

## Religious Studies Make a Gift

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### Program Description

Religious Studies takes you to other cultures, traditions and worlds. Our courses raise questions that awaken you to a global perspective that is fundamental to understanding the political and historical worlds around us. How are historical religious figures interpreted variously across time and space? What is to account to the resurgence of religious extremism the modern world? Why are certain religious individuals, and communities, compelled to act through peace, violence and modes of conflict? How does religion shape a community's stand on issues such as the environment, social justice, and national identity? From understanding ethics, to ways of living, to belief systems, to rituals engaging civic, civil and spiritual space - Religious Studies provides you access to all of this and more. A Religious studies education prepares you for every profession. Our graduates are found in medicine, law, business, non-profit organizations, government, education, and graduate work in a variety of disciplines.

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### Program Requirements

#### Major Requirements

Majors and minors are encouraged to take Religion 101 early in their careers and to explore as many different religious traditions as possible.

Ten courses are required for the major. Eight must be taken within the department, and two may be taken outside from a list of approved courses. Students may petition to allow more courses from outside the department to apply to the major, but the petition is subject to departmental approval. At least two courses must be at the 200-level; at least two courses must be at the 300-level or above.

Eligible upper-level students may submit proposals for senior independent study courses (Religion 460), which are subject to approval by the department and by the professor sponsoring the course. Students intending to submit proposals should do so in the semester preceding the semester when the course work will be done.

#### Minor Requirements

Six courses are required for the minor. At least one must be at the 200 level, and at least one must be at

the 300 level or above. One of the six may be taken outside the department, but may not be in the student's major. Students may petition to allow more courses from outside the department to apply to the minor, but the petition is subject to departmental approval.

### **Approved courses outside the department**

Any of the following courses outside the department may be counted toward a major or minor. Other courses may be possible with permission of the department chair.

Anthropology 227 Anthropology of Religion

Anthropology 218 Islam & Women

English 310 Topics in Medieval and Renaissance Literature

English 312 Medieval Drama

FYS 132 Religious Perspectives on the Environment

FYS 150 Death and the Meaning of Life

FYS 194 Exploring the World of Islam

Greek 204 New Testament Greek

History 104 History Islamic World to 1800

History 249 The American Mind

History 270 Topics in African History

History 278 History of Islamic Technology

History 311 Medieval Europe

History 313 Renaissance and Reformation

IDS 229 South Asia: Contemporary Issues in Historical Perspective

IDS 239 Survey of South Asian Literature

IDS 267 Theatre and Religion

Philosophy 206 Medieval & Renaissance Philosophy

Philosophy 223 Philosophy & Gandhi

Philosophy 229 Philosophy of Yoga

Philosophy 237 Philosophy of Religion

Philosophy 240 World Philosophy

Philosophy 329 Shapes of Evil

Philosophy 332 Philosophy and Mysticism

Pol. Sci. 323 Religion & Politics in the U.S.

Sociology 205 Sociology of Religion

VAH 202 Medieval Art

VAH 267 History of Islamic Art/Architecture

## **Course Listing**

Course level:

[100](#) | [200](#) | [300](#) | [400](#)

***REL-101 Introduction to Religion***

Introduction to basic elements entailed in the study of religion such as sacred space, sacred time, ritual, pilgrimage, cosmology, ritual, scripture, and the afterlife. Course explores case studies from various cultural traditions throughout the world.

***REL-105 The Bible and Modern Moral Issues***

Investigation of the relevance of the Bible for life in the twenty-first century. Some issues studied from a biblical perspective include sex roles and sexual relations, economic inequities, and legal injustices. Among topics to be covered are marriage and divorce, homosexuality, women's rights, poverty, war, and peace. Open to first year and sophomores only. No prerequisites.

***REL-127 Topics in History of Religions***

Intensive study of a religious topic, problem, writer, or theme in the field of the history of religions. Offered at the discretion of the department.

***REL-137 Topics in Religious Thought***

Intensive study of a religious topic, problem, writer, or theme in the field of religious thought. Offered at the discretion of the department.

***REL-138 Topics in Religious Thought***

Intensive study of a religious nonwestern topic, problem, writer, or theme in the field of religious thought.

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***REL-204 History, Literature, and Religion of the Hebrew Scriptures***

Study of the history, literature, and religion of the Hebrews, from the time of Abraham to about 500 B.C.E. History and culture of Israel are related to those of surrounding nations, with special emphasis on the relevancy of archeological data.

***REL-205 History, Literature, and Religion of the New Testament***

Introduction to writings of the New Testament as they originated in their Greco-Roman milieu. Emphasis is on the distinctive purposes and main content of each writing. Use of source, form, and redaction

criticism as tools for the academic study of the New Testament is demonstrated.

### ***REL-209 Topics in Religion***

Intensive study of a religious topic, problem, writer, or theme.

### ***REL-210 Buddhist Spiritual Autobiographies***

The story of the life of the Buddha became a pattern for later Buddhist practitioners to emulate in their own lives. Hence, life stories are a particularly important type of literature in the Buddhist tradition. This course explores spiritual autobiographies and biographies written by and about men and women of the Buddhist tradition. Readings include materials from many different geographic regions of the world and survey sources from the earliest periods of Buddhist history to modern times. Writings are selected from Buddhist practitioners from all walks of life: monks and nuns, mountain hermits and hermitesses, social activists, pilgrims, and court ladies. No prior knowledge of the Buddhist tradition is necessary.

### ***REL-214 Introduction to Judaism***

Overview of ancient and contemporary Jewish belief and practice through an examination of sacred texts, theology, and history. Special attention is given to Jewish theology, holidays, and life-cycle.

### ***REL-224 African American Religions***

Examination of the religious traditions of black Americans from 'slave religion' to the present. Course focuses on the religious beliefs of African Americans and the ways those beliefs have been used to develop strategies to achieve freedom and justice. Subjects covered include the influence of African religion, African American religious nationalism, Pentecostalism, spirituals and gospel music, and the Civil Rights movement. Offered in alternate years.

### ***REL-225 Religion in the Civil Rights Movement***

In this course on the phenomenon of religious organization and faith in the civil rights movement, students will analytically consider resources from within black American life (faith, preaching, musical production), resources from America writ large (popular culture, socio-economic growth, and intellectual development) as well as other various forms of support from the religious institutions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, black nationalism, agnosticism, and atheism. Students will further analyze issues of religion and American regionalism (both U.S. South and North); of religion and social formation (such as urban, rural, small-town migrations) of religion and racial/cultural identity (concepts of assimilation and middle-class expansion) as well as the religion and the realities of socio-economic

poverty and urban rioting. Finally, implications for and considerations of gender and sexuality, human rights, and property concerns as well as the role of media, global awareness and nonprofit organizational growth (including fundraising efforts) are also discussed.

### ***REL-226 Native American Religions***

An introduction to the religious traditions of the Native American peoples. This course considers various Native American "ways of life" as fundamentally religious. Ethnographic case studies and contemporary issues are focused upon to reveal the religious importance of land, language, and community to otherwise diverse Native American peoples. Special attention is paid to the ongoing struggle these same peoples face for religious freedom in a country where religion is often thought of as a matter of individual belief rather than communal practice.

### ***REL-227 Religion and Society***

Critical examination of relationship between society and religion. Course relies upon theories offered by key thinkers in the study of religion to reveal religious phenomena in the contemporary world as inherently social and as having tremendous impact upon all social structures. Critical reading and writing is emphasized.

### ***REL-228 God Wrestling: Philosophy of Religion***

Explores instrumental Western Philosophers' discussions of the definitions and characteristics of God, the interrelationship between faith, reason, revelation, the meaning of morality in religious thought and subsequent existential concerns.

### ***REL-232 Modern Prophets of Social Change: Martin Luther King Jr., Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Malcolm X***

An exploration of how religious, spiritual, philosophical and social forces shaped the lives of Martin Luther King Jr., Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Malcolm X. Consideration will be given to how their commitments of justice and their theological understandings impacted movements for change. Sermons, speeches, film and interviews will be among the resources used.

### ***REL-234 Religion in America***

Critical survey of various religious groups and phenomena in the United States. This course will examine the traditional religions whose adherents played significant roles in founding the United States, while also paying attention to the religious traditions of the historically enslaved, colonized, and otherwise

oppressed. Special attention will be paid to alternative religious movements and to those religious groups whose members seek greater visibility, freedom, or influence upon the religious character of the United States today.

### ***REL-238 The Holocaust and Jewish Thought***

An exploration of Jewish responses to the holocaust, looking at Jewish religious, literary, ethical, and philosophical responses to the Holocaust. The theme of the course will be how the Holocaust threatens traditional understandings of Judaism, and monotheism, social ethics, spirituality, and community.

### ***REL-241 Introduction to Hinduism***

Survey of the Hindu religious tradition from its origins in the Vedic period to the present. Gives attention to Hindu social formations and cultural expressions through an examination of core texts and practices. Focuses on central themes of sacrifice, liberation, devotion, and action, and examines ritual practices, gods and goddesses, temples, pilgrimage, and contemporary guru movements.

### ***REL-242 Religious Worlds of Late Antiquity***

A course in the religious imaginations of the world. This class will explore the way that the diverse religious beliefs of Late Antiquity (ca 100-500) helped shaped the worldviews of men and women. Students will investigate the cultural contacts that emerged during Late Antiquity, how ideas and religions developed and grew during this time period, and how men and women in Late Antiquity conceived of the world around them and used religion to make sense and order of the cosmos.

### ***REL-243 Mythology and Religion***

Mythology and religion have always been companions. Course aims at understanding this friendship. Students familiarize themselves with certain mythological artifacts, as well as current 'surrogate myths.' Primary focus is an appreciation of the process of 'mythmaking,' which is approached from several critical viewpoints. Not offered every year.

### ***REL-244 Introduction to Buddhism***

Introduction to the beliefs and practices of the Buddhist tradition, from their origins in ancient India to their modern interpretations in the writings of the Beat generation in twentieth-century America. Course surveys the development of Buddhism in China, Tibet, and Japan, with attention given to both primary texts and historical studies.

### ***REL-247 Introduction to Religions of South Asia***

A thematic and conceptual introduction to the religious traditions of India, Pakistan and Nepal through a close examination of primary texts, histories, practices, and founding figures within Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam. Explores what adherents of these religions have believed and practiced historically and in the present, and engages the worldviews and claims of these religions in various reflective, critical ways.

### ***REL-248 Religions of China***

General introduction to major religious traditions of China through textual, historical, and social studies of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Attention is also given to an assessment of their contemporary viability.

### ***REL-249 Religions of Japan***

Special emphasis on understanding the religious thinking of the Japanese, ancient and modern, through textual, historical, and cultural study of religious traditions: Shinto and folk beliefs, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism.

### ***REL-251 Looking For the Tao***

Introduction to the major texts of classical Chinese thought. Survey, in English translation, of the most important thinkers of the Confucian, Taoist, Legalist, and Mohist schools of the fifth to the third centuries B.C.E. These writings have shaped the thinking of over a fourth of the world's population, and we will consider their impact in modern Asia in such areas as education, human rights, and gender issues.

### ***REL-252 The Tao of Tradition Chinese Medicine***

Introduction to the philosophical and religious aspects of traditional Chinese healing practices. Course surveys such topics as the composition of the human body and its relationship with the larger cosmos, the diagnosis of ailments caused by material and spiritual pathogens, the medical and ritual treatment of conditions, and preventative practices such as meditation and exercise. Emphasis is on pre-modern traditions, but some attention is given to their modern applications.

### ***REL-254 Confucianism***

Survey of the religious and philosophical traditions of Confucianism in East Asia from ancient to modern times. Course explores such notions as ritual, education, human nature, self-cultivation, and quiet sitting.

Attention is also given to women's learning and women's education in ancient and later imperial times.

### ***REL-261 Buddhist Scriptures***

Course explores major Buddhist scriptures in English translation. Readings include texts from the time of the Buddha (500 BCE) to approximately 1000CE and include selections from South and North Asian traditions. Emphasis is on the scriptures' religious and philosophical content, but consideration is also given to the ritual use of texts. Prerequisite: prior course in Buddhism or permission of the instructor.

### ***REL-265 Introduction to Christianity***

This course surveys the historical development of Christian thought and practice from ancient times to the present day. Based on original sources, this course will delve into the distinctive creedal, worship, and prayer traditions - the vision and beliefs-- of the Christian faith. The differences between the Eastern Orthodox and the Western (Roman) Catholic Churches will be explored as well as the relationship of Catholicism to Protestantism. A field trip to visit various Christian sites (the National Cathedral, the Shrine of Immaculate Conception, and St. Sophia Orthodox Church) in Washington, DC, is planned.

### ***REL-267 Medieval Christianity***

A course on the development, thought, and practice of Christianity in the Middle Ages. The class explores different aspects of medieval religion, with a particular emphasis on the development of Christian thought in the Middle Ages and popular religious beliefs and practice. Topics include the conversion of the Barbarian kingdoms, the Carolingian Renaissance, saints and sanctity, monasticism, heresy, superstition, pilgrimage, the origins of the Renaissance and Reformation, and the connections between medieval Christianity and modern media.

### ***REL-268 Queering/Querying Religion***

A critical exploration of queer theology in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. This class will explore the ways that queer theory and theology have questioned and shaped religious traditions in the modern period. Topics will include the ways LGBTQ individuals have addressed and interpreted religious traditions and the ways queer readings of traditions have influenced new directions in theology.

### ***REL-270 Introduction to Islam***

Survey of the origins and development of Islamic beliefs and practices from inception to the present. Course examines the growth and development of the cultural, political, legal, theological, and mystical aspects of Islam from the early to the modern periods. Course readings emphasize primary source

material.

### ***REL-271 Sufism: The Mystic Path in Islam***

Survey of the mystical tradition in Islam known as Sufism, from its origins in medieval Iraq to its role in contemporary Islamic societies. Course focuses on how the Sufi pursuit of unity with, or annihilation in, God relates to the core monotheistic beliefs of Islam. Sufi theories and practices are studied through primary source materials and special attention will be paid to issues of orthodoxy, heresy, and anti-social behavior in the history of Sufism.

### ***REL-272 Islam in the Modern World***

Course focuses on key issues within the diverse world of global Islam such as gender, justice, colonialism, orientalism, Islamic law, violence, reform and piety movements, and human rights. Topics are examined through the study of autobiographies, religious texts, films, literature, historical writings, and art and architecture.

### ***REL-274 Religion and Democracy in the U.S.***

A survey of the strong, vibrant and often mutually beneficial relationship between religion and democracy in the U.S. from the U.S. founders through nineteenth century reform efforts and touching upon 20th century movements that aimed to increase American participation in democracy such as civil rights, ethnic and racial relations, women's rights, gay rights, etc. When has American religion supported democracy? When have religious practices taken away from democratic processes in this country? Is there a particular U.S. version of the connections between religion and democracy? This course discusses the ideas and case studies utilizing methods and readings from political science, American history, philosophy and sociology.

### ***REL-275 World Religions in Modern America***

Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Shinto, Native American Religions, African Diasporic Religions all serve as weekly foci of this course that discusses the rise of religious experiences in modern America with attention to the foundations put in place during the nineteenth century by American Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism. While an historical framework will be provided during the time devoted to each religion, the method will be largely comparative with attention to dialogue between religious groups during the last weeks.

### ***REL-280 Cosmology of the Body***

Exploration of the religious, symbolic, and magical dimensions of cross-cultural concepts of the human body. Course surveys religious attitudes toward such topics as resurrection, reincarnation, mutilation, cannibalism, fasting and body decoration. Not offered every year

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### ***REL-311 Jesus in First Three Gospels***

Examination of the Jesus tradition, as interpreted in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, using techniques of source, form, redaction, and literary criticism. Special attention is given to the distinctive perspective of each Gospel. Prerequisite: Religion 205. Not offered every year.

### ***REL-312 The Gospel of John***

Exploration of the thought and content of the Fourth Gospel. Effort is made to determine the background purposes for writing, and the community addressed by John's Gospel. The question of its relationship to the Synoptic Gospels and the Epistles of John is included. Prerequisite: Religion 205. Not offered every year.

### ***REL-314 The Apostle Paul***

Study of the life, letters, and legacy of the early Christian, Paul, through a careful consideration of primary and selected secondary sources. Particular attention is given to understanding the Pauline literature in its historical context. Ancient and modern interpretations of Paul's life and work are also treated. Prerequisite: Religion 205. Not offered every year.

### ***REL-320 Religion and Colonialism***

Critical examination of the relationship between religion and colonialism. The use of religion by some peoples as a colonizing tool is considered alongside the use of religion by other peoples as a tool that facilitates freedom from colonialism. Case studies of colonialism and indigenous resistance against colonialism are drawn from the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Theoretical constructions of religion, colonialism, and postcolonialism are considered, as well.

### ***REL-331 Religion and Technology***

This course explores modern Jewish thinkers who critically address how technology has changed Western attitudes concerning religion, ethics and community. In addition, we will use the readings as springboards to discuss such issues as alienation, labor, abortion, cloning and more. The insights of these thinkers will help us better understand the world in which we live. An exploration of how modern Jewish thinkers

critically address the question of technology and its effect on Western attitudes concerning religion, ethics and community. The course uses the readings as springboards to discuss such issues as alienation, labor, abortion, cloning and more. The insights of these thinkers help to better understand the world in which we live.

### ***REL-337 Twentieth Century Jewish Thought***

An exploration of how 20th century Jewish thinkers critically address many of the religious, spiritual, existential, social and ethical issues that face contemporary, Western society. Their insights are used to help us understand the world in which we live. Discussion is an important part of this course.

### ***REL-338 Religion & Politics in the Middle East***

Religion and Politics in the Middle East is a course designed to introduce students to the variety of ways that Muslims, Christians and Jews in the contemporary Middle East have struggled to define their religious traditions and national aspirations in light of the changes brought about by modernity. The course will specifically look at the role of religion in the political sphere of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

### ***REL-339 Religion and Public Life in the U.S.***

A study of how American religions have shaped public life for centuries. This course analyzes the impact of the rise of democracy during the colonial and Independence periods, the emergence of American voluntarism during the early Republic and antebellum years, the nineteenth-century growth of nonprofit organizations, the evolution of civic participations in the twentieth century, and the presence of contemporary—and often multi-religious--forms of service at the dawn of the twenty first century. Meanwhile, students discover their own voice as emerging participants, servants and leaders in public life—all the while reflecting on issues of race, economics, gender and sexuality.

### ***REL-353 Sex and Gender in Early Christianity***

A seminar on the construction of sexuality and gender in early Christianity. Given the radical nature of early Christianity, this seminar will explore the way that early Christian traditions influenced and reshaped ideas of sexuality in the Late Antique Mediterranean. The seminar will address multiple varieties of early Christianity and their teachings on gender, sex, the body, and the family.

### ***REL-358 Islam in South Asia***

Examines Islam in its diverse forms within South Asia—a region that is home to more Muslims than any other region of the world. The course explores various individual and collective expressions of Muslim

belief and practice (Sunni, Shi'i, and Sufi) from our earliest records to the present day. Attention will be given to the historical development of Islam in the region, religio-political movements, popular ritual and devotion, and Islamic mysticism through the study of religious and historical texts, biographies, visual art, and novels. Prerequisite: REL 270 or HIST 208 or permission of the instructor.

***REL-360 Religious Diversity and Conflict in South Asia***

This course examines the critical issue of inter-religious conflict and cooperation in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka by examining moments of contact between the region's various religious traditions, particularly Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism. Gives particular attention to historical and contemporary representations of conflict and cooperation, the religious dimensions of conflict and cooperation, and the ways in which religion is intertwined with political, social and cultural dimensions of these phenomena.

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***REL-450 Individualized Study-Tutorial***

Individualized tutorial counting toward the minimum requirements in a major or minor, graded A-F

***REL-452 Individualized Study-Tutorial***

Individualized tutorial not counting in the minimum requirements in a major or minor, graded A-F

***REL-460 Individualized Study-Research***

Senior Project must be approved by department.

***REL-461 Individualized Study-Research***

Individualized research counting toward the minimum requirements in a major or minor, graded S/U

***REL-470 Individualized Study-Internship***

Internship counting toward the minimum requirements in a major or minor, graded A-F

***REL-474 Summer Internship***

Summer Internship graded A-F, counting in the minimum requirements for a major or minor only with written permission filed in the Registrar's Office.

## ***REL-475 Summer Internship***

Summer Internship graded S/U, counting in the minimum requirements for a major or minor only with written permission filed in the Registrar's Office

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