

Religious Studies

Division of Humanities

- **Major: 33 credit hours**
- **Minor: 18 credit hours**
- **Major/minor GPA required for graduation: 2.25**
- **All courses for the major and minor must be completed with a grade of C- or better**

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:

- **Capstone: Complete two upper-level seminar style courses that involve giving class presentations and leading group discussions**

Description of Major: Religious studies analyzes the human relationship to what is conceived as ultimate reality or the highest reality. It studies the beliefs, practices, and behaviors that are expressions of this relationship, examining them in their individual and corporate, historical and contemporary forms.

Human history displays established patterns of the relationship to ultimate reality in the world's major religious traditions. Religious studies majors learn about the major world religions in all their diversity while also focusing in a special way on Christianity, its sacred texts, and Christian theology. Within this framework, students have significant freedom to shape their program of study in the direction of their interest. Students can choose a more general analysis of the world religions or they can make a more intensive study of Christianity with their electives.

The religious studies major stresses the development of skills in critical thinking, reading, and writing. It involves significant use and analysis of scholarly methodologies to understand the phenomenon of religion and interpret religious texts.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Understand and analyze the history, geographical distribution, and beliefs and practices of the world's major religions.
- Understand and analyze the history, beliefs, and practices of major Christian groups today, focusing on Christianity in the United States.
- Understand and implement contemporary scholarly methods for analyzing sacred texts, religious history, and religious expressions.
- Display competency in reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.

Preparation: The religious studies major helps prepare students for seminary studies and/or a career in Christian ministry. It also helps prepare students for academic graduate work in religious studies or other fields. Students can use this degree in any career that values critical thinking and sensitivity to human motivation, and involves encounters with diverse communities of belief in our increasingly global society.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS		33 crs.
REL 210	LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE EAST	3
REL 211	LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE WEST	3
REL 230	INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY	3
REL 215/315	RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES	3
REL 340	OLD TESTAMENT	3
or		
REL 345	NEW TESTAMENT	3
REL 330	HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT (W)	3
or		
REL 332	CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN THOUGHT (W)	3

PHI 201	INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY	3
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or

REL 325	PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION	3
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FOUR ELECTIVES IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES		
(AT LEAST TWO MUST BE 300 or 400 LEVEL)		12

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

MINOR REQUIREMENTS		18 crs.
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REL 210	LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE EAST	3
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REL 211	LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE WEST	3
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REL 230	INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY	3
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or

REL		
215/315	RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES	3

THREE ELECTIVES IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES		
(AT LEAST TWO MUST BE 300 or 400 LEVEL)		9

Religious Studies (REL)

REL 210 3

LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE EAST

An introduction to the indigenous religions of India, China, and Japan, including the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. The course includes analysis of important beliefs, practices and historical developments within each tradition, readings of classic and contemporary literature from the traditions, and visiting of religious sites.

REL 211 3

LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE WEST

An introduction to the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course includes analysis of important beliefs, practices and historical developments within each tradition, readings from classic and contemporary literature from the traditions, and visiting of religious sites.

REL 215/315 3

RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES

An overview of the history, character, and variety of religions in the United States. Elements of the course include summarizing historical developments in religion, analyzing constitutional issues regarding the separation of church and state, and examining the distinctive characteristics of denominational and religious groups, including the way they respond to important contemporary issues.

REL 230 3

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

An overview of the Christian tradition, including its roots in Judaism and its growth and development through the centuries. Special attention is given to critical analysis of significant issues Christian churches face in the contemporary world.

REL 233/333 3

RELIGION AND SCIENCE:

CONFLICT OR COMPATIBILITY?

An examination of major issues in the relation between science and religion. The course focuses on the way different religious systems may or may not be compatible with contemporary scientific theories. Scientific theories examined may include big bang cosmology, relativity, quantum theory, and biological evolution by means of natural selection. Religious systems examined may include classical theism, process thought, pantheism, and forms of eastern mysticism. Students elect to take this course at one level, not both.

REL 235 3

RELIGION AND GENDER

An exploration of the diverse experiences of women and men in a variety of religious traditions. Issues to be examined include beliefs about women and men in the major world religions; the role of religion in determining gender roles in human society; the relation between gender and spirituality; and the contemporary feminist challenge to male-dominated forms of religion.

REL 240 3

RELIGION AND RACE

A broadly interdisciplinary study of the historic and contemporary relation between religion and racial ideologies in the United States and around the globe. The course will focus on the many ways in which religion has been used both to support and to combat racism in the modern world. Special attention will be given to the history of black-white relations in America and the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe.

REL 250 3

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

A historical and comparative study of the world's living religions, including their beliefs, practices, literature, and influence in the world today.

REL 280-89 3

TOPICS IN RELIGION

Focused study of a particular topic, theme, or issue in Religious Studies that is meant to be accessible to general education students. Topics will be announced in the course schedule

REL 310 3

INTERFAITH EXPLORATIONS

This course explores issues surrounding interfaith relations in the United States, including interfaith dialogue, service and advocacy, politics, theology and worship, personal issues, and available resources for interfaith engagement. The course includes applying theory through case studies, engaging in dialogue with students from different cultures, leading and implementing campus interfaith programming, and formulating a personal plan for future interfaith interactions.

REL 325 3

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

An exploration of traditional and recent philosophical and theological thinking in such areas as arguments for the existence of God, the nature of religious knowledge, the problem of evil, the question of human destiny, and the nature of religious language. Same as PHI 325.

REL 330 3

HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT (W)

An examination of key thinkers and issues that have shaped Christian theology over the last two thousand years, including extensive reading in primary sources. Prerequisite: REL 230 or instructor consent.

REL 332 3

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN THOUGHT (W)

An examination of key thinkers and issues in Christian thought. This may include but is not limited to feminist theologies, liberation theologies, environmental theologies, process theologies, theology and pluralism, theology and the natural sciences, and post-modern theologies.

REL 335 3

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

An investigation of how Christians attempt to discern what is "right" and "wrong" for themselves and their society. Case studies are used throughout the course to illustrate and examine broader theoretical issues.

Religious Studies (REL)

REL 340 3

THE OLD TESTAMENT

An introduction to the history, beliefs, and practices of the ancient Hebrew people, as expressed in the literature of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

REL 345 3

THE NEW TESTAMENT

An introduction to the literature of early Christianity, with special attention to the authors' ideas about Jesus of Nazareth and the life and problems of the earliest Christian communities.

REL 350 3

GOD AND EVIL (W)

An interreligious examination of the question of theodicy, or how there can be both a good and all-powerful Deity and the existence of natural and social evil. While the major focus of the course is the Judeo-Christian tradition's response to this issue, the perspective of other world religions will be considered.

REL 355 3

RELIGION AND CONCERN

FOR THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT (W)

Religious beliefs play an important role in shaping the attitude of individuals and societies toward the natural environment. This course analyzes how those beliefs can contribute both to a constructive and a destructive human relationship to the natural environment. The course asks whether and to what degree religious beliefs can or need to be reconceived to promote environmental conservation and restoration. The primary focus of the course is the Judeo-Christian tradition, but other religious traditions may be examined.

REL 380-89 3

TOPICS IN RELIGION

Focused study of a particular topic, theme, or issue in Religious Studies that should prove interesting to majors and serious general education students. Topics will be announced in the course schedule.

REL 470 3-8

INTERNSHIP IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Internships are arranged by the student in consultation with faculty and the Career Placement office. Prerequisites: Senior standing, 15 hours of Religious Studies course work, 2.0 overall GPA. Internships with a current employer must represent a change of duties. No more than 4 credit hours of internship may be applied toward a major or minor in Religious Studies.

REL 480 1-4

INDEPENDENT STUDY IN RELIGION

Individualized research in topic areas not covered in the regular curriculum. Prerequisite: 15 hours in Religious Studies, 3.0 GPA, and instructor consent.

REL 490 1-4

SEMINAR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES (W)

Intensive study of a current topic in Religious Studies. Seminar topics will be announced in the course schedule as they are offered. Prerequisite: Major or minor in Religious Studies, or instructor consent.