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; politics, law and religion; religion, gender and sexuality; and religion, peace and war.

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

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

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

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

Chemus, Ira R.  
Professor Emeritus

Denny, Frederick M.  
Professor Emeritus

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

Gill, Sam D.  
Professor; PhD, University of Chicago

Johnson, Gregory B. (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_111214)  
Associate Professor; 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

Shneer, David (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_146105)  
Professor, Chair; PhD, University of California, Berkeley

Taylor, Rodney L.  
Professor Emeritus

Whitehead, Deborah Faith (https://experts.colorado.edu/display/fisid_144239)  
Associate Professor, Associate Chair, 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?*  
Examines 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*  
Examines 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 6 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 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 5750 (3) *Daoism*  
Traces the development of Daoism from its origin as an organized, communal religion in the second century CE to the vibrant living religion of today, encompassing meditative monastics, martial exorcists, solemn ritual masters and lay practitioners of inner alchemy and other self-cultivation techniques. Focuses on the extensive Daoist ritual tradition and the community of believers who created and used it.  
**Equivalent - Duplicate Degree Credit Not Granted:** RLST 4750 and CHIN 4750 and CHIN 5750  
**Requisites:** Restricted to graduate students only.  
**Grading Basis:** Letter Grade
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 5880 (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 4880
Repeatable: Repeatable for up to 9.00 total credit hours. Allows multiple enrollment in term.
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 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.