

## Faculty

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The Department of Religious Studies approaches religion as a global and pluralistic phenomenon. We understand the study of religion as a crucial element in the larger study of culture and history. Our goals include helping students (1) to recognize and examine the important role of religion in history and the contemporary world; (2) to explore the wide variety of religious thought and practice, past and present; (3) to develop methods for the academic study of particular religions and religion in comparative perspective; and (4) to develop the necessary skills to contribute to the ongoing discussion of the nature of religion.

Since the phenomena that we collectively call “religious” are so varied, it is appropriate that they be studied from a variety of theoretical perspectives and with a variety of

methods. The diversity of areas of specialization and approaches to the study of religion among our faculty members ensures the representation of many viewpoints. Our courses investigate the place of religion in various cultures in light of social, political, philosophical, and psychological questions. We also encourage religious studies majors to take relevant courses in other departments, and our faculty members frequently team-teach with members of other departments.

The curriculum mirrors the diversity of the faculty. We offer courses in Judaism, Christianity, religions of the Americas, Islam, Buddhism, South Asian religions, and East Asian religions. Religious studies majors are required to take courses in at least four of these areas. In our courses we emphasize work with primary sources, both textual and nontextual. To this end, students are encouraged to study relevant languages, and to spend at least part of their junior year abroad in an area of the world relevant to their particular interests. Our courses require no commitment to a particular faith. Students of any background, secular or religious, can benefit from the personal questions of meaning and purpose that arise in every area of the subject.

Our introductory courses (RELN 101, 102, and 103) are designed especially for students new to the

study of religion, although they are not prerequisites to other courses. RELN 101 is a regular class; RELN 102 covers the same material in the format of a seminar limited to first-year students; RELN 103, also a first-year seminar, covers equivalent material with a focus on women and religion. Students who enroll in any one of these, and wish to fulfill their humanities requirement with religious studies courses, may do so by taking any other course in the department. For this purpose we especially recommend our foundation courses (200 level), which can also serve as first courses in religious studies. The introductory and foundation courses are indicated below by the ♦ symbol. A few upper-level courses do have specific prerequisites, and a few with no specific course prerequisites do require sophomore or junior standing. They are so noted below.

## Requirements for the Major

Students majoring in religious studies are required to take RELN 101, 102, or 103; RELN 390 (Approaches to the Study of Religion); RELN 490 (Senior Seminar), and 3 1/2 other units. These units must include foundation courses (200 level) in traditions or areas representing at least four of the five fields of study (see lists below). In one of the traditions/areas, at least one more advanced course must also be taken. (Note: there are seven traditions/areas grouped in five fields of study. The advanced course must be in the same tradition or area, not just the same field.)

It is highly recommended that majors take all four of their required foundation courses, if possible, before their senior year. Students who are considering spending any portion of the junior year abroad should take RELN 390 (Approaches) in the sophomore year; otherwise the junior year is recommended.

Unless specified otherwise in the course description, any student may take any course; the numbering system does not correspond to levels of difficulty.

### A. Fields of Study

(covering seven traditions/areas)

1. Judaism
2. Christianity
3. Religions of the Americas
4. Islam, South Asian religions
5. Buddhism, East Asian religions

### B. Foundation Courses

(by tradition/area)

#### Judaism:

RELN 210 The Judaic Tradition

RELN 211 Modern Judaism

#### Christianity:

RELN 220 Faith of Christians

RELN 225 The New Testament

#### Americas:

RELN 230 Religion in America

#### Islam:

RELN 240 Classical Islam

#### South Asian:

RELN 250 South Asian Religions

#### Buddhism:

RELN 260 Buddhist Thought and Practice

#### East Asian:

RELN 270 Chinese Religions

RELN 275 Japanese Religions

The Senior Exercise in religious studies consists of (1) the Senior Seminar, RELN 490; (2) a comprehensive examination consisting of short-answer, objective questions on the seven traditions areas; (3) a fifteen- to twenty-page essay on an assigned topic; OR, if approved by the department faculty, a longer compara-

tive research paper (twenty to twenty-five pages); and (4) satisfactory participation in a Senior Symposium (a discussion and critique, with a small group of students and faculty, of the senior papers).

Students with an overall grade point average of 3.25 or better and 3.5 or better in religious-studies courses are eligible to submit a proposal for an honors project. Honors candidates select a field of concentration entailing 1 to 1 1/2 units of advanced research and writing under the supervision of one or more faculty members.

## Requirements for the Minor

The religious studies minor is designed to expose students in a systematic way to the study of religion, while simultaneously giving them some degree of more advanced knowledge in at least one religious tradition. A total of 3 units is required for the minor in religious studies. The following are the minimum requirements:

- RELN 101, 102, or 103 (1/2 unit)
- A foundation course and at least one further course in one of the seven areas listed above (1 unit)
- A second foundation course in another religious tradition (1/2 unit)
- Two additional courses (1 unit)
- At least one course must be a seminar.

## Year Course

### Senior Honors

RELN 497Y-498Y (1 unit)

Staff

Prerequisite: permission of department.

## First-Semester Courses

### Introduction to the Study of Religion

◆ RELN 101 (1/2 unit)

Staff

The format of this course is lecture and discussion. The usual enrollment in each section is twenty to twenty-five students. The course includes brief introductions to four or five major religious traditions, while exploring concepts and categories used in the study of religion, such as sacredness, myth, ritual, religious experience, and social dimensions of religion. Traditions such as Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, and Native American traditions are presented through their classic scriptures and traditional practices.

Readings vary among sections, but typically include important primary sources on Hindu thought and practice (e.g., the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-gita*), Buddhist thought and practice (*The Questions of King Milinda*, the *Heart Sutra*), Jewish life and thought (selections from the Hebrew Bible, the *Sayings of the Fathers*), Christian origins (one or more Gospels, selected Pauline letters), Islam (selections from the Qur'an and Sufi mystical poetry), Confucianism (the *Analects*), Taoism (the *Tao Te Ching*), and modern expressions of religion (e.g., Martin Buber's *I and Thou*). Many of the primary sources are studied in conjunction with relevant secondary sources (e.g., Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, important articles by anthropologists of religion). The Department of Religious Studies emphasizes writing, and several essays are assigned in this course.

**Special Topic: Afro-Caribbean Spirituality**

◆ RELN 232 (1/2 unit)  
*Edmonds*

This course explores the contours of the religious expressions that people of African descent have forged in the Caribbean. It will examine the context of domination and resistance in which African spirituality was forged, give a brief overview of African influence on religious expressions in the Americas, and explore the religions traditions of Vodou, Santeria, and Rastafari, paying close attention to their social history, their understanding of universe, their social structure, and their rituals and ceremonies.

**Classical Islam**

◆ RELN 240 (1/2 unit)  
*Schubel*

Islam is the religion of nearly a billion people and the dominant cultural element in a geographical region that stretches from Morocco to Indonesia. This course examines the development of Islam and Islamic institutions, from the time of the Prophet Muhammad until the death of Al-Ghazali in 1111 C.E. Special attention will be given to the rise of Sunni, Shi'i, and Sufi piety as distinctive responses to the Qur'anic revelation.

**Chinese Religions**

◆ RELN 270 (1/2 unit)  
*Adler*

This course is a survey of the major historical and contemporary currents of religious thought and practice in Chinese culture. Our aim will be to gain a richer understanding of some characteristic Chinese ways of experiencing the self, society, and the world. We will examine the three traditional "teachings" (Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism), as well as "popular religion," and the contributions of all four to Chinese culture. Specific themes will include ancestor worship, sacrifice and divination, religious ethics, meditation, and longevity techniques. In each section we will attempt to identify those aspects of Chinese religion which are inextricable from

traditional Chinese culture and those which are capable of crossing cultural boundaries. Classes are a mixture of lecture and discussion. Readings will focus on primary religious texts, supplemented by films and slides.

**Hebrew Scriptures/The Old Testament**

◆ RELN 310 (1/2 unit)  
*Dean-Otting*

This course will serve as an introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), as they reflect the myths, history, and institutions of ancient Israel. Topics to be explored will include biblical narratives and poetry, law codes, prayers and ritual, the prophetic critique of religion and society, and wisdom literature. We will also read a selection of short fiction and poetry that have been inspired by biblical literature.

**Ethics and Social Justice: The Ancient and Modern Traditions**

RELN 380 (1/2 unit)  
*George E. McCarthy, NEH  
Distinguished Teaching Professor of  
Sociology; Rhodes*

This mid-level course will examine the development of theories of ethics and social justice from the ancient Hebrew tradition of Torah and the prophets, New Testament writers Luke and Matthew, and the Greek drama of Aeschylus and political philosophy of Aristotle, to modern discussions about social, political, and economic justice. We will explore how modern social theories have employed ancient Hebrew and Greek teachings as the bases for social ethics. Questions of justice, freedom, economic development, individualism, and alienation will be major themes in this study of liberalism, Christianity, and Marxism. Special emphasis will be on contemporary debates about the ethics of democratic capitalism, including conservative theology and philosophy and radical liberation theology. Readings will be from the Bible, Aeschylus, Aristotle, Pope John Paul II, M. Friedman, E. Fromm, R. Pirsig, E.F. Schumacher, and N. Wolf. Prerequisite: introductory sociology or religious studies courses or permission

of the instructor. This course is cross-listed as SOCY 243.

**Approaches to the Study of Religion**

RELN 390 (1/2 unit)  
*Schubel*

This is an introductory survey intended to acquaint students with major methods employed in the academic study of religion. The course will cover phenomenological, psychoanalytical, sociological, and anthropological approaches to religion. Authors to be discussed will include Frazer, Marx, Freud, Weber, Durkheim, Eliade, Levi-Strauss, Douglas, Geertz, and Turner. This course is required for religious studies majors. Prerequisite: RELN 101.

**Religious Communities, East and West**

RELN 480 (1/2 unit)  
*Rhodes*

This course will examine traditional and innovative forms of monastic life and spirituality, using as a case study contemporary Christianity in dialogue with global monastic traditions. Starting with a brief historical overview, we will read the works of Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Thomas Moore, and Kathleen Norris. We will also use documentary videos and fictional accounts of the ascetic life, and track recent features of inter-faith monastic contacts. Prerequisite: sophomore standing. Enrollment limited.

**Senior Seminar**

RELN 490 (1/2 unit)  
*Dean-Otting*

This year's topic will offer opportunities to examine the phenomenon of sainthood in a variety of religious traditions. The ideal of the holy person will be studied in ancient and modern texts. The course will focus on various theories regarding the nature of holy persons and will apply the theories to a number of different examples. From the miracle workers among Christian saints in antiquity, to contemplative Buddhist ascetics, to the Hasidic storytelling *zaddikim*, what can be discovered about holy persons? Our last text, a novel, will confront us

with the fine line between holiness and possession by demons. The course is required for, but not limited to, senior religious studies majors. Religious studies minors are encouraged to take this course, provided that there is space. Nonmajors should consult the instructor for permission to enroll in the course.

### **Comparative Mysticism**

RELN 491 (1/2 unit)  
*Adler*

This seminar will explore the religious phenomenon and category of “mysticism” in a variety of traditions, including Judaism, Christianity, Taoism, and Buddhism. We will read some of the seminal works that helped define “mysticism” as a particular form of religious experience, including William James, Evelyn Underhill, and Walter Stace. Then we will examine a selection of mystical texts from the various traditions. Finally, we will focus on the methodological and philosophical problems involved in interpreting mystical experience in cross-cultural perspective. Particular questions to be addressed include: the nature of mystical experience and religious experience in general, the relationship between religious experience and other aspects of religious traditions, the question of the universality of mystical experience, and the nature and purpose of the academic study of religion itself. Prerequisite: Any 100 level course AND any 200-level course in religious studies.

### **Muslims in the Middle Ages**

RELN 492 (1/2 unit)  
*Kilic-Schubel*

The conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 is often seen as the beginning of the decline of Islamic civilization. In reality, the period between this event and the rise of European political and economic dominance was one of remarkable cultural florescence in the Islamic world. During this period the center of Islamic civilization shifted from the Arab world to Asia, where new empires, such as the Saffavids, the Ottomans, the Mughals, the Timurids and the Shaybanids, were founded by

Turko-Mongol Muslims. It was a period which saw the rise of diverse new political institutions, transformations of religious thought and practice, and the creation of extraordinary literary, artistic and technological achievements. This course will focus on some of the most significant transformations that took place in Muslim Asia in this period, including the conversion of nomadic tribes to Islam, the rise of Sufi orders, and the integration of traditional and Islamic law in medieval political systems.

### **Individual Study**

RELN 493 (1/2 unit)  
*Staff*

Prerequisites: Permission of instructor and department chair.

## **Second-Semester Courses**

### **Introduction to the Study of Religion**

◆ RELN 101 (1/2 unit)  
*Staff*

See first-semester course description.

### **Modern Judaism**

◆ RELN 211 (1/2 unit)  
*Dean-Otting*

This course will survey the life and thought of Jews from the sixteenth century through the modern era. Using a large selection of primary sources (sacred texts, diaries, philosophy, contemporary sources, films and art), the course will address how fundamental Jewish ideas and practices have both remained the same and changed in response to modernity. Topics covered will include, but not be limited to, worship and ritual, the Jewish Enlightenment, Hasidism, the branches of Judaism, love of Zion and the foundation of the state of Israel, feminism and ceremonial art.

### **Jesus and the Gospels**

RELN 225 (1/2 unit)  
*Rogan*

This course presents a study of the career and impact of Jesus in early Christianity as interpreted in the four gospels of the New Testament, with

careful attention to the historical background in Judaism and the Hellenistic Age. Prerequisite: sophomore standing.

### **Religion and Society in America (U.S.)**

◆ RELN 230 (1/2 unit)  
*Edmonds*

This course explores the historical and contemporary relationship between religious beliefs/values and the social and political dimensions of American life. Themes covered include Puritanism and pluralism; separation of church and state (from its constitutional enshrinement to the present controversy about prayer in school and “one nation under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance); religion, race discourse, and race relations; revivalism and social reforms, including abolitionism and the Social Gospel; religion and the African-American community, including the Civil Rights Movement; immigration and the configuration of religious life; religion and women’s rights; secularization and religious resurgence; megachurch and televangelists; and New Age or unconventional spirituality. Readings, lectures, and discussions will facilitate the exploration of these themes.

### **Medieval Christianity**

RELN 320 (1/2 unit)  
*Rhodes*

We will examine major works by central figures involved in the development of the medieval worldview: theological disputes, mysticism, inter-religious dialogue, new forms of religious community, feminine spirituality, and humanism. We will look at key issues—nature, community, salvation, God, knowledge, and love—that were of common interest to theologians, philosophers, mystics, and popular religion. Authors to be read include Augustine, Benedict, Abelard, Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure, Aquinas, Julian of Norwich, and Dante. Enrollment limited.

**Women in Christianity**RELN 328 (1/2 unit)  
*Suydam*

This course explores the significance of Christianity for women in that tradition. Why wasn't Mary considered one of the disciples? How did a system of church government evolve that excluded women? How have women responded to that system? We will examine founders of church-reform movements such as Claire of Assisi, as well as founders of new Christian churches (e.g., Ellen White, founder of Seventh-Day Adventism, and Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science). The course will also explore contemporary Christian issues involving women, such as ordination, abortion, and marriage and divorce laws. One of the goals of the course is to explore the importance and consequence of gender in the Christian experience. Is Christianity different for men and women? A respect for the variety within Christianity and the choices made by different women within it are also important parts of this course.

**Special Topic: Religion and Popular Music in the African Diaspora**RELN 342 (1/2 unit)  
*Edmonds*

Religious spaces, ideas, and practices have exerted a formative influence on the cultures of the people of African descent in the Americas. This course will examine the relationship between the religious traditions and the popular music of the African Diaspora. After a brief survey of the characteristics and genres of African Diaspora music, the course will focus primarily on the African-American (U.S.) musical tradition, reggae music from Jamaica, and Calypso from Trinidad. Special attention will be given to the religious roots of these musical expressions and their social functions in shaping identity and framing religious, cultural and political discourse. Readings, videos, and audio tapes or CDs, along with discussions and student presentations, will assist us in the exploration of various facets of our topic. Enrollment limited.

**Zen Buddhism**RELN 360 (1/2 unit)  
*Adler*

This course will cover the history, doctrines, and practices of Zen Buddhism in China, where it originated and is called Chan; Japan, where it has influenced many aspects of Japanese culture and from where it was exported to the West; and the United States. The class format will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Readings will be in both primary texts and secondary studies, and will be supplemented by slides and several films. Prerequisites: Any one of the following courses: RELN 101 (or 102 or 103; Introduction to the Study of Religion), RELN 260 (Buddhist Thought and Practice), RELN 270 (Chinese Religions), or RELN 275 (Japanese Religions).

**Meanings of Death**RELN 381 (1/2 unit)  
*Rhodes*

In all cultures, the idea of death and dying has shaped the imagination in myth, image, and ritual. This course will explore the symbols, interpretations, and practices centering on death in diverse religious traditions, historical periods, and cultures. We will use religious texts (the Bible and the *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*), art, literature (*Gilgamesh*, Plato, Dante, Donne, Tennyson), psychological interpretations (Kubler-Rose and Lifton), and social issues (AIDS, atomic weapons, ecological threats) to examine the questions death poses for the meaning of existence. Prerequisite: sophomore standing. Enrollment limited.

**Prophecy**RELN 382 (1/2 unit)  
*Dean-Otting*

Prophets were the messengers of justice and social responsibility in antiquity. This course poses the question: Are there contemporary prophets? We will first focus on the origins of prophecy in the Ancient Near East, and then will explore a number of contemporary writers and social movements. Readings in Max Weber, Clifford Geertz, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Cornel West will

provide theoretical perspectives. After establishing a theoretical model, we will examine the role of the biblical prophets (Amos, Isaiah, Micah and others) and the prophetic roles of Jesus and Mohammed. In the last two thirds of the semester we will study a selection of modern writers. This section will include, but not be limited to: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X (racism and civil rights), Sr. Helen Prejean (the death penalty), Wendell Berry (agribusiness and community), Arundhati Roy (globalization), Jonathan Kozol (inequities in public education), and Peter Singer (animal rights).

**Seminar on Sufism**RELN 440 (1/2 unit)  
*Schubel*

This seminar will examine some of the important ideas, personalities, and institutions associated with Islamic mysticism. Students will read and discuss important primary and secondary sources on such topics as the development and organization of Sufi *tariqahs*, Sufi mystical poetry, the nature of the Sufi path, and Sufi psychology. A crucial aspect of the course will be an examination of the role of the veneration of "holy persons" in Islamic piety. Prerequisite: RELN 240 (Classical Islam) or permission of instructor. Enrollment limited.

**The Confucian Tradition**RELN 471 (1/2 unit)  
*Adler*

This seminar will explore the philosophical and cultural history of the Confucian tradition, primarily in China, from its inception to the present day. Reading will include both primary texts and secondary studies covering the Five Classics and the sayings of Confucius and Mencius, the Neo-Confucians of the Sung and Ming dynasties, the "New Confucians" of the twentieth century. We will also examine the influences of Confucianism on Chinese and other East Asian societies, its involvement in the tension between tradition and modernity, and its influence on East Asian family dynamics and values. Among the general questions to be

considered are: In what senses can Confucianism be considered a religious tradition? Which aspects of the tradition are culture-bound and which are universally applicable? How has Confucianism contributed to the growth (and more recent decline) of East Asian economies? What contributions does Confucianism have to make to the debate on human rights? Prerequisite: RELN 270 (Chinese Religions), HIST 160 (Modern East Asia) or HIST 161 (Imperial China).

**Individual Study**

RELN 494 (1/2 unit)  
Staff

Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

ANTH 252 Anthropology of Religion  
ARHS 111 Art of Christian Europe  
ASIA 490 The Silk Road Legacy  
CLAS 114 Classical Mythology  
PHIL 200 History of Ancient Philosophy  
PHIL 240 Philosophy of Religion  
SOCY 243 Ethics and Social Justice

**The following courses may be offered in 2004-05:**

RELN 220 Faith of Christians  
RELN 260 Buddhist Thought and Practice  
RELN 313 Souls on Fire: Jewish Mystical Expression  
RELN 321 The Reformation  
RELN 332 African-American Religions  
RELN 410 Women in Judaism  
RELN 421 Modern Catholicism  
RELN 422 Victorian Religion  
RELN 441 Islam in Central Asia and the Turkic World  
RELN 472 Taoism

**Courses in other departments that meet requirements for the Department of Religious Studies:**

The list below is a sample of courses taught in other departments that may be counted as meeting religious studies department requirements for the major, up to 1 unit. Religious studies majors who wish to use these courses (or others) to satisfy requirements for the major must discuss them with their advisors and with the chair of the department.