

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

religious-studies.northwestern.edu

The Department of Religious Studies offers undergraduates from across Northwestern the opportunity to study religions as historical and cultural phenomena. This includes the scholarly exploration of religious traditions, histories, cultures, beliefs, practices, sacred texts, sacred stories, and material productions from around the world in their institutional as well as noninstitutional (“on the ground”) forms. The department’s approach is fundamentally multidisciplinary, drawing from a variety of fields and critical perspectives: anthropology, history, philosophy, ethics, sociology, and literary and cultural studies, among others.

The wide variety of undergraduate courses range from large introductory classes to advanced seminars, and there are also independent studies and a senior thesis program for qualified students. The courses cover aspects of Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, African American and Native American religions, new religious movements, and religion and culture in America. Several courses are structured comparatively or thematically and address religious ideas and phenomena across cultures and contexts.

The department offers a major and minor in religious studies and a minor in Catholic studies.

In consultation with a department adviser, students majoring in religious studies select one of four concentrations:

- Global study of religion in comparative perspective
- Religion, health, and medicine
- Religion, law, and politics
- Religion, sexuality, and gender

The concentrations are designed to complement academic interests and enhance professional goals.

The minor in religious studies provides a balanced set of departmental courses, including work on general theories of religion and on the historical development of religions and their social manifestations. In the interdisciplinary minor in Catholic studies, students take courses from both religious studies and other departments and choose an area of focus within Catholic studies.

Programs of Study

- Religious Studies Major (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/religious-studies/religious-studies-major/>)
- Religious Studies Minor (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/religious-studies/religious-studies-minor/>)
- Catholic Studies Minor (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/religious-studies/catholic-studies-minor/>)

RELIGION 101-7 College Seminar (1 Unit) Small, writing and discussion-oriented course exploring a specific topic or theme, and introducing skills necessary to thriving at Northwestern. Not eligible to be applied towards a WCAS major or minor except where specifically indicated.

RELIGION 101-8 First-Year Writing Seminar (1 Unit) Small, writing and discussion-oriented course exploring a specific topic or theme, and focused on the fundamentals of effective, college-level written communication. Not eligible to be applied towards a WCAS major or minor except where specifically indicated.

RELIGION 170-0 Introduction to the Study of Religion (1 Unit) Introduces students to foundational themes, categories, content, and modes of analysis for studying religion. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 172-0 Introduction to Religion, Media, and Culture (1 Unit) Integrating multimedia modes of learning and engaging students in skill-developing mediamaking assignments, this course offers undergraduates an introduction to studying the phenomena of religion in relationship to dynamics of media, society, and culture. No prerequisites required. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 173-0 Religion, Medicine & Suffering in the West (1 Unit) Examination of religious healing ceremonies and Christian perspectives on pain and suffering in light of the meaning of physical pain in people’s everyday lives. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 200-0 Introduction to Hinduism (1 Unit) Unity and diversity of Hindu mythology, beliefs, and practices from ancient times to the present. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 210-0 Introduction to Buddhism (1 Unit) The Buddha’s life and teachings, traditions that developed from these teachings, and systems of meditation, rituals, and ethics. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 220-0 Introduction to Hebrew Bible (1 Unit) Critical introduction to the Hebrew Bible: its history, content, and cultural influence, as well as the sociopolitical history of ancient Israel. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 221-0 Introduction to the New Testament (1 Unit) Beginning, development, and content of the New Testament; its Jewish and Hellenistic environment. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 230-0 Introduction to Judaism (1 Unit) Main concepts in the theology of Judaism, main rituals and customs, and main institutions. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 240-0 Introduction to Christianity (1 Unit) Doctrine, worship, and institutions in the various branches of Christianity. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 250-0 Introduction to Islam (1 Unit) Principal beliefs and practices of Muslims set against the historic development of the faith. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 262-0 Introduction to Black Religions: The North American Experience (1 Unit) Introduces students to the variety of Black religions that developed during and after the Atlantic slave trade up to the present. Explores these traditions as continuities/changes of West African religious cosmologies. Examines the interplay between religion, politics, and the constructions of racial identities within various forms of Christianity, Islam, and other expressive cultures. RELIGION 262-0 and BLK_ST 262-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both. *Historical Studies Distro Area Historical Studies Foundational Discipline U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

RELIGION 264-0 American Religious History from 1865 to the Great Depression (1 Unit) Topics include urban religion, African American churches, Christians and foreign policy, immigrant religion, the spiritual crisis of the 1920s, and Pentecostalism. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

Historical Studies Distro Area Historical Studies Foundational Discipline Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>)

RELIGION 265-0 American Religious History from World War II to the Present (1 Unit) Religion and the making of contemporary America, including Cold War religion, the Black Gods of the Great Migration, the rise of the Christian Right, and modern American Catholicism and Judaism. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Historical Studies Foundational Discipline Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>)*

RELIGION 270-0 Introduction to Theology (1 Unit) Theology as an academic discipline with a long history of asking fundamental questions about religious experience, texts, practices, and ideas in dialogue with thinkers past and present. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 271-0 Theology of Love (1 Unit) The concept of love from theological, historical, philosophical, and biblical perspectives. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 272-0 Luther and the West (1 Unit) Examination of Luther's work in the context of his life and times. Introduces basic dimensions of Western thought, showing how theology relates to broader cultural, political, social, and aesthetic issues. GERMAN 272-0 and RELIGION 272-0 are taught together; may not receive credit for both courses. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>)*

RELIGION 275-0 Mysticism and Spirituality (1 Unit) Examines mysticism (mystical experience, relationship, prayer, or consciousness) and spirituality (spiritual presence and practice) across religious traditions and outside traditions. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 295-0 Ahimsa: Nonviolence in South Asia and Beyond (1 Unit) Theory and practice of nonviolence in human action, taking into account ethics as well as efficacy. Emphasis on both spiritual and practical approaches to nonviolence and its usefulness in effecting spiritual development and social change. *Advanced Expression Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area Global Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

RELIGION 301-0 Hindu Epics: Mahābhārata (1 Unit) Immersion in the ancient Sanskrit epic in translation and modern retellings, focusing on classical Hindu myth and theology as well as issues of justice, war, gender, and violence. *Advanced Expression Ethics Values Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

RELIGION 302-0 Hindu Epics: Rāmāyaṅa (1 Unit) Immersion in the ancient Sanskrit epic in translation and modern retellings, focusing on classical Hindu myth and theology as well as issues of justice, violence, gender, and love. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 305-1 Introductory Readings in Sanskrit I (1 Unit) This course is the first of a two quarter sequence that provides instruction in the Sanskrit language for beginners. No prior knowledge is required. It begins a comprehensive introduction to the Sanskrit language, while engaging students from the beginning in the practice of translation.

RELIGION 305-2 Introductory Readings in Sanskrit II (1 Unit)

This course is the second of a two quarter sequence that provides instruction in the Sanskrit language for beginners. Students continue a comprehensive introduction to the Sanskrit language through study of its forms and through translation. Prerequisite: RELIGION 305-1.

RELIGION 308-0 Indian Philosophy (1 Unit) This course offers an introduction to ancient Indian philosophical traditions. We will look first at the distinctive features of philosophy in South Asia, including its particular aims and presuppositions. Thereafter we will look in some detail at two major Hindu traditions from the classical period: Sāṅkhya-Yoga and Advaita Vedānta. We also briefly explore the Hindu traditions of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. From there, we will turn to look at classical Buddhist and Jain philosophy. Our major topics will include metaphysics, consciousness, ego, meditation and the release from human suffering. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 309-0 Topics in Hinduism (1 Unit) Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic. *Advanced Expression Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 312-0 Buddhism and Gender (1 Unit) Women, men, and gendered symbolism in Buddhism from the time of the Buddha to the present. Draws on canonical texts, narrative literature, autobiography and biography, and ethnography. *Advanced Expression Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area Global Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

RELIGION 313-0 Tibetan Religion and Culture (1 Unit) Propagation of religions in Tibet in their larger historical, cultural, and political contexts. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 314-0 Buddhism in the Contemporary World (1 Unit) An exploration of where, why, and how Buddhist practices, ideas, and iconography are spreading and being reinterpreted in the modern world. *Advanced Expression Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

RELIGION 315-0 Buddhist Auto/biography (1 Unit) An exploration of Buddhist narratives of the self, including Sanskrit and Tibetan-language biographies and autobiographies in English translation, in conversation with literary theory. *Ethics Values Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

RELIGION 316-0 Religion and the Body in China (1 Unit) Explores the place of the body in Chinese religion, from the ancient period to the present day. Touches on dying and the afterlife, food and drink, health and medicine, gender and family, and other themes. *Advanced Expression Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 318-0 Topics in East Asian Religions (1 Unit) Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 319-0 Topics in Buddhism (1 Unit) Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

RELIGION 329-0 Topics in the Bible (1 Unit) Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 330-0 Varieties of Ancient Judaism (1 Unit) Introduction to the Judaisms that flourished from the fifth century BCE to the third century CE. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 333-0 Judaism in the Modern World (1 Unit) Radical changes that emancipation and modernity have brought to the religious expression of Judaism. May be repeated for credit. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 339-0 Topics in Judaism (1 Unit) Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 345-0 Idea of Sainthood in Christianity (1 Unit) Historical and contemporary conceptions of sanctity, especially in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 346-0 Church Architecture (1 Unit) Survey of historical and recent churches: spatial dynamics, centering focus, aesthetic impact, and symbolic resonance. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 349-0 Topics in Christianity (1 Unit) Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 350-0 The Qur'an (1 Unit) Islam's sacred scripture, Muslim understandings of revelation and prophecy, and debates about the Qur'an in the contemporary world. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 351-0 Islamic Law (1 Unit) Evolution of Islamic Law from the Prophet Muhammad to the contemporary world, focusing on the impact of colonialism. *Advanced Expression Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area Global Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity Historical Studies Foundational Discipline*

RELIGION 354-0 Sufism (1 Unit) The historical development of Islamic mystical traditions, with special attention to notions of mystical experience, sainthood, and devotion to the Prophet Muhammad. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 359-0 Topics in Islam (1 Unit) Selected topics in Islamic history and thought. May be repeated for credit with different topic. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 359-SA Topics in Islam (1 Unit) Selected topics in Islamic history and thought. May be repeated for credit with different topic. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 360-0 Black Religions (1 Unit) Exploration of the historical diversity of African American religious experiences and identities. *Advanced Expression Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area Global Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity Historical Studies Distro Area Historical Studies Foundational Discipline*

RELIGION 363-0 Topics in Women and Religion in America (1 Unit) Topics, figures, events, and dynamics in the history of American women and religion. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>)*

RELIGION 369-0 Topics in American Religion (1 Unit) Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 371-0 Religion, TV, and Film (1 Unit) Content varies. Explores expressions and representations of religion, spirituality, moral questions, transcendence, meaning of life, etc. in TV and film. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

RELIGION 373-0 Religion and Bioethics (1 Unit) Analysis of contemporary dilemmas in medicine and the life sciences; responses to these dilemmas from religious perspectives. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 374-0 Contemporary Religious Thought (1 Unit) Content varies (e.g., convergence between religious paths, science and religion, politics and religion). May be repeated for credit with change of topic. *Advanced Expression Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

RELIGION 375-0 Foundations of Christian Thought (1 Unit) Christian interpretations of salvation, Christ, and God, from Augustine to Julian of Norwich. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 376-0 Christianity and the Making of Modernity (1 Unit) Role of Christian thought in shaping the turbulent history of the West from the 16th to the late-18th centuries. Christianity's engagement with local and global events, from reformation to revolution, reason to romanticism. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 377-0 Christian Thought in Global Perspective (1 Unit) Globalization of Christian thought in the 19th-21st centuries, considering religious differences, colonialism, war, and democracy. Approaches to theology in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 378-0 Death: Myth and Meaning (1 Unit) Ideas, beliefs, and practices pertaining to death from a variety of ancient and modern cultures. Immortality, afterlife, care for the dying, suicide, funerary rituals, transhumanism. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 379-0 Topics in Comparative Religion (1 Unit) Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 381-0 Global Catholicism in the Contemporary World (1 Unit) Historical and contemporary global Catholicism. Topics include the church and political modernity; local saints; controversies over worship styles; Catholics and political revolutions; the Vatican; the pontificate of John Paul II. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>)*

RELIGION 382-0 Religion, Law, & Politics: Politics of Religious Diversity (1 Unit) This course teaches students to think critically, comparatively, and globally about the intersections of religion, law, and politics. It considers how religious, legal, and political traditions intersect and interact in modern states and societies. The course is organized around a set of legal cases and supporting materials in the Teaching Law and Religion Case Study Archive. RELIGION 382-0 taught with POLI_SCI 382-0; may not receive credit for both. *Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area Social and Behavioral Science Foundational Discipl U.S. Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

RELIGION 385-0 Topics in United States Catholicism (1 Unit) Historical and contemporary subjects in the study of Catholic culture in the United States. May be taken multiple times with different content. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>)*

RELIGION 386-0 Topics in Latin America Catholicism (1 Unit) Historical and contemporary subjects in the study of Catholic culture in Latin America. May be taken multiple times with different content. *Ethics Values Distro Area Historical Studies Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See*

Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>)

RELIGION 395-0 Theories of Religion (1 Unit) Ways of critically analyzing religious experience and its meaning. Phenomenology of religion, history of religions, comparative religions. For Religious Studies majors/minors and for others by permission. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

RELIGION 396-1 Senior Seminar (1 Unit) For honors students writing the senior thesis.

RELIGION 396-2 Senior Seminar (1 Unit) For honors students writing the senior thesis.

RELIGION 399-0 Independent Study (1 Unit) Reading and conferences on special subjects for advanced students. Consent of instructor required.