

RELIGION (RELS)

RELS 1210 Introduction to Religion

3 credit hours

3 credit hours Religion as a subject of study is relatively new, starting only in the nineteenth century. This course will deal with how religion became an object of study and the approaches and theories that have been used to come to grips with how religion fits into people's lives. It will also look at characteristic ways that the ultimate reality is approached and how religious life fits into contemporary culture.

RELS 1221 Intro Comparative Religions II

3 credit hours

Religious Diversity in Canada includes Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This course examines these religious traditions both in the context of their historical origins and their adaptations to Canadian Society.

RELS 1222 Religions of Asia (formerly RELS 1220)

3 credit hours

India and China gave birth to several traditions, including Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. These traditions spread to and interacted with local traditions, like Shinto in Japan and shamanism in Korea and Southeast Asia. Students in this course will learn how they have developed, and been shaped by globalization.

RELS 1251 Religion in Contemporary Culture

3 credit hours

This course explores the role of religion in contemporary culture, particularly North American culture. Portrayals of religious people as well as the employment of symbols and themes from various world religions will be identified within selected pieces of contemporary art, film, literature, music, Internet, and other media. We will also consider emerging religious trends and whether certain cultural practices are functioning in a religious role.

RELS 1252 Religious Diversity in Canada

3 credit hours

Religious diversity in Canada has come to incorporate Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, multiple denominations of Christianity and many new religious movements. Students examine both the history of religious diversity in Canada and the impact of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Legislation that promotes Multiculturalism. Selected examples of how new religious traditions are adapting in Canadian Society will also be studied.

RELS 1351 Love

3 credit hours

Our culture has represented love, variously, as effecting self-fulfillment, the affirmation of another personality, union with deity, merit for a future life; or, as sex, a passing neurosis, an unreasoned self-annihilation, or a social contrivance. Students explore the assumptions and implications of these views, particularly as they involve ultimate human concerns, that is, religion.

RELS 1352 Death

3 credit hours

The student considers such questions as what dying is really like, whether dying provides a valuable point of view of living, whether people continue in some form of existence after dying, how one is to understand the symbols in religious talk about death, and why mythologies deal so heavily in death.

RELS 1800 – 1825 Special Topics in Religion

6 credit hours

Course content varies from year to year.

RELS 1826 – 1849 Special Topics in Religion

3 credit hours

Course content varies from year to year.

Courses at the 2000 level may be used by students to complete their humanities requirement or as an elective in their degree program.

RELS 2211 Religious Lives

3 credit hours

Students draw on literature, biography, and autobiography as an introduction to the many dimensions of the human experience of spirituality and religion across geographies and traditions.

RELS 2305 Women in Christianity

3 credit hours

This course calls attention to the unconventional attitude of Jesus toward women; it studies the prominence of women in the New Testament, in contrast to early restrictions of their leadership roles. Did Christianity conform, from the beginning, to patriarchal society, betraying its own insight that in Christ "there is neither male nor female" (Galatians 3:28). Has Christian tradition legitimated male dominance? What can the cause of women's equality hope for from Christianity?

RELS 2310 Religion and Social Ethics

3 credit hours

Religion intersects with controversial moral issues, with different ethical frameworks informing our understanding of what is "right" and "wrong." This course connects theory to practice, offering a theoretical foundation for ethics from religious, philosophical, and Indigenous perspectives, and examining specific cases of sexual ethics, physician-assisted death, racism, euthanasia, abortion, ethics of immigration and the environment.

RELS 2323 The Islamic Religious Tradition

3 credit hours

Islam is one of the most rapidly expanding religious traditions in the world. This course will examine the origins of Islam, its fundamental teachings in the Qu'ran and in the works of some of its major teachers. In addition, the course will survey the history of Islam and contemporary developments in selected areas.

RELS 2324 World Christianity

3 credit hours

Students will investigate Christianity's origin, history, spread, diversity, and contemporary developments across the world. Key issues include the historical, cultural, political, and social factors that have shaped the emergence and practice of Christianity in different regions, especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Special attention is paid to the impact of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism on Christianity's expansion and reinvention.

RELS 2325 Myth and Story

3 credit hours

The telling of stories and the recounting of myths in ritual settings are two major characteristics of religious traditions. The course will examine in translation stories and myths from a variety of literary and oral traditions and cover major theories of approach to mythic narrative. Myths and stories will be studied within the religious context of religious traditions. Major theses will be analyzed and compared across religious traditions.

RELS 2326 South Asian Religious Traditions

3 credit hours

Students are introduced to the diverse religious traditions of South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka). Students will become familiar with basic concepts, themes, and practices of Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, and South Asian Muslim traditions.

RELS 2327 The Buddhist Religious Tradition

3 credit hours

The Buddhist religious tradition was founded in South Asia, spread throughout East and Southeast Asia, and now is growing in the West. Students are introduced to key Buddhist teachings, the transformations they have undergone in different countries, and the development of different sects. Particular attention will be paid to its contemporary cultural dimensions in Asia and in Canada.

RELS 2330 Spirituality and Work

3 credit hours

Is the emerging (or re-emerging) interest in spirituality in the workplace enabling more individual fulfillment and better decision-making or is it creating new conflicts and more exclusionary workplace practices? What influences do religious traditions and worldviews have on how we work together? The increasing globalization of business and communication, the need for more qualified immigrants to Canada, and the growing diversity of people in many workplaces is forcing re-examination of inherited attitudes and expectations about work. These changes require deep understanding of what spirituality, as the deepest source of values, can mean as workplaces change and people make choices about work, vocation, or calling. This course explores the potential, the benefits and the dangers of bringing spirituality into the workplace.

RELS 2332 Religion and Childhood

3 credit hours

Students examine the place of children in religious traditions. Students study the presentation of childhood in sacred texts and the role of children in rituals, ethical practices, and community life. Topics may include changes in the treatment of children over time, concepts of parenthood, childhood symbolism, and the religious education of children.

RELS 2333 Gender, Sexuality and Religion Today

3 credit hours

How has religion informed the way that we understand gender and sexuality through time and across cultural contexts? Students take a comparative and multidisciplinary look at some of the prevailing narratives about women, men, creation, morality, and belief in world religions. Students explore issues such as religious leadership, gender rights, sexuality and sexual identity, and reproduction.

RELS 2342 Violence

3 credit hours

How do different religions deal with violence? When is violence justified and towards whom? Students explore religious responses to these questions using a comparative approach. Topics include: religiously justified warfare, terrorism, gendered violence, and the rejection of violence in religious philosophies.

RELS 2343 Jewish Religious Tradition

3 credit hours

Students examine the origin and development of the Jewish faith as it is remembered in the Hebrew Scriptures and tradition. Selected contemporary debates in Jewish faith and tradition will be studied.

RELS 2347 Ecology and Religion

3 credit hours

The course reviews the phenomenon of human ecology in order to advance to further questions: In the human relationship to nature, does nature have rights? To reduce pollution, may the rich deprive the poor of advanced technology? Is a low-consumption life-style desirable in itself? Should we leave development and progress to the experts? Such questions prepare the ground for a theology that finds religious meaning in the worldly realities of science, commerce, and government.

RELS 2350 Faith in Action: Religion and Social Movements

3 credit hours

Students explore the religious dimensions of important social movements throughout the world, such as Engaged Buddhism and the Abolitionist, Anti-colonialism, Peace, Social Gospel, Temperance, and Civil Rights movements. Students will examine the stories of such important activists as Louise McKinney, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King Jr., The Dalai Lama, and Thich Nhat Hanh. The emphasis will be on social justice movements. The causes of the rise of reactionary, so-called "fundamentalist" movements will also be considered.

RELS 2353 New Religious Movements

3 credit hours

New Religious Movements (sometimes called cults and sects), are a complex and diverse sub-topic. Students explore the ways in which these movements challenge conventional understandings of religious practice and belief, including how religions are defined and the intersection of religion and the modern state.

RELS 2360 Feasting and Fasting: Religion and Food

3 credit hours

Food and eating play an important role in religion. In communities around the world, foodways are shaped by religious traditions and practices. Topics such as fasting, the making of offerings, dietary rules, and traditions and restrictions around commensality are examined in several world traditions.

RELS 2370 Introduction to the Qur'an

3 credit hours

Students examine the Qur'an as scripture, including sources, structure, style, transmission, sciences, interpretation and basic themes.

RELS 2377 Introduction to the Bible: Hebrew Scripture

3 credit hours

The course introduces the Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament. Students are introduced to the text along with the cultural and historical context of the biblical literature. The course also examines the meaning and relevance of these scriptures for today.

RELS 2378 Introduction to the Bible: New Testament

3 credit hours

The course introduces the New Testament scriptures of the Christian tradition. Students are introduced to the text along with the cultural and historical context of the biblical literature. The course examines the meaning and relevance of the New Testament today.

RELS 2401 Religions of China and Japan

3 credit hours

Students examine the major religious traditions of Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and Shinto, as well as popular manifestations of religion, such as belief in ghosts, ancestor worship, fortune telling, feng shui and spirit possession.

RELS 2800- 2825 Special Topics in Religion

6 credit hours

Topics can vary but reflect the expertise of the instructor and the interests of the student(s).

RELS 2826- 2849 Special Topics in Religion

3 credit hours

Topics can vary but reflect the expertise of the instructor and the interests of the student(s).

RELS 3010 Vietnamese Religious Tradition

3 credit hours

This course explores religion in the Vietnamese context and how it relates to social issues, like the construction of a national identity, politics and gender. The course will also examine the role religion has played in the lives of overseas Vietnamese.

RELS 3100 Religion and Development

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours of university courses, or permission of instructor

Students in this course explore the implications of incorporating religion into development theory, policy, and practice. It examines how religion affects development efforts toward health, human rights, gender equality, education, peace-building, political governance, and economic growth. Students will analyze the contributions of Faith-based organizations (FBOs) in comparison to secular NGOs, and discuss how religion in various forms impede or enhance development work.

RELS 3101 Law and Religion

3 credit hours

Students are provided with an overview and an exploration of the relationship between law and religion in Canada. Students examine the roots of the common law and its colonial trajectories by studying key cases on abortion, blasphemy, circumcision, divorce and other issues at the intersection of law and religion.

RELS 3102 Neoliberalism and the God of the Market

3 credit hours

Students examine the ideology of neoliberalism and the ways in which it functions as the religion of the “secular” present. Students explore the ways that neoliberal logics restructure our concepts of personhood, our relationships to each other, and the ways that religions are themselves restructured according to the demands of capital and the market.

RELS 3205 The Future

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

Students examine religious and secular conceptualizations of the future in history, in the contemporary moment, and beyond. Students explore concepts such as eschatology and apocalypticism, perspectives on the nature of time, theories and method for ‘reading’ the future, and imaginative representations of the future possibilities in literature and film.

RELS 3220 African Diaspora Religions

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

Students study the diverse religious traditions of the African diaspora in Africa, Europ, and the Americas. This may include: Islam and Christianity in Africa; contemporary Ifa and Yoruba spirituality; Caribbean religious traditions; Rastafarianism; Pan-Africanism and religion; religion under slavery; racism and religion; religion among African Nova Scotians.

RELS 3303 Birth of Christianity in the Ancient World ANCS 3303

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

Students study the formation and development of Christianity as seen through the letters of Paul. They examine the origin of Pauline Churches, their separation from Judaism, their struggles, beliefs, and worship.

RELS 3311 Jesus Of Nazareth

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

Jesus of Nazareth: Did Jesus really exist? What did he teach? Why was he killed? What does the resurrection mean? In examining these questions, the course will survey the many responses to Jesus’ question, “Who do men say that I am?”

RELS 3312 Theologies of Liberation

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

How has the life and teaching of Jesus made justice the central issue in Christianity today? What is liberation theology in the third world? Is capitalism opposed to the teaching of Jesus? What is Jesus’ teaching about the poor, the oppressed, human rights and violent revolution?

RELS 3316 Anthropology of Religion ANTH 3316

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

This course surveys major developments in the anthropological study of religions. The course will provide a solid theoretical foundation for the field study of contemporary religions.

RELS 3318 Ghosts: A Cultural Approach

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

Students explore beliefs in ghosts (the belief that human souls linger after death) in a cross-cultural context, examining a range of cultural products related to ghosts including movies, folktales, and ghost tourism from around the world. Students also explore anthropological theories regarding beliefs and practices related to ghosts.

RELS 3328 The Catholic Church Today

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

The Catholic Church has radically changed. What does it teach today about faith, revelation, God, Jesus Christ, Sacraments, ethics, and human destiny? Students will be introduced to a brief historical development on each of these teachings.

RELS 3330 Spirituality in the Workplace

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

Students consider changing attitudes toward spirituality and work with studies and examples of engagement, diversity, respectful pluralism, authentic leadership, mindfulness in the workplace, B-Corps, and attention to ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance issues). Individual and interactive learning exercises enable students to explore the challenges around spirituality in the workplace.

RELS 3337 South Asian Religions and the Arts

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

The arts have been an important mode of expression of religious ideas and ideals in historical and contemporary South Asia and the diaspora. Students examine visual arts, architecture, music and performance traditions that are associated with the religious traditions of the region.

RELS 3348 Ecological Crisis: Religious Perspectives

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

Students examine the religious ecologies from around the world and draw on voices from different communities and practitioners to explore their perspectives on contemporary environmental issues. Topics may include Indigenous ecological knowledge, ecofeminism, environmental racism and eco-justice, displacement, gender and power.

RELS 3349 Science and Religion

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

In this course we will explore the relationship between science and religion. In the past this relationship was defined mainly by difference, difference in method, understanding of knowledge and language. Because of contemporary crises such as poverty and oppression world-wide and ecological crisis, religion and science are finding new reasons to cooperate. Religious issues involved in this cooperation such as women's critique, new religious movements and environmental concerns will be examined in this course.

RELS 3351 Field Research Methods

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

Students are provided with the appropriate qualitative tools for conducting field-based research. Students develop a research project through various stages. Emphasis is placed on project planning, research ethics, participant observation, interviewing, note-taking, and writing.

RELS 3354 Indigenous Peoples, Religion, Spirituality and Social Justice

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

Students are introduced to religious, and spiritual traditions of Indigenous peoples in the Atlantic region and beyond. Students learn about connections between religion, spirituality, decolonization, and social justice for Indigenous people. Topics could include colonization, gender and sexuality, environment, education, land rights, policing, and the history of academic study of Indigenous cultures.

RELS 3356 Religions in Film

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

Feature films and documentaries about religions and religious issues have proliferated in recent years. Students examine a variety of topics which may include: how selected religious traditions such as Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam are presented in films; how films depict religious symbols and religious life, how religious and ethical issues are presented in the film narratives and documentary discussions.

RELS 3359 Buddhist Paths

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

The history of Buddhism has seen the development of multiple schools and sects that each practice Buddhism in a different way. Students explore this variety, looking at contemporary Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana practices in Asia and the West.

RELS 3360 Engaged Buddhism

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: RELS 2327 or 3359

Students examine the development of Engaged Buddhism in the modern period. Engaged Buddhism came about as a critique against the view that Buddhism was something practiced by monks, in monasteries, and focused on what happened after death. Engaged Buddhists have instead proposed that Buddhism should be involved with transforming this world, leading to social, political and environmental activism.

RELS 3373 Islam in South Asia

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

A third of the entire Muslim population of the world lives in South Asia. Students learn about the arrival of Islam in South Asia, its evolution and current manifestations in a sampling of its political, spiritual and social varieties.

RELS 3374 Islam in North America since 9/11

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 30 credit hours

This course is a multifaceted look at issues of gender, law, and identity in North American Islam since September 11th 2001. This event and a subsequent culture of securitization marks a fundamental shift in the way that Islam is represented, and we will explore how Muslims in North America construct their identities and practice their religion.

RELS 3800 - 3825 Special Topics in Religion

6 credit hours

Course content varies from year to year.

RELS 3826 - 3849 Special Topics in Religion

3 credit hours

Course content varies from year to year.

RELS 3876 - 3899 Directed Readings in Religion

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Declared major, concentration, or minor in Religious Studies
Directed Reading courses permit students to pursue independent research topics which are not part of the normal curriculum. Students must apply to department faculty to enroll in a directed reading course.

RELS 4000 Honours Thesis Research RELS

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Declared in the Honours degree program in Religious Studies

Under the supervision of faculty in religious studies, students will develop and honours thesis topic and complete the research for an honours thesis. Normally students will present their topic and research findings in a departmental seminar.

RELS 4001 Honours Thesis Writing RELS

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Declared in the Honours degree program in Religious Studies

Under the supervision of faculty in religious studies, students will write an honours thesis based on the topic and research completed in RELS 4000. Evaluation of the thesis will be by all faculty in religious studies.

RELS 4150 Religion and Globalization

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: 24 credit hours

Technology has allowed for unprecedented movements of people and information resulting in profound changes in the way religious traditions are practiced. Students explore some of the key themes in the study of globalization of religions, like diaspora and transnationalism, in order to understand how globalization has affected the way traditions are practiced how they are understood.

RELS 4151 Religion and Migration

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Declared Major or Honours in Religious Studies, Sociology, or Geography and completion of a minimum of 60 credit hours of university courses, or permission of instructor

The relationship between religion and migration occurs in three distinct stages: the aspiration to migrate, the capability to move, and integration into a new community. Through case studies from different religions (Indigenous, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism) and regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America), the course aims to show that migration is not solely an economic or political phenomenon but also embedded in religious cultures and resources.

RELS 4200 Postcolonialism and Religion

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Declared Major or Honours in Religious Studies and completion of a minimum of 60 credit hours of university courses or permission of the instructor

What is postcolonialism and how does it apply to the study of religion? When European and North American powers colonized a majority of the globe, they brought with them particular ways of defining legitimate religious behavior. Students explore ways in which these definitions continue to shape and challenge the ways we understand religion after colonialism.

RELS 4333 Religion Race & Gender

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Declared Major or Honours in Religious Studies and completion of a minimum of 60 credit hours of university courses or permission of the instructor

Students consider race, gender, religion and spirituality both as socially constructed, historically situated categories, and as intersecting, embodied human experiences. Students apply critical race and feminist theory to examine histories of colonialism, displacement, migration and resistance.

RELS 4387 Religious Pluralism

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Declared Major or Honours in Religious Studies and completion of a minimum of 60 credit hours of university courses, or permission of instructor

In Canada and in countries around the world, interpreters' religious pluralism frequently situates their analysis of religion within social theories about secularism, pluralism, globalization, multiculturalism and human rights. This course will examine those theories and their impact on the social location of religions and religious diversity in multicultural societies.

RELS 4389 Religion and Public Life

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Fourth year, honours, or graduate student in RELS or related field

A pressing question in Western democracies is the place of religion in public life. Students examine the historical presence of religion in public life and the ways in which its presence is manifest in the modern west and the questions/controversies that this presence elicits.

RELS 4390 Religion and Society in Atlantic Canada

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Declared Major or Honours in Religious Studies and completion of a minimum of 60 credit hours of university courses or permission of the instructor

An historical examination of the relationship between religion and society in Atlantic Canada from the beginning of European settlement to the present. Themes to be considered include religion and the formation of regional/ethnic identities, religion and politics, religion and movements of social reform, and the impact of secularization on Atlantic Canadian society. Topics will be examined in the broader context of Canadian history and the evolution of the trans-Atlantic world.

RELS 4481 Theories and Methods in the Study of Religions

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Declared Major or Honours in Religious Studies and completion of 42 credit hours of university courses.

The study of religious traditions includes detailed studies of specific religions, their historical development, and cultural expressions. It includes the study of sacred texts, philosophies, theologies, rituals, sacred images and spaces, and the broad cultural significance of the religious in relation to other aspects of culture. Such multi-cultural and cross-cultural studies began in the nineteenth century and have employed diverse methodologies and theories about how best to study religions. This course will examine the history of the study of religions and review selectively the contemporary debates about the various strategies for the study of religions.

RELS 4500 Religions & Orientalism

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: Declared Major or Honours in Religious Studies and completion of a minimum of 60 credit hours of university courses, or permission of instructor.

The course will explore Orientalist representations of religious traditions as an objective "other". Special focus will be given to the ways in which scholars in the humanities, religious writers, and the interpreters of sacred texts contribute to the formation of various forms of Orientalism.

RELS 4590 - 4595 Honours Seminars in Religion

6 credit hours

Prerequisite: fourth-year honours status and permission of Department
The three general areas in which the Department offers courses are noted below, together with the courses which fall into each area. Since this is only a partial list, please consult the undergraduate advisor for updates and further clarifications.

RELS 4800 - 4825 Special Topics in Religion

6 credit hours

These courses will investigate in depth a specific topic or set of topics in Religious Studies. The topic will vary from year to year.

RELS 4826 - 4849 Special Topics in Religion

3 credit hours

These courses will investigate in depth a specific topic or set of topics in Religious Studies. The topic will vary from year to year.

RELS 4850 – 4875 Directed Readings in Religion

6 credit hours

Prerequisite: permission of Department.

These courses are organized by individual faculty members in agreement with the Department as a whole; they are designed to supplement or provide an alternative to regular courses in Religious Studies according to the special needs and interests of students. Course content can be proposed by the student.

RELS 4876 – 4899 Directed Readings in Religion

3 credit hours

Prerequisite: permission of Department

These courses are organized by individual faculty members in agreement with the Department as a whole; they are designed to supplement or provide an alternative to regular courses in Religious Studies according to the special needs and interests of students. Course content can be proposed by the student.