

Religious Studies

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Web: divinity.uchicago.edu/academics/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 BA paper will be written in the fourth year. Students are encouraged to explore more than one religious tradition in their courses. Students who wish to receive credit in the major for courses taken elsewhere must submit a petition to the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Such requests are decided on a case-by-case basis. NOTE: The Office of the Dean of Students in the College must also approve the transfer of all courses taken at institutions other than those in which students are enrolled as part of a study abroad program that is sponsored by the University of Chicago. For more information, visit www.college.uchicago.edu/academics/transfer_credit.shtml.

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 BA Paper. The two-quarter senior sequence (RLST 29800 and 29900) will assist students with the preparation of the required BA paper. During May of their third year, students will work with the 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 BA 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 BA paper will be due the second week of Spring Quarter. The length is typically between thirty and forty pages, with the upward limit being firm.

This program may accept a BA 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 BA 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

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	BA Paper Seminar (RLST 29800)
1	BA Paper (RLST 29900)
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Faculty

D. Arnold, C. Brekus, K. Culp, A. Davidson, W. Doniger, J. Elshain, C. Evans, M. Fishbane, R. Fox, F. Gamwell, W. C. Gilpin, K. Hector, D. Hopkins, H.-J. Klauck, B. Lincoln, C. Lindner, J.-L. Marion, D. Martinez, F. Meltzer, P. Mendes-Flohr, M. Mitchell, M. Murrin, M. Nussbaum, W. Otten, L. Pick, M. Riesebrodt, J. Robinson, R. Rosengarten, S. Schreiner, W. Schweiker, M. Sells, J. Stackert, 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.*

11004. Jewish Thought and Literature I: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible. (=BIBL 30800, JWSC 20004, NEHC 20404/30404) This course explores Jewish thought and literature from ancient times until the modern era through a close reading of original sources. A wide variety of works is discussed, including the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Texts in English. *Autumn. (A)*

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)*

20701. The Autobiography of Teresa of Avila. (=FNDL 23112, GNDR 20701, HIST 19801) This course is a close reading of the autobiography of Teresa of Avila in which we pay attention to her attitudes towards prayer and religious practice, mystical experience, community organization, sin and redemption, and gender. Our reading is supplemented by other texts written by Teresa, as well as secondary works that help us interpret her in her historical context. *L. Pick. Winter. (A)*

21001. Witches, Revivals, and Revolution: Religion in Early America, 1600 to 1787. (=HIST 18402) This course is a survey of religion in American, from the founding of the colonies to the American Revolution. Topics include Puritanism, witchcraft, revivalism, slavery, gender, Native American religion, the coming of the Revolution, and the separation of church and state. *C. Brekus. Winter. (A)*

21105. Women in American Jewish History. This course explores the role of women in American Jewish history from the colonial period to the present. It progresses thematically, examining how and why Jewish women’s lives have changed over time and what that means for writing history. Themes include immigration, assimilation, race, ritual, religious experience, religious leadership, and political involvement. *S. Imhoff. Autumn. (A)*

22405. Medieval Monasticism. (=HIST 22405/32405) This course focuses on the origins and development of monasticism as one of the central institutions of medieval Europe. Topics include the appeal of asceticism in late antique society; the role of the monasteries in the collapse and preservation of European civilization; the social, economic, and political impact of Benedictine monasticism on the development of Western Europe; and the progressive reforms of this institution from Benedict to Francis. *R. Fulton. Spring. (A)*

22700. Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy of Religion. (=DVPR 34811, PHIL 24801/34801) *D. Brundy. Autumn. (B)*

23403. What Is Enlightenment? (=BPRO 28100, HUMA 28109) *PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing.* What is enlightenment? How does one become enlightened, and who is enlightened? In Euro-American civilization, the 18th-century Age of Enlightenment championed the powers of human reason against religion and superstition to achieve scientific progress. Buddhism in the 19th century was represented by the heirs of Enlightenment as a religion for the Enlightenment to the point of not being a religion at all. Both traditions offer pathways to freedom (or liberation?) that draw on our rational capabilities, and both sponsor the production of knowledge that re-vision our place in the world, but they seem to be opposed: How could reason reject ‘religious’ beliefs but also take part in ‘religious’ traditions that aim to bring certain kinds of persons into being? We compare the mental models, discourses, methods of analysis, world-

images, and practices of these traditions of enlightenment in order to assess the kinds of disciplines that their theoreticians and practitioners acquire and use. *M. Browning. Spring.*

23702. Calvin on Idolatry and True Religion. (=FNDL 29202) This course is a close reading of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), focusing on Calvin's diagnosis of idolatry as the root problem of human life and on his contrasting elaboration of true religion or "piety." We consider Calvin's treatment of the right knowledge of God and self and his depictions of rightly ordered individual, corporate, and civic life. Text in English. *K. Culp. Winter. (B)*

24601. Martin and Malcolm: Life and Belief. (=AFAM 24601) This course examines the religious, social, cultural, political, and personal factors behind the two most prominent public leaders and public intellectuals emerging from the African American community in the 1950s and 1960s: Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. We review their autobiographies, domestic trends within the United States, and larger international forces operating during their times to ask what their lives can tell us about America during one of the most dynamic periods in the nation's personality metamorphosis. We screen documentary videos of their speeches and of the social contexts in which they lived. *D. Hopkins. Winter. (B)*

25101. Augustine's Confessions. (=FNDL 24310, GNDR 27601, HUMA 22700, LATN 25000/35000) *PQ: LATN 20600 or equivalent.* Substantial selections from books 1 through 9 of the *Confessions* are read in Latin (and all thirteen books in English), with particular attention to Augustine's style and thought. Further readings in English provide background about the historical and religious situation of the late fourth century AD. *P. White. Spring. (B)*

26400. Milton's Paradise Lost. (=FNDL 21900, GNDR 21600, HUMA 20800) This course focuses on a close reading of *Paradise Lost*, attending to its redefinition of the heroics of war and of marriage and friendship. Discussion topics include family, politics, history, psychology, and theology. *W. Olmsted. Autumn. (C)*

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

27303. Introduction to the Study of Tibetan Religion. *PQ: Knowledge of Indian Buddhism and consent of instructor.* This course introduces current research on Tibetan Buddhism and on Tibetan indigenous religious traditions. The Tibetan Buddhist tradition has known over thirteen centuries of continuous development. During that time, it has spread among peoples neighboring Tibet—the Mongols, Himalayan and Siberian peoples, Manchus and Chinese—and at its height has been practiced in regions as far west as the Caspian Sea, and to the east in Beijing.

Its best-known exponent, the Dalai Lama, has become one of the most admired religious leaders in the world today. *M. Kapstein. Winter. (C)*

27403. Hindu Mythologies of Evil. Texts for this course include Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*; David Shulman, *The Hungry God*; selected passages from the *Rig Veda*, the *Upanishads*, *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Puranas*; and other, later works. *W. Doniger. Spring. (C)*

27600. The Art of Ancestral Worship. (=ARTH 20100/30100, EALC 20101/30101) This course focuses on various art forms (e.g., ritual jades and bronzes, tomb murals and sculptures, family temples and shrines) that were created between the third millennium BC and the second century AD for ancestral worship, the main religious tradition in China before the introduction of Buddhism. Central questions include how visual forms convey religious concepts and serve religious communications, and how artistic changes reflect trends in the ancestral cult. *H. Wu. Spring.*

27604. Religion and Gender. (=GNDR 27604) In what ways are notions of ideas about religion and the sacred gendered, and what are the consequences of this for how we live our lives? This course introduces the study of the relationships between religion and gender and the way these relationships play out in specific historical situations. We also examine the relationships between religions and sexualities. Examples are drawn from medieval to modern periods, with a primary focus on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. *L. Pick. Spring. (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, and Sri Lanka, as well as 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. *This course typically is offered in alternate years. Winter. (C)*

28400. Travelers on the Silk Road. (=CMLT 28100/38100, ENGL 16180/36180, RLIT 31500) *PQ: Advanced standing.* This course meets the critical/intellectual methods course requirement for students who are majoring in Comparative Literature. This course is a reading of some of the major travel narratives of the Silk Road and Tibet: Xuanzang, the most famous of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims who went to the West; Marco Polo and others, who went to the East; a diplomat like Clavijo, who went to see Tamerlane; modern travelers, like the spies the British government sent from India to explore and map the area who were the prototypes for Kipling's *Kim*; and archaeologists, like Aurel Stein

who went both ways on the Silk Road. We learn indirectly about the different religions and political regimes travelers experienced. *M. Murrin. Spring.*

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. BA 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 BA paper. Autumn.*

29900. BA 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 BA paper, which are formally presented and critiqued. Winter.*