

Religious Studies, Ph.D.

For more detailed information on graduate programs in religious studies, contact the Department of Religious Studies or visit Graduate Program on the department's website.

The doctoral program in the Department of Religious Studies trains students to become advanced practitioners of the study of religion—researchers, scholars, teachers, and facilitators of informed public discourse. It can prepare a person to become a college professor or to bring a nuanced, critical understanding of religion and its influences to such careers as medicine, nursing, law, diplomacy, ministry, social advocacy, journalism, counseling, and informatics.

Doctoral students analyze the ways in which diverse religious traditions originate, develop, and interact over time. Students learn to identify and use multiple methods for the study of religion, including historical, philosophical, ethical, literary, linguistic, psychological, ethnographic, and digital approaches. Students can draw on the expertise of the religious studies faculty and also are encouraged to work with faculty members in other UI departments who specialize in their areas of interest. Many Ph.D. students work, for example, with scholars in the Departments of Anthropology, English, History, and Asian and Slavic Languages and Literatures, as well as in Classics and Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies.

Graduate study in religious studies is flexible; it can accommodate individual students' interests within the limits of existing faculty expertise.

Graduate Study Concentration

Graduate study is often developed in relation to one of the following traditional areas of concentration.

Religions in the Middle East, Ancient Near East, and Mediterranean

Religion, law, and politics in the Islamic world; the history of interpretation of the texts and traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; Greco-Roman and Egyptian religion and culture; digital humanities.

Religions in Asia

Religions of India, China, and Korea in the context of political, social, and economic factors; religion and gender in transnational perspective; religion and empire.

Religions of Europe and the Americas

The Reformation; the Reformed tradition; history and ethnography of religion in the United States; African American Christianity and Islam; religion, media, and the negotiation of technological change.

Religion, Ethics, and Society

Religion and morality; human rights; religion's relationships to gender, race, and ethnicity; ethics of medicine and biotechnology.

Graduate study also is developed by theme. Popular themes include religions' relationships to public life, gender, race, media and technology, and human health and well-being.

It is the expectation that Ph.D. students complete their studies in six years; five for those who are accepted into the program with an M.A. and transfer credit.