At the beginning of the twenty-first century, religion plays a central role in virtually every aspect of human society around the globe. The Religion department’s curriculum offers students the opportunity to explore the histories, texts, and practices of many of the world’s religious communities and to consider both the profound ways in which religion has worked historically and how it continues to inform and affect the cultural, political, and ethical debates of the current moment. In addition, our curriculum invites students to reflect on the challenging theoretical questions that are generated by the category “religion” itself, an abstract category that has its own complicated history. The academic study of religion is self-consciously interdisciplinary, drawing upon the methods and insights of literary studies, historiography, social analysis, and cultural comparison. Moreover, the study of religion reminds us that religious identities demand sustained critical analysis, intersecting complexly as they do with race, class, gender, and ethnicity, among other categories of affiliation and identification. In its teaching, research projects, and public programming, the Religion department promotes engaged intellectual inquiry into the rich diversity of religious institutions, rituals, ideas, and communities both past and present.

The Departments of Religion at Barnard and Columbia marshal an array of academic approaches to the study of religion, representing the depth and diversity of the world’s religious traditions, past and present. The category of religion—along with key related terms like belief, spirituality, mystical experience, and ritual—is historically and culturally contingent; many of our courses interrogate these terms and the conditions of their construction. Yet we are committed to engaging “religion,” which persists so strongly in common usage and public debate, and is so hard to capture in any related domain or theoretical system.

Morningside Heights provides unique resources for the study of religion. The University’s specialized programs and centers, especially its regional institutes, create a context for exploring in depth the linguistic, literary, political, and cultural milieus that bear on particular religious traditions. The new Center for the Study of Science and Religion enriches curricular offerings in that field. Barnard’s Center for Research on Women often focuses on issues of ethics and policy where questions of religion and gender are paramount, and Barnard Religion faculty are particularly active in the area. Barnard and Columbia offer intensive language training in the languages of the major religious traditions of the world: Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Hebrew, Japanese, Latin, Persian, Sanskrit and other Indic languages, and Tibetan, among others. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Union Theological Seminary, with their world-renowned libraries, are our neighbors. And the city as a whole provides one of the world’s best laboratories for the study of religion.

Our program tries to help students discover these resources and use them well. Many courses fulfill the College’s general education requirements.

Mission

Goals for the Academic Study of Religion at Barnard
The faculty in Religion at Barnard have organized the curriculum around several interlocking goals:

- To help students learn to engage critically with different religious traditions in their historical and cultural settings;
- To attune students to the different theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary approaches required for critically interrogating different religious archives, performances, communal formations, artifacts, and ideas;
- To provide students with the critical tools for understanding the influence of religion on individuals and society;
- To open up the category of “religion” to critical investigation, both to consider its history and to understand how it comes to be applied to a variety of human and social phenomena.

Student Learning Outcomes

What Students Learn when Pursuing the Academic Study of Religion at Barnard
Students who are successful in our curriculum will learn to:

- Read/view/engage primary sources and scholarly materials critically and with subtlety;
- Situate religious texts, performances, artifacts, and ideas in historical, social, political, and cultural contexts;
- Understand the importance of perspective when analyzing religious ideas, claims, and sources;
- Express themselves fluently in writing and speaking about the materials under investigation.

In addition, they will:

- Develop an acquaintanceship with the history of theoretical debates about “religion”—how the intellectual history of the field has shaped the object of knowledge for the field—and
- Become familiar with a range of methodological approaches appropriate to the object of study (e.g., literary interpretation and analysis; historical contextualization; ethnographic participant observation; philosophical inquiry; analysis of visual, artistic, archaeological, architectural evidence).

Chair: Beth Berkowitz (Professor)
Professors: Elizabeth Castelli, Najam Haider, John Stratton Hawley
Assistant Professors: Tiffany Hale, Gale Kenny

Other officers of the University offering courses listed below:

Professors: Gil Anidjar, Peter Awn, Courtney Bender, Euan Cameron, Matthew Engelke, Katherine Ewing, Bernard Faure, Rachel McDermott, David (Max) Moerman, Wayne Proudfoot, Robert Somerville, Mark C. Taylor, Robert Thurman
Associate Professors: Michael Como, Josef Sorett, Yannik Thiem
Assistant Professors: Clémence Boulouque, Zhaohua Yang

Requirements for the Major

The department’s strengths in comparative study, textual and social analysis, philosophy, theory, and cultural history allow students to balance close study in one area with a broad investigation of the field we name “religion.” Working closely with an advisor in the department, majors construct a cluster of five courses that relate to one another in a coherent fashion (#1, below) and support the senior thesis. To complement this depth, they select three courses that lend breadth to their studies in religion (#2). Students considering Religion as a major should contact the chair or a member of the department in their sophomore year to begin planning their programs.
The Religion major requires twelve courses, as follows:

1) Major cluster: **five courses**, including one seminar. As many as two of these courses may come from other departments, and individually supervised research (UN 3901-2: Guided Readings) may also be included. This cluster of courses may be organized around a particular tradition or geographic area: Hinduism, Islam, Religion in America, etc. Alternatively, students may design clusters that focus on a set of related subjects and concerns, such as: Religion in New York; Religion in theory and practice; Religion and culture; Religious texts and histories; Religion and migration; Religion, women, gender, and Religion, race, nation, ethnicity.

Yet these are only exemplary. Students are urged to design their own clusters, supplementing departmental listings with religion-related courses posted on the Barnard Religion Department’s website as Religion Related Courses (http://religion.barnard.edu/sites/default/files/inline/religionrelatedcourses.pdf). Courses taken outside of the religion department must be approved by the student’s adviser or department chair. Several sample majors (http://religion.barnard.edu/majors-minors/#sample) are posted on the Barnard Religion Department’s website.

2) Breadth: **three Religion courses** - either lecture or seminar - that lend geographical, historical, and/or disciplinary range to a student’s program.

3) One semester of the course entitled “Religion Lab” (Religion GU4905), which focuses on methods, strategies, and materials utilized in the field of religious studies. Through guided exercises and selected exemplary readings, students learn research skills for locating and identifying primary and secondary sources. They are also exposed to important scholarly frameworks necessary for properly analyzing these sources. Majors are encouraged to take this course by their junior year as it serves to prepare them for their senior thesis.

4) One semester of the course entitled “Theory” (UN3799), engaging major theoretical issues in the field.

5) The two-semester Senior Research Seminar (BC 3997-8), which must be taken in sequence, beginning in autumn and continuing through the spring, and which structures the experience of preparing a senior thesis. Students work together in this seminar to develop, critique, and accomplish their research projects, submitting a formal proposal and partial draft in the fall, and completing the research and writing in the spring.

Language Courses: Students may fulfill up to two of their required twelve courses through language study pending department approval. If a language is considered vital or important to a student’s major concentration, she may petition for credit with 1 year (two semesters) of courses counting as one course towards the religion major.

To summarize:

- 5 courses – Concentration
- 3 courses – Breadth
- 1 course – Religion Lab
- 1 course – Theory
- 2 courses – Senior Seminar

The department encourages study abroad, particularly in summers or in one semester of the junior year, and is eager to help facilitate internships and funded research. These possibilities often contribute very meaningfully to the senior essay project.

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**Minors and Combined Majors**

A Religion minor comprises five Religion courses at any level, one of which must be RELI GU4105 Religion Lab. In addition, students are encouraged to include among the remaining four courses at least one seminar. Students intending to minor in Religion should contact the department chair.

Combined majors are offered with the programs in Human Rights and in Jewish Studies.

**RELI BC3997 Senior Research Seminar. 4 points.**

Working research seminar devoted to helping students produce a substantive piece of writing that will represent the culmination of their work at the College and in the major.

**RELI BC3998 Senior Research Seminar. 8 points.**

One year course - 4 points per term.

Working research seminar devoted to helping students produce a substantive piece of writing that will represent the culmination of their work at the College and in the major.

**RELI UN1610 Religion and Popular Culture. 3 points.**

When we hear “pop culture,” we often think of it in comparison to a “high culture.” In reality, popular culture is something that everyone has easy access to, and represents a common language of the people. Religion permeates American popular culture in surprising ways, and is part of national vocabulary. In addition, religious communities turn to popular culture as a way to preserve their own identities and uniqueness in the face of homogenization and assimilation.

**RELI UN1615 Vampires. 3 points.**

Do you believe in vampires? Like ghosts and zombies, vampires circulate in a secularized world and few are those who would speak of a “vampire religion.” This course will attempt to do that. It will ask about the ubiquitous figure of the vampire, insofar as it evokes the ancient and the archaic, the modern and the postmodern. With Bram Stoker’s Dracula as our guide, and with the help of film, we will explore the religious significance of vampires and what they mean for the salvation — or perdition — of the soul. We will wonder about vampires and sexuality, vampires and media, vampires and (geo-)politics, and even vampires and the economy.
REL 1620 Religion and the Movies. 3 points.
This class is an introduction to both film and religious studies and aims to explore their interaction. Ranging from auteurs to blockbusters, the course will analyze movies that make use of the sacred and of religious themes, figures or metaphors. The course will probe the definitions and boundaries of religion -as theology, myth, ideology- and will show students how religion remains a critical presence in the arts, even in a secular guise. We will look at the ways in which popular culture can serve religious functions in contemporary society and examine how faith is represented in popular culture.

REL 2205 Buddhism: Indo-Tibetan. 4 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
Historical introduction to Buddhist thought, scriptures, practices, and institutions. Attention given to Theravada, Mahayana, and Tantric Buddhism in India, as well as selected non-Indian forms.

REL 2304 Christianity. 3 points.
Survey of Christianity from its beginnings through the Reformation. Based on lectures and discussions of readings in primary source translations, this course will cover prominent developments in the history of Christianity. The structure will allow students to rethink commonly held notions about the evolution of modern Christianity with the texture of historical influence.

REL 2305 Islam. 4 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
An introduction to the Islamic religion in its premodern and modern manifestations. The first half of the course concentrates on “classical” Islam, beginning with the life of the Prophet, and extending to ritual, jurisprudence, theology, and mysticism. The second half examines how Muslims have articulated Islam in light of colonization and the rise of a secular modernity. The course ends with a discussion of American and European Muslim attempts at carving out distinct spheres of identity in the larger global Muslim community.

REL 2306 Intro to Judaism. 3 points.
A historical overview of Jewish belief and practice as these have crystallized and changed over the centuries. Special attention to ritual and worship, the forms of religious literature, central concepts, religious leadership and institutions, Israel among the nations.

REL 2307 Chinese Religious Traditions. 3 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
Historical survey highlighting major developments in Chinese religion: includes selections from the "Warring States" classics, developments in popular Daoism, and an overview of the golden age of Chinese Buddhism. Touches on "Neo-Confucianism," popular literature of the late imperial period, and the impact of Western ideas.

REL 2308 Buddhism: East Asian. 4 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
Lecture and discussion. An introductory survey that studies East Asian Buddhism as an integral, living religious tradition. Emphasis on the reading of original treatises and historiographies in translation, while historical events are discussed in terms of their relevance to contemporary problems confronted by Buddhism. There is a mandatory weekly discussion session.

REL 2309 Hinduism. 3 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
Considers efforts since 1900 to synthesize a coherent understanding of what “Hinduism” entails, sometimes under the heading of sanatana dharma. Using a rubric provided by the Bhagavad Gita, explores philosophical/theological (jnana), ritual (karma), and devotional (bhakti) aspects of Hindu life and thought.

REL 3199 Theory. 3 points.
An exploration of alternative theoretical approaches to the study of religion as well as other areas of humanistic inquiry. The methods considered include: sociology, anthropology, philosophy, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, structuralism, genealogy, and deconstruction. (Previous title: Juniors Colloquium)
REL I3202 Religion in America I. 3 points.
This course offers a survey of American religions from the 1500s through the mid-1800s. We examine the politics of conversion in different kinds of colonialisms; the different strands of Christianity in early America and their cultural contexts; the emergence of evangelical Protestantism; the effects of religious disestablishment in the early republic; and the relationship between religion and social movements.

REL I3203 Religion in America II. 3 points.
Survey of American religion from the Civil War to the present, with an emphasis on the ways religion has shaped American history, culture, and identity.

REL I3260 Sociology of Religion. 3 points.
Prerequisites: prior coursework in religion or sociology is highly encouraged.
This course introduces classical and contemporary theoretical and empirical approaches to the sociological study of religion, including secularization and secularity, religious identity formation, and sociological approaches to religious practice and meaning. Special focus will be on contemporary American topics, including religion and transnationalism, the role of religious actors and discourses in American politics, law and economics, and everyday religious practice.

REL I3303 Judaism and Translation in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean. 3 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
The course explores both the practice of translation (the rendering of texts from one language to another) and the idea of translation (as a medium of cultural transmission) in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean.

REL I3340 Early Christianity. 3 points.
Examines the competing currents within early Christianity, with emphasis placed on the literary and social expressions of Christian belief and identity. Topics to be covered include persecution and martyrdom, debates over authority and religious experience, orthodoxy and heresy, and asceticism and monasticism, among others.

REL I3357 I and We in the Christian East: The Making of Identity. 3 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
This course will provide a survey of Christian history in the eastern Mediterranean and Near East from roughly the fourth to the eleventh centuries with particular attention to religion and identity. How would the various Christians in this era answer the questions: “Who am I?” “Who are we?” How did their understanding of the divine influence their understanding of themselves and how was this identity enacted through writing and ritual? Though our focus will be on this period, we will also consider the framing of the history of “Eastern” Christianity into the modern period. No prerequisites.

REL I3407 Muslims in Diaspora. 4 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
Consideration of controversies surrounding mosque-building, headscarves, honor killing, and other publicized issues that expose tensions surrounding citizenship and belonging for Muslims in North America and Europe. Exploration of film and other media representations of Muslims in the West. There will be additional meeting times for film screenings.

REL I3425 Judaism and Courtly Literature in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia and Italy. 3 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
The course explores secular Jewish literature composed in the medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean in the context of its Arabic and Romance-language counterparts. After examining the literary, linguistic and philosophical backdrop of Jews in the Islamic Empire, we will focus on poetry and prose of al-Andalus, Christian Spain and Italy. We will look at examples of how Jews depicted themselves and how Christian and converso thinkers portrayed Jews. In addition, we will consider two crossover writers, one Jew in Spain and one in Italy, whose compositions in Castilian and Italian were accepted and integrated into Christian society. Historical materials will accompany textual examples, which span the eleventh through sixteenth centuries.

REL I3430 Indigenous Religious Histories. 4 points.
Nomads, natives, peasants, hill people, aboriginals, hunter-gatherers, First Nations—these are just a handful of the terms in use to define indigenous peoples globally. The names these groups use to describe themselves, as well as the varying religious practices, attitudes, and beliefs among these populations are far more numerous and complex. For much of recorded history however, colonial centers of power have defined indigenous peoples racially and often in terms of lackng religion; as pagan, barbarian, non-modern, and without history or civilization.

Despite this conundrum of identity and classification, indigenous religious traditions often have well-documented and observable pasts. This course considers the challenges associated with studying indigenous religious history, as well as the changing social, political, and legal dimensions of religious practice among native groups over time and in relationship to the state. Organized thematically and geographically, we will engage with classic works of ethnohistory, environmental history, indigenous studies, the history of anthropology, and religious studies as well as primary sources that include legal documentation, military records, personal testimony, and oral narrative.

REL I3511 Tantra in South Asia, East Asia & the West. 3 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
An introduction to the history, literature, and ideology of Tantra and Tantric texts, deities, rituals, and traditions, proceeding chronologically from the early centuries CE to current forms of Tantric practice, and primarily covering India, China, and Japan. Attention will also be given to contemporary iterations of Tantra in the West. Questions of definition, transmission, patronage, gender, and appropriation link the various sections of the course. Readings include primary texts, secondary sources, local case studies, and art historical material.
RELI UN3901 Guided Reading and Research. 1-4 points.
Prerequisites: the instructor’s permission.

RELI UN3902 Guided Reading and Research. 1-3 points.
Prerequisites: the instructor’s permission.

RELI GU4105 Religion Lab. 4 points.
Discussion Section Required

RELI GU4212 Modern Buddhism. 4 points.

What most Americans and Europeans call ‘Buddhism’ today is in fact a hybrid tradition dating back to the 19th century. It owes much to European philosophy and esoteric thought as to Asian traditions themselves and appeared in the context of decolonization. This course will survey the history of this recent tradition, identifying cultural and political trends that contributed to its creation in various geographical areas. Readings include several primary texts by important proponents of Modern Buddhism. The texts should also be read in comparison with the appropriate scholarly works on the Asian traditions they supposedly draw on. One course on Buddhism or East Asian Religions is recommended, but not required, as background.
RELI GU4305 Secular and Spiritual America. 4 points.
Prerequisites: Majors and concentrators receive first priority.
Are Americans becoming more secular or more spiritual (not religious), or both? What are the connections between secularism and what is typically called non-organized religion or the spiritual in the United States? We will address these questions by looking at some of the historical trajectories that shape contemporary debates and designations (differences) between spiritual, secular and religious.

RELI GU4307 Interactions of Buddhism and Daoism in China. 4 points.
Prerequisites: one course on Buddhism or Chinese religious traditions is recommended, but not required, as background.
In this course we will read English scholarship that probes the complex relationships between Buddhism and Daoism in the past two millennia. Students are required not only to be aware of the complementarity and tensions between them, but to be alert to the nature of claims to religious distinction or mixing and the ways those claims were put forward under specific religio-historical circumstances. The course is designed for advanced undergraduate and graduate students in East Asian religion, literature, history, art history and anthropology.

RELI GU4308 Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah. 4 points.
The purpose of this seminar is to study the interactions between two major intellectual trends in Jewish History, the philosophical and the mystical ones. From the medieval period to the twenty-first century, we will discuss their interactions, polemics and influences. We will compare Philosophy and Kabbalah in light of their understanding of divine representation and in light of their respective Theology and conception of God.

RELI GU4315 Sufis and the Qur'an. 4 points.
This course is a seminar for advanced undergraduates and graduate students who wish to gain an understanding of the complexity and richness of the Sufi exegetical tradition. the Qur'an has been the main source of inspiration and contemplation for Sufis for centuries....

RELI GU4318 Interpreting Buddhist Yoga: Hermeneutics East West Quantum. 4 points.
A seminar exploring the meanings of Buddhist Tantra and being, time, space, gender, technology, and mysticism through traditional religious, modern, post-modern, digital, quantum, and Buddhist “hermeneutics,” the science and art of interpretation. We will read ancient and modern classics on hermeneutics, by Schleiermacher, Gadamer, Heidegger, Barthes, and Ricouer; Indian and Tibetan works on their systems of interpretation, at least as sophisticated as anything from Europe; and contemporary works on how digital technology brings us into a world of new meaning for everything, including Buddhist yoga.

RELI GU4325 Sufism. 4 points.
Prerequisites: Permission of instructor.
This is a seminar for advanced undergraduate and graduate students who wish to gain an understanding of the richness of Sufism (Islamic mysticism). We will examine the historical origins, development and institutionalization of Sufism, including long-standing debates over its place within the wider Islamic tradition. By way of a close reading of a wide range of primary and secondary sources, we will examine Sufi attitudes toward the body. Sufi understandings of lineage, power and religious authority, as well as the continued importance of Sufism in the modern world.
RELI GU4365 Revolutionary Women and Political Islam. 4 points.
Muslim female reformers and revolutionaries were at the forefront of many of the 20th and early 21st centuries’ historic socio-political and religious movements across the Global South. Members of diverse classes, families, and ethnic communities, many worked within the tenets of Islam in multiple ways to construct religious identity and work towards achieving and demanding civil and political rights. Yet the myriad theoretical and popular discourses underpinning emergent and longstanding women’s movements within revolutionary contexts are frequently overlooked. Moreover, representations of Muslim women too often rely on essentialist, ahistorical, static, victim-centered, and Orientalist descriptions and analyses. As a result, shades of difference in interpretation, ideology, practice, and culture are minimized. This course situates Muslim women as complex, multidimensional actors engaged in knowledge production and political and feminist struggles.

RELI GU4509 Crime and Punishment in Jewish Culture. 4 points.
Explores ethical, cultural, and political dimensions of Jewish criminal punishment from the Bible through modernity, with focus on death penalty and running reference to Foucault’s Discipline and Punish. Topics include: interaction between law and narrative; Jewish power to punish; Sanhedrin trial of Jesus; ritualization of execution; prison; torture; martyrdom.

RELI GU4513 Buddhism and Neuroscience. 4 points.
With the Dalai Lama’s marked interest in recent advances in neuroscience, the question of the compatibility between Buddhist psychology and neuroscience has been raised in a number of conferences and studies. This course will examine the state of the question, look at claims made on both sides, and discuss whether or not there is a convergence between Buddhist discourse about the mind and scientific discourse about the brain.

RELI GU4535 Buddhist Contemplative Sciences. 4 points.
This course will explore key Buddhist contemplative sciences, including: stabilizing meditation; analytic insight meditation; the four immeasurables; form and formless trances; mind training; and the subtle body-mind states activated and transformed through advanced Tantric yoga techniques. These will be explored both within their traditional interdisciplinary frameworks, as well as in dialog with related contemporary arts and sciences.

RELI GU4615 Media and Religion. 4 points.
Typewriters, trains, electricity, telephones, telegraph, stock tickers, plate glass, shop windows, radio, television, computers, Internet, World Wide Web, cell phones, tablets, search engines, big data, social networks, GPS, virtual reality, Google Glass. The technologies turn back on their creators to transform them into their own image. This course will consider the relationship between mechanical, electronic, and digital technologies and different forms of twentieth-century capitalism. The regimes of industrial, consumer, and financial shape the conditions of cultural production and reproduction in different ways. The exploration of different theoretical perspectives will provide alternative interpretations of the interplay of media, technology, and religion that make it possible to chart the trajectory from modernity to postmodernity and beyond.

RELI GU4616 Technology, Religion, Future. 4 points.
This seminar will examine the history of the impact of technology and media on religion and vice versa before bringing into focus the main event: religion today and in the future. We’ll read the classics as well as review current writing, video and other media, bringing thinkers such as Eliade, McLuhan, Mumford and Weber into dialogue with the current writing of Kurzweil, Lanier and Taylor, and look at, among other things: ethics in a Virtual World; the relationship between Burning Man, a potential new religion, and technology; the relevance of God and The Rapture in Kurzweil’s Singularity; and what will become of karma when carbon-based persons merge with silicon-based entities and other advanced technologies.

RELI GU4637 Talmudic Narrative. 4 points.
This course examines the rich world of Talmudic narrative and the way it mediates between conflicting perspectives on a range of topics: life and death; love and sexuality; beauty and superficiality; politics and legal theory; religion and society; community and non-conformity; decision-making and the nature of certainty. While we examine each text closely, we will consider different scholars’ answers – and our own answers – to the questions, how are we to view Talmudic narrative generally, both as literature and as cultural artifact?