

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The Religious Studies curriculum presents a critical inquiry into the religious dimension of human experience. After an introduction to the nature of religion and the methods employed in its study, students can select from a variety of courses exploring specific topics such as sacred texts, issues in sexual ethics, questions of life and death, and the wide variety of devotions and practices that animate religious communities.

The study of religion allows for an informed appreciation of the motivations and values given expression in religious belief, and the way in which culture shapes, and is shaped by, that belief. Students may take courses offered by the Religious Studies Department as part of the required core curriculum, as electives, or as part of a major or minor program in religious studies under the direction of a departmental advisor.

Majors and minors in Religious Studies are eligible for induction to Theta Alpha Kappa, the national honor society for religious studies and theology. In addition, each year the department honors the academic achievement of an outstanding senior with the Mary Irene Gallagher Theology Medal, Fairfield's oldest academic award.

## Core Curriculum Options

The Orientation Level of the *Magis* core curriculum requires students to take an introductory course in Religious Studies, which can be any course at the 1000 level.

At the Exploration Level (2000-level courses), students must choose two further courses in two separate departments, selected from History, Philosophy, or Religious Studies. As such, students may select a 2000-level course in Religious Studies to fulfill part of the exploration-level requirement.

## Programs

- Religious Studies Major
- Religious Studies Minor
- Religion in America Minor

## Courses

### RLST 1001 Religion and the Critical Mind 3 Credits

**Attributes:** RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course examines some of the themes in the study of religion and offers a comparative analysis of the nature, function, and purpose of religion as found in a variety of models of religion. A wide variety of contemporary religious practices will serve as discussion points for scholarly analysis.

### RLST 1002 Common Questions, Traditional Response 3 Credits

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course examines the major questions addressed by most world religions, with special emphasis on how they are answered in a specific major tradition. Topics include the nature of the sacred and its relationship to human persons, the problem of evil and innocent suffering, religion's call for social responsibility, and the nature and function of ritual.

### RLST 1003 Religion in a Comparative Key 3 Credits

**Attributes:** RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course examines different kinds of religious experience, doctrine, and practice through a close examination of two different religious traditions, engaging the traditions as these appear in a variety of cultural contexts.

### RLST 1004 Peoples of the Book, Sacred Texts, and Their Communities 3 Credits

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course examines the relationship between sacred text and the historical communities of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Focusing on shared narratives, such as Adam and Eve in the Garden, the course illustrates the different ways that texts are interpreted and the various roles that Scripture plays in these communities.

### RLST 1060 Magic and Religion 3 Credits

**Attributes:** RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course is an introduction to magic, its academic study, and its practice across different religions. We will look critically at early scholarship that theorized about the nature of magic, seen as the irrational practice of "primitives;" and from there explore contemporary approaches that focus instead on individual magical practices within their specific cultures without value judgements. We will study specific cases of magic's place in the "rational" West and how it has also formed part of different "World Religions." We will conclude by exploring the ways in which magical practices exist even today in the digital age.

### RLST 1091 Introduction to Africana Religions 3 Credits

**Attributes:** RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course introduces several African-Diaspora religions like Haitian Vodou that developed when the enslaved creatively adapted their African traditions to the Americas; as well as with those African religions from where they derived. Importantly, it will challenge the centuries-old demonization and persecution of these traditions. Furthermore, it will explore how in the last decades, Africana religions have been reclaimed by Black and Brown communities in the US looking for a decolonized spirituality as part of a greater movement towards liberation; and also, how they have jumped from necessary secretness unto the public sphere, even being embraced by celebrities like Beyoncé.

### RLST 1101 Introduction to Judaism 3 Credits

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course examines ways in which Judaism has been defined and has developed as both a way of thought and a way of life. Included will be discussions of central Jewish concepts (e.g., covenant, holiness, and commandment), holidays, life-cycle ceremonies, and contemporary Jewish religious movements.

### RLST 1111 History of the Jewish Experience 3 Credits

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

The course examines the origin and development of Judaism and the Jewish people. It begins with the Hebrew Bible as the source of Judaism and follows its development to the modern era. This overview introduces the Jewish religion, its history, and development.

### RLST 1201 Hebrew Bible/Old Testament 3 Credits

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course will survey the texts that are normative for Judaism and Christianity today; the Hebrew Bible (TaNaKh) and the Christian Old Testament. These texts will be studied according to a wide range of modern methods of biblical criticism which consider carefully their literary and historical aspects. Special effort will be made to situate these texts within their historical and cultural setting in the ancient near east.

**RLST 1203 Life of Jesus****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

This course explores the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the founder of Christianity and one of the most influential people ever to have lived. The course will examine Jesus through a critical analysis of the earliest accounts of his life while also consulting modern scholarly reconstructions.

**RLST 1211 Introduction to the New Testament****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

This course introduces students to the text of the New Testament and its central themes regarding Jesus, his teachings, and the writings attributed to his disciples. As students read the New Testament, they will also engage with critical questions surrounding its composition, authorship, and reception, as well as other issues such as the canonization of the New Testament, extra-New Testament texts, interpretive strategies, and various matters involving the New Testament and race, sexuality, slavery, and gender.

**RLST 1251 Heroes and Villains in the Biblical Tradition****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** RSST Religious Studies Major Track, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

This course will critically examine the narratives of major figures that appear in both Jewish and Christian Bibles by studying them in their own historical context and pondering their ethical relevance to the modern world. The biblical texts themselves will be employed as primary sources for considering biblical notions of virtue and vice. The historicity, personality, and motivations of biblical protagonists and antagonists will be evaluated as reflections of the values of scriptural authors.

**RLST 1270 Qur'an as Scripture and Experience****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** IWHU Islamic World Studies: Humanities, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

This course provides students with an introductory survey to the Islamic scripture of the Qur'an, its socio-historical context, and its ongoing legacy within the wider Muslim world. Through close readings of the Qur'an and religious accounts of the Prophet Muhammad's life, students will explore the nature of revelation and prophetic authority in Islam. Furthermore, students will critically examine the nature of interpretation and the problems of authoritativeness, recognizing the importance of these issues for other religious traditions as well.

**RLST 1402 Introduction to Catholicism****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This introduction to the beliefs, doctrines, ideas, and practices that shape the unity and diversity of the Catholic tradition explores theological, devotional, and spiritual forms of expression in their historical and cultural contexts in order to appreciate the particularity of Catholic themes. The course also considers how these themes engage contemporary Catholic life and exercise an influence on the wider culture.

**RLST 1501 Introduction to Christian Ethics****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

What is ethics? How does Christian faith and practice inform moral discernment? This course examines the discipline of Christian Ethics through a consideration of the sources and frameworks Christian ethicists use to make ethical arguments in a theological key. Major Christian moral traditions and key contributions will be discussed, such as Catholic social teaching, liberation ethics, and the contemporary return to virtue, as will perennial tensions in Christian ethics such as those between love and justice, individual and collective responsibility, and actions and intentions. By placing the course material in conversation with case studies and students' own moral questions, this course aims to foster ethical awareness that students can bring to a variety of moral challenges within their individual lives, professional contexts, and as engaged citizens in society.

**RLST 1601 Religion in the United States****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** ASGW American Studies: Gateway, ASRS American Studies: Religion, CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, DEIE Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Elective, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course explores the story of religion in America from a multicultural, multi-faith perspective. Students will examine how different religious peoples and traditions have interacted across time and how these interactions and exchanges have both complicated and enriched the American religious landscape. Much attention will be paid to those voices often left out of the master narrative of American religion for reason of race, gender, ethnicity, class, or even peculiarity. The course is a survey, thus students will encounter a variety of topics varying from indigenous religious practices, revivalism, the early roots of traditions like Judaism and Islam, new religious movements, to secularization.

**RLST 1667 Mormonism: An American Church****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** ASRS American Studies: Religion, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

Who are the Mormons? This course seeks to answer this very question. Beginning with the birth of its prophet Joseph Smith and proceeding into Mormon life in the 21st century, the course traces the history of Mormonism as it moved from millennial religious movement to formal Church. We will examine the scripture, beliefs, practices, and mission of Mormonism and how they function within the church and within the Mormon community. We will also explore the paradox of Mormonism's controversial reputation and its popularity, examining how Mormons have combated negative perceptions and adapted in order to survive, and ultimately thrive.

**RLST 1701 Introduction to Islam****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** INEL International Studies Elective, IWHU Islamic World Studies: Humanities, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

This course introduces Islam as a global religion and civilization. After a brief historical overview, the course focuses on the foundational concepts of Islam: Quran, Prophet, Ritual, and Community, and then analyzes how these concepts are interpreted in the main intellectual traditions, in the ways that Islam is practiced in different cultures and in the works of modern thinkers.

**RLST 1801 Asian Religions****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** ANMC Asian Studies Elective, DEIE Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Elective, INEL International Studies Elective, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course examines the basic religious systems of India and China, including their fundamental differences, performative functions, and worldviews. The course evaluates Euro-American theories of religion in light of Asian religious expressions.

**RLST 1802 Buddhism****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** ANMC Asian Studies Elective, INEL International Studies Elective, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

This course explores the Indian Buddhist tradition, from its beginning in the life of Shakyamuni Buddha through the present revival of neo-Buddhism in the activism of oppressed classes. The course considers the early formative ideas of the Buddha, the Awakened One, as they unfold in the course of Indian history and society, and discusses Buddhist meditation and philosophy as procedures devised to elicit the awakened state. Using written and visual works, the course examines developments in Buddhist religious orders, lay social life, and the rise of the Great Vehicle tradition. Art and archaeology provide a context for Buddhism's compelling missionary activity throughout Central and Southeast Asia.

**RLST 2099 Religious Studies Seminar****3 Credits**

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This seminar offers an in-depth investigation of a significant figure, issue, or problem in religious studies. Enrollment by permission only.

**RLST 2113 Jews and Judaism in America****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** ASUP American Studies Upper Level, JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

What has it meant and what does it mean today to be a Jew in America? Viewing Judaism and Jewishness as inseparable from one another, Jews remain a distinct though by no means homogeneous religious and ethnic group in American society. This course explores the religious, cultural, social, economic, and political diversity among American Jews as well as distinctive beliefs, concerns, and experiences that continue to unite them. The course gives special attention to issues concerning immigration, acculturation, gender, and Black-Jewish relations.

**RLST 2115 Women in Judaism****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSST Religious Studies Major Track, WSGF Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: Gender Focused

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines ways in which women have understood and experienced Judaism from the Biblical period through the present, drawing on historical writings, novels, theological essays, and films and giving particular attention to the traditional religious roles and status of women, the many ways in which women have understood Jewish self-identity, and recent feminist efforts to re-evaluate and transform contemporary Jewish life.

**RLST 2117 The Literature of Jewish Modernity****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

**Prerequisite:** Any 1000 level RLST course.

As Jews were emancipated in Europe and freed from the "ghetto," some began to grapple with the challenges of modernity through literary genres like poetry and fiction; others through more traditionalist genres. Either way, the path of the modern Jewish writer seemed to entail a good deal of alienation, nostalgia, and regret, as well as the need to contend with increasingly virulent forms of anti-Semitism, culminating in the Holocaust. Despite the tension and anguish we will discover works of beauty and poignancy that yield profound insights into the modern experience.

**RLST 2118 Faith After the Holocaust****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor, PJST Peace and Justice Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisites:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course explores the complexity and horror of the holocaust and its contemporary historical, social, political, and theological implications. What historically made the attempted annihilation of European Jewry possible and how were some Jews able to survive? Was the holocaust unique? Could it have been prevented? What impact did it have on Western faith in humanity and God? What lessons, particularly in light of the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe today, can it teach us?

**RLST 2119 Zionism and its Critics: Religion, Nationalism, and Violence****3 Credits**

Zionism- an ideology for Jewish national self-determination- has assumed many forms and ignited much controversy, not least among those who are displaced and subjugated. We draw on historical, literary, and religious sources to explore the origins, development, and realization of Zionism, as well as cogent criticisms from both within and outside the Jewish community, especially by Palestinians and Hasidim. The religious foundations of claims and counter-claims underpin our discussions of one of the most fraught controversies of our time. An effort is made to listen to as many perspectives as possible in a way that is both empathetic and dispassionate.

**RLST 2120 Modern Jewish Theology****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course explores ways in which Jews have sought to know God. While Judaism has long maintained that ultimately God is unknowable, divine and human action, reason, revelation, mystical insight, and prayer are among the paths taken by Jews to gain theological knowledge. Included will be a discussion of works by several 19th- through 21st-Century theologians (e.g., Buber, Baeck, Rosenzweig, Heschel, Fackenheim, Greenberg, Plaskow) in drawing on these paths and in discussing such topics as the nature of the divine covenant, the role of human autonomy, liturgical images of God, and faith after Auschwitz.

**RLST 2150 Second Temple Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have rightly been called the greatest manuscript discovery of the twentieth century. Discovered in 1947, they have made a tremendous impact on how scholars today understand Judaism and Christianity in antiquity. Our examination of the community, texts, and archaeology of the Dead Sea Scrolls will begin with a study of the Second Temple Period (520 BCE through 70 CE), one of the most important in the history of Judaism. This course will examine the political, social, and theological developments of this period so that the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls and their writings may be situated within their proper context. Students will learn to read primary texts closely and secondary texts critically as they consider the influence and relationship between texts and their community.

**RLST 2155 Jewish Mysticism****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSST Religious Studies Major Track  
**Prerequisite:** Any 1000 level RLST course.

This course traces Jewish mysticism from antiquity through modernity. Beginning with early mysticism in the Bible, we proceed through early Jewish practices of divination, magic, and asceticism. We then delve into the erotically-charged symbolic literature known as "Kabbalah", focusing on the classic Zohar (Book of Splendor); mystical ethics early modern Safed (Tzefat); and mass messianic movements. Next, we explore varied manifestations of East European popular Kabbalah, including the magic-based praxis, Golem literature, and Hasidism. We conclude with contemporary manifestations of Kabbalah and Hasidism in America and Israel, reflecting on issues like gender, sectarianism, mystical-messianic Zionism, and the popularization of Kabbalah.

**RLST 2205 Women in the Bible****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSST Religious Studies Major Track, WSGF Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: Gender Focused  
**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines stories about women that appear in both Jewish and Christian Scriptures by applying various methodological approaches. Conventional methods of interpretation, namely literary and historical-critical, will be used and critiqued. While the focus will be on images of women in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (viz., the Jewish TaNaKh and the Christian Scriptures), other non-canonical stories about women will also be considered. This course does not presume any previous knowledge of the biblical texts themselves or biblical methodology.

**RLST 2207 Prophetic and Apocalyptic Voices****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** RSST Religious Studies Major Track  
**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course studies the major prophetic voices of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, concentrating on each prophet's unique vision of God and of the requirements of justice. The course blends these themes with the later apocalyptic consciousness, which demands rectification of the wrongs of hatred and injustice, and offers hope for a better future.

**RLST 2209 Jewish Interpretations of Scriptures****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** JST Judaic Studies Minor, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course explores ways in which Jews have understood the Hebrew Bible from the first centuries of the Common Era through today. Focusing on specific biblical texts, the course draws interpretations from early classical, legal, and non-legal rabbinic material; medieval commentaries and codes; mystical literature; and modern literary, theological sources.

**RLST 2210 A Feminist, Gender, and Queer Reading of the Hebrew Bible: Finding New Voices****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** RSST Religious Studies Major Track, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track, WSGF Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: Gender Focused

The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament engages the most profound questions of life, stories that are mysterious and surprising, full of twists of plot and revelation of character. We explore biblical stories through the experience of biblical figures such as Esther, Ruth, Joseph, and David. We discuss these stories through the lens of a feminist, gender, and queer theory approach to reading biblical texts. These powerful stories invite us to reflect on all voices in our community, particularly those who have been historically and culturally silenced, ignored, or eliminated. This class is aimed at finding and exploring these voices.

**RLST 2220 Writings of Paul****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines the texts and recurring themes of the writings attributed to Paul, with particular emphasis on Paul's treatment of ethical situations, community, and religious experience.

**RLST 2221 Good News of the Gospels****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John according to contemporary exegetical and literary methodologies.

The course examines and compares the theological positions of early Christianity as represented by each writer and by other early Christian gospels.

**RLST 2222 Writings of John****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines the text of the gospel and epistles attributed to John, placing particular emphasis upon the recurring themes in these writings, the distinctive view of Christianity they represent, and the development of early Christianity to which they witness.

**RLST 2231 The Problem of God****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This historical and theological examination of the Christian doctrine of God pays special attention to the problematic aspects of the development of this doctrine through the ages, exploring this development in biblical sources; patristic, medieval, Reformation, and modern times. The course concludes with a consideration of the challenge of post-Enlightenment atheism and of the efforts of contemporary theologians to recast the classical conception of God.

**RLST 2335 Liberation Theology****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** BSAH Black Studies: Arts and Humanities, BSFC Black Studies Focus Course, CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, HASM Humanitarian Action Minor Skills/Method Course, INEL International Studies Elective, LCEL LACS Minor: Elective, PJST Peace and Justice Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course analyzes contemporary theological movements that emphasize the relationship of religious faith and praxis to the sociopolitical realm. The course treats at length the development of the Latin American theology of liberation and examines its theological principles, tracing the influence of this theological outlook on other developing world theologies and on North American and European theological reflection. The course proceeds to a constructive proposal for a contemporary political theology.

**RLST 2336 Catholicism and Gender****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track, WSGF Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: Gender Focused

Course description: This course is an introduction to the issues that foregrounding a critical discussion of gender brings to the study of Christian, and particularly Catholic, theology. It is an investigation of both the elements of Catholic Christian theology and contemporary – often contested – understandings of gender, asking how these two challenge one another. To do this we will trace the history of recent feminist theology, including critical insights from *mujerista* and *womanist* thinkers situated in the U.S., interleaving this with the more recent analyses of masculinity that address both the patriarchal tradition of Catholic Christianity and the feminist response.

**RLST 2338 Evil****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course explores the problem of evil from the perspectives of theology and philosophy. The course considers God and evil, classical theodicies (reasonable justifications of God before the prevalence of evil), modern philosophical accounts of evil, social evil, and the possibility of belief in the face of evil. Within the context of these subjects, the course addresses the following questions: What is evil? What are the roots of evil? What effect does one's understanding of evil have on one's understanding of the human being, of God, and of religion? What is our responsibility in the face of evil?

**RLST 2339 Last Things: Catholic Belief in Life After Death****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course first explores the Christian understanding of life after death, affirmed in such beliefs as the resurrection of the body, the last judgment, heaven and hell, and the forgiveness of sins. It then goes on to examine the Catholic tradition's particular contributions to these beliefs in its teachings on purgatory and the communion of the saints. The course asks why these ancient beliefs continue to resonate in contemporary popular culture, and examines modern theological efforts to re-construct these hopeful beliefs for our own times.

**RLST 2428 Early Christianity****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course presents a historical overview of early Christianity between the end of the first century and the close of the sixth. The focus of the course is on the institutional and theological development of the early Church after the final books of the New Testament were written. Topics examined include: Jesus and Judaism, Christianity and the Roman Empire, heresies of the Early Church, and the development of Christian theology (in particular the doctrines of Christ and the Trinity).

**RLST 2430 Eastern Christianity: Europe, Africa, and Asia****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course traces the ancient spread of Christianity in eastern Europe, Africa, Persia, India, and China between 200-1300 CE, a time long before modern European colonizing and missionary efforts. Topics that will be covered include the early history of eastern Christian communities, the schisms between western and eastern churches, the Crusades, the phenomenon of eastern Catholicism, and ancient Christian interactions with other religions such as Judaism, Islam, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism.

**RLST 2440 The Medieval Church****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course surveys the development of Christianity in medieval Western Europe through the lens of the Western/Latin Church. It presents a broad history of the social, political and religious aspects of the Church as found in a variety of primary sources: mystical and theological writings, hagiographical literature and rules for monastic communities, and official Church documents. Through these sources students are introduced to the critical analysis of primary texts (dating from c. 300-1500) by giving proper attention to the social and cultural context in which they were written. Topics discussed in this course include: monasticism, the rise of papal power, the First Crusade, and the development of cathedrals and universities.

**RLST 2441 Encountering God in Medieval Christian Thought****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course presents a historical overview of religious thought in the medieval era (c. 500-1500), with a focus on the institutional and theological developments within Christian monasteries and universities. We will first treat the development of Benedictine monasticism and the types of theological literature associated with the monasteries, before looking at the development of the University system in Western Europe and the types of theology produced in the schools. Finally, we will treat the pervasive presence of "mystical theologians" who were often neither monks nor university professors, but developed a rich theology grounded in human experience.

**RLST 2443 The Papacy****3 Credits**

**Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, ISIF Italian Studies: Italy-Focused, ITEN Italian Course Taught in English, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track

**Prerequisites:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This survey of the Roman Catholic papacy, generally focuses on a single figure, theme, or period, and places that figure, theme, or period within the larger historical, cultural, and ecclesial context. A significant part of the course treats theological issues, using as texts either papal writings, significant encyclicals, or conciliar statements and actions. The course also includes a critical assessment of the role of the papacy within the Roman Catholic Church and a consideration of the role of the papacy in interreligious dialogue and world affairs.

**RLST 2445 The Reformation Era****3 Credits****Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

Participants study the religious reform of the 16th century. The course begins by probing the seeds of reform in the late scholastic tradition and in popular spirituality, and proceeds by tracing the development of the ideas and impact of the reformers: Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Müntzer, and Schwenckfeld. The course concludes with an investigation of the Roman Catholic response to reform in the events of the Council of Trent and the Counter-Reformation.

**RLST 2448 Faith and Reason: The Catholic Intellectual Tradition****3 Credits****Attributes:** RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course leads students to an understanding of the characteristically Catholic ways of engaging the world intellectually. The course examines key ideas of symbol, analogy and sacrament, and central Catholic motifs such as theology as "faith seeking understanding," the synthesis of faith and reason and the peculiarly Catholic expression of Christian humanism, as expressed in the work of Catholic philosophers and intellectuals. It attends to feminist and non-Western critiques of the tradition, to Catholicism's approach to some contemporary social problems, and to some examples of the role of the Catholic imagination in the arts.

**RLST 2544 Finding God in All Things****3 Credits****Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

The course aims at a deeper understanding of the origins, development, and present forms of Ignatian spirituality. Students are invited to study in an open yet critical fashion: the life and history of Ignatius of Loyola; the founding and development of the Society of Jesus; the historical context of the major themes of Jesuit spirituality and ways in which these have been worked out in history; strengths, weaknesses, and potential lacunae of this particular charism in the church; its relevance to contemporary spiritual needs, especially in the context of university life; its potential for nurturing lives characterized by love for others and justice for the world. Students are also exposed to the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises; a variety of prayer forms developed by Ignatius; and a service learning project. The course culminates in a creative project designed by each student.

**RLST 2550 Catholic 2.0: Faith and Practice****3 Credits****Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

Opening with a discussion of the Triune God, and highlighting questions of social justice (gender, race, and class), this course offers a scholarly approach to key issues shaping the lives of adult Catholics. An in-depth study of the liturgy (and its inculturation) theologically grounds the entire course, enhanced by a consideration both Roman and Orthodox Catholic traditions. Students will use this foundation to examine the dynamism of faith, reason and contemporary science, the sacraments and rites surrounding marriage and the end of life, and the changing institutional role of the "site" of most adult catholic practice: the local parish.

**RLST 2551 Christian Ecological Ethics****3 Credits****Attributes:** RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** Any 1001 RLST level course.

This course introduces students to the field of Christian Ecological Ethics. Students will critically examine the historically fraught relationship between anthropocentric Christian theologies and human treatment of the natural environment and explore how Christian theologians and practitioners draw on resources from the Christian tradition to construct ethical responses to issues such as climate change and environmental justice. The course covers a range of Christian theological approaches to ecological ethics through engaging written texts and immersive media such as film, case studies, and opportunities for experiential learning.

**RLST 2552 Contemporary Moral Problems****3 Credits****Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, DEIE Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Elective, EDCG Educational Studies Cognate, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This theological examination of contemporary moral problems considers selected ethical issues in contemporary society and leading approaches to moral decision-making. The course investigates moral problems such as euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, the death penalty, violence and just war theory, bioethics, sexual and reproductive ethics, global poverty, environmental ethics, and issues in business and legal ethics.

**RLST 2555 Catholic Social Teaching****3 Credits****Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, DEIE Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Elective, PJST Peace and Justice Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines the modern teachings of the Catholic Church on peace and justice; Christian/humanist attitudes towards war; pacifism and the just war theory; and changes in global political and economic structures that seem necessary to ensure a peaceful and just world order.

**RLST 2556 Spirituality and Social Justice****3 Credits****Attributes:** RSST Religious Studies Major Track

Embracing the Ignatian notion of becoming "contemplatives in action," this course invites students to develop a concrete understanding of interlocking social injustices by studying the spiritual practices that sustain and motivate faith communities struggling for justice. We will focus on the housing crisis, ecological devastation, and war, exploring through an interdisciplinary lens how spirituality enables practitioners to see the realities of the world (contemplation) and strive to transform them (action). The Benincasa Community in Guilford, a group of lay Catholics guided by the pillars of contemplation, learning, activism/ service, and right relationship, will be our partner in this community-engaged learning experience.

**RLST 2557 Christian Spirituality****3 Credits****Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines the foundations and elements of a spirituality of everyday life from a lay perspective. It considers issues related to the spirituality of university life and to one's broader, future developmental calling on personal, spiritual, and professional levels. Themes of the course include historical overview of Christian spiritual traditions; key theological foundations such as creation, incarnation, doctrine of the Holy Spirit, grace, priesthood of all believers, action, and contemplation; exploration of the practical implications of such a spirituality; and reflection on action for justice.

**RLST 2558 The Classic: Truth in Religion and the Arts 3 Credits****Attributes:** RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines the idea of the classic as a model for establishing relationships between religious language on the one hand, and poetic discourse and artistic expression on the other. What truth do classics lay claim to and how do they embody it? The course compares secular and religious classics before investigating the value of the classic model in the process of doing theology.

**RLST 2559 Saints and Sinners: Images of Holiness in Contemporary Fiction 3 Credits****Attributes:** CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines the complexity of current understandings of what it is to be holy. It begins with a brief consideration of traditional models of holiness. It turns next to several influential theories of spiritual growth, and then, in the light of these theories, looks at a series of 20th-century novels that examine the idea of holiness. Authors vary but include Georges Bernanos, Shusaku Endo, Mary Gordon, Graham Greene, David Lodge, Flannery O'Connor, Gloria Naylor, Muriel Spark, and Jean Sullivan.

**RLST 2649 American Catholic Theologians 3 Credits****Attributes:** ASRS American Studies: Religion, ASUP American Studies Upper Level, CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This lecture/reading course gives students insight into the modern development of Catholic theology in America and what makes it specifically American. Discussion/analysis covers the work of Gustav Weigel, John Courtney Murray, George Tavard, Frank Sheed, Walter Burghardt, and Robley Whitson.

**RLST 2660 I'm Spiritual, Not Religious: The American Spiritual Tradition 3 Credits****Attributes:** ASGW American Studies: Gateway, ASRS American Studies: Religion, ASUP American Studies Upper Level, CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines a strand of anti-institutionalism in American religion, one, which has culminated in the increasingly popular and ubiquitous phrase, "I'm spiritual, but not religious." The claim to spirituality, but not to religiosity, has a rich history in the United States context, beginning in the earliest periods of European settlement. In this course, students will investigate the evolution of this thoroughly American phenomenon across U.S. history and through the examples of spiritual Americans. Students will consider whether the phrase, "I'm spiritual, but not religious," though often intended as a statement of one's separateness from religious institutions, has become the marker of a distinctive religious affiliation.

**RLST 2662 Afro-Caribbean and African American Religions: Shout, O Children! 3 Credits****Attributes:** ASRS American Studies: Religion, BSAH Black Studies: Arts and Humanities, BSFC Black Studies Focus Course, CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, DEIE Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Elective, INEL International Studies Elective, PJST Peace and Justice Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines the evolution and innovation of the religions of African people as they were shaped through the middle passage, merged with other religions during the institution of slavery, and created anew on the American continent and throughout the Caribbean Sea. Students will examine how Caribbean traditions like Vodou and Santeria and American iterations of Christianity and Islam arose out of and against institutions and cultures that sought to subjugate them. Further, students will explore how elements of black religious life, from preaching style to music to liturgy to religious thought, have left an indelible mark upon American and Caribbean religious cultures and traditions.

**RLST 2663 New Religious Movements in America 3 Credits****Attributes:** ASRS American Studies: Religion, ASUP American Studies Upper Level, RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines new religious movements, more pejoratively known as "cults" on their own terms and in their American context. Students examine multiple religious traditions, including those born and grown in the United States, as well as those imported from outside the United States. Traditions studied may include Christian Science, the Nation of Islam, Heaven's Gate, and Scientology. Throughout the course, students seek to answer the following questions: why do new religious traditions arise, how do they thrive, and does the context of American culture have anything to do with their success or failure?

**RLST 2665 Religion and Medicine in the United States 3 Credits****Attributes:** ASGW American Studies: Gateway, HSTE Health Studies: Traditions, Delivery, and Ethics, RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

Students will explore overlapping narratives that characterize the relationship between the worlds of religion and medicine: (1) how various religious peoples, traditions, and institutions have understood health and wellness, and how these various understandings have shaped their approach to western medicine and/or healing practices, and (2) how the medical field and medical professionals have understood, engaged with, and dealt with resistance to medical treatment from religious people, traditions, and institutions. Examining these narratives will help students to understand the complexity of the relationship of religion and medicine, and to reexamine their understandings of what is meant by "do no harm."

**RLST 2667 Religion and Emotion in the U.S.: "Feeling Some Type of Way" 3 Credits****Attributes:** ASRS American Studies: Religion, RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course explores religion, religious experience, and identity in America through the lens of emotion, taking as its premise that religion and emotion are and have been intertwined in ways generative and destructive throughout U.S. history. Students will examine this relationship through a series of units that explore emotional "binaries," such as Love and Hate; Shame and Pride; Anxiety and Calm; and Grief and Joy. During each unit, students will have the opportunity to explore how a particular emotion and its purported opposite have shaped religious experiences, beliefs, practices, institutions, and peoples in the U.S.

**RLST 2668 American Catholic History****3 Credits****Attributes:** ASRS American Studies: Religion, CARS Catholic Studies: Religious Studies, RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course traces the development of American Catholicism from its origins through the extraordinary 19th century expansion to the point today at which 22% of U.S. citizens are Catholic. We will examine how Catholics fared before they had priests or sacramental ministry, how the early church developed in the age of Enlightenment Catholicism, what happened to transform the church during the years of European immigration, and how Catholics struggled for acceptance. We end by tracing the present day decline of cultural Catholicism, the assimilation of Catholics into mainstream American culture and the increasing Latinization of the church.

**RLST 2669 Religion and the Civil Rights Movement****3 Credits****Attributes:** BSFC Black Studies Focus Course, DEIE Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Elective, RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

With a special emphasis on the public speeches and work of Martin Luther King, Jr., this course will consider the role black religious leaders, institutions, culture played in shaping the modern Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s.

**RLST 2730 Islamic Theology****3 Credits****Attributes:** IWHU Islamic World Studies: Humanities, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course is a survey of major tenets of Muslim belief, points of difference, and schools of theological thought. We will explore important points of faith and investigate the debates that have emerged over the course of Islamic history. Special attention will be paid to the areas of doctrinal formulation, scholastic theology and mystical thought. Our primary readings will consist of both primary sources in translation and current secondary literature.

**RLST 2750 Islamic Ethical and Legal Thought****3 Credits****Attributes:** IWHU Islamic World Studies: Humanities, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course examines the different ways that ethical and legal thought have been formulated and practiced within Islam. Students will gain a basic understanding of Islamic law and the legal schools associated with it. The nature of Muslim ethics will be explored in a number of complementary and competing discourses including the law, Muslim philosophy, Sufism, theology, and political theory. Students will analyze pre-modern and modern case studies. Topics to be discussed include governance, war, sex, and biomedical ethics. Our readings will consist of primary sources in translation and current secondary literature.

**RLST 2760 Islam in America****3 Credits****Attributes:** ASRS American Studies: Religion, ASUP American Studies Upper Level, DEIE Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Elective, IWHU Islamic World Studies: Humanities, RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course is a survey of Muslim life and religious movements connected to Islam in North America. The course traces the history of Islam on the continent from the Atlantic slave trade to the post-9/11 era. We will investigate the many ways in which Islam, as both a religion and idea, has appeared on the American horizon and in the American imagination. The historic diversity of Muslim communities on the continent will be explored through their respective beliefs, cultures, and sense of identity. Special attention will be paid to the African-American and Immigrant Muslim communities.

**RLST 2795 Islam, Race, Power****3 Credits****Attributes:** DEIE Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Elective, IWHU Islamic World Studies: Humanities**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

Students will undertake a critical investigation of race and ethnicity within Islam from the classical period to the present. The course examines how different Muslims approached the concepts as well as how those concepts were applied to or imposed upon particular Muslim communities. The historical experience of Black Muslims serves as a recurring case study. Moreover, the relationship of race to power is also a central analytical theme. Topics to be discussed include the construction of race, slavery and its abolition, the Black American Muslim experience, and Muslim theologies of liberation and resistance. This course is research and writing intensive.

**RLST 2880 Hinduism****3 Credits****Attributes:** ANMC Asian Studies Elective, INEL International Studies Elective, RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course introduces the seminal texts, concepts, and images of the major religious tradition of India. Topics include Vedic ritualism; Upanishadic mysticism; yoga meditation; the Bhagavad Gita; the caste system; Vedanta philosophy; the cults of Rama, Krishna, Shiva, and the Goddess; and Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent action. The course views Hinduism as a historical phenomenon, a formative influence on Indian culture and society, and a response to the human condition.

**RLST 2883 Buddhist Spirituality****3 Credits****Attributes:** ANMC Asian Studies Elective, INEL International Studies Elective**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

The course explores the cultivation of meditation and spirituality in the Buddhist tradition, its embodiment in seminal figures in India, China, Japan, and Tibet, and their individual expressions of contemplation and spiritual experience. The association of these Buddhist saints with value systems, specific sites, and sacred activities is examined, especially as the relationships between these persons and their activity in the world reflect their religious path. Particular emphasis is placed on the questions of religious inspiration and creativity, and the manner that these are formed in the process of training in contemplation.

**RLST 2886 Buddhism in the United States****3 Credits****Attributes:** ANMC Asian Studies Elective, RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

This course will explore the history, sources, and forms of Buddhism that have prospered in the United States since the mid 19th century, with the emigration of Chinese to California. Subsequent developments will also be examined: Pure land, beat zen, hippie Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and emigrant communities from Japan, China, and Southeast Asia among others. The "two communities" model (impoverished emigrant vs. wealthy convert Buddhism) will be explored. Visits to Buddhist centers in the Northeast will be part of the program, and if possible, visits from Buddhist representatives to the class. Film, literature, and other media will inform the course as well.

**RLST 2889 Tantrism****3 Credits****Attributes:** ANMC Asian Studies Elective, INEL International Studies Elective, RSST Religious Studies Major Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

The course covers the medieval formation of tantrism, a pan-Indian approach to religion that was to develop separate but related subcultures in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism. With its ability to sacralize formulations of power and sexuality, it went on to become the most widely spread form of Buddhism, with premodern forms found in Tibet, China, Japan, and Eastern Europe. Recent expressions have been found all over the world. The course examines questions of tantrism's medieval origins, its espousal of antinomian conduct, its geographical spread, attempts at its domestication, and its recent developments in India and abroad.

**RLST 2900 Special Topics (Shell)****3 Credits****Attributes:** RSST Religious Studies Major Track, RSTH Religious Studies Theology Track**Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

Students and faculty in this course will engage in an in-depth exploration of a significant topic in the field of Religious Studies. The content will vary in successive offerings of this course, depending on the professor. The course may be repeated with the consent of the professor.

**RLST 3990 Independent Study****1-3 Credits****Prerequisite:** One 1000-level religious studies course.

Students, in consultation with a department director, define their course of study.

Glassman  
Jones  
McCulley  
Merritt  
Murchie  
O'Brien  
Prosnit  
Ranstrom  
Roy

**Faculty Emeriti**

Benney  
Davidson  
Dreyer  
Humphrey  
Lakeland  
Thiel  
Umansky

**Faculty****Professors**

Nguyen  
Slotemaker, *chair*

**Associate Professors**

Dallavalle  
Schmidt  
Willisky-Ciollo

**Assistant Professors**

Espiritu  
Grimes  
Holman  
McLaughlin  
Williams

**Associate Professor of the Practice**

Hardy

**Assistant Professor of the Practice**

Harper

**Lecturers**

Athais-Robles  
Bajwa  
Cintron  
Defeo  
Gaines