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

Tzvi Abusch, Chair (Near Eastern and Judaic Studies)
Bernadette Brooten (Near Eastern and Judaic Studies)
Wendy Cadge (Sociology)
Jonathan Decter (Near Eastern and Judaic Studies)
Gila Hayim (Sociology)

Patricia Johnston (Classical Studies)
Edward Kaplan (Romance and Comparative Literature)
Charles McClendon (Fine Arts)
Jerry Samet (Philosophy)
Ellen Schattschneider (Anthropology)

The following faculty members are affiliated with the program:
Marc Brettler (NEJS)
John Burt (ENG)
Stephen Dowden (GRALL)
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 (ROMS)
Avigdor Levy (NEJS)
Leonard Muellner (CLAS)
Richard Parmentier (ANTH)
Michael Randall (ROMS)
Jonathan Sarna (NEJS)
John Schrecker (HIST)
Eugene Sheppard (NEJS)
Govind Sreenivasan (HIST)
Cheryl Walker (CLAS)
David Wright (NEJS)
Palle Yourgrau (PHIL)

Requirements for the Minor

A. Core Course: REL 107a [Introduction to World Religions]. 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 two courses from the list of electives listed below.

D. A Senior Essay (REL 97a) may replace one of the two electives with the approval of the program chair.

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 GPA of at least 2.00 in program courses.
Courses of Instruction

**REL 97a Senior Essay**
Usually offered every year.
Staff

**REL 97b Senior Essay**
Usually offered every year.
Staff

**REL 98a Independent Study**
Usually offered every year.
Staff

**REL 98b Independent Study**
Usually offered every year.
Staff

**REL 107a Introduction to World Religions**
This course serves as an introduction to the study of religion; it surveys some of the major religions of the world. Staff

**REL 131b The Dynamics of Religious Experience**
A comparative study of religious experience, including Christian, Jewish, nonbiblical, and feminist responses to modern anguish and the quest for identity and absolute meaning. Topics include doubt, sin, conversion, prayer, mysticism, holiness, and social action. Usually offered every third year.

Mr. Kaplan

**REL 151a The Buddha: His Life and Teachings**
Few human beings have had as much impact on the world as Siddhartha Gotama Shakyamuni, known to us as Buddha. This course explores his life and teachings as reflected in early Buddhist literature and Western scholarship. Usually offered every year.

Staff

Traditions Courses

The following courses are approved for the program. Not all are given in any one year. Please consult the Schedule of Classes each semester.

**ANTH 80a**
Anthropology of Religion

**CLAS 170a**
Classical Mythology

**HIST 181a**
Seminar on Traditional Chinese Thought

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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>IMES 104a</td>
<td>Islam: Civilization and Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEJS 3a</td>
<td>Introduction to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEJS 5a</td>
<td>Foundational Course in Judaic Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEJS 9a</td>
<td>The World of the Ancient Near East</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEJS 111a</td>
<td>The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament</td>
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<td>NEJS 114b</td>
<td>Biblical Ritual, Cult, and Magic</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEJS 116a</td>
<td>Ancient Near Eastern Religion and Mythology</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEJS 128a</td>
<td>Introduction to Christianity</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEJS 130a</td>
<td>The New Testament: A Historical Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEJS 153a</td>
<td>Hasidism as a Religious and Social Movement</td>
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<td>NEJS 155b</td>
<td>Judaism and the Religious Quest</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEJS 186a</td>
<td>Introduction to the Qur’an</td>
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<td>NEJS 187b</td>
<td>Shi’ism and Political Protest in the Middle East</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEJS 198b</td>
<td>Modern Islamic Thought: The Eighteenth Century through the Contemporary Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL 151a</td>
<td>The Buddha: His Life and Teachings</td>
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Elective Courses

The following courses are approved for the program. Not all are given in any one year. Please consult the Schedule of Classes each semester.

**AAAS 81b**
Religion in African-American History

**AMST 167b**
The Cultural Work of Religion in America

**AMST 168b**
American Religious History

**ANTH 105a**
Myth and Ritual

**ANTH 137b**
Violence and the Sacred in Asia

**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

**FECS 147a**
Islam: Civilization and Institutions

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

**HIST 123b**
Reformation Europe [1400–1600]

**HIST 125a**
Early Modern Europe [1500–1700]

**HIST 148a**
Religion and Society in Modern Russia

**HIST 152b**
Salem, 1692

**HUM 10a**
The Western Canon

**IECS 140a**
Dante’s Divine Comedy

**NEJS 112a**
The Book of Genesis

**NEJS 115a**
The Book of Deuteronomy

**NEJS 115b**
Women and the Bible

**NEJS 122a**
Magic and Witchcraft in the Ancient Near East

**NEJS 127b**
The Jewish Liturgy

**NEJS 153b**
Abraham Joshua Heschel: Spirituality and Action

**NEJS 158b**
Topics in Jewish Devotional Literature of the Medieval and Later Periods

**NEJS 159a**
Major Trends in Modern Jewish Philosophy

**NEJS 162a**
American Judaism
NEJS 163a
Jewish-Christian Relations in America

NEJS 164a
Judaism Confronts America

NEJS 166b
“Divided Souls”: Jewish Conversion and Identity in Historical Perspective

NEJS 175b
Responses to the Holocaust in Literature

NEJS 190b
Islamic Philosophy

NEJS 196a
Marriage, Divorce, and Sexual Ethics in Islamic Law

PHIL 24a
Philosophy of Religion

PHIL 146a
Idea of God

PHIL 178b
Major Figures in the Christian Faith

POL 145b
The Islamic Challenge: Politics and Religion in the West

REL 131b
The Dynamics of Religious Experience

SOC 128a
Religion and Globalization

SOC 129a
Sociology of Religion

Romance Studies

Faculty

Edward Kaplan, Chair

French and Francophone Studies

Jane Hale

Italian Studies

Michael Randall, Undergraduate Advising Head for French
Late medieval and Renaissance poetry, prose, and philosophy. Comparative literature.

Italian Language

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

James Mандrell
Modern and contemporary Hispanic literature. Comparative literature. Women’s, gender, and sexuality studies. Film.

Marisol Negrón
Latin American and Latino studies.

Ronnie Perelis
Early modern peninsular and transatlantic studies.

Ángela Pérez-Mejía

Martine Voiret
French language and culture.

Italian Language

Elena González Ros
Spanish language.

Spanish Language

Nives Dal Bo-Wheeler
Italian language and culture.

Spanish language and language pedagogy.

Scott Gravina
Spanish language.

Olmanda Hernández
Spanish language and Hispanic cultures.

Rayssa Mederos
Spanish language.

Religious Studies

For course offerings and requirements for the major, refer to the sections found elsewhere in this Bulletin for European Cultural Studies, French and Francophone Studies, Hispanic Studies, and Italian Studies.