

# Majoring in . . . .

## Religious Studies

### Description of Religious Studies

#### What is religious studies?

Religious studies is the study of the nature of religion and religious expression, and the diversity of religious life.

#### What do religious studies majors study?

Students explore the nature of religious experience, expression, institutions, and practices. Students explore the social, psychological, philosophical, anthropological, literary, ethical, and artistic aspects of religions. Students study religion in general and particular religions to understand what distinguishes and what unifies humanity's diverse religious traditions.

#### What abilities and skills are important for and developed through the study of religious life?

- Reading, writing, and oral communication.
- Curiosity about and an interest in understanding different religions and cultures (past and present);
- Imagination, critical thinking, compassion.
- Ethical thinking and global responsibility.

#### What else do religious studies majors study?

Religious studies is a liberal arts major with a variety of courses to develop knowledge and skills that can be applied in both personal and professional settings.

Liberal arts courses provide a background to strengthen critical thinking; problem solving; written, oral, and interpersonal communication; quantitative, analytical, and reasoning skills. These skills are also very important for success in the workplace.

### **Course Requirements**

**General education:** About 50 credit hours of general education courses are required. These courses provide knowledge in science, math, writing, civilization, the arts, ethics, literature, behavior and urban environment.

**Major courses:** 30 credit hours of religious studies courses, including such courses as:

- Asian Religions and Asian Medicines
- Biblical Hebrew
- Black Religion
- Contemporary Catholic thought
- Existentialism
- Faith and Life Science
- Global Women's Spirituality
- Hebrew Prophets
- History of Christianity
- Indian Traditions
- Introduction to the Old & New Testament
- Islam
- Islam and Women
- Modern Jewish Thought
- Mysticism
- Religions of the World
- Taoism
- The Bible as Literature
- Tibetan Buddhism

**Electives:** About 40 credit hours are required.

Religious studies majors are encouraged to complete a minor and/or second major. Students may earn a minor or second major in Anthropology, Biology, Catholic Studies, English, French, Geography, German, History, Islamic Studies, Italian, Judaic Studies, Mass Communications, Mediterranean Studies, Native American Studies, Spanish, , or Social Justice Studies.

### **Careers in Religious Studies**

Religious studies majors may find employment opportunities in the following areas:

- Advertising
- Art Gallery Director
- Attorney
- Bookstore Manager
- Camp Director
- College Professor
- Editor
- Film Critic/Producer
- Human Resources Manager
- Intelligence Analyst
- International Aid
- International Relations
- Journalist
- Librarian
- Museum curator
- Non-profit organization
- Personnel interviewer
- Public Relations
- Public School Teacher
- Religious Representative
- Small business owner
- Theologian
- Travel Consultant
- Writer
- Youth program coordinator

Religious studies majors must also complete an experiential learning requirement through an approved internship, service-learning course, independent study, or study-abroad program. These experiences enrich student qualifications to find work in a range of fields.

### Next Steps

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a religious studies major at VCU, consider doing each of the following things. Check them off as you complete each step.

- Check out the VCU School of World Studies webpage.
- Take a religious studies course.
- Read about the religious studies major in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.
- Review the religious studies major graduation worksheet with an academic advisor.
- Talk to one or more upper-level religious studies students about their major.
- Discuss the major with one or more religious studies professors.
- Go to the Career Center to read about careers in religious studies.
- Go to the VCU bookstore and browse in the religious studies textbook section.

- Explore internship possibilities through the Career Center and the School of World Studies.
- Visit with the director of study-abroad program to discuss options available.
- Read specific information about careers in the Occupational Outlook Handbook located at [www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco).

# Virginia Commonwealth University

## College of Humanities & Sciences

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[http://www.has.vcu.edu/wld/academics/majors/  
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