

RELIGIOUS STUDIES, BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.)

worldstudies.vcu.edu/academics/relstudies (<http://worldstudies.vcu.edu/academics/religious-studies/>)

The mission of the Religious Studies Program at VCU is to advance understanding of the nature, history and diversity of religious traditions.

Religious studies is guided by the idea that studying humanity's diverse and developing religious traditions is vital to understanding what it means to be human and how to live wisely as members of the world community. Students explore the artistic, ethical, literary, psychological and social dimensions of religions, as well as the relationship between religious ideas, institutions, and practices and matters of gender, sexuality, race, nationality, health, social justice, human rights and nature.

Religious studies emphasizes excellence in written, oral and visual interpretation and communication, critical thinking, informed dialogue, and global citizenship. Combining classroom- and community-based learning through study-abroad programs, internships and community service, religious studies empowers students to engage intellectually and practically with diverse communities and work to build a peaceful, generous and affirming society.

Student learning outcomes

Upon completing this program, students will know how to do the following:

- Demonstrate knowledge of diverse religious traditions
- Utilize the vocabulary, concepts and research methods of the academic study of religion
- Analyze the influence of religions on ethics, society and culture
- Make clear, well-organized and substantive written and oral presentations

Experiential learning and study abroad

Each student completing a degree program within the School of World Studies is required to complete a World ePass as part of their experiential learning requirement; students are also encouraged to participate in a study abroad program. For more information on the ePass portfolio and study abroad opportunities, students may visit the overview page for the School of World Studies (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/college-humanities-sciences/school-worldstudies/>).

Special requirements

The Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies requires a minimum of 120 credits, with at least 30 credits in religious studies courses or in courses listed as acceptable for religious studies credit. Up to six of the 30 credits may be taken in language studies relevant to one's area of research interest and with the appropriate approval through the School of World Studies Advising Office. Other courses occasionally may be substituted should the needs and background of an individual student warrant substitutions. Religious studies majors are encouraged to consider a second major or minor that complements their study of religions (e.g. English, international studies), as well as study-abroad opportunities to enrich their studies.

Degree requirements Religious Studies, Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)

Course	Title	Hours
General education (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-study/general-education-curriculum/)		
Select 30 credits of general education courses in consultation with an adviser.		30
Major requirements		
• Major core requirements		
RELS 338	Eastern Religions	3
RELS 339	Western Religions	3
RELS 340/INTL 341	Global Ethics and the World's Religions	3
RELS 490	Senior Capstone Seminar	3
• Major electives		
RELS electives: Select an additional four courses from the list below, with at least six credits at the 400 level.		12
Select two religion, society and culture electives from the list below.		6
Ancillary requirements		
HUMS 202	Choices in a Consumer Society	1
RELS 108	Human Spirituality (satisfies general education BOK for humanities/fine arts and AOI for diversities in the human experience)	3
WRLD 495		0
• Experiential fine arts ¹		1-3
• Experiential learning		0-3
Select one of the following:		
Major-specific service-learning course		
Study abroad program		
Internship (FRLG 493, INTL 493, RELS 493, WRLD 493 or other preapproved internship opportunities)		
• Foreign language through the 102 level (by course or placement)		0-6
Open electives		
Select any course.		47-58
Total Hours		120

¹

Course offered by the School of the Arts

The minimum number of credit hours required for this degree is 120.

Electives

Course	Title	Hours
Religion, society and culture		
RELS 250	Death: Myth and Reality	3
RELS 310	Mediterranean Religions	3
RELS/PSYC 333	Psychology and Religious Experience	3
RELS 334	Religion in Contemporary America	3
RELS 336	Religions in Latin America	3
RELS 337	Contemporary Cults and New Religious Movements	3
RELS/SOCY 360	Sociology of Religion	3

RELS 361	The Bible as Literature	3
RELS/GSWWS 371	Women in Islam	3
RELS 414	Incarceration and Spirituality: _____	3
RELS 422	Religion and Film	3
RELS 450/INTL 449	Religion, Globalization and Social Justice	3
RELS/AFAM/INTL 451	Religion, Racism and Social Justice	3
RELS/GSWWS/INTL 453	Western Religions, Women and Social Justice	3
RELS electives		
RELS 280	Introduction to Catholic Studies	3
RELS 291	Topics in Religious Studies	1-3
RELS 300	What is Religion?	3
RELS 301	Introduction to the Hebrew Bible	3
RELS 302	Introduction to the New Testament	3
RELS 305	Hebrew Prophets	3
RELS 306	Judaism	3
RELS/AFAM/INTL 307	Black Religion	3
RELS 315/HIST 301	The Ancient Near East	3
RELS/INTL 317	Islam	3
RELS 318/HIST 333	History of the Jewish People I	3
RELS 319/HIST 334	History of the Jewish People II	3
RELS 320	Taoism	3
RELS 321	Buddhism	3
RELS/PHIL 322	Tibetan Buddhism	3
RELS 324	Indian Religious Traditions	3
RELS/PHIL 326	Existentialism	3
RELS 327/HIST 335	History of Christianity I	3
RELS 335	The American Jewish Experience	3
RELS 338	Eastern Religions	3
RELS 339	Western Religions	3
RELS 350/INTL 360	World Religions' Classics	3
RELS 354	Religion and Film: _____	3
RELS 362	Shakespeare and Religion	3
RELS 365	Archaeology and Religion: _____	6
RELS 380	Global Catholic Thought	3
RELS 391	Topics in Religious Studies	3
RELS 398	Directed Study Abroad	1-8
RELS/LFSC 401	Faith and Life Sciences	3
RELS 407	Modern Jewish Thought	3
RELS/INTL 409	Modern Islamic Thought and Global Trends	3
RELS/PHIL/INTL 412	Zen Buddhism	3
RELS/ANTH/INTL 425	Religion, Magic and Witchcraft	3
RELS/PHIL 430	Philosophy of Religion	3
RELS/PHIL 440	Mysticism	3
RELS/INTL 441	Islamic Mysticism: the Sufis	3
RELS 458	Religion and Ecojustice	3
RELS 491	Topics in Religious Studies	3
RELS 492	Independent Study	1-3

RELS 493	Religious Studies Internship	1-3
HIST 311	High and Later Middle Ages	3
HIST 335/RELS 327	History of Christianity I	3
HIST 336	History of Christianity II	3

What follows is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements within a four-year course of study at VCU. Please contact your adviser before beginning course work toward a degree.

Freshman year

Fall semester		Hours
RELS 108	Human Spirituality (satisfies general education BOK for humanities/fine arts and AOI for diversities in the human experience)	3
UNIV 101	Introduction to the University	1
UNIV 111	Focused Inquiry I (satisfies general education UNIV foundations)	3
Play course	video for Focused Inquiry I	
Experiential fine arts		1-3
Foreign language 101		3
General education course (select quantitative foundations)		3-4
Term Hours:		14-17

Spring semester

HUMS 202	Choices in a Consumer Society	1
RELS 338	Eastern Religions	3
or	or Western Religions	
RELS 339		
UNIV 112	Focused Inquiry II (satisfies general education UNIV foundations)	3
Play course	video for Focused Inquiry II	
Foreign language 102		3
General education course		3
Open elective		3
Term Hours:		16

Sophomore year

Fall semester		
RELS 339	Western Religions	3
or	or Eastern Religions	
RELS 338		
UNIV 200	Advanced Focused Inquiry: Literacies, Research and Communication (satisfies general education UNIV foundations)	3
General education course		3
General education course		3
Open elective		3
Term Hours:		15

Spring semester

RELS 340	Global Ethics and the World's Religions	3
General education course		3
General education course		3
Open elective		3

Religion, society and culture elective	3
Term Hours:	15
Junior year	
Fall semester	
RELS elective	3
Open electives	9
Religion, society and culture elective	3
Term Hours:	15
Spring semester	
On-campus or study abroad semester	
RELS elective	3
Open electives	12
Term Hours:	15
Summer semester	
Study abroad (recommended); credits completed during study abroad will decrease open electives needed in subsequent semesters	0-6
Term Hours:	0-6
Senior year	
Fall semester	
RELS 493 Religious Studies Internship (or other or experiential learning opportunity if not RELS 490 already met) or Senior Capstone Seminar	1-3
RELS elective (400-level)	3
Open electives	11-12
World ePass completion	
Term Hours:	15-18
Spring semester	
RELS 490 Senior Capstone Seminar (if not taken in or the fall) RELS 493 or Religious Studies Internship	3
WRDL 495 World ePass Portfolio	0
RELS elective (400-level)	3
Open electives	9
Term Hours:	15
Total Hours:	120-132

The minimum number of credit hours required for this degree is 120.