

## School of Arts and Sciences

**RELIGIOUS  
STUDIES**[www.religiousstudies.pitt.edu](http://www.religiousstudies.pitt.edu)

Religion is one of the creative expressions of the human spirit. As such, it has shaped and, in turn, been shaped by virtually all historical traditions as well as by many other forms of human activity such as the arts, literature, political thinking, and social behavior.

The academic study of religion should be undertaken through diverse scholarly methodologies, and it should treat experiences in a variety of cultural contexts in different periods. Courses in the study of religion tend to emphasize the human search for meaning and value in history; the manner in which particular religious traditions, practices, thoughts, and orientations have evolved over time; and the degree to which religious views have interacted creatively with other systems of thought and other meaningful expressions of human activity. In addition to courses in the Department of Religious Studies, related courses are offered in other departments as well, such as anthropology, classics, history, philosophy, and sociology.

Faculty in this department all pursue an active research program and publish regularly, besides teaching a full course load to graduates and undergraduates. The department has been the recipient of foundation support for course development, and individual faculty have received awards, grants, and other honors from local, regional, national, and international associations.

Graduates with religious studies majors can go on to professional school (such as law, ministry, and education), graduate school (religious studies programs usually, but programs in other fields like history, sociology, or anthropology are possible), or can go into areas such as business or communication.

**Requirements for the Major**

The religious studies major requires ten courses (30 credits).

**1. Introductory Courses (6 credits):**

Students complete both introductory core courses, RELGST 0105 Religions of the West; and RELGST 0505 Religion in Asia. Students are encouraged to complete these courses early in their college careers.

**2. Methods Courses (6 credits):**

Students select one course (from an approved list) in which the historical approach to religion is emphasized. Students select a second course (from an approved list) in which a philosophical, ethnographic, social scientific, or literary approach to religion is emphasized.

**3. Area Distribution Courses (9 credits)**

Students select one upper-level course from approved lists in three areas: religion in the East, the premodern West, and the modern/contemporary West.

**4. Elective Courses (6 credits)**

Students select two additional religious studies courses, at least one of which must be at the 1000 level. Students may use electives to form a clear area of specialization preparatory to graduate study or in line with their interests, or they may use electives to create a broader program in which they study as many traditions, ideologies, geographic areas, and themes as possible. Students are encouraged to meet with the director of undergraduate studies to plan the best arrangement of courses for their long-term academic goals.



#### 5. Capstone Research (3 credits)

All students write a senior thesis through the RELGST 1903 Directed Research course. The prerequisite for enrolling in the capstone seminar is at least six religious studies courses. Each fall, all graduating majors come together as an intellectual community to participate in a special seminar to produce a capstone research paper. The overarching thematic orientation of the capstone seminar changes with the instructor. Students are encouraged to develop research topics in their area of interest within the broader outlines of the annual theme. Students work with the seminar instructor as well as with another faculty member with expertise in the particular area of research. Students have opportunities to share their work-in-progress with other seminar members throughout the term and to present their research to their peers at the conclusion of the seminar.

For further information and regulations and for the lists of approved courses for each requirement, see the department website: <http://www.religiousstudies.pitt.edu/index.php>

#### **Related Area**

The required Arts and Sciences 12-credit related area may encompass the study of literature, language, art, or history of a culture the student is seeking to understand; or disciplines or processes that are related to religion, such as social change, mythology, symbolism, and literature. Students may use foreign languages as their related area, but those languages must show some relationship to the primary religion or cultural context within the major. Students planning to attend graduate school should know that competence in those languages related to the culture they will be studying is mandatory. The department strongly encourages development of language skills during undergraduate years.

The related area requirement is also met by a second major, minor, or certificate. Many religious studies majors pursue second majors in anthropology, history, English, and philosophy as well as other fields. In recent years, a number of religious studies majors also have completed certificate programs in fields such as Asian studies and Jewish studies.

#### **For more information about the religious studies major, contact:**

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Department of Religious Studies  
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E-mail: [ashear@pitt.edu](mailto:ashear@pitt.edu)  
[www.religiousstudies.pitt.edu](http://www.religiousstudies.pitt.edu)

#### **For more information about other majors, contact:**

University of Pittsburgh  
Office of Admissions and Financial Aid  
Alumni Hall, 4227 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260-6601  
412-624-PITT  
E-mail: [oafa@pitt.edu](mailto:oafa@pitt.edu)  
[www.oafa.pitt.edu](http://www.oafa.pitt.edu)

## Special Programs and Opportunities

### Internships

Having an internship can be one of the most enlightening and productive aspects of your undergraduate education. It not only gives you a closer look at working in a particular field but can help you gain a competitive edge, make contacts in the marketplace, and earn credits toward your degree. Pittsburgh is an exciting place for internship opportunities: internationally known as a renowned center for health care and groundbreaking medical research; home to many corporate headquarters; and a city with a wealth of cultural and entertainment activities, including professional sports teams and the Carnegie system of museums. Religious studies majors have participated in internships with religious organizations (churches, synagogues), with religious educational institutions, with museums, and with social organizations (Boys Club, youth groups). Internships are not limited to Pittsburgh, however. Every year, students complete internships in cities such as Philadelphia, Pa.; Washington, D.C.; New York, N.Y.; and their own hometowns. Some students complete an internship as part of their study abroad experience.

### University Honors College (UHC)

The religious studies department has a close relationship with the UHC. UHC offers many resources for talented, active students—unique courses, special degrees, opportunities to perform independent research or teach, supplemental advising, and a social and academic community of similarly motivated students. UHC courses offer a more in-depth treatment of the material covered in nonhonors courses. Students work more problems, write more, read more, and discuss topics in greater depth. Although UHC does not have a formal membership and does invite all students to participate in honors courses, there are certain qualifications that must be met to be eligible to take UHC courses. Entering freshmen are automatically considered for UHC participation on the basis of their admissions applications. A minimum quality point average of 3.25 is required for current Pitt students.

### Volunteer Service

Volunteering gives you valuable experience that enhances your learning, personal development, and the process of discovering your interests. The Student Volunteer Outreach center coordinates a variety of volunteer opportunities with more than 100 local community agencies and annual programs such as the mentoring and tutoring programs, Junior Achievement, Alternative Spring Break, annual volunteer agency fair, and Scouting for Food. Religious studies majors have volunteered at the Jewish Community Center and the Holocaust Center, and have tutored in schools.

### Study Abroad

Studying abroad is an exciting way to add an international perspective to your undergraduate education and strengthen your credentials as a graduate. The University of Pittsburgh encourages you to take advantage of this opportunity (almost 5 percent of Pitt students study abroad compared with 1.3 percent, nationally). Study abroad will not only distinguish you when you enter the job market or pursue graduate study, but also help broaden your experience of the world beyond your own country's borders, giving you an appreciation of other cultures and peoples while allowing you to earn credits toward your degree. Scholarships are available, and financial aid is applicable.

Some examples of programs of special interest to religious studies majors are:

#### **The Lowy School for Overseas Students—Tel Aviv University, Israel**

Qualified English-speaking undergraduate students may apply for one-year, one-semester, or summer session programs in the overseas student program at Tel Aviv University. All courses are taught in English, and the course work includes Jewish studies, Israel studies, Middle Eastern studies, arts, life sciences, social sciences, business and management, and Hebrew language studies. Summer students can participate in a kibbutz living experience. Extracurricular activities are a part of the program to enlarge and deepen student awareness of and contact with Israeli life and culture.

#### **Pitt in India**

The University of Pittsburgh is pleased to offer an eight-week summer study abroad program that introduces students to the fascinating country of India. The program is held at the University of Hyderabad in the culturally rich city of Hyderabad. The University of Hyderabad is a nationally funded university founded in 1974. It is a strong research and teaching university with a computerized library and an internationally connected faculty. It is situated on a 2,000-acre campus roughly 15 miles outside of Hyderabad. Recently the University of Hyderabad was designated as one of the top five universities in India. The program, founded by a professor of religious studies, will be coordinated by Richard Cohen in the Asian Studies Center and Aparna Rayaprol, who earned her PhD in sociology at the University of Pittsburgh and who is now faculty at the University of Hyderabad. The credits earned in the program also can be used toward the fulfillment of a Certificate in Asian Studies.

## **Certificate Programs**

Certificate programs allow students to complete a concentrated area of study in addition to their major. They consist of 18–24 credits of course work and in many cases can be used to fulfill the “related area” requirement of the Arts and Sciences degree. Certificate programs in Asian studies, Latin American studies, Russian and East European studies, and West European studies are offered through the University Center for International Studies (UCIS) and are designated by the U.S. Department of Education as among the best of their kind for research, teaching, and public service. Other UCIS certificate programs include Africana studies, European Union studies, and global studies. Certificate programs are also available in American Sign Language, children’s literature, conceptual foundations of medicine, geographic information systems, German language, historic preservation, history and philosophy of science, international engineering studies, Jewish studies, Medieval and Renaissance studies, professional and public writing, structural engineering for architectural studies majors, photonics, professional translation, and women’s studies. Faculty in religious studies serve as affiliates in many of these programs, especially Asian studies, Jewish studies, Medieval and Renaissance studies, and Russian and East European studies.