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.
# Fall 2019 Courses

**REL 01**  
Introduction to Religion  
Joseph Walser  
1, T, 9:00-11:30 AM  
CL: CVS 15

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

**REL 36**  
Global History of Christianity through the Middle Ages  
Jennifer Eyl  
G+, MW, 1:30-2:45 PM  
CL: HIST 09

**REL 42**  
Religion & Politics in American History  
Heather Curtis  
E+ MW 10:30-11:45 AM  
CL: AMER 15, CVS 33, HIST 126

**REL 44**  
Introduction to Hinduism  
Brian Hatcher  
H+ TTh 1:30-2:45 PM

**REL 48**  
Introduction to Islam  
Ken Garden  
F+ TTh 12:00-1:15 PM

**REL 58**  
Zen Buddhism  
Joseph Walser  
10 M 6:30-9:00 PM

**REL 70**  
Life After Death in Western History  
Jennifer Eyl  
H+ MW 3:00-4:10 PM  
*CANCELLED*

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

**REL 100**  
Religion and Film  
Elizabeth Lemons  
F+ TTh 12:00-1:15 PM  
CL: FMS 177

**REL 116**  
Europe and Islam, Islam in Europe  
Ken Garden  
J+ TTh 3:00-4:15 PM

**REL 149**  
Religion and Colonialism in South Asia  
Brian Hatcher  
7 W 1:30-4:00 PM  
CL: CST 194-04

Courses in other departments or programs

**REL 10-03**  
Introduction to Jewish Mysticism  
JS 92-01

**REL 10-04**  
Buddhist Art  
FAH 11

**REL 87**  
Introduction to the Talmud  
JS 87

**REL 132**  
Book of Genesis and Interpretation  
JS 132

**REL 134**  
Myth, Ritual, and Symbol  
ANTH 132

**REL 136**  
Religion in Japanese History  
HIST 132

**REL 194-09**  
History of Law in the Islamic World  
HIST 177
Faculty

Heather Curtis | Associate Professor | Department Chair
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
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*
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
Eaton Hall, Room 329 | joseph.walser@tufts.edu
Buddhism and Religion in Ancient South Asia
The Religion Major

Ten (10) 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 (5) 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  
Joseph Walser  1, T, 9:00-11:30 AM  
CL: CVS 15

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  
Peggy Hutaff  H+, TTh, 1:30-2:45 PM  
CL: JS 21

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
Jennifer Eyl  G+, MW, 1:30-2:45 PM  CL: HIST 09

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
Heather Curtis  E+, MW, 10:30-11:45 AM  CL: AMER 15, CVS 33, HIST 126

“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 44  Introduction to Hinduism
Brian Hatcher  H+, TTh, 1:30-2:45 PM

An overview of the Hindu religious tradition, combining historical and textual study with investigation of modern and contemporary themes. Includes attention to the expression and contestation of Hinduism in colonial, postcolonial and diasporic contexts. Promotes critical reflection on Hindu beliefs, social structures, popular customs, and rituals. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement, and the South and Southeast Asian Culture option.

REL 48  Introduction to Islam
Ken Garden  F+, TTh, 12:00-1:15 PM

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 58  Zen Buddhism
Joseph Walser  10, M, 6:30-9:00 PM

Historical and social examination of the origins and development of Zen Buddhism from the early political and epistemological debates in India to the reception and development of Buddhist meditation lineages in China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Introduction to debates about meditation theory, the rise of the martial arts, courtly arts such as tea and poetry, the rise of gentry society and the reception of Zen in the U.S. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement, and the East Asian Culture/Language option.
This course will examine the many ideas of heaven, hell, purgatory, and other post-mortem geographies, as they have developed throughout Western history. We will survey a range of texts, artifacts, and works of art from the ancient Mediterranean and Medieval Europe, to the Christian Reformation and early 21st century America. Among our historical readings, we will include theoretical questions regarding cognitive science and the imagining of invisible worlds, the socio-political uses of post-mortem damnation and/or reward, as well as the historical struggle to address human mortality. This course counts toward the Humanities requirement.

RECENTLY CANCELLED

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.
Scholars of religion and culture argue that films are worthy of study as contemporary religious texts and rituals, given how they function in social and personal life. Some point to patterns of film spectatorship and engagement that mirror traditional ritual behavior, both corporate and private. Some view films as modern “myths,” stories that inspire and challenge, creating opportunities for ethical and philosophical conversation and action. Other scholars study films as carriers of “theologies,” worldviews that convey ultimate or deep meaning, and thus reinforce, challenge or re-imagine traditional perspectives. Still others analyze the production and distribution of films to unveil the circulation of messages that reinforce prevailing norms, practices and institutions (whether religious or not), or pose challenges to them. In every case, these approaches are enriched by attention to film as an art form and aspects of film theory. This course invites students to explore the rich terrain of film through the variety of approaches employed by religious studies scholars. We will open up films to explore their messages about contemporary religions and religious issues, as well as to gain a broader and deeper understanding of “religion” itself. Genres will include drama, comedy, animation, horror and science fiction. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.
REL 116  Europe and Islam, Islam in Europe  
Ken Garden  J+, TTh, 3:00-4:15 PM

The 2015 “Refugee Crisis” that gripped Europe on the arrival of over a million mainly Muslim refugees provoked reactions of both compassion and fear. Germany and Sweden in particular accepted hundreds of thousands of refugees; both also saw their right-wing anti-immigrant political parties surge in popularity. But this is just the latest phase. European wariness of and fascination with Islam and Muslims goes back centuries, and today’s anxiety over Europe’s new Muslims can be traced to the economic and political decisions of European countries rebuilding from World War II. This course will look at Europe’s long relationship with the Muslim world, examining concerns including those of Europeans hostile to Islam and those of European Muslims who fear they will never be accepted. It will evaluate the accusations against Muslims—that they seek a parallel legal system through Sharia courts and that they have created autonomous “no-go zones” in European cities—and also focus on the landscapes of Muslim Europe, new articulations of Islam by Europeans, and the diverse voices of European Muslim intellectuals and artists. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement and the Middle Eastern Culture option.

REL 149  Religion and Colonialism in South Asia  
Brian Hatcher  7, W, 1:30-4:00 PM  CL: CST 194-04

Seminar on religious change in South Asia from the rise of British colonial rule to the partition of British India, with special emphasis on 19th-century Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh movements. Attention paid to the colonial construction of religious categories, competing modes of reformist and customary religion, and debates over the meaning of history, community, and gender. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement and the South and Southeast Asian Culture option.

REL 192  Independent Study  
REL 199  Senior Honors Thesis

Permission of instructor required  
Contact religion@tufts.edu to register