The study of religion in a college curriculum involves the historical and comparative scrutiny of the religious traditions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. Inevitably, the examination of basic questions about religion—traditional understandings of the divine, religious experience and expressions, and the role of religion in society—are central to the discipline.

Requirements for the Major in Religious Studies

A minimum of 10 courses, to include at least one from each of the following groups: Eastern religions (111, 212); Judaism and Islam (181, 182, or History 285); Christianity (236); and Bible (143, 144). The 10 required courses will include three religious studies courses at the 300 level or above and a senior independent study project. The three required 300-level courses may not include courses from other departments or institutions. The senior independent study project may take one of three forms: a four-credit independent study (491 or 492) sponsored by a member of the religious studies faculty or an approved faculty member from another department; a two-semester project in the honors program (483, 484) described below; or a Senior Scholars project with one mentor from the religious studies faculty. As part of the culminating experience, all seniors are required to present their independent research in a symposium held at the end of the spring semester.

The point scale for retention of the major applies to all courses that count toward the major.

Honors Program in Religious Studies

Students majoring in religious studies may apply during their junior year for admission to the honors program. Students are expected to submit their proposal to the department chair by April 15. Admission is contingent on GPA of 3.65 or higher in the major at the completion of the junior year. On successful completion of the work for the honors program, including a thesis, students will graduate from the College with “Honors in Religious Studies.”

Requirements for the Minor in Religious Studies

A minimum of six courses in religious studies, including at least one from three of the following groups: Eastern Religions (111 or 212); Judaism and Islam (181, 182, or History 285); Christianity (236); and Bible (143 or 144). The six required courses will include two religious studies courses at the 300 level or above. The two required 300-level courses may not include courses from other departments or institutions.

Courses from Other Departments That Can Serve as Electives in the Religious Studies Major/Minor

(Students may petition the chair to consider other courses toward the major)

Art
- 125 Art and Architecture of the Islamic World, 622-1250
- 126 Art and Architecture of the Islamic World, 1258-1914
- 213 Early Medieval Art
- 323 Destroying Culture: Iconoclasm
- 477 On the Road: Pilgrim Culture

Anthropology
- 244 Anthropology of Religion
- 246 Religion and Everyday Life in Muslim Societies

English
- 231 Tolkien’s Sources

Government
- 251 Israelis and Palestinians: Conflict and Accommodation
- 252 Introduction to Politics of the Middle East

History
- 285 Foundations of Islam
Course Offerings

RE111s  **Religions of India**  A study of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism, and Sikhism with a focus upon their religious texts and the cultural context within which they developed. An examination of the relationship these religious traditions have to one another, their metaphysical understanding of reality, their theories of self, and their views of the social, as expressed in myth, art, and ritual performance. How do these Indian religious traditions enrich our "patchwork heritage" in the United States? Readings, slides, sacred music, and film clips will be used to introduce the respective traditions. Previously listed as Religious Studies 211.  Four credit hours.  S.  SINGH

RE114f  **Introduction to the Study of Religion: Religion, Ritual, the Body**  We examine religious modifications of the body through ritual, the use of clothing, the treatment of hair, and through other forms of decoration and even violent modification. In this introduction to the study of religion and recent theories of religion, ritual, and the body, students will learn how scholars investigate religion. They will also learn to describe two major theoretical approaches to religious ritual, to use these tools to explain practices from prayer to extreme forms of asceticism, and to describe and evaluate sources of information for the study of religion.  Four credit hours.  S.  ORZECH

[RE117]  **A Passage to India: India and the Western Imagination**  Beginning with Walt Whitman's romantic journey toward the "soul" of the universe, Western attitudes towards India and India's encounter with Western culture will be studied. Literature and film include *A Passage to India*, *The Razor's Edge*, *The English Patient*, *Siddhartha*, *The Namesake*, *Gitanjali*, *My Son the Fanatic*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, and *Four Quartets*. Historical, political, religious, and visual context of the texts will be provided. A close reading of the texts for their aesthetic value, their existential disclosures, and as narratives on colonialism, racism, and orientalism.  Four credit hours.  L.

[RE120]  **Personal Writings about God**  What do I believe about God or the supernatural? Which values should guide my life, and how do I know? Why is there suffering in this world? How might I make sense of death? Students will learn to reflect upon and express in writing their own answers to these core religious/spiritual questions through critical engagement with the ideas of prominent contemporary thinkers from various traditions. In the process, they will develop skills as writers and critical thinkers while gaining deeper appreciation for the diversity and complexity of responses to some of life's fundamental questions.  Four credit hours.  W1.

RE120Bfs  **Religious Diversity in the Ancient Mediterranean**  Examines various forms of interreligious dialogue in the Greco-Roman world, between and among Jews, Greeks, Romans, and Christians: discussion and debate; prejudice and xenophobia; persecution and martyrdom; proselytism and conversion. How does contact with religious others spur debate on normativity, deviance, ethnicity, nationalism, purity, and virtue? Students will gain an informed understanding of the religious diversity of classical antiquity, will practice discussing and writing about controversial religious issues, and will apply these insights to the challenges and opportunities of religious diversity in our own complex, interconnected world.  Four credit hours.  H, W1, I.  JORGENSEN

[RE121]  **Catholic Church and Hollywood**  Explores various ways in which the histories of the Catholic Church and Hollywood intersect: in the works of God/church-obsessed directors (e.g., Alfred Hitchcock and Clint Eastwood); in Hollywood's treatment of Catholic teachings and ritual and of pivotal moments in the Catholic community's history; and in the Catholic hierarchy's attempt to act as Hollywood's censor. Designed to increase students' understanding of Catholic history and culture; provide practice in the art of discussing controversial religious topics; refine students' writing through brief, focused essays on Catholic films; and prepare students to reach their own conclusions about Catholics and Hollywood.  Three credit hours.  H, U.

RE136f  **Introduction to Christianity**  Considers historical turning points in key Christian ideas, texts, and practices in order to understand the lived experience of contemporary Christians around the world. Studies debates and controversies of faith in the context of social categories like gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, social class, and disability. Readings magnify voices of Christian people at the margins of evident power structures, especially (but not exclusively) in the U.S. context.  Four credit hours.  H.  O'NEIL
RE143f  Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament  Explores the best-selling book of all time by focusing on the first part of the Bible, i.e., the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. We will study famous biblical characters and analyze challenging and unexpected narratives. Students will gain an informed understanding of this rich collection of texts by concentrating on their literary, social, and historical contexts. We will also take into consideration the ways in which these texts have been used in contemporary poetry, film, art, and music.  Four credit hours.  L. JORGENSEN

RE144s  Introduction to the New Testament  Examines the varied writings that compose the New Testament from historical and literary perspectives. Who really was the Jesus of history and what did he teach about God, the end of the world, and humanity’s place in the cosmos? By analyzing texts critically and discussing their theological and social interpretations, students will gain an appreciation for the New Testament’s stunning influence on both ancient and modern culture.  Four credit hours.  L. JORGENSEN

[RE152]  Israeli Popular Music  Explores Israeli culture and society, past and present, through the medium of popular music. Students will learn about Israel’s political and social history and the rich cultural diversity of its population. Students will develop broadly applicable critical thinking skills through analyzing pop music and its lyrics. In the process, students will gain a deeper appreciation of contemporary Jewish and Palestinian identities and of the relationship between pop music as an artistic genre and the cultures within which it emerges.

Three credit hours.  A.

RE181f  Conceptions of Jews and Judaism  A survey of the history of the Jewish people and the religion called Judaism from the biblical era through the Middle Ages, tracing the development of ideas, texts, beliefs, and practices that continue to influence Jewish life and thought today. Examines Christian and Islamic ideas about Jews and Judaism and the historical impact of inequality, prejudice, and persecution on Jewish society and culture. Students will develop broadly applicable critical reading skills as well as those that relate specifically to the analysis of religious texts.  Four credit hours.  H, I. FREidenreich

RE182s  Jews, Judaism, and the Modern World  A survey of the social, cultural, intellectual, and political history of the Jews of Europe, the United States, and Israel/Palestine from the 17th century to the present. Traces the emergence of contemporary Judaism in its various manifestations. In addition to developing basic familiarity with the subject matter, students will learn how to interpret specific ideas, movements, biographies, and works of cultural production within the framework of broader dynamics associated with Jewish life in modern times.  Four credit hours.  H, I. FREidenreich

RE212f  Religions of China, Japan, and Tibet  An examination of Confucianism, Taoism, Shintou, and Buddhism—the indigenous religions of China, Japan, and Tibet—tracing the entrance of Buddhism into China, Japan, and Tibet and the resulting transformation of this religion in its interaction with these civilizations. The political ideology of Confucianism, the mystical dimensions of Taoism, the mythological aspects of Shintou, the meditative experiences of Zen (haiku, swordsmanship, the tea ceremony, etc.), and the psychological and artistic practices of Tibet.  Four credit hours.  S. SINGH

[RE214]  Global Sikhism: Migration and Identity  A study of the South Asian immigration to North America through the lens of the Sikh community. How do Sikhs cope with racism, prejudice, and stereotyping in the new country? How do they deal with gender, sexuality, and transnationalism within their own community? How do they contribute to the political, social, and religious diversity of America? We will explore the themes of displacement, hybridization, multiculturalism, and postmodernity in film, art, literature, and Bollywood bhangra music and dance. The goal is to promote intercultural understanding and strengthen the diversity of our reality.  Four credit hours.  I.

RE217s  Religion in the Americas  Examines religion and culture in the Americas, in both historic and current contexts, by addressing a number of social questions. Why did some African-American slaves convert to Christianity when many white slaveholders used the Bible to justify their enslavement? Why did some Jews in the United States maintain a practice of separate seating between genders in their places of worship, while others were eager to adopt mixed seating in synagogues? More recently, how have religions responded to and incorporated diverse forms of U.S. popular culture? Such questions will be considered comparatively with respect to such issues in Latin America and Canada. Prerequisite: Sophomore or higher standing.  Four credit hours.  H. O’neil

[RE219]  Violence and Religion through the Centuries  From the practice of human and animal sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible to the “sacrifice” of Jesus to contemporary acts of bigotry and violence conducted in the name of religious commitment, an examination of the intersection of violence and religion as portrayed primarily in the texts and traditions of Judaism and Christianity. Sacred texts, works of literature, and current events that illustrate and explore the theme of sacred violence will be the focus.  Four credit hours.

RE221s  The Jews of Maine  Participants will advance popular understanding of the experiences of Maine’s Jews past and present by producing mini-exhibitions for display at the Maine State Museum, along with thematically related programs for school groups and adult audiences. In conjunction with the 2017-18 humanities theme, “Origins,” we will explore the question, “What does it mean to be from Maine?” Students will develop transferable skills in research, multimedia communication, and collaboration while gaining a richer understanding of how Jews and others have staked their claim to authenticity as Mainers. Origins humanities lab.  Four credit hours.
[RE224] Jewish Theology  Listed as Jewish Studies 224.  Four credit hours.

[RE231s] Religious Life of Things  Icons, relics, scriptures, beads — we often overlook the fact that the spiritual is everywhere present in material images and objects. We will learn methods of understanding the role of religious images and objects. Students will use semiotic tools to analyze religious images, become familiar with contemporary approaches to the study of religious objects, and be able to use those approaches to analyze a religious object. Guided research will make use of library and online resources.  Four credit hours.  A.  ORZECH

[RE236] Modern Christianity  Examines critical turning points in the relationship between Christianity and modernity, including the Protestant Reformation; the encounter between religion and reason; the emergence and development of evangelical Christianity; Christianity’s complex relationships with movements to fight racial, ethnic, gender, and class-based oppression. Designed to increase students’ understanding of the evolution and diversity of Christianity, provide practice in discussing controversial religious topics, refine writing skills, and prepare students to reach their own conclusions about Christianity and its history.  Four credit hours.  H.

[RE242] The Good Life  What does the good life look like? What does it mean to live life well? We explore these questions through engagement with the lives and visions of founding figures from six diverse traditions of imagining a good life: the Buddha, the Hebrew Bible and Talmud, Jesus of Nazareth, Muhammad, John Stuart Mill, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Includes visits from contemporary individuals who understand their lives to be shaped by the traditions in question and an overnight retreat focused on the ‘spiritual autobiographies’ of students in the course. Previously offered as RE297 (Jan Plan 2017).  Three credit hours.  S.  NELSON

[RE244f] Anthropology of Religion  Listed as Anthropology 244.  Four credit hours.  I.  STROHL

[RE246s] Religion and Everyday Life in Muslim Societies  Listed as Anthropology 246.  Four credit hours.  I.  STROHL

[RE253] Mormons  An examination of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from its 19th-century origins to the present day: its history, theology, spirituality, and rituals. Attention to controversies over race and polygamy and to the Mormon mystique. Designed to increase students’ understanding of the Mormons, their history, and their church; provide practice in discussing controversial religious topics in a pluralistic setting; refine writing skills; and prepare students to draw their own conclusions about Mormons, their history, and their church.  Four credit hours.  H, U.

[RE256] The African-American Religious Experience  A sociological analysis and historical overview of the diverse religious organizations, leaders, experiences, and practices of black people in the United States. Emphasis upon the predominant Afro-Christian experience, its relationship with the African background, contemporary African religions, other religions (e.g., Islam), political institutions, social change, urban problems, and the arts. Special attention to the role of black Christian women in church and society. Formerly offered as Religious Studies 356.  Four credit hours.  U.

[RE257] Women in American Religion  An examination of women in American religion from colonial times to the present, including experiences of ordinary women and leaders of reform movements and alternative communities. Attention to how women have embraced and adapted traditional religions and constructed alternative communities and theologies. Increases students understanding of religious diversity and marginalization, as well as the role of organized religion in promoting (and impeding) justice and equality; provides practice in discussing controversial religious issues; refines writing skills; helps students to form their own opinions on issues related to women in American religion.  Four credit hours.  H, U.

[RE259] Catholics  An examination of the history and culture of the Catholic Church during the past century, with special emphasis on the recent past: Catholic social teachings, Vatican II, the Pope Francis Phenomenon, and what makes Catholics different from other Christians. Intended to provide students with practice in the art of writing about and discussing controversial religious topics and help them to form their own opinions concerning Catholicism—past, present, and future.  Four credit hours.

[RE263s] Buddhism across East Asia  Listed as East Asian Studies 263.  Four credit hours.  L.  ORZECH

[RE275] Contemporary Witchcraft: Formalists, Feminists, and Free Spirits  History and practice of contemporary Witchcraft. Often erroneously confused with Satanism, Witchcraft (which includes Wicca) is an Earth-based religion centered on Goddess and God imagery which declares nature to be sacred and derives many of its rituals and practices from the seasons and cycles of the natural world. Readings, videos on thea/ology, rituals, practices, and activism of Witches. Experiential components (discussions with Witches, ritual design, participation in an open circle, personal use of divination) and questions: How does feminine divine imagery affect the development, structures, practices? How has the focus on nature shaped contemporary Witchcraft? Why are many Witches activists? Why is there public interest in Witches?
The course "Religious Responses to Harry Potter" explores the religious and ethical themes in the Harry Potter series. Students will engage in critical analysis of the religions and ethics presented in the novels. This course is open to students with a background in religious studies or history, making it accessible to a wide range of students. The course is taught by Professor Jin Yoon, an expert in the field of religious studies. Students will learn how to analyze religious texts and develop their critical thinking skills. The course is offered in the spring semester and is worth four credit hours. 

The course "Sports, Religion, and Inequality" examines the intersection of sports and religion in various contexts, considering both historical and contemporary issues. The course is taught by Professor L. O'NEIL, an expert in the field of religious studies. Students will learn how to analyze the relationship between sports and religion and how this relationship impacts society. The course is offered in the fall semester and is worth four credit hours.

The course "South Asians and Global Literature, Film, Art, Environmentalism" explores the complex and diverse literature of South Asia, including films and art. The course is taught by Professor S. SINGH, an expert in the field of South Asian studies. Students will learn how to analyze the cultural and political contexts of South Asian literature and art. The course is offered in the spring semester and is worth four credit hours.

The course "Food and Religious Identity" examines the relationship between food and religion, considering both historical and contemporary examples. The course is taught by Professor L. SINGH, an expert in the field of religious studies. Students will learn how to analyze the cultural and political contexts of food and religion. The course is offered in the fall semester and is worth four credit hours.

The course "Death and Spirituality" focuses on the experience of death and spirituality in the West, examining both historical and contemporary examples. The course is taught by Professor S. SINGH, an expert in the field of religious studies. Students will learn how to analyze the cultural and political contexts of death and spirituality. The course is offered in the spring semester and is worth four credit hours.

The course "Jesus Christ Superstar: The Bible in Film" explores the relationship between religious texts and film, focusing on the musical "Jesus Christ Superstar" and its biblical roots. The course is taught by Professor A. TURNER, an expert in the field of religious studies. Students will learn how to analyze the cultural and political contexts of film and religious texts. The course is offered in the fall semester and is worth four credit hours.

The course "Religious Responses to Ethical Dilemmas" focuses on the ethical challenges faced by religious ethicists in contemporary society. The course is taught by Professor I. FREIDENREICH, an expert in the field of religious studies. Students will learn how to analyze the cultural and political contexts of ethical dilemmas. The course is offered in the spring semester and is worth four credit hours.
**RE398s  Health, Religion, and Ethics**  Explores the intersection of religion, health, and ethics with an emphasis on their interplay in sports. Sports and fitness are often viewed as surefire remedies for health problems, but sports can also produce health crises of their own. When athletes push beyond all limits, their dogged determination can coincide with and create trauma at the psychological, physical, and spiritual levels. These factors intersect with other complicated aspects of the human experience, including social class, race, gender, and sexuality. We will consider these subjects through various mediums in the humanities, including both written and visual texts.  *Four credit hours.*  O’NEIL

**RE483fj  Religious Studies Honors Program**  Research conducted under the guidance of a faculty member and focused on an approved topic leading to the writing of a thesis.  *Prerequisite:*  A 3.65 average in the major at the end of the junior year and permission of the department.  *Four credit hours.*  FACULTY

**RE483Jj  Religious Studies Honors Program**  *Noncredit.*  JORGENSEN

**RE491f, 492s  Independent Study**  Individual projects in areas where the student has demonstrated the interest and competence necessary for independent work.  *Prerequisite:*  Permission of the instructor.  *One to four credit hours.*  FACULTY