

# Religious Studies

In the College of Arts and Letters

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## Faculty

Emeritus: Anderson, Downing, Friedman, Gefter, Johnson, Jordan, Khalil, Sparks  
Chair: Holler  
Professor: Holler  
Associate Professor: Kohn  
Assistant Professor: Moore  
Lecturers: Boni, Mueller, Swayd, Thomas

## Offered by the Department

Major in religious studies with the B.A. degree in liberal arts and sciences.  
Minor in religious studies.

## The Major

The academic study of religion is central to the creation of a community of world citizens. Our program is designed for students who live in a pluralistic society and who wish to investigate the role religions play in human life and society. Because religion has shaped the human story of almost every culture, it is difficult to understand human behavior or to interpret world events without grasping how religion has helped to determine them. As United States Supreme Court Justices Clark and Goldberg wrote in their decision allowing the study of religion in public schools, "one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization." Part of the liberal arts, religious studies employs critical analysis and methods from a variety of disciplines to understand religious traditions as well as to question the dogmas, stereotypes, and prejudices that may surround those traditions. In addition to investigating religious symbols, texts, practices, and belief systems, the study of religion examines the relationship of religion to ethics, contemporary social issues, politics, history, psychology, science, literature, and the arts.

### Career Outlook

Religious studies prepares students for any career that requires critical thinking, analysis, oral and written communication skills, and the ability to reflect on questions of meaning and value. The study of religion is excellent pre-professional preparation for fields such as law, teaching, medicine, counseling, social work, conflict resolution, international business, foreign service, journalism, various ministries and other careers in non-profit organizations and public service. While some of our majors go on to do graduate work in religion or related academic fields, other graduates find themselves well prepared for careers requiring imagination, problem solving, communication, self-understanding, and awareness of human diversity.

### Double Majors and The Minor

Because religious studies is interdisciplinary and multicultural it is an excellent degree to complement many other majors. Double majors are easily accommodated within a well-designed four-year course of study, since the Religious Studies major has only a 36-unit requirement. Graduates from the program have had double majors with Biology, Communication, History, Psychology, and other fields where the study of religion enhances or focuses the second major. The 15-unit minor is a less ambitious way to combine your major interests with the academic study of religion. Anyone who is interested in human beliefs, behavior, and values would benefit from a minor in religious studies.

## Advising

All College of Arts and Letters majors are urged to consult with their department adviser as soon as possible; they are required to meet with their department adviser within the first two semesters after declaration or change of major.

## Religious Studies Major

**With the B.A. Degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences**  
(Major Code: 15101)

All candidates for a degree in liberal arts and sciences must complete the graduation requirements listed in the section of this catalog on "Graduation Requirements." No more than 48 units in religious studies courses can apply to the degree.

A minor is not required with this major.

**Preparation for the Major.** Religious Studies 101; Religious Studies 100 or 103. (6 units)

**Foreign Language Requirement.** Competency (successfully completing the third college semester or fifth college quarter) is required in one foreign language as part of the preparation for the major. Refer to section of catalog on "Graduation Requirements."

**Upper Division Writing Requirement.** Passing the University Writing Examination or Rhetoric and Writing Studies 305W or 500W with a grade of C (2.0) or better.

**Major.** A minimum of 30 upper division units in religious studies to include Religious Studies 400 and at least three units from Sacred Texts, nine units from World Traditions, nine units from Religion, Society, and Culture, and three units from Religion in the Americas:

**Area 1, Sacred Texts:** Religious Studies 301, 305, 310. (3 units)

**Area 2, World Traditions:** Religious Studies 320, 325, 328, 333, 335, 337, 338, 339, 345. (9 units)

**Area 3, Religion, Society, and Culture:** Religious Studies 350, 353, 355, 358, 360, 363, 364, 370, 373, 376, 378, 379. (9 units)

**Area 4, Religion in the Americas:** Religious Studies 385, 390A, 390B, 395, 530. (3 units)

In order to complete the 30 unit requirement, students can select a course from any of the four areas.

Courses with variable content (496, 580, 581, 582, 583, 596) may be used in the four areas of study when deemed relevant by the department adviser.

## Religious Studies Minor

The minor in religious studies consists of a minimum of 15 units to include at least three lower division units in religious studies and 12 upper division units selected from the four areas of study.

Courses in the minor may not be counted toward the major, but may be used to satisfy preparation for the major and general education requirements, if applicable. A minimum of six upper division units must be completed in residence at San Diego State University.

## Courses (REL S)

### LOWER DIVISION COURSES

#### 100. Exploring the Bible (3) I, II

Basic content and themes of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament using methods of contemporary biblical studies. Attention to ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman cultural settings as well as the impact of the Bible on contemporary culture.

**101. World Religions (3) I, II**

Major world and selected tribal traditions from primal times to present. Broad historical development and philosophical overview including founders, teachings, beliefs, practices, and interactions with culture, such as art, literature, politics.

**103. American Religious Diversity (3) I, II**

Religious identities and traditions of diverse peoples living in the US. Major world religions in context of contemporary multicultural America. Religions of indigenous peoples and religious movements which have arisen in US. Not open to students with credit in Religious Studies 102.

**296. Experimental Topics (1-4)**

Selected topics. May be repeated with new content. See Class Schedule for specific content. Limit of nine units of any combination of 296, 496, 596 courses applicable to a bachelor's degree.

**Area 1: Sacred Texts**

**UPPER DIVISION COURSES  
(Intended for Undergraduates)**

**301. Hebrew Bible (3) I, II**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Literature, history, major themes of Bible; methods and concerns of contemporary biblical studies. Situates folkloric, political, heroic, poetic, and religious meanings of texts among their original audiences.

**305. The New Testament (3) I, II**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors. Recommended: Religious Studies 301.

Structure, composition, meaning of New Testament; methods for interpreting Biblical texts. Focus on letters of Paul, post-Pauline writings, Gospel accounts of Jesus's life.

**310. The Qur'an (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Major themes of Qur'an including cosmology, eschatology, good and evil, gender, God and monotheism, People of the Book (Jews and Christians), and role of religion in society. Attention to historical period in which the Qur'an was compiled.

**Area 2: World Traditions**

**UPPER DIVISION COURSES  
(Intended for Undergraduates)**

**320. Judaism (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Jewish history, culture, theory, and practice. Biblical roots of modern Jewish beliefs, basic movements within modern Judaism; Jewish calendar and Jewish life cycle as seen in Hebrew Bible, short stories, and films.

**325. Christianity (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Historical development of Christian traditions and major issues confronting Christianity today. Beliefs and practices important to Christian self-understanding, debates over authority of Bible, accommodations to modern science, and relationship with non-Christian religions.

**328. Islam (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Islamic religion and culture in Asia, Africa, and Near East. History, doctrines, practices, literatures, social and intellectual movements, role of Mohammed, and gender relations within Islam as understood in global context. (Formerly numbered Religious Studies 340.)

**333. Ancient Near Eastern Religions (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Religious worlds of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Canaan through an examination of gods, goddesses, mythology, death, after-life, and religious art, architecture, and archaeology.

**335. Comparative Mysticism (3)**

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Meaning, origin, and development of mysticism. Purgation, illumination, annihilation, separation, covenant, and union of soul with the Divine as found in world scriptures, writings of prominent mystics, and mystical movements such as Kabbalists, Sufis, and yogic traditions.

**337. Shamanism (3)**

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Global forms of shamanism, including Amazonian, African, Native American, and Southeast Asian, before and after Columbus. Archaic forms of shamanism and revival in industrial age; how shamanism informs contemporary religious meaning and experience. (Formerly numbered Religious Studies 380.)

**338. Buddhism (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Origins and interpretations of Buddhist teachings in India, China, Tibet, and Japan. Trends in contemporary Buddhism and foundational concepts on Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism including their development in various Asian geographical settings.

**339. Religions of India (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Major religious traditions from pre-Aryan Harappas to post-colonial India. Literatures of Hinduism, religious practices such as yoga and tantra, scriptural schools, sacrificial cults, Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita, Vedanta philosophies, early Buddhism. (Formerly numbered Religious Studies 401.)

**345. Religions of East Asia (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism in broad historical and cultural context. Focus on Chan (Zen) school of Buddhism, Confucius, neo-Confucianism of Ju Xi, and Taoist masters Lao Ze and Chuang Ze. (Formerly numbered Religious Studies 403.)

**Area 3: Religion, Society, and Culture**

**UPPER DIVISION COURSES  
(Intended for Undergraduates)**

**350. Dynamics of Religious Experience (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities.

Religious experiences created in dynamics of myth, ritual, pilgrimage and community using film as primary data base. Primal and shamanistic religion, ecstatic experience and mysticism.

### **353. Religion and Psychology (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Religious dimensions of psyche using insights from academic and transpersonal psychology. Construction of religious identities through spiritual practice and transformation. May be repeated with new content. See Class Schedule for specific content. Maximum credit six units of which three units may be applicable to General Education.

### **355. Love and Marriage in Western Religions (3)**

Prerequisite: Three units in religious studies.

Judeo-Christian practice and meaning of love, romance, and marriage based on historical and literary sources. Biblical period to present with emphasis on contemporary values and issues.

### **358. Death, Dying, and the Afterlife (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Diverse ways religions deal with process of dying and rituals involved in transition of life to death. Grieving, end-of-life decisions, views on afterlife.

### **360. Religion, Literature, and the Arts (3)**

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

The relations between religion, literature, and the arts in major cultural traditions.

### **363. Religion and the Sciences (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Views of science and religion as separate, conflicting, complementary, and overlapping. Galileo and the Church, the Scopes Trial, and twentieth century physics provide historical examples for study of assumptions about science and religion.

### **364. Religion and Film (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Representations of religion in modern cinema and analysis of how religious themes and imagery in film reflect societal values, beliefs, and morals.

### **370. Women in Religion (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Women's contributions to and transformations of mainstream and marginal religions, including ancient goddess worship and modern witchcraft, indigenous religions, and major world religions. Spiritual questions and quests of contemporary women.

### **373. Women and the Bible (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Narrative, legal, and poetic material about women in Bible. How women are depicted by authors of Bible, lives of women in ancient world, how women and women's studies are transforming biblical studies.

### **376. Nature, Spirituality, Ecology (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Cross-cultural religious views of nature. Attention to sacred texts, writings of naturalists, deep ecologists, and ecofeminists on place of nature in spirituality and role of spirituality in ecology.

### **378. Religion and the Marketplace (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Modes of consumption and economics in relation to religious beliefs and practices. Use of religion in marketing and marketing of religion.

### **379. Religious Violence and Nonviolence (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Role of religion in terrorism, hate groups, scapegoating, domestic and ecological violence, versus role of religion in peacemaking and movements for social justice. Nonviolent philosophies of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and pacifism in Jain, Buddhist, and Christian traditions.

## **Area 4: Religion in the Americas**

### **UPPER DIVISION COURSES (Intended for Undergraduates)**

#### **385. American Indian Religions (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Religions of Native peoples in North and South America from earliest to contemporary times. American Indian myths, primal world views, shamanism, rituals, vision quest, autobiographies, contributions of women, encounter of traditions with modernity.

#### **390A-390B. Religious Experience in America (3-3)**

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Major religious movements, events, and issues affecting development of US government and institutions. 390A: From time of Spanish contact to 1900. 390B: Religion's impact in twentieth century. This year course satisfies the graduation requirement in American Institutions.

#### **395. Alternative Religious Movements (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies; and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

America's alternative religions, popularly called "cults," and why they attract spiritual seekers. New religions and transplanted Asian and African religions. Theoretical structures of belief systems and concrete specifics on different groups.

### **UPPER DIVISION COURSE (Also Acceptable for Advanced Degrees)**

#### **530. Liberation Theologies (3)**

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Twentieth century liberation movements in their religious expression, from 1960's Latin America through Black theology, feminist theology, eco-theology, and queer theology. International religious liberation movements, particularly in Africa and the Americas.

## **Elective Courses**

### **UPPER DIVISION COURSES (Intended for Undergraduates)**

#### **400. Senior Seminar (3)**

Prerequisite: Religious studies major with more than 90 units; others with consent of department chair.

Senior capstone seminar in major. Discussion and research on topics in religious studies. Formal research paper and presentation.

#### **496. Experimental Topics (1-4)**

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Selected topics. May be repeated with new content. See Class Schedule for specific content. Limit of nine units of any combination of 296, 496, 596 courses applicable to a bachelor's degree.

**499. Special Study (1-3) I, II**

Prerequisite: Twelve upper division units in religious studies. Individual study. Maximum credit six units.

**UPPER DIVISION COURSES  
(Also Acceptable for Advanced Degrees)**

**580. Major Figure (3)**

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Life, works and significance of one major figure in a religious tradition. May be repeated with new content. See Class Schedule for specific content. Maximum credit six units.

**581. Major Theme (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and upper division or graduate standing.

Advanced systematic study of a theme or motif selected from major religious traditions. May be repeated with new content. See Class Schedule for specific content. Maximum credit six units.

**582. Major Text (1-3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and upper division or graduate standing.

Advanced systematic study of a selected scripture or classic text(s) selected from one of the major religious traditions. May be repeated with new content. See Class Schedule for specific content. Maximum credit six units.

**583. Major Tradition (3)**

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and upper division or graduate standing.

Advanced systematic study of the doctrines, practices, and development of a major religious tradition. May be repeated with new content. See Class Schedule for specific content. Maximum credit six units.

**596. Advanced Topics in Religious Studies (1-3)**

Prerequisite: Consent of instructor.

Advanced selected topics in religious studies. May be repeated with new content. See Class Schedule for specific content. Limit of nine units of any combination of 296, 496, 596 courses applicable to a bachelor's degree. Maximum credit of six units of 596 applicable to a master's degree. Maximum combined credit of six units of 596 and 696 applicable to a 30-unit master's degree.

**GRADUATE COURSES**

**Refer to Bulletin of the Graduate Division.**

