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.

Cover photo: Madonna icon / Rome, Italy (© Jennifer Eyl)
Back photo: Madonna of the iPhone, (© Jennifer Eyl)
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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
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<tr>
<td>REL 06</td>
<td>Philosophy of Religion</td>
<td>Elizabeth Lemons</td>
<td>F+</td>
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<td>REL 22</td>
<td>Introduction to the New Testament</td>
<td>Jennifer Eyl</td>
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<td>REL 37</td>
<td>Global History of Christianity since the Middle Ages</td>
<td>Heather Curtis</td>
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<td>REL 48</td>
<td>Introduction to Islam</td>
<td>Owen Cornwall</td>
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<td>Contemporary Catholicism</td>
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<td>Marie-Clare Beaulieu</td>
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<td>REL 100</td>
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<td>REL 104</td>
<td>Feminist Theologies</td>
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<td>REL 111</td>
<td>(Mis-)Translating Vodun: Africana Religious Cultures and the Politics of Interpretation</td>
<td>Elana Jefferson-Tatum</td>
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<td>REL 144</td>
<td>A History of Yoga: From Slaughter to Sex to Spandex</td>
<td>Joseph Walser</td>
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<td>REL 148</td>
<td>Modern Hinduism</td>
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Courses Co-Listed with Religion

| REL 11      | Buddhist Art                                                                  | FAH 11               |
| REL 23/121  | Early Islamic Art                                                             | FAH 21/121           |
| REL 78      | Jewish Women                                                                  | JS 78                |
| REL 122     | Iconoclasm & Iconophobia                                                      | FAH 122              |
| REL 137     | The Story of David                                                            | JS 137               |
| REL 142     | Jewish Experience on Film                                                     | JS 142               |
| REL 158     | Music & Prayer in the Jewish Tradition                                        | JS 150               |
| REL 194-06  | Culture, Power, Islam                                                         | ANTH 149-40          |
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 (on leave)
Eaton Hall, Room 313 | ken.garden@tufts.edu
Islam and Sufism

Brian Hatcher | Professor | Packard Chair of Theology | Chair
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
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 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+   TTh  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
Jennifer Eyl        K+   MW  4:30-5:45 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.
REL 37  Global History of Christianity since the Middle Ages
Heather Curtis        E+  MW  10:30-11:45 AM
CLST: CST 37

This course explores the development of Christianity as a world movement from the early modern period to the present. We will study major historical events such as the Protestant Reformations; expansions of Catholicism and Protestantism through exploration, trade, conquest and mission; the growing diversity and transformations of Christian traditions in colonial and postcolonial societies; the rise of indigenous expressions of Christian faith and practice in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; the global spread of evangelicalism and pentecostalism; and development of Christian ‘internationalism’ in an era of increasing globalization. This course counts toward the Humanities or Social Sciences distribution requirement.

REL 48  Introduction to Islam
Owen Cornwall        ARR  MW  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 56  Contemporary Catholicism  
Peggy Hutaaff  F+  TTh  12:00-1:15 PM

A study of the complex landscape of contemporary Catholicism, emerging from the mandates for reform and renewal set forth by Vatican Council II (1962-65). We will study basic Catholic beliefs and practices; evolving models of church, ministry, and vocation; contemporary interpretations of ancient traditions and dogmas; the impact of critical scholarship in Religion and greater access to theological education; contentious debates and dialogues around ethical issues, such as contraception, abortion, sexual identities and lifestyles; controversies over women’s ordination, mandatory priestly celibacy, and divorce; calls for change from feminist and other liberation-theological and social justice initiatives; changing demographics and parish closings; disclosures and repercussions of clergy sexual abuse; the aesthetics and religious imagination of Catholic culture in its multiple locations and diverse expressions. Major focus on how Catholics in the U.S. have “lived their religion” amidst the push and pull of unity and diversity, continuity and change, gain and loss, in the wake of Vatican II. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.
REL 80/180  Greek Religion
Jennifer Eyl & Marie-Clare Beaulieu
CLST: CLS 80/180

This course explores Greek religion at the confluence of ancient polytheism and early Christianity. We will reflect on elements of convergence and divergence between the two religions and think about the fundamental belief systems that sustained these sets of practices. We will look at religion and culture as integrated and evolving wholly through the lens of religious practice. We will pay particular attention to the use of Greek, as recurring or evolving patterns in the use of words and phrases reflects change or continuity in cultural concepts. The course does not assume any knowledge of Greek, Classics, or Christianity and is appropriate for students at all levels in their curriculum. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.

REL 100  Religion and Film
Elizabeth Lemons
CLST: FMS 177

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.
“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 that the growth of feminist/womanist consciousness during the last five decades has had on the religious commitments of women, as well as on traditional institutions, beliefs, and practices. We will explore new approaches and methods which recent feminist scholarship has brought to the study and interpretation of ancient religious texts and other historical sources, and will assess how the inclusion of women’s critiques and perspectives is challenging, enlarging, and enriching the craft of theology itself. Also to be considered: the rise of feminist rituals and alternative spiritualities, and the relation of religious feminism to other struggles for human dignity and liberation. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.

REL 118  (Mis-)Translating Vodun: Africana Religious Cultures and the Politics of Interpretation
Elana Jefferson-Tatum  7  W  1:30-4:00 PM
CLST: AFR 118, AMER 118, CST 118

This course critically interrogates the (mis-)translation of West African Vodun, Haitian Vodou, and New Orleans Voodoo as “primitive,” “savage,” “witchcraft,” and “bad magic.” Giving attention to modern colonialist practices of othering, this course provides an overview of the history of cultural contact between Vodun religious cultures and the Western world. Our investigation will include an attention to representations of Vodun (Vodou, Voodoo) in newspapers, magazines, and other primary source materials. Students will examine the cultural translation of Vodun communities, materialities, philosophies, and experiences beginning with the invention of the fetish concept in the contact between European merchants and African coastal peoples in West Africa. We will then proceed by scrutinizing interpretations and translations of West African Vodun, Haitian Vodou, and New Orleans Voodoo in a number of contemporary scholarly texts. Finally, we will conclude our semester by examining New Orleans Voodoo as an American religious phenomenon. The guiding questions for this class will include: What is the relationship between colonialist imaginations of Africa and the mistranslation of Africana religious cultures? How might we challenge and reimagine the normative methods, theories, and concepts that are used to translate African and African diasporic religious cultures? This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement, and the African and African-American Culture and Region of Origin options.
REL 144   A History of Yoga: From Slaughter to Sex to Spandex
Joseph Walser        10   M   6:30-9:00 PM

The history and practice of yoga in global perspective, tracing the roots of the modern Yoga studio backwards through a variety of adventures and misadventures in the modern and premodern eras to its most ancient roots in the world of Vedic India. Examination of the international bodybuilding movement and Indian Nationalist movement (late 19th and early 20th centuries), ascetic practices associated with the mass yogic militias of the 17th and 18th centuries, various alchemical and sexual yogas of the 8th-16th centuries, contemplative and philosophical yogas of the 1st century, and the sacrificial and political significance of meditation in the context of animal sacrifice in the late Vedic period (ca. 500 BCE and afterwards). Discussion of the role of memory and forgetting — as yogic traditions reinvent themselves multiple times over the course of two millennia. Discussion of the purpose and early social/political context for blood sacrifice and vegetarianism, public ritual sex, rituals of coronation and installation and how each of these contribute to the modern practice of yoga. Particular attention paid to the rise and fall of blood sacrifice, of yogic alchemy, the rise and persistence of late yogic philosophy of Kashmiri Shaivism, and the pivotal role of yogic practices in the spread of Islam in pre-colonial India and of yogis in the defeat of the Marathas and the Mughals in the 17th century. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement, and the South/Southeast Asian Culture option.

REL 148   Modern Hinduism
Brian Hatcher        I+   MW   3:00-4:15 PM

An examination of the meaning, practice and contestation of Hinduism in South Asia and the global diaspora, from 1800 to the present. Topics for consideration may include the genesis of new Hindu movements; changing patterns of Hindu worship and temple publics; debates surrounding caste, untouchability and gender; the role of modern media; or on-going challenges associated with environmentalism, economic development and Hindu nationalism. Requires no prior knowledge of Hinduism. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement, and the South and Southeast Asian Culture option.