

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The curriculum in the Department of Religious Studies at CU Boulder trains students in the scholarly understanding and interpretation of the complex phenomenon we call religion through careful study of history, texts, rituals, narrative, art and media. The program offers the skills to approach the comparative study of religion with the option of gaining deeper knowledge in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, religions in America, religions in the Mediterranean, religions in Asia and several indigenous traditions. We also allow students to develop expertise in thematic areas such as religion and the body; ritual studies; religion and the environment; ethics, politics and law; religion, gender and sexuality; and ancient and medieval religions.

The graduate degree in religious studies emphasizes the application of various theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of religion; the understanding of religious practices and traditions with attention to historical context and present-day impact; and the development of media literacy, critical thinking, effective oral and written communication, and research skills in our increasingly globalized and religiously diverse world.

In addition, students with a degree in religious studies are expected to achieve basic religious literacy: the ability to communicate and analyze practical information regarding religious diversity as educated citizens of a pluralistic society and thereby to effectively understand and participate in public debates and discussions about religion.

Course codes for this program are RLST and SNSK.

Master's Degree

- Religious Studies - Master of Arts (MA) (<https://catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/programs-study/religious-studies/religious-studies-master-arts-ma/>)

Faculty

While many faculty teach both undergraduate and graduate students, some instruct students at the undergraduate level only. For more information, contact the faculty member's home department.

Ali, Aun Hasan (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_155948/)
Assistant Professor; PhD, McGill University

Biernacki, Loriljai (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_115294/)
Professor; PhD, University of Pennsylvania

Boyd, Samuel L. (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_155484/)
Associate Professor, Associate Chair; PhD, University of Chicago

Catlos, Brian Aivars (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_147829/)
Professor; PhD, University of Toronto

Chernus, Ira R. (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_101043/)
Professor Emeritus; Ph.D, Temple University

Denny, Frederick M.
Professor Emeritus

Gayley, Antonia Hollis (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_144505/)
Associate Professor, Associate Chair; PhD, Harvard University

Gill, Sam D. (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_103595/)
Professor Emeritus; PhD, University of Chicago

Kleeman, Terry F. (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_114181/)
Professor; PhD, University of California, Berkeley

Ross-Bryant, Lynn
Professor Emerita

Sacks, Elias R. (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_151425/)
Associate Professor; PhD, Princeton University

Taylor, Rodney L.
Professor Emeritus

Whitehead, Deborah Faith (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_144239/)
Associate Professor, Chair; ThD, Harvard University

Courses

RLST 5030 (3) Religions in America

Studies various religious movements in the U.S. and other parts of the Americas. Includes American religion and religions, religion and nationalism, revitalization and religion and Asian religions in America.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4030

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 5050 (3) Topics in Christian Studies

Studies a particular topic in Christian theology and culture such as early Christianity, medieval Christianity, Christianity in the United States, women and Christianity, liberation theologies, Christianity and literature, and modern Christian thought.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4050

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

Recommended: Prerequisite 6 hours of RLST courses at any level or instructor consent.

RLST 5170 (3) God and Politics

Explores the relationship between religion and politics. Examining traditions such as Judaism and Christianity, this course considers diverse ways in which ancient, medieval and modern sources have imagined the role of religion in civic life. Some topics include the status of religious minorities, the nature of religious freedom and contemporary debates surrounding issues such as torture, sexuality and climate change.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4170 and JWST 4170

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 5180 (3) Is God Dead?

Explores debates about the following questions: does it make sense to believe in God? Should believing or not believing in God make a difference for how individuals behave? Examining ancient and modern views on the existence and nature of a higher power, this course considers topics including evil and suffering, religion and science and religion's role in politics.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4180 and JWST 4180

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 5190 (3) Love and Desire

Explores debates about the following questions: what and whom should humans and gods love, and what role should passions play in religion? Examining traditions such as Judaism and Christianity, this course considers diverse views on topics including religion and sexuality, the promise and perils of loving gods and humans, and the relationship between love, politics, and violence.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4190 and JWST 4190

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 5200 (3) Topics in Hinduism

Examines in depth central themes, schools of thought and movements in Hinduism, such as myth and ritual, renunciation, Vedanta, Tantra and Yoga.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4200

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

Recommended: Prerequisite 6 hours of RLST courses at any level or instructor consent.

Additional Information: Departmental Category: Asia Content

RLST 5210 (3) Advanced Readings in Sanskrit

Requires at least two years of prior Sanskrit training. Students will read texts in the original. Class time is devoted to parsing out difficult grammatical structures, discussing the philosophical import of the readings and addressing the historical contexts that assist in interpreting the texts. The topic varies according to student interest.

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours.

Requisites: Requires prerequisite course of SNSK 2120 (minimum grade C-). Restricted to graduate students only.

Additional Information: Departmental Category: Asia Content

RLST 5250 (3) Topics in Buddhism

Examines in depth central themes, schools of thought and movements in Buddhism, such as Theravada in Southeast Asia, Mahayana and Tantrayana thought, Zen and Buddhism in America.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4250

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

Additional Information: Departmental Category: Asia Content

RLST 5260 (3) Topics in Judaism

Examines in depth central themes, schools of thought, and movements in Judaism, along with other traditions, across a range of historical periods.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4260 and JWST 4260

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 5280 (3) Body and Magic in India

Addresses ideas of the body and its use and functions within magic, particularly in Tantric traditions. Uses classical Hinduism and Tantra as a point of departure, focusing on subtle bodies and Tantric bodies and will also supplement this with writing about the body and its connection to mind in contemporary Western thought addressing the mind-body problem.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4280

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 5300 (3) Topics in Native American Religions

Examines a topic (varies at different offerings) focusing on religions of peoples indigenous to the Americas. May consider mythology; shamanism and medicine; trickster, clown and fool; crisis cult movements.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4300

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

Recommended: Prerequisite 3 additional credit hours of RLST course work or instructor consent.

RLST 5350 (3) Native American Religions: Regional Studies

Studies religion(s) of a single native North American tribe or geographic region within context of history and culture of the tribe.

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

Recommended: Prerequisite 6 additional credit hours of RLST course work or instructor consent.

RLST 5353 (3) Indigenous Traditions and Law: A Global Perspective

Explores intersections of indigenous religions and law through historical and contemporary case studies. American Indian and Hawaiian contexts will be featured, as well as the study of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its recent implementation in places as diverse as Bolivia, Norway and Nagaland. Theoretical issues in the academic study of religion and ethnic studies will be emphasized.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4353 and ETHN 4353 and ETHN 5353

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 5610 (3) Topics in Islam

A detailed exploration of diverse intellectual approaches to central questions in Islamic traditions. Department consent required.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4610

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

RLST 5650 (3) Islam in the Modern World

Globally surveys Islam, covering religion and politics; Islam and the West; the Islamic revival and its varied forms in Iran, Indonesia, Libya and Pakistan; development and change; the status of women; media and academic stereotyping.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4650

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

Recommended: Prerequisite 6 credit hours of religious studies at any level or instructor consent.

Additional Information: Departmental Category: Asia Content

RLST 5780 (3) New Religions of East Asia

Explores the new religious movements of modern China, Japan, and Korea, which have arisen over the last century due to the influence of the West and in response to the pressures of modernization. Previous coursework in religious studies or Asian languages and civilizations is recommended.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4780

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

RLST 5820 (3) Interdisciplinary Seminar on Religion

Variable topics in religion, drawing from a variety of disciplines and methodologies as they shed light on specific traditions and issues.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4820

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 5840 (1-6) Independent Study

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 8.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 5850 (3) Gender in Hagiography

Explores gendered ideals of sainthood in medieval hagiographic literature. We draw primarily from the lives of female mystics in Buddhist and Christian sources and also examine the construction of mendicant masculinities. Reading from an array of primary sources, we query the category of mysticism and ask why visionary experience has so often been gendered female.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: RLST 4850 and WGST 4850

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

RLST 6110 (3) Adv Tpcs: Chicana/o Studies: US/Mexico Borderlands

Examines complex histories, cultural practices and liminal, 3rd spaces of the US and Mexico borderlands; racial and gender identities; community formations. Considers a range of autobiographic testimony narratives, films, social and legal studies, and theories of subjectivity that engage with the politics of representation vis a vis the criminalization of Chicana/o and ethnic youth, immigrants and those perceived to be immigrants.

Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted: ETHN 6110

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

Grading Basis: Letter Grade

RLST 6830 (3) Introduction to the Academic Study of Religion

Introduction to the graduate academic study of religion through the exploration of contemporary models and issues that demonstrate the nature and future of the field. Students prepares a profile of intended area of research.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 6840 (1-6) Independent Study

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 8.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 6940 (1) Master's Candidate for Degree

Registration intended for students preparing for a thesis defense, final examination, culminating activity, or completion of degree.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 6945 (1-4) Portfolio: Non-Thesis Option

Course work finished or in the last semester.

Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 4.00 total credit hours.

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.

RLST 6950 (1-4) Master's Thesis

Requisites: Restricted to graduate students only.