

An interdepartmental program

Courses of Study:
Minor

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)

Jonathan Decter

(Near Eastern and Judaic Studies)

Gila Hayim

(Sociology)

Patricia Johnston

(Classical Studies)

Charles McClendon

(Fine Arts)

Jerry Samet

(Philosophy)

Ellen Schattschneider

(Anthropology)

Ramie Targoff

(English and American Literature)

The following faculty members are affiliated with the program:

Marc Brettler (NEJS)
Joan Bryant (AAAS)
John Burt (ENG)
Olga Davidson (WMGS)
Stephen Dowden (GRALL)
Sylvia Fishman (NEJS)
ChaeRan Freeze (NEJS)
Gregory Freeze (HIST)
Tona Hangen (AMST)
Eli Hirsch (PHIL)
Jane Kamensky (HIST)
William Kapelle (HIST)
Reuven Kimelman (NEJS)
Ann Koloski-Ostrow (CLAS)
Sarah Lamb (ANTH)
Richard Lansing (ROCL)
Avigdor 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)
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 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 Approaches to Religious Studies

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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 121a Mysticism and the Moral Life: Abraham Heschel, Howard Thurman, Thomas Merton

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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

REL 131b The Dynamics of Religious Experience

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A comparative study of religious experience, including Christian, Jewish, non-biblical, 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

Traditions Courses

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

ANTH 80a

Anthropology of Religion

CLAS 170a

Classical Mythology

HIST 181a

Seminar on Traditional Chinese Thought

IMES 104a

Islam: Civilization and Institutions

NEJS 3a

Introduction to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

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

NEJS 198b

Modern Islamic Thought: The Eighteenth Century through the Contemporary Era

Elective Courses

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

AAAS 81b

Religion in African-American History

AMST 167b

The Cultural Work of Religion in America

AMST 168b

Religions in America

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**
Jewish Identities in France since 1945
- HIST 110b**
The Civilization of the High and Late Middle Ages
- HIST 123b**
Reformation Europe (1400-1600)
- HIST 126a**
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**
Dealing with Evil in Ancient Babylon and Beyond: Magic and Witchcraft in Antiquity
- NEJS 127b**
The Jewish Liturgy
- NEJS 153b**
Abraham Joshua Heschel: Spirituality and Action
- NEJS 156a**
Introduction to Jewish Mysticism
- 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 196a**
Marriage, Divorce, and Sexual Ethics in Islamic Law
- NEJS 196b**
Women, Gender, and Islamic Civilization
- PHIL 24a**
Philosophy of Religion
- PHIL 146a**
Idea of God
- PHIL 178b**
Major Figures in the Christian Faith
- REL 121a**
Mysticism and the Moral Life: Abraham Heschel, Howard Thurman, Thomas Merton
- REL 131b**
The Dynamics of Religious Experience
- SOC 128a**
Religion and Globalization
- WMGS 195b**
The Woman's Voice in the Muslim World

Romance and Comparative Literature

Courses of Study:
See French Language and Literature.
See Italian Studies.
See Spanish Language and Literature.
See Comparative Literature.

Faculty

Dian Fox, Chair

Spanish medieval and early modern drama, poetry, and prose. Cervantes. Women's and gender studies.

French and Comparative Literature

Jane Hale, Undergraduate Advising Head for Comparative Literature

French and comparative literature. Twentieth-century French fiction and drama. Beckett, Queneau. Literature and painting. Francophone literature of Africa and the Caribbean.

Erica Harth

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French prose. Cultural studies and comparative literature. Feminism and gender studies.

Edward Kaplan

French romanticism. Michelet. Hugo. Modern French poetry and theory. Baudelaire. Jabès. Bonnefoy. Religion and literature. Translation.

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

Dante. Italian and European Renaissance. Courtly tradition. Modern Italian literature.

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, Latin American Studies Program Chair

Colonial Latin American literature. Latin American film and cultural studies. Latin American women writers.

French Language

Hollie Harder, Director of Language Programs

French language and culture. Language pedagogy. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century French literature. Women's studies.

Sabine Levet

French language and culture. Cross-cultural studies. Language pedagogy. Teacher training. Technology in the humanities.

Esther Ratner

French language and culture.

Italian Language

Paola Servino

Italian language and culture.

Spanish Language

Jorge Arteta

Spanish language.

Mary Nasielskier de 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 Literature, European Cultural Studies, French, Italian, and Spanish.