

RELIGIOUS STUDIES, CERTIFICATE

Religious Studies is an academic discipline that looks at religious phenomena worldwide from different perspectives to understand the many roles that religion plays in human life. To this end, students of religion learn to use a variety of theoretical analyses and methods:

- historical methods to understand how religions develop in time;
- critical literary methods to understand religious ideas;
- aesthetic methods to understand religious art and material culture;
- social-scientific methods to understand the relationship between religion, society and culture.

Religious studies can also engage a variety of professional disciplines in analysis of how religion functions in economic, educational or political contexts, healthcare and scientific research, and others.

Some ways of studying religion emphasize understanding religions on their own terms, other ways use comparative methods to discern differences and similarities between religions. Students of religion also study ways that people use religious resources to make meaning outside the boundaries of religious institutions and identities. Above all, the field of religious studies requires a willingness to explore different ways of interpreting human life and diligent effort to develop understanding of how religious ideas, symbols, rituals and spaces serve as resources for people in a variety of contexts as they make sense of and live out their lives in the world. Thus, the Religious Studies major provides important preparation for thinking, communicating and functioning professionally and personally in a complex, multidimensional world.