

RELIGION

In keeping with the mission of Wabash College to educate men to “think critically, act responsibly, lead effectively, and live humanely,” the Religion Department promotes the academic study of religion as part of a rich, well-rounded liberal arts education. We recognize that learning how people have understood and practiced religion throughout history and around the globe is not only important for understanding our world, but also intellectually exciting and personally enriching.

In our courses, we encourage broad and rigorous critical thinking about, and engagement with, religion and theology. We use lectures, discussions, and immersion learning, as well as a wide diversity of methods, including those of theology, philosophy, history, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and literature and the arts. We invite students to study everything from ancient texts to contemporary issues, from religious traditions that they likely know well to those that are new to them.

As such, our courses are intended for all students, including believers, skeptics, and seekers of all kinds. They typically challenge and complicate students’ religious beliefs, while at the same time giving them the tools to broaden and deepen their beliefs. We thus prepare our students for success in graduate school, in religious vocations, as teachers of religion, and in all the career options open to liberal arts college graduates.

As it has done for many years, the Religion Department also supports a variety of activities on campus, such as the annual Christmas Festival with the Music Department, events hosted by the Muslim Students Association, a weekly religious chapel in the Protestant Christian tradition, the Roman Catholic Newman Club, Wabash Christian Men, and other student religious activities.

We try to provide a large number of “entry points” for interested students.

- 100-level courses: Courses numbered in the 100s are all appropriate to take as a first course in religion. Most are lecture courses, but some are discussion courses (e.g. REL-194 Religion and Film, REL-195 Religion & the Arts, REL-196 Religion & Literature). 100-level courses do not have prerequisites.
- 200-level courses: Courses numbered in the 200s are smaller discussion courses. Some have prerequisites; some do not. 200-level courses without a prerequisite are also appropriate to take as a first course in religion.
- 300-level courses: Courses numbered in the 300s are more advanced seminars and usually have prerequisites as indicated.
- REL-490 Sr. Sem: Nature & the Study of Religion is usually taken by majors in the fall of their senior year.

Student Learning Goals

History: acquire knowledge of the history of religious traditions- both ancient and modern, familiar and new.

Relevance: understand the ongoing relevance and impact of religion today, and the interactions of different religions globally.

Diversity: develop awareness of the diversity of religions experiences and traditions.

Pedagogy: learn through a variety of pedagogical methods, including immersion experiences.

Critical Thinking about Religion: think critically about all aspects of religion.

Complexity: enable students to broaden, deepen, or complicate their own religious beliefs.

Activities: have access to various activities at the College, religious and otherwise, that are outside the classroom and supported by the department.

Critical Thinking about the Study of Religion: think broadly and critically about what we’re doing when we’re engaged in the academic study of religion.

Methods: learn a variety of methods commonly employed in the academic study of religion, e.g. sociology, anthropology, theology, history, cultural studies, literary criticism, rhetorical analysis, immersion learning.

Analysis: use these methods to practice the close analysis and interpretation of various religion texts, where “texts” are broadly construed to include, e.g. inscriptions, symbols, artifacts, rituals, festivals, art, music, film, fiction, poetry, other written documents.

Requirements for the Major

A minimum of nine course credits including:

Code	Title	Credits
History of Christianity		2
REL-171	History of Christianity to Reformation	
REL-172	Christianity: Reformation to Modern Era	
Topics in Religion (select two course credits from the following)		2
REL-141	Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	
REL-240	Topics in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	
REL-340	Seminar in Hebrew Bible	
REL-162	His & Lit of the New Testament	
REL-260	Topics in New Test & Early Christianity	
REL-360	Seminar in New Test. & Early Christ.	
REL-272	Topics in History of Christianity	
REL-372	Seminars in the History of Christianity	
REL-173	Introduction to Theology	
REL-273	Topics in Theology	
REL-370	Contemporary Theology	
REL-373	Seminar in Theology	
REL-270	Theological Ethics	
REL-274	Topics in Ethics	
REL-374	Seminar in Ethics	
REL-181	Religion in America	
REL-280	Topics in American Religion	
REL-380	Seminar in American Religion	
REL-275	Topics in Religion & Philosophy	
REL-194	Religion and Film	
REL-195	Religion & the Arts	
REL-196	Religion & Literature	
REL-294	Topics in Religion & Film	
REL-295	Religion and the Arts	
REL-296	Religion and Literature	

REL-150	History of Judaism	
REL-250	Topics in History of Judaism	
REL-350	Seminar in History of Judaism	
REL-387	Independent Study	
World Religions (select two course credits from the following)		2
REL-103	Islam and the Religions of India	
REL-210	Topics in Islam	
REL-220	Topics in South Asian Religions	
REL-310	Seminar in Islam	
REL-320	Seminar in South Asian Religions	
REL-104	Religions of China and Japan	
REL-230	Topics in East Asian Religions	
REL-330	Seminar in East Asian Religions	
REL-151	Studies in Judaism	
REL-251	Topics in the Study of Judaism	
REL-351	Seminar in Jewish Thought	
REL-290	Topics in Comparative Religion	
REL-388	Independent Study	
Methods (select one from the following)		1
REL-297	Anthropology of Religion	
REL-298	Sociology of Religion	
REL-370	Contemporary Theology	
Senior Seminar		1
REL-490	Sr. Sem: Nature & the Study of Religion	
Advanced Elective		1
At least one course credit at the 200-level or 300-level, apart from those courses listed above. ²		
Total Credits		9

¹ Taken before the senior year

² If, out of REL-297 Anthropology of Religion, REL-298 Sociology of Religion, or REL-370 Contemporary Theology, one of these courses has already been taken in order to satisfy requirements above, then either of the remaining two may count as a 200/300-level course to satisfy the requirement. But if not, then it may not.

Comprehensive Examinations

Senior majors write for two days, three hours each day. The usual pattern has been to write on two questions the first day. There is a wide range of questions from which to choose, and questions characteristically draw on material from more than one course. On the second day, students write about a case study—chosen from two options—that raises questions about the nature and study of religion in a specific context.

Requirements for the Minor

A minimum of five course credits.

Code	Title	Credits
Sequence (select at least one from the following sequences)		2
REL-103 & REL-104	Islam and the Religions of India and Religions of China and Japan	
REL-141 & REL-162	Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and His & Lit of the New Testament	
REL-171 & REL-172	History of Christianity to Reformation and Christianity: Reformation to Modern Era	

REL-173	Introduction to Theology	
& REL-270	and Theological Ethics	
REL-181	Religion in America	
& REL-280	and Topics in American Religion	
Advanced Elective		1
At least one credit from Religion courses numbered 200 or above, other than REL-270 or REL-280 if they are taken as part of the two-course sequence.		
Religion Electives		2
Total Credits		5

REL-103 Islam and the Religions of India

This course is an introduction to Islam, and the indigenous religions of India. The first part of the course studies the history, beliefs, and practices of Islam in the Middle East from Muhammad to the present day. The second part studies the history, beliefs, and practices of the religions of India (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism), down to the coming of Islam in the 8th century. The third part deals with the religious developments in India that have resulted from the interactions between Islam and Hinduism in the modern period. Emphasis is placed upon readings in primary texts of these religions. This course is offered fall semester.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-104 Religions of China and Japan

This is an introduction to the indigenous traditions of East Asia (Confucianism, Daoism, and Shinto), and the development of Buddhism in China and Japan. There will also be some coverage of Christianity, Islam, and popular religion. Special attention will be given to the ways these various traditions have changed and interacted with one another in different historical contexts, especially the modern period. Readings will be from the works of Confucius, Laozi, and other Chinese and Japanese philosophers and religious figures. This course is offered in the spring semester.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-141 Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

This is an introduction to the Tanakh, or Hebrew Bible. The format of this course will be reading and discussion of primary texts from the Torah, Prophets, and Writings of the Hebrew Bible. The emphasis will be reading for literary and narrative themes and theological issues in the text, with some discussion of historical context. This course is offered in the fall semester.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-150 History of Judaism

This course will address, at the introductory level, various topics in Jewish history, such as Second Temple Judaism, Rabbinics, or medieval Jewish thought. Topics will vary from year to year. REL 150 applies to requirement B for the major. Please refer to the Registrar's page for course description.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

REL-151 Studies in Judaism

This course will address, at the introductory level, various aspects of Jewish thought and theology, such as contemporary Jewish thought, Jewish-Christian dialogue, and responses to the Holocaust. Topics will vary from year to year. Please refer to the Registrar's page for course description.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-162 His & Lit of the New Testament

This course is an introduction to the social-historical study of the writings that came to be the New Testament of the Christian churches. We will survey the social, political, and religious contexts of the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds of the first century, the actions and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, and the missionary activity of Paul of Tarsus. We will study most of the texts included in the New Testament, as well as other ancient Jewish and early Christian writings to learn about the development of the various beliefs and practices of these first Christian communities.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: Literature/Fine Arts, History/Philosophy/Religion

Equated Courses: CLA-162

REL-171 History of Christianity to Reformation

An introduction to the history of Christianity from the patristic, post-New-Testament period to the medieval period and the early Renaissance. Principal themes include the emergence and meaning of early Christian beliefs and practices, their development during the Middle Ages, the social and cultural environments of the ancient, medieval, and early Renaissance church, and the trends leading up to the Reformation. This course is offered in the fall semester.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-172 Christianity: Reformation to Modern Era

This course is an introduction to the history of Christianity from the sixteenth-century Reformation to the present. The course focuses primarily on Christianity in the West, but also examines the global spread of Christianity. Principal themes include the challenges of modern thought and culture to traditional Christianity, religious innovation and pluralism, missionary movements, the interaction between Christianity and its social and cultural environments, and new forms of Christian theology and institutions. This course is offered in the spring semester.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-173 Introduction to Theology

This is a course which introduces students to the principal themes, issues, and genres of Christian theology. Special attention will be given to method in theological thought, as well as the themes of creation, redemption, and reconciliation. Readings will typically be drawn from the modern period, including Tillich, Caputo, Placher, Moltmann, and Keller. In some years the course may be offered for half (0.5) credit.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

REL-181 Religion in America

An introduction to the religious history of America, this course will explore the historical development of the primary religious traditions in America, especially Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism, as well as the formative influence of religion among women, African Americans, and American Indians. Principal themes include pluralism, the impact of religious disestablishment, revivalism and reform, theological movements, and religious innovation. This course is offered in the fall semester.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-194 Religion and Film

This course is an introduction to the genre of film as an imaginative vehicle for religious beliefs, practices, and traditions. These can be explored not only in doctrinal forms, but also creatively and often indirectly in artistic forms like film or other videographic media. The course will employ film criticism as well as theological reflection as tools for understanding films with religious themes and insights

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

REL-195 Religion & the Arts

This is an examination of the arts of a particular period and place with a view to discovering the religious insights and attitudes that they embody.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-196 Religion & Literature

This course is an examination of one or more works of literature, with a view to discovering the religious insights and attitudes that they embody. The works and authors will vary from year to year, depending on the focus of the course. Recent topics have included classical Chinese poetry (Li Bo and Du Fu); Japanese literature; and novels and stories by John Updike, Shusaku Endo, Flannery O'Connor, Graham Greene, Anne Tyler, and C.S. Lewis.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

Equated Courses: HUM-196

REL-210 Topics in Islam

This is a discussion course on some topic in Islamic thought or history. Recent topics have included Muhammad and the Qu'rán, and issues in contemporary Islam. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: REL-103, or permission of instructor

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-220 Topics in South Asian Religions

This is a discussion course on some topic in the religions of South Asia. Recent topics have included myth and art in classical Hinduism. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: REL-103

Credit: 1

REL-230 Topics in East Asian Religions

This is a discussion course on some topic in the religions of China and Japan. Recent topics have included Confucianism, Daoism, and Zen Buddhism. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: REL-104

Credit: 1

REL-240 Topics in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

This is a discussion course on some topic related to the history and literature of ancient Israel. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-250 Topics in History of Judaism

This is a discussion course on Jewish history. Recent topics have included Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Jewish War with Rome, and Second Temple Judaism. REL 250 applies to requirement B for the major. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-251 Topics in the Study of Judaism

This is a discussion course on Jewish thought and theology, such as contemporary Jewish thought, responses to the Holocaust, and the Jewish-Christian dialogue. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-260 Topics in New Test & Early Christianity

This is a discussion course on some topic in the history and literature of the early Christian church. Recent topics have included apocalyptic, the letters of Paul, the Historical Jesus, and Jesus in cultural context (film, literature, the Greco-Roman world, etc.). (In some years REL-360 may be offered instead). Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-270 Theological Ethics

This is a discussion course that examines the relationship between religion and ethics from many different perspectives, beginning with theological models of talking about God, the self, and ethical goods and ending with discussions of specific ethical problems. American realism, Latin American liberation theology, Roman Catholic natural law theory, and environmental theology will be covered. Issues discussed include medical ethics, theology and economics, the problem of war, the role of the church in social change, and the nature of sin.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-272 Topics in History of Christianity

This is a discussion course on one or more figures, themes, or movements in the history of Christianity. Topics in recent years have included heretics and Gnostics, Christian lives, and world Christianities. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-273 Topics in Theology

This is a discussion course on one or more figures, themes, or movements in Christian theology. Topics in recent years have included Augustine and Aquinas, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and African Christianity. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-274 Topics in Ethics

This is a discussion course on one or more figures, themes, or movements in contemporary ethics. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-275 Topics in Religion & Philosophy

This is a discussion course on some topic concerning the use of philosophy in the study of religion, or some aspect of it. Topics in recent years have included the philosophy of religion, and hermeneutics and culture. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-280 Topics in American Religion

This is a discussion course on one or more figures, themes, or movements in American religion. Topics in recent years have included Christianity and Mental Health in America, Puritanism, and Sects and Cults in America. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-290 Topics in Comparative Religion

This is a discussion course on a topic in two or more different religious traditions, for instance Biblical and Vedic, or Confucian and Christian, or ancient and modern. Examples include Sacred Scriptures; Bible and Qur'an; Symbol and Myth; Ritual; and Pilgrimage and the Holy. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-294 Topics in Religion & Film

This is a discussion course on some topic in the area of religion and film, with a view to its religious implications. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-295 Religion and the Arts

This is a discussion course on some topic in the arts with a view to its religious implications. A recent topic was visual, literary and memorial representations of the Holocaust. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

Equated Courses: HUM-295

REL-296 Religion and Literature

This is a discussion course on religious themes and theological issues in literary works. A recent topic was Dante's Divine Comedy, parables in Jewish and Christian theological traditions. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

Equated Courses: HUM-296

REL-297 Anthropology of Religion

A seminar examining the various ways anthropology describes and interprets religious phenomena. We will study anthropological theories of religion, and focus on how these theories apply to specific religions in diverse contexts, especially among indigenous peoples. We will pay particular attention to the social and symbolic functions of beliefs and rituals and to the religious importance of myths, symbols, and cosmology.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

REL-298 Sociology of Religion

This discussion course examines the various ways sociology describes and interprets religious phenomena. The course investigates the history and methods of sociology, and different sociological theories of religion, as applied to specific religions or social structures involving religion. Recent topics have included the expansion of early Christianity; religious persecution and violence; religion among teenagers and emerging adults in the United States; religious diversity in contemporary American society; and post-colonial approaches to the study of religion and society.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: Behavioral Science, History/Philosophy/Religion

Equated Courses: SOC-298

REL-310 Seminar in Islam

This is an advanced seminar on some topic in Islamic thought or history. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: REL-103

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-320 Seminar in South Asian Religions

This is an advanced seminar on some topic in the religions of South Asia, such as Hinduism, Jainism, or Indian Buddhism. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: REL-103

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-330 Seminar in East Asian Religions

This is an advanced seminar on some topic in the religions of China and Japan. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: REL-104

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-340 Seminar in Hebrew Bible

This is an advanced seminar on some topic related to the history and literature of ancient Israel. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: REL-141

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-350 Seminar in History of Judaism

This is an advanced seminar on Jewish history, such as Second Temple Judaism, Rabbinics, or medieval Jewish thought. REL 350 applies to requirement B for the major. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-351 Seminar in Jewish Thought

This is an advanced seminar on Jewish thought and theology, such as contemporary Jewish thought, responses to the Holocaust, and the Jewish-Christian dialogue. (REL 351 applies to requirement C for the major.)

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-360 Seminar in New Test. & Early Christ.

This is an advanced seminar on the New Testament and early Christianity. Recent topics have included apocalyptic and the Apocalypse, gnostic writings, and the construction of orthodoxy and heresy. (In some years REL-260 may be offered instead). Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-370 Contemporary Theology

Seminar discussions of selected works of some significant theologians of the 20th and 21st centuries: Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Paul Tillich, William Placher, Sallie McFague, Jurgen Moltmann, and others. Special attention will be given to the role of scripture, Jesus, human experience (including race and gender issues), our understandings of God, theologies of liberation, and theology's special contribution to contemporary issues.

Prerequisites: REL-171, REL-172, REL-173, REL-270, or PHI-242

Credit: 1

REL-372 Seminars in the History of Christianity

This is an advanced seminar on one or more figures, themes, or movements in the history of Christianity. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: REL-171 or REL-172

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-373 Seminar in Theology

This is an advanced seminar on one or more figures, themes, or movements in Christian theology. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

REL-374 Seminar in Ethics

This is an advanced seminar on one or more figures, themes, or movements in contemporary ethics. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: REL-270

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-380 Seminar in American Religion

This is an advanced seminar on one or more figures, themes, or movements in American religion. Refer to the Course Descriptions document on the Registrar's webpage for topics and descriptions of current offerings.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-387 Independent Study

Individual research projects. The manner of study will be determined by the student in consultation with the instructor. Students must receive written approval of their project proposal from a department Chair before registering for the course.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-388 Independent Study

Individual research projects. The manner of study will be determined by the student in consultation with the instructor. Students must receive written approval of their project proposal from a department Chair before registering for the course.

Prerequisites: none

Credits: 0.5-1

REL-490 Sr. Sem: Nature & the Study of Religion

This course examines different theories of the phenomenon of religion, different methods of studying and understanding it, and the issues that arise from comparing these theories and methods. This course is required of all religion majors, normally in their senior year, and is open to other students with the consent of the instructor.

Prerequisites: none

Credit: 1

Distribution: History/Philosophy/Religion

Religion Faculty

Jonathan Baer (chair)

David Blix

Jeffrey Reed Jay

Derek Nelson