

# Religious Studies Major and Minor

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**Degrees offered:** Bachelor of Science (BS), Bachelor of Arts (BA)

## Program Description

The Religious Studies BS or BA degree requires a total of 36 credits for the major, as well as 15 credits in a complementary minor.

Students begin their course of study by completing one lower-division course (RELS 1010, Introduction to Religious Studies).

Students must take 30 credits of upper-division coursework, distributed over the following three areas: **Cultural Inquiry** (humanistic approaches), **Scientific Inquiry** (social scientific approaches), and **Doctrinal Inquiry** (philosophical and theological approaches).

At the end of the program, students completing either the BA or the BS degree must take a capstone seminar.

The minor in religious studies requires the same lower-division course as the major, as well as 12 additional credits with at least one upper-division course chosen from each of the three areas of approach.

## Purpose and Outcomes

Students completing the BA or BS degree in Religious Studies should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

1. understand the influence of religion upon culture, and the influence of culture upon religion;
2. analyze the influence of religious value systems on individuals;
3. apply appropriate methods of research and argumentation to questions concerning religion and culture;
4. communicate their findings in clear, well-reasoned writing; and
5. express cultural literacy concerning the major religions of the world.

## Requirements

New students accepted in good standing by the University may apply for admission to the Religious Studies Program. Students transferring from another institution or another major will be admitted if they have an overall minimum GPA of 2.5.

Candidates must earn a grade of C or better in all courses used to meet the requirements of the Religious Studies major or minor.

## Degree Options

Students in the program may work toward one of the following two degrees:

### Bachelor of Arts (BA) Degree

Students enrolled in the BA degree focus their work on cultural questions within religious studies. Since sufficient coursework in a foreign language is required, students should consider completing courses offered by USU in Latin, Greek, Chinese, or other appropriate languages. The BA degree requires a minimum proficiency in a foreign language. This proficiency may be established in one of the following ways:

1. Sixteen credits in a single language
2. Documentation of a proficiency level of "intermediate low" or better through an examination administered by the USU Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Speech Communication
3. Completion of any upper-division foreign language course constituting a third-year course of study with a grade of C or better

### Bachelor of Science (BS) Degree

Students enrolled in the BS degree focus their work on quantitative or clinical questions within religious studies. Students should consider completing upper-division courses in social science methods or statistics. Students must complete 15 credits of math and science beyond the University Studies requirements.

## Religious Studies Major

**Minimum GPA for Admission:** 2.5, USU; 2.0, Career

**Minimum GPA for Graduation:** 2.5, major courses; 2.0, USU

**Minimum Grade Accepted:** C in all major requirements

Students must complete at least 36 credits in interdisciplinary coursework. A grade of C or better must be earned in all classes used for the major.

### Required Courses (6 credits)

**RELS 1010** Introduction to Religious Studies ..... 3  
Historical and comparative survey of the principal beliefs and practices of the world's religions, as well as an exploration of their interplay with the cultures in which they exist. Following general introduction to the study of religion, course includes units on Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese and Japanese religions, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and the "new religions" in America.

**RELS 4990** Religious Studies Capstone..... 3  
Students write a substantial research paper dealing with a religious studies topic and demonstrating their command of the research methods, documentation, and style of professional communication used in the discipline.

### Elective Courses (30 credits)

Complete at least 6 credits of coursework in *each* of the following three divisions. The total credits for coursework completed in this section must be *at least* 30 credits.

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## Cultural Inquiry

Courses in this section use the methods of the arts and humanities to explore religious expression and the ways in which religion and behavior interact over time.

### Select at least two of the following courses:

- ENGL 3070 (DHA)** Perspectives in Folklore (F,Su).....3  
In-depth study of folklore for nonmajors. Topics vary according to faculty expertise. Also taught as HIST 3070.
- ENGL 3700 (CI)** Regional Folklore (F,Sp).....3  
Study of folklore and folklife as they relate to regional cultures. Also taught as HIST 3700.
- HIST 3110 (DHA/CI)** Ancient Near East (Sp).....3  
Survey of history and civilization of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Israel, from prehistory to 500 B.C. Writing intensive. Prerequisite: ENGL 2010 or equivalent. Also taught as ARTH 3110.
- HIST 3150 (CI)** Roman History (Sp).....3  
History of Rome from Neolithic era to “fall” of the Western Empire. Special emphasis on politics, art, literature, and civilization. Writing intensive. Prerequisite: ENGL 2010.
- HIST 3220 (DHA/CI)** Medieval European Civilization, 500-1500 .....3  
Provides students with overview of major themes in medieval European history from 500 to 1500 A.D. Also introduces major historiographical problems related to this period. Writing intensive and document based. Prerequisite: ENGL 2010 or equivalent.
- HIST 3230** Early Modern Europe .....3  
Explores major themes of early modern European history, such as secularization, the rise of the nation state, the Reformation, and the birth of capitalism. Introduces major historiographical issues of the period. Reading and writing intensive. Prerequisite: ENGL 2010 or equivalent.
- HIST 3250 (DHA/CI)** Renaissance Europe 1300 to 1520 (F,Sp).....3  
Emphasizing writing and primary sources, covers significant changes in Europe in government, society, and intellectual life caused by the Black Death, the humanist revolution in arts and literature, and the centralizing efforts of popes and monarchs.
- HIST 3410** The Modern Middle East .....3  
Examines history of the Middle East (Arabian peninsula, Fertile Crescent, Egypt, Iran, and Turkey), with special emphasis on social and political currents which have shaped the area’s history.
- HIST 3460** Comparative Asian History .....3  
Surveys history of Asian continent, analyzing common patterns in the cultures of West, South, Southeast, and East Asia.
- HIST 3850 (DHA/CI)** History of Utah (Sp).....3  
Prehistory to the present. Examines environment and peoples of Utah, emphasizing use of primary documents to view and interpret Utah’s past. Reading and writing intensive. Requires use of USU Special Collections and Archives. Prerequisite: ENGL 2010.
- HIST 4210** Celtic Europe (F).....3  
History of Celtic peoples in British Isles, Scandinavia, and continental Europe, from Neolithic times to the Norman Conquest in 1066. Computer intensive.

**HIST 4230 (DHA/CI)** The History of Christianity in the West .....3  
Introduces students to history of Christian spirituality, asking how Christianity has been lived and how it has shaped lives over two thousand years. Uses original sources to introduce both the history and the historiographical problems surrounding the Christian religion. Writing intensive.

**HIST 4250** The Reformation in Britain: 1450-1688 .....3  
Focuses on major research questions in the field of early modern studies. Explores causes and consequences of English Reformation and British Civil War. Writing and research intensive.

**HIST 4790** American Religious History .....3  
Varieties of American religious experience from settlement to the present.

**RELS 3010** Introduction to Buddhism .....3  
General survey of historical development, basic doctrine, and practice of Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism. Also taught as HIST 3010.

**RELS 3020** Introduction to Hinduism .....3  
Surveys history, doctrinal developments, and sociological concerns of Hinduism from the Vedic Period through the Modern Period. Focuses primarily on Hindu religious thought as applied to Hindu life through various modes of religious action. Also taught as HIST 3020.

**RELS 3990** Introduction to Religious Studies Methodology .....3  
Pre-major course helping students to understand the discipline of religious studies. Explores the questions asked by religious studies, as well as the methods used to answer these questions. Helps students gain an understanding of the various approaches to the study of religion and the history of attempts to understand religion in cultural contexts.

**RELS 4010** Buddhism in the West .....3  
One-semester introduction to Buddhism in the Western world for nonspecialists in Buddhism. Focuses on development of Buddhism as a Western religious phenomenon. Presents interpretive, historical introduction to Buddhism in the West. Also taught as HIST 4010.

## Scientific Inquiry

Courses in this section use the methods of the social sciences to explore religious values and behavior on an individual and a societal level.

### Select at least two of the following courses:

- ANTH 3160 (DSS)** Anthropology of Religion (F) .....3  
Cross-cultural description and theoretical analysis of religion and its functional relationships to human psychology, society, and the natural environment.
- ANTH 4110 (d6110) (DSS)** Southwest Indian Cultures, Past and Present (F) .....3  
Reviews past and present Indian cultures of greater southwest region. Examines the prehistoric Anasazi, the Pueblos, the canyon and desert peoples, the Utes, and the Navajos. Interprets these cultures in ecological, historic, and political contexts.
- ANTH 4230 (DSS)** Medical Anthropology: Matter, Culture, Spirit, and Health (Sp) .....3  
Examines the bio-ecological (matter) and socio-cultural aspects of disease/illness in human populations and examines “spiritual” dimensions of health in cross-cultural context. Includes methods component for anthropology majors and serves as a Liberal Arts cluster capstone course.

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**PHIL 3750** Religion and Science in the Modern World (F).....3  
Study of problems addressing the relation of religion to science in the modern world (e.g., evolution, Big Bang, origin of life).

**PSY 3500 (CI/DSS)** Scientific Thinking and Methods in Psychology (F,Sp).....3  
Social science research is commonly reported by the media, and by political and governmental interests. Students learn how to legitimately interpret such research through a study of accepted research methods and analysis procedures, and through critical study of the common interpretive mistakes made by media writers. Prerequisite: PSY 1010.

**PSY 3510 (DSS)** Social Psychology (F,Su).....3  
Study of the individual in society; problems, theories, and methods of social psychology; will relate reading assignments to current social issues. Prerequisite: PSY 1010.

**PSY 4420 (DSS)** Cognitive Psychology (Sp) .....3  
In-depth study of basic concepts, methods, and theories involved in perception, memory, and thinking. Lab required. Prerequisite: PSY 1010.

**PSY 4430** Cognitive Psychology Laboratory (Sp).....1  
Required laboratory, designed to accompany PSY 4420. Focuses on conducting cognitive experiments via computer simulations and sampling data collection. Designed to increase skills in designing data collection and interpreting experimental data.

**SOC 3110 (CI)** Methods of Social Research (F,Sp) .....3  
Examines surveys, field techniques, and observational studies. Prerequisite: Completion of 6 credits of Sociology coursework.

**SOC 3500** Social Psychology (F,Sp).....3  
Explores interaction between the social system and the individual. Examines human behavior in terms of positions people occupy in the social structure.

**SOC 4330** Religion, Science, and Society (Sp) .....3  
Discussion of theories and research used by sociologists to understand social dimensions of religion. Includes ways in which religion influences and is influenced by other societal institutions, such as politics, the economy, and the class system.

## Doctrinal Inquiry

Courses in this section use the methods of philosophy and theology, exploring systems of belief and major theological models.

### Select at least two of the following courses:

**PHIL 3100 (CI)** Ancient Philosophy .....3  
Development of philosophical thought in the Ancient Greek world. Readings from the pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and Epicureans.

**PHIL 3110** Medieval Philosophy.....3  
Neo-Platonism with stress on Plotinus, St. Augustine, and early Christian philosophy; early medieval thought; St. Thomas Aquinas and the rise of scholasticism; and philosophical thought in the Renaissance.

**PHIL 3120 (CI)** Early Modern Philosophy .....3  
Philosophers and philosophical disputes in Western Europe from 1400-1750. Figures and topics may include: Bacon, Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, Hume, nominalism, empiricism, rationalism, religion, politics, and morals.

**PHIL 3700 (DHA)** Philosophy of Religion (F) .....3  
Problems in defining "religion" and the existence of God; the problem of evil; the immortality of the soul; religious experience; faith; alternatives to theism; religious language.

**PHIL 3710** Philosophies of East Asia (F) .....3  
Study of three Asian philosophies: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Focus on appreciating the merits of each system of thought. Emphasis on class discussion and participation.

**PHIL 3720** Philosophical Theology After Kant (F) .....3  
Explores attempts to reconstruct the reasonable basis of religion in the two centuries after the Enlightenment.

**PHIL 3730 (CI)** Philosophy of the New Testament .....3  
Historical and intellectual context of the development of the New Testament. Character, ideas, and historical setting of the various documents.

**PHIL 4300** Epistemology .....3  
Study of foundations of knowledge and belief systems, and related topics in epistemology, including perception, certainty, and skepticism.

In consultation with the program advisor, students may receive approval to fulfill division elective requirements with courses other than those shown above.

## Minor in Religious Studies

The minor in Religious Studies requires 15 credits. Students must earn a grade of C or better in all courses counted toward the minor. Students must complete the following courses.

**RELS 1010** Introduction to Religious Studies (required).....3  
Historical and comparative survey of the principal beliefs and practices of the world's religions, as well as an exploration of their interplay with the cultures in which they exist. Following general introduction to the study of religion, course includes units on Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese and Japanese religions, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and the "new religions" in America.

In addition to the RELS course listed above, students must also complete 12 additional credits, with *at least one* upper-division course chosen from each of the following three areas of approach: Cultural Inquiry, Scientific Inquiry, and Doctrinal Inquiry.

## Sample Four-year Plan for Religious Studies Major

A suggested semester-by-semester four-year plan for students working toward a bachelor's degree in Religious Studies can be found at: <http://www.usu.edu/degreeplans/>

Students should consult with their advisor to develop a plan of study tailored to their individual needs and interests.

## Course Descriptions

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