

RELIGION



In Swarthmore's Religion Department, we delight in asking—and risking answers to—the complex questions that characterize the human condition, as we explore how humanity understands and experiences the sacred, the self, and the world.

Some students turn to the Religion Department to delve deeper into the faith traditions in which they were raised. Others seek courses on traditions radically different from their own, in an effort to better appreciate our global community. Our courses cater to both, by addressing the interplay of culture, history, text, orality, performance, and personal experience within the world's religions.

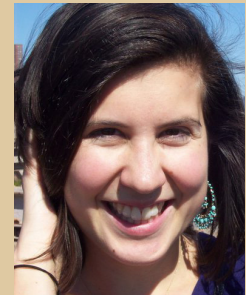
Swarthmore's liberal arts approach to learning encourages students to integrate their religious studies with other interests, such as literary criticism, art interpretation, or community-based learning. The interdisciplinary nature of religion also makes it a popular choice as a double major or minor, often paired with biology, philosophy, or gender & sexuality studies, among other disciplines.

Founded in 1968, the Religion Department has long played a central role at Swarthmore—through its commitment to ethical responsibility and to keeping humanities relevant at the College and beyond.

Martha Marrazza '09

Program officer, U.S. Department of State

"Studying religion helped me understand and appreciate different cultures, philosophies, and rituals, which has been invaluable in my life and career. I also loved using religion as a lens through which to explore other topics, such as history, psychology, and art."



WHAT MAKES OUR PROGRAM UNIQUE?

- Courses are offered on the development of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Afro-Caribbean religions, and as well as various traditions within regional contexts, including the Indian subcontinent, Sri Lanka/Southeast Asia, China, Japan, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas.
- Directed readings allow students to pursue independent study for credit, working in close partnership with a faculty member.
- A weekly Religion Café symposium for seniors tackles seminal themes, theories, and methods in the comparative, cross-cultural study of religion.





RELIGION GRANTS AND PRIZES

A number of monetary awards are available to support religion students in their research and internship endeavors, such as:

- The William J. Carter '47 Grant, a \$4,500 award supporting a summer research project or internship that encourages and promotes an understanding, harmony, and respect among the various religions of the world.
- The Hay-Urban Prize for Summer Internship, Study, or Research in Religion, a \$4,800 award given annually since 1989.
- The Jesse H. Holmes Prize in Religion, a \$300 award presented annually to the winner of a student essay competition.

POSTGRADUATE PATHS

A Swarthmore religion degree can open doors to many of the country's most distinguished graduate schools. Programs pursued by alumni have included:

- M.Div./MTS/Ph.D, Harvard Divinity School
- Ph.D. in Religious Studies, Columbia University
- M.A./Ph.D. in Religion, University of Chicago
- M.A. in Ethics, Peace, and Global Affairs, American University

While some graduates choose professions within organized religion or become scholars in the field, others apply their religious studies to careers in law, medicine, social work, education, journalism, business, and other areas.

“The study of religion, more so than any other field, allows us to explore the greatest questions of the human experience in its many forms, through languages, histories, and cultures.”

— YVONNE CHIREAU, PROFESSOR AND CHAIR OF RELIGION



SAMPLE RELIGION COURSES

Magic, Theory, and Practice

In this seminar, we examine the history, theory, and meaning of magic as a category of belief and practice—from the Greek-defined *mageia*, to Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, and Jewish sources, to the rise of the “inner sciences.”

Postmodern Religious Thought

This seminar asks whether religious belief is possible in the absence of a “transcendental signified.” Topics include metaphysics and theology, the death of God, female divinity, and ethics without foundations.

Religion and the Meaning of Life

What is the purpose and meaning of life? What constitutes “a life well lived”? Themes include religion and personal and social change, understandings of the sacred, religion and radical action, community, suffering, love, hope, and good and evil.

BEIT MIDRASH

A joint project of the Religion Department and Swarthmore's Libraries, the Beit Midrash (Hebrew for “house of study”) offers unique access to the rich tradition of Jewish textual interpretation in the liberal arts environment. Open to all, the Beit Midrash draws students from a wide variety of academic and religious backgrounds.

