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 image: Hieronymus Bosch, “Paradise: Ascent of the Blessed” (1500–04). Oil on panel, 86.5 x 39.5 cm. Palazzo Ducale, Venice.

### REL 01  Introduction to Religion
- Teacher: Walser
- Days: T
- Time: 9:00-11:30 AM

### REL 21  Introduction to Hebrew Bible
- Teacher: Hutaff
- Days: F+ TTh
- Time: 12:00-1:15 PM

### REL 36  A Global History of Christianity to the Middle Ages
- Teacher: Eyl
- Days: K+
- Time: 4:30-5:45 PM
- *CLST: HIST 9*

### REL 42  Religion and Politics in American History
- Teacher: Curtis
- Days: E+
- Time: 10:30-11:45 AM
- *CLST: HIST 126, AMER 194-05*

### REL 48  Introduction to Islam
- Teacher: Dhanani
- Days: L+
- Time: 4:30-5:45 PM

### REL 70  Life After Death
- Teacher: Eyl
- Days: G+
- Time: 1:30-2:45 PM

### REL 99  Theory and Method in the Study of Religion
- Teacher: Lemons
- Days: D+
- Time: 10:30-11:45 AM

### REL 100  Religion and Film
- Teacher: Lemons
- Days: F+
- Time: 12:00-1:15 PM

### REL 102  Religion, Race, and Nation
- Teacher: Curtis
- Days: 7
- Time: 1:30-4:00 PM
- *CLST: HIST 127, AMER 180-10*

### REL 141  Indian Philosophies
- Teacher: Walser
- Days: 10, M
- Time: 6:30-9:00 PM
- *CLST: PHIL 122*

### REL 148  Modern Hinduism
- Teacher: Hatcher
- Days: J+
- Time: 3:00-4:15 PM

### REL 192  Independent Study

### REL 199  Senior Honors Thesis

### Courses Co-Listed with Religion

| REL 04 | Introduction to World Art 1 | FAH 01 |
| REL 11 | Buddhist Art | FAH 11 |
| REL 12 | The Arts of Japan | FAH 12 |
| REL 28/128 | Medieval Art in the Mediterranean: Pagans, Jews, Christians, Muslims | FAH 28/128 |
| REL 68 | Martin Luther: The Man & His Era | GER 68; HIST 116 |
| REL 73 | Aspects of Sephardic Tradition | JS 73 |
| REL 87 | Introduction the Talmud | JS 87 |
| REL 132 | The Book of Genesis | JS 132 |
| REL 143 | Sociology of Religion | SOC 143 |
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*

**Elizabeth Lemons**  
Senior Lecturer  
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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 01  Introduction to Religion
Joseph Walser  T  9:00-11:30 AM

An introduction to the field of religion to give students an understanding of the basic elements of the subject. The focus this year will be on the various relationships between religion and political power. Through this lens, we will examine pivotal texts, doctrines and monuments in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.

REL 21  Introduction to Hebrew Bible
Peggy Hutaff  F+ TTh  12:00-1:15 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.

Course Descriptions
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 48  Introduction to Islam
Alnoor Dhanani  L+  TTh  4:30-5:45 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 70  Life After Death
Jennifer Eyl  G+  MW  1:30-2:45 PM

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.

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 141  Indian Philosophies**
Joseph Walser  
10  M  6:30-9:00 PM  
**CLST: PHIL 122**  
Prerequisites: REL 43, 44, or 45; or PHIL 33; or permission of instructor.

Seminar on the doctrines and arguments of the major Indian schools of philosophy (Samkhya, Buddhist, Vedanta, Nyaya-Vaisesika, and Navya-Nyaya). How these schools attempt to ground their religious systems in logical argumentation about the human soul, God, and the path to nirvana. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, World Civilization requirement and the South and Southeast Asian Culture option.

**REL 102  Religion, Race, and Nation**
Heather Curtis  
7  W  1:30-4:00 PM  
**CLST: HIST 127, AMER 180-10**  
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 or Social Sciences distribution requirement.
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.