



Religious Studies

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FACULTY

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DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION

The program in Religious Studies invites students to explore the big questions about life, death, love, sin, freedom, grace, peace, justice, God, and the human community. Christianity, and specifically the Catholic tradition, are the focuses of the Religious Studies program. Courses not only explore the religious dimensions of life but also endeavor to cultivate the skills and methods necessary to the study of religion and theology. The content and skills fostered in Religious Studies courses enable students to understand and appropriate their own religious tradition.

ADVANCED WRITING PROFICIENCY

A student completing the Advanced Writing Proficiency requirement in Religious Studies assembles a portfolio of three papers demonstrating her ability to read theological literature with sensitivity, rigor, and understanding, and to engage in theological writing with insight, clarity, and persuasion.

SENIOR COMPREHENSIVE

Students who major in Religious Studies take a two-part comprehensive examination in their final year. The exam tests the student's breadth of knowledge in Religious Studies and her facility in theological reflection. One part covers historical materials, texts, and issues (up to 1950); the second examines contemporary sources (1950 to present). Each test consists of three essays. Students prepare their bibliography in consultation with their academic advisor and then work with two members of the faculty to discuss the texts and prepare their responses. Students may use any books or articles relevant to the exam while taking it.

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE MAJOR AND MINOR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

A major or minor in Religious Studies does the following:

- Reads critically and analyzes texts pertaining to the study of religion, whether sacred, classical, or contemporary.
- Explains ways in which historical and cultural contexts affect the development of religious traditions.
- Articulates and defends her own line of interpretation and criticism regarding religious questions and texts pertaining to religion.
- Synthesizes examples, facts, issues, or theories within her studies in religious studies and theology, as well as articulates connections, where appropriate, to what she has learned in her other areas of study.

- Identifies some of the major figures, central issues of debate, and most important schools of thought in the field of religion and the discipline of theology; accurately articulates the positions they express; and explains their significance.
- Understands and uses specialized language accurately in analyzing, critiquing, and developing arguments.

PROGRAM IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Bachelor of Arts, Major in Religious Studies—RLST (27 hours)

The following:

RLST 101 Introducing Religious Studies 3 hours

One of the following:

RLST 213 Experiencing God 3 hours
 RLST 214 Spirituality and Comedy 3 hours
 RLST 225 Reading the Hebrew Bible in Jewish and Christian Terms 3 hours
 RLST 228 Christian Holiness 3 hours
 RLST 232 Introduction to the New Testament 3 hours
 RLST 236 Faith in Action 3 hours
 RLST 240 Catholic Social Thought 3 hours
 RLST 251 The Christian Tradition 3 hours
 RLST 261 Catholic Faith and Life 3 hours
 RLST 290 Special Topics 3 hours

One course from each of the following areas:

Biblical Studies

RLST 304 Historical Jesus: The Quest for Jesus of Nazareth 3 hours
 RLST 307 Leviticus and Numbers: Cultural Interpretations 3 hours
 RLST 308 Paul and His Times 3 hours

Historical Theology

RLST 325 Great Theologians 3 hours
 RLST 445 Historical Theology 3 hours

Theory of Theology

RLST 370 Aquinas' Search for God: Faith Meets Philosophy 3 hours
 RLST 406 Ways of Doing Theology 3 hours

Systematic Theology

RLST 315 Free and Responsible: Grace and the Human Condition 3 hours
 RLST 318 Heaven and Hell 3 hours
 RLST 355 African-American Theologies 3 hours
 RLST 457 Systematic Theology Seminar 3 hours

Ethical Studies

RLST 352 Religion and Politics 3 hours
 RLST 458 Theological Ethics Seminar 3 hours

Two courses from the following or from any of the major areas above (6 hours):

RLST 312 Theologies of Love 3 hours
 RLST 314 Reading and Interpreting Hebrew Bible Prophets 3 hours
 RLST 321 The Mystics 3 hours
 RLST 339 Religion and Literature 3 hours
 RLST 351 Religion and Science 3 hours
 RLST 362 Becoming Women 3 hours
 RLST 380 World Religions and Christianity 3 hours
 RLST 381 Islam: Beliefs, Practices, and Current Events 3 hours
 RLST 390 Special Topics 3 hours
 RLST 476 Theology for Ministry and Life I 3 hours

Minor in Religious Studies—RLST (15 hours)

The following

RLST 101 Introducing Religious Studies 3 hours

One of the following:

RLST 213 Experiencing God 3 hours
 RLST 214 Spirituality and Comedy 3 hours
 RLST 225 Reading the Hebrew Bible in Jewish and Christian Terms 3 hours
 RLST 228 Christian Holiness 3 hours
 RLST 232 Introduction to the New Testament 3 hours
 RLST 236 Faith in Action 3 hours
 RLST 240 Catholic Social Thought 3 hours
 RLST 251 The Christian Tradition 3 hours
 RLST 261 Catholic Faith and Life 3 hours
 RLST 290 Special Topics 3 hours

Three of the following, two of which must be at the 300 level or above (9 hours):

RLST 213 Experiencing God 3 hours
 RLST 214 Spirituality and Comedy 3 hours
 RLST 225 Reading the Hebrew Bible in Jewish and Christian Terms 3 hours
 RLST 228 Christian Holiness 3 hours
 RLST 232 Introduction to the New Testament 3 hours
 RLST 236 Faith in Action 3 hours
 RLST 240 Catholic Social Thought 3 hours
 RLST 251 The Christian Tradition 3 hours
 RLST 261 Catholic Faith and Life 3 hours
 RLST 290 Special Topics 3 hours
 RLST 304 Historical Jesus: The Quest for Jesus of Nazareth 3 hours
 RLST 307 Leviticus and Numbers: Cultural Interpretations 3 hours
 RLST 308 Paul and His Times 3 hours
 RLST 312 Theologies of Love 3 hours
 RLST 314 Reading and Interpreting Hebrew Bible Prophets 3 hours
 RLST 315 Free and Responsible: Grace and the Human Condition 3 hours
 RLST 318 Heaven and Hell 3 hours
 RLST 321 The Mystics 3 hours
 RLST 325 Great Theologians 3 hours
 RLST 339 Religion and Literature 3 hours
 RLST 351 Religion and Science 3 hours
 RLST 352 Religion and Politics 3 hours
 RLST 355 African-American Theologies 3 hours
 RLST 362 Becoming Women 3 hours
 RLST 370 Aquinas' Search for God: Faith Meets Philosophy 3 hours
 RLST 380 World Religions and Christianity 3 hours
 RLST 381 Islam: Beliefs, Practices, and Current Events 3 hours
 RLST 390 Special Topics 3 hours
 RLST 406 Ways of Doing Theology 3 hours
 RLST 445 Historical Theology 3 hours
 RLST 457 Systematic Theology Seminar 3 hours
 RLST 458 Theological Ethics Seminar 3 hours
 RLST 476 Theology for Ministry and Life I 3 hours

RELIGIOUS STUDIES COURSES (RLST)

101 Introducing Religious Studies (3)

This course introduces students to the study of religion and theological inquiry. Through a variety of sources it explores the meaning of religion in personal and cultural life.

102 Religion in Communities (1)

An introduction to several religious traditions practiced in the South Bend area and the skills needed to reflect on how our own beliefs and expectations shape our understanding of others.

191 The Greco-Roman World and Christian Origins (3)

This course functions together with a study program in Greece. Students will also meet for nine hours of classroom instruction and orientation before departure to Greece. The remainder of the course will occur while traveling to and within Greece. Students will study the origins of early Christianity in Greece during the first century C.E. in light of Greco-Roman culture and history. Students will examine ways in which ancient cultural patterns, symbols, values, and embodied artifacts of the Greco-Roman world shaped early Christianity in Greece and that movement's unique Christian assemblies by investigating Greco-Roman religions, politics, gender issues, social status, daily life, city planning, architecture, art, economy, and ancient travel. The course is organized around daily excursions to various archaeological sites in Greece that will allow students to probe the cultural and historical realities of Greco-Roman antiquity and their influence on early Christianity.

NOTE: Courses at the 200 level are open only to those Saint Mary's College students who have completed their Religious Traditions I Sophia requirement.

213 Experiencing God (3)

An exploration of the ways people come to know the divine through their own experience. This course will focus on works in which people reflect on their experience of the divine, and it will also consider works in which scholars seek to understand religious experience from different perspectives.

214 Spirituality and Comedy (3)

Christianity has often been resistant to areas of life we associate with comedy, such as laughter, play, and joy; as Hugo Rahner asks, "May a Christian laugh, when he has heard our Lord's warning, 'Woe upon you who laugh now; you shall mourn and weep' (Luke 6.25)? May a Christian go on merrily playing when a stern and strict choice has to be made for eternity?" This course will investigate the relationship between comic dimensions of human life and Christian spirituality, including spirituality of ecumenical and inter-religious engagement. Students will participate in spiritual practices (for instance, forms of meditation), attend a small number of local religious events, and present individual final projects based on their interests in spirituality and the comic. Prerequisite: RLST 101.

225 Reading the Hebrew Bible in Jewish and Christian Terms (3)

This course is a study of the Bible as a foundation for Jewish and Christian theology and the relationship between the two faith traditions. It will focus on the Hebrew Bible and how some of its texts and themes are utilized and reinterpreted in the New Testament.

228 Christian Holiness in History and Culture (3)

This course examines a broad array of Christian practices, techniques and ideas about holiness.

232 Introduction to the New Testament (3)

This course examines the Christian biblical writings giving attention to their social-historical, literary, and theological characteristics. The New Testament texts are situated within the respective Jewish Palestinian and Greco-Roman contexts of Jesus and his early followers. Attention is given to compositional issues and to the subsequent transmission of these writings.

236 Faith in Action (3)

This course examines the faith, practices, and theories of influential American Christian activists who exemplify a variety of approaches to the Christian quest for justice. It seeks to understand how a commitment to justice can grow out of Christian faith.

240 Catholic Social Thought (3)

What is the Church's proper role in social and political life? What insight does the Roman Catholic tradition offer in the face of ever more difficult moral quandaries? This course examines the foundational elements of the Church's social tradition and their application to contemporary issues such as poverty and homelessness, health care, the environment, capital punishment, war, and the beginning and end of life, and may focus on the impact of such issues on women inside and outside the Church, as well as on the relationship between one's role as believer and one's role as citizen.

251 The Christian Tradition (3)

An examination of the sources and development of Christianity's central teachings. Consideration of the history and contemporary understandings of those aspects of the faith of prime importance: God, Christ, the Church, the Christian life. What does it mean to be part of the Christian tradition? How can we understand its richness and diversity?

261 Catholic Faith and Life (3)

A study of basic doctrinal beliefs, moral values, and worship in the Catholic Church. Primarily an introduction to a theological understanding of these issues, the course also considers practical implications for personal and social life.

290 Special Topics (3)

The presentation of selected general education topics not covered in regular departmental 200 level courses. May be repeated for credit with a different topic.

NOTE: courses at the 300-400 level are open only to those Saint Mary's College students who have already satisfied their Religious Traditions I and II Sophia requirements.

304 Historical Jesus: The Quest for Jesus of Nazareth (3)

This course will examine the life, message, and mission of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. Students will study the historical context in which Jesus lived, investigate the ancient sources which provide the data for reconstructing the life of the historical Jesus, and make use of historical-critical scholarly methods.

307 Leviticus and Numbers: Cultural Interpretations (3)

This course is a study of the third and fourth books in the Torah or Pentateuch. These biblical books will be read in conversation with biblical criticism and cultural anthropology.

308 Paul and His Times (3)

This course introduces students to the life, letters, and beliefs of Paul's own writings within their social-historical contexts. Students also become familiar with diverse positions in Pauline studies by reading contemporary scholarship.

312 Theologies of Love (3)

A study of various theological approaches to the concept and lived reality of love and loving—God, human persons, and the world of nature and culture. Different sorts of human love are explored: the love of friendship, married love, parental and filial love, love of one's work, etc. Excerpts are read from classical and contemporary theologians, a few mystics, and some current social activists.

314 Reading and Interpreting Hebrew Bible Prophets (3)

This course is a study of the fifteen prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible, written from the 8th century BCE to approximately the 4th century BCE. The books will be read in conversation with contemporary work on methods of biblical interpretation, particularly feminist criticism.

315 Free and Responsible: Grace and the Human Condition (3)

This course explores the God-human relationship which the Christian tradition describes as grace. It studies contemporary expressions of God's action, human freedom, and responsibility. It also explores classical texts and Church teaching on the relationship of grace to sin, salvation, and the meaning of history.

318 Heaven and Hell (3)

This course offers an interdisciplinary introduction to eschatology, the branch of Christian theology that deals with what are traditionally known as the last things—death, judgement, heaven, and hell. The class will focus on the ways theologians and artists have wrestled with understanding and depicting the afterlife.

321 The Mystics (3)

This course explores the wisdom of the Christian mystics and the significance of this wisdom for theology and religious studies. Different themes occur in various semesters; e.g., women mystics, medieval mystics, Spanish mystics, etc.

325 Great Theologians (3)

In a given semester, the work of a few Christian theologians is studied according to selected themes in their writings. Choice of the specific theologians is determined according to the expertise of available faculty and expressed interest of majors. Seminar format.

338 Studies in Theology and Film (1)

This course focuses on selected theological themes in films. Students learn to think critically, discover and discuss theological themes in a variety of cinematic presentations. May be repeated for credit with a different theme. Graded: S/U. Prerequisites: RLST 101 and a 200-level RLST course. This course does not count toward the major or minor.

339 Religion and Literature (3)

This interdisciplinary seminar examines how literature can address religion's questions—and how it can't. Participants will use the lens of literary studies to probe religious texts and will consider how imaginative literature—sacred and secular, Christian and non-Christian—can shed light on theological issues.

351 Religion and Science (3)

This course explores the relationship between religion and science, and addresses questions raised by the religion/science debate and seeks ways to relate better the wisdom gained by science and religion.

352 Religion and Politics (3)

This course examines ethical issues at the intersection of religion and politics. It explores topics such as the function and limits of secular authority for religious communities, the possible imperative for religious claims to enter the public sphere, and how various competing religious claims may be adjudicated effectively. Prerequisite: Junior/Senior standing or permission of instructor.

355 African-American Theologies (3)

This course will be an engagement with various forms of African-American theologies. Our focus will be on ways in which African-Americans have conceived of the three persons of the Christian Trinity, both constructively and critically. We will also consider ways in which social, historical, cultural, and political contexts relate to developing theologies.

362 Becoming Women (3)

This course examines Christian theological positions about women and sexuality as these positions have functioned in history and have affected Church teaching on the role of women in society. It uses interdisciplinary, interfaith discussions to highlight the importance of constructive theological reflection on contemporary issues facing women.

370 Aquinas' Search for God: Faith Meets Philosophy (3)

This course, based in the writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, pursues the mysteries of faith with the fascination of reason. Topics to be addressed include the existence and attributes of God, God's relationship to the world's evil, and the delicate balance between faith and reason.

380 World Religions and Christianity (3)

What do non-Christian religions say about ultimate reality and the meaning of life? How should Christians regard the beliefs and practices of non-Christians? A survey of selected non-Christian theologies and Christian responses.

381 Islam: Beliefs, Practices, and Current Events (3)

This course will be an engagement with Islam. We will examine Muslim beliefs and practices, as well as ways that Islam impacts current events. We will explore the roots of the Muslim tradition, different ways of being Muslim, the status of women in Islam, and the relationship between violence and Islam, among other topics. We will also consider ways in which the social, historical, cultural, and political contexts relate to Islam.

390 Special Topics (1–3)

The presentation of selected subjects of special relevance not included in regular department offerings. May be repeated with different topic.

406 Ways of Doing Theology (3)

Reflection on the methods and standards used by Christian thinkers to develop appropriate and credible theologies when faced with the most pressing issues in contemporary Christian life.

445 Historical Theology (3)

This course is an exercise in Historical Theology that identifies classical theologians and classical texts from the Christian tradition—especially from the early Church, the Middle Ages, and the Reformation. This course explores selected classical texts, in context, as a way of understanding the evolution of Christian doctrine and as a way of informing the work of theology.

457 Systematic Theology Seminar (3)

A study of systematics, correlating major theological themes, and doctrinal issues such as Christology, ecclesiology, sin and grace, sacraments.

458 Theological Ethics Seminar (3)

A study of basic issues for Christian ethical reflection, such as the status of norms, the meaning of natural law, doctrine of person and human action, and the nature of moral argument.

476 Theology for Ministry and Life I: Theory (3)

A study of issues, foundations, and theologies which shape contemporary catechetical ministries. Special attention to the psychology of religious learning and to themes in biblical, moral, and doctrinal theology which characterize contemporary Catholic thinking.

486 Theology for Ministry and Life II: Practicum (1–3)

Supervised ministry or teaching of religion in a local parish or school is the basis for a weekly reflection seminar and for readings. Prerequisite: RLST 476. This practicum does not count as one of the two required electives for the RLST major or minor.

497 Independent Study (1–3)

May be repeated.