RELIGIOUS STUDIES (REL)

REL 101 The Old Testament 3 Semester Hours

This course explores the development of Hebrew history, literature, society, and religious thought and practice through careful reading of the Hebrew Bible. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.B.

REL 102 The New Testament 3 Semester Hours

This course focuses on the literature of the New Testament, placing emphasis on the life and teachings of Jesus, the life and letters of Paul, and the characteristics of the early church. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.B.

REL 111 Introduction to Religious Studies 3 Semester Hours

The field of religion explores the ultimate questions of human being, meaning, and value, and the nature of the cosmos around us. This course introduces a variety of methods used for responding to such questions within the academic study of religion. It inquires into major themes and practices of various religions and addresses critical issues in religion and philosophy such as origins, rituals, sacred texts, gender and sexuality, aesthetics, ethics, violence, social teachings, mysticism, and science. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.B.

REL 153 World Religions 3 Semester Hours

A study of myth, ritual, and belief in religions of the world, the course pays particular attention to religions and philosophies of India, China, and the Near East. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.B. or III.D.

REL 210 Israelite and Christian Writings Outside the Bible 3 Semester Hours

This seminar course explores Israelite and/or Christian textual traditions outside the Bible. Topical foci vary according to student demand and the special interests and needs of religion studies majors and faculty. Topics include: The Apocrypha; The Israelite Writings of Adam, Enoch, Abraham and Others; The Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls; Christian Apocryphal Gospels and Acts; and The Writings of Philo of Alexandria: Judaism and Platonism. Prerequisite: REL 101 or REL 102, or permission of instructor. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.B.

REL 221 The Rise of Western Christendom 3 Semester Hours

This course focuses on the first one thousand years of Christianity. The scope of the course covers Christianity in both the Western and Eastern worlds. Topical foci vary the emphasis of the course. Topics include Politics and Theology in Medieval Spirituality and Artistic Expression; Iconoclasm, Greek Orthodoxy, and Islam. The course topics change according to student demand and the special interests and needs of religious studies majors and faculty. The course may be taken for credit more than once, provided the topical focus differs each time. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.A. or III.B.

REL 241 Christianity in America's Past 3 Semester Hours

This course seeks to understand the nature and significance of religious belief and practices in the rise and development of American life and identity. Topics explored include: the Pilgrims and their Protestant faith and European origins; colonial religion and Native Americans spirituality; the Christian colonies and the Revolution; the young republic and church-state separation; revivalism and American individualism; religious persecution and Mormonism; Catholics in Protestant America; the Civil War and Christian killing Christian; the rise of African-American Christianity. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.A. or III.B.

REL 242 Religion in Contemporary America 3 Semester Hours

In this course students consider the historical development and contemporary situation of religion in the United States of America. We study topics regarding religious diversity and pluralism, missions, social engagement, the relation of religion and science, immigrant religion, religion and civil rights, new religious movements, American civil religion, the development of contemporary Evangelicalism, and religion and politics. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.A. or III.B.

REL 256 Hinduism and Buddhism 3 Semester Hours

This course focuses on two of the world's most populous—and, increasingly, popular—religions, Hinduism and Buddhism. From shared roots in an ancient Indian Vedic worldview, both spread well beyond their original confines and today reach from Japan to Indonesia to Guyana to North Carolina. This course considers the textual, cultural, ritual, and philosophical foundations of these religions as well as how they have influenced contemporary society. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.B. or III.D.

REL 268 Topics in Philosophy, Religion, and Story 3 Semester Hours

This course explores religion and philosophy through the powerful medium of story. Topical foci vary according to student demand and the special interests and needs of religious studies majors and faculty. Stories (books and movies) studied in light of philosophy and religion may include: C.S. Lewis's Narnia series; J.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings; J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter

series; Star Trek, The Matrix, and other Science Fiction series; King Arthur and Holy War; Dante and the Comedy of Heaven and Hell; Chaucer and the Christian Pilgrim; Shakespeare and the Life Well-Lived. This course meets General Education Distribution Area I.C., III.B. or IV.B.

REL 270 New Religious Movements 3 Semester Hours
This course provides an introduction to the study of new religious movements (NRMs) in the United States of America. We will consider several case studies as well as examine the wider phenomenon of NRMs in the modern western world. We pay attention to the traditional sociological issues of leadership, charisma, conversion, and belief maintenance, as well as the lived practices and experiences of members of new religions, such as rituals, gender practices, spatial dynamics, childrearing, and holidays. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.B.

REL 278 Environmental Theology 3 Semester Hours
Although the peoples of the world are divided into multiple cultural and religious groupings, we share one fragile earth. In the 21st century, theology is becoming increasingly aware of this commonality, as the members of various religious groups seek within their own traditions to find both roots of our current ecological crisis and contributions to its potential resolution. This course explores what a variety of religions, both ancient and contemporary, have to say about the sacred ground of our being, as well as about our mutual responsibilities for tending this ground with care. When linked with ENG 217, Environmental Literature, REL 278 provides tools for reflecting on the spiritual and theological dimension of texts written about the natural world. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.B.

REL 288 Women and Religion 3 Semester Hours
From the roles of women in various world religions, to the relationship between sexuality and spirituality, to the impact of feminist theories upon theological reflection, this course examines a range of issues pertinent to the intersection of gender and religious studies. This course meets General Education Distribution Area III.B.

REL 312 Jesus in the Gospels 3 Semester Hours
Each of the four Gospels of the New Testament contains a different portrait of Jesus. Comparing these portraits and placing them in both Jewish and Hellenistic backgrounds is the main work of this course. The history of Jewish and Christian interpretations of Jesus is also included. Prerequisite: REL 101 or REL 102, or permission of instructor.

REL 316 St. Paul 3 Semester Hours
This course explores the biography and character of the Apostle Paul in light of ancient descriptions of personality and human identity. Drawing on primary sources from antiquity, as well as lessons from cultural anthropology, we seek to understand through Paul's story what ancient people expected in biography. Prerequisites: REL 101 or REL 102, or permission of instructor.

REL 325 The Age of Reform: 1250-1550 3 Semester Hours
This course seeks to enter imaginatively into the intellectual, religious, and social world of late Medieval and Reformation Europe. Students discover that the Protestant Reformation was one of many different medieval reformations that preceded and followed great reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin. We explore these early reformation movements, analyzing their nature, how church leaders reacted to them, and why they did not lead to the kind of church division caused by the Protestant Reformation. Then we turn to the Protestant movement and explore how it preserved certain aspects of medieval thought and protested against others. Prerequisite: A prior course in REL, PHI, or HIS, or permission of instructor.

REL 365 Philosophy of Religion 3 Semester Hours
This course explores how Religion as a historical category emerged in the West and has come to be applied as a universal concept by the modern western world. The course probes into the assumptions behind this modern concept of "Religion" and examines the content and purpose of the modern "philosophy of Religion." Prerequisite: A prior course in REL or PHI, or permission of instructor.

REL 495 Senior Thesis 3 Semester Hours
Under consultation with the student's major advisor, each religion major writes a senior thesis. The nature of this thesis varies with the student's interests. Religious Studies majors may choose to write a research paper on a particular topic, engage in a service project, or do an on-site investigation of an existing religious tradition. They might also participate in church or social work and write a detailed description and analysis of their work. The length of the final written form of the project, as well as the breadth of sources used, will vary according to the subject chosen. All projects will be presented in a public oral defense. Prerequisite: HUM 461 and Religious Studies major.