

Religious Studies – An Overview

In the Department of Religious Studies, students study the religious systems of the world (large and small, past and present) in their socio-historical contexts, and critically examine the phenomenon of religion as it relates to issues of personal meaning and international affairs. Religious Studies courses are cross-cultural in scope and multi-disciplinary in nature. We study all forms of expression of the religious life—myth, art, meditation, ritual, ideas, festivals, mysticism, etc.—whether the expression be found in individual experience, in world religions like Buddhism and Judaism, or in small-scale societies like the Lakota of North America or the Semai of Malaysia. We do not consider religious beliefs or practices to be right or wrong, but instead seek to understand the ways that religion provides people with meaning in their lives and serves important social functions.

The Religious Studies major is designed to prepare students for a wide range of career paths by developing abilities that are highly sought after in all professions, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, effective oral and written communication, etc. In addition, by studying world religions, students learn information that is highly valuable to the contemporary world such as how to deal with differences in beliefs, cultural practices, and contrasting points of view.

Religious Studies majors develop these abilities through the completion of courses that teach (a) broad knowledge of the history, beliefs, practices, and contemporary dynamics of the world's religious systems, (b) in-depth knowledge of at least two specific religious systems in their socio-historical contexts, (c) comparative knowledge of classical and contemporary theories about the origins and functions of religious beliefs and practices in human life and society, and (d) practical knowledge of the impact religion has on international affairs and personal lives.

Degree Requirements for Majors

42 required credit hours in Religious Studies
27 general education credit hours
59 elective credit hours

The requirements for a major consist of completion of 21 credit hours of required core courses and 21 credit hours of elective courses in Religious Studies.

Core Courses (21 credit hours)

1. RELG 1000 Roots of Religion (3 Hours)
2. 6 Credit Hours from:
 - a. RELG 2070 Introduction to Eastern Religions (3 Hours)
 - b. RELG 2080 Introduction to Western Religions (3 Hours)
 - c. RELG 2090 Introduction to Religions of Small Scale Societies (3 Hours)
3. 6 Credit Hours from:
 - a. RELG 3100 Hinduism (3 Hours)
 - b. RELG 3120 Buddhism (3 Hours)
 - c. RELG 3130 Religions of China and Japan (3 Hours)
 - d. RELG 3180 Judaism (3 Hours)
 - e. RELG 3190 Christianity (3 Hours)
 - f. RELG 3200 Islam (3 Hours)
 - g. RELG 3210 African Religions (3 Hours)

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- h. RELG 3220 Ancient Religions (3 Hours)
 4. 6 credit hours at the 4000 level.

Elective Courses (21 credit hours)

In addition to the 21 core credit hours, majors also complete 21 credit hours of electives. 12 of the 21 credit hours are taken in one of three emphases: *Emphasis in Religious Traditions*, *Emphasis in Religion in the Arts and Humanities*, or *Emphasis in Religion and the Social Sciences*.

Emphasis in Religious Traditions

A Religious Studies major with an emphasis in Religious Traditions is designed to encourage students to explore, by contrast and comparison, different religious traditions of the world. Requires 12 hours among the following (*NOTE: Other courses may apply, depending on their content):

- RELG 1060 World Religions (3 Hours)
- RELG 2075 Introduction to Buddhism (3 Hours)
- RELG 2085 Introduction to Judaism (3 Hours)
- RELG 2350 Sacred Texts (3 Hours)
- RELG 2420 Religion and Culture (3 Hours)
- RELG 3100 Hinduism (3 Hours)
- RELG 3120 Buddhism (3 Hours)
- RELG 3130 Religions of China and Japan (3 Hours)
- RELG 3180 Judaism (3 Hours)
- RELG 3190 Christianity (3 Hours)
- RELG 3200 Islam (3 Hours)
- RELG 3210 African Religions (3 Hours)
- RELG 3220 Ancient Religions (3 Hours)

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Emphasis in Religion and the Arts and Humanities

A Religious Studies major with an emphasis in Religion and the Arts and Humanities is designed to encourage students to explore religion as it relates to issues of meaning and values that are addressed by disciplines in the Arts and Humanities like Art, Literature, Music, Philosophy, and so forth. Requires 12 hours among (*NOTE: Other courses may apply, depending on their content):

- RELG 1080 Thinking Through Religions (3 Hours)
- RELG 2050 Religion and Human Values (3 Hours)
- RELG 2100 Religion and Literature (3 Hours)
- RELG 2150 Existence and Meaning (3 Hours)
- RELG 2350 Sacred Texts (3 Hours)
- RELG 2400 Religion and the Arts (3 Hours)
- RELG 2405 Religion and Film (3 Hours)
- RELG 2430 Environments and Religion (3 Hours)
- RELG 3050 Topics in Religion and Philosophy (3 Hours)
- RELG 4040 Belief Systems (3 Hours)
- RELG 4400 Spiritual Paths and Classics (3 Hours)

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Emphasis in Religion and the Social Sciences

A Religious Studies major with an emphasis in Religion and the Social Sciences is designed to encourage students to explore religion as it relates to complex issues of human behavior, culture, and society that are addressed by disciplines in the Social Sciences like Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, and so forth. Requires 12 hours among (*NOTE: Other courses may apply, depending on their content):

- RELG 2410 Religion and Science (3 Hours)
- RELG 2420 Religion and Culture (3 Hours)
- RELG 2430 Environments and Religion (3 Hours)
- RELG 2440 Religion and Social Action (3 Hours)
- RELG 2450 Death and Dying (3 Hours)
- RELG 2500 Gender, Culture, and Religion (3 Hours)
- RELG 3030 Topics in Religion and Society (3 Hours)
- RELG 3070 Topics in Religion and Psychology (3 Hours)
- RELG 3600 Field Experience in Religion (1-6 Hours)
- RELG 3605 International Field Experience in Religion (1-6 Hours)

Special Degree Requirements

- Of the required 42 credit hours to complete a B.A. in religious studies, a minimum of 18 credit hours must be taken at Webster University.
- At least 12 credit hours of courses for the major must be completed at the 3000 and 4000 levels.
- Up to 9 hours of coursework from cognate disciplines may count toward Religious Studies major requirements.
- In special cases, up to 9 hours of foreign language coursework beyond the elementary level may count toward the Religious Studies major requirements.
- Courses in Religious Studies completed with a grade lower than C- will not count toward fulfilling the major.
- No more than 6 credit hours of coursework outside the classroom structure, such as in a readings course, independent study, field experience, etc., will count toward the major requirements.

Departmental Academic Honors

A Religious Studies major may earn departmental academic honors by completing the additional requirements below.

To earn departmental academic honors, a Religious Studies major must:

1. Maintain a G.P.A. of 3.5 in Religious Studies coursework.
2. Complete at least 18 credit hours in Religious Studies courses offered at the 3000 and 4000 levels.
3. Complete at least two semesters of a foreign language with a grade of B or higher in each semester, or test out of that requirement.
4. Participation of 3 hours or more in a domestic or international field experience.
5. Complete the Senior Honors Project courses, RELG 4600 and 4700.

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