

Religious Studies

Chair of Undergraduate Studies: David Martinez, S 405, 702-8232

*Director of Undergraduate Studies: Lucy Pick, S 306B, 702-8278,
lucypick@uchicago.edu*

Web: <http://divinity.uchicago.edu/academics/ugradReligiousStudies.html>

Program of Study

The field of Religious Studies engages perennial questions about religion and human society. It investigates religions and how they shape and are shaped by human cultures. The concentration in Religious Studies exposes students to different sources, problems, and methodologies in the study of religion. Students explore one particular question in depth by writing a senior paper. The program is designed to attract students who wish to take interdisciplinary approaches to the study of religion, including those that are historical, philosophical, theological, sociological, or literary-critical. The interests of such students may be descriptive, explanatory, or normative.

Program Requirements

A concentration in Religious Studies consists of twelve courses, including one introductory course and a two-quarter senior seminar. It is preferable that students consult the Director of Undergraduate Studies and declare their concentration in Religious Studies before the end of their second year. Students and the Director of Undergraduate Studies will work together to create a program of study. The goal is to develop depth in one area so that a satisfactory B.A. paper will be written in the fourth year.

Students will normally be permitted to count language courses toward their concentration that go beyond the College language requirement and are pertinent to the area of research of their B.A. paper. Placement credit may not be used for these courses. With the consent of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, students may also count two additional extra-departmental courses toward the concentration. Students are encouraged to explore more than one religious tradition through their course work.

Introductory Course. All concentrators in Religious Studies are required to take Introduction to Religious Studies (RLST 10100). It need not precede other course work in the concentration, but students are advised to have completed it by the end of their second year. It will normally be offered every year during Autumn Quarter. This course will introduce students to some of the central themes in Religious Studies; its particular focus will vary according to the interests of the individual instructor.

Course Distribution. Religion is expressed in many forms throughout the world's cultures, and the academic study of religion therefore requires multiple perspectives on its subject. Students of religion should have some knowledge of the historical development of specific religious traditions, understand and critically engage the ethical and intellectual teachings of various religions, and begin to make some comparative appraisals of the roles that religions play in different cultures and historical periods. To introduce students to these multiple perspectives on religion

and to provide a sense of the field as a whole, students are required to take at least one course in each of the following areas. To identify the areas, refer to the boldface letter at the end of each course description.

(A) *Historical Studies in Religious Traditions*: courses that explore the development of particular religious traditions, including their social practices, rituals, scriptures, and beliefs in historical context

(B) *Constructive Studies in Religion*: courses that investigate constructive or normative questions about the nature and conduct of human life that are raised by religious traditions, including work in philosophy of religion, ethics, and theology

(C) *Cultural Studies in Religion*: courses that introduce issues in the social and cultural contingencies of religious thought and practice by emphasizing sociological, anthropological, and literary-critical perspectives on religion, and by raising comparative questions about differing religious and cultural traditions

Senior Seminar and B.A. Paper. The two-quarter senior seminar (RLST 29800 and 29900) will assist students with the preparation of the required B.A. paper. During May of their third year, students will work with a preceptor to choose a faculty adviser and a topic for research, and to plan a course of study for the following year. These must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students will enroll in the B.A. Paper Seminar convened by a preceptor during Autumn and Winter Quarters. This seminar will allow students to prepare their bibliographies, hone their writing, and present their research. The B.A. paper will be due early in the Spring Quarter. Normally it is between thirty and forty pages, with the upward limit being firm.

Grading. Religious Studies concentrators must receive quality grades in all courses in the concentration. Nonconcentrators may take Religious Studies courses on a *P/N* or *P/F* basis if they receive the prior consent of the faculty member for a given course.

Honors. Students who write senior papers deemed exceptional by their faculty advisers will be eligible for consideration for graduation with honors. They will be required to have a 3.5 GPA or higher in the concentration and a 3.25 GPA or higher overall.

Summary of Requirements

Concentration	1	Introduction to Religious Studies (RLST 10100)
	1	course in historical studies in religious traditions
	1	course in constructive studies in religion
	1	course in cultural studies in religion
	6	additional courses in Religious Studies
	1	B.A. Paper Seminar (RLST 29800)
	1	B.A. Paper (RLST 29900)
	<hr/> 12	

Faculty

A. Boden, C. Brekus, D. Browning, K. Culp, A. Davidson, W. Doniger, J. Elshtain, M. Fishbane, T. Frymer-Kensky, F. Gamwell, W. C. Gilpin, D. Hopkins, M. Kapstein, H. Klauck, B. Lincoln, S. Mahmood, J.-L. Marion, D. Martinez, F. Meltzer, P. Mendes-Flohr, M. Mitchell, M. Murrin, M. Nussbaum, W. Olmsted, L. Pick, M. Riesebrodt, R. Rosengarten, S. Schreiner, W. Schweiker, W. Sullivan, K. Tanner, D. Tracy, A. Yu

Courses: Religious Studies (RLST)

Boldface letters in parentheses refer to the areas noted in the preceding Program Requirements section.

10100. Introduction to Religious Studies. *Required of concentrators.* This course introduces students to some of the central concerns, problems, and materials of Religious Studies. Students are exposed to a range of primary and secondary source material grouped around a set of themes chosen by the instructor. Possible themes include canon, prophecy, revelation, initiation, priesthood, sacred space, discipline, and ritual. *L. Pick. Autumn.*

12000. Introduction to the New Testament. (=BIBL 32500, FNDL 28202, NTEC 21000/32500) This course is an immersion in the texts of the New Testament with the following goals: through careful reading to come to know well some representative pieces of this literature; to gain useful knowledge of the historical, geographical, social, religious, cultural, and political contexts of these texts and the events they relate; to learn the major literary genres represented in the canon (i.e., “gospels,” “acts,” “letters,” “apocalypse”) and strategies for reading them; to comprehend the various theological visions to which these texts give expression; and to situate oneself and one’s prevailing questions about this material in the history of interpretation. *M. Mitchell. Winter. (A)*

14000. Introduction to Midrash. (=HIJD 30300) *M. Fishbane. Spring. (A)*

21500. Gods on Earth, The Author of the Bible. (=HIJD) This course is a discussion of the many facets of the biblical theology of humanity. We consider such issues as the image of God, humanity of nature, the glory of humanity, holiness and other issues toward building a biblical theology of humankind. Implications for contemporary religious anthropology are also considered. *T. Frymer-Kensky. Autumn. (A)*

21600. Early Monasticism. (=HIST 11900) This course examines early monasticism from its origins among the desert fathers of the Greek and Syriac East to its development in the Latin West, especially in Italy and Spain, concluding with the Carolingian reformation of monasticism in the ninth century. We examine such themes as monastic rules, monastic hagiography, women in monasticism, ideas of virginity, and the economics of monasticism. *L. Pick. Spring. (A)*

21700. Religious Thought in the United States. (=HIST 15401) A general history of theology and religious thought from 1776 to the present. *W. C. Gilpin. Spring. (A)*

21800. Religion and Society in the Medieval West. (=HIST 22101/32101) What did it mean to be religious in medieval Europe? This course considers this question from two main perspectives. On the one hand, we study certain fundamental beliefs and practices of medieval Christians, including devotion to Christ and the saints, participation in the liturgy, the study of the Bible, and concern for the afterlife. On the other hand, we examine how these beliefs and practices were articulated and, often, challenged within European society, both institutionally and experientially. Our goal is to come to an appreciation of the way in which beliefs, practices, institutions, and experience interrelate in shaping both the self-perceptions of the members of a society and the structures of society itself. *R. Fulton. Autumn. (A)*

21900. Ancient Near Eastern Religions: Mesopotamian Religion. (=NEHC 20031/30031) The religion of Mesopotamia from the early Dynastic period (third millennium B.C.) to the end of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (mid-first millennium B.C.), covering the major trends in Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian religion. The course introduces the principal gods by examining the sources in which they appear (including mythological texts and hymns, in translation, as well as iconography) and focuses on various themes (e.g., the role of goddesses, the theology of death, religious architecture, and ritual practice). *Spring. (A)*

22300 Early Christian Narratives. (=NTEC) In this course we read a representative selection of early Christian narratives, ranging from the familiar canonical Gospel of Mark to the undoubtedly less familiar Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of Cannibals. Our focus is the primary yet very difficult question of genre: what are these texts, how do they relate to each other, and how do they compare with contemporary non-Christian narratives? To this end, we read selections from Greco-Roman historiography, biography, and fiction alongside the Christian texts. *J. Spittler. Spring. (A)*

24201. Indian Philosophy I: Origins and Orientations. (=DVPR 30200, HREL 30200, SALC 20901/30901) A survey of the origins of Indian philosophical thought, emphasizing the Vedas, Upanisads, and early Buddhist literature. Topics include concepts of causality and freedom, the nature of the self and ultimate reality, and the relationship between philosophical thought and ritual or ascetic religious practice. *Winter. (B)*

24202. Indian Philosophy II: The Classical Traditions. (=DVPR 30300, HREL 30300, SALC 20902/30902) *PQ: RLST 24201.* Continuing and building upon SALC 20901/30901, we focus on the development of the major classical systems of Indian thought. The course emphasizes Indian logic, epistemology, and philosophy of language. *M. Kapstein. Spring. (B)*

24900. Women, Religion, and Human Rights. This course examines the intersection of both gender and religion in the practice of human rights. Of particular concern is how theological conflicts with rights norms for women; questions of privacy, relativism, and agency; and the role of human rights law in supporting religious freedom and women's rights, as well as resolving conflicts between the two. *A. Boden. Winter. (B)*

25100. Augustine's Confessions. (=FNDL 27600) A seminar class that discusses Augustine's *Confessions* and *On Christian Doctrine* in depth. *W. Olmsted. Autumn. (B)*

25200. Moments in Atheism. (=BPRO 24600, CLCV 22300, HIST 29402) *PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing.* Atheism is as old as religion. As religion and its place in society have evolved throughout history, so has the standing and philosophical justification for non-belief. This course examines the intellectual and cultural history of atheism in Western thought from antiquity to the present. We are concerned with the evolution of arguments for a non-religious worldview, as well as with the attitude of society toward atheism and atheists. *S. Bartsch, S. Carroll. Winter. (B)*

25300. St. Augustine's *City of God*. (=FNDL 26200) *PQ: Some background in political/social theory useful.* A close reading of Augustine's great masterwork with a strong emphasis on his critical deconstruction of the politics, rhetoric, and civic religion of Rome and on the social, political, and cultural implications of his concept of a pilgrim people in their sojourn in the earthly city, a people whose lives are framed by the hope of membership in the eternal city of God. *J. Elshtain. Spring. (B)*

26800. The *Mahabharata* in English Translation. (=FNDL 24400, HREL 35000, SALC 20400/48200) A reading of the *Maharabharata* in English translation (van Buitenen, Narasimhan, P. C. Roy, and Doniger), with special attention to issues of mythology, feminism, and theodicy. *W. Doniger. Autumn. (C)*

27101. Durkheim's *Elementary Forms: Classics in the Study of Religion*. (=FNDL 23803, RELH) A close reading, in its entirety, of Durkheim's foundational text, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, along with a brief consideration of some later, representative Durkheimians. *J. Z. Smith. Spring. (C)*

27300. Religion, Sex, Politics, and Release in Ancient India. (=FNDL 23601, HREL 32200, SALC 25701/35701, SCTH 35600) A study of the four goals of human life (purusharthas) in classical Hinduism with readings in the *Laws of Manu*, the *Kamasutra*, the *Arthashastra*, and the *Upanishads*. Texts in English. *W. Doniger. Winter. (C)*

28200. Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev*. (=CMLT 22800, CMST 26600/36600, HUMA 23301, ISHU 23301/33301, RUSS 23300/33300) Using Andrei Tarkovsky's 1966 film *Andrei Rublev* as our primary focus, we investigate Tarkovsky's oeuvre and its antecedents in world cinema from Dreyer and Eisenstein to Bresson and Pasolini. Developing an aesthetic language capable of describing Tarkovsky's cinema, we seek a critical evaluation of such concepts as poetic or transcendental cinema, anti-montage cinema, Deleuze's "time-image," and Tarkovsky's own concept of cinema as "imprinted time." *Class discussion encouraged. R. Bird. Autumn. (C)*

28300. Fairy Tales. (=CMLT 23300, ENGL 13650) A historical approach to fairy tale in the West, beginning with the first collections in the seventeenth century and ending with Ursula LeGuin. Attention is given to the historically relevant theories and to related genres such as some stories of E. T. A. Hoffmann. Other authors include Perrault, Tieck, Anderson, Baum, Tolkien, and Lewis. Other collections include those of Basile and the brothers Grimm, as well as *The Arabian Nights*. *M. Murrin. Autumn. (C)*

28400. Travelers on the Silk Road. (=CMLT 28100/38100, ENGL 16100/36100, RLIT 31500) We read some of the major travel narratives of the Silk Road and Tibet, including Xuanzang and the early Chinese Buddhist pilgrims who went West, Marco Polo and others who went East, diplomats such as Clavijo who went to see Tamerlane, those Shah Rukh sent from Iran to China some years later, the spies the British government sent from India to explore and map the area, and archaeologists such as Aurel Stein who went both ways on the Silk Road. Through slide lectures, students gain a sense of the physical characteristics of the region and its art during various periods. At the same time, students learn indirectly about the different religions and political regimes travelers experienced. *M. Murrin. Winter.* (C)

28500. Ancient Mediterranean Myths and Mythologies. (=RELH) This course examines a variety of myths and mythologies from the ancient Mediterranean world, including Canaanite, Israelite, Sumerian, Babylonian, and Greek materials. Besides gaining facility in the close reading of texts, the course inquires as to whether, despite linguistic differences and often antagonistic histories, the ancient Mediterranean world can be usefully imagined as a single, interactive cultural system. *J. Z. Smith. Autumn.* (C)

28600. Buddhism in Contemporary China: Religion, Politics, and Culture. (=CHIN 28605) This course examines the diversity of Buddhist practices in contemporary China, and its relationship to the Chinese state. We begin by asking what Buddhism might be in China and how the Chinese state treats religious groups. We then consider two models for examining Buddhism: (1) a political model in which the Sangha is a participant in political action, and (2) a popular religion model in which we focus on practices and materials unconnected to the state that may or may not be resisting state incursions. We also consider Mahayana, Tibetan/Vajrayana, and Theravada Buddhism as they are practiced throughout late twentieth-century China. *T. Borchert. Winter.* (C)

29700. Reading and Research Course. *PQ: Consent of faculty supervisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form. Autumn, Winter, Spring.*

29800. B.A. Paper Seminar. *RLST 29800 and 29900 form a two-quarter sequence that is required of fourth-year concentrators. This course meets weekly to provide guidance for planning, researching, and writing the B.A. paper. Autumn.*

29900. B.A. Paper. *PQ: Consent of faculty supervisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form. RLST 29800 and 29900 form a two-quarter sequence that is required of fourth-year concentrators. The purpose of this course is to assist students in the preparation of drafts of their B.A. paper, which are formally presented and critiqued. Winter.*