

# Department of Religious Studies

The Department of Religious Studies offers Honours, Majors and Minors with a critical approach to studying religious traditions in their multiple contexts—historical, cultural, political, artistic or literary, for example, both local and global.





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New religious movements often challenge the values and vision of mainstream religious traditions. This course is a collaborative inquiry into the historical and cultural contexts, self-understanding and practices of such new religious movements as the Church of Scientology, the Branch Davidians, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Euro-Indians, and the Vineyard Renewal.



**-2513.**

An examination of the theoretical base and the significance of Christian ethics with an analysis of some of its central aspects such as the foundational role of love, critical thought and engagement, conscience and responsibility, and understanding contemporary dilemmas.

**-2553.**

This course provides a basic introduction to Islamic societies in their formative centuries.

We will explore how the Muslim umma first emerged, developed and ultimately established itself as a unifying yet far from monolithic ideal, linking different peoples across the globe.

Our focus will be on comprehension of historical experiences and relations between peoples rather than on detailed analysis of religious beliefs.

**-2613.**

An introduction to the basic precepts, methods, and resources of theology. An examination of challenges to theology will provide an understanding of the present state of theological concerns.

**-3073.**

This course will introduce students to the basic beliefs and practices of global Islam, becdsga2.8-5 ID 241

**-3453.**

An inquiry into the religious traditions of India, including Hinduism in its many varieties, early Buddhism, and Jainism.

**-3473.**

An inquiry into the issues in the study of Native American religions, and the results of that study. The focus will be on some of the diverse religions of First Nations people in what is now Canada and the United States.

**-3533.**

This course examines the physical presence of Islam in New York City. Students will tour the mosques of New York, visit collections of Islamic art and manuscripts, observe ritual music and dance, and taste food from around the Muslim world. Themes will include spiritual Islamic art, Islam in the West, and North American Muslims today. The goal of the course is to provide students with material objects that will enrich their understanding of culture.

**-3553.**

This course will look at the various forms of Islamic spirituality, as expressed by individuals and organized orders. It will explore the symbolic path of the mystic and how it coalesced with popular piety and sainthood. It will also look at the ethical systems of rational mystics who combined theology, philosophy, and mysticism.

**-3653.**

Women's rights, gender sensitivities, and feminist movements both inside and outside the

end of a Major or Honours program of study; and to provide students majoring or honouring a platform for further studies in a broad range of academic or professional programs.

## 1. Tools Courses

Students of religions engage in the analysis of three main sources of religious identity: action, rituals and texts. The intent of these courses is to provide critical resources for the analysis of religiously-based action, rituals and texts. Tools courses remain open to all students with a general interest in religious studies. There are no prerequisites, except the completion of the first year of university-level study or its equivalent.

### -2243.

This course will explore the interaction between text and context of several writings deemed to be sacred, whether traditional or not, from a variety of religious traditions. Attention will also be paid to the particular situations and conditions in which these texts are created and received.

### -2313.

This course will provide an introduction to the study of the Hebrew Bible, commonly referred to by Christians as the Old Testament. A first chapter will provide an overview of the history of Israel from the early centuries of the second millennium B.C. to the end of the first century A.D. A second chapter will look at the various canonical collections of scriptural books accepted by the Samaritans, the Palestinian Jews, the Jews of the Diaspora and Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians.

### -2333.

This course will investigate the history of the growth of the New Testament Canon of twenty seven books and then study two major categories of New Testament books: the Gospels and the Pauline Corpus. Several special questions including the Synoptic Question, the relationship between John and the Synoptics and the authenticity of the Pauline Corpus will be briefly introduced.

### -2353.

The Qur'an is understood by Muslims to be the direct word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. This 7th-century Arabic text continues to serve as a guidance for all Muslims. This course will examine the role of the Qur'an in the Islamic world: its history, methods and differences of interpretation. It will further explore the significance and impact of the written word in art and architecture.

### -2413.

An inquiry into some of the issues in the study of rituals by means of a close investigation of selected religious rites and more secular examples of ritualizing. Examples might include Hindu pilgrimage, Christian liturgy in its many forms, Shinto festivals, rites of passage from childhood to adulthood (Bar Mitzvah in Judaism, sacred thread ceremony in Hinduism, the Isanaklesh Gotal of Apache girls), Taoist death rites, and contemporary behaviour at sporting events and music concerts.

## 2. Research Methodology Courses

Religious Studies involves a variety of research methodologies as the basis for gathering, organizing, analyzing and interpreting data related to religious identities and traditions. The intent of these courses is to provide Honours students with critical formation in one or another of the research methodologies active in the discipline.



**-2003.**

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This mandatory course for History Majors and Honours students provides an introduction to the discipline of History. The course examines a variety of historiographical and methodological approaches to History, as well as the history of History. It encourages students to re-examine their assumptions about History, but it will also help students develop their basic historical research and writing skills. Exploring History provides a foundation for upper-year History courses and students are strongly encouraged to take it before their third year. Prerequisite: At least 6 credit hours in History courses at St. Thomas University.

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An introduction to the main research approaches used in sociology. The course includes practical experience in developing a research program by considering research question development, research design, methods of data collection, research ethics and data analysis. Of particular interest are the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches.

**-3053.**

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This course is intended for third-year Honours students who are considering using qualitative analysis in the research for their Honours thesis. It will address theoretical foundations of qualitative analysis, research ethics for qualitative researchers, and provide hands-on experience in developing a research question and collecting and analyzing data using basic qualitative techniques including observation, in-depth interviewing, and unobtrusive measures.

**-3643.** *Religion and Culture (3 credits)*

This course emphasizes an understanding of religious phenomena by viewing religion in the context of the diversity of cultures. Prerequisite: None.

#### 4. Majors and Honours Required Seminars

**-4023.** *Religious Studies Seminar*

An in-depth analysis of selected issues in Religious Studies, focusing on the distinctive concerns of the discipline and the furthering of research skills appropriate to it. The course fosters reflection on the variety of methods used in Religious Studies, mindful of the need of senior students to integrate their four years of learning in the discipline. Honours students are normally required to take this course in their third year, Majors students in their fourth year, of full-time study.

**-4033.** *Religious Studies Seminar*

Designed for students who are considering advanced study, this course will consider a variety of research strategies in the field of Religious Studies. The final project will be an Honours thesis proposal. Normally taken in the second semester of a student's next to final year, this course is required for continuation into the Honours Program.

**-4066.** *Religious Studies Seminar*

The student will select an advisor from the Department members before the end of the second semester in his or her third year of studies. The student, in consultation with his or her advisor, will submit a thesis proposal which must be approved by the Department by the end of the student's third year of studies. The thesis is written in the fourth year of studies.

*NOTE: Not all courses listed are offered each year. Please consult with the Department Chair for more information about current and planned course offerings.*