

## Religion (REL)

The Religion program is offered through the Division of Humanities. The academic study of religion stresses the historical, ethical, spiritual, and cultural bases of a society's system of beliefs.

### Religion Major

This program is designed for individuals who are interested in the study of religion for personal, academic, or professional goals. It consists of an 18-hour core and two options: Biblical and Comparative Studies. Students will choose to pursue one of these, taking at least 4 electives from that option, at least one course from the other option, and two more courses from either option.

Basic Program for a baccalaureate degree

- I. Core Requirements..... 52-56 hours
- II. Religion Requirements for Major ..... 39 hours

#### Religion Core (18 hours)

REL 213	Old Testament Introduction.....	3
REL 214	New Testament Introduction.....	3
REL 230	World's Great Living Religions.....	3
REL 251	Philosophy of Religion.....	3
REL 301	History of the Christian Church	
	<i>or</i>	
REL 401	Religion in America.....	3
REL 450	Religion Senior Seminar.....	3

#### Religion Electives (21 hours)

Choose Biblical or Comparative Studies, taking at least four electives from the area you choose, at least one from the other area, and two additional REL courses for a total of 7 electives:

#### Option I: Biblical Studies

REL 232	Christian Ethics.....	3
REL 309	The Torah.....	3
REL 312	Life and Teachings of Jesus.....	3
REL 313	Judges-Samuel.....	3
REL 315	Paul's Life and Letters.....	3
REL 333*	Abrahamic Religions in Spain.....	3
REL 410	Apocalyptic Literature.....	3
REL 420	Culture and Customs of the Biblical World.....	3
REL 390	Appropriate special topic courses as determined by Religion faculty.....	3

#### Option II: Comparative Studies

REL 233	Comparative Ethics.....	3
REL 331	Religions of Asia.....	3
REL 332	Islam.....	3

REL 333*	Abrahamic Religions in Spain .....	3
REL 356	Greco-Roman Mythology .....	3
REL 357	World Mythology .....	3
REL 390	Appropriate special topic courses as determined by Religion faculty .....	3
REL 430	Spirituality in the World Religions .....	3

*\*Note: May count in either option but not both.*

III. General electives as needed to meet minimum requirements of 128 semester hours.

### **Religion Minor**

Requirements..... 24 hours  
REL 213, REL 214, REL 230, two of the following courses: REL 232, REL 251,  
REL 301, REL 401; any three 300-400 level REL electives.

### **Religion Course Descriptions**

**REL 213 Old Testament Introduction**.....(3)  
The major segments of the Old Testament (Torah, Prophets, Writings) viewed against their historical backgrounds. *Prerequisite: ENG 111 or ENG 114.*

**REL 214 New Testament Introduction**.....(3)  
Surveys the New Testament literature in its historical context. Principal topics of consideration include the synoptic gospels, Acts, the Pauline correspondence, and Johannine literature. *Prerequisite: ENG 111 or ENG 114.*

**REL 230 World's Great Living Religions**.....(3)  
A historical and literary introduction to the beliefs of the world's major religions. Religions considered include Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. *Prerequisites: ENG 111 or ENG 114 and ENG 112 or ENG 115.*

**REL 232 Christian Ethics**.....(3)  
A theoretical and practical introduction to the realm of Christian decision making. The relationship between the Biblical literature and various theories of Christian ethics is examined so that a theoretical foundation may be developed for the examination of concrete ethical situations (e.g. human sexuality, ecology, hunger). *Prerequisites: ENG 111 or ENG 114 and ENG 112 or ENG 115.*

**REL 233 Comparative Ethics**.....(3)  
A theoretical and practical introduction to ethical decision making. The course surveys the ethical systems of the world's great living religions and major Western ethical philosophies. The course also explores the application of critical thinking to ethics. Theories and critical tools are applied to concrete ethical situations (such as environmental issues, sexuality, bioethics, or religious violence). *Prerequisite: ENG 112 or ENG 115.*

**REL 251 Philosophy of Religion .....(3)**

This course will survey certain basic questions related to the use of reason as it both asks and investigates fundamental issues concerning religion and spirituality. The questions discussed will include: Is it possible to discern the existence of God outside of God's own direct revelation? What can be known about God when it comes to God's own nature? What is the origin and nature of "inspiration" as it applies to religious texts, doctrines, and ethical application? Is a direct, "mystical" knowledge of God possible and/or describable? While traditional answers found in the classical western tradition will be studied, time and space will also be given to the emergence of a distinctive eastern tradition, particularly where it is based on religions other than Christianity. *Prerequisites: ENG 111 or ENG 114 and ENG 112 or ENG 115.*

**REL 301 History of the Christian Church .....(3)**

The historical and theological movements in the Church from its earliest foundations to the Counter Reformation. Emphasis will be placed on the interaction of the Church with other prevailing European social, cultural, and political institutions. *Prerequisites: REL 214 and HIS 221 and ENG 112 or ENG 115. Cross-listed as HIS 301.*

**REL 309 The Torah .....(3)**

A literary, historical study of the first five books of the Old Testament. *Prerequisites: ENG 111 or ENG 114 and ENG 112 or ENG 115, and REL 213 or REL 214.*

**REL 312 Life and Teachings of Jesus .....(3)**

A study of Jesus based on the New Testament and extra-Biblical material. *Prerequisites: REL 214 and ENG 112 or ENG 115.*

**REL 313 Judges-Samuel .....(3)**

A study of the two systems of government used in Biblical Israel (tribal confederacy and monarchy) and the difficult transition between the two. The course will also focus on the relationships among the characters in Samuel and how they are complicated by violence, power, and concern over public opinion. *Prerequisites: ENG 112 or ENG 115 and REL 213 or REL 214.*

**REL 315 Paul's Life and Letters .....(3)**

A study of Paul's life and work, based on a close study of his letters and other historical sources. Paul's letters will be viewed against their historical backgrounds, and his major theological themes will be explored. *Prerequisites: REL 214 and ENG 112 or ENG 115.*

**REL 331 Religions of Asia.....(3)**

A survey of the religious traditions of South and East Asia in their historical and cultural settings, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism. *Prerequisites: ENG 112 or ENG 115 and REL 230 or consent of the Instructor.*

**REL 332 Islam .....(3)**

A survey of the history, beliefs, and practices of Islam. Special attention will be given to Islam's role in geopolitics. *Prerequisites: ENG 112 or ENG 115 and REL 230 or consent of the Instructor.*

**REL 333 Abrahamic Religions in Spain .....(3)**

From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries in Spain, there were Christian kingdoms and Muslim kingdoms, and Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived in both of them. A culture common to the three groups (known as *convivencia*) was developed even though during this period they were often at war with each other (*reconquista*). How did they manage to live together for so long? Why were they unable to sustain their common culture? Is there anything we can learn from their success and failure? *Prerequisites: For Spanish credit, SPN 111 and 112. For REL credit, REL 213 or 214.*

**REL 356 Greco-Roman Mythology.....(3)**

An introduction to Greco-Roman mythology, including material from Homer, Hesiod, Ovid, Sophocles, Virgil, and other ancient sources. We will look at what makes these works *mythological*: how they communicate about the nature of the divine, about human, and about the relationship between them as well as how they pass on the information needed in order to survive in that culture. *Prerequisites: REL 213 or REL 214 and ENG 112 or ENG 115. Cross-listed as ENG 356.*

**REL 357 World Mythology.....(3)**

A study of the religious and cultural functions of myth, including material from among Egyptian, Buddhist, Hindu, Chinese, Japanese, Jewish, Christian, Norse, African, Amerindian, Celtic, and modern mythologies (students will have some input as to which cultures we deal with) as well as the work of scholars of myth and religion. We will look at how these mythologies show the worldviews of the cultures they represent and note ways in which their concerns and responses are both similar and different. *Prerequisites: REL 213 or REL 214 and ENG 112 or ENG 115. Cross-listed as ENG 357.*

**REL 390 Special Topics .....(3)**

Study of a topic of special interest. Possible topics include (but are not limited to) Christian Thought, Old Testament Prophets, Women in the Bible, Old Testament Writings, Options in contemporary Christianity, Ethics in the World Religions, Women in the World Religions, Religion in Film. *Prerequisites: ENG 112 or ENG 115 and REL 213 or REL 214 or consent of the Instructor.*

**REL 401 Religion in America.....(3)**

The study of the phenomenon of religion in America and its historical and cultural development from the early colonial period to the present. Emphasis will be placed on the dominance of religious institutions within colonial American society; historical and current definitions of religious freedom; and the contribution of various religious groups to the overall development of the American character. *Prerequisites: HIS 225, 226, ENG 112 or ENG 115, and at least one course in Religion or approval by course Instructor. Cross-listed as HIS 401.*

**REL 410 Apocalyptic Literature .....(3)**

A study of the development of Biblical apocalyptic thought, the literature that grew out of that movement, and the various ways in which it has been interpreted. *Prerequisites: REL 213 or REL 214 and ENG 112 or ENG 115.*

**REL 420 Culture and Customs of the Biblical World .....(3)**

An introduction to the cultural world of the Old and New Testaments with emphasis on the social, political, economic, legal, and family traditions of societies included in or

in some way affecting the Biblical story. Patterns of daily life will be studied through the use of related texts written during the periods covered as well as through a consideration of archaeological excavations of particular ancient and Biblical sites. *Prerequisite: REL 213 or REL 214.*

**REL 430 Spirituality in the World Religions .....(3)**

A survey of the processes of human transformation taught and practiced by the world's religions. Spirituality involves the praxis of a religion, so the course focuses on how adherents translate their religious perspective into daily life. The course explores spirituality in three ways: traditional patterns of spirituality found throughout the world's religions, as well as non-traditional patterns that have arisen in the modern world; paradigmatic people that model transformation; and selected practices, such as prayer, yoga, and T'ai Chi. *Prerequisites: ENG 112 or ENG 115 and REL 230 or consent of the Instructor.*

**REL 450 Religion Senior Seminar.....(3)**

Capstone course for those majoring in Religion; minors may take it as well. In this course students will write a paper pulling together the Biblical, historical, and ethical material they have taken in the program. Faculty and students will decide on a topic or topics to discuss in class meetings. Open only to REL majors and minors in their senior year.

**REL 499 Directed Individual Study .....(3)**

Research or reading project, devised by the student and under the supervision of an appropriate instructor. Open only to senior religion majors or minors who are completing their course work. May be repeated for credit. *Prerequisites: Permission of the Instructor, Division Chair, and Dean of the College.*