

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. 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 are 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. 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 meet 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, this project typically takes the form of a research paper developed in consultation with the program coordinator.

Summary of Requirements

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
11–12	

Grading. Students in the program must receive quality 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 are available for either quality grades or for *P/F* grading. Nonmajors may take any course offered by the program either for quality grades or for *P/F* grading.

Honors. Students interested in being considered for honors should consult with the program coordinator.

Faculty

J. Z. Smith

Courses: Religion and the Humanities (RELH)

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. Courses are open to all students in the College.

10100. Introduction to Religious Studies. (=RLST 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.* (A, B, D)

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

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