

Religious Studies

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Web: divinity.uchicago.edu/degree/undergraduate.shtml

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 program 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 major 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 major 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 typically be permitted to count up to two language courses at the second-year level or above if they are pertinent to their B.A. paper research. 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 major. Students are encouraged to explore more than one religious tradition in their courses.

Introductory Course. Students in Religious Studies are required to take Introduction to Religious Studies (RLST 10100). It need not precede other course work in the major, but students are advised to have completed it by the end of their second year. It will typically 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 (RLST 11000 through 15000, 20000 through 22900).

(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 (RLST 23000 through 25900).

(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 (RLST 26000 through 28900).

Senior Seminar and B.A. Paper. The two-quarter senior sequence (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 take part 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. Students will register for RLST 29800 in the Autumn Quarter and for RLST 29900 in the Winter Quarter. The B.A. paper will be due early in the Spring Quarter. The length is typically between thirty and forty pages, with the upward limit being firm.

This program may accept a B.A. paper or project used to satisfy the same requirement in another major if certain conditions are met and with the consent of the other program. Approval from both departments is required. Students should consult with the departments by the earliest B.A. proposal deadline (or by the end of their third year, if neither program publishes a deadline). A consent form, to be signed by both departments, is available from the College adviser. It must be completed and returned to the College adviser by the end of Autumn Quarter of the student's year of graduation.

Grading. Religious Studies majors must receive quality grades in all courses in the major. With consent of instructor, nonmajors may take Religious Studies courses for *P/F* grading. Faculty will determine the criteria that constitute a *Pass*.

Honors. Honors are awarded by the Divinity School's Committee on Undergraduate Studies. Students who write senior papers deemed exceptional by their faculty advisers will be eligible for consideration for graduation with honors. To be considered for honors, students must also have a 3.5 GPA or higher in the major and a 3.25 GPA or higher overall.

Summary of Requirements

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| 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) |
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Faculty

D. Arnold, A. Boden, C. Brekus, K. Culp, A. Davidson, W. Doniger, J. Elstain, M. Fishbane, R. Fox, F. Gamwell, W. C. Gilpin, D. Hopkins, M. Kapstein, H. Klauck, B. Lincoln, C. Lindner, J.-L. Marion, D. Martinez, F. Meltzer, P. Mendes-Flohr, M. Mitchell, M. Murrin, M. Nussbaum, W. Olmsted, L. Pick, M. Riesebrodt, J. Robinson, R. Rosengarten, S. Schreiner, W. Schweiker, M. Sells, K. Tanner, C. Wedemeyer, M. Zeghal

Courses: Religious Studies (RLST)

Boldface letters in parentheses refer to the areas noted in the preceding Course Distribution section.

10100. Introduction to Religious Studies. (=RELH 10100) *Required of students who are majoring in Religious Studies.* This course introduces 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. *J. Z. Smith. 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)*

20602. The Jews in Medieval Spain. *May not be both used to meet the general education requirement and counted toward the courses required for the Religious Studies major. J. Robinson. Winter. (A)*

21301. A History of American Secularism. This course considers the changing ideas of the secular, secularism, and secularization in the history of the United States from the American Revolution to the present. *W. C. Gilpin. Spring. (A)*

21801. Religion and Society in the Middle Ages. The purpose of this course is to examine some of the roles religion played within medieval society. We consider topics such as the conversion of Europe to Christianity, monasticism, the cult of saints, the rise of the papacy, and religious dissent. We study medieval religious ideals, as well as the institutions created to perpetuate those ideals, weighing the experience of the individual and the group. We read autobiographies, saints’ lives, chronicles, miracle collections, and papal documents, among other kinds of sources. *L. Pick. Autumn. (A)*

22400. Tolkien: Medieval and Modern. (=FNDL 24901, HIST 29900) *PQ: Prior reading of the Lord of the Rings trilogy.* J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* is one of the most popular works of imaginative literature of the twentieth century. This course seeks to understand its appeal by situating Tolkien’s creation within the context of its medieval sources and modern parallels. Possible themes include the nature of history and its relationship to story, the activity of creation and its relationship to language, and the interaction between the world of “faerie” and religious belief. *R. Fulton. Spring. (A)*

22404. Medieval Pilgrimage. This course seeks to investigate the nature, meaning, and significance of the phenomenon of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages. We consider the origin and development of pilgrimage and its relationship to the medieval cult of saints. We use narrative accounts, as well as art and architecture. Although our primary focus is on Christian pilgrimage, we also investigate parallels in the Jewish and Muslim traditions. *L. Pick. Winter. (A)*

22500. Death/Afterlife in American Religion. (=HIST 22500) This course explores the history of the rituals, beliefs, and images surrounding death in American culture from the colonial period to the present. *W. C. Gilpin. Autumn.*

22602. Protestant Reformation in Germany. (=HIST 23002/33002) This course is designed to clarify and test the assumptions underlying the present state of knowledge about the Protestant Reformation. Its method consists of reading extensively in the historiography and reflecting intensively on the issues raised by that reading. So as to maintain a well-defined focus, the course is largely limited to the Reformation in Germany. So as to develop a broad perspective the course is not limited to the most recent literature. We begin with some of the most famous older interpretations (i.e., Hegel, Ranke, Engels, Troeltsch, Weber, Febvre). We then go on to consider the redefinition of the historical agenda since the 1960s and the current state of our knowledge by reading the work of leading contemporary historians of the Reformation (e.g., Bernd Moeller, Thomas Brady, Heiko Oberman, Jean Delumeau, Peter Blickle, Heinz Schilling). The course consists of a mixture of discussion and professorial commentary. *C. Fasolt. Winter.* (A)

23401. Terror, Religion, and Aesthetics. (=BPRO 28000, HMRT 28801, ISHU 28201) *PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing.* Through our contemporary experiences of terrorist acts, we apprehend the no-citizens' land of life without a social contract, of the violent "state of nature" among people. In varied genres (e.g., poems, plays, novels, memoirs, essays), we engage with the transformative powers of diverse aesthetics (e.g., catharsis, the sublime, theatre of cruelty, realism, fable, satire) and of religious faiths (e.g., deism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Sufism, Buddhism) to counteract terror and redeploy our civil status in society. *A. Boden, M. Browning. Autumn.* (B)

24301. Historical Knowledge and Biblical Faith. The difference between the world of the Bible and that of the contemporary Christian for whom the Bible is to be normative is one of the definitive problems for post-Enlightenment Christian thought. This course investigates a crucial turning point and development in the treatment of this problem through a focus on the biblical theology and hermeneutics of Rudolf Bultmann (1884 to 1976). We see that this fairly specific problem opens into abiding theological questions about the relation of God to the world, the nature of faith as a human response to God, and the role of philosophical argument in explicating that response of faith. *M. Shukla. Spring.* (B)

25501. Augustine's *Confessions*. (=FNDL 27600, GNDR 27601, HUMA 22700) *Knowledge of Latin not required.* This course discusses Augustine's representations of the self, of inquiry, and of the relation of language to truth. We discuss the literary and rhetorical form of the *Confessions*, while also examining Augustine's psychology and theology. Text in English. *W. Olmsted. Winter.* (B)

26601. The Representation of Jesus in Modern Jewish Literature. (=CMLT 25800, JWSC 24800, NEHC 20457) This course examines the Jewish literary world's relation to the figure of Jesus from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. We study the transformations of Jesus through close readings of major works, both prose fiction and poetry, by Yiddish and Hebrew writers (e.g.,

Uri Zvi Greenberg, H. Leivick, Jacob Glatstein, S. Y. Agnon, Avraham Shlonsky, Natan Bistritzki, A. A. Kabak, Haim Hazaz, Zalman Shneior, Yigal Mosenzon, Avot Yeshurun, Nathan Zach, Yona Wallach, Yoel Hoffmann). Classes conducted in English; students with knowledge of Hebrew are encouraged to read texts in the original. *N. Stahl. Autumn.*

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

27302. Buddhism in South Asia. Buddhism has been an important presence in South Asian religion and culture since its origins in northern India some 2500 years ago. In this course, we survey the history of ideas and practices in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism from its earliest traces to the present. *C. Wedemeyer. Autumn. (C)*

27400. Myths of Transvestism and Transexuality. (=HREL 40800, SALC 35900) *PQ: Consent of instructor.* Studies in selected Greek and Hindu myths, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*, Roland Barthes's *S/Z*, Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests and Vice Versa*, Wendy Doniger's *Splitting the Difference*, and selected operas (*Marriage of Figaro*, *Rosenkavalier*, and *Arabella*) and films (*Dead Again*, *Queen Christina*, *Some Like It Hot*, *I Was a Male War Bride*, *Tootsie*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *All of Me*, and *The Crying Game*). *W. Doniger. Spring.*

27402. Hinduism: An Alternative. (=HREL 35401, SALC 30302) This course is a survey of the history of Hinduism, setting texts in historical contexts. *W. Doniger. Winter. (C)*

27700. Music of South Asia. (=MUSI 23700/33700, SALC 20800/30800) *PQ: Any 10000-level music course or consent of instructor.* This course examines the music of South Asia as an aesthetic domain with both unity and particularity in the region. The unity of the North and South Indian classical traditions is treated historically and analytically, with special emphasis placed on correlating their musical and mythological aspects. The classical traditions are contrasted with regional, tribal, and folk music with respect to fundamental conceptualizations of music and the roles it plays in society. In addition, the repertoires of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and states and nations bordering the region are covered. Music is also considered as a component of myth, religion, popular culture, and the confrontation with modernity. *P. Bohlman. Winter. (C)*

28001. Monarchies in the Modern Arab World: Family, Religion, and Power. *PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing.* This class examines the history and sociology of Arab monarchs in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Arab world. Why did some Arab monarchies disappear in the twentieth century to be replaced

by republics? How do monarchies function in the Arab Middle East? On what type of idea is their legitimacy founded and contested? What is the role played by economics, sacred and profane lineages, family circles, and Islam? How are political resources shared, distributed, and confiscated? How are these political systems evolving today, and are they so different from models established by the Arab republics? The following four cases are examined: Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. *M. Zeghal. Winter. (C)*

28201. Russian Philosophy. (=RUSS 25801/35801) From the mid-nineteenth century, Russia developed a unique form of philosophical discourse that has often sat uncomfortably between ideology and theology, and between metaphysics and psychology. We read and interpret the major texts of the tradition, from the Slavophiles and Vladimir Solovyov through the Silver Age (i.e., Rozanov, S. Bulgakov, Berdiaev, Florensky) and up the present day. Our key issues are the relationship between reason and faith, the development of a modern anthropology consistent with Orthodox belief, and aesthetics. Texts in English. *R. Bird. Autumn. (C)*

28501. Tolstoy's Late Works. (=ISHU 22201/32201, RLIT 32900, RUSS 22201/32201) After completing *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy underwent a series of spiritual crises and subsequently became known around the world as a moralist and religious thinker. Yet he also remained an artist who never ceased to explore new creative avenues. We address both sides of Tolstoy's work. Major fictional works include "The Death of Ivan Ilych," "The Kreutzer Sonata," *Hadji-Murad*, and *Resurrection*. We also read Tolstoy's *Confession* and *What Is Art?* Selections from his philosophical and religious writings are included in the bibliography. *R. Bird. Autumn. (C)*

28701. The Demons. (=FNDL 21502, RUSS 27502/37502) Fedor Dostoevsky wrote *The Demons* in response to the rise of political terrorism and, more broadly, as an investigation into the human agency of evil. We focus on a close reading of the novel, paying attention to the historical context, philosophical parallels, and issues of language. *R. Bird. Spring. (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. *PQ: Consent of faculty supervisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies. RLST 29800 and 29900 form a two-quarter sequence that is required of fourth-year students majoring in Religious Studies. This course meets weekly to provide guidance for planning, researching, and writing the B.A. paper. Autumn.*

29900. B.A. Paper. *RLST 29800 and 29900 form a two-quarter sequence that is required of fourth-year students who are majoring in Religious Studies. This course meets weekly to assist students in the preparation of drafts of their B.A. paper, which are formally presented and critiqued. Winter.*