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

worldstudies.vcu.edu/academics/relstudies

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 | 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.
  - Select two religion, society and culture electives from the list below.

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
  - Experimental fine arts 1 1-3
  - Experimental 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

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
The following 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
- HIST 311: High and Later Middle Ages
- RELS 339: Eastern Religions
- RELS 340: World Religions' Classics
- RELS 354: Religion and Film
- RELS 362: Shakespeare and Religion
- RELS 365: Archaeology and Religion
- RELS 380: Global Catholic Thought
- RELS 391: Topics in Religious Studies
- RELS 398: Directed Study Abroad

Hours: 15

Spring semester
- HIST 335/RELS 334: History of the Jewish People II
- RELS 338: Eastern Religions
- RELS 339: Western Religions
- RELS 350/INTL 360: World Religions' Classics
- RELS 354: Religion and Film
- RELS 362: Shakespeare and Religion
- RELS 365: Archaeology and Religion
- RELS 380: Global Catholic Thought
- RELS 391: Topics in Religious Studies
- RELS 398: Directed Study Abroad

Hours: 16

Sophomore year

Fall semester
- RELS 339: Western Religions
- RELS 339: Eastern Religions
- RELS 340: World Religions' Classics
- RELS 354: Religion and Film
- RELS 362: Shakespeare and Religion
- RELS 365: Archaeology and Religion
- RELS 380: Global Catholic Thought
- RELS 391: Topics in Religious Studies
- RELS 398: Directed Study Abroad

Hours: 15

Spring semester
- RELS 340: Global Ethics and the World's Religions
- RELS 339: Western Religions
- RELS 339: Eastern Religions
- RELS 340: World Religions' Classics
- RELS 354: Religion and Film
- RELS 362: Shakespeare and Religion
- RELS 365: Archaeology and Religion
- RELS 380: Global Catholic Thought
- RELS 391: Topics in Religious Studies

Hours: 15
Religious Studies, Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)

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