WHY STUDY RELIGION AT TUFTS?

To study religion in an academic setting is to learn how to think about religion from a critical vantage point. As a critical and comparative discipline, the study of religion provides a powerful set of tools for exploring other cultures and thinking about the world we live in. Students learn to ask pressing questions about the role religion plays in personal experience and human society; about the nature and origin of religion; and about the dynamic interplay among religion and other dimensions of human culture, from biology, sociology, and economy to psychology, politics, and gender.

The study of religion is central to a liberal arts education and provides excellent preparation for a wide range of careers from education, medicine, law, and the arts to social work, ministry, and foreign service. Through the critical study of religion students develop the kinds of critical thinking skills essential for responsible engagement in their community and the larger world. The study of religion is an ideal preparation for entrance into graduate programs in religious studies, theological studies, or seminary training.

The study of religion provides a wonderful complement to other majors and programs at Tufts such as History, Philosophy, Sociology, English and International Relations.

The Department of Religion at Tufts is dedicated to the exploration and critical analysis of religion as a central aspect of human history and culture. Courses seek to promote:

• Awareness of the diversity of religious experience around the globe and throughout history
• Empathetic engagement with the beliefs, texts, and practices of the world’s religions
• Mastery of a range of methods for studying religion
• Reflection on the role religion plays in shaping human customs, values, beliefs, and institutions.

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<td>Owen Cornwall</td>
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<td>Ken Garden</td>
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### Courses in other departments or programs

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<td>REL 136</td>
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</table>
Heather Curtis | Associate Professor
Eaton Hall, Room 316A | heather.curtis@tufts.edu
History of Christianity and American Religions

Jennifer Eyl | Assistant Professor
Eaton Hall, Room 312 | jennifer.eyl@tufts.edu
Ancient Christianity and Religions of the Ancient World

Kenneth Garden | Associate Professor
Eaton Hall, Room 313 | ken.garden@tufts.edu
Islam and Sufism

Brian Hatcher | Professor | Packard Chair of Theology
*On Leave 2018-2019*
Eaton Hall, Room 314 | brian.hatcher@tufts.edu
Hinduism and Religion in Modern South Asia

Peggy Hutaff | Senior Lecturer
Eaton Hall, Room 316B | peggy.hutaff@tufts.edu
Christian Studies

Elana Jefferson-Tatum | Mellon Bridge Assistant Professor
*On Leave Fall 2018*
Eaton Hall, Room 313 | elana.jefferson_tatum@tufts.edu
African Religious Cultures

Elizabeth Lemons | Senior Lecturer
Eaton Hall, Room 316B | elizabeth.lemons@tufts.edu
Religion and Culture

Joseph Walser | Associate Professor
*On Leave Fall 2018*
Eaton Hall, Room 329 | joseph.walser@tufts.edu
Buddhism and Religion in Ancient South Asia
The Religion Major

Ten courses distributed as follows:

**Foundation Requirement**
After taking two courses in the department, students must take REL 99 Theory and Method in the Study of Religion.

**Diversity Requirement (four courses)**
Students should have exposure to at least four different religious traditions. This may be accomplished through classes in which four different traditions are taught, or through four courses, each focused on a different religious tradition, or through some combination thereof. Students are to take four classes within the department to achieve the diversity requirement. The advisor and the chair of the Department of Religion must approve the courses taken to fulfill this requirement.

**Depth Requirement (three courses)**
Students must choose a subfield in religious studies. This may be one religious tradition, the traditions of a geographical region, or a religious textual tradition. Students must demonstrate that they have taken at least three classes in that specialty. One of the three courses must be in the doctrinal (theological and philosophical) aspects of religion. In their chosen areas of specialization, students must take two above-100 level courses. These may include an independent study or a senior thesis. The departmental advisor and the chair must approve the student’s area of specialization. No course may count for both the diversity and depth requirements.

**Two Additional Courses**
The two courses can be listed or cross-listed within the department.

The Religion Minor

Five courses distributed as follows:

**Foundation Requirement**
After taking two courses in the department, students must take REL 99 Theory and Method in the Study of Religion.

**Diversity Requirement (three courses)**
Students should have exposure to at least three different religious traditions. This may be accomplished through classes in which three different traditions are taught, or through three courses, each focused on a different religious tradition, or through some combination thereof. The advisor and the chair of the Department of Religion must approve the courses taken to fulfill this requirement.

**Upper-division Requirement**
One other course numbered above 100. This course may not be counted as one of the three courses of the above requirement.
REL 01  
**Introduction to Religion**  
Owen Cornwall  
R+  MW  9:00-10:15 AM  

An introduction to the field of religion to give students an understanding of the basic elements of the subject. The focus will be on the various relationships between religion and political power. Through this lens, we will examine pivotal texts, doctrines and monuments in Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Chinese Religions, Zoroastrianism, Shinto, New Religious Movements, and Atheism/Secularism. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.

REL 21  
**Introduction to Hebrew Bible**  
JS 21  
Peggy Hutaff  
H+  TTh  1:30-2:45 PM  

We will study the Hebrew Bible to become familiar with the works of its individual authors, and to gain an understanding of the historical circumstances in which they wrote, as well as to survey the historical development of ancient Israel’s religious beliefs and institutions. Topics will include the life of Moses, the production of Israel's codes of law, the construction of theological language and imagery, the rise of the monarchy and the temple, accounts of creation, psalms and wisdom literature, and the lives and legacies of the Israelite prophets. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement and the Judaic Culture option.
REL 36  Global History of Christianity to the Middle Ages
HIST 09  Jennifer Eyl  G+  MW  1:30-2:45 PM

This class will examine the development of Christianities from antiquity through the medieval period. We will encounter key Christian figures, texts, theological debates, and religious practices alongside political and historical events from Egypt, Nubia, China, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and southern Europe. Central questions we will confront include, Who defines Christianity? Can we speak of Christianity in the singular? How do religious practices and beliefs become localized as they spread from region to region? This course counts toward the Humanities or Social Sciences distribution requirement.

REL 42  Religion & Politics in American History
HIST 126  Heather Curtis  E+  MW  10:30-11:45 AM

“In God we Trust,” “One Nation Under God,” “God Bless America”: phrases like these alert us to the on-going influence of religion in American public life. This course explores the role of religion in shaping American civic engagement and political activity from the 17th century to the present, aiming to put contemporary events in broader historical context. Key topics and themes include: the relationship between church and state in the colonial period; faith and the founders; religion and social activism in the antebellum era (especially anti-slavery and women’s rights); religion, race and civil rights; religious “outsiders” and American politics (particularly Mormons, Catholics, and Muslims); spirituality and social protest in the 20th century (pacifism; feminism; and economic reform); the rise of the religious right; religion and American politics post-9/11; and the upcoming presidential election. This course counts toward the Humanities or Social Sciences distribution requirement.
REL 48  Introduction to Islam
Ken Garden  T+  TTh  9:00-10:15 AM

Islam in its many facets. Pre-Islamic Arabia, the Prophet, the Qur’an, the prophetic traditions, tradition and customs, law, theology, major denominations, philosophy, and mysticism. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement, and the Middle Eastern Culture option.

REL 99  Theory and Method in the Study of Religion
Elizabeth Lemons  D+  TTh  10:30-11:45 AM

Required course for Religion majors and minors.
Prerequisites: 2 other religion courses, or permission of instructor

This seminar aims to enhance students’ ability to discuss and analyze theoretical and methodological issues in the academic study of religion. We will explore selected important modern texts that raise enduring questions about such issues as the nature of religious phenomena, their purpose in societies, and their comparability across cultures. In addition, we will consider recent work by scholars of religion that critiques earlier perspectives and/or raises new issues. Discussion of case studies will facilitate assessment of the benefits and liabilities of various methodological and theoretical perspectives. Through analysis of significant approaches and issues, students will develop an understanding of their own perspectives in relation to the field of religious studies. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.
REL 105  Re-imagining God
Elizabeth Lemons   F+   TTh  12:00-1:15 PM

Do genocides and nuclear weapons undermine ideas about God’s all-encompassing goodness and power? Why do some Christians maintain that “God is on the side of the oppressed”? Does science and/or reason disprove the existence of God? How do Christian thinkers respond to environmental issues? This course explores contemporary Christian thought and its criticism, focusing on representative responses to a range of social and intellectual challenges to traditional Christian beliefs. By considering questions raised by political/social oppression, secularization, and environmental issues, we will explore how post-WW II Catholic and Protestant thinkers and their critics have re-imagined the meaning of “God.” The course will draw on contemporary arts (e.g., film, literature) to enrich our understanding of these thinkers’ social contexts; we will also consider how their ideas relate to cultural images of “God.” Through consideration of a variety of contemporary perspectives, the course aims to foster students’ ability to think critically about Christian conceptions of God. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.
The radical transformation in human societies, economies, institutions, and world-views over the past 200 years known as modernity has posed challenges to all religious traditions. This course will begin with a survey of the major figures and movements in modern Islamic thought from the 19th century to the present and end with a survey of the contemporary religious landscape of Egypt, covering the Muslim Brotherhood, different trends in Salafism, and the “new preachers.” This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement, and the Middle Eastern Culture and South & Southeast Asian Culture options.
Examination of gender and sexuality in the ancient Mediterranean, with special attention to how issues of gender and sexuality are treated in the New Testament, in early Church Fathers, Hebrew Bible, martyrdom accounts, and hagiography (saints’ lives). Consideration of pre-Christian sexual ethics and the structure of the family in Mediterranean patriarchal cultures (in this case Greeks, Romans, and Judeans) and discussion of the sexual ethics found in the writings of figures like Pythagoras, Plato, and the Stoics. Discussion of how early Christians (second through the fifth centuries CE) simultaneously reinscribe traditional gender roles and notions of sexuality, and also subvert these roles and ideas. Consideration of the conflict over the right of women to hold positions of authority and alternative avenues of power such as renouncing sexuality & marriage, and voluntary martyrdom. The rise of sexual renunciation as a central feature of ascetic Christianity and attention to the ways that women and men strive to shed the trappings of “this mortal coil” by denying sexuality full-stop.