

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Chair: Paul Powers

Administrative Coordinator: Claire Kodachi

As part of the Lewis & Clark programs in the humanities, the academic study of religion provides an opportunity for critical reflection on a key aspect of human culture, tradition, and experience. The extraordinary role religion has played throughout history as well as in contemporary societies provides the backdrop against which this critical inquiry takes place.

The Department of Religious Studies emphasizes the careful use of critical method along with clear and extensive writing as key tools of scholarly endeavor. As in any humanities program, students are encouraged to develop analytical skills that are of value in many graduate schools and professional fields. Religious Studies majors are encouraged to pursue the study of languages relevant to their interests in the department, such as Greek, Arabic, or Japanese.

Resources for Nonmajors

All of the department's offerings are open to nonmajors. Preference is given to majors for enrollment in RELS 201 History and Theory and 400-level seminars.

Courses at the 100 and 200 levels are designed as introductory or survey courses, and none presumes a background in the field or any personal experience on the part of participants. These courses are designed to introduce not only the subject areas but also the methods of academic inquiry in the field of religion. The 200-level courses are organized in four areas (see details of the major program) reflecting the diversity of the world's religious traditions.

The majority of students taking religious studies courses are nonmajors pursuing elective interests. Many are students whose major academic interest is in another field such as art, music, history, politics, philosophy, or sociology, yet who find that some religious studies courses supplement and expand their understanding of their own fields.

Departmental Seminars

To give students opportunities to explore the departmental curriculum at an advanced level, seminars are offered each year in various areas of faculty expertise. Specific content of the seminars changes from year to year. Refer to the course list for those offered during recent academic years.

The Major Program

The field of religious studies is extremely diverse and thus the religious studies major is designed to give students a broad background in the field. The curriculum is organized in a series of levels:

100 level: Introduction to the academic study of religion.

200 level: Survey courses in four areas: Judeo-Christian origins, history of religions in the West, Islamic traditions, and religions of Asia and India.

300 level: Exploration of specific topics introduced in 100- and 200-level courses.

400 level: Upper-division seminars in biblical studies, Western religious history, Asian religions, and Islamic traditions.

Major Requirements

A minimum of 40 semester credits (10 courses), distributed as follows:

- Twelve semester credits of departmental core courses at the 200 level, from at least three of the following four areas: Judeo-Christian origins, the history of religions in the West, Islamic traditions, and the religions of Asia and India.
- Four additional semester credits of departmental core courses at the 100 or 200 level.
- Sixteen semester credits of departmental courses at the 300 or 400 level (except RELS 490 Senior Thesis), at least one of which is a 450-level seminar. CLAS 314 Topography and Monuments of Athens and CLAS 325 Negotiating Identity in the Ancient World may also be used as electives.
- One methods course: RELS 201 History and Theory.
- The senior thesis: RELS 490 Senior Thesis.

Relevant courses from other departments or overseas programs may, on a case-by-case basis, be substituted for one of the above requirements. Approval for such substitutions is granted by the department chair; students are responsible for submitting the appropriate forms to the registrar.

Minor Requirements

A minimum of 20 semester credits (five courses), distributed as follows:

- Twelve semester credits from 100- and 200-level departmental core courses, eight of which must be at the 200 level. RELS 201 History and Theory is recommended.
- Eight semester credits of religious studies electives at the 300 or 400 level.

Independent study coursework does not count toward the minor.

Honors

Students will be considered for departmental honors based on the following criteria:

- 3.500 GPA or higher both in the department and overall.
- Completion of a thesis paper deemed worthy of honors.

The faculty member teaching the thesis course will recommend exceptional papers from students meeting the above GPA requirements for review by the entire department. The department will reach a consensus decision on awarding honors based on GPA, the thesis paper, and the overall departmental performance of the student.

Faculty

Sylvia Frankel. Adjunct instructor in religious studies. Jewish studies.

Robert A. Kugler. Paul S. Wright Professor of Christian Studies. Judeo-Christian origins, Dead Sea Scrolls, early Jewish literature. PhD 1994 University of Notre Dame. MDiv 1984 Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. BA 1979 Lewis & Clark College.

Susanna Morrill. Associate professor of religion. Religion in America. PhD 2002, MA 1993 University of Chicago. BA 1989 Bryn Mawr College.

Paul R. Powers. Associate professor of religious studies, chair of the Department of Religious Studies. Islamic studies. PhD 2001, MA 1992 University of Chicago Divinity School. BA 1990 Carleton College.

Jessica D. Starling. Assistant professor of religious studies. East Asian religions, Buddhism. PhD 2012, MA 2006 University of Virginia. BA 2000 Guilford College.

Courses

RELS 102 Food and Religion in America

Faculty: Morrill

Content: Examination of the relationship between food, American religions, and American popular culture; how food is incorporated into formal religious rituals such as the Eucharist or fasting; how cooking, communal eating, and food practices are part of the more informal religious culture of religious communities. Also, consideration of whether eating and food have taken on religious meaning within American culture as a whole, using the Northwest as a focus.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 103 Asceticism: Self-Discipline in Comparative Perspective

Faculty: Starling

Content: Comparative approach to asceticism and examination of acts of self-discipline in Eastern (Jain, Hindu, Buddhist), Western (Stoic, Christian mystic), and modern secular (eco-activism, fasting diets, and extreme exercise regimes) cultural contexts. Consideration of the question: What good is self-discipline? Depriving oneself of sensual pleasures can be seen as an antidote to materialism and a means of liberating the soul from its fleshly shackles, but is denying our inborn desires a form of self-violence?

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 104 Religion and Violence

Faculty: Powers

Content: Investigation of the oft-made claim that "religion causes much of the world's violence," exploring the best arguments for and against this proposition framed by maximalist claims that religion is inherently prone to inspiring violence, and minimalist claims that religion is either peaceful or subordinated to other (e.g., economic or political) concerns. Consideration of various definitions of "religion" to see how it might motivate a range of behaviors both peaceful and violent. Attention given to pervasive religious phenomena (such as sacrifice, conversion, holy/just war, and apocalypticism) that might inspire violence, as well as theological and ethical frameworks that may counteract violence. In a multi-stage, guided research project, students will pursue case studies of specific instances of violence apparently related to religion, thereby testing and employing the analytical lenses developed in the course.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall and spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 201 History and Theory

Faculty: Kugler, Morrill, Powers, Starling

Content: History of the field. Psychological, literary, anthropological, sociological, and historical approaches to the study of religion. Readings by major theorists. Should normally be taken no later than the junior year.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Annually, fall semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 224 Jewish Origins

Faculty: Kugler

Content: Exploration of early Judaism, from circa 450 B.C.E. to 200 C.E. Focus on the development of the religion in the multicultural, pluralistic context of the Greco-Roman world. Study of the archaeological and written evidence for Jewish origins (i.e., the archaeology and literature of pre-Jewish Israelite religion and of early Jewish communities in Egypt and Palestine, the Hebrew Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the related excavations at Qumran, documentary and literary texts of Jews in Egypt, and related archaeological evidence). Analysis of key themes in the study of early Judaism (i.e., gender, colonialism, multiculturalism and identity, early Judaism's relationship to earliest Christianity).

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Annually, fall semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 225 Christian Origins

Faculty: Kugler

Content: Exploration of early Christianity, from the turn of the eras to 400 C.E. Focus on the development of the religion in the multicultural, pluralistic context of the Greco-Roman world. Study of the archaeological and written evidence for Christian origins (i.e., the archaeology of Jerusalem, the Galilee, and the Dead Sea Scrolls community; the New Testament, the writings of "orthodox" and "heretical" early Christian thinkers, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and other relevant Judean texts). Analysis of key themes in early Christian studies (i.e., gender, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, early Christianity's relationship to early Judaism, Christianity and empire).

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 241 Religion and Culture of Hindu India

Faculty: Starling

Content: Introduction to Hinduism in its Indian cultural context, with focus on theories of sacrifice, fertility, and discipline. Studies in classic Hindu sacred texts, with careful readings of myths of order and productivity. Analysis of reconstructed postcolonial Hinduism. Emphasis on studying religion from a critical and comparative perspective.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Every third year, fall semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 242 Religions and Cultures of East Asia

Faculty: Starling

Content: Chinese and Japanese worldviews. Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Shintoism: their origins, development, interactions. Mutual influence of folk and elite traditions, expansion of Buddhism and its adaptation to different sociopolitical environments, effects of modernization on traditional religious institutions.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 243 Buddhism: Theory, Culture, and Practice

Faculty: Starling

Content: Introduction to Buddhist thought and practice. Indian origins, contemporary Theravada Buddhism, emergence of the Mahayana, Buddhism and society in Tibet, Zen and Pure Land traditions of East Asia, and the Western reception of Buddhism. Problems in the study of Buddhism.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Annually, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 244 Practicum

Faculty: Religious Studies Faculty

Content: Internship or practicum to be arranged with instructor.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing and consent required.

Usually offered: Annually, fall and spring semester.

Semester credits: 1-4.

RELS 246 Religions of Japan

Faculty: Starling

Content: Religious traditions of Japan from the eighth century to the present examined through the thematic lenses of hagiography, asceticism, syncretism, gender, family, and cultural identity. Critical attention will be paid to the concepts of "religion" and "secular" during examination of continuities and changes from the ancient to the contemporary period. Students will conduct a semester-long research project on a topic related to Japanese religion.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 251 Medieval Christianity

Faculty: Westervelt

Content: Formation and development of Western Christianity from late antiquity through the late medieval period (circa 250 to 1450 C.E.). The relation of popular piety to institutional and high cultural expressions of Christianity. Issues such as Christianity and the late Roman empire, the papacy, monasticism, religious art and architecture, and heresy and hierarchy discussed using theological texts, social histories, popular religious literature.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 253 Prophets, Seekers, and Heretics: U.S. Religious History from 1492 to 1865

Faculty: Morrill

Content: Introduction to major themes and movements in American religious history from colonial origins to the Civil War. Consideration of Native American religious traditions, colonial settlement, slavery and slave religion, revivalism, religion and the revolution, growth of Christian denominationalism, origins of Mormonism, using a comparative approach in the effort to understand diverse movements. Central themes: revival and religious renewal, appropriation of Old Testament language by various groups (Puritans, African Americans, Mormons), democratization of religion.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 254 Religion in Modern America, 1865 to Present

Faculty: Morrill

Content: Impact of religion in modern America from the end of the Civil War to the present day, emphasizing the interaction between America's many religions and emerging American modernity. The fate of "traditional" religion in modern America; "alternate" American religious traditions; urbanization, industrialism, and religion; science, technology, and secularism; evangelicalism, modernism, and fundamentalism; religious bigotry; pluralism; new religions and neofundamentalism.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 262 Judaism Encounters Modernity

Faculty: Frankel

Content: Exploration of how the emancipation period in Europe transformed the Jewish world, beginning in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Includes some of the early personalities, such as Moses Mendelssohn, Samson Raphael Hirsch, Leopold Zunz; the emergence of new denominations in Europe in the nineteenth century, such as the Reform and neo-Orthodox movements; and denominations developed in the United States in the twentieth century.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 273 Islamic Origins

Faculty: Powers

Content: Major religious and sociohistorical developments in the Islamic world from circa 600 to 1300 C.E. Focus on the Qur'an, Muhammad, early Islamic expansions and dynasties, and interactions with non-Muslims. Examination of the formation of orthodox beliefs and practices (e.g., theology, ritual, law), contestation over religious ideals and political power, and the emergence of Shi'ite and Sufi Islam.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Annually, fall semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 274 Islam in the Modern World

Faculty: Powers

Content: The religious, social, and political dynamics of the Islamic world, circa 1300 C.E. to present, especially the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries. Earlier developments (e.g., the Qur'an, Muhammad, Muslim dynasties) considered in relation to the modern context. European colonialism, postcolonial change, reform and "fundamentalist" movements, Sufism, Muslim views of "modernity," and changing understandings of politics, gender, and relations with non-Muslims.

Prerequisites: None.

Usually offered: Annually, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 299 Independent Study

Faculty: Kugler, Morrill, Powers, Starling

Content: Individual study directed by selected faculty. Determined in consultation with faculty, study focuses on bibliographic development and analysis of the literature on a topic otherwise not covered in depth in the curriculum. Major paper required. May be repeated for credit.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing and consent required.

Usually offered: Annually, fall and spring semester.

Semester credits: 1-4.

RELS 330 Jesus: History, Myth, and Mystery

Faculty: Kugler

Content: Survey of the history of cultural appropriations of Jesus through the centuries, ending with the contemporary search for the historical Jesus and its pop culture congeners. A case study in the appropriation of a classical religious figure. Gospel records; evidence of other ancient sources, including noncanonical gospels; early Christian writings; Western cultural appropriations of Jesus; and Jesus in modern film and literature.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 333 Apocalyptic Imagination

Faculty: Kugler

Content: For centuries Jews and Christians have sought to make sense of human existence through apocalyptic speculation, stimulating along the way a parallel secular apocalyptic imagination. Exploration of the interplay between religious and secular apocalyptic and the sociohistorical and cultural realities it responded to and engendered. A focus on early Jewish and Christian apocalyptic from the 6th century B.C.E. to the 3rd century C.E. and selected instances of apocalyptic through the 21st century C.E. Resources include archaeological evidence, literature, art, music, and film.

Prerequisites: One 200-level Religious Studies course.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 334 Lost Books of Early Judaism

Faculty: Kugler

Content: Jews of the Persian and Greco-Roman periods produced many literary works written in Greek. Later, rabbinic Judaism prohibited these books not only because of the language in which they were written, but also because they were so heavily influenced by the literature, thought, and social world of Classical Greek and Hellenistic culture. Analyzing these Jewish texts and corollary Classical literature provides a window on lost forms of Judaism at its infancy and on the relationship between religious traditions and cultural contexts.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 340 Gender in American Religious History

Faculty: Morrill

Content: Gender as a component in religious experiences in America from the colonial era to the present. The relationship between gender and religious beliefs and practices. Religion as a means of oppression and liberation of women and men. Interactions between laywomen and male clergy. The intersection of religion, wellness, the body, and sports. Diverse movements and cultures including colonial society, African American culture, immigrant communities, and radical religious groups.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 341 Religions of the Northwest

Faculty: Morrill

Content: Exploration of the religious history of the Pacific Northwest, with a focus on Oregon and Washington. Examination of the religious traditions of regional Native American tribes, early Protestant missions, and the growth of Catholicism and Mormonism in the region, as well as recent immigrant religions (such as Vietnamese Buddhism), nondenominational Christian groups, and alternative forms of spirituality. Using theoretical models from religious studies to consider why the Northwest does not carry the imprint of a dominant religious tradition or traditions, as most other regions of the country do.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 342 Mormonism in the American Religious Context

Faculty: Morrill

Content: This course will use the origin and development of Mormonism in the U.S. as a case study to understand larger trends in American religious history, including the history and importance of folk and magical traditions in the U.S., prophetic/charismatic religious movements, the shifting relationship between church and state, public Protestantism in the U.S., secularization, and globalization.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 355 Sufism: Islamic Mysticism

Faculty: Powers

Content: The historical roots and branches of Sufi Islam, including the search for the "inner meaning" of the Qur'an, complex metaphysical formulations, ascetic assertions, meditation practices, devotional ruminations on love, and Sufi poetry and music. Discussion of the important role of Sufism in the spread of Islam. Muslim critiques of Sufism and Sufi responses.

Prerequisites: RELS 273.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall and spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 356 Buddhism and Gender

Faculty: Starling

Content: Examination of women and gender in Buddhist mythology, doctrine, practice, and institutions spanning the length of the Buddhist tradition (i.e., 500 BCE to the present), addressing examples from Indian, Southeast Asian, Tibetan, and Japanese Buddhist contexts. Tension between Buddhism's theoretical discourse on women and gender; actual roles and experiences of women in the Buddhist tradition. Topics include the founding myth of the Buddhist order of nuns and the writings of early nuns; Buddhist discourse on female impurity and the exclusion of women from sacred mountains; female tantric adepts and depictions of the feminine in Tibetan Buddhism; the movement to revive full ordination for nuns in Southeast Asia; the Buddhist feminist movement in contemporary Japan.

Prerequisites: Any 200-level RELS course.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 357 Family, Gender, and Religion: Ethnographic Approaches

Faculty: Starling

Content: Theories and ethnographic case studies of family, gender, and religion. Topics may include the function of religious symbols in relation to gender and family roles, religious meanings of food, religious interpretations of marriage and childrearing, and domestic religion as a bridge between the sacred and profane. Emphasis will be on anthropological approaches to religion, and students will employ ethnographic methods in their research projects. Case studies will address Christian feasting and fasting in contemporary and medieval contexts, female shamans in contemporary Korea, Confucianism and the construction of gender roles in East Asia, and Buddhist temple families in Japan.

Prerequisites: Prior course in RELS or SOAN.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 373 Reformations of the 16th Century

Faculty: Westervelt

Content: A historical perspective on the various religious movements, collectively known as the Protestant Reformation, that marked Europe's transition from the medieval to the early modern period (circa 1400 to 1600). Review of medieval religious patterns. The status of Catholic institutions and ideas in crises of the late medieval period, the theologies of Luther and Calvin, radical movements, the political background of the Reformation, and Catholic responses to Protestantism. Readings and discussions concentrate on recent social historiography of the Reformation. Popular appeal of Protestant religiosity, social implications of Calvinism, roles of women in the Reformation, family patterns and the Reformation, class structure and competing religious cultures, Catholicism and rural society.

Prerequisites: RELS 251.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall and spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 376 Religious Fundamentalism

Faculty: Powers

Content: The perceptions and realities of religious resurgence in a supposedly secularizing world. Focus on the historical, theological, social, and political aspects of Christian and Islamic fundamentalism. Themes include secularization theories and their critics; changing understandings of religion and modernity; connections among religion, politics, violence, sexuality/gender, and identity.

Prerequisites: RELS 254 or RELS 274.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall and spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 450 Seminar: Social and Religious World of Early Judaism and Christianity

Faculty: Kugler

Content: Recent research into the relationship between the social setting of early Judaism and Christianity and the texts both religions produced. Special attention to the sociohistorical aspects of selected regional expressions of Judaism and Christianity (e.g., Asia Minor, Palestine, Egypt). Readings from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Jewish pseudepigrapha, the New Testament, other early Christian literature, and media interpretations of Judaism and Christianity to the present. Emphasis on original student research. With instructor consent, may be taken twice for credit.

Prerequisites: RELS 224 or RELS 225.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall and spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 451 Seminar in American Religion

Faculty: Morrill

Content: Major trends in American religion from the Puritans to the feminist and liberation theologies of the 20th century. Intensive reading of works by major American figures and scholars. With instructor consent, may be taken twice for credit.

Prerequisites: One 200-level RELS course.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 452 Seminar in Asian Religions

Faculty: Starling

Content: Advanced seminar in Asian religions with an emphasis on East Asia. Topics may include Zen and/or Pure Land Buddhist doctrine and practice; religion and family in East Asia; female religious adepts and theories of women's salvation. Intensive readings in primary texts and student research projects. May be taken twice for credit with change of topic.

Prerequisites: RELS 242 or RELS 243.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall and spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 453 Seminar in Islamic Studies: Islamic Law

Faculty: Powers

Content: The religio-legal traditions of Islam, the efforts to develop a comprehensive set of behavior guides derived from the Qur'an, the exemplary behavior of the Prophet, and other sources. Topics include legal history; efforts at modernization and reform; the formation of the major schools of law; legal theory and methods for deriving rules from sacred texts; the rules of ritual, civil, and criminal law; political theory; adjudication and court procedure; Islamic law and the colonial encounter; legal expressions of gender roles; and historical case studies.

Prerequisites: RELS 273.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years, fall semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 455 Themes in History of Religions

Content: Study of a selected theme in the history of religions (e.g., interiority; construction of the self; notions of the sacred; scripture; development of tradition) from diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives.

Prerequisites: Completion of a religious studies course at the 200 level or higher.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing required.

Usually offered: Alternate Years.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 490 Senior Thesis

Faculty: Kugler, Morrill, Powers, Starling

Content: Advanced readings and major works in religion. In consultation with faculty, selection of a thesis topic and further reading in the discipline and research in the topic area. Substantial written document demonstrating mastery of theory and methodology in the study of religion and the ability to integrate these into the thesis topic.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Senior standing required.

Usually offered: Annually, spring semester.

Semester credits: 4.

RELS 499 Independent Study

Faculty: Kugler, Morrill, Powers, Starling

Content: Individual study directed by selected faculty. Determined in consultation with faculty, study focuses on primary research, methodological concerns, and bibliography on a topic of mutual interest to the student and faculty director. Major paper required. May be repeated for credit.

Prerequisites: None.

Restrictions: Sophomore standing and consent required.

Usually offered: Annually, fall and spring semester.

Semester credits: 1-4.