

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Religious Studies offers a curriculum of challenging coursework that explores and critically analyzes religious traditions and systems of value. The many diverse courses delve into the history and meaning of rituals, canonical and non-canonical texts, and theological and social categories and how they have been shaped by and construct institutions, habits, hierarchies, and collectives. The study of religion probes the organization of society, gender roles, global affairs, war, violence, terrorism, and conflicting orthodoxies. Multiple disciplinary lenses and methodological approaches inform and shape the field, including: anthropology, history, philosophy, philology, psychology, and sociology. Courses on religious practices and formations span the globe over the course of history, from antiquity until the present day. The curriculum also addresses competing value systems that circulate in pop culture and politics, with studies of fundamentalism, spirituality, secularism, atheism, and consumerism.

The Department of Religious Studies is particularly known for its promotion of scholarly research by undergraduates. The tight cohort of majors have the unique opportunity to work closely with leading scholars of the field. The curriculum enables majors to acquire the linguistic, philosophical, and historical acumen necessary for in-depth research projects during their senior year. While courses normally have no prerequisites, some advanced seminars may require the permission of the instructor. The multidisciplinary nature of Religious Studies makes it attractive both for students seeking two majors and for those seeking to delve deep into a field of study as it relates broadly to the humanities.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The Religious Studies major requires twelve term courses, to include a core of five courses, a junior seminar (RLST 490), a two-term senior essay (see below) and four electives. Religious Studies majors develop specialized areas of expertise as they plan a coherent program in consultation with the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) and other members of the faculty.

Core requirement A core of five courses in Religious Studies is required of all majors and should be selected in consultation with the DUS. These courses should originate in the Religious Studies department and carry a RLST subject code. One of the core courses must be an introductory course, numbered 001–199; another must introduce breadth into the student's core area of study; the remaining three courses must form a cohesive cohort of courses leading students to the area of expertise upon which they write their senior essay.

Electives The four elective courses are designed to complement a student's area of expertise. Collectively they should form the basis for advanced work in the major conducted during the senior year. These electives can be taken either within or beyond the Department of Religious Studies. They can comprise language study, topics and methods from other disciplines, or further advanced coursework within the department. Through these electives, students develop expertise in methods, regions,

historical periods, or bodies of literature that inform their area of study and their work for the senior essay. Students pursuing a double major or an outside certificate may count up to two courses taken for the fulfillment of their other major or certificate toward the elective requirement in Religious Studies.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

Students must write a senior essay under the supervision of a faculty adviser in the student's area of concentration. In selecting a senior essay topic, students normally choose a subject on which they have completed coursework before commencing the senior year. The essay counts as two term courses toward the major and is taken in both terms of the senior year. The student should begin choosing a senior essay topic during the second term of the junior year, and early in the first term of the senior year must submit a Statement of Intention approved by a faculty adviser and the DUS. The senior essay courses, RLST 491 and 492, include research and writing assignments as well as colloquia in which seniors present and discuss their research. Students submit at least ten pages of the essay to the DUS by the last day of classes in the first term in order to receive a grade of "satisfactory" for that term.

ADVISING

Students majoring in Religious Studies who plan to do graduate work in the subject are strongly encouraged to study the languages that they will need for their graduate programs.

Courses in the Divinity School Some Divinity School courses may count toward the major, with permission of the DUS. Divinity School faculty are eligible to advise senior essays. Information about courses and faculty may be found in the Divinity School online bulletin.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Prerequisites None

Number of courses 12 term courses (incl senior req)

Specific course required RLST 490

Distribution of courses 5 core RLST courses to include: 1 intro course, 1 breadth course, 3 related core courses; 4 electives, as described and with DUS permission

Substitution permitted Divinity School courses, with DUS permission

Senior requirement Senior essay (RLST 491, 492)

The Religious Studies curriculum approaches the history of human thought and practice while focusing on specific geographical, cultural, and philosophical areas of scholarly interest. The department offers general and comparative courses that engage more than one tradition, concept, or text, as well as survey courses that provide a broad introduction to a particular religious tradition or scripture in historical context.

Courses in Religious Studies explore when, how, and why communities forge systems of value. Faculty guide students to examine institutions, practices, texts, and ideas simultaneously: to see how texts influence institutions, how institutions prescribe

habits, and how human beings resist and reevaluate the given institutions and practices of their specific geographic and historical contexts.

The Religious Studies department is particularly known for its promotion of scholarly research by undergraduates. Undergraduate majors acquire the linguistic, philosophical, and historical acumen necessary for an in-depth research project during their senior year.

Most courses have no prerequisites and are open to nonmajors. Courses appropriate for first-year students include:

- RLST 012, Divine Law in Historical Perspective
- RLST 102, Atheism and Buddhism
- RLST 113, The Prophetic Tradition and Democracy
- RLST 114, What's the Matter (with Religion)?
- RLST 115, How to Build an American Religion
- RLST 119, The Animal and Religion
- RLST 121, Religion and Culture in Korea
- RLST 128, Emotion and Identity in Antiquity
- RLST 129, Imagining Utopia
- RLST 145, The Bible
- RLST 160, The Catholic Intellectual Tradition

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Professors Stephen Davis, Carlos Eire, Steven Fraade, Paul Franks, Bruce Gordon, Philip Gorski, Frank Griffel, John Hare, Noel Lenski, Nancy Levene, Kathryn Lofton, Ivan Marcus, Laura Nasrallah, Sally Promey, Eliyahu Stern, Shawkat Toorawa, Travis Zadeh

Associate Professors Maria Doerfler, Eric Greene, Zareena Grewal, Noreen Khawaja, Hwansoo Kim, Todne Thomas

Assistant Professors Supriya Gandhi, Sonam Kachru

Senior Lecturers John Grim, Margaret Olin, Mary Evelyn Tucker

Lecturers Jimmy Daccache, Stephen Latham

View Courses