

Religion (REL)

Course information contained within the Bulletin is accurate at the time of publication in June 2025 but is subject to change. For the most up-to-date course information, please refer to the Course Catalog.

REL 5000. Special Topics. 1 to 3 Credit Hour.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 5001. Foundations in Philosophy of Religion. 3 Credit Hours.

Considers a selection of classical and modern European and American philosophers and the implications of their views for religious thought. Some of those whose writings are considered may include Hume, Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Kierkegaard, James, Whitehead, Rosenzweig, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Derrida, Irigaray, Habermas, and Foucault. Also may consider non-Western philosophies of religion, for example, those deriving from India or Japan.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5002. Foundations in Religion and the Social Sciences. 3 Credit Hours.

Introduces students to the discourse of Western social sciences on religion. Examines both modern and postmodern thinkers. Offers extensive readings in Durkheim, Marx and Weber. Then puts these modern theorists into conversation with postmodern critical theory as exemplified by Foucault and Bourdieu.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5003. Foundations in Textual and Historical Studies in Religion. 3 Credit Hours.

Teaches the issues, methods, and trends emerging in the turbulent world of historical studies. Explores the problems, ideological constraints, and new venues that occur when "religion" is introduced to historical studies. Deals with New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, postcolonial theory, various feminisms, the crisis of narrative history, and various approaches now in vogue for reading ancient texts, 1st through 6th century CE and dealing with Greco-Roman religions, Judaism, and Christianity.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5009. Foundations for the Critical Study of the Hebrew Bible. 3 Credit Hours.

This seminar provides an introduction to the development and application of various critical methods employed in Hebrew Bible scholarship (sometimes called Old Testament scholarship). It will focus on methodological developments from the mid-nineteenth century CE through the present. Knowledge of Hebrew is not required.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5101. Foundations in Hinduism. 3 Credit Hours.

Both a historical and thematic survey of Hinduism. Attempts to make clear the structures of Hinduism and to explain its internal coherence as well as its apparent inconsistencies. While recognizing that it is impossible to include everything in the study of a religion which covers a time span of 5,000 years and which has existed over a vast geographical area, this course aims at giving comprehensive coverage of the history, traditions, rituals and theologies of Hinduism.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5102. Foundations in Indian Buddhism. 3 Credit Hours.

Examines the biographical data (not Buddhology) and philosophical themes in the Majjhima Nikaya and the Digha Nikaya. Studies philosophical themes in early Theravada traditions and selected suttas.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5201. Foundations in Chinese Religions. 3 Credit Hours.

Basic studies of (1) the classical texts and essential teachings of early Confucianism and Taoism, and (2) the ideological continuity from early Confucianism and Taoism to Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Taoism. Focuses on the major religious and philosophical traditions of China. Special consideration is given to the ethical, religious, and social thought of Confucianism and Daoism. Topics of discussion include: 1) the pre-Han concepts of spirits and gods, 2) classical Confucianism (the "Kung-Meng tradition"), 3) philosophical Daoism (the "Lao-Zhuang tradition"), 4) religious Daoism (including the popular cult of immortality), 5) ideological continuities and transformations in Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Daoism, and 6) religious practices in contemporary China. The approach is both historical and comparative. No knowledge of Chinese is required, as the readings are in translation.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5202. Foundations in Chinese Buddhism. 3 Credit Hours.

The course will provide an overview of Chinese Buddhism from its beginning in ca. 200 CE to the modern era. We will read primary sources in translation supplemented by overview lectures on history and philosophy. We will look at Chinese Buddhist thought, as well as its art and architecture, social dynamics and relationship with other traditions. A special section on modern and contemporary Chinese Buddhism will emphasize Buddhist reactions to modernity. Participants will create an annotated bibliography, do at least one presentation, and write a term paper (20+ pages).

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5301. Foundations in Japanese Buddhism. 3 Credit Hours.

Prepares students to do an in-depth study of Japanese Buddhism, covering several major Buddhist thinkers, such as Kukai, Dogen, Shinran, Myoe, Hakuin, Takuan, and Nishida. In order to understand how Japanese Buddhism accepted Indian and Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, the course traces some of the prominent conceptual frameworks of these two. The methodological orientation of the course is philosophical.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5401. Foundations in Judaism. 3 Credit Hours.

This course offers students a critical introduction to issues within Jewish studies and the study of Jews, Judaism and Jewishness. Who are Jews and how have these designations shifted and changed over time? What is Judaism and how is it a religion? What role do texts and practices play in defining Judaism? The course asks these and other questions in order to both build on the legacy of how Judaism has been studied within the academic field of religious studies and to challenge some of these long held assumptions. In other words, the course both appreciates and challenges this scholarly legacy by offering students Religious studies, Jewish studies and literary critical tools to better appreciate Jewish texts and practices. And, by looking at Jews, Judaism and Jewishness in the plural, the course offers students a broad historical vision of Jewish culture. The course is organized, more or less, chronologically offering students a critical overview of Jewish history moving from the biblical period to the present with attention to specific Jewish texts and artifacts from specific periods and geographical locations within this history.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5501. Foundations in Christianity. 3 Credit Hours.

Focuses on both thought (doctrine, theology) and patterns of spiritual life, especially as revealed in Christian devotional "classics." What has been believed, taught and confessed by Christians since the Church's earliest era? How have individuals lived out these teachings, helped to reshape them, and discerned a spiritual life focused on God as known through Jesus Christ? As contemporary persons, how can we read and interrogate as well as appropriate these texts within a religious and cultural world so different from those of the authors? The continuing importance and vitality of these "classics" - or their rediscovery after long periods of obscurity - is part of the milieu for Christianity in its world context today.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5601. Foundations in Islam. 3 Credit Hours.

Provides a basic survey of Islam for non-specialists. Includes a historical overview focusing on the relationship of Islam to the world and to other religions and ideologies of ancient, medieval, and modern times. Also considers the major modalities of Islam as a religion, including the legal, spiritual, philosophical, and social aspects. Finally, current issues in Islam will be considered, including modern changes in social organization and present-day politics. No prerequisites or language requirements.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5701. Foundations in African Religions. 3 Credit Hours.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 5801. Foundations in Digital Humanities for the Study of Religion. 3 Credit Hours.

"Foundations in Digital Humanities for the Study of Religion" will familiarize graduate students with methods and applications from the emerging field of DH. This course alerts students to the digital difference in three fields: text, space, and networks. It focuses on examples from the domain of religious studies, but the methods are applicable in other fields as well.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 8005. Interreligious Dialogue. 3 Credit Hours.

Investigates the theoretical issues that underlie all interreligious dialogue as well as examples of actual dialogue in progress, the latter partly according to student interest in those dialogues. The former will include analyses of what precisely is meant by dialogue and of the philosophical, theological, religious, psychological, "spirituality," and "praxis" aspects of interreligious dialogue, in other words, the presuppositions and implications of such dialogue.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 8006. Methodological Options in the Study of Religion. 3 Credit Hours.

Focuses on one of the currently available methodologies used in academic discourses on religion, enabling the students to evaluate this methodology and compare and contrast it with others.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 8010. Rel Exper-East & West. 3 Credit Hours.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 8011. Religion and Public Life. 3 Credit Hours.

We will inquire about key intellectual issues pertaining to the public understanding of religion in the U.S. today: examining the ideas of secular and religious; understanding the first amendment clauses on religious freedom and establishment; tracking ethical debates concerning race, gender, and sexuality; gaining perspective on civil religion and popular culture; examining how religion uses and is portrayed in the media; and gaining insight about religious pluralism in local and global contexts. Additional goals include understanding the connections among world events, American society, and religious life. Students will do critical writing in a variety of styles to address public and academic audiences.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 8012. Religion and Sexuality. 3 Credit Hours.

This course examines recent ideas and trends in the scholarly literature about sexuality in the context of religious studies. We will focus primarily on how contemporary scholars have reshaped and rethought religious traditions that control and celebrate sexuality in light of contemporary ideas about the power and variety of sexual experience and expression. Students will be required to read and critically engage scholarly monographs and write an extensive original research paper on a topic of their choice.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 8100. Topics in Buddhist Thought. 3 Credit Hours.

Various topics in the Buddhist thought of Japan, China, or India. May treat one, two, or all three of these traditions on a given topic and also compare them with parallel Western thought.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 8201. Chinese Philosophy and Religion. 3 Credit Hours.

This course will introduce participants to a select few seminal works in the history of East Asian thought. These works will be read closely and in depth together with secondary scholarship on them. The primary readings will usually be from the pre-modern period and will focus on foundational works of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 8401. Race, Gender, Class and Ethnicity in Ancient Near East. 3 Credit Hours.

Against the background of the substantial work done in recent years in biblical racial and gender studies, this course explores the ancient Near Eastern, and specifically biblical, origins of diversity and religious nationalism in terms of race, gender, class, and ethnicity. The focus will be on how these apply to particular biblical texts that involve gender, ethnic, and class confrontations.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 8406. Feminist and Womanist Biblical Interpretation. 3 Credit Hours.

This seminar provides a survey of the history and development of feminist and womanist biblical interpretation in the United States. It includes interpreters of the Hebrew Bible (sometimes called Old Testament) and New Testament in religious and non-religious contexts. Knowledge of Hebrew or Greek is not required.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 8600. Topics in Islamic History. 3 Credit Hours.

Offers one of several topics in classical Muslim history, including the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the early development of the political system and Muslim law, Muslim theories of history, and selected trends in modern Muslim history.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 8602. Islamic Mysticism. 3 Credit Hours.

Examines the sources, rise and development of Muslim spirituality. The ideal of life and worship in Islam will be studied as the framework for Muslim mysticism. Then the development of spiritual life and thought will be examined, and especially the contribution of noted individuals. Finally, Sufi orders and their role in the life of Muslim society will be considered.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

REL 8800. Special Topics in Religion. 3 Credit Hours.

A series of special topics in the field of religion, including some of those taught by visiting faculty. Content will vary from semester to semester. Specifics will appear in department course description booklet each semester.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 8810. Special Topics in Religion. 3 Credit Hours.

A series of special topics in the field of religion, including some of those taught by visiting faculty. Content will vary from semester to semester. Specifics will appear in department course description booklet each semester.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 9182. Individual Study. 1 Credit Hour.

Individual study with a faculty member while in the coursework phase of the program.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 9282. Individual Study. 3 Credit Hours.

Individual study with a faculty member while in the coursework phase of the program.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 9382. Individual Study. 3 Credit Hours.

Individual study with a faculty member while in the coursework phase of the program.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 9994. Preliminary Examination Preparation. 1 to 6 Credit Hour.

This course fulfills the continuous enrollment requirement after coursework completion while preparing for the Preliminary examinations.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 9996. Master's Thesis Research. 1 to 6 Credit Hour.

Capstone MA course. Student explores a specific topic with his or her MA advisor and writes a thesis of approximately 50 pages. Registration each semester required until thesis approval.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 9998. Pre-Dissertation Research. 1 to 6 Credit Hour.

Pre-Dissertation Research. After having passed the Preliminary exams, registration is appropriate for students working on the dissertation proposal.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

REL 9999. Dissertation Research. 1 to 6 Credit Hour.

Registration required each semester after elevation to candidacy until completion and successful defense of the dissertation.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.