RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Courses offered by the Department of Religious Studies are listed under the subject code RELIGST on the Stanford Bulletin’s ExploreCourses website.

Mission of the Department

The Department of Religious Studies brings a variety of disciplinary perspectives to bear on the phenomenon of religion for the purpose of understanding and interpreting the history, literature, thought, social structures, and practices of the religious traditions of the world. Comprised of a dozen regular faculty with particular strengths in the study of American Religions, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, it enrolls about twenty graduate students (mostly doctoral) and roughly as many undergraduate majors, minors, and joint majors.

Religious Studies works closely with several related programs at Stanford: the Department of Philosophy, with which it offers a combined undergraduate major; the Ho Center for Buddhist Studies; the Taube Center for Jewish Studies; the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies; the McCoy Center for Ethics in Society; the Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies; and the Center for South Asia.

While some undergraduates continue their study of religion in a graduate or professional program, most pursue meaningful and successful careers in business, government, the nonprofit sector, and medicine. In this respect, Religious Studies is an ideal interdisciplinary major in the liberal arts. Graduates of the department’s doctoral program generally pursue academic careers and are routinely placed in the best universities and colleges in the country and overseas.

Undergraduate Programs in Religious Studies

The department offers a Bachelor of Arts major, minor, and honors program in Religious Studies, and a combined major with the Philosophy Department in Philosophy and Religious Studies. Undergraduate courses in Religious Studies are designed to engage students existentially and to assist them in thinking about intellectual, ethical, and sociopolitical issues in the world’s religions. The department’s faculty seek to provide tools for understanding the complex encounters among religious ideas, practices, and communities, and the past and present cultures that have shaped and been shaped by religion. Courses therefore expose students to: leading concepts in the field of religious studies such as god(e), sacrifice, ritual, scripture, prophecy, and priesthood; approaches developed over the past century, including the anthropological, historical, psychological, philosophical, and phenomenological, that open religion to closer inspection and analysis; and major questions, themes, developments, features, and figures in the world’s religious traditions. The department encourages and supports the acquisition of languages needed for engagement with sacred texts and interpretive traditions as well as study abroad at Stanford’s overseas centers where religions can be observed and experienced in their contemporary contexts.

Major in Philosophy and Religious Studies

The departments of Philosophy and Religious Studies jointly nominate for the B.A. in Philosophy and Religious Studies those students who have completed a major in the two disciplines. See a description of this combined major under the "Bachelor’s" tab of the "Religious Studies" section of this bulletin (p. 1), in the "Philosophy" section of this bulletin (http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/schoolofhumanitiesandsciences/philosophy/#bachelorstext), or in the guidelines available from the Director of Undergraduate Studies of either department.

Learning Outcomes (Undergraduate)

The department expects undergraduate majors in the program to be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes. These learning outcomes are used in evaluating students and the department’s undergraduate program. Students are expected to:

1. demonstrate familiarity with a variety of methods used analytically in the field of Religious Studies.
2. demonstrate proficiency in writing papers in the style of academic writing in the field of Religious Studies.
3. demonstrate the ability to engage peer scholars’ research in constructive and critical ways, and communicate feedback effectively.
4. demonstrate individual expertise through oral presentation of one’s advanced research to peers.
5. complete an advanced research project consistent with standards for papers in the field of Religious Studies.

Graduate Programs in Religious Studies

The graduate mission of the department is to provide students with an interdisciplinary setting of study within which to focus on their respective areas of specialization. The department offers an internal M.A. and a Ph.D. degree in Religious Studies. The master’s program is restricted to current Stanford students.

Learning Outcomes (Graduate)

Master’s Program: The purpose of the Master’s program is to develop knowledge and skills in Religious Studies. For some students this will serve as preparation for applications to Ph.D. programs. For others it will serve as a further capstone experience for their undergraduate program of study. The goals are achieved through the completion of courses, in the primary field as well as related areas, and experience with independent work and specialization. For some it will involve an optional Master’s thesis.

Doctoral Program: The Ph.D. is conferred upon candidates who have demonstrated substantial scholarship and the ability to conduct independent research and analysis in Religious Studies. Through completion of advanced coursework and rigorous skills training, the doctoral program prepares students to make original contributions to the field of Religious Studies and to interpret and present the results of such research through teaching and publication.

Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies

Suggested Preparation for the Major

Students contemplating the major, the minor, or the Philosophy and Religious Studies major are invited to consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies. The Undergraduate Student Services Associate in Building 70 can also field questions regarding the declaration procedure within the department.

Degree Requirements

The curriculum for majors is designed to lead students through a course of study which begins with laying foundations, then moves on to building expertise, and finally culminates in a capstone experience. The foundational courses aim to introduce students to the academic study of religion through the exploration of a particular religious tradition, issue, or methodology. Students build expertise in more advanced courses offering in-depth investigation of specific topics, such as mysticism, gender, or violence/nonviolence; of particular texts, historical periods, or figures of a given religious tradition; or of distinct approaches to the study of religion, such as the philosophy of religion, ritual studies, or ethnography. Students consolidate the knowledge and skills acquired in the major through an integrative capstone experience consisting of either
a senior essay or an honors thesis, completed in conjunction with three supporting capstone courses.

Students who have declared the major prior to Autumn 2019-20 may choose to follow the Degree Requirements listed in either the current Bulletin or the 2018-19 Bulletin (http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/archive/2018-19/schoolofhumanitiesandsciences/religiousstudies).  

**Required Courses**

A Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies requires 60 units of course work, distributed as follows:

1. Three courses (3-5 units each) from courses numbered RELIGST 1-99, only one of which may be an Introductory Seminar.
2. Six courses (4-5 units each) from courses numbered RELIGST 100-289, of which at least two must be at the 200-level.
3. Three integrative capstone courses as follows:

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELIGST 290</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELIGST 297</td>
<td>5-10</td>
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<td>RELIGST 298</td>
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   - RELIGST 290: Majors’ Seminar: Theories of Religion (Winter Quarter; junior year; fulfills WIM requirement)
   - RELIGST 297: Senior Essay/Honors Thesis Research (Senior Essay: 5 units, Winter Quarter, graded ‘N’ until submission; Honors Thesis: 5-10 units, spread over Autumn and Winter Quarters, graded ‘N’ until submission)
   - RELIGST 298: Senior Colloquium (Spring Quarter only; grading option S/NC)

4. The remainder of the coursework needed to bring the total Religious Studies unit count to 60 to be chosen according to interest, in consultation with the student's advisor, and with an eye to the senior capstone requirement.

**Additional Regulations**

1. With the approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, up to two language courses relating to the student's program of study (such as Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Chinese, Persian, or Japanese), but not counted towards the University language requirement, may be counted toward the major.
2. No more than ten units of the total 60 (excluding RELIGST 298) may be taken for the grade of ‘S/NC’ or ‘CR/NC.’
3. Students must ensure that their total complement of Religious Studies courses is not focused on a single religious tradition.
4. Variations to the required distribution may be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies on an individual basis.
5. All units must be in RELIGST courses unless an exception is made by the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

**Senior Essay**

A 25-30 page essay on a topic chosen by the student and approved by the advisor upon receipt of a student's proposal by the end of the third quarter prior to expected graduation. The character and content of the essay, which is meant to allow the student to call into play knowledge and skills learned in the course of the major, may take several forms. For example, a student may return to a subject studied earlier but now pursued in more depth or from a new perspective, research a recent or new topic of interest in the field, or offer a carefully framed critical assessment of what has been learned in the major based on review of influential sources, theories, and methods of studying religion. The senior essay is read and graded by the student's advisor and one other member of the Religious Studies faculty.

**Honors Thesis**

A 40-80 page research paper on a topic chosen by the student and approved by the advisor upon receipt of a proposal in the fourth quarter prior to expected graduation. The paper, supported by mastery of primary and secondary scholarship, advances a well-reasoned, supportable thesis. Writers of honors theses must have a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 in Religious Studies courses, and at least 3.2 overall, and are expected to have already demonstrated success in writing research papers. The honors thesis is read and graded by the student's advisor and one other member of the Religious Studies faculty. Theses earning a grade of ‘B+’ or above receive honors.

**Philosophy and Religious Studies Combined Major**

The undergraduate major in Philosophy and Religious Studies consists of 60 units of course work with approximately one third each in the philosophy core; the religious studies core; and additional coursework and a capstone requirement that completes the course of study.

No courses in either the philosophy or religious studies core may be taken satisfactory/no credit or credit/no credit.

In general, transfer units cannot be used to satisfy the core requirements. Transfer units and substitutions must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the relevant department.

Students who have declared the combined major prior to Autumn 2019-20 may choose to follow the Degree Requirements listed in either the current Bulletin or the 2018-19 Bulletin (http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/archive/2018-19/schoolofhumanitiesandsciences/religiousstudies).

**Core Requirements**

1. Philosophy (PHIL) courses:
   a. Required course: PHIL 80 Mind, Matter, and Meaning (5 units).
   b. 16 units, including at least one Philosophy course from each of the following areas:
      i. Logic and philosophy of science: Students take either one from this list or an intermediate philosophy of science course numbered PHIL 160-169.

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<td>PHIL 151</td>
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<td>PHIL 154</td>
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   ii. Ethics and value theory: This requirement may be satisfied by PHIL 2 or any intermediate course devoted to central topics in moral and political philosophy numbered between PHIL 170-172 or 174-176.
   iii. Epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of language. This requirement may be satisfied by any intermediate course numbered between PHIL 180-189.
   iv. History of philosophy: Select one of

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<tr>
<td>PHIL 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHIL 101</td>
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Minor in Religious Studies

A Religious Studies minor is a complement to many majors throughout the University. Students contemplating the minor are invited to consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies. The Undergraduate Student Services Associate in Building 70 can also field questions regarding the declaration procedure within the department.

Degree Requirements

A minor in Religious Studies requires a minimum of 28 units. Students are encouraged to focus their program of study either on a religious tradition or on a theme that cuts across traditions. In consultation with their minor advisor, students may design the minor in Religious Studies to complement their major. The minor must be declared no later than the last day of the quarter, two quarters before degree conferral.

Students who have declared the minor prior to Autumn 2019-20 may choose to follow the Degree Requirements listed in either the current Bulletin or in the 2018-19 Bulletin (http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/archive/2018-19/schoolofhumanitiesandsciences/religionsstudies).

Required Courses for the Minor

1. Two courses (3-5 units each) from courses numbered RELIGST 1-99, only one of which may be an Introductory Seminar.

2. Two courses (4-5 units each) from courses numbered RELIGST 100-289, of which at least one must be at the 200-level.

3. The remainder of the coursework needed to bring the total Religious Studies unit count to 28 is to be chosen according to interest, in consultation with the student’s minor advisor.

Additional Regulations

1. With the approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, one language course relating to the student’s program of study (such as Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Chinese, Persian, or Japanese), but not counted towards the University language requirement, may be counted towards the minor.

2. No courses may be taken for the grade of ‘S/NC’ or ‘CR/NC’.

3. One course in directed reading (RELIGST 199 Individual Work) may be counted towards the minor.

4. Students must ensure that their total complement of Religious Studies courses is not focused on a single religious tradition.

5. Variations to the required distribution may be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies on an individual basis.

6. All units must be in Religious Studies courses unless an exception is made by the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Master of Arts in Religious Studies

University requirements for the M.A. are described in the “Graduate Degrees” section of this bulletin.

The department offers an M.A. program that serves two groups of Stanford students:

1. undergraduates looking to pursue a coterminous master’s degree in Religious Studies

2. Ph.D. candidates in Religious Studies who wish to also obtain a master’s degree while completing their doctoral requirements.

Degree Requirements

The following requirements are in addition to the University’s basic requirements (http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/graduatedegrees).

The student completes at least 45 units of graduate work at Stanford beyond the B.A. degree, including RELIGST 290 Majors’ Seminar: Theories
of Religion. Students who have taken this course as part of the B.A. need not take it again.

Residence may be completed by three quarters of full-time work or the equivalent.

The student’s plan of courses is subject to approval by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). No field of specialization is expected, but students may focus work in particular areas. Advanced and graduate courses in other departments may be taken in consultation with the advisor. No thesis is required; a thesis, if elected, may count for as many as 9 units.

Each student demonstrates reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.

The department allows cotermals to count courses as early as their first quarter of sophomore year toward their master’s degree. Course transfers require department approval and cannot be processed after the bachelor’s degree has been conferred. All University coterm policies apply.

**Application and Admissions**

At this time, eligibility for admission to the master’s program is restricted to current Stanford undergraduates and graduate students.

**Current Stanford Undergraduates**

Religious Studies accepts coterm applications in Winter Quarter (due end of the second week of classes) for admission starting Spring Quarter. Only complete applications submitted by the deadline are reviewed. A complete application includes the following:

- Two confidential letters of recommendation, one of which must be from a Stanford faculty member familiar with the applicant’s academic work
- Statement of purpose, not to exceed two pages
- Undergraduate transcript(s)
- Preliminary program proposal

**Current Stanford Graduate Students**

- The completed application forms for current Stanford graduate students
- Two confidential letters of recommendation, one of which must be from a Stanford faculty member familiar with the applicant’s academic work
- Undergraduate and graduate transcripts
- Statement of purpose, not to exceed two pages
- Preliminary program proposal

**University Coterminal Requirements**

Coterminal master's degree candidates are expected to complete all master's degree requirements as described in this bulletin. University requirements for the coterminal master's degree are described in the "Coterminal Master’s Program (http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/cotermdegrees)" section. University requirements for the master’s degree are described in the "Graduate Degrees (http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/graduatedegrees/#masterstext)" section of this bulletin.

After accepting admission to this coterminal master's degree program, students may request transfer of courses from the undergraduate to the graduate career to satisfy requirements for the master's degree. Transfer of courses to the graduate career requires review and approval of both the undergraduate and graduate programs on a case by case basis.

In this master’s program, courses taken during or after the first quarter of the sophomore year are eligible for consideration for transfer to the graduate career; the timing of the first graduate quarter is not a factor. No courses taken prior to the first quarter of the sophomore year may be used to meet master's degree requirements.

Course transfers are not possible after the bachelor’s degree has been conferred.

The University requires that the graduate adviser be assigned in the student’s first graduate quarter even though the undergraduate career may still be open. The University also requires that the Master’s Degree Program Proposal be completed by the student and approved by the department by the end of the student’s first graduate quarter.

**Financial Aid**

The Religious Studies department does not provide financial assistance to coterminal or master’s students. For information on student loans and other sources of support, consult the Financial Aid Office (http://financialaid.stanford.edu).

**Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies**

University requirements for the Ph.D. are described in the "Graduate Degrees (http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/graduatedegrees)" section of this bulletin. The Ph.D. in Religious Studies signifies special knowledge of an interdisciplinary field of study and potential mastery of an area of specialization within it. The faculty of the department have established certain fields of study in which the department’s strengths and those of other Stanford departments cohere. They are: Religion in East Asia; Religion in Europe and North America; Religion in Late Antiquity; and Religion in South Asia. Each of these areas of specialization follows a shared structure of study.

**Degree Requirements**

The following requirements are in addition to the University's basic requirements.

1. **Residence**
   - Each student completes three years (nine quarters) of full-time study, or the equivalent, in graduate work beyond the B.A. degree, and a minimum of 135 units of graduate course work (excluding the dissertation).

2. **Required Courses**
   - The 135 units of graduate course work must include the following:
     a. RELIGST 304A Theories and Methods 4
     b. RELIGST 304B Theories and Methods 4
     c. RELIGST 391 Teaching Religious Studies 3
   - Two courses in an area outside the student’s field.
   - The remainder of the course work is individually designed, in consultation with the student's advisor.

3. **Languages**
   - Each student demonstrates a reading knowledge of two foreign languages, including French or German. One of these language requirements should be fulfilled by the time of advancing to candidacy at the end of the second year. Competence in the second language must be demonstrated at the time of the qualifying examination. Each student also demonstrates reading knowledge of other ancient or modern languages necessary for the field of study, area of specialization, and dissertation topic.
4. **Candidacy**
   At the end of each academic year, the department’s faculty recommend second-year students for candidacy on the basis of all relevant information, and especially on the student’s candidacy dossier. This includes the approved declaration of an area of specialization, certification for one foreign language, and two substantial papers written for courses during the previous two years. Students are required to take RELIGST 304A Theories and Methods, RELIGST 304B Theories and Methods, and RELIGST 391 Teaching Religious Studies prior to candidacy.

5. **Paper-in-Field**
   During the third year, under the supervision of their advisors, students prepare a paper suitable for submission to an academic journal in their field. The paper is read and approved by at least two faculty members in the department. Students are encouraged to register for RELIGST 392 Paper in the Field while working on the paper.

6. **Teaching Internship**
   At least one teaching internship under the supervision of faculty members is undertaken at a time negotiated with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Students receive academic credit for the required internship, which is considered part of their academic training and not as employment.

7. **Qualifying Examination**
   To qualify for writing a dissertation, the student must pass a comprehensive examination in the chosen field and the area of specialization, typically during the first quarter of their fourth year. The student must complete the second language requirement before taking the qualifying examination. The qualifying examination is normally conducted by a committee of at least three Academic Council members of the department, one of whom is the advisor. One faculty member may be from outside the department with permission of the DGS.

8. **Dissertation**
   The dissertation contributes to the humanistic study of religion and is written under the direction of the candidate’s dissertation advisor and at least two other members of the Academic Council. The University Oral examination is a defense of a completed draft of the dissertation.
   a. **Dissertation Committee**—The dissertation committee is formed after successful completion of the qualifying examinations. It is normally composed of the dissertation advisor and at least two Academic Council members of the Religious Studies department. One non-departmental faculty member may serve as a reader when approved by the DGS.
   b. **Dissertation Proposal**—Candidates submit their dissertation proposal in consultation with their advisors. It is read and approved by the three members of the dissertation committee.

9. **University Oral Examination**
   This examination, required by the University of Ph.D. students, is a defense of a completed draft of the dissertation. The composition of the examination committee is set by University regulation: five or more faculty, normally all of whom are members of the Academic Council, one of whom must be outside the department to serve as chair of the committee. Normally, the examining committee includes all members of the dissertation committee. A majority of those voting must be Academic Council faculty from within the department.

**Ph.D. Minor in Religious Studies**
Candidates for the Ph.D. in other departments may select a Ph.D. minor in Religious Studies.

**Degree Requirements**
The minor requires at least 24 units in Religious Studies at the 200 level or above. These 24 units should include at least one of the following courses:

### Optional Courses for the Minor
Other courses should be chosen in consultation with the DGS and the student’s primary graduate advisor.

**Graduate Advising Expectations**
The Department of Religious Studies is committed to providing academic advising in support of graduate student scholarly and professional development. When most effective, this advising relationship entails collaborative and sustained engagement by both the adviser and the advisee. As a best practice, advising expectations should be periodically discussed and reviewed to ensure mutual understanding. Both the adviser and the advisee are expected to maintain professionalism and integrity.

Faculty advisers guide students in key areas such as selecting courses, designing and conducting research, developing of teaching pedagogy, navigating policies and degree requirements, and exploring academic opportunities and professional pathways.

Graduate students are active contributors to the advising relationship, proactively seeking academic and professional guidance and taking responsibility for informing themselves of policies and degree requirements for their graduate program.

For a statement of University policy on graduate advising, see the "Graduate Advising (http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/graduatedegrees/#advisingandcredentialstext)" section of this bulletin.

**Faculty**

*Emeriti: (Professors)* Carl W. Bielefeldt, Arnold Eisen, Bernard Faure, Hester G. Gelber, Robert C. Gregg, Van Harvey

*Emerita: (Senior Lecturer)* Linda Hess

*Chair: Paul Harrison*

*Director of Graduate Studies: Charlotte Fonrobert*

*Director of Undergraduate Studies: Michael Penn*

*Professors: Paul Harrison, John Kieschnick (on leave), Michael Penn, Thomas Sheehan, Lee Yearley*

*Associate Professors: Anna Bigelow, Charlotte Fonrobert, Kathryn Gin Lum (on leave), Brent Sockness*

*Assistant Professors: Elaine Fisher, James Gentry, Ariel Mayse, Michaela Mross*

*Senior Lecturer: Barbara Pitkin*

*Lecturers: Kirsti Copeland, Sangyop Lee, Jason Schwartz, Daniel Tuzzeo, Sarah Willburn*

*Courtesy Professors: Fiona Griffiths, Mark Lewis*

*Courtesy Associate Professor: Ari Y. Kelman*

**Overseas Studies Courses in Religious Studies**
The Bing Overseas Studies Program (http://bosp.stanford.edu) manages Stanford study abroad programs for Stanford undergraduates. Students
Religious Studies

should consult their department or program’s student services office for applicability of Overseas Studies courses to a major or minor program.

The Bing Overseas Studies course search site (https://undergrad.stanford.edu/programs/bosp/explore/search-courses) displays courses, locations, and quarters relevant to specific majors.

For course descriptions and additional offerings, see the listings in the Stanford Bulletin’s ExploreCourses (http://explorecourses.stanford.edu) or Bing Overseas Studies (http://bosp.stanford.edu).

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>OSPKYOTO 13</td>
<td>Contemporary Religion in Japan’s Ancient Capital: Sustaining and Recasting Tradition</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSPKYOTO 58</td>
<td>A Journey into the Buddhist Visual Arts of Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSPMADRD 74</td>
<td>Islam in Spain and Europe: 1300 Years of Contact</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSPMADRD 75</td>
<td>Sefarad: The Jewish Community in Spain</td>
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