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.

### Fall 2020 Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REL 01</td>
<td>Introduction to Religion</td>
<td>Joseph Walser</td>
<td>T, T</td>
<td>9:00-11:30 AM</td>
<td>CVS 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 08</td>
<td>Law, Religion, and International Relations</td>
<td>Joseph Walser</td>
<td>M, M</td>
<td>6:30-9:00 AM</td>
<td>CVS 124</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 21</td>
<td>Introduction to Hebrew Bible</td>
<td>Peggy Hutaff</td>
<td>H+, TTh</td>
<td>1:30-2:45 PM</td>
<td>JS 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 36</td>
<td>Global History of Christianity through the Middle Ages</td>
<td>Craig Tichelkamp</td>
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<td>HIST 09</td>
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<td>REL 44</td>
<td>Introduction to Hinduism</td>
<td>Brian Hatcher</td>
<td>I+, M</td>
<td>3:00-4:15 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 48</td>
<td>Introduction to Islam</td>
<td>Ken Garden</td>
<td>F+, TTh</td>
<td>12:00-1:15 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL 99</td>
<td>Theory and Method in the Study of Religion</td>
<td>Elizabeth Lemons</td>
<td>D+, TTh</td>
<td>10:30-11:45 AM</td>
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<td>REL 100</td>
<td>Religion and Film</td>
<td>Elizabeth Lemons</td>
<td>F+, TTh</td>
<td>12:00-1:15 PM</td>
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<td>Ken Garden</td>
<td>J+, 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 in other departments or programs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REL 10-03</td>
<td>Introduction to Jewish Mysticism</td>
<td>JS 92-01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL 87</td>
<td>Introduction to the Talmud</td>
<td>JS 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL 132</td>
<td>Book of Genesis and Interpretation</td>
<td>JS 132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL 134</td>
<td>Myth, Ritual, and Symbol</td>
<td>ANTH 132</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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
Eaton Hall, Room 316B | peggy.hutaff@tufts.edu
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 courses 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.
Course Descriptions

REL 01  Introduction to Religion
Joseph Walser  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 21  Introduction to Hebrew Bible
Peggy Hutaff  H+, TTh, 1:30-2:45 PM  CL: JS 21

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 08  Law, Religion, and International Relations
Joseph Walser  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.

REL 36  Global History of Christianity to the Middle Ages
Craig Tichelkamp  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.
REL 44    Introduction to Hinduism
Brian Hatcher   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 +inGu
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 48    Introduction to Islam
Ken Garden      F+, TTh, 12:00-1:15 PM
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.

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 100    Religion and Film
Elizabeth Lemons      F+, TTh, 12:00-1:15 PM
CL: 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.
REL 103 Martyrs, Mystics, And Melancholics: Christian Spirituality and The Body
Craig Tichelkamp  G+, MW, 1:30-2:45 PM

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.

REL 153 Sufism
Ken Garden  J+, TTh, 3:00-4:15 PM

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 192 Independent Study

REL 199 Senior Honors Thesis

Permission of instructor required
Contact religion@tufts.edu to register
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