

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 non-departmental courses 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)
12	

Faculty

D. Arnold, C. Brekus, S. Chavel, K. Culp, A. Davidson, W. Doniger, J. Elshtain, C. Evans, M. Fishbane, 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.*

11005. Jewish History and Society I: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible. (=BIBL 31000, 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. *S. Chavel. 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)*

20200. Saints in the Modern World. (=HIST 27113) How has holiness been constructed in the modern Catholic world in the period since the Reformation and how has this changed from period to period and from place to place? Who decides who was holy and who was not? This course examines what saints do for their communities and how, why, and by whom they are remembered. It also examines the phenomenon of apparitions and asks what its relationship to the cult of saints is. We consider the visionaries themselves, their visions, and how both have been interpreted. *L. Pick. Autumn. (A)*

20702. Calvin’s Institutes. (=FNDL 23113, HCHR 41700, THEO 41300) This course examines the key concepts of Calvin’s theology through his major work: the definitive 1559 edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. *S. Schreiner. Winter. (A)*

20840. Radical Islamic Pieties. (=HIST 25901/35901, NELC 20840/30840) *Some knowledge of primary languages (i.e., Arabic, French, German, Greek, Latin, Persian, Spanish, Turkish) helpful.* This course examines responses to the Mongol destruction of the Abbasid caliphate in 1258 and the background to formation of regional Muslim empires. Topics include the opening of confessional boundaries; Ibn Arabi, Ibn Taymiyya, and Ibn Khaldun; the development of alternative spiritualities, mysticism, and messianism in the fifteenth century; and transconfessionalism, antinomianism, and the articulation of sacral sovereignties in the sixteenth century. Readings in English. *This course is offered in alternate years. C. Fleischer. Autumn. (A)*

21003. Evangelicism in America. (=HIST 27201) This course examines the history of American evangelicalism from its rise in the eighteenth century to the present. Besides discussing evangelical leaders such as Jonathan Edwards, Phoebe Palmer, Dwight Moody, and Billy Graham, we explore popular evangelical beliefs and practices. Topics include conversion, prayer, revivalism, apocalypticism, controversies over science, gender, the rise of Fundamentalism, and the emergence of the Religious Right. *C. Brekus. Winter. (A)*

21302 Catholicism in America. (=HIST 27015) This course examines the history of Catholicism in America from the sixteenth century to the present. After discussing the conquest of America and Catholic missions to Native Americans, we examine Catholic immigration to America, nativist tensions, popular devotionism, Vatican II, and the contemporary American church. *C. Brekus. Spring. (A)*

22400. Tolkien: Medieval and Modern. (=FNDL 24901, HIST 29900) *PQ: Prior reading of text.* J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The 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 Tolkien’s larger work as both artist and scholar. Themes include the problem of genre and the uses of tradition; the nature of history and its relationship to place; the activity of creation and its relationship to language, beauty, evil, and power; the role of monsters in imagination and criticism; the twinned challenges of death and immortality, fate and free will; and the interaction between the world of “faerie” and religious belief. *R. Fulton. Spring. (A)*

22800. African American Religion: Themes and Issues. (=AFAM 22800, CRES 22800) This course introduces the history and religious experiences of African Americans. We focus especially on the social and cultural context of the evolution of African American religion, relationships between black and white churches, and black and white interpretations of African American religion. *C. Evans. Winter. (A)*

23603. Looking for Ourselves Elsewhere: Cosmos and Conscience. (=ASTR 23000, BPRO 23000) *PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing.* Science and religion are two ways, among many others, that people can seek to know about reality: how do we construct ordered pictures of the whole—cosmos or civilization—and how do we relate to them in terms of action? How do we know what we do not know, and what does that kind of “knowledge” mean for the orientation and direction of human existence? How would cultural biases be affected by knowing that there are others “out there” in the universe, should we discover them? From various perspectives, this course addresses these questions of the origins, structures, and ends of reality as we look for ourselves—seek understanding of the human condition—in the cosmos but also in complex religious and cultural traditions. Whereas in our popular culture, science is often identified with the realm of knowledge and religion is simply “belief” or “practice,” the course also seeks to trace the rational limits of science and the rational force of religion with respect to the ethical problem of the right and good conduct of human life. *W. Schweiker, D. York. Autumn. (B)*

23703. Reinhold Niebuhr: Theology and Ethics. (=RETH 46100, THEO 46900) This course examines Reinhold Niebuhr’s systematic theology, especially his arguments for the Christian understanding of human existence and for the relation of the moral enterprise to the reality of God. *F. Gamwell. Autumn. (B)*

23801. Wolfhart Pannenberg: God and History. (=FNDL 21503) This course makes a close reading of Pannenberg’s work the occasion for careful consideration of twentieth-century debates about the historicity of biblical narrative, the limits consequent to our human finitude for theological language about God, characterizations of human freedom and human destiny, the theological significance of matters of political justice, and the relevance of nontheological scientific knowledge for Christian dogmatics. At the center of the syllabus are significant portions of *Revelation as History* and *The Idea of God and Human Freedom*. We look also at writing by thinkers from whom Pannenberg is careful to distinguish himself, including Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Alfred North Whitehead. *C. King. Autumn. (B)*

24201. Indian Philosophy I: Origins and Orientations. (=DVPR 30200, HREL 30200, RLST 24202) This course is 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. *D. Arnold. Autumn. (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, this course focuses on the development of the major classical systems of Indian thought. We emphasize Indian logic, epistemology, and philosophy of language. *M. Kapstein. Winter. (B)*

24303. Faith, Reason, and the Existence of God. One of the greatest “problems” facing western religious thought through the years has been the question of the existence of God. How have people approached this problem? What does it mean for people to offer reasoned argument for something many think is either a question of faith or a response to a personal encounter? Can theology and philosophy engage in dialogue, and on what terms? What would it mean for an argument for God to fail? Would we be left in a crisis of meaninglessness? Can faith and reason work together and if so, how? How can religious people think about their faith when faced with religious pluralism? *M. Doherty. Winter. (B)*

24601. Martin and Malcolm: Life and Belief. (=AFAM 24601, CRES 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. Their life stories provide the contexts for the sharp differences and surprising commonalities in their political thought and religious beliefs. The operative question is: what can Malcolm and Martin tell us about America during one of the most dynamic periods in the nation’s personality metamorphosis? We use documentary videos of each man’s speeches and of the social contexts in which they lived. *D. Hopkins. Spring. (B)*

26501. Renaissance Demonology. (=CMLT 27610, HIST 22110, ITAL 26500) This course analyzes the complex concept of demonology according to early modern European culture from a theological, historical, philosophical, and literary point of view. The term “demon” in the Renaissance encompasses a vast variety of meanings. Demons are hybrids. They are both the Christian devils, but also synonyms for classical deities, and Neo-Platonic spiritual beings. As far as Christian theology is concerned, we read selections from Augustine’s and Thomas Aquinas’s treatises; some complex exorcisms written in Italy; and a new recent translation of the infamous *Malleus maleficarum*, the most important treatise on witch-hunt. We pay close attention to the historical evolution of the so-called witch-craze in Europe through a selection of the best secondary literature on this subject, with special emphasis on Michel de Certeau’s *The Possession at*

Loudun. We also study how major Italian and Spanish women mystics, such as Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi and Teresa of Avila, approach the issue of demonic temptation and possession. As far as Renaissance Neo-Platonic philosophy is concerned, we read selections from Marsilio Ficino’s *Platonic Theology* and Girolamo Cardano’s mesmerizing autobiography. We also investigate the connection between demonology and melancholy through a close reading of the initial section of Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Cervantes’s short story *The Glass Graduate (El licenciado Vidriera)*. Classes taught in English. *A. Maggi. Spring. (C)*

26701. The Re-Enchantment of the World: The Sacred and the Secular in Modern Literature and Philosophy. (=CMLT 25601, ENGL 25939, ITAL 25900) Looking at nineteenth- and twentieth-century creative literature, memoirs, and philosophical works, we investigate the connections between modernity and new forms of religious thought. With burgeoning scientific explanations for what were once perceived as miracles, combined with the array of religious and irreligious choices offered by an increasingly secular society, how do modern thinkers approach the problem of transcendent or mystical experience? Why has the yearning toward an ultimate, sacred reality proven strong in apparently secular authors? How does a rising interest in Hindu and Buddhist philosophy impact upon ancient Western debates about the relationship between the material and the spiritual? We explore such questions through detailed engagement with a series of short but challenging readings. Authors include Giacomo Leopardi, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Rainer Maria Rilke, Miguel de Unamuno, Henri Bergson, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Eugenio Montale, and Pier Paolo Pasolini. Classes conducted in English. Students taking the course for credit toward the Italian major or minor read and discuss Leopardi, Montale, Pasolini, and others in special sessions conducted in Italian. *L. Barca. Autumn. (C)*

26801. Many Ramayanas. (=FNDL 22911, HREL 42501, SALC 42501, SLTH 40701) A close reading of the great Hindu epic, the story of Rama’s recovery of his wife, Sita, from the demon Ravana on the island of Lanka, with special attention to changes in the telling of the story through Indian history, up to its present use as a political weapon against Muslims and a rallying point for Hindu Fundamentalists. Readings in Paula Richman, *Many Ramayanas*, and *Questioning Ramayanas*; in translations of the *Ramayanas* of Valmiki, Kampan, Tulsi, and Michael Dutta, as well as the *Ramajataka*; *Rama the Steadfast*, trans. Brockington; the *Yogabasishta-Maharamayana*; and contemporary comic books and films. *W. Doniger. Winter (C)*

27202. Ralph Waldo Emerson. This class discusses selected readings by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82) in relation to the religious and literary culture of the United States during the nineteenth century. *W. C. Gilpin. Autumn. (C)*

27404. Hindu Mythology. (=HREL 34700, SALC 38300, SLTH 34700) This course is a survey of the great mythological themes of Hinduism. We begin our

reading with the *Rg Veda*, continue through the *Epics* and the *Puranas*, and end with contemporary folk tellings. Texts in English. *W. Doniger. 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. K. Mason. Winter.*

28301. Medieval Vernacular Literature in the British Isles. (=CMLT 26000, ENGL 15801) *This course meets the critical/intellectual methods course requirement for students who are majoring in Comparative Literature.* This course covers the Celtic tradition, Old Middle English, Anglo-Norman French, and a late text from Scotland. Texts include: from Old English, *Beowulf*; from Irish, *The Battle of Moytura* and the *Tain*, and two of the *immrana* or voyages that concern Bran Son of Ferbal and Mael Duin; from Anglo-Norman French, *The Lays of Marie de France*; from Welsh, *The Four Branches* from the *Mabinogion*; from Middle English, selections from *The Canterbury Tales* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; and from Scotland, Dunbar. *M. Murrin. Winter.*

28303. American Scriptures. American scriptures are, by definition, comparatively new as world scriptures go. Their relative novelty allows us unique entry into the most essential questions of scriptures' meaning, function, and use: What is scripture? How does that understanding differ across religions? Where do scriptures come from, and how do beliefs about scriptural origins affect their use? In this class, we discuss selections from *The Book of Mormon*, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (used by the Seventh-day Adventist Church), *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Christian Science), *Message to the Blackman in America* (the Nation of Islam), and *Dianetics* (the Church of Scientology). We read and discuss secondary sources contextualizing each text, but emphasis is on reading and reflecting on these scriptures as primary sources, investigating their internal logic, discursive influences, and rhetorical effects. *S. Perry. 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. 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 who are majoring in Religious Studies.* This class

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 class meets weekly to assist students in the preparation of drafts of their BA paper, which are formally presented and critiqued. *Winter.*