

**Religious Studies (RLS)****Major and Minor in Religious Studies****Department of Asian and Asian American Studies, College of Arts and Sciences**

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Minors of particular interest to students majoring in Religious Studies: China Studies (CNS), Classics (CLS), Japanese Studies (JNS), Judaic Studies (JDS), Korean Studies (KOR), Medieval Studies (MVL), Middle Eastern Studies (MES), Philosophy (PHI), South Asian Studies (SOA)

**Religious Studies (RLS)**

The Program in Religious Studies offers an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of religion in its many forms and aspects. To the variety of religious traditions, both living and historical, the program brings the techniques and questions of philosophy, history, literature, and the human sciences. Designed for flexibility in meeting students' interests and needs, the Religious Studies program offers a major, a minor, an honors program, and a variety of electives useful for broadening one's knowledge of religious phenomena, for supplementing the major program in many related fields of humanities and social science, and for meeting general education requirements.

The major in Religious Studies is an attractive option for students seeking a general liberal arts education with strength in humanities. It develops skills in reading texts with sophisticated critical awareness, and in expressing complex ideas orally and in writing. It affords insight into the fundamental traditions that shape historic cultures, East and West, and forms habits of tolerance and appreciation of unfamiliar ideas and values.

Students also major in Religious Studies intending to go on to further professional training in this field or in closely related ones like law and diplomacy. Those who wish to pursue graduate studies are encouraged to study the languages needed for their areas of interest, and to supplement their major requirements with related work in history, philosophy, and the arts.

More information and advising in regard to any of the program's services are available through the program director.

**Requirements for the Major and Minor in Religious Studies (RLS)****Requirements for the Major in Religious Studies (RLS)**

Attentive and personal advising is a primary commitment of the Religious Studies faculty, and students who enter the program are assigned to an individual advisor who will help them find the courses best suited to their area of interest in the major and make productive use of their electives outside the major and the general education requirements of the University. Students commonly complete minors or even second majors in related fields. Final approval of courses selected for major requirements should be obtained prior to registration for the senior year. Requirements for the major may be satisfied with RLS courses and, with advisor's approval, with courses from other programs listed under "Related Courses in Other Programs". Students wishing to satisfy the requirements with yet other courses may do so with the approval of the major advisor.

The major in Religious Studies leads to the Bachelor of Arts degree. All courses offered for the major must be passed with a letter grade of C or higher.

Completion of the major requires 30 credits.

**A. Required Courses**

#RLS 301 Sources and Methods (ordinarily taken in the fall of the junior year; may be taken in the senior year by those who do not meet the prerequisites as juniors)

#RLS 400 Religious Studies Seminar (ordinarily taken in the spring of the senior year)

**B. Depth Requirement**

Four courses at the 200, 300, and 400 levels in one of the following areas of emphasis: 1. Hinduism (SKT 111, 112 may also count as one course for this area)

2. Buddhism

3. East Asian religions (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean religions)

4. Judaism (in coordination with Judaic studies; ordinarily all four courses in this area emphasis are JDS and JDH, but one may be replaced with a relevant RLS or other course with advisor's approval)

5. Christianity (to include at least one Judaic studies course; JDH/RLS 230 or JDS/HIS 225, 226 recommended)

6. Islam (may include one course in Judaism or Christianity; ARB 111, 112 may also count as one course for this area)

7. Theology, philosophy, and method in religion

8. Other areas, as available; these must be approved by the major advisor before the first semester of the senior year.

C. Breadth requirement: Four RLS courses in areas outside the area emphasis.

**D. Upper-Division Writing Requirement**

Majors are required to demonstrate a capability for expressing themselves effectively in writing. They should meet this requirement by taking RLS 301 before the end of their junior year and achieving a special overall rating of "satisfactory" on the written work in that course apart from the course grade. An overall rating of "unsatisfactory" necessitates remedial action. More detailed information about this requirement is available from the program.

### The Honors Program in Religious Studies

Religious Studies majors who have maintained a grade point average of 3.50 in the major and 3.00 overall through their junior year may be invited to attempt the degree in Religious Studies with honors.

The honors major requires a total of 36 credits, consisting of the 30 credits required for the major and six additional credits in a special research project pursued through both semesters of the senior year under the supervision of a member of the faculty, with registration in RLS 495-496.

When the supervising faculty member judges the student ready, an honors essay based on this special project is presented and defended at a meeting of the Religious Studies Seminar, which consists of the Religious Studies faculty and participating faculty from related disciplines. Thereafter, the Religious Studies faculty, together with at least one faculty member from another discipline who attended the seminar, meet to decide whether to recommend conferring the degree with honors. The decision is based on the student's overall record, the recommendation of the special project supervisor, the student's performance in presenting the honors essay, and the judgment of the faculty concerning its intrinsic worth.

Students who wish to become candidates for honors should consult with the program coordinator during their junior year. Faculty supervision of the senior honors project must be agreed upon and arranged before the end of the junior year.

### Requirements for the Minor in Religious Studies (RLS)

The minor in Religious Studies consists of six courses (18 credits), at least three of which (nine credits) must be at the upper-division level. At least 12 credits, including RLS 301, must be taken for a letter grade. In addition to these general requirements, the program is designed to ensure: 1) an encounter with the variety of world religions; 2) a grasp of problems of method and the critical use of sources in the study of religion; and 3) sufficient depth in a single area emphasis to read advanced work in the area with experience and judgment. Requirements to meet these goals are:

1. RLS 101 or AAS 102/RLS 102 or one 200 level RLS course
2. One 200-level RLS course
3. RLS 301
4. At least three courses in one of the area emphases listed for the major

Students should consult the program director by the semester in which they register for RLS 301 for advice on coordinating the Religious Studies minor with the student's major program. Final approval of courses selected to meet the minor requirements should be obtained prior to registration for the senior year.

**Sample Course Sequence for the Major in Religious Studies**

<b>Freshman Fall</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Credits</b>
First Year Seminar 101	1	First Year Seminar 102	1
D.E.C. A	3	D.E.C. A	3
RLS 101 or 102	3	Selected Area Emphasis course #1 (200 level)	3
D.E.C.	3	D.E.C.	3
D.E.C.	3	D.E.C.	3
Elective	3	D.E.C.	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Sophomore Fall</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Credits</b>
Selected Area Emphasis course #2 (200 level or higher)	3	Selected Area Emphasis course #3 (300 level or higher)	3
RLS elective outside Area Emphasis	3	RLS elective outside Area Emphasis	3
D.E.C.	3	D.E.C.	3
D.E.C.	3	Upper-Division elective	3
D.E.C.	3	Elective	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Junior Fall</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Credits</b>
RLS 301	3	RLS Up-Div elec outside Area Emphasis	3
Selected Area Emphasis course #4 (300 level or higher)	3	D.E.C.	3
RLS Up-Div elec outside Area Emphasis	3	D.E.C.	3
D.E.C.	3	Upper-Division elective	3
Upper-Division elective	3	Upper-Division elective	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Senior Fall</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Credits</b>
D.E.C.	3	RLS 400	3
Upper-Division elective	3	Upper-Division elective	3
Upper-Division elective	3	Upper-Division elective	3
Elective	3	Elective	3
Elective	3	Elective	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

# RLS

## Religious Studies

### RLS 101 - B: Western Religions

An historical introduction to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Attention is given to the cultural background, art, literature, philosophy, and institutional development of each tradition.

3 credits

### RLS 102 - B: Eastern Religions

An historical introduction to Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Attention is given to the cultural background, art, literature, philosophy, and institutional development of each tradition. This course is offered as both AAS 102 and RLS 102.

3 credits

### RLS 230 - G: Judaism

A survey of the great texts of the Judaic heritage, with the aim of learning the contribution of each to the Jewish tradition. The course includes an examination of characteristic Jewish beliefs, practices, and attitudes. This course is offered as both JDH 230 and RLS 230.

3 credits

### RLS 240 - J: Confucianism and Taoism

An introduction to the basic philosophies and doctrines of Confucianism and Taoism, such as the concept of Tao, non-action, benevolence, and propriety. The course explores both the similarities and the differences between these two traditions. This course is offered as both AAS 240 and RLS 240.

3 credits

### RLS 246 - J: Korean and Japanese Religions

An introduction to Korean and Japanese religious history from earliest recorded periods to the 19th century. Emphasis is given to Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Korean Shamanism, and Japanese Shintoism. Relationships between the Korean variant of religious traditions and those of China and Japan are also investigated. Crosslisted with AAS 246.

3 credits

### RLS 256 - J: Hinduism

Survey of the principal religious and philosophical currents of Hindu civilization in India from the time of the Vedas and Upanishads through the development of the

major devotional ways and schools of thought current in India today. These include the polytheism of Hindu mythology, the theism of various forms of devotional practice, and the monotheism and nondualism of Hindu philosophy. This course is offered as both AAS 256 and RLS 256.

*Advisory Prerequisite: Completion of D.E.C. category B*

3 credits

### RLS 260 - J: Buddhism

An introduction to the basic philosophy and doctrines of Buddhism, beginning with a survey of lives and works of major historical figures of Buddhism. The principal issues of Buddhist thought, drawing from Indian, East Asian, and Western sources, are treated. Particular attention is paid to the meaning of faith, practice, and enlightenment in Buddhism. This course is offered as both AAS 260 and RLS 260.

3 credits

### RLS 270 - I: Christianity

A critical introduction to the scripture, tradition, history, and religious practices and beliefs of Christianity as one of the principal factors in the shaping of European culture.

3 credits

### RLS 280 - J: Islam

An introduction to the main features of Islamic revelation as contained in the Koran and its impact on the major spiritual, intellectual, legal, and social teachings and institutions of the Islamic world. The course concludes with an examination of Islam in the modern world. This course is offered as both AAS 280 and RLS 280.

3 credits

### RLS 301 - G: Sources and Methods

An in-depth inquiry into the application of critical, historical, and philosophical methods to religious texts and experiences. An introduction to the resources and limitations of academic study of religion.

*Prerequisite: any 200-level or higher RLS course*

3 credits

### RLS 310 - G: Biblical Theology

Intensive introduction to the theological tendencies and implications of selected major texts from the Christian and Jewish scriptures. The course surveys historical and critical work on the selected texts, but focuses on the religious thinking reflected in them and their

influence on later traditions. May be repeated once as the topic changes.

*Prerequisite: U3 or U4 standing*

*Advisory Prerequisite: Varies according to topic*

3 credits

### RLS 320 - G: The Rabbinic Tradition

The origin and development of the Rabbinic tradition, examination of the chief elements of Rabbinic teaching at various times, and analysis of the major types of Rabbinic literature. This course is offered as both JDH 320 and RLS 320.

*Prerequisite: JDS/HIS 225 or 226 or JDH/RLS 230*

3 credits

### RLS 366 - G: Feminine Spirituality

The role and destiny of human beings as envisaged by the world's great traditions, especially the Chinese and the Islamic. The course focuses on the concept of femininity as a principle in the realms of theology, metaphysics, cosmology, and spiritual psychology; and the theoretical and practical applications of the feminine principle to the place of both men and women in society. Topics include feminine and masculine as metaphysical and cosmological principles; woman and religious law; woman's role in symbolism, mythology, and literature; and the feminine aspects of the self that both women and men need to develop on the path of achieving spiritual perfection. Previously offered as RLS 426, this course is now offered as RLS 366. Not for credit in addition to the former RLS 426. This course is offered as both AAS 366 and RLS 366.

*Prerequisite: any 200-level or higher RLS course*

3 credits

### RLS 367 - J: Meditation and Enlightenment

A critical analysis of the traditions, practices, and literature of Zen and other traditions of Buddhism, with particular attention paid to the meaning of enlightenment and the practice of meditation. Previously offered as RLS 341, this course is now offered as both AAS 367 and RLS 367. Not for credit in addition to the former RLS 341.

*Prerequisite: AAS/RLS 102 or 260*

3 credits

### RLS 368 - J: Yoga: Theory and Praxis

In this course we investigate Yogic systems of philosophy and self-transformation in their many forms throughout history. Topics

include the origins of Yoga in ancient India, the philosophy of the Yoga Sutras and its commentarial traditions, Buddhist Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Tantric Yoga, and the medicalization and globalization of Yoga in the modern period. Students are encouraged to supplement class discussions by participating in Yoga classes at the Stony Brook University Wellness Center. This course is offered as both AAS 368 and RLS 368.

*Prerequisite: One previous course in AAS or RLS*

*Advisory Prerequisite: Junior or Senior standing*

3 credits

### **RLS 380 - G: Islamic Classics**

A study in depth of Islamic texts in translation. Selections may be made from the Qur'an, the Hadith, the Law, and from one or more of the major intellectual schools, such as Kalam (scholastic theology), Peripatetic philosophy, illuminationist theosophy, Sufism, and the "transcendent theosophy" of the School of Isfahan. May be repeated as the topic changes. Previously offered as RLS 408, this course is now offered as both AAS 380 and RLS 380.

*Prerequisite: AAS/RLS 280*

3 credits

### **RLS 382 - G: Japanese Buddhism**

An introduction to the teachings and practices of two major schools of Japanese Buddhism: Zen and Pure Land. The course focuses on the writings of the founders of the important lineages within these schools. Formerly offered as RLS 406, this course is now offered as both AAS 382 and RLS 382. Not for credit in addition to the former RLS 406.

*Prerequisite: AAS/RLS 260*

3 credits

### **RLS 387 - J: Islam and Confucianism**

The goal of this course is to compare the basic teachings of Islam and Confucianism concerning the correct way to achieve true human status. Special stress will be placed on books that Muslim scholars wrote in Chinese beginning in the seventeenth century. These books employed Neo-Confucian language to introduce Chinese Muslims to their own theology, cosmology, and spiritual psychology, thus providing a rare pre-modern example of inter-religious dialogue. This course is offered as both AAS 387 and RLS 387.

3 credits

### **RLS 390 - G: Special Topics**

Semester supplements to this Bulletin contain specific descriptions when course is offered.

Past topics have included Philosophical Mysticism; Religion and Science; and Islam and Confucianism. Semester supplements to this Bulletin contain specific descriptions when course is offered. May be repeated for credit as the topic changes. Designed for upper-division students, this course provides an in-depth study of a specific topic within humanities disciplines such as music, art, literature, religion, and philosophy. Students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods used in the humanities discipline(s) studied. May be repeated as the topic changes.

*Prerequisite: U3 or U4 standing*

*Advisory Prerequisite: Completion of D.E.C. category B*

3 credits

### **RLS 391 - G: Special Topics**

Semester supplements to this Bulletin contain specific descriptions when course is offered. Past topics have included Philosophical Mysticism; Religion and Science; and Islam and Confucianism. Semester supplements to this Bulletin contain specific descriptions when course is offered. May be repeated for credit as the topic changes. Designed for upper-division students, this course provides an in-depth study of a specific topic within humanities disciplines such as music, art, literature, religion, and philosophy. Students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods used in the humanities discipline(s) studied. May be repeated as the topic changes.

*Prerequisite: U3 or U4 standing*

*Advisory Prerequisite: Completion of D.E.C. category B*

3 credits

### **RLS 400: Religious Studies Seminar**

A seminar for senior majors in religious studies, focusing on the problem of the relation between phenomenology, hermeneutics, and history of religions on the one hand and their theological and philosophic interpretation on the other.

*Prerequisite: Permission of the director of undergraduate studies*

3 credits

### **RLS 415 - G: Judaic Response to Catastrophe**

The response of Judaic thinkers, from the Bible to the Second World War, to the problem of historical disaster and the need to understand and respond to it. Particular attention is given to the question of long-term continuity and the appearance of innovation in

such responses. This course is offered as both JDH 415 and RLS 415.

*Prerequisite: JDS/HIS 225 or 226 or JDH/RLS 230*

3 credits

### **RLS 447: Readings in Religious Studies**

Directed readings with religious studies faculty, limited to religious studies majors or upper-division students working on advanced problems in religious studies. May be repeated.

*Prerequisite: Permission of program coordinator*

1-6 credits

### **RLS 475: Undergraduate Teaching Practicum**

Students assist instructors in religious studies courses with large enrollments. Under the supervision of the course instructor, they are responsible for conducting discussion and review sections of the course and helping students with course readings and assignments such as research papers.

*Prerequisites: U4 standing in religious studies major; permission of instructor and program director*

3 credits, S/U grading

### **RLS 495: Senior Honors Project**

First course of a two-semester project for RLS majors who are candidates for the degree with honors. Arranged with the program during the student's junior year, the project involves independent study and the writing of a paper under close supervision of an appropriate faculty member, on a topic chosen by the student. Students receive only one grade upon completion of the sequence.

*Prerequisite: Permission of instructor and program director*

3 credits

### **RLS 496: Senior Honors Project**

Second course of a two-semester project for RLS majors who are candidates for the degree with honors. Arranged with the program during the student's junior year, the project involves independent study and the writing of a paper under close supervision of an appropriate faculty member, on a topic chosen by the student. Students receive only one grade upon completion of the sequence.

*Prerequisite: Permission of instructor and program director*

3 credits