

# Religion and the Humanities

*Program Coordinator: Jonathan Z. Smith, HM 403, 702-6022*

## Program of Study

The aims of the program in religion and the humanities are to acquire (1) understanding of religion as one of humankind's primary responses to and expressions of the human condition, and (2) appreciation of the difficulties and possibilities inherent in undertaking a critical, disciplined study of religion. The location of the program within the Humanities Collegiate Division and its use of courses from a variety of programs imply that neither the study of religion nor its data are the privileged possession of a single discipline. The basic courses, being problem oriented, imply that there is an intellectual tradition of the study of religion that must be mastered.

## Program Requirements

**Basic Courses.** All students in the program are required to take a one-quarter course in each of four areas that serve as a disciplined base for further work. These areas emphasize either key methodological questions in the academic study of religion or characteristic religious data. No fewer than two of these areas must be fulfilled by taking courses within the religion and the humanities program; up to two of these areas may be fulfilled by taking courses offered by other programs. Any variation requires the written consent of the program coordinator. The four basic areas are as follows:

(1) *Basic problems in the study of religion (Area A).* The intent is to isolate a key problem in the study of religion and to examine critically a representative sample of the kinds of data that give rise to the problem and the sorts of answers that have been proposed.

(2) *Basic strategies in the interpretation of religion (Area B).* One or more fundamental approaches to the study of religion is carried through a given body of religious materials with rigor and criticism.

(3) *Basic issues in the self-interpretation of religion (Area C).* A study of those texts whereby a religious tradition interprets itself to its community and to those who are outside the tradition.

(4) *Religious literature and expression (Area D).* The focus is on specific religious texts or artifacts and techniques for their interpretation.

**Other Courses in the Program.** All students in the program are required to take one Western and one non-Western civilization sequence (or their equivalents) in order to gain appreciation for the problems of interpreting religion within a wider historical and cultural setting. One of these sequences may be used to fulfill the general education requirements. In addition to the four basic courses, students, with the approval of the program coordinator, select at least five courses from the wide range of College and graduate courses regularly offered on some aspect of religion. Some of these may be independent study. At least three of these courses must represent concentration in either a particular religious tradition or in a coherent set of

problems in the study of religion. Finally, each student submits a senior project to be developed in consultation with the program coordinator. For students eligible for honors in the program, this project usually takes the form of a research paper developed in consultation with the program coordinator.

### Summary of Requirements

<b>Concentration</b>	2-3	civilization sequence (Western or non-Western, whichever was not taken for the general education requirement)
	4	courses, one in each of the four basic areas
	5	courses in religion (three of which must represent an area of concentration)
	–	senior project
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**Grading.** Concentrators must receive letter grades in the required courses (a one-quarter course in each of the four basic areas, and a civilization sequence). With consent of instructor, all other courses may be taken for either *Pass* or letter grading. Nonconcentrators may take any course offered by the program for either *Pass* or letter grading.

**Honors.** Students who are interested in honors should consult with the program coordinator.

### Faculty

A. Carr, J. Z. Smith

## Courses

*The following courses fulfill the area requirements of the program. The area represented is indicated by a letter in parentheses at the end of each description. They are open, without prerequisites, to all students in the College.*

**22300. Myths and Symbols of Evil.** (=FN DL 22300, HUMA 21200, RLST 23600) This course examines in depth Martin Buber's *Good and Evil* and Paul Ricoeur's *Symbolism of Evil*. There are a few brief lectures, but emphasis is on seminar discussion and student participation. A. Carr. Winter. (A, C)

**23801. Mythical Thinking: Classics in the Study of Religion.** (=FN DL 23801, RLST 27800) Ernst Cassirer was the twentieth century's most influential philosopher of culture. This course focuses on that part of Ernst Cassirer's three-volume work on *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* devoted to mythical thought. In addition, we read Cassirer's *Essay on Man* and part of his *Myth of the State*. J. Z. Smith. Autumn, 2002. (A, B)

**23802. Thinking with Stories.** (=FNDL 23802, RLST 27900) This course focuses on understanding the thoughtful and argumentative character of folktales, legends, and myths by reading successive or parallel versions of the same narratives (e.g., Near Eastern, biblical, classical texts), as well as oral narratives from traditional societies. *J. Z. Smith. Spring, 2002. (A, B, D)*

**29700. Readings in Religion and the Humanities.** *PQ: Students are required to submit a formal proposal and receive the consent of the program coordinator. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form. J. Z. Smith. Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

**29900. Senior Project.** *PQ: Students are required to submit a formal proposal and receive the consent of the program coordinator. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form. J. Z. Smith. Autumn, Winter, Spring.*