

Religious Studies

Barry R. Huff, Professor

Heather Martin, Associate Professor

Gretchen Starr-LeBeau, Professor

The Religious Studies major gives you the opportunity to delve deeply into knowledge of the Bible, the history and Christian context of Christian Science, and the practices and beliefs of the world's major religious traditions. Throughout, you will be guided and challenged by faculty whose purpose is to empower you to think deeply and act compassionately. Your engagement with vital questions of meaning, community, and spirituality prepares you to contribute significantly to a world impacted at every level by religion.

In the Religious Studies major, you will interact with award-winning teachers, visit sites connected to various religious traditions, investigate the intersection of religion and culture, and discuss religious texts of profound meaning. The Religious Studies major provides the knowledge, tools, and context to equip you to explore religious questions, deepen your understanding of faith, and insightfully dialogue with others.

The major culminates in an independent project based on your area of interest, which could include biblical studies, Christian Science history, comparative religions, religion and culture, religious history, or a focus on a particular religious tradition.

If you have questions about the Religious Studies major or minor, including requirements or courses, please contact any member of the Religious Studies faculty.

Departmental Learning Outcomes

1. *Students will be biblically literate.*

Students will be able to interpret and analyze biblical texts in contexts. They will be able to apply biblical texts to contemporary faith and life.

2. *Students will be culturally engaged and historically informed global citizens.*

Students will be able to appraise religious traditions and sacred texts and their intersection with religion, society, and culture, historically and today.

3. *Students will be ethically motivated thinkers and doers.*

Students will be able to articulate ethical messages of theological texts and their contemporary application.

Major

- B.A. Major in Religious Studies (<http://catalog.principiacollege.edu/majors-minors/religious-studies/ba/>)

Minor

- Minor in Religious Studies (<http://catalog.principiacollege.edu/majors-minors/religious-studies/minor/>)

2 Religious Studies

- RELS 105 Religious Studies Internship** 1.0 SH []
Professional internship in off-campus, third-party setting to prepare student for a career directly related to Religious Studies. Position may be in any relevant area (e.g., Christian Science nursing, church activities, government, or nonprofits, including advancement, operations, management), but must provide professional career-based experience. Supports students in Religious Studies by providing context and practical experience applying concepts taught in the major.
Prerequisite: One RELS course at the 200 or 300 level.
Field of Study Restrictions: Religious Studies Majors and/or Minors only.
- RELS 110 The Old Testament** 3.0 SH [GEB]
Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures as history, as literature, and as a statement of faith. God's covenant with Israel forms a unifying motif, seen against the background of the ancient Near East. A brief overview of the New Testament is also included.
- RELS 120 The New Testament** 3.0 SH [GEB]
An introductory overview of the historical context, literary genres, and theological and ethical messages of the New Testament, with focus on its contemporary relevance, the identity of Jesus, and what it means to be his follower. A brief overview of the Old Testament is also included.
- RELS 130 World Religions** 3.0 SH [GEH]
An introduction to the world's religious traditions, including the three Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, and other traditions at the discretion of the instructor. This course provides an opportunity to learn about the diversity of religious practice in the world and prepares students for a world impacted by religion at every level.
- RELS 140 Moral Imagination** 3.0 SH [GEH]
Students explore how individual religious convictions can impact self and society. Students will identify the creative, ethical, and theological thinking of varied texts and consider how a moral imagination can help them to focus both their own religious beliefs and practices and empower them to be agents of change.
Class Level Restriction: Freshman and Sophomore only.
- RELS 150 Christian Contexts of C.S.** 3.0 SH [GEH]
Explore key themes in Christianity as related to Christian Science. The course will range from Jewish monotheism to primitive Christianity, the Protestant Reformation to Puritanism, the Christian contexts of the American revolution and civil war, up to the discovery and founding of Christian Science. A core emphasis will be the individual rights central to Christian Science: self-government, reason, and conscience.
- RELS 160 Topics** 3.0 SH []
An introduction to a topic in religious studies. The content varies, and the title will be extended to describe the current topic. May be taken a total of four times provided the topics differ.
- RELS 215 The Hebrew Prophets** 3.0 SH [GEH]
Prophecy as a quest for leadership and as insight into social and moral conditions in Israel before, during, and after the exile.
- RELS 218 Wisdom Literature and Psalms** 3.0 SH [GEH]
Close reading of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, with reference to wisdom traditions of the ancient Near East.
- RELS 222 The Bible and the Environment** 3.0 SH [GEH]
This course critically examines and interprets relevant biblical texts within the context of the current ecological crisis with the intent of articulating a biblical case that responds to the challenge to live faithfully and responsibly as stewards of the Earth and its resources.
- RELS 224 Christian Gospels** 3.0 SH [GEH]
An examination of the origins and development of Christian gospels in and outside the New Testament canon, as historical, literary, and theological products of the early Church, and of their contemporary interpretations.

RELS 227	Paul the Apostle	3.0 SH	[GEH]
An exploration of the life, letters, thought and impact of the prolific and controversial apostle. The book of Acts, Paul's letters and those attributed to him, are examined in order to better understand both the man and the message.			
RELS 230	Faith and Film	3.0 SH	[GEH]
Students will develop evaluative and critical skills for use in their encounter with the medium of film. These skills will be applied both to films with explicitly religious and spiritual themes, as well as to films in which such themes are more hidden and implicit. Students view, discuss, review, and research a variety of popular films.			
RELS 231	History of Christianity	3.0 SH	[GEH]
An exploration of the Christian churches from their beginnings in the apostolic period to their most recent expressions in the twenty-first century. The course considers how Christianity has shaped societies and how societies have shaped Christianity. Major movements, leading figures, theological developments, and religious trends will be examined to better understand the global spectrum of Christian expressions.			
RELS 240	Islam: History and Religion	3.0 SH	[GEH]
An introduction to the foundation and historical development of Islam, including intellectual trends, varieties of religious practice and belief, the role of issues such as gender, war, and politics in Islam in the past and present, and the emergence of fundamentalist and political Islam in the contemporary period. Also listed as HIST 240.			
RELS 260	Religion in America	3.0 SH	[GEH]
An historical survey of religious groups and movements that shaped and were shaped by the American experience.			
RELS 265	Comparative Religious Ecology	3.0 SH	[GEH]
This course addresses how various religious traditions understand the relationship between humanity, ecology, and the divine. Monotheistic, dharmic (such as Buddhism), and indigenous traditions will be addressed. The course also covers religiously informed environmental movements.			
RELS 270	Gender & Religion	3.0 SH	[GEH]
This course examines underlying assumptions about gender roles in the context of scripture and religious practice. It explores historical, cultural, and religious expectations about men's and women's attitudes and interests, and how those appear in scriptures and in various religious traditions. The title will be extended to describe the current topic. May be taken two times provided the topics differ.			
RELS 275	Christian Science Movement	3.0 SH	[GEH]
This course allows students to engage in in-depth study of specific aspects of the history and/or cultural practice of Christian Science at various times and places. May be repeated once provided the topics differ.			
RELS 284	Gender, Law, & Religion	3.0 SH	[GEH]
This course examines the intersection of concepts of gender, law, and religion historically and in the present. It addresses the importance of varied definitions of gender in religious life and in legal contexts, and the way in which historical, cultural, and religious expectations about gender have affected legal practices and theories. Also listed as HIST 284.			
RELS 300	Biblical Interpretation	3.0 SH	[]
An analysis and practicum of the methods scholars and others have used to interpret biblical literature, from antiquity to the present.			
Prerequisite: RELS 110 or RELS 120.			
Class Level Restriction: Junior and Senior only.			
RELS 304	Topics in Biblical Studies	1.0-3.0 SH	[]
A seminar on a topic in biblical studies at the advanced level. The content varies, and the title will be extended to describe the current topic. May be offered for variable credit from one to three semester hours. May be repeated up to a total of nine semester hours provided the topics differ.			
Prerequisite: RELS 110 or RELS 120.			
Class Level Restriction: Junior and Senior only.			

4 Religious Studies

RELS 307 Spiritual Autobiographies 3.0 SH [GEH]

In this course we will explore classic and contemporary spiritual autobiographies and learn about the practices of faith that sustained and challenged diverse religious people. Students study texts from different cultures and historical periods, discovering how historical and cultural context shapes faith. Through critical examination of the texts, students will reflect on their own spiritual journeys and identities.

Class Level Restriction: Sophomore and Junior and Senior only.

RELS 310 Topics in Religious Studies 1.0-3.0 SH []

A seminar on a topic in religious studies at the advanced level. The content varies, and the title will be extended to describe the current topic. Topic areas include comparative religions, history of religions, philosophy and ethics of religions, and religion in society. May be repeated up to a total of nine semester hours provided the topics differ.

Prerequisite: at least one RELS course.

RELS 320 Biblical Sites and (Con)texts 3.0 SH [GEH]

An examination of biblical sites in light of pertinent biblical texts as well as their ancient and contemporary contexts. This course includes critical analyses of land in the Bible and of biblical sites in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Secondly, this course addresses the role of these concepts in conflicts in the land of the Bible from antiquity to the present.

RELS 332 The Life of Mary Baker Eddy 3.0 SH [GEH]

An historical survey of the life and times of Mary Baker Eddy, from her childhood through her work as Discoverer, Founder, and Leader of Christian Science.

RELS 365 God and the Holocaust 3.0 SH [GEH]

This course helps students understand the historical background, context, events, and aftermath of the Holocaust. We will also be addressing the implications and repercussions of the Holocaust on religious practice and theology. Finally, the course is intended to encourage students independently to develop their own prayerful response to examples of violence and evil. Also listed as HIST 351.

Class Level Restriction: Sophomore and Junior and Senior only.

RELS 370 Jews, Christians, & Muslims 3.0 SH [GEH]

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam sometimes interact harmoniously, but at other periods have fought bitterly. This course compares these religions theologically, legally, and culturally; traces the history of the interactions among these religions; and also examines contemporary relations between these three religions. Also listed as HIST 370.

RELS 390 Seminar in Religious Studies 3.0 SH []

This course provides students with an understanding of the methodological tools used in the study of religion; it also gives students the opportunity to reflect upon which of those methods will be most helpful to them in undertaking a specific research project in which religion is a significant category of analysis.

Prerequisite: RELS 110 or RELS 120 and two RELS courses numbered 200 or above.

Class Level Restriction: Junior and Senior only.

RELS 401 Capstone Project 1.0-3.0 SH []

A selected topic, area, or problem providing opportunity for survey, investigation, research, creative activity, or approved travel-study. May be offered for variable credit from one to three semester hours. May be taken three times up to a total of six semester hours. May be offered on an independent contract basis.

Class Level Restriction: Junior and Senior only.