
Religious Studies

In the College of Arts and Letters

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Faculty

Emeritus: Anderson, Downing, Friedman, Gefter, Holler, Jordan, Khalil, Sparks

Chair: Levitt

Professors: Frost, Levitt, Moore

Associate Professors: Hansen, Mohammed, Timalsina

Lecturers: Kelly, Stewart, Swayd, Whitaker

Offered by the Department

Major in religious studies with the B.A. degree in liberal arts and sciences.

Minor in religious studies.

The Major

The academic study of religion is central to the creation of a community of world citizens. Our program is designed for students who live in a pluralistic society and who wish to investigate the role religions play in human life and society. Because religion has shaped the human story of almost every culture, it is difficult to understand human behavior or to interpret world events without grasping how religion has helped to determine them. As United States Supreme Court Justices Clark and Goldberg wrote in their decision allowing the study of religion in public schools, "one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization." Part of the liberal arts, religious studies employs critical analysis and methods from a variety of disciplines to understand religious traditions as well as to question the dogmas, stereotypes, and prejudices that may surround those traditions. In addition to investigating religious symbols, texts, practices, and belief systems, the study of religion examines the relationship of religion to ethics, contemporary social issues, politics, history, psychology, science, literature, and the arts.

Career Outlook

Religious studies prepares students for any career that requires critical thinking, analysis, oral and written communication skills, and the ability to reflect on questions of meaning and value. The study of religion is excellent pre-professional preparation for fields such as law, teaching, medicine, counseling, social work, conflict resolution, international business, foreign service, journalism, various ministries and other careers in non-profit organizations and public service. While some of our majors go on to do graduate work in religion or related academic fields, other graduates find themselves well prepared for careers requiring imagination, problem solving, communication, self-understanding, and awareness of human diversity.

Double Majors and The Minor

Because religious studies is interdisciplinary and multicultural it is an excellent degree to complement many other majors. Double majors are easily accommodated within a well-designed four-year course of study, since the religious studies major has only a 36-unit requirement. Graduates from the program have had double majors with biology, communication, history, psychology, and other fields where the study of religion enhances or focuses the second major. The 15-unit minor is a less ambitious way to combine your major interests with the academic study of religion. Anyone who is interested in human beliefs, behavior, and values would benefit from a minor in religious studies.

Advising

All College of Arts and Letters majors are urged to consult with their department adviser as soon as possible; they are required to meet with their department adviser within the first two semesters after declaration or change of major.

Impacted Program

The religious studies major is an impacted program. To be admitted to the religious studies major, students must meet the following criteria:

- Complete preparation for the major;
- Complete a minimum of 60 transferable semester units;
- Have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0.

To complete the major, students must fulfill the degree requirements for the major described in the catalog in effect at the time they are accepted into the premajor at SDSU (assuming continuous enrollment).

Major Academic Plans (MAPs)

Visit <http://www.sdsu.edu/mymap> for the recommended courses needed to fulfill your major requirements. The MAPs Web site was created to help students navigate the course requirements for their majors and to identify which General Education course will also fulfill a major preparation course requirement.

Religious Studies Major

**With the B.A. Degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences
(Major Code: 15101) (SIMS Code 116101)**

All candidates for a degree in liberal arts and sciences must complete the graduation requirements listed in the section of this catalog on "Graduation Requirements." No more than 48 units in religious studies courses can apply to the degree.

A minor is not required with this major.

Preparation for the Major. Religious Studies 101. (3 units)

Language Requirement. Competency (successfully completing the third college semester or fifth college quarter) is required in one foreign language to fulfill the graduation requirement. Refer to section of catalog on "Graduation Requirements."

Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement. Students must have fulfilled the Writing Placement Assessment with a score of 8 or above before taking Religious Studies 396W and earn a grade of C (2.0) or better. See "Graduation Requirements" section for a complete listing of requirements.

International Experience. The department encourages international experience for its majors. It will facilitate the transfer of religious studies credits for appropriate study abroad, student exchange, or other overseas programs. International internships may also receive religious studies credit, if approved in advance by a department adviser.

Major. A minimum of 33 upper division units in religious studies to include Religious Studies 396W, 400, and at least three units from Texts, six units from Traditions, six units from Theories and Methods (in addition to Religious Studies 396W and 400), six units from Critical Issues in Religion, and six additional units selected from any of the four upper division areas.

Area 1, Texts: Religious Studies 301, 305, 310, 315, 373, Asian Studies 458. (3 units)

Area 2, Traditions: Religious Studies 320, 325, 328, 330, 335, 338, 339, 340, 342, 345, 351 (or Africana Studies 351), 507 (or History 507), American Indian Studies 470, History 538*, Philosophy 351, 353, 412*, 565*. (6 units)

Area 3, Theories and Methods: Religious Studies 350, 353, 395, 396W, 400, Anthropology 424*, 524*, Philosophy 535*, Sociology 338* (6 units)

REL S

Religious Studies

Area 4, Critical Issues in Religion: Religious Studies 341, 358, 363, 364, 370, 376, 379, 380, 390A, 390B, Political Science 562*, Women's Studies 515*. (6 units)

Courses with variable content (496, 580, 581, 582, 583, 596) may be used in the four areas of study when deemed relevant by the department adviser.

* Additional prerequisites required.

Religious Studies Minor

(SIMS Code: 116101)

The minor in religious studies consists of a minimum of 15 units taken in the Department of Religious Studies to include at least three lower division units and 12 upper division units.

International Experience. The department encourages international experience for students in the religious studies minor. It will facilitate the transfer of religious studies credits for appropriate study abroad, student exchange, or other overseas programs. International internships may also receive religious studies credit, if approved in advance by a department adviser.

Courses in the minor may not be counted toward the major, but may be used to satisfy preparation for the major and general education requirements, if applicable. A minimum of six upper division units must be completed in residence at San Diego State University.

Courses (REL S)

Refer to *Courses and Curricula and University Policies* sections of this catalog for explanation of the course numbering system, unit or credit hour, prerequisites, and related information.

LOWER DIVISION COURSES

REL S 100. Exploring the Bible (3) [GE]

Basic content and themes of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament using methods of contemporary biblical studies. Attention to ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman cultural settings as well as the impact of the Bible on contemporary culture.

REL S 101. World Religions (3) [GE]

Major world and selected tribal traditions from primal times to present. Broad historical development and philosophical overview including founders, teachings, beliefs, practices, and interactions with culture, such as art, literature, politics.

REL S 103. American Religious Diversity (3) [GE]

Religious identities and traditions of diverse peoples living in the US. Major world religions in context of contemporary multicultural America. Religions of indigenous peoples and religious movements which have arisen in US.

REL S 296. Experimental Topics (1-4)

Selected topics. May be repeated with new content. See *Class Schedule* for specific content. Limit of nine units of any combination of 296, 496, 596 courses applicable to a bachelor's degree.

Area 1: Texts

UPPER DIVISION COURSES

(Intended for Undergraduates)

REL S 301. Hebrew Bible (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Literature, history, major themes of Bible; methods and concerns of contemporary biblical studies. Situates folkloric, political, heroic, poetic, and religious meanings of texts among their original audiences.

REL S 305. The New Testament (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Structure, composition, meaning of New Testament; methods for interpreting Biblical texts. Focus on letters of Paul, post-Pauline writings, Gospel accounts of Jesus's life.

REL S 310. The Qur'an (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Major themes of Qur'an including cosmology, eschatology, good and evil, gender, God and monotheism, People of the Book (Jews and Christians), and role of religion in society. Attention to historical period in which the Qur'an was compiled.

REL S 315. Sacred Texts of South Asia (3)

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Primary texts from sacred literatures of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Methods of interpretation, issues of translation, and placement of sacred texts in their social and historical contexts.

REL S 373. Women and the Bible (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Narrative, legal, and poetic material about women in Bible. How women are depicted by authors of Bible, lives of women in ancient world, how women and women's studies are transforming biblical studies.

Area 2: Traditions

UPPER DIVISION COURSES (Intended for Undergraduates)

REL S 320. Judaism (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Jewish history, culture, theory, and practice. Biblical roots of modern Jewish beliefs, basic movements within modern Judaism; Jewish calendar and Jewish life cycle as seen in Hebrew Bible, short stories, and films.

REL S 325. Christianity (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Historical development of Christian traditions and major issues confronting Christianity today. Beliefs and practices important to Christian self-understanding, debates over authority of Bible, accommodations to modern science, and relationship with non-Christian religions.

REL S 328. Islam (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Islamic religion and culture in Asia, Africa, and Near East. History, doctrines, practices, literatures, social and intellectual movements, role of Mohammed, and gender relations within Islam as understood in global context.

REL S 330. Abrahamic Faiths: Shared Stories (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Theological, textual, and political relations among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Shared religious practices and stories such as creation, sacrifice, theories of evil and salvation, prophecy and Messianic expectations. Contemporary issues regarding gender, fundamentalism, and rise of nationalism.

REL S 335. Comparative Mysticism (3)

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Meaning, origin, and development of mysticism. Purgation, illumination, annihilation, separation, covenant, and union of soul with the Divine as found in world scriptures, writings of prominent mystics, and mystical movements such as Kabbalists, Sufis, and yogic traditions.

REL S 338. Buddhism (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Life and teachings of Buddha, foundational concepts of Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism. Buddhist psychology and soteriology, meditative techniques, ethical issues; contemporary Buddhism, particularly in America.

REL S 339. Religions of India (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

Religious pluralism of Indian sub-continent. Influences of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, and Sikhism upon each other and social structures of gender, race, and caste. Karma and rebirth, liberation theories and practices, the interaction of mainstream religions with minority and indigenous tribal rituals and beliefs.

REL S 340. Daoism and Chinese Religions (3)

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Daoist tradition in context of Chinese popular religions. Early Daoist communities, texts, practices covered. Themes include body and cosmos, magical medicine, immortality practice, ritual, and relationship between classical and popular religious traditions.

REL S 342. Hinduism (3)

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Historical development of Hinduism from its Harappan and Vedic origins to contemporary times. Hindu myths and rituals, gods and goddesses, art, architecture and sacred geographies; Hindu philosophies and ascetic traditions, yogas and tantras; modern Hinduism, diaspora Hinduism and Indian nationalism.

REL S 345. Religions of East Asia (3) [GE]

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies. Recommended: Completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities for nonmajors.

Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism in broad historical and cultural context. Focus on Chan (Zen) school of Buddhism, Confucius, neo-Confucianism of Ju Xi, and Taoist masters Lao Ze and Chuang Ze.

**REL S 351. Black Religions and Spirituality (3)
(Same course as Africana Studies 351)**

Prerequisite: Religious Studies 101 or Africana Studies 101B.

Major Black religious and spiritual responses and expressions in Africa and Black diaspora, including creation of institutions to support and advance religious and spiritual matters.

Area 3: Theories and Methods

UPPER DIVISION COURSES

(Intended for Undergraduates)

REL S 350. Varieties of Religious Experience (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities for nonmajors.

Nature and scope of religious experience; transformations of consciousness and self through altered modes of human awareness and mind-body relationships. Yogic and ascetic experience, Shamanic trance and spirit possession, ecstatic experience and mysticism. Techniques of compassion.

REL S 353. Religion and Psychology (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities for nonmajors.

Religious dimensions of psyche using insights from academic and transpersonal psychology. Construction of religious identities through spiritual practice and transformation. May be repeated with new content. See *Class Schedule* for specific content. Maximum credit six units of which three units may be applicable to General Education.

REL S 395. New Religions (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II. C., Humanities for nonmajors.

America's alternative religions, popularly called "cults" and why they attract spiritual seekers. New religions and transplanted Asian and African religions. Theoretical structures of belief systems and concrete specifics on different groups.

REL S 396W. Writing on Religion (3)

Prerequisite: Satisfies Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement for students who have completed 60 units; completed Writing Placement Assessment with a score of 8 or higher (or earned a C or higher in RWS 280, 281, or LING 281 if score on WPA was 7 or lower); and completed General Education requirements in Composition and Critical Thinking. **Proof of completion of prerequisites required:** Test scores or verification of exemption; copy of transcript.

Theoretical approaches in study of religion and religious phenomena. Writing in discipline of religious studies through analysis of key thinkers in history of religions.

REL S 400. Senior Seminar (3)

Prerequisite: Religious studies 396W; others with consent of department chair.

Senior capstone seminar in major. Discussion and research on topics in religious studies. Formal research paper and presentation.

Area 4: Critical Issues in Religion

UPPER DIVISION COURSES

(Intended for Undergraduates)

REL S 341. Religion in Japanese Culture (3)

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Historical analysis of major components of classical, medieval, early modern and modern religious systems of Japan through texts, images, rituals, and institutions.

REL S 358. Death, Dying, and Afterlife (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities for nonmajors.

Diverse ways religions deal with process of dying and rituals involved in transition of life to death. Grieving, end-of-life decisions, views on afterlife.

REL S 363. Religion and the Sciences (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities for nonmajors.

Views of science and religion as separate, conflicting, complementary, and overlapping. Galileo and the Church, the Scopes Trial, and twentieth century physics provide historical examples for study of assumptions about science and religion.

REL S 364. Religion and Film (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities for nonmajors.

Representations of religion in modern cinema and analysis of how religious themes and imagery in film reflect societal values, beliefs, and morals.

REL S

REL S 370. Goddess Studies (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities for nonmajors.

The divine feminine in mainstream and marginalized religions. Goddess/nature worship and its transformation across time and culture to include ancient religion, mythology, indigenous traditions, and world religions.

REL S 376. Nature, Spirituality, Ecology (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities for nonmajors.

Cross-cultural religious views of nature. Attention to sacred texts, writings of naturalists, deep ecologists, and ecofeminists on place of nature in spirituality and role of spirituality in ecology.

REL S 379. Religious Violence and Nonviolence (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities for nonmajors.

Role of religion in terrorism, hate groups, scapegoating, domestic and ecological violence, versus role of religion in peacemaking and movements for social justice. Nonviolent philosophies of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and pacifism in Jain, Buddhist, and Christian traditions.

REL S 380. Atheism, Humanism, and Secularism (3) [GE]

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities for nonmajors.

Atheism, humanism, and secularism in western culture to include the creation of institutions that support and advance these movements. Rise of unbelief in reaction to contemporary religious fundamentalism and attacks on science and reason.

REL S 390A-390B. Religion and American Institutions (3-3) [AI]

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Major religious movements, events, and issues affecting development of US government and institutions. Religious Studies 390A: From time of Spanish contact to 1900. Religious Studies 390B: Religion's impact in twentieth century. This year-long course satisfies the graduation requirement in American Institutions.

Elective Courses

UPPER DIVISION COURSES (Intended for Undergraduates)

REL S 496. Experimental Topics (1-4)

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Selected topics. May be repeated with new content. See *Class Schedule* for specific content. Limit of nine units of any combination of 296, 496, 596 courses applicable to a bachelor's degree.

REL S 499. Special Study (1-3)

Prerequisite: Twelve upper division units in religious studies. Individual study. Maximum credit six units.

UPPER DIVISION COURSES (Also Acceptable for Advanced Degrees)

REL S 507. The Reformation (3) (Same course as History 507)

Continental Europe, 1500-1648. Split of Christendom; political and intellectual dissent; social fabric of family life; relationship between gender, class, and power; cultural stratification of European society.

REL S 580. Major Figure (3)

Prerequisite: Three units of religious studies.

Life, works, and significance of one major figure in a religious tradition. May be repeated with new content. See *Class Schedule* for specific content. Maximum credit six units.

REL S 581. Major Theme (3)

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and upper division or graduate standing.

Advanced systematic study of a theme or motif selected from major religious traditions. May be repeated with new content. See *Class Schedule* for specific content. Maximum credit six units.

REL S 582. Major Text (1-3)

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and upper division or graduate standing.

Advanced systematic study of a selected scripture or classic text(s) selected from one of the major religious traditions. May be repeated with new content. See *Class Schedule* for specific content. Maximum credit six units.

REL S 583. Major Tradition (3)

Prerequisites: Three units of religious studies and upper division or graduate standing.

Advanced systematic study of the doctrines, practices, and development of a major religious tradition. May be repeated with new content. See *Class Schedule* for specific content. Maximum credit six units.

REL S 596. Advanced Topics in Religious Studies (1-3)

Prerequisite: Consent of instructor.

Advanced selected topics in religious studies. May be repeated with new content. See *Class Schedule* for specific content. Limit of nine units of any combination of 296, 496, 596 courses applicable to a bachelor's degree. Credit for 596 and 696 applicable to a master's degree with approval of the graduate adviser.

GRADUATE COURSES Refer to the *Graduate Bulletin*.
