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: Convent of the Capuchos in Sintra, Portugal, © Jennifer Eyl
Back Cover: Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, Turkey © Jennifer Eyl
Spring 2019 Courses

REL 01  Introduction to Religion  
Owen Cornwall  R+, MW, 9:00-10:15 AM

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

REL 08  Law, Religion, and International Relations  
Joseph Walser  10, M, 6:30-9:00 PM

REL 10-02  (Re-)Inventing Africa: Religion, Race, and Colonialism in the Making of the Africana World  
Elana Jefferson-Tatum  T+, TR, 9:00-10:15 AM  CL: AFR 47-02, AMER 94-02, ANTH 149-51, CST 94-02

REL 22  Introduction to the New Testament  
Jennifer Eyl  K+, MW, 4:30-5:45 PM

REL 37  Global History of Christianity since the Middle Ages  
Heather Curtis  E+, MW, 10:30-11:45 AM  CL: CST 37, HIST 15

REL 45  Introduction to Buddhism  
Joseph Walser  1, T, 9:00-11:30 AM

REL 56  Contemporary Catholicism  
Peggy Hutaff  F+, TR, 12:00-1:15 PM  CL: AMER 94-03

REL 64/164  Jesus from the 1st to the 21st Century  
Jennifer Eyl  G+, MW, 1:30-2:45 PM

REL 76  After God: Atheism and Secularism  
Ken Garden  I+, MW, 3:00-4:15 PM

REL 104  Feminist Theologies  
Peggy Hutaff  H+, TR, 1:30-2:45 PM  CL: WGSS 140

REL 106  Religion, Sexuality, and Violence  
Elizabeth Lemons  D+, TR, 10:30-11:45 AM  CL: AMER 194-02, WGSS 142

REL 153  Divine Love in Islam  
Ken Garden  E+, MW, 10:30-11:45 AM

Courses in other departments or programs

REL 137  The Story of King David  JS 136
REL 142  Jewish Experience on Film  JS 142
REL 157  Spiritual Development Across the Life-Span  CSHD 157
REL 158  Music & Prayer in the Jewish Tradition  JS 150
REL 194-06  Culture, Power, Islam: Global Religion in the Age of Nation-States  ANTH 149-40
REL 194-07  Music, Religion, and Magic in Early Modern Europe MUS 130
Faculty

Heather Curtis | Associate Professor
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History of Christianity and American Religions

Jennifer Eyl | Assistant Professor
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Ancient Christianity and Religions of the Ancient World

Kenneth Garden | Associate Professor
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Islam and Sufism

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

Peggy Hutaff | Senior Lecturer
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Christian Studies

Elana Jefferson-Tatum | Mellon Bridge Assistant Professor
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African Religious Cultures

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Religion and Culture

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Buddhism and Religion in Ancient South Asia
Requirements

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.
Course Descriptions

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 06     Philosophy of Religion
Elizabeth Lemons     F++, TR, 12:00-1:15 PM     CL: 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 10-02  (Re-) Inventing Africa: Religion, Race, and Colonialism in the Making of the Africana World
Elana Jefferson-Tatum  T+, TR, 9:00-10:15 AM  CL: AFR 47-02, AMER 94-02, ANTH 149-51, CST 94-02

Africa is more than a geographical locale; it is an invention—a political, socio-cultural, and religious creation. Giving specific attention to the intersectional relationship between religion, race, and colonialism in the making of Africa, this course examines both the colonial invention of Africa and the creative imaginings of Africana peoples that have produced new Africas on the continent and its diaspora. Investigating the African-European cultural encounter beginning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the first section of this course will examine “religion,” “race,” and “gender” as central Western categories of thought for imagining and inventing the African Other. In the second section, students will alternatively explore how Africana peoples have utilized their religious cultures and artistic traditions to craft their own images and visions of Africa. Course materials will include novels, films, and academic texts, such as: Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, Oyeronke Oyewumi’s The Invention of Women, Michael Gomez’s Exchanging Our Country Marks, Dianne Stewart’s Three Eyes for the Journey, Ruy Blanes’ A Prophetic Trajectory, Julie Dash’s Daughters of the Dust (1991) and Black Panther (2018).
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  CL: CST 37, HIST 15

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 45  Introduction to Buddhism
Joseph Walser  1, T, 9:00-11:30 AM

The history, doctrines, and practices of Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia. Philosophical theories of the Buddha, meditation, and Nirvana, plus aspects of Buddhist social and institutional history. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement and the South/ Southeast Asian Culture and Region of Origin option.
REL 56    Contemporary Catholicism  
Peggy Hutaff    F+, TR, 12:00-1:15 PM    CL: AMER 94-03

A study of the complex landscape of contemporary Catholicism in the U.S., 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; dialogues around ethical issues, such as contraception, abortion, diverse sexual identities, and lifestyles; controversies over women’s ordination, optional priestly celibacy, and divorce; calls for change from feminist and other liberation-theological and social justice initiatives; parish closings; disclosures of clergy sexual abuse; the aesthetics and religious imagination of Catholic culture in its 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 64/164    Jesus from the 1st to the 21st Century  
Jennifer Eyl    G+, MW, 1:30-2:45 PM

May be taken as lower or upper level

Was Jesus a gentle shepherd of the people who taught kindness, forgiveness, and charity? Or, was Jesus an apocalyptic avenger who will return with fire to destroy the world? Does Jesus love capitalism and neoliberalism? Is Jesus a feminist? This course offers critical analysis of the many ways in which the figure of Jesus has been imagined and reimagined since the first century. Students read many ancient accounts of Jesus (canonical and noncanonical), and examine shifting visual representations from the third to the twenty-first century (in art and film). We will examine how “Jesus” has been put to use in the intersecting arenas of politics, gender relations, race/ethnicity, and economics from antiquity to today. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.
**REL 104 Feminist Theologies**

Peggy Hutaft  
H+, TR, 1:30-2:45 PM  
CL: WGSS 140

“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 since the 1960’s 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 76 After God: Atheism and Secularism**

Ken Garden  
I+, MW, 3:00-4:15 PM

What is religion, and can people live without it? This course explores the question by looking at Atheism, the rejection of the existence of god/s, and Secularism, the removal of religion from public life. We will compare ancient atheisms, such as Epicureanism, to that of contemporary “New Atheists,” to look at what is at stake in different arguments for atheism and what kind of value systems they entail. We will also engage with different theories of the origins of Western secularism and its implications for modern life. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.
REL 153  Divine Love in Islam
Ken Garden     E+, MW, 10:30-11:45 AM

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.

REL 106  Religion, Sexuality, and Violence
Elizabeth Lemons     D+, TR, 10:30-11:45 AM

This course will analyze representative ethical and theological positions on current issues related to violence/nonviolence and sexuality in the U.S. We will look at the treatment of these issues in a variety of contemporary religious and secular traditions. Topics include responses to war, terrorism, structural oppressions (such as racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism), and sexual violence, as well as controversies around reproductive rights and same-sex marriage. This course counts towards the Humanities distribution requirement.