Religious Studies

Degree Offered

• Bachelor of Arts

Nature of the Program

The program for religious studies in the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences meets the needs of West Virginia University students by offering instruction in the history and practice of many world religions including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Near Eastern traditions. In addition, the program offers opportunities to explore many other interesting areas of study including Hebrew and Christian scriptures, ethics, and current topics of interest. The program for religious studies also seeks to address issues of interest within the WVU community by providing activities such as guest lectures and panel forums for students and the public.

In the program, students have the unique opportunity to study religious issues from a scholarly perspective. Hence, religion courses at West Virginia University are intended to stimulate interest in the academic discipline of religious studies, which involves studying world faiths objectively, without an agenda. Instructors utilize various methodologies that allow students to immerse themselves in, and learn about, many different traditions. Some of these methodologies include studying ancient texts, examining the history and traditions of various world cultures, the use of resource texts from reputable scholars, and the analysis of archaeological data.

The degree in religious studies offers a general liberal arts education for students entering such professions as law, medicine, and business, if electives are chosen carefully. This major is useful to anyone seeking a professional career in religion, such as the ministry, teaching, graduate study of theology, biblical studies, and religious journalism. For further information about this program, please go to: http://religiousstudies.wvu.edu.

Students who earn a degree in the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences must complete the University requirements, the College requirements for their specific degree program, and their major requirements.

Minors

All students have the possibility of earning one or more minors; view a list of all available minors and their requirements (http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/minors) here. Please note that students may not earn a minor in their major field.

Certificate of Global Engagement

Students in the Eberly College, regardless of their major, can earn a Certificate of Global Engagement. Completion of the Certificate demonstrates the student’s knowledge of diverse cultures, as well as the ability to communicate and interact effectively with people of different cultural backgrounds. Students will be required to apply their knowledge of contemporary issues and global social contexts to their course work and their broader citizenship. For details regarding Certificate requirements, please visit the Eberly College page (http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/eberrcollegeofartsandsciences/#otherdegreeextext).

FACULTY

COORDINATOR

• Aaron M. Gale - Ph.D. (Northwestern University)  
  Associate Professor, New Testament Studies, World Religions, Archaeology

TEACHING ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

• Alex Snow - Ph.D. (Syracuse University)  
  Asian Religions

TEACHING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

• Alyssa Beall - Ph.D. (Syracuse University)  
  Cultural Studies

Admissions

• First Time Freshmen are admitted directly into the major.
• WVU students transferring from another major, and students transferring from another institution must meet minimum standard of a 2.00 overall GPA. Please see an adviser for details.

Click here to view the Suggested Plan of Study (p. 3)
General Education Foundations

Please use this link to view a list of courses that meet each GEF requirement. [(http://registrar.wvu.edu/gef)](http://registrar.wvu.edu/gef)

NOTE: Some major requirements will fulfill specific GEF requirements. Please see the curriculum requirements listed below for details on which GEFs you will need to select.

**General Education Foundations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1 - Composition &amp; Rhetoric</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 101</td>
<td>Introduction to Composition and Rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; ENGL 102</td>
<td>and Composition, Rhetoric, and Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or ENGL 103</td>
<td>Accelerated Academic Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2A/F2B - Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3 - Math &amp; Quantitative Reasoning</td>
<td>3-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>F4 - Society &amp; Connections</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>F5 - Human Inquiry &amp; the Past</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>F6 - The Arts &amp; Creativity</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>F7 - Global Studies &amp; Diversity</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>F8 - Focus (may be satisfied by completion of a minor, double major, or dual degree)</td>
<td>9</td>
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</table>

Total Hours: 31-37

Please note that not all of the GEF courses are offered at all campuses. Students should consult with their advisor or academic department regarding the GEF course offerings available at their campus.

**Degree Requirements**

Students must complete WVU General Education Foundations requirements, College B.A. requirements, major requirements, and electives to total a minimum of 120 hours. For complete details on these requirements, visit the B.A. Degrees tab on the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences [(http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/eberlycollegeofartsandsciences/#bachelorofartstext)](http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/eberlycollegeofartsandsciences/#bachelorofartstext) pages.

**Departmental Requirements for the B.A. in Religious Studies**

All students wishing to obtain a degree in Religious Studies must complete a minimum of 30 credits of course work in Religious Studies and comply with the following:

- **Capstone Experience**: The university requires the successful completion of Capstone course. Religious Studies majors must complete RELG 482.

- **Writing and Communication Skills Requirement**: Religious Studies Bachelor of Arts students fulfill the Writing and Communication Skills requirement by completing ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 (or ENGL 103), and at least two additional SpeakWrite Certified Courses selected from: RELG 219, RELG 223, RELG 230, RELG 231, RELG 301, RELG 310, RELG 482.

- **Calculation of the GPA in the Major**: A cumulative GPA of 2.0 in all RELG courses is required for graduation; only grades of C- or higher will be applied toward major requirements. If a course is repeated, all attempts will be included in the calculation of the GPA unless the course is eligible for a D/F repeat.

- **Benchmarks Expectations**: For details, go to the Religious Studies admissions tab (p. 1).

**Curriculum Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELG 191</td>
<td>First-Year Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEF: number of hours may vary depending on options selected and overlap with major; please see above</td>
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<tr>
<th>ECAS B.A. Requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Arts Requirement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Studies &amp; Diversity Requirement</td>
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<tr>
<th>DEPARTMENTAL REQUIREMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All RELG courses must be completed with a grade of C- or higher</td>
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**Religious Studies Basic Requirements**

Select one of the following:
### Religious Studies Intermediate Requirements

Select three from the following:

- RELG 219: The History of Christianity
- RELG 222: Origins of Judaism
- RELG 223: Christianity in America
- RELG 230: Religions of India
- RELG 231: Religions of China and Japan
- RELG 232: History and Practice of Islam
- RELG 242: Theological Perspectives in Modern Literature
- RELG 255: Religion Across Cultures
- RELG 293: Special Topics

### Religious Studies Advanced Requirements

Select four from the following:

- PHIL 308: Philosophy of Religion
- RELG 301: Studies in Asian Scriptures
- RELG 302: Studies in Islamic Scriptures
- RELG 303: Studies in Christian Scripture
- RELG 304: Studies in Hebrew Scriptures
- RELG 305: Biblical History/Archaeology
- RELG 306: Biblical History and Archeology of Israel
- RELG 310: Historical Theology
- RELG 393: Special Topics
- RELG 410: Apocalypse
- RELG 493: Special Topics
- RELG 494: Seminar
- RELG 350: Biblical Ethics/Current Issues

### Capstone Experience

- RELG 482: Interactions in World Religions

### General Electives

Number of electives may vary depending on GEF overlap

Total Hours: 120

### Suggested Plan of Study

#### First Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>RELG 191</td>
<td>1 ENGL 101 (GEF 1)</td>
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<td>GEF 3</td>
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<td>GEF 4</td>
<td>3 Foreign Language 102</td>
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<td>Foreign Language 101</td>
<td>3 RELG Intern. Course 1</td>
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<td>RELG Basic Course</td>
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<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<td>Spring</td>
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#### Second Year

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<td>ENGL 102 (GEF 1)</td>
<td>3 GEF 5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GEF 2</td>
<td>3 ECAS Fine Arts Requirement (GEF 6)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Foreign Language 203</td>
<td>3 ECAS Global Studies &amp; Diversity Requirement (GEF 7)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>RELG Intern. Course 2</td>
<td>3 Foreign Language 204</td>
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<td>General Elective</td>
<td>3 RELG 350</td>
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<th>Semester</th>
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<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
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Total Hours: 120
Religious Studies

Third Year

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<td>RELG Interm. Course 3</td>
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<td>GEF 8*</td>
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<td>RELG Advanced Course 1</td>
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<td>GEF 8*</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELG Advanced Course 2</td>
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<td>RELG Advanced Course 3</td>
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<td>General Elective</td>
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Fourth Year

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<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GEF 8*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>RELG 482 (Capstone)</td>
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<td>RELG Advanced Course 4</td>
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<td>General Elective</td>
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<td>General Elective</td>
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15

Total credit hours: 120

* Students who complete a minor, a double major or a dual degree already meet F 8.

Degree Progress

- By the end of the 4th semester in the major students should have successfully completed RELG 102, all three 200-level required RELG courses, RELG 304, and maintain a 2.0 GPA in all courses counted toward the major.
- All majors must meet with RELG program adviser each semester.

Students who fail to meet these benchmarks may be removed from their major.

Major Learning Outcomes

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

1. Identify and differentiate among the core principles and theories of at least three major world religions.
2. Research and critique, utilizing academic methods of inquiry, sacred texts from at least two major world religions.
3. Demonstrate satisfactory research and writing skills, coherent thought, and ability to articulate with clarity concepts related to the study of world religions.
4. Demonstrate a general knowledge of religious ethics and theology.
5. Demonstrate the use of critical methods in the analysis of religious texts.
6. Summarize and compare the histories and cultural settings of at least three major world religions

Religious Studies Minor

MINOR CODE - U031

Students choosing the Religious Studies minor will coordinate with an advisor to design 15 hours of coursework within Religious Studies that best represents the student's interests within the minor. Students must earn a minimum grade of C in all courses applied to the minor.

- Course requirements: The minor consists of 15 hours of coursework in religious studies (any RELG courses), with at least 9 hours at the upper-level (300-level or above).

COURSES

RELG 102. Introduction to World Religions. 3 Hours.
This course explores five of the most widely practiced world religions; Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Students are introduced to the history and basic tenets of each faith.

RELG 105. Introduction to Issues in Religious Studies. 3 Hours.
Leading issues involved in religious studies: transcendence, the God question, evil, redemption, community, eschatology, symbolism, ethics, examples of the relationship between religion and culture.
RELG 120. Introduction to the Study of Religion. 3 Hours.
Religious Studies as a field is interdisciplinary in its approaches. Drawing on sociology, anthropology, psychology, theology, and other perspectives, students will explore key themes, major ideas, and important figures in the study of religion. We will examine what it means to “study religion,” and explore what different perspectives might contribute to the field.

RELG 191. First-Year Seminar. 1-3 Hours.
Engages students in active learning strategies that enable effective transition to college life at WVU. Students will explore school, college and university programs, policies and services relevant to academic success. Provides active learning activities that enable effective transition to the academic environment. Students examine school, college and university programs, policies and services.

RELG 219. The History of Christianity. 3 Hours.
This course explores the birth and evolution of Christianity from its inception until the modern era. Emphasis will be placed upon the significant people and events that shaped Christianity.

RELG 220. Origins of Judaism. 3 Hours.
Main beliefs and practices of the Jewish religion in its formative period, 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. Selections from the late Old Testament writings, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and rabbinical literature.

RELG 223. Christianity in America. 3 Hours.
Explore the history of American Christianity, as republican ideology, democratic polity, and commitment to individual freedom create a competitive religious marketplace without an established church.

RELG 230. Religions of India. 3 Hours.
Proto-Indian religion, Hinduism, beginnings of Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism; historical and theological foundations; developments of thought; and contemporary expressions and encounters with the modern world.

RELG 231. Religions of China and Japan. 3 Hours.
Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism; historical and theological foundations; developments of thought; and contemporary expressions and encounters with the modern world.

RELG 232. History and Practice of Islam. 3 Hours.
Examines the origins and development of Islam from its inception in ancient Arabia to the modern era. The central beliefs, practices, and denominations associated with Islam will also be explored.

RELG 242. Theological Perspectives in Modern Literature. 3 Hours.
Theological perspectives in selected modern writers including Beckett, Camus, Faulkner, Hesse, Hopkins, Wiesel, Eliot, and Auden. Theological insights into nihilism, evil, redemption, and meaning, as well as psychological analyses of religion, will be examined in these authors.

RELG 255. Religion Across Cultures. 3 Hours.
Introduces cross-cultural study of religion, with emphasis on non-western examples; surveys classic statements by major modern theorists, focusing on comparison in modern and secular academic setting.

RELG 293. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

RELG 301. Studies in Asian Scriptures. 3 Hours.
Explores the content and background of Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian scriptures from the Vedic period through the modern era. Examines the historical, cultural, and religious settings of the texts as well as their theological concepts.

RELG 302. Studies in Islamic Scriptures. 3 Hours.
Explores Islamic scriptures including the Qur’an and Hadith from the time of revelation through the modern era. Examines the historical, cultural, and religious settings of the texts along with theological concepts.

RELG 303. Studies in Christian Scripture. 3 Hours.
This course explores the origin and development of the Christian Bible. The historical, cultural, and religious settings of the texts, as well as their theological intent, will be examined.

RELG 304. Studies in Hebrew Scriptures. 3 Hours.
This course explores the origin and development of the Hebrew Bible. The historical, cultural, and religious settings of the texts, as well as their theological intent, will be examined.

RELG 305. Biblical History/Archaeology. 3 Hours.
Explores development of the biblical world from 2,000 BCE through the first century CE. Various cultures will be examined socially, historically, and religiously. How biblical archaeology impacts understanding of the Bible will also be discussed.

RELG 306. Biblical History and Archeology of Israel. 1-6 Hours.
Study abroad program in Israel. Students explore the biblical world from the Iron Age to the Roman era through participation in an archaeological dig. Examines social, historical, and religious dimensions of various ancient cultures.

RELG 310. Historical Theology. 3 Hours.
Explore the historical development of Judeo-Christian theology from ca. 1000 BCE through the mid-20th century. Topics will include the nature of God, Christology, and apocalypticism.
RELG 350. Biblical Ethics/Current Issues. 3 Hours.
Introduction to biblical ethics and its application to current issues. Issues such as war, the environment, and biotechnology are explored by interpreting biblical texts as a touchstone of ethical principles and values.

RELG 393. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

RELG 410. Apocalypse. 3 Hours.
PR: ENGL 102 or ENGL 103. Examine the apocalyptic literature of Judaism and Christianity and consider its perspectives and functions by tracing the impact of leading theologies and interpretations of end-time prophecy.

RELG 482. Interactions in World Religions. 3 Hours.
PR: 12 credits of RELG course work or consent. Explores the in-depth history and interactions among major world religions and cultures from ancient times through the modern era. Emphasis upon specific geographical regions including the Middle East, Asia Minor, and the Far East.

RELG 490. Teaching Practicum. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Teaching practice as a tutor or assistant.

RELG 491. Professional Field Experience. 1-18 Hours.
PR: Consent. (May be repeated up to a maximum of 18 hours.) Prearranged experiential learning program, to be planned, supervised, and evaluated for credit by faculty and field supervisors. Involves temporary placement with public or private enterprise for professional competence development.

RELG 492. Directed Study. 1-3 Hours.
Directed study, reading, and or research.

RELG 493. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

RELG 494. Seminar. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Presentation and discussion of topics of mutual concern to students and faculty.

RELG 495. Independent Study. 1-6 Hours.
Faculty supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

RELG 496. Senior Thesis. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent.

RELG 497. Research. 1-6 Hours.
Independent research projects.

RELG 498. Honors. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Students in Honors Program and consent by the honors director. Independent reading, study or research.