

JOY: The Journal of Yoga

investigating the philosophy, science, and spirituality of yoga

2004 United States Divinity School Rankings¹

Top 25

1. [Harvard Divinity School](#) Cambridge, MA
2. [Princeton Theological Seminary](#) Princeton, NJ
3. [University of Chicago Divinity School](#) Chicago, IL
4. [Duke Divinity School](#) Durham, NC
5. [University of Notre Dame Theology Department](#) Notre Dame, IN
6. [Candler School of Theology at Emory University](#) Atlanta, GA
7. [Yale University Divinity School](#) New Haven, CT
8. [Fuller Theological Seminary](#) Pasadena, CA
9. [Union Theological Seminary](#) New York, NY
10. [Boston College Department of Theology](#) Chestnut Hill, MA
11. [Drew University Theological School](#) Madison, NJ
12. [The Catholic University of America Department of Theology](#) Washington, DC
13. [Vanderbilt University Divinity School](#) Nashville, TN
14. [Boston University School of Theology](#) Boston, MA
15. [Asbury Theological Seminary](#) Wilmore, KY
16. [Claremont School of Theology](#) Claremont, CA
17. [Graduate Theological Union](#) Berkeley, CA
18. [Dallas Theological Seminary](#) Dallas, TX
19. [Garrett-Evangelical Seminary](#) Evanston, IL
20. [Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University](#) Dallas, TX
21. [Oral Roberts University School of Theology and Missions](#) Tulsa, OK

¹ Compiled by Douglas J. Phillips II BA Pepperdine University, MTS Emory University, Ph.D. candidate The California Institute of Integral Studies. Data on enrollment figures, library holdings, and faculty were obtained from the Association of Theological Schools (www.ats.edu). Please email your comments and suggestions to editor@journalofyoga.org

22. [Catholic Theological Union](#) Chicago, IL
23. [Andover Newton Theological School](#) Newton Centre, MA
24. [The University of the South School of Theology](#) Sewanee, TN
25. [The Divinity School at Wake Forest University](#) Winston-Salem, NC

Progressives²

[The California Institute of Integral Studies](#) San Francisco, CA

[The Institute of Transpersonal Psychology](#) Palo Alto, CA

[John F. Kennedy University](#) Orinda, CA

[Naropa University](#) Boulder, CO

Top Religion Departments³

[Stanford University](#) Palo Alto, CA

[Princeton University](#) Princeton, NJ

[The University of Virginia](#) Charlottesville, VA

[The University of Pennsylvania](#) Philadelphia, PA

[Brown University](#) Providence, RI

[The University of California at Santa Barbara](#) Santa Barbara, CA

[The University of Florida](#) Gainesville, FL

[The University of Georgia](#) Athens, GA

[Columbia University](#) New York, NY

[Northwestern University](#) Evanston, IL

² In this section, I have included reference to schools that have been established within the past fifty years that are extremely progressive in nature and exploring dialogue with Eastern religions much faster than many of their mainstream counterparts. CIIS, for example, is one of the few accredited institutions of higher learning in the United States founded upon principles of eastern thought. The schools listed here are difficult to categorize because of their unique characteristics and relatively new status as places of graduate education. However, from my experience, these schools contain some of the most forward looking thinkers in the nation. Yet, their futures remain uncertain as more mainstream institutions begin to explore similar topics of investigation. Nevertheless, the location of these schools remains optimal for ongoing advancement and continued growth. The Bay Area of California and Boulder, Colorado are regions of the country where I see phenomenally innovative thinking occurring and present opportunities for learning that are unquestionably progressive.

³ I mention here only the public institutions or private schools without a divinity school or religious affiliation. See the NRC ranking of graduate research programs for more information located online at: <http://www.research.sunysb.edu/research/nrcdata.html>

[Rice University](#) Houston, TX

[The University of Pittsburgh](#) Pittsburgh, PA

[The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) Chapel Hill, NC

[The University of Michigan](#) Ann Arbor, MI

Top Philosophy Departments⁴

[New York University](#) New York, NY

[Princeton University](#) Princeton, NJ

[Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) Cambridge, MA

[Florida State University](#) Tallahassee, FL

[Columbia University](#) New York, NY

[Harvard University](#) Cambridge, MA

[Duke University](#) Durham, NC

[University of Texas at Austin](#) Austin, TX

[Emory University](#) Atlanta, GA

[Stanford University](#) Palo Alto, CA

[University of Michigan](#) Ann Arbor, MI

[University of California at Los Angeles](#) Westwood, CA

[University of California at Irvine](#) Irvine, CA

[University of California at San Diego](#) La Jolla, CA

[University of California at Berkeley](#) Berkeley, CA

[University of Colorado](#) Boulder, CO

[University of Wisconsin](#) Madison, WI

[University of Pittsburgh](#) Pittsburgh, PA

[Ohio State University](#) Columbus, OH

[Rutgers University](#) New Brunswick, NJ

[University of Chicago](#) Chicago, IL

[University of Pennsylvania](#) Philadelphia, PA

⁴ See also the Philosophical Gourmet Report at: <http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/>

[Yale University](#) New Haven, CT

[Brown University](#) Providence, RI

[Cornell University](#) Ithaca, NY

[University of Notre Dame](#) Notre Dame, IN

[University of Minnesota](#) Minneapolis, MN

[University of Arizona](#) Tucson, AZ

[Syracuse University](#) Syracuse, NY

[University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) Chapel Hill, NC

[Indiana University at Bloomington](#) Bloomington, IN

Ranking Methodology

Attempting to place numerical values upon schools of divinity is a rather difficult endeavor due to the nature of theological education. However, I have provided a guide based upon my own experiences and understanding of relevant factors. The rankings take into account a wide variety of academic indications including reputation, library resources, number of full-time faculty, student selectivity, financial endowments, and affiliation with related departments within respective universities. Theology schools with intimate connections to a wider university setting give students access and opportunities to explore affiliated departments such as philosophy and religion. As you will notice, most of the top schools are optimally positioned within excellent research universities of national recognition. For example, **The University of Chicago's Divinity School** is augmented by one of the best departments of religion in the nation, not to mention a superb philosophy department. As a student, I found the resources available to me in the midst of a larger university setting to be invaluable and critical to my theological studies.

Choosing a school to study theology is an extremely personal matter. Especially if you want to pursue specialized studies in a particular discipline, maintain faith commitments, or work with a favorite teacher, the rankings can be virtually superfluous. Nevertheless, if you are thinking about entering a divinity school without a clear focus upon your future objectives, this guide may be of help. Personally, I was fairly vague in what I wanted to pursue with my theological education when I began. If you are uncertain about your particular path, I would highly recommend that you think carefully about the school you decide to attend. All of the schools listed above can help provide you with an excellent education. Yet, there tend to be areas of emphasis in the different institutions that may reflect upon your education. For example, **The Catholic University of America** will, as the name indicates, have a tendency to emphasize Catholicism and Catholic thought. There is no doubt, however, about the quality of this institution.

The nature of theology appears to be shifting in the contemporary milieu of academe. While there continues to be commitments to faith communities, theology in the modern world is largely becoming an ecumenical affair where diverse religions are brought to bear upon questions of ultimate meaning and significance. In this type of environment, institutions that cater to individuals who are seeking to understand the nuances of world religions are more likely to thrive in the near future. Despite the fact that religion is largely a personal series of developments and transformations, contemporary theology is beginning to gain insights from quite different perspectives. While Christianity remains a foundation for many of these schools, there is increasingly a move towards the integration of world religions. As such, institutions like **The Harvard Divinity School** are especially poised to cater to the needs of the modern theology student.

In general, schools that are typically considered more 'liberal' have been given higher rankings in this report. This is an interpretation of the data that may not adhere to your personal inclinations or beliefs. It should be kept in mind and quite obvious to the reader however, that these are not absolute values. The rankings are merely guides to help you decide upon your course of theological studies.

Although schools of theology have not been given much attention in the mainstream media or sometimes even within their respective institutions of residence, they are once again becoming beacons of quite significant power and influence. Many of the Ivy League schools were founded upon a specifically theological orientation and there is little doubt about the role religion has played in the formation of *academe* itself. Today, renewed support is emerging for the study of theology as indicated in recent gifts to a few of the major universities. Just this week, **The Duke Divinity School** received a financial gift of \$2.5 million in celebration of their 75th anniversary. Additionally, *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* recent report entitled, "The Largest Private Gifts to Higher Education Since 1967" shows the remarkable contribution by the Pitts family to **The Candler School of Theology of Emory University** for the sum of \$83.3 million. Despite the fact that theology schools are not even mentioned in the *US News & World Report's* annual survey of professional graduate programs, there is considerable evidence to suggest that schools of theology are significant contributors to the academic communities they serve.

The religious impulse of humans to express themselves spiritually has been an occupation and part of life since the beginning of culture on the planet Earth. Despite recent advances in science and technology to help shed light upon matters concerning the nature of Reality and the Cosmos, there continues to remain a yearning within the human spirit to connect with something beyond physical reality. As the debates between science and religion take place within academic institutions, there may ultimately come a time when a synthesis between the various disciplines of inquiry takes form, creating what some may suggest is a "Unified Theory of Everything." Such a theory may eventually incorporate all of the academic departments into a single entity or 'meta-theory'. While my comments here are largely speculative in nature, the idea of a 'University' is colored intensely by the hues of all contributing 'knowledge' and 'information' gathering resources emanating throughout the different departments. The 'University' is meant to be the epitome of open-ended research into all areas of inquiry and the place of learning for our diverse needs as individuals comprising a wide spectrum of social, physical, and spiritual realities.

The Lucky 7

The schools I have placed in the Lucky 7 represent what I take to be the elite of the divinity schools. Some who are intimately connected with these schools are likely to disagree with my placements of the various schools however. None of them are obviously perfect, but they all can provide an excellent theological education of the highest caliber. I would like to briefly comment about each of the schools in the Lucky 7 and discuss their respective positions in the rankings.

I ranked **The Harvard Divinity School** number one for a variety of compelling reasons. There is no question about the quality of this institution in regards to faculty and academic resources. Harvard maintains one of the best theological libraries in the world with over 400,000 volumes, has an intimate connection to a superb research university setting, continues to supplement an already thriving endowment, and integrates world religions perhaps better than any of the other divinity schools. Nevertheless, Harvard has a comparatively low number of full-time faculty in their divinity school- currently at around 20. As you will see later in this report, a few of the theology schools employ many more full-time faculty, but the opportunity afforded students to draw from excellent philosophy and religion departments makes up for this deficiency.

Princeton Theological Seminary is arguably the best stand alone school of theology in the nation. Their course offerings, breadth of degree programs, and outstanding faculty make it virtually untouchable. In the prior rankings, I had some reservations concerning PTS in terms of students having the opportunity to attend classes at Princeton University. I have since been informed that PTS students can and do take classes at Princeton. There may still be some room to integrate world wisdom traditions at a higher level of dialogue.

The University of Chicago Divinity School is among *le creme de le creme*. As many students of religion and theology soon learn in their academic studies, Chicago holds one of the best reputations in the business. Although I have heard some students complain about the climate and academic rigor at this institution, Chicago has produced some of the best scholars in the world. Like Harvard, they are surrounded by excellent philosophy and religion departments. Their course offerings are excellent.

I am particularly fond of the **Duke Divinity School** and considered ranking them number one. Duke offers a variety of scholarships to their divinity students, has an awesome campus uniquely situated in a larger university setting, a healthy student enrollment of 555, and stellar faculty. I especially like Duke's philosophy department with a concentration in consciousness studies and philosophy of mind. Also, with an outstanding medical facility on the campus, persons considering medical ethics or the theological implications of the science/religion dialogue are going to be hard pressed to find a better school. They are also right in the middle of the research triangle where computer innovation is exploding.

I consider the **University of Notre Dame** to be the best Catholic school on the list. With a dynamic campus environment, renowned faculty, and close connections to the Catholic Church, Notre Dame is an excellent choice.

Both the **Catholic University of America** and the **University of Notre Dame** offer educations that are hard to match. Notre Dame's philosophy department is one of the best in the nation.

My alma mater, **The Candler School of Theology at Emory University** comes in at number six. Emory is a fabulous school. With a staggering student enrollment of 700, clearly one of the best theological libraries in the nation, and an almost absurd endowment, Emory is poised to be a leader in theological education. I found the professors to be quite amazing coming from such schools as Princeton, Harvard, Yale, and The University of Chicago. Like the other schools in the Lucky 7, Candler is intimately connected to a research university of significant status. Recently, they have also been able to draw some big names like Desmond Tutu and my commencement speaker, the Dalai Lama.

The Yale University Divinity School is ranked seventh with some trepidation. Yale and Emory seem to share a close relationship with one another as students and faculty seem to go back and forth between the two schools. Currently, Rebecca Chopp is the Dean at Yale who was formerly at Emory. Undoubtedly, Yale boasts an excellent faculty with such figures as Marilyn McCord Adams and Nicholas Wolterstorff to name just a couple. Yale's reputation is legendary and clearly deserves to be among the Lucky 7.

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