

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

While remaining intensely personal, the resurgence of religion in the public sphere is a characteristic of our era. Religion has become central to contemporary culture, politics, identity, and conflict in every part of the globe. At the same time, our world is marked by an emerging pluralism, as globalization, migration and technology bring diverse religious traditions into closer proximity and creates new religious communities.

The Department of Religious Studies offers DePaul students the opportunity to engage in the academic study of religion. The study of religion includes not only the traditional areas of sacred texts, myths, rituals, mystical experiences and doctrines, but also the ways in which political, social and economic forces shape these phenomena for religious communities. Drawing on a host of academic disciplines, religious studies challenges students to encounter the traditions of the world in all their rich diversity. Given the complexity of the subject matter, members of the department draw upon several other academic disciplines -- anthropology, art history, biblical studies, economics, environmental studies, ethics, gender studies, history, linguistics, literature and literary criticism, political science, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and theology -- as they do their work.

Beyond work with texts, students may also study religion through the media of film and video, music, the visual and dramatic arts, and the internet. The department emphasizes comprehensive learning in writing, synthetic and analytic thinking, and oral communication skills. Students can go beyond their course work with further learning opportunities, such as the senior thesis, independent study, study abroad and internships, and service learning, both locally and internationally.

A truly interdisciplinary field, religious studies at DePaul helps students broaden cultural literacy and deepen critical skills. The study of religion also prepares students to engage important conversations of our day. Further, students may find that the study of religions can help them respond not only to political, social and environmental challenges, but also to address the existential questions they face and that are encountered by other thoughtful men and women.

A religious studies major or minor is positioned to pursue a wide variety of careers. A bridge between the specialist's perspectives on religion and a wider world that is often in need of these perspectives, religious studies majors have worked in the fields of law, social work, regional and international business, governmental and non-governmental service, secondary school teaching, and service in religious communities. A religious studies major is also well-prepared for further studies in graduate programs leading to careers in academia.

Religious Studies at DePaul expresses the university's distinct identity, which respects engaged pluralistic inquiry in all religious issues and traditions. The department is committed to DePaul's Catholic, Vincentian and urban heritage, mission, and identity, and to its goal of establishing the university as a model of diversity. The department's course offerings reflect the diversity of the city of Chicago and of the students who attend DePaul.

The department faculty constitute one of the largest and most diverse undergraduate departments of religious studies in the United States. This size and diversity enables us to offer courses in a wide range of geographical regions and historical periods. The research and teaching interests of the faculty include American religious history as well as South and East Asia, the African diaspora, North and Meso-America, the

Middle East and Europe. The faculty and curriculum includes specialists in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, as well as Native American, African American, and Latino/a religious traditions.

In addition to excellence in teaching, the faculty also maintain high standards for research, and are actively engaged in presenting at major academic conferences and publishing their work in high-ranking professional journals.

The Department of Religious Studies sponsors the Center for Religion, Culture, and Community and is fully engaged with Center for Intercultural Theology and World Catholicism and other centers and institutes of the University. It has a close working relationship with the Department of Catholic Studies, the Islamic World Studies Program and the Grace School of Applied Diplomacy. Religious Studies is a vital part of the First Year, Liberal Studies and Honors Programs.

The Department encourages students in all major concentrations and minors to engage various questions related to the study of religion, such as (but not limited to):

- What is religion?
- How do religious communities come into being and define themselves?
- How do religious communities form worldviews, doctrines, and practices, and how does the study of religion help us to understand their change over time?
- How do sacred texts come into being, and what do they communicate to us?
- How does religion shape culture, and how does the wider culture define religion?
- What is the role of religion in the contemporary world?
- How do religion or religious sensibilities help us to relate (or hinder us from relating) to each other?
- How can an informed student of religion evaluate the rival claims to truth and moral rightness of different religious and secular ideologies?
- How do religious traditions and texts treat issues of sexuality and gender, race and class?
- How have religious traditions interacted with each other in the past, and how do they continue to do so today?

Faculty

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