

RELIGIOUS STUDIES, THEOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY

The study of religion is an important part of the liberal arts curriculum, in that it explores the way people have understood themselves, their world, and reality.

The religious studies student is expected to reflect upon the great ideas of religious traditions in an academic fashion as well as achieve a sympathetic understanding of their importance and viability as perhaps the deepest part of human experience. In so doing, the study of religion can become the appreciation of the whole human person and the forces that have so profoundly influenced civilizations.

The religious studies major will take 30 credits in religious studies courses. In the early part of the curriculum students will build a strong foundation in the field of religious studies and the history of religions, with a particular focus on the traditions and sacred texts of Christianity. In the upper-level courses, students will be able to explore in more depth Christian theological traditions and pastoral studies according to their own interests and in conversation with their advisors.

Philosophy has a unique place among the liberal arts for the ways in which it fosters the intellectual and moral growth of the student. In the adage of William James, "philosophy ought to make a difference" in the way we understand and live our lives. In particular, the discipline of philosophical thinking elevates the mind by instilling a spirit of wonder and criticism, and serves to illumine and reflect upon the meaning of life itself. To fulfill this promise, the philosophy program combines one fundamental course with a variety of electives allowing students to pursue topics tailored to their interests and fields of specialization.

Interdisciplinary Studies Major

Interdisciplinary Studies majors with a concentration in religious studies are required to take 18 credits in religious studies courses, 6 credits of which must be at the 300 or 400 level.

Programs

Majors

- Religious Studies, B.A. (<http://catalog.georgian.edu/undergraduate/school-arts-sciences/religious-studies/religious-studies-ba/>)

Minors

- Ethics, Minor (<http://catalog.georgian.edu/undergraduate/school-arts-sciences/religious-studies/ethics-minor/>)
- Religious Studies, Minor (<http://catalog.georgian.edu/undergraduate/school-arts-sciences/religious-studies/religious-studies-minor/>)

Certificates

- Pastoral Ministry, Certificate (<http://catalog.georgian.edu/undergraduate/school-arts-sciences/religious-studies/certificate-program-pastoral-leaders/>)

Courses Philosophy (PL)

PL245 Survey of Philosophy: The Big Questions (3.0 Credits)

In this introductory course students will explore the responses to some of the most challenging philosophical questions: What can I know and how is knowledge acquired? What is the nature of reality and how do we experience it? What is human existence and is there a meaning to it? Do justice and morality exist, and do they even matter? Students will confront a variety of historical and contemporary expressions of these concerns, study the arguments proposed to conceive and clarify them, and acquire the critical and analytical abilities necessary to construct their own views on the topics. This focus on perennial problems and methods of philosophy is developed through reading, discussion, and written assignments. Specific course content may vary by semester and by instructor.

Prerequisite(s): Grade of C or better in EN111, its equivalent, or EN221.

PL290 Social & Political Philosophy (3.0 Credits)

PL290 will provide students a historical survey of the major political philosophers of the Western tradition from Plato to Rawls by way of exposition and analysis of primary readings representing classical Greece, the Renaissance, the social contract tradition, Marxism and liberalism. Authors read include Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and Rawls.

PL300 Philosophical Ethics (3.0 Credits)

Inspired by Socrates' dictum that "The unexamined life is not worth living," this course will engage students in a critical discussion of major philosophical themes central to the morally good life: the relation between ethical reasoning and the world's major religious traditions; the importance of character and the moral personality; the nature of virtue and its relation to happiness; ethical criteria for moral actions; and relation of ethics to politics, the role of the individual in society. Readings will include selections from ethical literature of both East and West as represented by such thinkers as Confucius, Lao Tzu, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Kierkegaard, Mill, Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, Rawls, and MacIntyre.

Prerequisite(s): 3 credits as required to meet the current General Education requirements in either philosophy or religious studies; PL245 strongly recommended.

PL354 Bioethics (3.0 Credits)

This course provides a basic introduction to the main ideas, debates, and traditions in the history of Western ethical and moral philosophy, especially as applied to medical practice, biotechnology, and environmental issues. Lectures and group discussions apply various ethical traditions to actual and hypothetical cases. Topics could include decision making at the beginning and end of human life; patient's rights and professionals' duties; ethical issues raised by biotechnologies; the environmental determinants of health; and the ethical value of sentient animals, all living things, species, and ecosystems.

Prerequisite(s): 3 credits as required to meet the current General Education requirements in either philosophy or religious studies; PL245 strongly recommended.

Religious Studies (RS)

RS201 Women & Religion (3.0 Credits)

This course will examine the status of women as defined by traditional religion and as reconstructed by feminist theological work. Students will explore the roles of women within the following major religions of the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as within new religious movements, including Wicca. This course is cross-listed with WS201.

RS208 Discovering the Bible (3.0 Credits)

This course offers students an overview of significant themes of the bible. It will examine the historical, literary and theological formation of selected biblical texts and their impact on both the ancient communities and the world today. The class will include a summary of Israel's geographical, cultural and political history and its association with other ancient Near Eastern nations. It will also provide a study of chosen New Testament texts that will afford an understanding of the growth and challenges of early Christian communities.

RS213 Women & the Bible (3.0 Credits)

In this course, the student will investigate selected passages from the Bible that affect or pertain to women. The student will study these texts and traditions from the viewpoint of feminist biblical scholarship. The study will include an introduction to the methodology of feminist hermeneutics, theological traditions about women, as well as a careful study of chosen narratives, speeches, dialogues and prayers about or by women in the Bible. Applicable to Women's Studies minor. This course is cross-listed with WS213.

RS220 Exploring Christian Theology (3.0 Credits)

This introductory course invites students to explore the core beliefs, history, and cultural impact of Christianity. Using primary theological texts, students will learn to read and interpret works of Christian theology for their key insights and in relation to ideas that have shaped the Christian tradition. Students will engage with both historical and modern perspectives to deepen their understanding of Christianity, its history, and its place in the world today.

RS235 Journeys in Spirituality (1.0 Credits)

This course invites the student to enter into an experience of a particular dimension of spirituality, rather than studying it from a distance. Thus, the student will be asked to actively participate in the topic so as to learn from the inside-out. While there will be academic assignments, there will be an emphasis on experiencing the topic. This course may be repeated if the topic is different. 1 hour lecture.

Prerequisite(s): RS208 or RS220.

RS236 Social Justice (3.0 Credits)

In this course we examine both official Catholic social teaching (CST) and non-official Catholic social thought and action from the late 19th century to the present. Emphasis is placed on the ways in which the Catholic social-justice tradition has developed in response to social praxis within the wider church as well as to secular currents of thought, social movements and world events.

RS260 Christianity in Dialogue (3.0 Credits)

This course will provide an introduction to the Christian tradition with references to its relation, engagement, and dialogue with other major world religious traditions. We will begin with a treatment of ancient Judaism and the story of Christianity, followed by an exploration of Rabbinical Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. We will learn about the central tenets, history, and practices of these religious traditions with references to interfaith movement.

RS290 Topics in Religious Studies (3.0 Credits)

This course offers the student an opportunity to explore various areas in religious studies. The topic will be studied for the entire semester. This course may be repeated by students as different topics are presented. This course is cross-listed with TH537.

RS311 The Gospel of John (3.0 Credits)

A study of Johannine theological tradition as manifested in the fourth Gospel. The principal Johannine texts are examined in their historical context as witnesses of the Christian faith. Relevancy to contemporary Christian life is also indicated. This course is cross-listed with TH613.

RS320 Theology of Church (3.0 Credits)

This course provides a biblical, historical, and theological understanding of the nature and life of the Christian community. It will focus on the Roman Catholic Church, its origins, development, and contemporary life. The course pays particular attention to the Second Vatican Council as a watershed moment in the life of the church and to subsequent theological interpretations and movements within the church. This course is cross-listed with TH533.

RS323 Sacramental Theology (3.0 Credits)

Study of religious questions surrounding the notions of signs and symbols as expressions for the experience of the Transcendent. Exploration of the way in which signs can effectively render present to the individual what they signify. Focus of the study: Sacramental theology in the Catholic Tradition. This course is cross-listed with TH551.

RS325 Theology of Creation (3.0 Credits)

An exploration of different conceptions of nature/creation, the human place/role in the universe, and what it means to care for God's good creation. Case studies explore both particular environmental issues/problems and relationships between theology, science, ethics, and public policy. Alternative proposals for constructing more just, sustainable communities are studied and critically evaluated.

Prerequisite(s): RS208, RS213, RS220, or RS260.

RS334 Theological Ethics (3.0 Credits)

This course explores the major sources, methods and insights of Christian theological and social ethics. The study will focus on foundational sources and questions in Christian ethics and examine the moral significance of major theological claims and themes. Particular attention is given to Roman Catholic thought. It will show how these foundational theological themes and teachings guide ethical understanding for living an integrated just moral life with bearing on contemporary moral issues.

Prerequisite(s): 3 credits as required to meet the current General Education requirements in either philosophy or religious studies.

RS336 Social Justice Ethics (3.0 Credits)

In this course, we examine both official Catholic social teaching (CST) and non-official Catholic social thought and action from the late 19th century to the present. The course focuses on CST about justice, the human person in community, the role of government, economics, and global development. Emphasis is placed on the ways in which the Catholic social-justice tradition has developed in response to social praxis within the wider church as well as to secular currents of thought, social movements and world events.

Prerequisite(s): 3 credits as required to meet the current General Education requirements in either philosophy or religious studies.

RS340 A Survey of Eastern Religious Thought (3.0 Credits)

An examination of the major themes in the dominant traditions of the Asian cultural sphere (Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religions). A study of the diversity of historical religious traditions aims at developing a fuller appreciation of the sacred dimension in human experience. Applicable to International Area Studies minor.

RS345 Comparative Monotheisms (3.0 Credits)

This course will study comparatively the three sibling religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students will explore the history and development of each tradition from the ancient through the modern period. In the latter part of the course, focus will be on the comparative study of major elements of these traditions such as the concept of God, worship and ritual, ethics, and theories of religion and the political order.

RS350 Exploring Spiritual Autobiographies (3.0 Credits)

This course explores the search for the divine through the lens of spiritual autobiographies, blending personal narrative with theological reflection. Students will critically analyze how individuals articulate profound human experiences—love, suffering, freedom, community, and morality—in their quest to understand God. Using autobiography theory, this course examines how our understanding of the autobiographical act informs, enriches, and/or problematizes narratives of human experiences with the divine. Using autobiographical texts and stories of conversion, students will develop strategies for interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating authors' narratives. This course challenges students to question the perspectives of these texts, cultivating a deeper understanding of spirituality. Prerequisite(s): EN111, EN221, or equivalent.

RS360 African American Religious Experience (3.0 Credits)

This course dives into the complex history of African American religious life by exploring how diverse experiences of African Americans have given rise to equally diverse religious expressions. Through an exploration of major historical milestones and a variety of religious traditions (like Christianity, Islam, and others), this course will uncover how the African American community has engaged with and been shaped by religious faiths. Using texts from these traditions, students will develop strategies to interpret, analyze, and evaluate theological worldviews, engaging with themes of spiritual experience, cultural identity, and the enduring struggles against racism. Prerequisite(s): EN111, EN221, or equivalent.

RS401 Seminar in Religious Thought (3.0 Credits)

Intensive study in a particular area of theological thought (i.e., Scripture, theology, ethics, etc.) selected by participating students in consultation with department faculty members. Open to majors, minors, and other qualified students.

RS402 Independent Study (1.0 Credits)

An intensive study of a particular area, theme or concern of religious studies selected by the student with the consent of a department member. Offered on application.

RS403 Foreign Study: Biblical (1.0 Credits)

A course designed to offer the student a unique opportunity to go beyond the study of Scripture in the printed word. The student will visit biblical sites, archeological excavations and museums that feature ancient treasures. Further, exposure to the citizens of the land presents an occasion for the student to develop a greater awareness of other cultures, traditions and religions. Time and credit to be arranged.

RS404 New Testament Selections (3.0 Credits)

An in-depth examination of selected themes in the New Testament. Explore the influences of Judaism, Hellenism and other contemporary factors on the development of New Testament texts. Examine selected texts for their contribution to the early Christian Church and their relationship to each other. This course is cross-listed with TH502 and TH624.

RS405 Sources & Methods in Theology (3.0 Credits)

This course provides an advanced study of scholarly approaches to theological texts, current concepts in the literature, methods used by various schools of thought, and proper tools for research. This course is cross-listed with TH500.

RS406 Hebrew Bible Selections (3.0 Credits)

An in-depth examination of selected themes, from pre-exilic Hebrew scripture, in light of literary and historical formation of the texts. Includes an overview of Israel's history; the cultural, political, and religious circumstances that influence the authors; and an overall presentation of a God who creates, protects, and loves the world as well as the response of the community. Selected themes include an in-depth review of the materials in Genesis and Exodus, as well as a look at sections of the Book of Judges, 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, Amos, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Psalms. This course is cross-listed with TH501.

RS431 Christology (3.0 Credits)

This course traces Christian thought and teachings concerning the nature and identity of Jesus Christ from the biblical period, through the formation of Christian doctrine in the early councils, to subsequent interpretations of Jesus through the present day. This course is cross-listed with TH531.

RS436 Research Project in Social Justice (3.0 Credits)

Students work under the guidance of a faculty member to develop a research project or create an applied, real world project in the community pertaining to a social justice issue. Number of hours of coursework to be determined in relation to number of course credits. Offered on application. Course may be retaken up to 6 credits. Prerequisite(s): Permission of the chairperson or instructor.

RS450 Christian Formation Ministry (3.0 Credits)

A consideration of what helps or hinders religious development and the responsibility of Church to foster growth in faith. An examination of the various theological, philosophical, and educational models that inform the foundations of religious formation. Criteria for evaluating appropriate models of religious formation will be discussed. This course is cross-listed with TH650.

RS451 Counseling: Pastoral Applications (3.0 Credits)

This course examines the intersectionality of religious and/or spiritual identity and clinical mental health diagnosis from theoretical, philosophical, and developmental frameworks. In addition, students will explore trauma treatment that accounts for other identities (e.g. gender, age, sexual orientation, race, and culture), with an emphasis on clinical application and professional limits. (Not offered every year). This course is cross-listed with TH651.

RS452 Introduction to Canon Law (3.0 Credits)

Explore the nature, purpose, and function of Church law, using practical and pastoral applications in the Church. Special attention will be given to the role of basic canonical principles in the lives of members of the Catholic Church. This course is cross-listed with TH552.

RS456 Theology of Pastoral Ministry (3.0 Credits)

This course explores the historical, philosophical and pastoral approaches to the basis of ministry. We will look at the sources for each of these within Scripture and the Church's tradition. The practice of the believing community will play an important part in our examination of the formation of the ministerial and pastoral activities in Christianity. We will examine the intellectual frameworks which have shaped various theologies of ministry, both Catholic and Reformed. This course is cross-listed with TH556.

Faculty

**Johann M. Vento, Professor of Theology and Religious Studies; Chair,
Department of World Cultures & Human Experience; Coordinator,
Religious Studies, Theology & Philosophy**

Ph.D., Fordham University
M.A., Washington Theological Union
B.A., University of Maryland

Elissa Cutter, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Theology

Ph.D., Saint Louis University
M.A., Graduate Theological Union
A.B., Georgetown University

Jonathan Kim-Reuter, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Ph.D., M.A., New School for Social Research
M.A., B.A., Kent State University

Judith Schubert, RSM, Professor of Theology and Religious Studies

Ph.D., Fordham University
M.A., Providence College
B.A., Georgian Court University