

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

FACULTY

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The study of religion is fundamentally an interdisciplinary endeavor, involving a variety of intellectual approaches in the analysis of diverse expressions of religious phenomena and cultures around the world. Reflecting the methodological and substantive breadth of the field of religious studies, the religious studies major at Susquehanna University is designed to accomplish the following student learning goals:

LEARNING GOALS:

- To develop the ability to critically analyze primary religious texts.
- To use various interpretative perspectives (literary, historical, theological, ideological, etc.) in deriving meaning from religious texts.
- To engage with at least one non-Western religious tradition in historical and geographical context.
- To think critically and cross-culturally about ethical questions in relationship to themselves, society and/or the world.
- To engage critically with issues and problems in contemporary societies as they relate to religious thought and/or practice.
- To conduct substantive research (finding, consulting and engaging both primary and secondary resources and making preliminary connections and conclusions from the same) and present this research in written form.
- To reflect upon and assess work in critical and constructive ways by applying concepts, theories and methods within academic and professional contexts.

Requirements for the Major in Religious Studies. Majors in religious studies complete at least 36 semester hours in the discipline with grades of C- or better. To ensure both breadth and depth of study, there is one compulsory course, and the remaining 32 semester hours must include at least one course from each of the four subject areas identified below. At least 20 of the 32 semester hours must be taken at the 200 level or higher. Topics courses and independent study courses may be given a subject area designation by the instructor in consultation with the department. The compulsory course does not count toward the subject area distribution requirement.

Double-counting restriction: students majoring in religious studies may double-count a maximum of 12 semester hours toward another major.

- 4 Compulsory Course for the Religious Studies Major
RELI-101 Introduction to Religious Studies

Subject Area Courses

- 16 Must include at least one course from each of the four subject areas from Primary Religious Texts, Ethics, Non-Western Religions and Contemporary issues in Religion

Elective Courses

- 16 Elective courses can be additional courses within the four subject areas or other courses identified below. At least 20 of the 32 semester hours taken to fulfill the subject area and elective requirements must be at the 200 level or above.
- 4 **Primary Religious Texts**
RELI-103 The New Testament
RELI-104 Ethics in Biblical Stories
RELI-201 The Hebrew Bible
RELI-203 The Historical Jesus
RELI-207 Women in the Biblical Tradition
RELI-300 The Book of Revelation and Zombie Apocalypses

- 4 Ethics**
RELI-102 Applied Biblical Ethics
RELI-104 Ethics in Biblical Stories
RELI-107 Faiths and Values
RELI-115 Jewish Philosophy and Ethics
RELI-117 Introduction to Asian Religions
RELI-203 The Historical Jesus
RELI-208 Buddhism
RELI-235 Environmental Ethics
RELI-315 Being Awesome at Life
RELI-316 Daoism, Zen and Authenticity
RELI-318 Confucian Ethics

- 4 Non-Western Religions**
RELI-105 World Religions
RELI-117 Introduction to Asian Religions
RELI-120 Introduction to Islam
RELI-208 Buddhism
RELI-225 Women in Religion
RELI-316 Daoism, Zen and Authenticity
RELI-318 Confucian Ethics

- 4 Contemporary Issues in Religion**
RELI-102 Applied Biblical Ethics
RELI-107 Faiths and Values
RELI-113 Introduction to Judaism
RELI-208 Buddhism
RELI-220 Magic, Witchcraft and Religion
RELI-225 Women in Religion
RELI-235 Environmental Ethics
RELI-305 when offered as 'Fiction of C. S. Lewis
RELI-350 Science and Religion
RELI-360 Religious Fundamentalisms in the Modern World

Electives

- RELI-209 The Bible and Archaeology
RELI-210 Philosophy of Religion
RELI-215 Music in Christian Rituals
RELI-309 Luther: Life and Thought
RELI-312 Church History: Early and Medieval
RELI-313 Church History: 1500 to the Present
RELI-353 The Practice of Church Music
RELI-500 Capstone

Minor in Religious Studies. Students minoring in religious studies complete 20 semester hours in the discipline with grades of C- or better. Students consult with an assigned minor adviser to select both upper- and lower-level courses. Of the five courses, at least two must be at the 200 level or above.

Double-counting restriction: students majoring in religious studies may double-count a maximum of 12 semester hours toward another major.

Honors. The honors program in religious studies encourages and commends outstanding academic work. To graduate with departmental honors in religious studies, students must do the following:

- Complete requirements for the major,
- Have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 overall and at least 3.50 in religious studies, and
- Perform outstanding academic work in religious studies capstone.

Capstone Requirement. Students majoring in religious studies are expected to take the senior capstone requirement in the appropriate subject. A student with a double major may fulfill the university capstone requirement in a major outside of this department. Any student who elects to fulfill the capstone requirement in this manner must complete the religious studies major by successful completion of an additional four-semester-hour course, or the equivalent, in the relevant subject. Any student wishing to qualify for religious studies departmental honors must fulfill the appropriate capstone as provided by the Religious Studies Department in addition to any capstone requirements imposed in a second major.

The course description for the departmental capstone states that it is “to serve [students] as a culmination of all their studies, allowing them to address a particular topic, issue or thinker in religious studies through the lens of their total undergraduate education.” Religious studies majors are encouraged to develop capstone projects that also draw on knowledge and strengths they have acquired in declared minors. Primary oversight of such projects will rest with the appropriate faculty supervisor in religious studies, although students will also be expected to work with an appropriate adviser from their minor area(s) of study.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES COURSES

RELI-101 Introduction to Religious Studies

Explores the human phenomenon of religion via the interdisciplinary perspectives and methods of religious studies. Seeks to gain understanding of a wide range of cross-cultural human religious experiences, such as ritual, the sacred, the divine, religious community, religious ethical norms, mysticism, myth and doctrine. An emphasis on analysis of gender, power, privilege and justice in religion. Provides a foundation for understanding religious studies as a discipline. 4 SH CC: Diversity, Ethics.

RELI-102 Applied Biblical Ethics

Examines what contributions biblical texts can make to specific moral dilemmas in contemporary society, using the biblical traditions of the Old and New Testaments together with ethical theory and the Christian traditions of biblical interpretation. Specific problems vary, but at least six of the following areas are covered each time the course is offered: economics and consumerism; personal vocation; environmentalism; recreation and entertainment; sexual issues; health care; violence and war; education and moral development; media; and racism. 4 SH. CC: Ethics.

RELI-103 The New Testament

An introduction to those texts identified as Christian scripture. Particular focus on the social, historical and religious contexts that helped shape this literature and the ways in which these texts witness to the early history of Christianity. 4 SH. CC: Literary Expression.

RELI-104 Ethics in Biblical Stories

This course makes use of biblical stories in order to address ethical questions about human nature, the natural and social world, and the nature of good and evil. As we read the Bible’s folktales, epics, legends, chronicles, and parables while examining their ethical worldview and teachings, we will also ask how and where we see parallels to these stories’ plots, characters, themes, and moral lessons in the world today. 4 SH. CC: Ethics.

RELI-105 World Religions

Examines both historical and contemporary aspects of the world's major religions. 4 SH. CC: Diversity Intensive, Ethics Intensive.

RELI-107 Faiths and Values

Examines the contemporary personal and social consequences of religiously based values from a multicultural perspective. 4 SH. CC: Diversity, Ethics.

RELI-113 Introduction to Judaism

Examines Judaism as it has been defined and developed as a way of thought and a way of life. The course focuses on central religious concepts, holidays, life-cycle ceremonies and various forms of religious expression, including prayer and ritual, in order to help students understand what it means and has meant to be a Jew. Same as JWST- 113. 4 SH. CC: Diversity.

RELI-115 Jewish Philosophy and Ethics

Explores issues and problems related to the philosophical and ethical literature of the Jews, from the Talmudic period through the present. Topics vary and may include classical Jewish texts, mysticism, continental and poststructural Jewish philosophy, morality and social practice, women and gender, and Judaism in America. The course encourages students to recognize in Jewish texts reflections of Judaism that are diverse and, at times, antithetical to one another. Same as JWST-115. 4 SH. CC: Ethics.

RELI-117 Introduction to Asian Religions

This course provides students with an introduction to various religious traditions in Asia. It will provide an overview of the history, beliefs and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism, with the intent of helping students to understand the culture, history and values of Asian communities. 4 SH. CC: Diversity Intensive, Ethics Intensive.

RELI-120 Introduction to Islam

Examines the traditions, history, and main social and legal institutions of Islam. Besides considering the basic tenets and texts of the religion, this course focuses on the variety of ways in which Muslims and non-Muslims have understood and interpreted Islam. Specific topic areas addressed include the life of the Prophet of Islam, Islamic pre-modern, modern and contemporary history, the Quran, the Islamic concept of God and society, the role of women, and Islamic governments and movements. 4 SH. CC: Ethics, Diversity.

RELI-150 Introduction to Contemplative Studies

Contemplative Studies is an emerging multi-disciplinary academic field that investigates the nature, function, and potential value of contemplative states of consciousness. It considers "contemplative" any state of human consciousness characterized by both heightened awareness and deepened tranquility, and draws from psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, religious studies, fine and performing arts, and more to investigate these states. In addition to traditional third-person study, it also incorporates critical first-person inquiry into contemplative practices and states as a mode of analysis. This course serves as a basic introduction to the field, and as a vehicle for applying its methods and insights to students' academic, social, and personal growth at Susquehanna. 4 SH. CC: Ethics Intensive, Perspectives.

RELI-201 The Hebrew Bible

An introduction to the texts of the Hebrew Bible, with concern for their sociohistorical contexts, literary forms and theological insights. Attention also to the variety of ways in which this literature has been and continues to be valued. Prerequisites: Sophomore standing and one of the following: a course in religious studies, a course in English, a course in history, DIVS-100, WGST-100, or instructor's permission. Same as JWST-201. 4 SH. CC: Diversity Intensive, Interdisciplinary, Writing Intensive.

RELI-203 The Historical Jesus

Close reading of both the canonical and noncanonical gospels and their various representations of Jesus. Consideration of the search for the historical Jesus and the nature of the communities from which the gospels derived. 4 SH. CC: Historical Perspectives, Ethics Intensive.

RELI-207 Women in the Biblical Tradition

An extensive inquiry into women's stories and images in the Hebrew Bible, New Testament and related literature from the biblical period. Explores the range of roles played by women within biblical narratives, the variety of metaphorical/symbolic uses of femininity in biblical traditions, and legal and ethical precepts related to the status of women in the biblical period. Methods and approaches from the social sciences, history, literary studies and theology, as shaped by feminist theory, will serve as the main guides for this study. Prerequisites: Sophomore standing and one of the following: a course in religious studies, a course in women's studies, a course in English, a course in history, or DIVS-100. Same as WGST-207 and JWST-207. 4 SH. CC: Diversity Intensive, Interdisciplinary, Writing Intensive.

RELI-208 Buddhism

This course gives students an intensive introduction to Buddhism, one of the most influential and vibrant religious traditions in the world today. Beginning at home with North American Buddhism, the course covers the history, practices and beliefs of all major Buddhist traditions, organized geographically. Primary texts in English translation are emphasized, and students are encouraged to try out Buddhist practices in optional sessions. The course also covers contemporary Buddhist responses to ethical issues like abortion, global poverty and the peace process. 4 SH. CC: Diversity Intensive, Ethics.

RELI-209 The Bible and Archaeology

A study of the events, persons and sociocultural processes of ancient (biblical) Israel. Examines carefully the ways in which both the Bible and archaeology can and cannot serve as prime source material for a history of ancient Israel. Considers also the relationships between the biblical text and archaeological findings for historical reconstructions. Prerequisites: Sophomore standing and either one course in history or one of the following courses: RELI-102, RELI-103, RELI-201, RELI-203, or RELI-207. 4 SH. CC: Historical Perspectives, Interdisciplinary.

RELI-210 Philosophy of Religion

Focus on classical and contemporary writings to determine the credibility of religious faiths and beliefs. Same as PHIL-210. 4 SH.

RELI-215 Music in Christian Rituals

Examines the theological and musicological aspects of artistic contributions to Christian worship as recognized in varied cultural settings. Same as MUSC-215. Prerequisite: Junior standing and ability to read music. 4 SH. CC: Artistic Expression, Diversity Intensive, Interdisciplinary.

RELI-220 Magic, Witchcraft and Religion

Examines anthropological concepts of magic, witchcraft and religion in a cross-cultural context. Drawing on ethnography, anthropological theory, history and film, the class explores the nature of magic, witchcraft and religion; the relations among them; and the ways in which they interact with other social formations--for example, gender, politics and economics. Countries studied have included South Africa, India, Haiti and the United States. Same as ANTH-220. 4 SH. CC: Diversity, Social Interactions.

RELI-225 Women in Religion

Critically studies how women are perceived, portrayed and involved in a number of the world's religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity and women's spiritual movements. Prerequisite: Sophomore standing. Same as WGST-225. 4 SH. CC: Diversity Intensive, Interdisciplinary, Writing Intensive.

RELI-235 Environmental Ethics

This course combines religious, philosophical and ecological thought as a means of addressing questions about appropriate ethical responses, actions and attitudes in our relationship with our ecosystems. It covers current utilitarian, deontological and virtue-based religious moral thought to focus on questions about the morality of economic and built-environment infrastructures and resultant cultural sea-shifts that need to take place to enable us to embody an ethical relationship with the environment. Prerequisite: Sophomore standing or permission of the instructor. 4 SH. CC: Ethics, Interdisciplinary.

RELI-277 Philippines-History, Religion, and Culture

This course offers an introduction to the history, religion and culture of the Philippines. It is designed as a pre- departure course for students taking part in the GO-Philippines program. 2 SH.

RELI-300 The Book of Revelation and Zombie Apocalypses

This course uses contemporary zombie films to frame an interdisciplinary exploration into the ancient origins of the apocalyptic genre and the origins and reception history of the Book of Revelation. Discourses about the end(s) of the world/society are explored across history in an effort to find ethically meaningful ways of interpreting John's apocalypse. Prerequisite: Sophomore standing. 4 SH. CC: Ethics, Interdisciplinary.

RELI-353 The Practice of Church Music

A practical course designed to introduce the student to the work of the church musician as planner, administrator, leader and resource person. Incorporates the examination of material for use with soloists, instrumentalists, handbells and choral groups of all ages and in various denominations. Same as MUSC-353. Prerequisites: MUSC-161 and MUSC-163. CC: Diversity Intensive. 4 SH.

RELI-305 Topics in Religion

Examines selected topics in religion, depending on student and instructor interest. Course may be repeated for credit if topic is different. 2-4 SH. CC: Ethics Intensive and Interdisciplinary when the topic is Theology and Philosophy in the Fiction of C.S. Lewis.

RELI-309 Luther: Life and Thought

Through readings from the writings of Martin Luther (1483-1546) and major secondary sources, this course examines the life, thought and importance of Luther in the context of his times and with attention to his significance for today's Christian churches and interfaith dialogs. 4 SH.

RELI-312 Church History: Early and Medieval

The purpose of this course is to offer an introduction to the academic study of the Christian Church from its inception through the Middle Ages. Beginning with a quick background sketch of the events in the New Testament, this course will examine the people, events and theology that we associate with the early and medieval church, up to the dawn of the Reformation. This class is designed, then, to introduce students to the defining people and events during this period that shaped, and continue to shape, the Christian Church. 4 SH. CC: Historical Perspectives.

RELI-313 Church History: 1500 to the Present

The purpose of this course is to offer an introduction to the academic study of the Christian Church from the 16th century until today. Beginning with a quick background sketch of the events in the Middle Ages, this course will examine the people, events and theology that we associate with the Reformation, Enlightenment and contemporary Church. We will also be considering the history of the Church outside of its Western parameters. This class is designed, then, to introduce students to the defining events during these periods that shaped, and continue to shape, the Christian Church. Prerequisite: Sophomore standing. 4 SH. CC: Historical Perspectives.

RELI-315 Being Awesome at Life

This course offers a cross-cultural examination of the pursuit of a good human life, and how one learns to live better. In other words, it is about the theory and practice of being awesome at life. We focus on ethical dispositions (skills, habits and virtues) as critical features of ethics, explored through texts from various religious and philosophical figures in English translation, as well film and other media. Prerequisite: Junior standing. Previous experience in philosophy or religious studies is helpful, but not required. 4 SH. CC: Ethics.

RELI-316 Daoism, Zen and Authenticity

This course is an in-depth study of two uniquely East-Asian religious traditions: Daoism and Zen Buddhism. It is also an exploration of the ethical implications of authenticity in personal conduct, especially as it relates to interpersonal communication and interaction. We will read primary texts in English translation as a way to understand how these texts were created and used in the East Asian context, as well as how they might speak to students' own ethical lives. No prerequisites, but previous experience in Religious Studies or Philosophy will be helpful. 4 SH. CC: Ethics.

RELI-318 Confucian Ethics

This course introduces students to the indigenous system of ethical thought that has most profoundly shaped Chinese and East Asian culture: Confucianism. We focus on original textual material in English translation and place these materials in their historical context to understand their relationship to each other and to subsequent developments in China and beyond. However, the course primarily focuses on the ideas these texts express and how those ideas relate to universal concerns in ethics, as well as specific ethical issues. In other words, this is first and foremost an ethics class, and in particular it deals with Chinese materials and East Asian approaches to ethical issues. 4 SH. CC: Diversity Intensive, Ethics, Writing Intensive.

RELI-350 Science and Religion

Examines the interaction of science and religion by looking at the history of their relationship, philosophical and theological issues, and current debate on specific questions of interest to both disciplines. Prerequisite: Sophomore standing or instructor and adviser permission. 4 SH. CC: Interdisciplinary, Ethics Intensive.

RELI-360 Religious Fundamentalisms in the Modern World

This course examines religious beliefs, practices and ways of life that have come to be labeled “fundamentalist.” The course attends in particular to their emergence in the modern world and the ways in which they critically engage secular convictions about morality, aesthetics and epistemology. The focus of the course is on Protestant fundamentalism and the Islamic Revival, but, depending on student interest, the class may also consider “ultra- orthodox” Judaism or Hindu nationalism. Prerequisite: One of the following: ANTH-162, ANTH-220, SOCI-101, SOCI-102, a 100-level religious studies course or instructor’s permission. Same as ANTH-360. 4 SH. CC: Diversity Intensive, Social Interactions, Writing Intensive.

RELI-400 Independent Study

Individual and in-depth study of a specialized topic under a faculty member’s direction. May involve a reading program, a major research paper or experiential learning in conjunction with written analysis and reflection. Prerequisite: Department permission. Variable credit.

RELI-500 Capstone

Study of a particular topic under a faculty member’s direction. The capstone is to serve students as the culmination of their studies allowing them to address questions in religious studies through the lens of their total undergraduate education. Such projects could be structured in a number of different ways and might include an experiential learning aspect. The capstone should culminate in a major research paper. 2-4 SH. Capstone.