Religion is one of the creative expressions of the human spirit. As such, it has shaped and, in turn, been shaped by virtually all historical traditions, as well as by many other forms of human activity such as the arts, literature, political thinking, and social behavior. The academic study of religion, therefore, is undertaken through diverse scholarly methodologies, and it treats experiences in a variety of cultural contexts in different periods. Students who wish to understand the manner in which religion, in its broadest terms, has contributed to the shaping of the human experience are encouraged to undertake a course of study that will expand their methodological skills as well as give them a firm command of a particular cultural or historical context. Courses in the study of religion tend to emphasize the human search for meaning and value in history; the manner in which particular religious traditions, practices, thought, and orientations have evolved over time; and the degree to which religious views have interacted creatively with other systems of thought and other meaningful expressions of human activity.

The religious studies major makes the study of religion the focus of an education in the humanities and social sciences. The major draws students into an exploration of critical issues and themes that have shaped human life and thought in all time periods and in all cultures around the world. The major proposes a broad balance between breadth and depth for all students, and it requires each student to work out the particular balance of the course of study with the director of undergraduate studies.

**Required courses for the Religious Studies major**
The religious studies major requires completion of 30 credits. The same course may not fulfill more than one distribution requirement. Requirements may be taken in any order, but students are encouraged to take the introductory courses early in the major.

**Introductory courses**
- RELGST 0105 Religions of the West
- RELGST 0505 Religions of Asia

**Methods courses**
All students select one course from each of the following lists. These courses substantively treat major disciplinary approaches to the study of religion: historical, philosophical, ethnographic, social scientific, and literary.

**Historical approach: one course from the following list**
- RELGST 0090 Myth in the Ancient Near East
- RELGST 0405 Religion in Early America
- RELGST 0415 Religion in Modern America
- RELGST 0455 Introduction to Islamic Civilization
- RELGST 1120 Origins of Christianity
- RELGST 1130 Varieties of Early Christianity
- RELGST 1220 Medieval Jewish Civilizations
- RELGST 1250 Modern Jewry
- RELGST 1252 History of the Holocaust
- RELGST 1266 Israel: State and Society
- RELGST 1372 Catholicism in the New World
- RELGST 1500 Religion in India

**Philosophical, ethnographic, social scientific, or literary approach: one course from the following list**
- RELGST 0025 Major Biblical Themes
- RELGST 0115 Bible as Literature
- RELGST 0215 Ethics in Jewish Thought
- RELGST 0305 Classics of Christian Thought
- RELGST 0315 Ethics in Christian Tradition
- RELGST 0435 Religious Themes in American Lit.
- RELGST 0525 Religion and Culture in Asia
- RELGST 0705 Approaches to the Study of Religion
- RELGST 0715 Philosophy of Religion
- RELGST 0735 Wisdom
- RELGST 1554 Death and Beyond in Buddhist Cultures
- RELGST 1562 Confucianism: Basic Texts
- RELGST 1572 Popular Religion in a Changing Japan
- RELGST 1610 Myth, Symbol and Ritual
- RELGST 1620 Women and Religion
- RELGST 1650 Approaches to Anti-Semitism
- RELGST 1675 Reading the Hebrew Bible
- RELGST 1730 Problems in the Philosophy of Religion
- RELGST 1760 Religion and Rationality
Area courses
Students must take one course from each of the following lists. These courses substantially treat three major area subfields: religion in the East, the pre-modern West, and the modern/contemporary West.

Religion in the East; one course from the following list
- RELGST 1500 Religion in India I
- RELGST 1516 Temple, Icon and Deity in India
- RELGST 1520 Buddhist Civilization
- RELGST 1530 Topics in Buddhist Civilization
- RELGST 1540 Saints East and West
- RELGST 1545 Mysticism East and East
- RELGST 1550 East Asian Buddhism
- RELGST 1552 Chan/Zen Buddhism
- RELGST 1554 Death and Beyond in Buddhist Cultures
- RELGST 1560 Chinese Religious Traditions
- RELGST 1570 Japanese Religious Traditions
- RELGST 1572 Popular Religions in a Changing Japan

Religions in the Pre-Modern West; one course from the following list
- RELGST 1100 Israel in the Biblical Age
- RELGST 1110 Special Topics Ancient
- RELGST 1112 Bible as Literature 2
- RELGST 1120 Origins of Christianity
- RELGST 1130 Varieties of Early Christianity
- RELGST 1132 Paul
- RELGST 1135 Orthodox Christianity
- RELGST 1140 Dualism in the Ancient World
- RELGST 1142 Construction of Evil
- RELGST 1145 Greco-Roman Religions
- RELGST 1150 Body and Society in Late Antiquity
- RELGST 1210 Classical Judaism
- RELGST 1220 Medieval Jewish Civilization
- RELGST 1222 Jewish Mysticism
- RELGST 1225 Jewish Culture in Medieval Spain
- RELGST 1454 Islamic Thought
- RELGST 1540 Saints East and West
- RELGST 1545 Mysticism East and East
- RELGST 1624 Women and Judaism
- RELGST 1640 Jews in the Islamic World
- RELGST 1642 Christian-Muslim Relations
- RELGST 1644 Jewish-Christian Relations
- RELGST 1675 Reading the Hebrew Bible
- RELGST 1680 Readings in Jewish Historiography

Religion in the Modern or Contemporary West; one course from the following list
- RELGST 1250 Modern Jewry
- RELGST 1252 History of the Holocaust
- RELGST 1254 After the Holocaust
- RELGST 1256 Modern Israel
- RELGST 1257 Russian Jewry
- RELGST 1266 Israel: State and Society
- RELGST 1370 Religion in the Modern Western World
- RELGST 1372 Catholicism in the New World
- RELGST 1400 Religion and Culture in America
- RELGST 1410 Religion in American Thought
- RELGST 1412 Ethnicity in American Religion
- RELGST 1425 Popular Religion in America
- RELGST 1760 Religion and Rationality

Elective courses
Students select two additional religious studies courses, at least one of which must be at the 1000 level. Student may use electives to form a clear area of specialization preparatory to graduate study or in line with their interests, or they may use electives to create a broader program in which they study as many traditions, ideologies, geographic areas, themes, and so forth as possible. Students are encouraged to meet with the director of undergraduate studies to plan the best arrangement of courses for their long-term academic goals.

Capstone seminar
- RELGST 1903 Directed Research Seminar (W course)
  **Prerequisite:** at least 6 RELGST courses

Each fall, all graduating majors come together as an intellectual community to participate in a special seminar to produce a capstone research paper. Students are encouraged to develop research topics in their area of interest within the broader outlines of the annual theme. Students work with the seminar instructor as well as with another faculty member with expertise in the particular area of research. Students have opportunities to share their work-in-progress with other seminar members throughout the term and to present their research to their peers at the conclusion of the seminar.

Related area: All Arts and Sciences students must complete a related area requirement. Students should consult with the director of undergraduate studies for help formulating their options:
- Students identify a cluster of four courses that support and reinforce their study of religion; or
- Students complete a second major, a minor, or a program certificate.

**Grade requirements:** All courses counted toward the major must be taken for a letter grade and completed with a C grade or above. At least five courses and the capstone seminar must be completed on the Oakland campus. Students transferring from other colleges or universities need to consult with the director of undergraduate studies about transferring courses and credits to be applied to the major.

**Satisfactory/No Credit option:** No course that counts toward the major can be taken on an S/NC basis.

**Writing (W) requirement:** The capstone seminar fulfills the W-course requirement for this major.

**Honors major requirements:** Department honors require a GPA of 3.25 or higher in the major and a B+ or above in the capstone seminar.

**Advising:** Clark Chilson

CL 2610

412-624-5977

chilson@pitt.edu

**Requirements for the Religious Studies minor**

The RELGST minor consists of 15 credits. Please see the department’s Web site for more information.