

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Degree Types: PhD

The Doctoral Program in Religious Studies (<https://www.religious-studies.northwestern.edu/graduate/>) focuses on the history, anthropology, theory, methodological research and applications of the field within each of seven areas of concentration:

- American Religions
- Buddhist Studies
- Classical Judaism
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Latin American Religion
- Religion, Law, and Politics

The program is highly flexible and profoundly interdisciplinary. All students take courses both within and outside the department, most choose at least one committee member from another department, and many students take a qualifying examination in another discipline. This flexibility allows for rigorous projects grounded in Religious Studies but influenced by other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. The program is intended to give both a scholarly training in the discipline and a careful training in academic teaching, a focus of the program. Our nationally recognized faculty takes leadership in national policy debates and international scholarship at the highest level, and trains our students for this leadership role.

Students in this program are also encouraged to participate in TGS's Interdisciplinary Cluster Initiative (<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/admission/academic-programs/clusters-and-certificates/>) and in the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching (<https://www.northwestern.edu/searle/>). The Clusters offer a strong set of colleagues in areas of specific interest and many students get certificates within the cluster. For more information on finding a second intellectual "home" outside the Department, please visit the Interdisciplinary Clusters page (<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/admission/academic-programs/clusters-and-certificates/>). Additional funding is sometimes available through clusters, in addition to our robust support package. Each student is assigned to a leading expert in their field, and works closely with this faculty member throughout their PhD program.

For more information on applying to the Department of Religious Studies, please see the Religious Studies Applications page (<https://www.religious-studies.northwestern.edu/graduate/admissions/applications.html>).

## Additional resources:

- Department website (<https://www.religious-studies.northwestern.edu/graduate/>)
- Program handbook(s)

## Degrees Offered

- Religious Studies PhD (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/religious-studies/religious-studies-phd/>)

Learning objectives for PhD students in Religious Studies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Becoming conversant in the broad methodological and theoretical conversations that undergird the inherently interdisciplinary field of religious studies.
- Developing an original research project.
- Becoming a skilled teacher.
- Developing professionally in preparation for careers in academia.

## Religious Studies Courses

### RELIGION 301-0 Hindu Epics: Mahābhārata (1 Unit)

Immersion in the ancient Sanskrit epic in translation and modern retellings, focusing on classical Hindu myth and theology as well as issues of justice, war, gender, and violence.

*Advanced Expression Ethics Values Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

### RELIGION 302-0 Hindu Epics: Rāmāyaṇa (1 Unit)

Immersion in the ancient Sanskrit epic in translation and modern retellings, focusing on classical Hindu myth and theology as well as issues of justice, violence, gender, and love.

*Ethics Values Distro Area*

### RELIGION 312-0 Buddhism and Gender (1 Unit)

Women, men, and gendered symbolism in Buddhism from the time of the Buddha to the present. Draws on canonical texts, narrative literature, autobiography and biography, and ethnography.

*Advanced Expression Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Discipline Ethics Values Distro Area Global Perspectives on Power, Justice, and Equity*

### RELIGION 313-0 Tibetan Religion and Culture (1 Unit)

Propagation of religions in Tibet in their larger historical, cultural, and political contexts.

*Ethics Values Distro Area*

### RELIGION 315-0 Buddhist Auto/biography (1 Unit)

An exploration of Buddhist narratives of the self, including Sanskrit and Tibetan-language biographies and autobiographies in English translation, in conversation with literary theory.

*Ethics Values Distro Area Interdisciplinary Distro - See Rules (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) Literature Fine Arts Distro Area Literature and Arts Foundational Discipline*

### RELIGION 316-0 Religion and the Body in China (1 Unit)

Explores the place of the body in Chinese religion, from the ancient period to the present day. Touches on dying and the afterlife, food and drink, health and medicine, gender and family, and other themes.

*Advanced Expression Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Discipline Ethics Values Distro Area*

### RELIGION 339-0 Topics in Judaism (1 Unit)

Content varies. May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

RELIGION 339-0 taught with JWSH\_ST 339-0.

*Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Discipline Ethics Values Distro Area*

### RELIGION 375-0 Foundations of Christian Thought (1 Unit)

Christian interpretations of salvation, Christ, and God, from Augustine to Julian of Norwich.

*Ethics Values Distro Area*

### RELIGION 376-0 Christianity and the Making of Modernity (1 Unit)

Role of Christian thought in shaping the turbulent history of the West from the 16th to the late-18th centuries. Christianity's engagement with local and global events, from reformation to revolution, reason to romanticism.

*Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

**RELIGION 377-0 Christian Thought in Global Perspective (1 Unit)**

Globalization of Christian thought in the 19th-21st centuries, considering religious differences, colonialism, war, and democracy. Approaches to theology in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

*Ethical and Evaluative Thinking Foundational Disci Ethics Values Distro Area*

**RELIGION 440-0 Topics in Buddhism (1 Unit)**

May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

**RELIGION 460-0 Topics in Christianity (1 Unit)**

May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

**RELIGION 462-0 Topics in American Religious History & Contemporary Practice (1 Unit)**

The intersection of race, religion, and class-as a generative convergence, as well as tragedy and outrage-is at once everywhere and nowhere in US religious history. This course considers the strange fate of this convergence through a careful consideration of recent work that aims to recover particular pieces its history.

**RELIGION 468-0 Critical Theory and Religion (1 Unit)**

This course explores the central place the concept of "religion" has occupied in the development of critical theory and, in turn, the role critical theory has played in reframing "religion" in modernity and in the contemporary geopolitical moment. We take up the question, "Is critique secular," as we consider the contributions, potential and actual, of "religion" to social transformation.

**RELIGION 470-0 Theology and the Study of Religion (1 Unit)**

An historical exploration of the study of religion, from the nineteenth century to the present, in relation to theological themes. Also addressed are constructive issues concerning the contemporary relation between theology and religious studies.

**RELIGION 471-0 Studies in Religions (1 Unit)**

May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

**RELIGION 472-0 Studies in Literature of Religion (1 Unit)**

May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

**RELIGION 473-0 Studies in Buddhism (1 Unit)**

May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

**RELIGION 474-0 Studies in Judaism (1 Unit)**

May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

**RELIGION 475-0 Studies in Christianity (1 Unit)**

May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

**RELIGION 476-0 Studies in Islam (1 Unit)**

May be repeated for credit with change of topic.

**RELIGION 481-1 Classical Theories of Religion (1 Unit)**

This course explores the writings of well-known European and American philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and historians who wrote between the late eighteenth and mid-twentieth centuries and who have shaped the foundations of scholarly and public perceptions of religion over approximately the past 150 years.

**RELIGION 481-2 Contemporary Theories of Religion (1 Unit)**

In this seminar, we trace the emergence of the category of religion as an object of scholarly inquiry and cross-cultural comparison, with particular attention to how the category emerged in the context of European colonialism and imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries.

**RELIGION 482-0 Themes in Comparative Religion (1 Unit)**

Theoretical and methodological approaches to comparative work in religious studies. Content varies.

**RELIGION 490-0 TA / RA Assistantship (1 Unit)**

Administrative registration for graduate students who are TAing an undergraduate class, teaching their own course, or assigned as RA (research assistant).

**RELIGION 499-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)**

SEE DEPT FOR SECTION AND PERMISSION NUMBERS Permission of instructor and department required. May be repeated for credit.

**RELIGION 570-1 Research Seminar (1 Unit)**

Research seminar for advanced graduate students. Two quarters of registration required for completion of two-quarter research projects.

**RELIGION 570-2 Research Seminar (1 Unit)**

Research seminar for advanced graduate students. Two quarters of registration required for completion of two-quarter research projects.

**RELIGION 570-3 Research Seminar (1 Unit)**

Research seminar for advanced graduate students. Two quarters of registration required for completion of two-quarter research projects.

**RELIGION 590-0 Research (1-3 Units)**

SEE DEPT FOR SECTION AND PERMISSION NUMBERS Independent investigation of selected problems pertaining to thesis or dissertation.