RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The academic study of religion has deep roots in Western intellectual history. One cannot adequately grasp the full dynamics of world culture without attending to the role of religion. In the last hundred years scholars in the West have paid increasing attention to non-Western religions and to the category of “religion” itself as a dimension of human experience.

Religious studies courses do not encourage or discourage religious belief; rather, they engage in the academic study of religion as a crucial element of human culture. Religious studies employs a variety of methods including anthropological, sociological, historical, philosophical, phenomenological, literary, and linguistic approaches. The principal goal of religious studies is submitting sacred texts and traditions to descriptive, analytical, critical, and empathetic scrutiny.

In terms of employment potential, a religious studies minor primarily serves a student in the same way that history or philosophy might. It increases a student’s understanding of persons and cultures. Key liberal arts skills in close reading, analysis, research, and oral and written communication are central to religious studies. Some students will use religious studies to enhance their chances of acceptance in graduate programs in areas such as anthropology, sociology, social work, international relations, history, or various area studies. Others may use the minor as a broadly based stepping stone for professional training in theological seminaries or rabbinical schools.

Janice Capel Anderson, Acting Coordinator (405 Morrill Hall 83844-3016; phone 208-885-6065).


Minors


Religious Studies

RELS 133 Religion and Family
2 credits
Overview of influence of religion on dating, courtship, marriage, and family life.

RELS 204 (s) Special Topics
Credit arranged.

RELS 299 (s) Directed Study
Credit arranged.

RELS 302 Biblical Judaism: Texts and Thought
3 credits
Cross-listed with PHIL 302
Analysis of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and related texts with an emphasis on hermeneutics and thought.

RELS 303 Early Christianity: Texts and Thought
3 credits
Cross-listed with PHIL 303
Analysis of the New Testament and other early Christian texts of the first and second centuries C.E. with an emphasis on hermeneutics and thought.

RELS 307 Buddhism
3 credits
Cross-listed with PHIL 307
Philosophy and religion of Gautama Buddha as it developed in India, Tibet, China, and Japan.

RELS 311 Development of Social Theory
3 credits
Cross-listed with SOC 311
Development of social theory from classical roots through contemporary schools; biographical accounts and original works in sociological theory.

Prereq: SOC 101.

RELS 327 Belief Systems
3 credits
Cross-listed with ANTH 327
Method and theory of comparative anthropological study of religion.

RELS 375 The Bible as Literature
3 credits
Gen Ed: Humanities
Cross-listed with ENGL 375
Literary qualities of the Bible.

Prereq: ENGL 102.

Prereq or Coreq: ENGL 175 or EGNL 257 or ENGL 258.

RELS 404 (s) Special Topics
Credit arranged.

RELS 413 Psychology of Religion
3 credits
Cross-listed with PSYC 413
This course examines psychological theories on the origin of the religious impulse in humans, some aspects of religious experience, and contemporary religious phenomena. It provides an overview of the relevance of objective, depth, and humanistic approaches for the psychology of religion. The biographies and theories of particularly Freud, Jung, Erikson, and James are highlighted.

Prereq: PSYC 101.

RELS 422 Plateau Indians
3 credits
Gen Ed: American Diversity
Cross-listed with AIST 422 and ANTH 422
An overview of historic and contemporary Indian cultures of the Plateau; oral traditions, ceremonial life, social organization, and subsistence activities; history of contact with Euro-American society. Two 1 to 2-day field trips reqd. Additional projects/assignments reqd for grad cr. ANTH 422 is a cooperative course available to WSU degree-seeking students.

RELS 442 The Medieval Church: Europe in the Early and High Middle Ages
3 credits
Gen Ed: Humanities
Cross-listed with RELS 442
Evolution of medieval Christian society from reign of Constantine (c. 300) to pontificate of Innocent III (1215), as expressed in monastic and mendicant orders, crusades, 12th-century Renaissance, and heresy.
RELS 443 The Medieval State: Europe in the High and Late Middle Ages
3 credits
Gen Ed: Humanities
Cross-listed with HIST 443
Analysis of how the vitality of particular medieval princes, of the commercial revolution, and of such movements as development of common law was harnessed in the evolution of medieval government from feudalism to the modern state.

RELS 447 The Renaissance
3 credits
Gen Ed: Humanities
Cross-listed with HIST 447
Explores the transformative movement known as the European Renaissance. Examines how humanism not only shaped and formed art, music, literature and philosophy but also informed one's relationship to the state. Additional projects/assignments required for graduate credit.

RELS 448 The Reformation
3 credits
Gen Ed: Humanities
Cross-listed with RELS 448
This course examines the social and economic as well as the theological dynamic of the Reformation. The course begins by examining the thought of Erasmus and More, continuing through that of Luther, Calvin, and Loyola, to the Anabaptists. Religious upheaval lead not only to the political and military upheaval of the Religious Wars, but also to religious debate, the echoes of which resound through to the present. Additional projects/assignments required for graduate credit.

RELS 499 (s) Directed Study
Credit arranged.