

WHY STUDY RELIGION?

As we have seen, religion is ubiquitous and it behooves us to understand the undercurrents, and power religion has in human affairs.

The Religious Studies program is designed to expand a student's understanding of the vast range of responses to challenges found throughout human history and in contemporary society. Indeed, the study of religion is as much the study of human ideals as it is the study of human suffering. In analyses and discussions of: ancient and modern didactic, poetic, and theological texts, devotional imagery, and religious organizations, Religious Studies courses explore how people from a broad range of traditions across the historical spectrum grapple with perplexing questions, vexing moral dilemmas, emotional turmoil, and challenges to social welfare. Religious Studies examines:

- practices and teachings that cultivate the ultimate in human potential,
- claims to perfect harmony with divinity,
- salvation, and
- enlightenment.

In our examinations of religious ultimacy, we pay careful attention to the particular historical, cultural, racial, class, and gender contexts in which teaching and practices operate.

The study of religion does not necessitate that one have or not have a particular religious orientation. Religious (or anti-religious) impulses undergird much of human activity. Therefore Religious Studies is one of the most multi-disciplinary academic fields, weaving approaches from text-criticism, history, psychology, literature, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, politics, gender studies, and the arts. Studying various cultures of the world is central to Religious Studies as it cultivates the tools necessary to explain divergent views about the world and the purpose of human life. A Religious Studies concentration is an ideal home base from which to explore the liberal arts; it paves the way for the pursuit of a career in many areas.