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, International Relations, and Civic Studies.

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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Fall 2020 Courses

REL 01  Introduction to Religion
Joseph Walser  VIRTUAL | 1, T, 9:00-11:30 AM  CL: CVS 15

REL 08  Law, Religion, and International Relations
Joseph Walser  VIRTUAL | 10, M, 6:30-9:00 PM  CL: CVS 124

REL 10-05  Islam in the West
Ken Garden  IN-PERSON | J+, TTh, 3:00-4:15 PM

REL 21  Introduction to Hebrew Bible
Peggy Hutaff  HYBRID | H+, TTh, 1:30-2:45 PM  CL: JS 21

REL 36  Global History of Christianity through the Middle Ages
Craig Tichelkamp  HYBRID | E+, MW, 10:30-11:45 AM  CL: HIST 09

REL 44  Introduction to Hinduism
Brian Hatcher  VIRTUAL | I+, MW, 3:00-4:15 PM

REL 48  Introduction to Islam
Ken Garden  IN-PERSON | F+, TTh, 12:00-1:15 PM

REL 99  Theory and Method in the Study of Religion
Elizabeth Lemons  HYBRID | D+, TTh, 10:30-11:45 AM

REL 100  Religion and Film
Elizabeth Lemons  HYBRID | F+, TTh, 12:00-1:15 PM  CL: FMS 177

REL 103  Martyrs, Mystics, And Melancholics: Christian Spirituality and The Body
Craig Tichelkamp  HYBRID | G+, MW, 1:30-2:45 PM

REL 192  Independent Study
REL 199  Senior Honors Thesis

IN-PERSON: courses will meet for regularly scheduled sessions but may be open to virtual participants
HYBRID: courses will have a mix of in-person and virtual class sessions
VIRTUAL: courses will be fully online with both synchronous and asynchronous elements
If you have questions about specific courses, please contact the instructor

Courses in other departments or programs

REL 10-03  Introduction to Jewish Mysticism  JS 92-01
REL 87  Introduction to the Talmud  JS 87
REL 132  Book of Genesis and Interpretation  JS 132
REL 134  Myth, Ritual, and Symbol  ANTH 132
Faculty

Heather Curtis  |  Associate Professor
*On Leave AY 2020-2021*
Eaton Hall, Room 316A | heather.curtis@tufts.edu
History of Christianity and American Religions

Jennifer Eyl  |  Assistant Professor
*On Leave AY 2020-2021*
Eaton Hall, Room 312 | jennifer.eyl@tufts.edu
Ancient Christianity and Religions of the Ancient World

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

Brian Hatcher  |  Professor | Packard Chair of Theology | Interim Chair
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
*On Leave AY 2020-2021*
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

Craig Tichelkamp  |  Lecturer
Eaton Hall, Room 316A | craig.tichelkamp@tufts.edu
History of Christianity and Christian Spirituality

Joseph Walser  |  Associate Professor
Eaton Hall, Room 329 | joseph.walser@tufts.edu
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. 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.
REL 01  Introduction to Religion
Joseph Walser  VIRTUAL | 1, T, 9:00-11:30 AM  CL: CVS 15

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 08  Law, Religion, and International Relations
Joseph Walser  VIRTUAL | 10, M, 6:30-9:00 PM  CL: CVS 124

Relations between religion and the state seen through the lens of law and the day to day function of the judiciary in the US, India, and China. Ways that religions provide the justification and structural foundation for the exercise of political and legal power within and between states as well as ways that religions respond to legal constraints enacted by governments. Focus on the repercussions of “Freedom of Religion” both historically and internationally and the role of secularism in fostering distinctly modern forms of religiosity and 10 “fundamentalisms.” First Amendment case-law in the United States; issues of sovereignty, law, and the state in India and China. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.
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.
REL 44    Introduction to Hinduism
Brian Hatcher

VIRTUAL | I+, MW, 3:00-4:15 PM
An overview of the Hindu religious tradition, combining historical and textual study with investigation of modern and contemporary themes. Includes attention to the expression and contestation of Hinduism in colonial, postcolonial and diasporic contexts. Promotes critical reflection on Hindu beliefs, social structures, popular customs, and rituals. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement, and the South and Southeast Asian Culture option.

REL 36    Global History of Christianity to the Middle Ages
Craig Tichelkamp

HYBRID | E+, MW, 10:30-11:45 AM
CL: HIST 09
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.
The Islamic religious tradition is rooted in a shared scripture and sacred history that has inspired Muslim religiosity, thought, and culture since the 7th century. From these shared roots has come great diversity and constant transformation as Islam has spread from the Arabian Peninsula throughout the world over the past 1400 years. This course will begin by examining the complex scripture and sacred history that unites Muslims—Qur’an, Hadith, and Sira. It will then look at the ways that Muslims have made sense of their lives and changing world through their scripture and religious tradition, and argued with one another over the true meaning of Islam, from the Sunni-Shiite division, to law and mysticism, to understandings of issues relating to violence and women, to challenges posed by modernity. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement, the World Civilization requirement, and the Middle Eastern Culture option.
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.
History of Christian spirituality and the body from antiquity to the present. How have Christians in different historical and cultural contexts understood, debated and enacted the relationship between flesh and spirit, body and soul? How have gender, social location and political concerns shaped Christian ideas about and practices of suffering, sanctity, spirituality and embodiment? Topics and themes may include the meanings of incarnation and resurrection; devotional disciplines and ritual practice; sickness, health and healing; sexuality and family life; the politics of martyrdom, monasticism, and mysticism. This course counts toward the Humanities distribution requirement.

Religion

REL 103 Martyrs, Mystics, And Melancholics: Christian Spirituality and The Body
Craig Tichelkamp HYBRID | G+, MW, 1:30-2:45 PM

REL 192 Independent Study
REL 199 Senior Honors Thesis
Permission of instructor required
Contact religion@tufts.edu to register