Religious Studies, B.A.

The major in religious studies enables students to develop the critical skills and strengths to thrive in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. Religions and religious ideas are connected to every aspect of modern life and culture, so the major is designed to allow students to tailor it to fit their personal goals or interests. Many students choose to earn a second major or minor in related disciplines such as anthropology, biology, classics, English, history, journalism and mass communication, philosophy, political science, or psychology.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- possess a general understanding of several religious traditions or movements,
- understand and evaluate the critical role that religion plays within culture,
- develop critical thinking skills by analyzing and evaluating concepts and arguments,
- develop the ability to communicate effectively in writing and speech, and
- access and interpret religious information in a digital world.

Requirements

The Bachelor of Arts with a major in religious studies requires at least 30 s.h. of coursework. Students must maintain a 2.00 g.p.a. in all courses for the major. With the approval of the department’s undergraduate committee, up to 15 s.h. of transfer credit may be counted toward the major. Students also 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.

The program of study for the major includes two core courses and 24 s.h. of elective coursework. Students are encouraged to work with a faculty member to choose the elective courses that best fit their particular academic goals. Courses for the major may not be taken pass/nonpass.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1000</td>
<td>First-Year Seminar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1015</td>
<td>Jewish, Christianity, and Islam</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS:1041</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1323</td>
<td>Life in the Biblical World</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1400</td>
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<td>RELS:1430</td>
<td>The Bible: Frequently Asked Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS:1502</td>
<td>Asian Humanities: India</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1506</td>
<td>Introduction to Buddhism</td>
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The course RELS:1015 Global Religious Conflict and Diversity introduces students to the study of the world’s religious traditions and analyzes how religious ideologies contribute to some of the most important events and issues around the world. This course is offered every spring semester. Students are encouraged to take this course as early as possible.

The course RELS:4950 Senior Majors Seminar is a capstone course that typically focuses on a general theme or issue that serves as a common connection for the diverse interests of the majors. It allows them to reflect on what they have learned and challenges them to further assess the role that religion plays within culture. This course is offered every spring semester. Students are encouraged to take this course during their senior year, but it may be taken during their junior year.

Electives

Students must complete at least 24 s.h. of elective coursework (approximately eight courses) for the major. Students may choose courses from either the Religious Traditions or Critical Issues categories. The department encourages students to choose electives that examine a variety of religious traditions and issues.

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Critical Issues

An important role that religious traditions play within a culture or society is to provide a space to struggle with difficult questions about human existence and interactions. Courses in this category focus on ideas, arguments, and problems within a given tradition or among several. They deal with such important issues as gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, ethics, law and politics, and human rights.

### Code | Title |
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RELS:1000 | First-Year Seminar |
RELS:1050 | Big Ideas: Introduction to Information, Society, and Culture |
RELS:1350 | Introduction to African American Religions |
RELS:1404 | Living Religions of the East |
RELS:1470 | Contemporary Science Fiction: Beyond the Usual |
RELS:1702 | Religion in America Today |
RELS:1725 | Gender and Religion in Korean Visual Culture |
RELS:1810 | Happiness in a Difficult World |
RELS:1903 | Quest for Human Destiny |
RELS:1997 | Harry Potter: The Mystery and Magic of Life |
RELS:2068 | Jews in Popular Culture |
RELS:2080 | Public Life in the U.S.: Religion and Media |
RELS:2087 | Narnia and Beyond: The Writings of C.S. Lewis |
RELS:2110 | Diversity in American Religious History: Experimenting with Gender and Sexuality |
RELS:2260 | Hard Cases in Healthcare at the Beginning of Life |
RELS:2265 | Hard Cases in Healthcare at the End of Life |
RELS:2272 | Gods and Superheroes: Mythologies for a Modern World |
RELS:2289 | Jerusalem: The Holy City |
RELS:2330 | Economics and Islam |
RELS:2333 | Economics and Religion: Theories and Practices |
RELS:2353 | Love: Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and Art |
RELS:2420 | Almost Human: Exploring Identity in Science Fiction |
RELS:2486 Religious Coexistence and Conflict in the Middle East 3
RELS:2510 Fed Up with Organized Religion 3
RELS:2540 The Walls Between Us: Historic Uses of the Bible in Defining the Other 3
RELS:2552 Atheism, Agnosticism, and Religion 3
RELS:2570 Introduction to Islamic Psychology 3
RELS:2620 Politics, Sex, and the Bible 3
RELS:2674 Food, Body, and Belief: A Global Perspective 3
RELS:2775 The Bible and the Holocaust 3
RELS:2834 Philosophy of Religion 3
RELS:2852 Women in Islam and the Middle East 3
RELS:2855 Human Rights, Law, Religion, and Culture 3
RELS:2877 Sport and Religion in America 3
RELS:2912 The Bible in Film: Hollywood and Moses 3
RELS:2930 Digital Media and Religion 3
RELS:2947 Quest II: Sex, Love, and Death 3
RELS:2980 Religion and Contemporary Popular Culture 3
RELS:2986 Religion and Women 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:3333 Economics and Islam 3
RELS:3341 Gender and Sexuality in Asia 3
RELS:3572 Comparative Ritual 3
RELS:3580 Religion and Healing 3
RELS:3645 Buddhist Philosophy 3
RELS:3700 Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness I 3
RELS:3701 Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness II 3
RELS:3714 Anthropology of Religion 3
RELS:3745 Twentieth-Century African American Religion: Civil Rights to Hip Hop 3
RELS:3808 Malcolm X, King, and Human Rights 3
RELS:3855 Human Rights and Islam 3
RELS:3976 American Indian Environmentalism 3
RELS:4730 Religion and Environmental Ethics 3
RELS:4970 Honors Tutorial 2-3
RELS:4975 Honors Essay 2-4

Honors

Honors in the Major

To graduate with honors in the religious studies major, students must have a UI cumulative g.p.a. of at least 3.33, a minimum requirement set by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Students also must maintain a UI religious studies g.p.a. of at least 3.50. In addition to the major requirements, students also take an additional 3 s.h. of advanced coursework. Students often choose to take RELS:4960 Individual Study: Undergraduates or RELS:4970 Honors Tutorial for their extra course. Students also must take RELS:4975 Honors Essay under the supervision of a faculty advisor to complete their honors thesis. Copies of the approved and completed thesis are submitted to the Department of Religious Studies and to University Archives.

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 graduate with honors in the religious studies major.

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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<tr>
<td>RHET:1030 or ENGL:1200</td>
<td>Rhetoric or The Interpretation of Literature</td>
<td>3 - 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE CLAS Core: Diversity and Inclusion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective course</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Elective course

**Elective course RELS:4950 Spring**  
GE CLAS Core: Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts  
Major: religious studies course  
Fall  
Fourth Year  
Major: religious studies course  
GE CLAS Core: Natural Sciences with Lab  
GE CLAS Core: Social Sciences  
Elective course  
Hours 15-16

**Second Year**  
**Fall**  
Major: religious studies 1000-level course  
GE CLAS Core: Quantitative or Formal Reasoning  
GE CLAS Core: World Languages First Level  
Proficiency or elective course  
Elective course  
Elective course  
Hours 16-17

**Spring**  
Major: religious studies 2000-4999 level course  
GE CLAS Core: International and Global Issues  
GE CLAS Core: World Languages Second Level  
Proficiency or elective course  
Elective course  
Elective course  
Hours 16-17

**Third Year**  
**Fall**  
Major: religious studies 2000-4999 level course  
Major: religious studies course  
GE CLAS Core: Historical Perspectives  
GE CLAS Core: Natural Sciences without Lab  
GE CLAS Core: World Languages Second Level  
Proficiency or elective course  
Hours 16-17

**Spring**  
Major: religious studies 2000-4999 level course  
Major: religious studies course  
GE CLAS Core: World Languages Fourth Level  
Proficiency or elective course  
Elective course  
Elective course  
Hours 16-17

**Fourth Year**  
**Fall**  
Major: religious studies course  
GE CLAS Core: Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts  
Elective course  
Elective course  
Elective course  
Hours 15

**Spring**  
RELS:4950 Senior Majors Seminar  
Elective course  

**Career Advancement**

Because religion and religious traditions impact every aspect of culture and society, a major in religious studies prepares students for many different career choices. As the world becomes more and more interconnected, employers look for people who have experience with different cultures and religious backgrounds. Religious studies majors also develop critical thinking, speaking, and writing skills that prepare them for employment and for pursuing an advanced academic degree.

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

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

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