Religion, Study of

OFFICE: Literature Building, third floor, room 3323
(858) 534-8849
Email: religion@ucsd.edu
Program Web site: http://religion.ucsd.edu/
Program Director: Arthur J. Droge

Faculty

Nancy Caciola, Assistant Professor, History
Suzanne Cahill, Associate Adjunct Professor, History
Alain J.-J. Cohen, Professor, Literature
Richard S. Cohen, Assistant Professor Literature
Stephen Cox, Professor, Literature
Arthur J. Droge, Professor, Literature
Page A. duBois, Professor, Literature
David Noel Freedman, Professor, History
Richard E. Friedman, Professor, Literature
David Goodblatt, Professor, History
Jack Greenstein, Associate Professor, Visual Arts
Ramón Gutierrez, Chancellor’s Associates
Endowed Chair and Professor, Ethnic Studies
Alan Houston, Associate Professor, Political Science
David K. Jordan, Professor, Anthropology
Benetta W. Jules-Rosette, Professor, Sociology
Hasan Kayali, Associate Professor, History
Sanford A. Lakoff, Professor Emeritus, Political Science
Edward N. Lee, Professor Emeritus, Philosophy
Richard P. Madsen, Professor, Sociology
John A. Marino, Associate Professor, History
Timothy McDaniel, Professor, Sociology
Michael E. Meeker, Professor, Anthropology
Alden A. Mosshammer, Professor, History
Sheldon A. Nodelman, Professor, Visual Arts
Steven M. Parish, Associate Professor, Anthropology
William H. Propp, Professor, History
Fred V. Randel, Associate Professor, Literature
Edward Reynolds, Professor, History
Joel Robbins, Assistant Professor, Anthropology
Gershon Shafir, Professor, Sociology
Gary Shiffman, Assistant Professor, Political Science
Melford E. Spiro, Professor Emeritus, Anthropology
Tracy B. Strong, Professor, Political Science
Christena Turner, Associate Professor, Sociology
Donald F. Tuzin, Professor, Anthropology

Program Description

The program engages in the academic study of religious phenomena; and it studies literature, history, and society in relation to religion. Faculty and students associated with the program give primacy to humanistic and social scientific methods of study that have become established in the academic community during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The location of the program in the Arts and Humanities Division and its use of courses from a variety of departments and divisions imply that neither the study of religion nor its data are the privileged possession of a single discipline. The hallmark of the program is its interdisciplinary and interdepartmental structure. At UCSD, faculty from the departments of Anthropology, History, Literature, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, and Visual Arts provide students with the opportunity to examine religious artifacts, texts, institutions, and communities within a particular cultural and historical context and in the context of comparable manifestations within the general history of religions.

A concentration in the Study of Religion aims at fostering a student’s understanding of religion as one of the primary expressions of the human condition and as an historically powerful force in the shaping of human cultures. It also seeks to develop a student’s appreciation of the difficulties and possibilities inherent in undertaking a critical, disciplined study of religion. The goal is not to fashion “experts” in religion, but rather to use the study of religion in order to develop critical thinking and a more adequate understanding of history and society.

Since the program endorses an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to the study of religion, lower-division preparation should be wide and varied. Lower-division courses in which religion figures prominently (e.g., Introduction to Religion, The Making of the Modern World, or the Revelle College Humanities Program), as well as courses which focus on textual and contextual analysis and employ the analytical tools and conceptual categories of the human sciences, would all be useful in preparing the student for a major in the Study of Religion. The program strongly encourages foreign language study. The ability to read the languages of original sources and of modern scholarship is highly recommended, especially for students planning to attend graduate school in religion.

Major

The major in the Study of Religion consists of twelve upper-division courses, which should include the following:

• two required courses in the Study of Religion (RELI 110A or 110B; RELI 112 or 113),
• ten courses from the approved course list to be selected in consultation with the program director. Students should see the program adviser for further details.

Double Major

Students may choose to pursue the Study of Religion as their second major. In such cases, it may be possible for up to two courses to overlap with the other major. Students should consult the program coordinator for further information.

Honors in the Study of Religion

The program for the Study of Religion offers an Honors Program for students who demonstrate excellence in the major. Eligibility for the Honors Program requires:

• completion of RELI 110A or 110B
• at least junior standing
• 3.5 GPA in the major and a 3.3 overall GPA
• eight units of RELI 196H taken over two quarters (typically winter and spring)
• research paper (at least 20 pages)
• public presentation

Students interested in the Honors Program should consult with the program coordinator for a detailed list of requirements and an application. Participation in the Honors Program is contingent upon the prior approval of the Honors Thesis research topic by the director. Honors proposals are due at the Program Office by the tenth week of the quarter prior to being enrolled. Final approval must take place before the first day of the quarter in which the student plans to enroll in RELI 196H. The notations “distinction,” “high distinction,” and “highest distinction” will be determined on the following basis; major G.P.A., the grade for the research paper, and the grade for the public presentation.
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Minor

The minor in the Study of Religion consists of seven courses, of which five must be upper-division. These seven courses must include two required courses in the Study of Religion as delineated under the major (RELI 110A or 110B; RELI 112 or 113). Some students may apply two lower-division college requirements to the minor (e.g., Revelle students may apply HUM 1 and HUM 2, and ERC students may apply MMW 2 and MMW 3).

STUDENT ADVISING

All students are assigned a faculty adviser and are encouraged to meet with their adviser at least once a quarter to develop their course of study. Additional advising information may be obtained from the program coordinator, Literature Building, third floor, room 3323.

STUDY ABROAD

Students are encouraged to investigate the University of California Education Abroad Program (EAP) and other options for foreign study through the Opportunities Abroad Program (OAP). By petition, credits earned through EAP/OAP can fulfill major and minor requirements. More information about studying abroad can be obtained in the Education Abroad section of the catalog.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND PREPARATION FOR GRADUATE STUDY

A major in the Study of Religion is designed to develop fundamental skills in critical thinking, comparative analysis, research, and written expression. As such, the B.A. degree is appropriate for careers in education, government, business, and non-profit agencies, it is also an excellent preparation for graduate study in a variety of fields and disciplines.

Students interested in earning a California teaching credential from UCSD should contact the Teacher Education Program for further information.

Students are encouraged to consult the program director for further information about career opportunities and graduate study.

COURSES

RELI 1. Introduction to Religion (4)
An introduction to key topics in the study of religion through a comparative reading of religious texts and/or artifacts. The intent is to develop basic strategies of interpretation for undertaking a critical, disciplined study of religion.

RELI 110A. The Modern Study of Religion: Religion in Modernity (4)
This class examines the history of the term “religion,” focusing upon the development of religion’s contemporary significance within the Reformation and Enlightenment, and questioning what it means to be “modern.” Topics change yearly. Special attention to contemporary culture and politics.

RELI 110B. The Modern Study of Religion: Social and Cultural Theories of Religion (4)
An introduction to basic strategies of interpretation in the study of religion, including issues of category formation, theory, and method. Special attention paid to prominent voices of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including Marx, Freud, Durkheim, Eliade, etc.

RELI 112. Texts and Contexts: The Holy Book in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (4)
An introduction to the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with an aim of providing a comparative perspective on the “bibles” of Western civilization.

RELI 113. Texts and Contexts: Textual Communities in South Asia (4)
This class considers important texts belonging to one or more of the following South Asian Traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, or Sikhism. It introduces students to the ways in which religious identities are formed and contested within a pluralistic society.

RELI 196H. Honors Thesis Research (4)
Honors thesis research for students accepted into the Honors Program. Research is conducted under the supervision of a program faculty member.

RELI 199. Independent Study for Undergraduates
Conduct independent advanced reading or research in religion under the supervision of a faculty member who is affiliated with the Program for the Study of Religion. (P/NP grades only.) Prerequisites: upper-division standing, consent of instructor, and permission of the program director.

APPROVED ELECTIVE COURSES

The following lower- and upper-division courses are offered on a regular basis, although not every course is available every year. Please contact the program coordinator for approved courses in any given quarter or visit the program’s website, religion.ucsd.edu. Students may petition other courses, including independent study and Education Abroad Program courses when appropriate.

LOWER-DIVISION

ANLD 1. Introduction to Culture
HUM 1. The Foundations of Western Civilization: Israel and Greece
HUM 2. Rome, Christianity, and the Middle Ages
MMW 2. The Great Classical Traditions
MMW 3. The Medieval Heritage
PHIL 14. Introduction to Philosophy: Metaphysics
PHIL 31. History of Philosophy: Ancient Philosophy
RELI 1. Introduction to Religion
SOC 1A, B. The Study of Society

UPPER-DIVISION

METHODOLOGICAL
ANRG 108. Hinduism
ANRG 150. The Rise and Fall of Ancient Israel
ANRG 173. Chinese Popular Religion
HIEU 168. Topics in Classical and Medieval Chinese History
HIEU 105. The Early Christian Church
HIEU 113. Rule, Conflict, and Dissent in the Middle Ages
HIEU 161. Topics in Roman History: Christianity in the Roman Empire
HINE 100. The Ancient Near East and Israel
HINE 102. The Jews in Their Homeland in Antiquity
HINE 103. The Jewish Diaspora in Antiquity
HINE 104. The Bible and the Near East: The Primary History
HINE 105. The Bible and the Near East: The Prophets

GENERAL COMPARATIVE
ANRG 113. Theories of Modern Subjectivity
ANRG 120. Anthropology of Religion
ANRG 147. Ritual and Symbolism
ANRG 167. Rituals and Celebrations
SOC 100. Classical Sociological Theory
SOC 156. Sociology of Religion

RELIGION IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT
ANLD 104. Anthropology of Fantasy
ANRG 135. Bodies and Boundaries: Symbols in Ritual and Everyday Life
HISC 162. History of Science and Religion
LTWL 100. Mythology
LTWL 133. Religion, Inside Out and Upside Down
VIS 126F. Western and Non-Western Rituals and Ceremonies