Religious Studies, BA

A religious studies major enables students to gain competency 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.

Learning Outcomes

Courses in religious studies help students gain competency in global religious diversity by:

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

Requirements

The Bachelor of Arts in religious studies requires 30 s.h. of coursework, including one 3 s.h. course in each of 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 15 s.h. may be taken from any core area or any religious studies course (prefix RELS). Of the 30 s.h., at least two courses (6 s.h.) must be numbered 3000 or above. 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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Area Courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Coursework</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Core Area Courses

Students select one 3 s.h. course from each of the five core areas.

Social Justice, Equity, Inclusion, and Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1015</td>
<td>Global Religious Conflict and Diversity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1041</td>
<td>African American Religion and Popular Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1350</td>
<td>Introduction to African American Religions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1765</td>
<td>U.S. Latina/o/x Religions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1810</td>
<td>Happiness in a Difficult World</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2000</td>
<td>Engaging Religious Diversity for Leadership and Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2330</td>
<td>Wealth, Inequality, and Islam</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:3745</td>
<td>Twentieth- and Twenty-first-Century African American Religion: Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Religion in History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1001</td>
<td>Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1225</td>
<td>Medieval Religion and Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1250</td>
<td>Modern Religion and Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1430</td>
<td>The Bible Matters: Biblical Studies for Our Modern World</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2775</td>
<td>The Bible and the Holocaust</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2930</td>
<td>Digital Media and Religion</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:3190</td>
<td>Medieval to Modern: The Birth of Protestantism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:3385</td>
<td>Early Modern Catholicism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:3520</td>
<td>Religious Violence and Nationalism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:4155</td>
<td>Religious Conflict: Early Modern Period</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religion in Global Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1130</td>
<td>Introduction to Islamic Civilization</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1404</td>
<td>Introduction to Asian Religions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1506</td>
<td>Introduction to Buddhism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1670</td>
<td>Korea in the World</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2852</td>
<td>Women in Islam and the Middle East</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:3655</td>
<td>Zen Buddhism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Religion, Values, and Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1070</td>
<td>Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1080</td>
<td>Introduction to the New Testament</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course #</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1702</td>
<td>Religion in America Today</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1903</td>
<td>Quest for Human Destiny</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2260</td>
<td>Hard Cases in Healthcare at the Beginning of Life</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2265</td>
<td>Hard Cases in Healthcare at the End of Life</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2272</td>
<td>Gods and Superheroes: Mythologies for a Modern World</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2353</td>
<td>Love: Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and Art</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2877</td>
<td>Sport and Religion in America</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2947</td>
<td>Quest II: Sex, Love, and Death</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:3431</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality in East Asia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Special Topics and Current Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1050</td>
<td>Big Ideas: Introduction to Information, Society, and Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:1997</td>
<td>Harry Potter and the Religion of Fandom</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2122</td>
<td>The Place of Animals in the Hebrew Bible</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2674</td>
<td>Food, Body, and Belief: A Global Perspective</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:2980</td>
<td>Religion and Contemporary Popular Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:3055</td>
<td>Death, Dying, and Beyond in Asian Religions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:3267</td>
<td>Dissent and Rebellion in Islamic Societies: Was There an Arab Spring?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:4893</td>
<td>Classical Arabic: Vocabulary, Syntax, and Grammar</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS:4930</td>
<td>Internship in Research on Rights and Remedial Justice</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Additional Coursework

Students select 15 s.h. from any core area listed above or any other religious studies course.

### 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 also must maintain a UI religious studies GPA 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 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 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 prepares students for many different career choices. Employers look for people who have experience with different cultures and religious backgrounds, which makes a religious studies major relevant to a wide number of careers and professions. Religious studies majors also develop critical thinking, speaking, and writing skills that prepare them for employment and for pursuing an advanced academic degree.

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 BA with a major in religious studies can benefit them.

The Pomerantz Career Center 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.
## Religious Studies, BA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Career</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE CLAS Core: Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Any Semester | | |
| **First Year** | | |
| **Fall** | | |
| Major: social justice, equity, inclusion, and religion course | | 3 |
| ENGL:1200 or RHET:1030 or The Interpretation of Literature | | 3 - 4 |
| GE CLAS Core: Diversity and Inclusion | | 3 |
| GE CLAS Core: Values and Culture | | 3 |
| CSI:1600 Success at Iowa | | 2 |

| Hours | 0 |

| Spring | | |
| Major: religion in history course | | 3 |
| RHET:1030 or ENGL:1200 or The Interpretation of Literature | | 3 - 4 |
| GE CLAS Core: Natural Sciences with Lab | | 4 |
| GE CLAS Core: Social Sciences | | 3 |
| Elective course | | 3 |

| Hours | 14-15 |

| **Second Year** | | |
| **Fall** | | |
| Major: religion in global context course | | 3 |
| GE CLAS Core: Quantitative or Formal Reasoning | | 3 |
| GE CLAS Core: World Languages First Level Proficiency or elective course | | 4 - 5 |
| Elective course | | 3 |
| Elective course | | 3 |

| Hours | 15-16 |

| Spring | | |
| Major: religion, values, and culture course | | 3 |
| GE CLAS Core: International and Global Issues | | 3 |
| GE CLAS Core: World Languages Second Level Proficiency or elective course | | 4 - 5 |
| Elective course | | 3 |
| Elective course | | 3 |

| Hours | 16-17 |

| **Third Year** | | |
| **Fall** | | |
| Major: special topics and current events course | | 3 |
| Major: religious studies course | | 3 |
| GE CLAS Core: Natural Sciences without Lab | | 3 |
| GE CLAS Core: World Languages Third Level Proficiency or elective course | | 4 - 5 |
| Elective course | | 3 |

| Hours | 16-17 |

| Spring | | |
| Major: religious studies course | | 3 |
| Major: religious studies course | | 3 |
| GE CLAS Core: World Languages Fourth Level Proficiency or elective course | | 4 - 5 |
| Elective course | | 3 |

| Hours | 16-17 |

| **Fourth Year** | | |
| **Fall** | | |
| Major: religious studies course | | 3 |
| GE CLAS Core: Historical Perspectives | | 3 |
| Elective course | | 3 |
| Elective course | | 3 |
| Elective course | | 3 |

| Hours | 16-17 |

| Spring | | |
| Major: religious studies course | | 3 |
| GE CLAS Core: Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts | | 3 |
| Elective course | | 3 |
| Elective course | | 3 |
| Elective course | | 3 |

| Hours | 15 |

| Degree Application: apply on MyUI before deadline (typically in February for spring, September for fall) | | |
| **Total Hours** | 123-129 |

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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 Culture.
b See General Catalog for list of approved courses.
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 years of a single language in high school have satisfied the GE CLAS Core World Languages requirement. Enrollment in world languages courses requires a placement exam, unless enrolling in a first-semester-level course.
g 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 Graduation Services.