

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Phone: (209) 946-2161

Location: WPC Annex

## Minors Offered

**Religious Studies** (<https://catalog.pacific.edu/uop/collegeofthepacific/minors/religiousstudies/>)

**Ancient Studies** (<https://catalog.pacific.edu/uop/collegeofthepacific/minors/ancientstudies/>)

The Department of Religious Studies challenges students to study the religious practices, beliefs, institutions, and texts of ancient and modern societies. Through these studies, students learn about the religious phenomena that have shaped human civilizations. In addition to deep knowledge of this religious and cultural activity, our students acquire intellectual skills that serve them throughout their educational endeavors and beyond. Religion has historically shaped and continues to influence cultures and institutions worldwide. It is useful to explore spiritual traditions in order to examine ultimate religious and ethical questions. Our coursework provides perspectives that prepare citizen-leaders to engage these matters in a thoughtful, humane, historically broad and intellectually rigorous manner. A typical course in the Department includes students from various backgrounds and academic disciplines, and it affords significant opportunity for inter-disciplinary discussion.

## Health and Humanities Courses

**HHUM 051. Introduction to Health & Humanities. 4 Units.**

This course will promote student understanding of the humanistic, social, and cultural elements of health, disease, illness, death, dying, and healthcare. It will utilize various humanistic approaches to the study of health and health care (e.g. literature, film, philosophy, and religion). (GE2B, GEGR)

## Religious Studies Courses

**RELI 023. History of the Old Testament. 4 Units.**

In this course we will investigate the texts comprising the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament. Utilizing various conceptual tools and historical methods, we will examine the individual books in this collection to understand their literary structure, major themes, and diverse relationships to their historical-cultural milieu. The course will be historical in orientation, but will touch upon issues traditionally assigned to the sphere of theology or religion. Also offered as HIST 023. (GE2A, GELN)

**RELI 025. The Earliest Christians. 4 Units.**

This course offers a soci-historical and literary introduction to the writings of the earliest Christians. The course emphasizes the importance of the historical context of these writings and investigates the ways these texts fit into Mediterranean cultures. Topics include: the Jewish origins of the "Jesus movement;" the formation of early Christian communities and their varying patterns of belief and practice; the development of oral and written traditions about Jesus, especially in the gospels and letters of Paul; and various images of Jesus and their significance. Students learn how to read ancient texts closely, gain an understanding of the various methods of scholarly biblical interpretation, and learn how to evaluate these interpretations critically. Also offered as HIST 025. (GE2B, GELN)

**RELI 027. Portraits of Jesus. 4 Units.**

In this course, students examine some of the different "Jesuses" that have emerged from the "Quest for Jesus" through the ages, which include several historical studies, art, and literature. Was Jesus an itinerant, charismatic teacher? Was he a healer and miracle-worker or a social revolutionary? Or is he an historical figure on whom we have projected our own needs and desires for two millennia? (GE2B)

**RELI 030. Comparative History of Monotheisms: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. 4 Units.**

This course compares the history and traditions of three major monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These three traditions are examined comparatively under seven rubrics: Scripture, Authority, Monotheism, Ritual and Worship, Ethics, Material Culture, and Political Organization. The various connections made throughout the course between and among the religions studied will enable students 1. to identify variations on ideas common to each, 2. to discern influences some have exerted upon others, and 3. to understand the various distinctives that have developed within each. Besides learning information about these three religious traditions, the goal of this course is to understand that even religious traditions that claim to be timeless and divinely revealed are affected by the ebb and flow of human activity within particular historical, cultural, and environmental contexts. Also offered as HIST 068. (GE2B, GEWE)

**RELI 031. Jerusalem through the Ages. 4 Units.**

This course follows the history and culture of Jerusalem, a sacred city to three major world religions, from pre-history to the present. The course sets the city's political, cultural, and religious history against the broader backdrop of the history of the region and, in the Common Era, the rise and interactions of various forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Along the way students will examine key primary documents as well as important material artifacts that illuminate both the city's rich history as well as the religions that view it as sacred. Also offered as HIST 067. (GE1C, GESO)

**RELI 034. Introduction to Religion. 4 Units.**

This class is designed to introduce students to religion as an academic field of study. While one can easily locate groups who identify themselves as Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and so forth, one might actually have more difficulty figuring out what - if anything - unifies all of these groups, and therefore what it is that people mean when they use the term religion. In this class students explore some of the basic concepts and categories used by scholars when they investigate the social phenomenon of religion. All students discover that this course gives them experience in critical thinking, comparative analysis, and cultural diversity. (GE2B, GESO)

**RELI 035. Judaism. 4 Units.**

This course is a basic introduction to Judaism that covers its history, beliefs and customs with an emphasis on understanding the Jews of today. (DVSJ, GE2B, GEDI, GEWE)

**RELI 039. Introduction to Digital Humanities. 4 Units.**

We humans often turn to literature and the arts as we seek meaning, beauty and connection in our lives. Poetry, art, religion, philosophy, literature, theatre, and film all speak to this human yearning. Have you ever felt like a song was “your” song? Have you ever wondered why people of a different religion believe or do something differently than you? Did you ever debate with a friend about an ethical question? Now how many of these moments occurred online or were inspired by an event online - music video, a Facebook conversation, a blog. Increasingly, we have turned to technology to create and to discuss the arts and the humanities (poetry, art, religion, philosophy, literature, theatre, film, etc.). How might we use computers and digital media to make new discoveries in the arts and humanities? How might we use digital methods to communicate or share our explorations of what it means to be human? This collaborative, project-based course will introduce students to various methodologies in digital humanities, to the use of technology to publish research and creative work digitally, and to critical questions about digital technology and society. (GE3C)

**RELI 043. Social Ethics. 4 Units.**

This course examines several contemporary problems in social ethics from the standpoint of religious traditions and philosophical perspectives. It introduces ethical and religious concepts and considers such issues as pacifism and just war, civil disobedience, capital punishment, the distribution of scarce resources, and the environment. Students discuss what selected thinkers say about such issues, and how they reach their conclusions in light of their religious, philosophical, and anthropological convictions. (GE2B, GEWE)

**RELI 044. Sex, Sin, and Salvation. 4 Units.**

This course explores and analyzes sexuality and gender in terms of ethics and religion. It focuses primarily on historical and contemporary Christian perspectives with some attention to other religious traditions and philosophical viewpoints. Topics include such issues as sexual ethics, homosexuality, sexuality and spirituality, gender roles and connections between gender and ethical perspectives. (GEND)

**RELI 047. Unbelief: Atheism and Agnosticism. 4 Units.**

After a brief survey of the rise of atheistic and agnostic thought from ancient to modern times, the course turns to recent examples of atheism/agnosticism in contemporary culture, especially the “new atheists” – their viewpoints and the responses they have provoked from both religious and secular thinkers. Students will read various texts and scholarly treatments that argue for and against atheism/agnosticism. Focus will be on placing atheistic/agnostic thinkers in their historical and intellectual contexts and understanding their (mode of) argumentation and the varied response such has provoked: culturally, intellectually, and politically. This course will not condemn or promote atheistic or agnostic ideas *per se*, though students will be asked to assess claims and argumentation. Ultimately, the course will enable students to understand what atheists, agnostics, and their critics think and to place these ideas in a broader cultural perspective. Thus, students will be prepared to assess these ideas for themselves.

**RELI 051. Classical Mythology. 4 Units.**

An introductory survey of the Greek and Roman myths of major importance in Western religion, literature, art and music. This course will focus upon Greek mythology against the background of Roman, or Roman mythology against the background of Greek. (GE2B)

**RELI 070. Religion and American Culture. 4 Units.**

Students examine the way in which religion has contributed to the shaping of American political, social and cultural life, and the way in which the American experience has in turn shaped religion. It moves from the colonial experience through the “awakenings” to the emergence of new religions and cults, the revolutions of the sixties, the revival of conservative Christianity in the American political spectrum and ecology as the “new awakening.

**RELI 087. Internship. 2-4 Units.****RELI 102. History of Ancient Egypt and the Near East. 4 Units.**

This course covers the history and cultures of the pre-Greek ancient world, namely, Egypt and the Near East from the third millennium BCE (3300 BCE) to the beginning of the Hellenistic period (333 BCE). After surveying the geography of the area under study, students examine primary and secondary sources to understand the political currents and social practices of Egypt, Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria. Special emphasis is given to the origins, development, and social uses of writing / literacy. Also offered as HIST 107. (GE1C, GEWE)

**RELI 104. Religion of the Pharaohs. 4 Units.**

The past century has witnessed a fascination with all things ancient Egyptian. From the earliest version of the film, “The Mummy” in 1931 to the traveling art exhibit of the treasures of Tutankhamen’s tomb (twice!) to the millennium party at the pyramids, the previous hundred years was marked by an obsession with ancient Egyptian religion and culture. This course examines the religious beliefs and practices of ancient Egyptians and the portrayal of ancient Egypt in popular culture. Topics include: Egyptian royal and social history; Egyptian language and literature; mythology and cosmology; death and the afterlife; temple rituals and architecture; pyramids, tombs and other burial architecture; the intersection of religion with ethnicity, gender, social class, and political power; colonialism and the modern “discovery” of ancient Egypt; and ancient Egypt in American popular culture. (DVSY, GE1C)

**RELI 106. Illness and Healing in the Ancient World. 4 Units.**

This course examines powerful supra-human beings such as deities, demons, witches, and ghosts from ancient Mesopotamia and their assumed relationship, on the one hand, to human sin, disease, illness, disability, and suffering and on the other, to preventative wellness, therapy, and recovery. We answer a number of questions about these relationships throughout the course such as: What constitutes a disease, illness, disability, and suffering in ancient Mesopotamia? How did the ancient Mesopotamians, perceive preventative wellness, therapy, and recovery? How did the ancient Mesopotamians combat human suffering and celebrate healing? Whence did the knowledge of such things come? And how was this knowledge transmitted to future generations? Although focused on a long-enduring ancient culture, the course provides an opportunity to learn an number of theoretical and methodological perspectives that is useful for understanding related concepts from other times and places. Using the ancient world as a lens to reflect upon our contemporary American setting is a running theme throughout the course. (GE1C)

**RELI 120. Wisdom in Biblical Literature. 4 Units.**

This course introduces the student to the biblical books of Proverbs, Job, and Qohelet (Ecclesiastes). These books share the common thread of teaching people how to live skillfully and have incited controversy for millennia. Students read these books in English, examine and discuss the major themes, literary structures, cultural contexts, and issues in interpretation that surround these books, and reflect upon their significance for several communities of readers in various periods of history. In order to situate these Israelite books within their ancient cultural contexts, students read and discuss wisdom texts from the neighboring cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia. In order to appreciate the position of these books within wisdom tradition, students also look at some wisdom writings from Israel that are not included in the biblical canon.

**RELI 124. Ancient Judaism. 4 Units.**

The course surveys ancient Judaism from roughly 539 BCE until the Islamic era (c. 600 CE) and emphasizes the ideological importance of the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE. Readings and discussion in primary texts (e.g. Enoch, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Maccabees, the Talmud, Mishnah, and various midrashim) complement our historical investigation. (GETC)

**RELI 126. Ancient Israel in Its Historical Context. 4 Units.**

This course focuses on the historical and cultural context in which ancient Israel arose and flourished from the early Iron Age (c. 1200 BCE) to the beginning of the Hellenistic period (323 BCE). In the first part of the course, after surveying the geography and political history of the ancient Near East from 2000-320 BCE, students critically examine the historical rise and existence of Israel in its larger geo-political context. Special consideration is given to understanding the relationship of archaeological, politico-historical, and biblical evidence. In the second part of the course students turn attention to "everyday life" in ancient Israel, that is, to various social and material elements of ancient Israelite culture (e.g., family structure, buildings, vocational activities, art and music, literacy, etc.) as reconstructed from archaeological and biblical evidence, and then apply their learning to various biblical topics and/or texts.

**RELI 128. Social Topics in Early Christianity. 4 Units.**

Students study of one or more social issues prominent during the early stages of Christianity. Topics vary according to the interests of faculty and students. (DVSU, GEND)

**RELI 130. The Christian Tradition. 4 Units.**

Students examine historical and theological analysis of Christian thought and practice, and the content varies depending upon instructor. Examples of possible study focus are Christian origins in Greek and Hebrew culture, the Reformation Era, or issues of theological reinterpretation for the 21st century.

**RELI 134. World Religions. 4 Units.**

Students examine fundamental religious questions as developed in major religions of the world which includes primal religious experiences in African, Australian and Native American traditions. Special attention is also given to Islam, in context with other Abrahamic traditions, as the fastest growing religion in the world. Some attention is given to historical development and to major personalities, but attention centers on the religious questions as developed in each religious system. (GE2B, GEGR)

**RELI 135. Asian Religious Traditions. 4 Units.**

Students study the traditional religions of India, China, Tibet and Japan, in attempt to delineate the spirituality, beauty, and wisdom of these traditions. The course traces the rich historical and cultural heritages of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, the Taoist ways of achieving harmony in the world, and the melding of nature and ritual life in Shinto. Each semester one or two of these religions is studied in depth to investigate how they influence society, politics and culture in the countries where they spread. The academic approach is supplemented by practical learning of mediation, energy-regulations and ritual.

**RELI 140. Religion and Politics. 4 Units.**

This course explores the relationships between religious convictions and political thought and action. The course concentrates on selected eastern or western religious traditions. Topics of discussion include the state, individual liberty, economics, and war. Readings introduce historical and contemporary religious and philosophical perspectives.

**RELI 141. Animals, Religion, and Ethics. 4 Units.**

This course examines how religious traditions have affected the ways in which we see, speak about, and treat non-human animals. Religions have both reinforced ideas of human superiority over non-human animals and called into question ideas of human dominion and exceptionalism. Pedagogically, the course will be interdisciplinary and seek to expose students to a wide variety of topics related to the issue of religion and animals.

**RELI 143. Religion, Race, Justice in US. 4 Units.**

Throughout American history, religion has played a pivotal role in discussions of race, both in justifications for slavery and racial discrimination and in movements for social justice. In the 19th century, white supremacists argued that a passage in Genesis about Noah and his sons preordained the enslavement of Black people. During the Civil Rights movement, the Black church played a central role and Martin Luther King quoted extensively from the Bible in speeches such as his "I Have a Dream" speech. Other Black civil rights advocates argued that the connection between racism and Christianity ran so deep that true liberation could not be found in the Christian church. This course will examine the intersection of religion and race. We will look at race and ethnicity in the Bible and early biblical interpretation and then turn to the American experience. The course will address multiple religious traditions, although it will concentrate primarily on Christianity. We will look at both history and pressing contemporary issues. (DVSU, ETHC)

**RELI 145. Biomedical Ethics. 4 Units.**

Students study the ethical concepts and issues that arise in medicine and the health sciences. Topics include the physician-patient relationship, termination of life-sustaining treatment, abortion, artificial reproductive technologies, genetic and technological manipulations, access to healthcare, and biomedical research.

**RELI 146. Technology, Ethics, and Religion. 4 Units.**

This course offers historic, philosophical, and religious perspectives on science and technology. It endeavors to help students understand the impact of science and technology on our moral and religious traditions and institutions, and how those traditions and institutions in turn impact science and technology. It considers how technology addresses social problems, and the benefits, possibilities, and further problems that it produces.

**RELI 152. Confucian Traditions. 4 Units.**

Students examine moral, political, philosophical and religious aspects of various Confucian traditions beginning from Confucius and Mencius to Han and Song dynasties Confucianism to modern Du Weiming's school. This course is not recommended for freshmen.

**RELI 154. Buddhist Traditions. 4 Units.**

This course covers philosophy, literature, and religious beliefs and practices of various Buddhist traditions as they developed over hundreds of years in India, Tibet, China, Japan, and finally, Western countries. For each tradition, students examine its historical formation; the body of its sacred literature, with the focus on one or two most prominent scriptures; biographies of most influential practitioners; and the evolution of philosophical, social and psychological ideas in that particular tradition.

**RELI 170. Bible in America. 4 Units.**

How do people read, use, interpret, remix, and resist the Bible in America? From the sermons of Jonathan Edwards in colonial America to graphic novels about Christian superheroes, the Bible has been interpreted and even rewritten for American culture and politics. Some politicians and grass-roots activists appeal to the bible in debates about sexual ethics and marriage, while others object to the use of a "sacred scripture" as a source for legislation on morality. American film and art retell biblical stories and use iconic biblical themes and archetypes in crafting new stories. Abolitionists and slave-owners alike cited the bible as an authority for their positions on slavery. This course will ask how biblical traditions have shaped American culture and politics and how diverse Americans have brought their own perspectives to interpreting, experiencing, and even recreating "Bible" in the United States.

**RELI 171. Religion and Cinema. 4 Units.**

Students study the way religious ideas, institutions and figures are presented on film. The course involves screening and analyzing various films. The scope of the course is international and intercultural, but the majority of the images are Western. The course intends to demonstrate the power of cinematic images to define, illustrate, enrich and sometimes pervert religious sensibility. (FILM)

**RELI 172. Biblical Themes in Literature. 4 Units.**

A reading course in the Bible and the ways in which Biblical themes have informed representative texts in Western literature. Students compare the Biblical world view with that of later ages by reading such authors as Dante, Camus, Hemingway, and John Updike.

**RELI 191. Independent Study. 2-4 Units.**

**RELI 196. Religious Studies Seminar. 4 Units.**

This capstone seminar is for majors, and the focus of the study varies from year to year according to interests of faculty and students (e.g. Religion & Nature, Early Christianity, and Spirituality & Health).

**RELI 197. Undergraduate Research. 1-4 Units.**