) Different cultures/ diversity.

The presumed rationales for these reasons for enrolling for a Religion module may be described as follows. (In general these are normally mentioned when asked for comment during the registration process.)

- No information – This is self-explanatory. Some students may only provide the contact details on the form and not be willing to divulge any other information; or not be willing to engage the issue at all because they merely need electives and extra credits.
- Learn more about religion(s) – There may be many reasons for this statement but the most obvious is that the student has some basic religious knowledge and wants to study his or her own religion in a deeper sense or the own religion together with other religions, or all religions in general. All three of these reasons often come to the fore in discussions with students at the time of registration.
- Sounds or looks interesting – Again, there may be many reasons for this statement. Even so, the most obvious one is that since the religions, and orders and denominations normally function quite separately in civil society, and in terms of their own universes of meaning and practice, the opportunity to study the major world religions in one module in a

programme aimed at accommodating the diversity of the city in which the university is situated, seems exciting.

- Elective (needs credits) – This too is self-explanatory. There is no preference of the religion module *per se*. The student needs a ‘filler’. Another perspective – and which is one we propagate to the students – is that the student does need the credits but also need to make a conscious decision about the specific bouquet of electives to be included in the qualification or programme, so that the student has some independent decision making power over the nature of the specific qualification or degree with which s/he exits.
- Existential reasons – This rationale may link up with any of the two items on learning more about religion(s) or that the religion module ‘sounds’/ ‘looks’ interesting. Yet, we do have the added ‘meaning’ dimension that moves beyond the mere scholarly or knowledge or information gaining interest.
- Different cultures/ diversity – in a city characterized by so much diversity in terms of culture and religion as well as a variety of combinations and fusions of these, this is another reason that has social significance.

3 RELG101 Introduction to Religion

This module deals with and engages the normal introductory information about the religions as well as their specific historical and contextual significance in South Africa. The module’s aim and content descriptives are as follows.

Aim: To gain diachronic and synchronic insight into, and focus and overview of religious and cultural traditions in the broader ambit of selected issues and debates in contemporary religion.

Content: A syntagmatic and generalized study of beliefs and practices of African Traditional Religions and Cultures; Christianity; Eastern Religions and Hinduism; Islam and New Religious Movements.

3.1 2008

3.1.1 Data

Significantly, for the year 2008, and of the 138 internal registration forms completed by students taking RELG101 as elective, there were no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); BA (Psychology major); Social Work; Geography; and Tourism modules. There are some variables involved here, e.g. that Religion is not recommended by staff in these disciplines, that other electives are recommended and not Religion, or that modules with a religious focus are already available for students in the respective programmes – especially in Anthropology. For this year, the enrolment figures are as follows: BA degree (22); BSocSc (29); Law (19) BSocSc (Psychology) (10); Engineering (51); Community Development (1); and Management (9). The most significant statistic is the 51 Engineering students. At this point in 2008, we became aware that the module has become quite popular among Engineering students at Howard College campus. This was due to positive feedback by fellow students who have taken the module in previous years but also Engineering Programme Coordinators who actively encourages students to consider it as their elective taken from another faculty.

Reasons	Qualifications						
	BA	BSocSc	Law	BSSc Psych	Engin	Com Dev	Man
No information	1	1	1		7		
Learn more about religion	7	11	6	4	7	1	3
Sounds or looks interesting	6	6	4	4	7		3
Elective (needs credits)	6	11	5	2	28		
Existential reasons			3		2		
Difference of cultures/ Diversity	2						

TOTAL RESPONSES: 138

Figure 17: Data for RELG101 Introduction to Religion (2008)

3.1.2 Interpretation

The first observation is that for this year, the majority of students came from Engineering – 51 – and the second largest group, from students registered for the Social Sciences degree – 29. Numbers for the other qualification programmes are: BA – 22; Law – 18; BSocSc Psych – 10; Community Development – 1; Management – 6.

As pointed out above, we became aware of the trend of *Engineering students* taking the module in 2008, and that it has mostly come about due to the word-of-mouth advertising of the module by students who completed it in the years 2005 – 2007. By this time, we also became aware that the module was actively propagated by some academic coordinators in Engineering. Apart from taking the module for meeting the needed credit requirements, the two main reasons were that Engineering students wanted to or expected to ‘learn more about religion’ or that the module ‘sounds’ or ‘looks’ interesting. Subsequent discussions with students revealed that the module also had a surprise element in that they did not realise that ‘the world is such a religious place’. We also took the opportunity to engage Engineering lecturing staff and to discuss the future prospects of Engineering students taking the module. There was general approval of the module and support among colleagues from Engineering.

The trend for *Law students* is similar for this year – most students took the module to ‘learn more about religion’ or that the module ‘sounds or looks interesting’. Apart from possible existential reasons, there is also the added importance the module has for prospective lawyers and graduates who want to follow a career in the law profession. Similar to graduates in the helping and service professions, prospective workers in the legal fraternity would have an advantage when engaging with their clients who would come from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. This would not only provide the needed insight into specific domestic and cultural beliefs and practices, but also the needed knowledge about how to engage people from diverse backgrounds in ways that would assist them most.

For the *BA* and *BSocSc students* to ‘learn more’ about the religions and that the module ‘looks or sounds interesting’ are again the highest. Statements focused on the fact that the module allows for students to expand their knowledge about religions. Even though only 10 students from BSocSc

(Psychology) enrolled for the module, the majority here too, mentions these two reasons for taking the module. Across these disciplines, and in line with the main rationale of the module, one may assume that the module adds some basic understanding about the religions and that this would articulate with the discipline focuses in each of the areas of the BA and Social Sciences but also more specifically Psychology.

Finally, we do not think one should read something distinctive or specific into the fact that the only existential responses came from Law and Engineering students. These may be pure coincidence and existential reasons may well be embedded in the other responses. One should however remember that whereas the human and social sciences often deal with issues that involve existential questions this may not always be present in the Law and even less in the Engineering disciplines. Even if it does not form part of a programme officially, existential issues are often discussed even outside the official requirements of the programmes. From this perspective one may therefore look into the possibilities for addressing issues related to ‘meaning’ more consciously for the benefit of students who enrol for the course.

3.2 2009

3.2.1 Data

For the year 2009, 91 students enrolled for this module as an elective. There were again no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); BA (Psychology major); Geography; and Tourism modules. Social Work, however, had 2 students taking the module. For the other qualifications, the data is as follows: BA degree (11); BSocSc (17); Law (10) BSocSc (Psychology) (6); Engineering (43); Community Development (1); and Management (1). The most significant statistic again, is 43 Engineering students. It seems as if this trend continues, with positive responses from both students and Engineering academic coordinators.

Reasons	Qualifications							
	BA	BSSc	Law	BSSc Psy	Engin	Soc Wk	Com Dev	Man
No information					4			

Learn more about religion	8	6	4	1	27			
Sounds or looks interesting	3	4	2		4	1		1
Elective (needs credits)		4	4	4	8			
Existential reasons		2		1		1	1	
Difference, cultures/ Diversity		1						

TOTAL RESPONSES: 91

Figure 18: Data for RELG101 Introduction to Religion (2009)

3.2.2 Interpretation

Similar to the interpretation for 2008, the majority of students again came from Engineering – 43 – and the second largest group, from students registered for Social Sciences qualifications – 17. Numbers for the other qualifications and programmes are also similar to the previous year: BA – 11; Law – 17; BSocSc Psych – 6; Community Development – 1; and Management – 1.

As pointed out above, we became aware of the trend of *Engineering students* taking the module in 2008, and engaged academic personnel about it for which there was general support. One important deduction we may make on this point is that it is most probably due to official support from faculty, that the figure for the reason for taking the module only for its credits, has dropped by 36%, from 28 (55%) out of 51 to 8 (19%) out of 43. Whereas 28 students took the module in the previous year for its credit value, there were only 8 in 2009. Conversely, the reason that they took the module in order to ‘learn more about religion’ jumped by 49%, from 7 (14%) out of 51 to 27 (63%) out of 43. (Since the increase is so large we may even assume that the reason for taking the module was used as a motivation among the students themselves.)

The general trend for the other disciplines basically remained the same with no sufficient deviation. To ‘learn more about religions’ remain the same across the other disciplines.

3.3 2010

3.3.1 Data

For the year 2010, 72 students enrolled for this module as an elective. There were again no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); and the BA (Psychology major). There were however a few from Geography (4) and Tourism (5). For the other qualifications, the data is as follows: BA degree (6); BSocSc (14); Law (9) BSoc Sc (Psychology) (12); Engineering (39); Social Work (3); Community Development (5); Management (4); Geography (5); and tourism (1). The most significant statistic again, is the 28 Engineering students who took the module to ‘learn more about religion’.

Reasons	Qualifications									
	BA	BSSc	Law	BSSc Psy	Eng	Soc W	Com Dev	Ma	Geo	To
No info.					3					
Learn more about religion	1	4	6	5	28	3	5			1
Sounds or looks interesting	4	6		5	3					
Elective (needs credits)			3	1	5			1	5	
Existential reasons		1		1				2		
Difference, cultures/ Diversity	1	3						1		

TOTAL RESPONSES: 72

Figure 19: Data for RELG101 Introduction to Religion (2010)

3.3.2 Interpretation

The interpretation is again similar to the interpretation for 2009, with the majority of the students coming from Engineering and the second largest group, from students registered for the Social Sciences degree – 14. Numbers for the other qualification programmes are also again similar to the previous year with no significant fluctuations: BA – 6; Law – 9; BSocSc (Psych) – 12; Community Development – 5; and Management – 1. The addition of Geography and Tourism students were not very clear at this point because students from these disciplines have not taken this module before.

With regard to the reasons for enrolling for the module, it is clear that the majority of students from Law and Engineering gave as reason, to ‘Learn more about religion’. The majority of BSocSc students fall in the category of ‘Sounds or looks interesting’ with an equal split between these two reasons for the BSocSc students. Taken together, we observe though that these two reasons together by far constitute the main reasons for students taking this module.

3.4 Conclusion

As far as the analysis of the reasons why students enrol in the RELG101 Introduction to Religion is concerned, the findings can be summarised as follows.

RELG101 Introduction to Religion	2008	2009	2010	TOTAL
No information	10	4	3	17
Learn more about religion	38	46	53	137
Sounds or looks interesting	30	15	18	63
Elective (needs credits)	52	20	15	87
Existential reasons	5	5	4	14
Difference, cultures/ Diversity	2	1	5	8
TOTAL				326

Figure 19: Data summary - RELG101 Introduction to Religion (2008 – 2010)

The data speaks for itself. Even so, the most significant finding was that by far the most students enrolled for the two reasons ‘learn more about religion’ (137 or 42%) and ‘sounds or looks interesting’ (63 or 19%). These two reasons, the learning or educational and the curiosity reasons are heartening because they show that taking modules for credit only (87 or 27%) is indeed not the only reason why students take electives and in this case, the foundational RELG101 module.

4 RELG106 Religion and Conflict

This module deals with some of the kinds of conflict that exist and the variety of roles that religions and religious formations may play in these conflicts. With its main focus on the African continent, and African contextual realities, the module’s main aim and content descriptives are as follows.

Aim: To understand how religion as resource can be used in addressing conflict and redressive action.

Content: The definition of religion in conflict situations; culture and religiously-inspired conflicts in the history of religions - globally, in Africa, nationally, locally. Different kinds of culture and religious conflict; relationship between religion, culture, politics, economics; fascism, national-socialism, and religion advancement; the positive elements in conflict.

4.1 2008

4.1.1 Data

Similar to RELG101 Introduction to Religion, for 2008, there were no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); BA (Psychology major); Social Work; Geography; and Tourism modules. The reasons may be similar to the ones for RELG101 – that Religion is not recommended by staff in these disciplines, that other electives are recommended and not Religion, or that modules with a religious focus are already available for students in the respective programmes. For this year, the enrolment figures are as follows: BA degree (15); BSocSc (21); Law (12) BSocSc (Psychology) (19); Engineering (11); Community Development (1); and Management (3). In

comparison with RELG101, the most significant statistic is the low enrolment from Engineering. This may indicate that RELG101 is more popular than RELG106. The general spread of enrolments between the BA and BSocSc qualifications appears to be generally in a similar region.

Reasons	Qualifications									
	BA	BSSc	Law	BSSc Psy	Eng	Soc W	Com Dev	Ma	Geo	To
No information	1	5	6	7	1		1	1		
Learn more about religion	2	8	5	9	1			1		
Sounds or looks interesting	8	5		3	3			1		
Elective (needs credits)	2	1			6					
Other	2	2	1							

TOTAL RESPONSES: 91

Figure 20: Data for RELG106 Religion and Conflict (2008)

4.1.2 Interpretation

In comparison with the elective RELG101 Introduction to Religion module taken for 2008, we see, surprisingly, that students from Engineering and Law do not figure prominently for RELG106. The reason may be that students are required to only take one module, and in which case they choose the introductory module which is more foundational than RELG106 Religion and Conflict. Another reason may be that whereas RELG101 is better accommodated in the Engineering and Law timetables, the same is not the case for RELG106. Significant, however, is that the highest score is for only taking RELG106 for purposes of extra credits.

Another significant trend is that the qualification programme numbers strongly veer toward the Humanities: BA degree (15); BSocSc (21); Law (12) BSocSc (Psychology) (19); Engineering (10); Community Development (1); and Management (3). The most significant statistic is that

represented by the combination of the BSocSc and BSocSc (Psychology), which comes to 40. The main reason may be that apart from foundational interests, RELG106 deals with a variety of forms of social and cultural conflict articulated with religion, which constitutes one of the main challenges in society and encountered in both the Social Sciences and the BSocSc (Psychology) programmes. This fact is brought to the fore even more in that BSocSc has 19 students for this one year, whereas RELG101 only had a total of 27 for the three years 2008 – 2010.

For the reasons why students enrol for this module, it is clear that the two reasons, ‘learn more about religion’ and ‘sounds or looks interesting’ are the most prominent for the BA, BSocSc, and BSocSc (Psychology) qualifications and programmes with a substantial representation from Law. The module’s topical focus, obviously motivates students to choose it vis-à-vis others on offer in the Humanities faculty. What is significant, however, is that students want to learn more about religion, indicating that there is a recognition that there is a lack of knowledge of the religion disciplines and religions among students enrolling for these qualifications and programmes.

4.2 2009

4.2.1 Data

For the year 2009, 70 students enrolled for this module as an elective. There were again no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); BA (Psychology major); Social Work; Community Development; Management; Geography; and Tourism modules. For the other qualifications, the data is as follows: BA degree (9); BSocSc (18); Law (11) BSocSc (Psychology) (23); Engineering (9). The most significant statistic is the combined number of 40 students from the BSocSc programmes.

Reasons	Qualifications									
	BA	BSSc	Law	BSSc Psy	Eng	Soc W	Com Dev	Ma	Geo	To
No information		4	5	2	6					
Learn more about religion	4	3		5	3					

Sounds or looks interesting	2	8	3	12						
Elective (needs credits)	1	3	3	2						
Existential reasons	1			1						
Difference, cultures/ Diversity	1			1						

TOTAL RESPONSES: 70

Figure 21: Data for RELG106 Religion and Conflict (2009)

4.2.2 Interpretation

For 2009, the basic trend continues. We see again that students from Engineering and Law do not figure as prominently as in the RELG101 module, with only 9 for the former and 11 for the latter enrolling for RELG106. Statistics for the other modules indicates a substantial number from the two BSocSc qualifications.

Of the students who enrolled for 2009, the majority list their reason for choosing the module as ‘sounds or looks interesting’. In total, 20 students from the BSocSc qualifications give this as reason. The curiosity element is here signalled again and also registers for the BA qualification and Law.

4.3 2010

4.3.1 Data

For the year 2010, 112 students enrolled for this module as an elective. There were again no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); the BA (Psychology major); Community Development; Geography and Tourism. For the other qualifications, the data is as follows: BA degree (10); BSocSc (11); Law (14) BSocSc (Psychology) (40); Engineering (4); Social Work (2); Management (31). In comparison with RELG101, the most significant statistic again, is the low number from Engineering. However, there is a sharp rise in numbers for students from the BSocSc (Psychology) and Management programmes.

Reasons	Qualifications									
	BA	BSSc	Law	BSSc Psy	Eng	Soc W	Com Dev	Ma	Geo	To
No information					1			1		
Learn more about religion	2	6	6	21				10		
Sounds or looks interesting	5	3	6	16		2		15		
Elective (needs credits)	2			1	3			4		
Existential reasons				1				1		
Difference, cultures/ Diversity	1	2	2	1						

TOTAL RESPONSES: 112

Figure 22: Data for RELG106 Religion and Conflict (2010)

4.3.2 Interpretation

In general for 2010, we see the basic trend continues. Again, students from Engineering and Law do not figure as prominently as in the RELG101 module, with only 4 for the former and 14 for the latter enrolling for RELG106. There is however an additional feature in evidence here. In comparison with 2008 (19 students) and 2009 (23 students), we see a remarkable increase in BSocSc (Psychology) students (40 students). We also see a very remarkable increase in students from Management (31 Students).

As with earlier years, the majority of reasons why students enrolled for these modules – especially in the groups with the large number of students (BA; BSocSc; Law; BSocSc (Psychology); and Management Studies) the two most prominent reasons are ‘learn more about religion’ and ‘sounds or looks interesting’. The expectations of gaining knowledge and the curiosity element are the most prominent.

4.4 Conclusion

For the analysis of the reasons why students enrol in RELG106 Religion and Conflict, the combined finding is as follows.

RELG106 Religion and Conflict	2008	2009	2010	TOTAL
No information	22	17	2	41
Learn more about religion	26	15	45	86
Sounds or looks interesting	20	25	47	92
Elective (needs credits)	9	9	10	28
Existential reasons		2	2	4
Difference, cultures/ Diversity	5	2	6	13
TOTAL				264

Figure 23: Data summary - RELG106 Religion and Conflict (2008 – 2010)

The data again speaks for itself. Similarly, the most students enrolled for the two reasons ‘learn more about religion’ (86 or 33%) and ‘sounds or looks interesting’ (92 or 35%). The combined finding for students who only did this module for purposes of credit, is a lowly 28 or 11%.

III Inter-disciplinary Articulation of Religion with the Humanities Disciplines

The dynamics analysed in this article represents only a sample of the bigger picture of the offering of the full bouquet of Comparative Religion modules (all three levels) as well as the modules of the Religion-specific stream (only offered at levels 2 and 3) and their articulation with fellow Humanities disciplines. In general, the analyses so far not only indicate the steady rise in student numbers since the introduction of the religion discipline at Howard College, but also some of the variables that impact on the implicit or latent articulation of these two religion modules with fellow subjects in the

Humanities (and Engineering and Law). What we here term ‘implicit’ or ‘latent’ articulation relates to fellow Humanities disciplines not only content wise – by filling a perceived gap in these adjacent disciplines – but more significantly indicates the constructive contribution to these two religion modules to the Humanities disciplines as perceived by its clients, the students. This is especially evident in the fact that in both RELG101 and RELG106, the two overriding reasons given for enrolling for the modules are to ‘learn more about religion’ and ‘sounds or looks interesting’.

	RELG101	RELG106	Combined
Learn more about religion	137 (42%)	86 (32%)	223 (38%)
Sounds or looks interesting	63 (19%)	92 (35%)	155 (26%)
TOTAL: 378 (64%)			

Figure 24: Cumulative data for the two most prominent variables (2008 – 2010)

What is significant in this calculation is that cumulatively, the two most prominent reasons for enrolling for these two modules come to a total of 64%. This means that the main reasons why its clients enrolled for these two modules over the period 2008 – 2010 are that they expected the modules to add to their knowledge of religion as well as satisfy their curiosity about religion. More significantly, the analyses also raise the question of the actual perceived importance of the inter-disciplinary engagement of the disciplines by the students, and per definition by the modules offered. Such interdisciplinary articulation of Religion at the Howard College campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal could be represented as in figure 1.

The representation of these articulations is only drawn from the two modules, RELG101 Introduction to Religion, and RELG106 Religion and Conflict, for the years 2008 - 2010. In the section below, we only focus on these two modules and reflect on the potential for developing further some relevant critical perspectives on these interdisciplinary articulations.

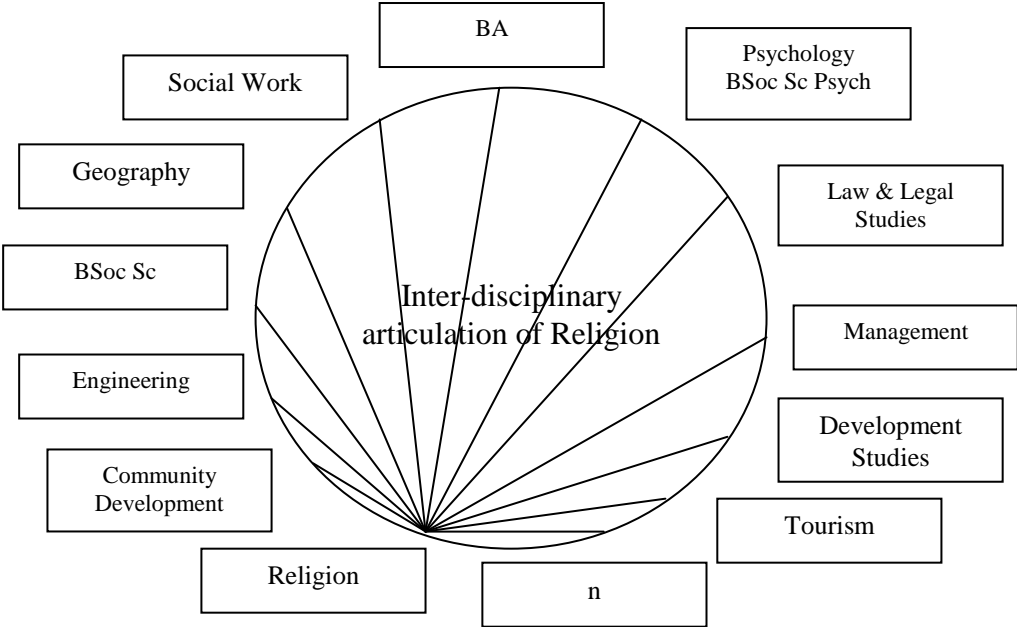


Figure 25: Inter-disciplinary articulation of Religion with Humanities disciplines at Howard College

1 Inter-disciplinary Articulation of Religion in the Humanities - Data

This first section provides the data, followed by the data interpretation of each of the articulations in the next. The third and fourth sections interpret the significance of the data for the two respective modules, RELG101 Introduction to Religion, and RELG106 Religion and Conflict.

RELG101 Introduction to Religion

Dates	Qualifications								
	BA	BSocSc	Law	BSSc Psych	Engin	Com Dev	Man	Soc Wk	To

2008	22	29	19	10	51	1	6		
2009	11	17	10	6	43	2	2	2	
2010	6	14	9	12	39	5	4	3	1
Total	39	60	38	28	133	8	12	5	1

TOTAL RESPONSES: 301

Figure 26: Inter-disciplinary articulation of RELG101 Introduction to Religion with Humanities disciplines at Howard College

RELG106 Religion and Conflict

Dates	Qualifications							
	BA	BSocSc	Law	BSSc Psych	Engin	Com Dev	Man	Soc Wk
2008	15	21	12	19	11	1	3	
2009	9	18	11	23	9			
2010	10	11	14	40	4		31	2
Total	34	50	37	82	24	1	34	2

TOTAL RESPONSES: 273

Figure 27: Inter-disciplinary articulation of RELG106 Religion and Conflict with Humanities disciplines at Howard College

2 Inter-disciplinary Articulation of Religion in the Humanities - Interpretation

2.1 Religion and the BA Qualification

It is to be expected that a sizeable portion of the annual intake of students for a Religion elective would come from the BA general studies cohort of students. For these three years, the two modules drew 39 (13%) and 34 (12,5%) students of the total respectively. In general they comprise an average mix with students coming from across the BA majors, in the languages, literary, historical and gender studies.

2.2 Religion and the BSocSc Qualification

For the three years being studied, the two modules drew 60 (20%) and 50 (18,3%) students of the total respectively. A sizeable portion, about one fifth

of the class enrolled for these two modules over this period comes from this qualification group. Significant is that the two modules drew about the same percentage of students from the social sciences for these three years.

2.3 *Religion and Law/ Legal Studies*

For the years analysed, the number of students who enrolled from Law or Legal studies were: 38 (13,6%); and 37 (13,5%) respectively. Similar to the students from the social sciences, there appears to be about an equal distribution of students interested in the two modules from the Law student cohort. So some students would enrol for the introductory module due to its general and introductory nature. A similar percentage enrolled for the second module because it introduces and stimulates interest due to its focus on social and cultural conflicts and how these articulate with the religions – with the parallel significance of such conflicts in a legal frame of reference.

2.4 *Religion and Psychology (BSocSc Psych)*

It is significant that for the years analysed, the number of BSocSc with Psychology students are: 28 (9,3%); and 82 (30%) respectively. Significant is the substantial number enrolling for the second module, indicating that most interest from Psychology perspective lies not in the general introductory nature of the module, but the significance of the articulation of religion with conflict and how this could also have significance in the area of the study of Psychology from social scientific perspective.

2.5 *Religion and Engineering*

The data indicates that it is especially the introductory module which is popular among Engineering students. For the introductory module, we have 133 (44%) and for religion and conflict 24 (9%) respectively.

2.6 *Religion and Community Development*

One could understand that students from Development Studies would be very interested in Religion, because it is such an important social construct in grassroots communities. The statistics for this articulation were however low: 8 (2,6%); and 1 (0,3%) respectively.

2.7 Religion and Management

For students enrolling in Religion modules from Management, the statistics were: 12 (%); and 34 (%) respectively. Similar to the indication in the BSocSc (Psychology) articulation, we also have a sharply higher percentage of students enrolling for the Religion and Conflict module. The obvious deduction is that students in Management Studies also deal with real-time and concrete events and realities of conflict and the enrolling for this module would provide some introduction and background to the analysis and understanding of the significance of religion in conflict situations which have to be engaged and dealt with in organisations and companies at different levels of management.

2.8 Religion and Social Work

The statistics for Social Work is quite low: 5 (1,6%); and 2 (0,7%) respectively. This may be due to the fact the Social Work is a structured qualification and that students only take the religion modules over and above their regularly enrolled qualification mixes.

2.9 Religion and Tourism

Here too, the statistics is quite low: 1 for the introductory module and 0 for religion and conflict. It appears the religious dimension in tourism is not yet prominent in Tourism studies.

2.10 Conclusion

Even though only applicable to the period focused on 2008 - 2010, there are three important observations concerning the statistical analyses above.

The *first* deduction is that there is an equal distribution of students between RELG101 and RELG106 from the adjacent majors and disciplines in the BA, BSocSc, and Law/ Legal qualifications. This indicates a general trend among these cohorts of students in their decisions and rationales for enrolling for these two first level religion modules.

The *second* observation is that the main choice of Engineering students is the introductory module. With 51, 43 and 39 in the respective years, this indicates a general trend of interest in RELG101 rather than RELG106.

Thirdly, there is an overwhelming interest of BSocSc (Psychology) and Management students in RELG106 Religion and Conflict. Moreover, if the data for the structured degree of the BSocSc (Psychology) students is added to that of the BSocSc (General) students, we get a figure of 132 or 48,3% – which indicates that nearly 50% of the RELG106 students over the three years studied, comes from the Social Sciences majors and qualifications.

Given these observations, it appears that the main deduction which could be made is that the lecturers responsible for offering the modules should take these findings into consideration, and especially the fact that a large percentage – nearly half of the class of RELG106 – hails from the social science cohort of students every year.

3 Critical Perspectives: RELG101 Introduction to Religion

Apart from the module introduction and conclusion which both prepare and introduce as well as conclude and summarise the module, students are introduced to some of the basic perspectives and concrete contents of African Religion, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and New Religious Movements respectively in RELG101. Students are introduced to these religions in terms of five critical theoretical perspectives.

These five critical perspectives critically articulate with Comparative Religion Studies as general umbrella theoretical construct for the programme. These also underpin the teaching delivery of the material, e.g. the continuous highlighting of pluralism, phenomenology, secular theory, contextuality and postcolonialism in prescribed material as well as in tests and essays. *Pluralism* is explored in so far as all the major world religions present in the greater Durban area are studied equally with regard to focuses on the diversity of religions as well as diversity within religions. The progressive study of the religions is rooted in the *phenomenological approach* in so far as they are not studied from a specific faith perspective and in a non-partisan manner according to Smart's 'dimensions of religion'. Ninian Smart's (1997) phenomenological distinctions between beliefs, narratives, ethics, ritual, social organisation, religious experience and symbol

systems¹⁴ are well-known. Since all of these are not equally present with the same intensity in the different religions, this diversity is taken into consideration in terms of the material and contextual manifestation and significance of the religions in South Africa. Such diversity is present both in the comparison of religious formations within each of the religions as well as between them – which also adds another dimension to the focus on pluralism. The significance of the *secular theoretical framework* links up with the basic phenomenological approach and the modernisation debate – holding that for religions to meet on an equal footing, there should not be one overarching or dominant system. The course's *contextual focus* is evident in that each religion's historical facets and significance are briefly reviewed in southern African context and the critical role(s) it has played and continues to play in our country. This is primarily done from *postcolonial* theoretical perspective as the perspective which gives the broad contextual parameters for the description of our current post-apartheid dispensation¹⁵.

This general five-fold philosophical approach in the modules, and by implication how this focus impacts on the RELG101 Introduction to Religion but by implication also the whole programme, derives from a combination of the Philosophy of Consciousness tradition as well as the Philosophy of the Sign (cf. Flood 1999). In developmental context, a rigorous split between these two European-derived traditions is unwelcome to say the least¹⁶. The critical and empathic as well as agency aspects of the tradition of the Philosophy of Consciousness must be practiced and kept in a healthy tension

¹⁴ In addition to the 6 dimensions that Smart has worked with initially, it is well-known that he has also added the focus on religious symbols as well as the study of the religions in their material manifestation in subsequent studies.

¹⁵ Our approach resonates with Oxtoby and Hussain (2011) but also moves beyond their approach as encapsulated in our five critical theoretical perspectives, as well as the more general spread of our modules on offer.

¹⁶ In this regard, Gavin Flood's *Beyond Phenomenology* is helpful but not convincing – in his attempt to separate these two focuses as if they can be dealt with as distinct paradigms. If one does make such an attempt, one's argument often founders on simplifying the perspective against which one develops one's own argument.

with the tradition of the Philosophy of the Sign and its recognition of diversity, contradiction, ambiguity and ambivalent, non-conclusive nature of social and cultural life. Whereas the former focus is important for the objectification of experience, and the cultivation of conscious action and agency, it needs to be counter-balanced by an existentially inclusive ethical focus on the different forms of diversity which characterises social and cultural life in developmental contexts. This is especially important in the recognition of the importance between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives. If this latter dichotomy is accounted for in developmental context, the researchers’ own embeddedness in social and cultural life is acknowledged and recognised in terms of the socio-economic and cultural constraints such embeddedness entails in the scholarly paradigm they work in. it also curtails claims to completeness or the theoretical totalising of the theoretical domain.

Drawing on notions of both consciousness as well as semiotics, the module’s general formative and generic character and the five main critical philosophical perspectives, the module aims to meet the diverse expectations of its clients from within the BA and BSocSc¹⁷ qualifications, students from the other majors and disciplines, as well as the Engineering students. From this perspective, the module aims to meet their expectations with regard to the social and cultural significance of its study of the religions, and their institutions, systems¹⁸.

Correspondingly, the module provides a very basic introduction to the foundational analysis and theoretical understanding of a sample of the structures and systems of the major world religions and some new religious movements in the region. At selected points in the course, there are also

¹⁷ For the BA General Studies SAQA template, see: <http://regqs.saqa.org.za/viewQualification.php?id=23375>. For the BSocSc Sociological Analysis and Social Research qualification SAQA template, see: <http://regqs.saqa.org.za/viewQualification.php?id=81201>.

¹⁸ Indicative of this fact is the significance social scientists give to the study of religions and religious formations. Historically, most prominent is the work by Durkheim (1915), Weber (1930; 1951; 1958) but also Berger (1967a; 1967b) more recently. On the African continent, there is a rising tide of scholarly publications. Cf. for instance, Nthoi (2006); Platvoet, Cox & Olupona (1996); ter Haar (ed) (2007; 2010); Ugba (2009); and Ukah (2008).

some basic and preliminary explication of some of the basic and most seminal principles and practices of empirical social research into the social systems and structures of society. In this regard one of the choices for the researched semester paper comprises the empirical research of a religious tradition, formation or practices of a specific religious group. Students are able to not only learn theoretically but observe and study a social phenomenon empirically and practically as ‘lived religion’¹⁹. They are also encouraged to choose and formulate a semester paper topic that links up with their home discipline and/ or career objectives. As such the module is brought closer to the career and professional expectations of students, while firmly anchored in the module’s course materials. Such an approach is vital in South Africa, if we conscientiously attend to its diversity and plurality but also the variety of developmental needs and the dearth of informed critical social analysis, especially with regard to the actual functioning and social impact of religion²⁰.

Similar to the generic significance of the module for the BA and BSocSc, it would have the same function for the Law qualifications. The analysis shows that there are a consistent number of Law students enrolling for this module. As such, the module is valuable for a career in law or the legal fraternity at a very basic level²¹. The same is true for students from the BSocSc (Psychology) background. They would similarly acquire a broad spread of perspectives on the study of Religion²².

¹⁹ The collection of essays edited by Harvey (2010) is ground-breaking in this regard.

²⁰ Gifford (1998; 2004; 2009) has significantly addressed this very important issue for some regions in sub-Saharan Africa.

²¹ There have been some remarkable developments in the area of Religion and law (cf. Feldman 2000; Bennett 2011). Additional perspectives concern the articulation of religious morality, ethics or law with corresponding secular legal but also scientific fields, e.g. biomedical ethics (cf. Martin 2007 for a few general perspectives; and Ebrahim 2011 on reproductive health).

²² Apart from the rich history of the articulation of Psychology with Religion (cf. Leeming, Madden & Marian 2010), see the very influential study by Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi ([1958] 1975) which set the agenda and is indicative of the important areas of the field; cf. also Wulff (2010).

A major reason why Engineering students enrol for the module is that it is a requirement in their qualification structure that they take at least one module from a discipline outside the Engineering faculty. However, as the statistics above indicates, Introduction to Religion has become popular among Engineering students because of two prominent reasons – that they ‘want to learn more about religion’ and because it ‘sounds or looks interesting’. This, one could say, is the curiosity element that serves as motivation. Even so, reviews of the module have indicated that it meets expectations of the Engineering students on this score. Being the foundation module of the programme, and also because it serves such a variety of students from within the Humanities, it is not advisable to make alternations concerning specifically Engineering disciplinary requirements, e.g. the significance of engineering in the history of religions, and their material manifestations²³.

Even though one could provide quite a number of reasons, why a basic introductory course to religion would be of interest to students in Community Development, Management and Social Work, the most significant is the module’s general spread of focuses on the religions. It is therefore disappointing that so few students from these programmes enrolled for RELG101. This may indicate that there is a general lack of knowledge of the significance of the religions in these working life contexts. With regard to tourism, the limited interest is understandable since the Tourism programme offers CHTM211 Festivals and Events Tourism which includes a focus on religious festivals. The more general spread of the study of the religions in RELG101 is also not directly applicable to tourism. A more specialised module, for instance would represent the role and function of religious people and faith-based organisations in the politics, and history of the region – similar to literary and political figures²⁴.

²³ There is however a vast scholarship on this both with regard to the classical texts and remnants of dated scientific expressions in buildings, architecture, machinery, etc. (cf. Schwartz 1997; 2002 among numerous others) – which represent the fact that religious personnel often also functioned as the thinkers and scientists of the past – as well as more recent reflections (cf. Gosling 2001; Herzfeld 2009; Smith 2010).

²⁴ Amongst others, see Jeanette Eve’s *Literary Guide to the Eastern Cape* (2003) for instance.

4 Critical Perspectives: RELG106 Religion and Conflict

The main rationale for this module is that it studies the articulation of religions and religious formations with different kinds of conflict from the perspective of viewing the religions as resources of peacebuilding and peacemaking and not as part of the causes of conflict in the first place. As such, it starts off by defining religion in conflict situations – to highlight that religions are not necessarily part of the causes of conflicts and that they could play different roles in conflict processes and developments – that of critic or bystander for instance. This is followed by successive historical focuses on religiously-inspired conflicts, fundamentalism, the relationships between religion, culture, politics and economics in conflict situations, and the different kinds of conflict in terms of sect and cult studies. It then deals with genocide and the roles of religions in these very serious manifestations of conflict and repression. Finally, and retrospectively, the module treats the fact that conflict is not to be seen as only negative but also as a positive force in human society, and how religions have formed and continue to form part of this positive developmental force.

Since this second semester module follows on the offering of RELG101 Introduction to Religion in the first semester, it is assumed that it would not only provide an adequate background for RELG106, but also impacts on the latter with regard to the general philosophical, theoretical and empirical approaches. With regard to the general philosophical approach of the module, the module continues the study of religions in terms of the phenomenon of conflict in the Comparative Religion Studies theoretical framework. Each of the six sections covered engages the five main critical philosophical perspectives to various degrees. *Pluralism* is inherent in the realities focused on. How diversity between and inside the religions play a role in conflict generation and intervention are also traced and how diversity could be dealt with in terms of peace-building, peacemaking, peace-keeping and reconciliation exercises. The basic *phenomenological* map of the dimensions of religion forms the contours of the different focuses in so far as the roles and functions of each of these are traced in the theoretical study of the phenomenon, as well as in the case studies. All are treated in *secular perspective*, allowing students to explore the topics both from within their own religion standpoints as well as others'. Where possible, all topics covered are addressed in terms of the phenomenological approach and the

modernisation debate. The module's *contextual focus* is evident in that each religious phenomenon's historical dimensions as well as material significance are analysed, with a main focus on African realities. This is primarily done from African *postcolonial* theoretical and moral perspective – social justice, freedom, dignity and equality – as the perspective which gives the broad evaluative contextual parameters for the description of our current post-apartheid dispensation.

Similar to the spread of students for RELG101, RELG106 has a similar spread from the BA, BSocSc and Law qualifications – around 34 (12,5%), 50 (18,3%), and 37 (13,5%) respectively. The rationale for this spread could again be similar – that the percentages represent a general trend of interest in the module among students coming from across the BA majors and BSocSc qualifications. These students enrol for the module due to its general introductory nature with regard to the articulation of religions and religious formations with different kinds of conflict in the broader social and cultural domain²⁵ but also for its central focus on peacemaking and peacebuilding²⁶. Furthermore, from the legal perspective, students enrolled for the module because it introduces and stimulates interest due to its focus on conflict at educational but also ethnic and group levels²⁷.

Different from the enrolments for RELG101, the BSocSc enrolment figures for this module are quite high – nearly 50% of the class over the three year period. In comparison with RELG101, this is a definite indication that there is a much higher interest among BSocSc students in the Religion and Conflict module than in the Introduction to Religion. This is due to the

²⁵ For the broader cultural dimensions of conflict, see Avruch, Black & Scimecca (1998) and Cohen (1991).

²⁶ For significant sources in this regard, see Lederach (1993); Saunders (1999); Getui & Ayanga (2002); Getui & Kanyandago (1999); Mollov (2003); Iram (2006).

²⁷ Cf. Johnston & Sampson (1994) and the significant but controversial book by Huntington (1996) as well as the scholarship and divergence of opinion around it, especially Sen (1999) on diversity; Berman (2003) on groups of protagonists as cause of conflict and not 'civilizations'; and Said (2001) on the diversity in Islam vs Huntington's homogeneous representation of Islam.

recognition of the significant role religions play in socio-cultural conflicts as well as peace-building on the African continent and elsewhere²⁸.

Furthermore, the fact that the interest is from both general sociological and psychological perspectives, indicates that on this level too, there is not only an interest with regard to the social systems and structures but also how conflict relates and articulates with human personality and social psychological perspectives with regard to social psychological articulations with individual and group life.

A similarly substantial percentage was registered for students from the management sciences. The obvious deduction is that students in Management Studies also deal with real-time and concrete events and realities of conflict and the enrolling for this module would provide some introduction and background to the analysis and understanding of the significance of religion in conflict situations which have to be engaged and dealt with by management – especially at larger and global levels.

As pointed out above, even though present, this module is not very high on the agenda for students from Engineering, Community Development, and Social Work.

Conclusion

After a brief background sketch of some of the dynamics that lead to the founding and establishing of the Religion discipline at the Howard College campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal this article *firstly* overviewed the student numbers of two first level and four second level modules that were offered as electives since 2005. The most significant observation was the overall annual steady growth in numbers the modules experienced.

The *second* focus of the article was the analysis of the home disciplines and programmes of students who enrolled for RELG101 Introduction to Religion and RELG106 Religion and Conflict as electives as well as a cursory analysis and interpretation of the reasons why students from the Faculties of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (HDSS), Law and Engineering chose these modules.

²⁸ Cf. the seminal study by Westerlund (1996).

With regard to the analysis of home disciplines and programmes of students who enrolled for RELG101 Introduction to Religion, the following findings were made:

- the identification of the home disciplines and programmes;
- the near average spread and distribution of enrolments from year to year from the BA, Law, BSocSc and BSocSc (Psychology) students; and
- the large number of students representing the Engineering qualifications and programmes over the three years.

With regard to the home disciplines and programmes of RELG106 Religion and Conflict, the findings were:

- the identification of the home disciplines and programmes;
- the near average spread and distribution of enrolments from year to year from the BA, Law, BSocSc and BSocSc (Psychology);
- the strong presence of students from the social sciences – when we combine the numbers of BSocSc and BSocSc (Psychology) – which was much higher than for RELG101 Introduction to Religion;
- the very low number of students from Engineering when compared to RELG101; and
- the very significant increase in students numbers from Management in 2010.

As far as the analysis of the reasons why students enrol in the Religion modules is concerned, the findings were that most enrolled for these two modules because they wanted to learn more about Religion or that they were curious about the subject. Combined, the statistics are: 378 or 64% vis-à-vis the combined number for those who only enrol for it for credit purposes, 115 or 19%. This augurs well for the continued enrolment of students taking these modules as electives because it indicates commitment and not mere enrolment for credit purposes.

Our *third* focus was the analysis of the significance of the articulations of these two modules with the home disciplines from which students came. The analyses speak for themselves. Even so, this is an area in

need of more focused and concerted research, not only how the modules articulate with the home disciplines and programmes of students but especially how they articulate with real-life social challenges in society and community as the third point of comparison and application.

Given this study and its findings, it appears that the main deduction which must be made is that the lecturers responsible for offering the modules should take the findings into consideration in their teaching and learning – especially the fact that a large percentage hails from the social science cohort of students every year. Coupled with the second section of analyses, it is this group of students that also indicates as the main reasons for enrolling for this module as wanting to learn more about Religion or that they are curious about the subject. If similar analyses could be done early on each semester that the modules are offered, better informed and focused decisions could be made about how to more constructively accommodate the students from the adjacent programmes, disciplines and schools in actual course content and course teaching and learning.

Finally, it stands to reason that religion as social phenomenon has been part and parcel of human evolution. In our post-colonial and post-modern context, this has not changed. It appears that at least for a certain sector within the Humanities disciplines, the social scientific study of religion, is regarded as a very significant part of studying human evolution, human societies, and human community²⁹.

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²⁹ In this regard, we can at least say that this study has confirmed that the decision taken by the academic staff at the former University of Durban-Westville (1999) to develop a social science approach to the study of religion in our region, has been borne out. Even though one can never exclude a meaning-focused approach to the study of religion, in our own developmental context, a social sciences approach seems the most appropriate.

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