An interdepartmental program

Religious Studies

Objectives

The modern field of religious studies contributes significantly to a liberal arts education, cultivating the investigation of religious thought, ritual, spiritual insight, culture, history, and sacred texts. The goal of the Program in Religious Studies is to expose students to several scholarly and pedagogical approaches to a variety of religious phenomena, often in a comparative context. The program’s course offerings are designed to encourage students to deepen their understanding of religion and its manifestations through the perspectives of several disciplines and departments. Students survey systematic approaches to the field (REL 107a) and complete courses in at least two different religious traditions.

The program fosters interaction between its faculty and students by requiring completion of either an independent study or a senior essay course. The University, with its commitment to ethical responsibility, and the wide range of religious and ethnic backgrounds represented in its student body, provides a unique context for examining religion with open-minded curiosity and sympathetic understanding.

How to Become a Minor

Students may enter the program at any time in their undergraduate careers, but an early start maximizes a student’s range of choice because a number of the courses are only offered every other year. Ideally students should take the core course (REL 107a) early in their career. Students should consult with their advisor and the head of the program to map out their particular design.

Committee

Edward Kaplan, Chair
[Romance and Comparative Literature]

Tzvi Abusch
[Near Eastern and Judaic Studies]

Bernadette Brooten
[Near Eastern and Judaic Studies]

John Burt
[English and American Literature]

Arthur Green
[Near Eastern and Judaic Studies]

Gila Hayim
[Sociology]

Patricia Johnston
[Classical Studies]

Charles McClendon
[Fine Arts]

Jerry Samet
[Philosophy]

Ellen Schattschneider
[Anthropology]

The following faculty members are affiliated with the program:

Marc Brettler (NEJS)
Joan Bryant (AAAS)
Olga Davidson (WMNS)
Jonathan Decter (NEJS)
Stephen Dowden (GREA)
Sylvia Fishman (NEJS)
ChaeRan Freeze (NEJS)
Gregory Freeze (HIST)
Eli Hirsch (PHIL)
Jane Kamensky (HIST)
William Kapelle (HIST)
Reuven Kimelman (NEJS)
Ann Koloski-Ostrow (CLAS)
Sarah Lamb (ANTH)
Richard Lansing (ROCL)
Avidgor Levy (NEJS)
Leonard Muellner (CLAS)
Yitzhak Nakash (NEJS)
Richard Parmentier (ANTH)
Michael Randall (ROCL)
Jonathan Sarna (NEJS)
John Schrecker (HIST)
Eugene Sheppard (NEJS)
Govind Sreenivasan (HIST)
Ramie Targoff (ENG)
Cheryl Walker (CLAS)
David Wright (NEJS)
Palle Yourgrau (PHIL)
Requirements for the Minor

A. Core Course: REL 107a [Approaches to Religious Studies]
Ideally the core course should be taken early in the student’s career at Brandeis, but not necessarily as the first course in the program.

B. Students must complete at least two courses covering at least two different religious traditions from the traditions courses listed below.

C. Students must complete at least one course from the list of electives listed below.

D. Completion of one semester of independent study [98a or b], or completion of a senior essay [97a or b] under the direction of one or more faculty members affiliated with the program. A senior thesis in the student’s major, with an emphasis on some aspect of religious studies and read by at least two faculty members in the program, may be substituted for the Senior Essay. Students will normally complete this requirement in the year in which they complete the program, although exceptions may be granted by the program chair in consultation with the student’s program advisor.

E. A passing letter grade must be obtained in each course taken for program credit. (Pass/Fail courses are not allowed.) Students must achieve a grade point average of at least 2.00 in program courses.

Courses of Instruction

REL 107a Approaches to Religious Studies
[hum nw] 
Prerequisite: One previous course in religious studies.
A historical, multidisciplinary survey that includes classic explanations of religion as a human experience, modern theories, the study of belief systems, religions and society, myth and philosophy, mysticism and shamanism, texts, ritual and language, comparative study, gender issues, and contemporary debates. Usually offered every year.

Staff
REL 107b Approaches to Religious Studies
Usually offered every year.
Staff
REL 98a Independent Study
Usually offered every year.
Staff
REL 98b Independent Study
Usually offered every year.
Staff
REL 97a Senior Essay
Usually offered every year.
Staff
REL 97b Senior Essay
Usually offered every year.
Staff
REL 121a Mysticism and the Moral Life: Abraham Heschel, Howard Thurman, Thomas Merton
[hum ss]
This course may not be repeated for credit by students who have taken HIP 21a in previous years.
A study of three exemplary American religious activists: Abraham Heschel, a Jewish theologian and activist; Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk; and Howard Thurman, a black minister. Focuses upon the relationship between their inwardness and social and political commitments. Usually offered every third year.
Mr. Kaplan

Traditions Courses

ANTH 80a Anthropology of Religion

CLAS 170a Classical Mythology

HIST 181a Seminar on Traditional Chinese Thought

IME5 104a Islam: Civilization and Institutions

NEJS 5a Foundational Course in Judaic Studies

NEJS 9a The World of the Ancient Near East

NEJS 111a The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

NEJS 114b Biblical Ritual, Cult, and Magic

NEJS 116a Ancient Near Eastern Religion and Mythology

NEJS 128a Introduction to Christianity

NEJS 130a The New Testament: A Historical Introduction

NEJS 153a Hasidism as a Religious and Social Movement

NEJS 155b Judaism and the Religious Quest

NEJS 186a Introduction to the Qur’an

NEJS 187b Shi’ism and Political Protest in the Middle East

Electives

AAAS 81b Religion in African-American History

AMST 167b The Cultural Work of Religion in America

ANTH 105a Myth and Ritual

COML 179a Life Stories, Spiritual and Profane

FA 13b Buddhist Art

FA 15b Arts of the Ming Dynasty

FA 42b The Age of Cathedrals

FA 45a St. Peter’s and the Vatican

HIST 110b The Civilization of the High and Late Middle Ages

HIST 123b Reformation Europe (1400-1600)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIST 129b</td>
<td>Science and Religion: The Trial of Galileo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 135b</td>
<td>Evolution and Creationism in Historical Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 148a</td>
<td>Religion and Society in Modern Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 152b</td>
<td>Salem, 1692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUM 10a</td>
<td>The Western Canon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IECS 140a</td>
<td>Dante’s Divine Comedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 112a</td>
<td>The Book of Genesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 115a</td>
<td>The Book of Deuteronomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 115b</td>
<td>Women and the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 122a</td>
<td>Dealing with Evil in Ancient Babylon and Beyond: Magic and Witchcraft in Antiquity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 127b</td>
<td>The Jewish Liturgy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 127b</td>
<td>Introduction to Jewish Mysticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 156a</td>
<td>Topics in Jewish Devotional Literature of the Medieval and Later Periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 159a</td>
<td>Major Trends in Modern Jewish Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 162a</td>
<td>American Judaism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 163a</td>
<td>Jewish-Christian Relations in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 175b</td>
<td>Responses to the Holocaust in Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEJS 196a</td>
<td>Marriage, Divorce, and Sexual Ethics in Islamic Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 24a</td>
<td>Philosophy of Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 146a</td>
<td>Idea of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 178b</td>
<td>Major Figures in the Christian Faith: Simone Weil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL 121a</td>
<td>Mysticism and the Moral Life: Abraham Heschel, Howard Thurman, Thomas Merton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL 131b</td>
<td>The Dynamics of Religious Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC 128a</td>
<td>Religion and Globalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMNS 195b</td>
<td>The Woman’s Voice in the Muslim World</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Romance and Comparative Literature

Faculty

Dian Fox, Chair
Spanish medieval and early modern drama, poetry, and prose. Cervantes. Women’s and gender studies.

Harleen Singh, Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow
Mellon Fellow in Comparative Literature and Women’s Studies. Postcolonial and Gender Studies.

French and Comparative Literature

Jane Hale

Erica Harth

Edward Kaplan, Undergraduate Advising Head for Comparative Literature

Michael Randall, Undergraduate Advising Head for French
Late Medieval and Renaissance poetry, prose, and philosophy.

Italian and Comparative Literature

Richard Lansing, Undergraduate Advising Head for Italian

Spanish and Comparative Literature

Roxanne Dávila
Modern and contemporary Latin American literature and culture. Latin American studies.

James Mandrell, Undergraduate Advising Head for Spanish
Modern and contemporary Spanish literature. Genre and gender. Film.

Ángela Pérez-Mejía

French Language

Hollie Harder, Director of Language Programs

Sabine Levet

Esther Ratner
French language and culture.

Italian Language

Paola Servino
Italian language and culture.

Spanish Language

Jorge Arteta
Spanish language.

Mary Burstin
Spanish language.

Elena González Ros
Spanish language and language pedagogy.

Olmanda Hernández
Spanish language and Hispanic cultures.

Raysa Mederos
Spanish language.

Javier Sanchez
Spanish language, culture, and literature.

Requirements

For course offerings and requirements for the major, see Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies, European Cultural Studies, French, Italian, and Spanish.