

# RELIGION (REL)

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## **REL-1100 Comparing Scriptures (4 semester hours)**

What makes a religious book "sacred" and how do different cultures use written texts to construct belief and practice? This course will compare the Christian Bible, the Qur'an, and at least one other major religious book, such as Confucius' Analects, the Sikh Guru Granth Sahib, or the Hindu Bhagavad Gita. Emphasis is placed on understanding diverse genres of text and analyzing the ways religious communities interpret their scriptures. We will see how sacred scriptures shape traditions, as well as how traditions define and reshape scriptures.

## **REL-1400 Spirituality Today (4 semester hours)**

What changes are taking place in the religious lives of 21st-century individuals and communities? Focusing primarily on the contemporary United States, this course examines forms of spiritual expression and practice that have emerged amidst a decline in traditional religious institutions. Students will question whether the "spiritual" and "religious" are in fact distinct categories and investigate the extent of current trends toward "secularization." Emphasis is placed on interpreting spiritual experience and group identity in its social context. How do religious and nonreligious people tell their stories, and how does our society shape the ideas and expectations of both?

## **REL-1810-9 Selected Topics in Religion (Variable semester hours)**

This course will address a specific area of study in Religion not already covered by other course offerings. Prerequisites vary by topic.

## **REL-2060 Exploring Religion (4 semester hours)**

What is "religion" and how should it be studied? This course introduces classification, interpretation, and explanation in the study of religion. Students will compare examples from a wide range of cultural traditions in order to understand the diversity of the world's religions and to apply methods drawn from the social sciences and contemporary critical theories. Emphasis is placed both on the content of religious belief and practice and the social and political construction of religious identities. Students develop tools for understanding how elements of religion operate in culture.

## **REL-2760 Religion in America (4 semester hours)**

How has religion shaped the history of the United States and been reshaped by the course of that history? This course focuses on key moments in the history of American religions in order to understand the social and political dynamics that created the religiously diverse public sphere we live in today. Topics may include the internal diversity of American Christian churches; the impact of religious ideas on movements for social and economic reform, especially the abolition of slavery; the evolution of ideas and practices of religious liberty, including the role of the Supreme Court; political engagement of religious communities on both the Left and the Right; moments of conflict between religion and science; and encounters between Christians and non-Christians in North American history.

## **REL-2810-9 Selected Topics in Religion (Variable semester hours)**

This course will address a specific area of study in Religion not already covered by other course offerings. Prerequisites vary by topic.

## **REL-3400 Vocation, Purpose and Community: Calling All Faiths! (4 semester hours)**

How does a religious worldview shape the direction a human life takes? How are decisions about what career to pursue or how to engage in the community influenced by the ancient sources of the world's religious traditions? How do individuals negotiate religious identities while living in our contemporary multi-faith society? This course explores the ways different religious traditions have thought about calling, or vocation, and how values shape the decisions that make a life. We will focus particularly on narratives of vocation told by individuals who connected their motivation to work toward some good in the world with the principles and stories that make up their religious worldview. Students will also have opportunities to reflect on their own goals and sense of purpose in light of the multiple faith-journeys under consideration.

## **REL-3800 Religion and Politics in World History (4 semester hours)**

How have religions exercised political power to shape the history of human societies? This course takes a comparative approach to a major historical problem, examining case studies from the history of Christianity alongside cases from the histories of Islam, Confucianism, Hinduism, or another of the world's religions. Students will study major religious documents as well as primary sources for understanding political and legal contexts. Emphasis is placed on understanding how religious ideas shaped historical conflicts and how these conflicts reshaped the history of the religions themselves.

**Prerequisite(s):** One prior college-level history or religion course.

## **REL-3810-9 Selected Topics in Religion (Variable semester hours)**

This course will address a specific area of study in Religion not already covered by other course offerings. Prerequisites vary by topic.

## **REL-4810-9 Selected Topics in Religion (Variable semester hours)**

This course will address a specific area of study in Religion not already covered by other course offerings. Prerequisites vary by topic.