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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### Spring 2017 Courses

**REL 06**  
Philosophy of Religion  
Elizabeth Lemons  
F+ TR 12:00-1:15 PM  
**CLST: PHIL 16**

**REL 22**  
Introduction to the New Testament  
Peggy Hutaff  
F+ TR 12:00-1:15 PM

**REL 53**  
Introduction to the Religions of China  
Joseph Walser  
10 M 6:30-9:00 PM

**REL 58**  
Zen Buddhism  
Joseph Walser  
1 T 9:00-11:30 AM

**REL 76**  
After God: Atheism and Secularism  
Ken Garden  
G+ MW 1:30-2:45 PM

**REL 100**  
Religion and Film  
Elizabeth Lemons  
D+ TR 10:30-11:45 AM  
**CLST: FMS 177**

**REL 102**  
Religion, Race and Nation in American History  
Heather Curtis  
5 M 1:30-4:00 PM  
**CLST: AFR 152-02, AMER 180-04, HIST 127**

**REL 104**  
Feminist Theologies  
Peggy Hutaff  
H+ TR 1:30-2:45 PM  
**CLST: WGSS 140-01**

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

**REL 153**  
Sufism  
Ken Garden  
E+ MW 10:30-11:45 PM

**REL 192**  
Independent Study

**REL 199**  
Senior Honors Thesis

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**Courses in other departments or programs**

| REL 23/121 | Early Islamic Art | FAH 21/121 |
| REL 78 | Jewish Women | JS 78 |
| REL 122 | Iconoclasm & Iconophobia | FAH 122 |
| REL 136 | The Story of King David | JS 136 |
| REL 142 | Jewish Experience on Film | JS 142 |
| REL 158 | Music & Prayer in the Jewish Tradition | JS 150 |
Faculty

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Hinduism and Religion in Modern South Asia

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Buddhism and Religion in Ancient South Asia

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History of Christianity and American Religions

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Islam and Sufism

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Ancient Christianity and Religions of the Ancient World

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Christian Studies

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Religion and Culture
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 06  Philosophy of Religion
Elizabeth Lemons  F+  TR  12:00-1:15 PM  CLST: PHIL 16

This course offers an introduction to the philosophical analysis of major religious issues. We will explore such topics as the nature of religion, religious experience, and ultimate reality, the problem of evil and/or suffering, and the relationship between faith and reason and the relationship between religion and science. By exploring different philosophical approaches to the study of religion—including existential, phenomenological, linguistic and comparative, students will develop constructive responses to the variety of ways in which philosophers analyze religious beliefs and practices in diverse world religions. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.

REL 22  Introduction to the New Testament
Peggy Hutaaf  F+  TR  12:00-1:15 PM

We will study the origins of Christianity and the evolution of its earliest beliefs and practices, as reflected in the writings ultimately selected for its canon. Topics will include: Jesus and his interpreters, Paul and his letters, beginnings of the church, interaction between Christians and their Jewish and Greco-Roman environments, and women’s participation in the shaping of early Christian history. Occasional readings from non-canonical literature will add perspective. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.
This course will cover the major religious traditions of China. We will trace the development of and interactions between Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism and village cults from the Shang dynasty to the present. Emphasis will be placed on the mutual influence between the philosophical, political, literary and economic aspects of each religion.

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.
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
REL 102 Religion, Race and Nation in American History
Heather Curtis 5 M 1:30-4:00 PM
CLST: AFR 152-02, AMER 180-04, HIST 127
Prerequisites: AMER 12 (Race in America) or one course in American Religious
History (REL40, REL41, REL42); or permission of instructor.

This course explores how the categories of race, religion and nation
have been imagined in light of each other throughout American
history. What social, cultural and political circumstances have shaped
the meaning of these concepts and the perceived relationships
among them in various historical settings? How have religions
played a role in structuring, and/or in shifting racial identities and
related ideas about American “civilization”? Conversely, in what
ways have intersecting notions of race and citizenship influenced
the development of American religious traditions, institutions and
practices? In analyzing changing formations of nation, religion, and
race in the United States, we will also examine how conceptions of
citizenship and civilization have been inflected by ideas about class
and gender. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution
requirement.
REL 149  Religion and Colonialism in South Asia
Brian Hatcher  7    W    1:30-4:00 PM

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 104  Feminist Theologies
Peggy Hutauff   H+    TR  1:30-2:45 PM  CLST: WGSS 140-01

“Feminism,” says theologian Judith Plaskow, “is a process of coming to affirm ourselves as women/persons - and seeing that affirmation mirrored in religious and social institutions.” This course will survey the impact which the growth of feminist/ womanist consciousness during the last four decades has had on the religious commitments of women, as well as on traditional religious institutions, beliefs, and practices. We will explore new approaches and methods which recent feminist scholarship has brought to the study of ancient religious texts and other historical sources, and will assess how the inclusion of women’s perspectives is challenging, enlarging, and enriching the craft of theology itself. Also to be considered: the rise of new women’s rituals and alternative spiritualities, and the relationship of religious feminism to other struggles for human dignity and liberation. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.
Sufism is often defined as “Islamic Mysticism.” It is further described as a practice through which a Sufi seeks the “annihilation of the self” and “union with the divine” through “spiritual exercises.” But what do any of these terms actually mean? This course aims to demystify Islamic mysticism. We will begin with a brief overview of the Islamic religious tradition from a Sufi perspective to see what is particularly Islamic about Islamic mysticism. We will then turn to Sufi psychology and practice, asking how Sufism sees human nature and how it seeks to perfect it and thereby bring it closer to God, the ultimate source of its existence. We will then look at concrete, historical expressions of Sufi thought and practice in the world, asking what happens when the quest for the eternal and ineffable is instantiated in flesh-and-blood human beings with worldly relations and concerns. We will then grapple with the question of how to describe the indescribable experience of the divine. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement and the Middle Eastern Culture option.