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.

Back photo credit: Methodist camp meeting, March 1, 1819. Engraving. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Times</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REL 01</td>
<td>Introduction to Religion</td>
<td>Walser</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>9:00-11:30 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL 21</td>
<td>Introduction to Hebrew Bible</td>
<td>Hutaff</td>
<td>TTh</td>
<td>1:30-2:45 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 42</td>
<td>Religion &amp; Politics in American History</td>
<td>Curtis</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>10:30-11:45 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 43</td>
<td>Asian Religions</td>
<td>Hatcher</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>3:00-4:15 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL 45</td>
<td>Introduction to Buddhism</td>
<td>Walser</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6:30-9:00 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 48</td>
<td>Introduction to Islam</td>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>TTh</td>
<td>8:05-9:20 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 99</td>
<td>Theory and Method in the Study of Religion</td>
<td>Lemons</td>
<td>TTh</td>
<td>10:30-11:45 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 105</td>
<td>Re-imagining God</td>
<td>Lemons</td>
<td>TTh</td>
<td>12:00-1:15 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 152</td>
<td>Islam and Modernity</td>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>TTh</td>
<td>3:00-4:15 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 194-03</td>
<td>Islam and Modernity – IR seminar level</td>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>TTh</td>
<td>3:00-4:15 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 192</td>
<td>Independent Study</td>
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<td>REL 199</td>
<td>Senior Honors Thesis</td>
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Courses Co-Listed with Religion

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Department</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REL 04</td>
<td>Introduction to World Art 1</td>
<td>FAH 01</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 05</td>
<td>Arts of Asia</td>
<td>FAH 05</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 15</td>
<td>Japanese Architecture</td>
<td>FAH 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 28/128</td>
<td>Medieval Art in the Mediterranean: Pagans, Jews, Christians, Muslims</td>
<td>FAH 28/128</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 73</td>
<td>Aspects of Sephardic Tradition</td>
<td>JS 73</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 87</td>
<td>Introduction the Talmud</td>
<td>JS 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL 120</td>
<td>Armenian Art, Architecture and Politics</td>
<td>FAH 120</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 124</td>
<td>Early Medievel Art</td>
<td>FAH 124</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 132</td>
<td>The Book of Genesis</td>
<td>JS 132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL 157</td>
<td>Theories of Spiritual Development</td>
<td>CD 157</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Brian Hatcher
Professor | Packard Chair of Theology | Department Chair
Eaton Hall, Room 314 | brian.hatcher@tufts.edu
Hinduism and Religion in Modern South Asia

Joseph Walser
Associate Professor
Eaton Hall, Room 329 | joseph.walser@tufts.edu
Buddhism and Religion in Ancient South Asia

Heather Curtis
Associate Professor
Eaton Hall, Room 316A | heather.curtis@tufts.edu
History of Christianity and American Religions

Kenneth Garden
Associate Professor
Eaton Hall, Room 313 | ken.garden@tufts.edu
Islam and Sufism

Jennifer Eyl (on leave)
Assistant Professor
Eaton Hall, Room 312 | jennifer.eyl@tufts.edu
Ancient Christianity and Religions of the Ancient World

Peggy Hutaff
Senior Lecturer
Eaton Hall, Room 316B | peggy.hutaff@tufts.edu
Christian Studies

Elizabeth Lemons
Senior Lecturer
Eaton Hall, Room 316B | elizabeth.lemons@tufts.edu
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  1   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   H+  TTh  1:30-2:45 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.
“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 43  Asian Religions
Brian Hatcher  I+  MW  3:00-4:15 PM
An introduction to the major religious traditions of Asia that seeks to promote critical reflection on and imaginative engagement with the history, texts, and practices central to Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, World Civilization requirement, East Asian Culture/Diasporas and Region of Origin, and South/Southeast Asian Culture and Region of Origin options.

REL 45  Introduction to Buddhism
Joseph Walser  10  M  6:30-9:00 PM
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.
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 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.
REL 105  Re-imagining God  
Elizabeth Lemons  F+  TTh  12:00-1:15 PM

Do genocides and nuclear weapons undermine ideas about God’s all-encompassing goodness and power? Why do some Christians maintain that “God is on the side of the oppressed”? Does science and/or reason disprove the existence of God? How do Christian thinkers respond to environmental issues? This course explores contemporary Christian thought and its criticism, focusing on representative responses to a range of social and intellectual challenges to traditional Christian beliefs. By considering questions raised by political/social oppression, secularization, and environmental issues, we will explore how post-WW II Catholic and Protestant thinkers and their critics have re-imagined the meaning of “God.” The course will draw on contemporary arts (e.g., film, literature) to enrich our understanding of these thinkers’ social contexts; we will also consider how their ideas relate to cultural images of “God.” Through consideration of a variety of contemporary perspectives, the course aims to foster students’ ability to think critically about Christian conceptions of God. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.
The radical transformation in human societies, economies, institutions, and world-views over the past 200 years known as modernity has posed challenges to all religious traditions. This course will begin with a survey of the major figures and movements in modern Islamic thought from the 19th century to the present and end with a survey of the contemporary religious landscape of Egypt, covering the Muslim Brotherhood, different trends in Salafism, and the “new preachers.” This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement, and the Middle Eastern Culture and South & Southeast Asian Culture options.