

Religious Studies, BA

A religious studies major enables students to gain competence in global religious diversity and develop the skills necessary for living and working effectively in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

A degree in religious studies is often added as a second major to enhance students' education and training by stimulating their curiosity, expanding their imaginations, deepening their thinking, and helping them to better understand themselves and other people.

The department also provides its majors and minors with support for undergraduate research, for example in the form of scholarships, awards for the UI Undergraduate Research Festival, research assistant positions, and other support.

Learning Outcomes

Courses in religious studies help students to gain competence in global religious diversity by:

- understanding influential religious ideas and traditions;
- learning critical approaches to interpreting historical events and explaining the role of religion in societies;
- gaining analytical reading and writing skills and cross-cultural communication strategies;
- developing practical strengths to function well in diverse societies and a globalized world; and
- employing technologies to interpret ancient texts, images, and artifacts, and studying the output of new tools including radio, TV, and digital media.

Requirements

The Bachelor of Arts in religious studies requires 30 s.h. of coursework, including 15 s.h. that are distributed across at least three of the department's five core areas: social justice, equity, inclusion, and religion; religion in history; religion in global context; religion, values, and culture; and special topics and events. The remaining s.h. may be taken from any core area or religious studies course (prefix RELS). Of the 30 s.h., at least two courses (6 s.h.) must be numbered 3000 or above.

A minimum of 15 s.h. for the major must be earned at the University of Iowa. Students must maintain a grade-point average of at least 2.00 in all courses for the major. Courses for the major may not be taken pass/nonpass.

Students must complete the college's graduation requirements, which include at least 120 s.h. of coursework and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences GE CLAS Core. A number of the courses for the major count toward the GE CLAS Core. Students can identify courses approved for the GE CLAS Core by viewing the course descriptions. Students may count up to 56 s.h. of coursework from the Department of Religious Studies (prefix RELS) toward credit required for the Bachelor of Arts degree.

The BA with a major in religious studies requires the following coursework.

Requirements	Hours
Core Area Courses	15
Additional Coursework	15

Core Area Courses

Students select 15 s.h. (typically five courses) that are distributed across at least three of the department's five core areas.

Social Justice, Equity, Inclusion, and Religion

Course #	Title	Hours
RELS:1015	Global Religious Conflict and Diversity	3
RELS:1041	African American Religion and Popular Culture	3
RELS:1350	Introduction to African American Religions	3
RELS:1810	Happiness in a Difficult World	3
RELS:2000	Engaging Religious Diversity for Leadership and Entrepreneurship	3
RELS:2250	Jews, Judaism, and Social Justice	3
RELS:2330	Wealth, Inequality, and Islam	3
RELS:3745	Twentieth- and Twenty-first-Century African American Religion: Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter	3

Religion in History

Course #	Title	Hours
RELS:1001	Judaism, Christianity, and Islam	3
RELS:1225	Medieval Religion and Culture	3
RELS:1250	Modern Religion and Culture	3
RELS:2152	The Gnostic Religion: Knowledge, Institution, and Salvation	3
RELS:2775	The Bible and the Holocaust	3
RELS:2930	Digital Media and Religion	3
RELS:3190	Medieval to Modern: The Birth of Protestantism	3

Religion in Global Context

Course #	Title	Hours
RELS:1130	Introduction to Islamic Civilization	3
RELS:1404	Introduction to Asian Religions	3
RELS:1506	Introduction to Buddhism	3
RELS:1670	Korea in the World	3
RELS:2515	Introduction to Chinese Religious Thought: How Best to Live	3
RELS:2852	Women in Islam and the Middle East	3
RELS:3655	Zen Buddhism	3
RELS:3850	Perspectives on Migration	3

Religion, Values, and Culture

Course #	Title	Hours
RELS:1070	Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	3
RELS:1080	Introduction to the New Testament	3
RELS:1702	Religion in America Today	3
RELS:1903	Quest for Human Destiny	3
RELS:2240	Introduction to Jewish Studies	3
RELS:2260	Hard Cases in Healthcare at the Beginning of Life	3
RELS:2265	Hard Cases in Healthcare at the End of Life	3
RELS:2272	Gods and Superheroes: Mythologies for a Modern World	3
RELS:2877	Sport and Religion in America	3

Special Topics and Current Events

Course #	Title	Hours
RELS:1050	Big Ideas: Introduction to Information, Society, and Culture	3
RELS:2122	The Place of Animals in the Hebrew Bible	3
RELS:2674	Food, Body, and Belief: A Global Perspective	3
RELS:2980	Religion and Contemporary Popular Culture	3
RELS:3055	Death, Dying, and Beyond in Asian Religions	3
RELS:3267	Dissent and Rebellion in Islamic Societies: Was There an Arab Spring?	3
RELS:3325	Bioethics and Religious Diversity	3
RELS:4893	Classical Arabic: Vocabulary, Syntax, and Grammar	1-3
RELS:4930	Internship in Research on Rights and Remedial Justice	1-3
RELS:4960	Individual Study: Undergraduates	arr.

Additional Coursework

Students select another 15 s.h. from any core area list or any other religious studies course.

Honors

Honors in the Major

To graduate with honors in the religious studies major, students must have a UI cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of at least 3.33, a minimum requirement set by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Students must also maintain a UI religious studies GPA of at least 3.50. Beyond the 30 s.h. required for the major, students must take the 3 s.h. course RELS:4975 Honors Essay under the supervision of a faculty advisor and complete an approved honors thesis. Students often choose to take RELS:4960 Individual

Study: Undergraduates or RELS:4970 Honors Tutorial in preparation for taking RELS:4975 Honors Essay, but this is not a requirement. Copies of the thesis are submitted to the Department of Religious Studies and may be published through Iowa Research Online.

University of Iowa Honors Program

Students also have the opportunity to pursue advanced studies and activities through the University of Iowa Honors Program. Visit Honors at Iowa to learn about the university's honors program.

Students do not have to be members of the University of Iowa Honors Program to write an Honors Thesis or graduate with honors in the religious studies major.

Career Advancement

Because religion and religious traditions impact every aspect of culture and society, a major in religious studies can prepare students for many different career paths while at the same time enhancing the quality of their everyday lives and interactions with others. Most employers look for employees who have some experience with different cultures, are comfortable interacting with people from various religious backgrounds, have curious, open, and creative minds, and collaborate well with others, all of which are fostered through the academic study of the world's religions. Religious studies majors also develop strong speaking and writing skills that prepare them for advancement into leadership positions.

Graduates have gone on to careers in media and communication, social work, nursing, public health, government, and nonprofit organizations. They have also pursued advanced degrees in the humanities, social sciences, law, and medical professions.

Students should contact the Department of Religious Studies to learn how the BA with a major in religious studies can benefit them.

The Pomerantz Career Center also offers many resources to help students find internships and jobs.

Academic Plans

Four-Year Graduation Plan

The following checkpoints list the minimum requirements students must complete by certain semesters in order to stay on the university's Four-Year Graduation Plan.

Before the fifth semester begins: one or two courses in the major.

Before the seventh semester begins: three to six courses in the major and at least 90 s.h. earned toward the degree.

Before the eighth semester begins: five to seven courses in the major.

During the eighth semester: enrollment in all remaining coursework in the major, all remaining GE CLAS Core courses, and a sufficient number of semester hours to graduate.

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and

should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

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Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		
GE CLAS Core: Sustainability ^a		
Students may count up to 56 s.h. of coursework from the Religious Studies Department (prefix RELS) toward credit required for the Bachelor of Arts degree.		
Hours		0
First Year		
Fall		
Major: core area course ^{b, c}		
RHET:1030	Rhetoric: Writing and or ENGL:1200 Communication or The Interpretation of Literature	3 - 4
GE CLAS Core: Understanding Cultural Perspectives ^d		3
GE CLAS Core: Values and Society ^d		3
CSI:1600	Success at Iowa	1
Hours		13-14
Spring		
Major: core area course ^{b, c}		
RHET:1030	Rhetoric: Writing and or ENGL:1200 Communication or The Interpretation of Literature	3 - 4
GE CLAS Core: Natural Sciences with Lab ^d		4
GE CLAS Core: Social Sciences ^d		3
Elective course ^e		2
Hours		15-16
Second Year		
Fall		
Major: core area course ^{b, c}		
GE CLAS Core: Quantitative or Formal Reasoning ^d		3
GE CLAS Core: World Languages First Level Proficiency or elective course ^f		4 - 5
Elective course ^e		3
Elective course ^e		3
Hours		16-17
Spring		
Major: core area course ^{b, c}		
GE CLAS Core: International and Global Issues ^d		3
GE CLAS Core: World Languages Second Level Proficiency or elective course ^f		4 - 5
Elective course ^e		3
Elective course ^e		3
Hours		16-17
Third Year		
Fall		
Major: core area course ^{b, c}		
Major: religious studies course ^g		
GE CLAS Core: Natural Sciences without Lab ^d		3
GE CLAS Core: World Languages Third Level Proficiency or elective course ^f		4 - 5

Elective course ^e		3
Hours		16-17
Spring		
Major: religious studies course ^g		
Major: religious studies course ^g		
GE CLAS Core: World Languages Fourth Level Proficiency or elective course ^f		4 - 5
Elective course ^e		3
Elective course ^e		3
Hours		16-17
Fourth Year		
Fall		
Major: religious studies course ^g		
GE CLAS Core: Historical Perspectives ^d		3
Elective course ^e		3
Elective course ^e		3
Elective course ^e		3
Hours		15
Spring		
Major: religious studies course ^g		
GE CLAS Core: Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts ^d		3
Elective course ^e		3
Elective course ^e		3
Elective course ^e		3
Degree Application: apply on MyUI before deadline (typically in February for spring, September for fall) ^h		
Hours		15
Total Hours		122-128

- a Sustainability must be completed by choosing a course that has been approved for Sustainability AND for one of these General Education areas: Natural Sciences; Quantitative and Formal Reasoning; Social Sciences; Historical Perspectives; International and Global Issues; Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts; or Values and Society.
- b Students select courses from at least three out of the five core areas in Religious Studies for a total of 15 s.h. toward the major. The core areas include: social justice, equity, inclusion, and religion; religion in history; religion in global context; religion, values, and culture; and special topics and current events. See General Catalog for list of approved courses in each area.
- c Fulfills a major requirement and may fulfill a GE requirement.
- d GE CLAS Core courses may be completed in any order unless used as a prerequisite for another course. Students should consult with an advisor about the best sequencing of courses.
- e Students may use elective courses to earn credit towards the total s.h. required for graduation or to complete a double major, minors, or certificates.
- f Students who have completed four levels of a single language or two levels of two different languages in high school or college have satisfied the GE CLAS Core World Languages requirement. Students who have completed three levels of a single language may complete a fourth-level course in the same language or may choose an approved World Language and Cultural Exploration course. Enrollment in world languages courses requires a placement exam, unless enrolling in a first-semester-level course.

Contact your academic advisor or CLAS Undergraduate Programs Office with questions concerning the World Languages requirement.

g See General Catalog for list of approved courses.

h Please see Academic Calendar, Office of the Registrar website for current degree application deadlines. Students should apply for a degree for the session in which all requirements will be met. For any questions on appropriate timing, contact your academic advisor or Degree Services.