

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Department Website (<http://www.cas.sc.edu/relg/>)

Michael Dickson, *Interim Chair*

The Department of Religious Studies offers a Bachelor of Arts degree with the option for an intensive major, which has potential for a degree "With Distinction in Religious Studies" upon graduation. The department offers both a major and a minor in religious studies for students seeking a broad liberal arts education focused on the study of a range of complex issues. Students engage in a dynamic, multi-disciplinary investigation that involves insights from fields such as anthropology, history, philosophy, sociology, and theology. Most of all, however, the program of study embraces critical and careful thinking, honest analysis, and an openness to learning about new ideas.

## Programs

- Religious Studies Minor (<https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/archives/2020-2021/undergraduate/arts-sciences/religious-studies/religious-studies-minor/>)
- Religious Studies, B.A. (<https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/archives/2020-2021/undergraduate/arts-sciences/religious-studies/religious-studies-ba/>)

## Courses

### RELG 101 - Exploring Religion (3 Credits)

Beliefs and practices of the world's religions and the methods scholars use to study them.

**Carolina Core:** GSS

### RELG 120 - Comparative Religion (3 Credits)

Issues, theories, and debates that shape global religious traditions, cultures, and communities; examination of historical contexts and development, applying social scientific inquiry and methods to analyze relevant current circumstances and concerns.

### RELG 201 - Religion and Culture (3 Credits)

Exploration of the dynamic relationships between selected religions and cultures.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

### RELG 202 - Introduction to Reason and Faith (3 Credits)

Critical study of the intellectual strands leading to Western disconnections between reason and faith; the search for balance between belief and reason with emphasis on contemporary developments.

### RELG 204 - Introduction to Religions in America (3 Credits)

The diversity of religious traditions in America.

### RELG 205 - Morality, Ethics, and Religion (3 Credits)

Values and ethics as developed, contested, and transmitted through a variety of religious practices.

**Carolina Core:** VSR

### RELG 206 - History of the Devil (3 Credits)

A survey of the beliefs and practices associated with the demonic and the Devil from c 500 B.C.E. to the 20th century.

**Cross-listed course:** HIST 215

### RELG 207 - Introduction to African American Religions (3 Credits)

The variety of religious traditions of African Americans, with emphasis on the contexts in which they developed.

**Cross-listed course:** AFAM 207

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Diversity and Social Advocacy, GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

### RELG 208 - Biblical Archaeology (3 Credits)

The fundamental elements of human culture as it relates to biblical archaeology. The defining characteristics of different kinds of society through interdependency of language and culture. The affects of modern world interests in defining / redefining this area.

**Cross-listed course:** ANTH 226

### RELG 210 - Introduction to Hinduism (3 Credits)

An interdisciplinary examination of the complexity of the Hindu religious and philosophical traditions covering such topics as deity, self, cosmos, body ritual, karma, and yoga.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Global Learning, GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

### RELG 219 - Ethics and the Good Life in Asian Religions (3 Credits)

Fundamental questions of ethical and moral inquiry in the religious traditions of Asia.

### RELG 220 - Introduction to Buddhism (3 Credits)

An introduction to Buddhism from a social historical perspective that examines Buddhist religious goals and practices in the local contexts of India, Sri Lanka, Tibet, China, and Japan.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Global Learning, GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

### RELG 221 - Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice (3 Credits)

Buddhist methods of meditation, asceticism, and similar disciplinary practices for personal and social transformation. Examination of classic Buddhist works from diverse cultures with attention to modern American practices.

### RELG 230 - Introduction to Judaism (3 Credits)

Overview of Jewish experiences, beliefs, practices from a contextual point of view.

**Cross-listed course:** JSTU 230

### RELG 240 - Introduction to Christianity (3 Credits)

Introduction to the Christian religion, with emphasis on the history of the major traditions and movements that have shaped the multicultural practices and social impact of modern global Christianity.

### RELG 250 - Introduction to Islam (3 Credits)

Interpretation of primary materials reflecting many dimensions of the Islamic religious tradition, such as the Qur'an, Hadith, legal, and theological and mystical writings, art, rituals, and contemporary Muslim voices.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Global Learning, GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

### RELG 260 - Anthropology of Magic and Religion (3 Credits)

A comparative examination of such topics as ritual, cosmology, revitalization movements, magic, witchcraft, myth, and possession.

**Cross-listed course:** ANTH 206

### RELG 261 - Global Human Religiosity (3 Credits)

The human experience and expression of what it means to be religious.

**RELG 270 - Religion and the Arts (3 Credits)**

Literary, visual, and/or performance art associated with religious discourse and practice.

**Carolina Core:** AIU

**RELG 291 - Special Topics in Religious Studies (3 Credits)**

Special topics in Religious Studies. May be repeated as content varies by title.

**RELG 301 - Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) (3 Credits)**

Modern study of the Hebrew Bible from historical, literary, and archeological points of view. Reading and analysis of texts in translation.

**Cross-listed course:** JSTU 301

**RELG 302 - New Testament (3 Credits)**

Historical and critical study of the New Testament writings, with emphasis on origins, production, and transmission.

**RELG 310 - Paul and the Philosophers (3 Credits)**

Paul's teachings and practices, as shown in his letters and how these resemble those of various cultural formations of his time, with emphasis on moral teachings and schools of Hellenistic philosophy.

**RELG 311 - Gospel Literature and the Formation of Christianity (3 Credits)**

Gospels about Jesus from the 1st and 2nd centuries CE; analysis with attention to canonical texts as well as those not contained in today's major canonical collections; assessment of gospel literature in competing configurations of Christianity during its formative years.

**RELG 312 - The Life and Letters of Paul (3 Credits)**

A critical study in the life and thought of Paul, his letters to the early Christian churches, his role in the expansion of the Christian movement, and his continuing influence today.

**RELG 313 - The Writings of John the Apostle (3 Credits)**

Writings of the Apostle John in the context of first century Mediterranean history as well as the changing interpretations over the centuries up to and including current methodologies of academic study of these ancient texts.

**RELG 314 - Religion and Culture (3 Credits)**

The impact of religion on modern Western culture and, in turn, of culture on religion. Selected topics: Holocaust, Puritanism, fundamentalism, Islam, Freud, "love" wisdom tradition, "civil religion."

**RELG 315 - Early Christianity (3 Credits)**

Christianity in the 1st through 5th centuries; its formation as seen through the literature of early Christians and their detractors.

**RELG 316 - Imagining Jesus: Antiquity to Present (3 Credits)**

Conceptions and representations of Jesus in antiquity up to the present; including the gospel traditions as well as literature, art, and film.

**RELG 320 - The Greek New Testament (3 Credits)**

Readings in the Gospels and Epistles.

**Prerequisites:** GREK 121 and GREK 122.

**Cross-listed course:** GREK 305

**RELG 321 - Old Testament Prophets (3 Credits)**

Old Testament prophets, the nature of their prophetic experience, their place in the life of ancient Israel, their message, and their continuing theological significance.

**RELG 332 - Christian Theology (3 Credits)**

Basic Christian teachings concerning God, creation, sin, the person and work of Christ, and life after death.

**RELG 333 - Sex, Gender, and Religion (3 Credits)**

Gender and sexuality in the shaping of social and individual identity in religious contexts.

**Cross-listed course:** WGST 333

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Diversity and Social Advocacy, GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

**RELG 334 - Asian Religious Philosophy (3 Credits)**

A historical overview and critical introduction to the philosophical practices of Asian religions; an examination of the basic worldviews, thought frameworks, and foundational questions of the main schools of premodern Asian religious philosophy.

**Cross-listed course:** PHIL 315

**RELG 335 - Christian Ethics (3 Credits)**

Basic Christian teachings concerning human nature and conduct; historical foundations and contemporary applications.

**RELG 336 - Social Justice & Religion (3 Credits)**

Historical, contextual, and developmental aspects of social justice as a significant function of religion.

**RELG 337 - Religion and Politics (3 Credits)**

Relationships between religion and the structure, institutions, and content of a nation's political processes.

**RELG 338 - Sociology of Religion (3 Credits)**

Sociological perspectives related to selected aspects of religious behavior. Includes references to non-Western religions.

**Cross-listed course:** SOCY 307

**Carolina Core:** GSS

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Diversity and Social Advocacy

**RELG 339 - Law and Religious Traditions (3 Credits)**

The study of the role of law, legal argumentation, and legal contexts in one or more religious traditions.

**RELG 340 - God and the Gods (3 Credits)**

The worship of Yahweh and other deities in ancient Israel with special attention to the evolution of monotheism.

**RELG 343 - Religions of the African Diaspora (3 Credits)**

Explore development/theologies of African/African Diaspora religions; examine misunderstandings; arrive at a more sophisticated and nuanced vision of these religions and the people who hold them.

**Cross-listed course:** AFAM 343

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Diversity and Social Advocacy, GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

**RELG 344 - Hindu Devotional Traditions (3 Credits)**

One of the main paths to the divine in the Hindu tradition; deep devotion to a god or goddess, or bhakti, with expressions in art, poetry, mythology, theology, and ascetic fervor.

**Prerequisites:** At least one 100- or 200-level Religious Studies course.

**RELG 349 - Tantra: Sex, Power, and Bliss in South Asian Religions (3 Credits)**

Investigation of the Buddhist and Hindu religious ideas and practices known as tantra. Topics include tantric views of the human body, freedom, and consciousness; tantric use of sex, imagination, visualization, and manipulation of bodily energy; role of tantric traditions in south Asian religions and cultures.

**RELG 350 - Buddhist Stories, Poetry, and Films (3 Credits)**

Buddhist stories, poetry, novels, and films from various cultures and times examined for how they creatively convey their religious ideals. Study of great works of Buddhist writing, in English translation, analyzing their techniques and examining how Buddhists use film today for similar aims.

**RELG 351 - Yoga: The Art of Spiritual Transformation (3 Credits)**

Examination of major South Asian religions—Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Islam, emphasizing the historical context for changing religious ideals, and the commingling of traditions.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Global Learning, GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

**RELG 352 - Religions of East Asia (3 Credits)**

Expansion of Buddhism beyond India, development of Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, and other national religious expressions in China and Japan.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Global Learning, GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

**RELG 354 - Islamic Institutions and Traditions (3 Credits)**

The religious, political, social and economic institutions and intellectual and scholarly traditions developed by Muslim societies throughout Afro-Eurasia from late antiquity to the present.

**Cross-listed course:** HIST 386

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Diversity and Social Advocacy, GLD: Global Learning, GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

**RELG 358 - The Qur'an and Hadith (3 Credits)**

Intensive study of the Qur'an and Hadith: its major themes and literary quality, with attention to a range of classical and contemporary discourses about the Qur'an, both Islamic and Western.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Global Learning

**RELG 359 - Islamic Theology and Philosophical Thought (3 Credits)**

Close reading and discussion of primary texts (the Qur'an, Hadith, creeds, classical theological arguments, and modern writings) on major theological problems such as salvation, God, revelation, and religious pluralism.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Global Learning

**RELG 361 - Psychology of Religion (3 Credits)**

The development of the religious consciousness and its various expressions, the psychological dynamics of growth and conversion, response to crisis, and the relation of spiritual practice to health and wholeness.

**Cross-listed course:** PSYC 320

**RELG 362 - Science, Magic and Religion (3 Credits)**

Occultism as a link between science and religion and its central role in Western intellectual and cultural history; the historical development of the science-magic-religion continuum in the Islamo-Christian world from late antiquity to present.

**Cross-listed course:** HIST 389

**RELG 367 - Sufism (3 Credits)**

A survey of Islamic mysticism, its foundation in the Quranic revelation doctrines and practices, subsequent development, significance within Islamic civilization, and role in the contemporary world, both Islamic and non-Islamic.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Global Learning

**RELG 368 - Messiahs, Mystics and Rebels in the Islamic World (3 Credits)**

Representative messianic movements, millenarian visionaries and apocalyptic imaginings in the Islamic world from the 7th century to the present, with attention to related developments in the Jewish and Christian traditions over the last two millennia.

**Cross-listed course:** HIST 387

**RELG 369 - Islamic Law (3 Credits)**

Close reading and discussion of primary texts (scriptural, classical, and modern) and accounts of court cases, focuses on one aspect of Islamic law such as equity, violence, authority, or gender.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Global Learning

**RELG 372 - Religion and Existentialism (3 Credits)**

Existentialist thought as adapted by theologians to interpret religious experience and the biblical message. The movement from philosophical protest against essentialism into imaginative description of existence revealed under stress.

**RELG 373 - Literature and Film of the Holocaust (3 Credits)**

Film, poetry and literature created in response to the Holocaust as the means for a decades long cultural discussion, in European and American societies, of the moral and religious implications of the Holocaust on our self-understandings as religious and moral beings.

**Cross-listed course:** JSTU 373

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Global Learning

**RELG 374 - Religion in the South (3 Credits)**

Regional faith traditions in Southern historical-cultural context: evangelical piety, denominational tradition, revival, African-American church, Lost Cause idealism.

**RELG 376 - Holy Women (3 Credits)**

Holy women from various periods and religious traditions, and how they demonstrate the different ways communities understand ideas of holiness, from piety, martyrdom, monasticism and mysticism to social action.

**Cross-listed course:** WGST 376

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Professional and Civic Engagement Leadership Experiences

**RELG 377 - Religion and Literature (3 Credits)**

Classic literary works from one or more religious traditions which have shaped and/or expressed the core ethos of a religious tradition or of the more general human concern for the religious and spiritual; and/or general literature (fiction, poetry, plays, essays, non-fiction) which incorporates religious or spiritual references, ideas, symbolism, allusions.

**RELG 381 - Jewish History I: Late Antiquity to 1500 (3 Credits)**

The religious, cultural, social, and political conditions that shaped the Jewish experience in the Near East and Europe from late antiquity to 1500.

**Cross-listed course:** HIST 383, JSTU 381

**RELG 382 - Jewish History II: 1500 to the Present (3 Credits)**

Case studies of Jewish history in Europe, America, and the land of Israel, 1500 to the present.

**Cross-listed course:** HIST 384, JSTU 382

**RELG 387 - Jews and Muslims (3 Credits)**

Jewish-Muslim relations in the Near East and the US; an exploration of Jewish-Muslim encounters, issues of religious law, politics, radical religious ideologies, and their repercussions for today.

**Cross-listed course:** JSTU 387

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Diversity and Social Advocacy

**RELG 388 - Kabbalah: Science, Religion and Nature in Western History (3 Credits)**

Historical investigation of kabbalah, a philosophical system and mystical current common to Judaism, Islam and Christianity, from the medieval period to the present; focus on its formative role in early modern Western cosmology and science, and its ecological implications today.

**Cross-listed course:** HIST 388, JSTU 388

**RELG 390 - Theories of Religion (3 Credits)**

A historical overview of major theories and approaches in the academic study of religion.

**RELG 399 - Independent Study (3-6 Credits)**

Contract approved by instructor, advisor, and department chair is required for undergraduate students.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Research

**RELG 410 - Origins of Western Morality (3 Credits)**

Greek and Roman ethical theory, its adaptation into Judean and Christian traditions and impact on Western models of morality.

**RELG 412 - Faith, Doubt, and God (3 Credits)**

Judeo-Christian views of God; modern criticism and contemporary responses.

**RELG 471 - Interfaith Dialogues in the 21st Century (3 Credits)**

The variety of contemporary discourse on interfaith issues and views of the diversity and range of religions with particular emphasis on global dynamics of religious dialogues.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Diversity and Social Advocacy

**RELG 472 - Religion and Science: Human Questions (3 Credits)**

Relationships between religion and science, especially considering impacts of mutual responses and questions with respect to human life in the 21st century.

**RELG 473 - Religions, Medicines, and Healing (3 Credits)**

Inter-relationships between religion, medicines, and healing; examining perspectives and practices, interfaces and influences across cultures.

**RELG 474 - Spiritual Lives (3 Credits)**

Contemporary and historical life-stories about spiritual or religious figures as presented in various forms such as biography, autobiography, hagiography, art, and/or film; explores both the specific issues within unique accounts and idealized, general models for spiritual lives.

**RELG 475 - Visions of Apocalypse (3 Credits)**

Symbolic visions, tours of heaven and hell, cosmic battles, divine judgment, messianic figures, prophecy, or other forms of revelation as found in literature, art, or social movements from diverse geographical and historical locations.

**Cross-listed course:** JSTU 475

**RELG 488 - Perspective in Religious Studies (3 Credits)**

Build an understanding of the contexts of religious studies; participate in ongoing scholarly discussions; and expand the serious student's skills in critically analyzing religions.

**RELG 491 - Advanced Special Topics in Religious Studies (3 Credits)**

Advanced special topics in Religious Studies. May be repeated as content varies by title.

**RELG 492 - Special Topics in Research in Religious Studies (1 Credit)**

Focused research on special topics in Religious Studies. May be repeated as content varies by title.

**RELG 498 - Advanced Project (3 Credits)**

A supervised research project or other creative work, required of intensive majors, to be completed in the senior year.

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Research

**RELG 514 - The Quest of the Historical Jesus (3 Credits)**

Examination of studies on the historical Jesus from 1778 to the present. Attention given to the relationship between "the Jesus of history" and "the Christ of faith".

**RELG 551 - Tradition and Transformations in Islamic Cultures (3 Credits)**

Islam as a dynamic cultural tradition: emphasis on the tension between Islamization and the larger Islamic tradition.

**Cross-listed course:** ANTH 515

**Graduation with Leadership Distinction:** GLD: Diversity and Social Advocacy, GLD: Global Learning

**RELG 552 - Buddhist Studies Seminar (3 Credits)**

The examination of a theme or problem central to the study of Buddhism in a seminar emphasizing intensive reading and creative discussion.

Course may be repeated since topics change.