

# RELIGION, BALAS

*for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts & Sciences Major in Religion*

The Religion major offers students a rigorous academic study of religious traditions, ideas, and practices across historical and cultural contexts. Grounded in the humanities, the degree fosters critical thinking, cultural literacy, ethical reflection, and strong analytical and communication skills. Because it develops broadly applicable intellectual tools, the major places no limits on career direction and prepares students for a wide range of professional pathways.

Graduates can pursue opportunities in:

- **business**, where global organizations value the cultural understanding and cross-cultural communication developed through Religious Studies.
- **education**, supporting careers in teaching—whether in social studies, history, English, or in religious education settings—often in combination with additional pedagogical training.
- **international fields**, including work with NGOs, government agencies, development organizations, and other groups that rely on deep knowledge of cultures, histories, and belief systems.
- **religious professions**, offering an excellent academic basis for further study in seminaries or theological schools and for professional roles within faith communities.

Whether students plan to enter the workforce directly or pursue graduate or professional training, the Religion major equips them with the interpretive skills, cultural awareness, and intellectual flexibility needed to navigate an increasingly interconnected world.

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Each student must complete two courses in any of the following: Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese and Japanese Religions, or indigenous American religious practices, chosen from a list maintained in the departmental adviser's office. And each student must complete two courses in any of the following: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or religious practices of the ancient Near East, chosen from a list maintained in the departmental adviser's office.

Additionally, each student will establish a primary and secondary field of study. For the primary area of study, a student must complete a minimum of three courses (nine credit hours), and for the secondary area two courses (six credit hours) are required. An individual course may not be counted twice toward fulfilling the requirements of the primary and secondary areas of interest. (Students are encouraged to complete more than the minimum of three courses in the primary area of study.)

The following are the areas of study: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Philosophy of Religion, Religion in America, or individually designed area of study chosen with the approval of the departmental adviser.

Students considering graduate study in Religion are urged to consult with professors on the necessary preparation for graduate study in their area of interest.

## Language Requirements

The major in Religion does not require any language study beyond meeting the University's general education language requirement. However, majors are strongly encouraged to learn the languages relevant to their primary field of study and to begin that course of study as soon as possible. Please consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Religion or a professor in your area of interest about appropriate language study.

## Capstone Experience

Research paper for one 400-level course in Religion (REL): Each major must make special arrangements with a professor teaching a 400-level REL course to conduct a significant research project that results in a research paper of 20 pages (minimum). The goal of this requirement is to ensure that each Religion major has conducted a significant research project. REL 493 can be used to satisfy this requirement.

## Departmental distinction

To be considered for departmental distinction a student must have an overall GPA of at least 3.5. Distinction is granted on the basis of a senior thesis written in the context of REL 493. The level of distinction is based on evaluation of the thesis.

**General education: Students must complete the Campus General Education (<https://courses.illinois.edu/gened/DEFAULT/DEFAULT/>) requirements including the campus general education language requirement.**

**Minimum required major and supporting course work: A minimum of 30 hours of coursework is required for the major. This includes (a) REL 230 or REL 231, and (b) completing a Capstone course. At least 15 of the 30 hours must be at the 300 or 400 level, and no more than 9 hours may be at the 100 level.**

**Twelve hours of 300- and 400-level in the major must be taken on this campus.**

## Minimum hours required for graduation: 120 hours.

Code	Title	Hours
Minimum of 30 hours of Religion courses including:		
PHIL/REL 230 or REL 231	Philosophy of Religion Intro Happiness and the Good Life	3
Distribution Requirement: Courses taken must include:		12
(a) Two courses in the following: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or religious practices of the ancient Near East, chosen from a list maintained in the departmental adviser's office and		
(b) Two courses in the following: Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese and Japanese Religions, or indigenous American religious practices, chosen from a list maintained in the departmental adviser's office.		
Three courses in a primary area of study <sup>1</sup>		9
Two courses in a secondary area of study <sup>1</sup>		6
Capstone Experience: a 400-level REL course in which a research project is undertaken and a 20 page research paper is written. This course can be REL 493 and can also be used to fulfill part of the distribution or primary or secondary area of study requirement.		3

<sup>1</sup> Areas of study include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Philosophy of Religion, Religion in America, or an individually designed area

of study approved by the departmental advisor. Courses chosen to fulfill the primary area of study cannot also be used to fulfill the secondary area of study.

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### Sample Sequence

This sample sequence is intended to be used only as a guide for degree completion. All students should work individually with their academic advisors to decide the actual course selection and sequence that works best for them based on their academic preparation and goals. Enrichment programming such as study abroad, minors, internships, and so on may impact the structure of this four-year plan. Course availability is not guaranteed during the semester indicated in the sample sequence.

Students must fulfill their Language Other Than English requirement by successfully completing a fourth level of a language other than English. For more information, see the corresponding section on the Degree and General Education Requirements page (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/general-information/degree-general-education-requirements/>).

### First Year

First Semester	Hours
Free Elective course	1
Distribution Requirement course	3
General Education course	3
Language Other Than English (3rd level)	4
Composition I or General Education course	4
	<b>15</b>

### Total Hours 15

### First Year

Second Semester	Hours
Distribution Requirement course	3
General Education course	3
Free Elective course	3
Language Other Than English (4th level)	4
General Education course or Composition I	3
	<b>16</b>

### Total Hours 16

### Second Year

First Semester	Hours
REL 230 or 231	3
Distribution Requirement course	3
General Education course	3
General Education course	3
Free Elective course	3
	<b>15</b>

### Total Hours 15

### Second Year

Second Semester	Hours
Distribution Requirement course	3
Primary Area of Study course	3
General Education course	3
General Education course	3
Free Elective course	3
	<b>15</b>

### Total Hours 15

### Third Year

First Semester	Hours
Primary Area of Study course	3
Secondary Area of Study course	3
General Education course	3
Free Elective course	3
Free Elective course	3
	<b>15</b>

### Total Hours 15

### Third Year

Second Semester	Hours
Primary Area of Study course	3
General Education course	3
General Education course	3
Free Elective course	3
Free Elective course	3
	<b>15</b>

### Total Hours 15

### Fourth Year

First Semester	Hours
Capstone Experience	3
General Education course	3
Free Elective course	4
Free Elective course	3
Free Elective course	3
	<b>16</b>

### Total Hours 16

### Fourth Year

Second Semester	Hours
Secondary Area of Study course	3
Free Elective course	4
Free Elective course	3
Free Elective course	3
	<b>13</b>

### Total Hours 13

### Total Hours: 120

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1. Students will be able to understand and explain how global religious traditions reflect the social contexts in which they emerged, and in turn how the traditions have affected and continue to affect those societies;
2. Students will be able to analyze, and interpret (in both written and oral communication) the relationship between religious traditions and other forms of human cultural and social activity, including languages, literature, arts, political and social movements;
3. Students will be able to appreciate the diversity of global religious traditions and express that appreciation in activities and experiences meaningful to them.
4. Students will be able to develop sound and well-formed written arguments on matters of interest to them that respond insightfully to scholarship significant to their field of study.
5. Students will be able critically to assess and evaluate theories, arguments, and positions that have shaped the fields of the study of religion and individual global traditions.

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Department of Religion website (<https://www.religion.illinois.edu/>)  
Religion faculty (<https://www.religion.illinois.edu/directory/faculty/>)  
Religion advising (<https://religion.illinois.edu/academics/undergraduate-programs/>)

Overview of College Admissions & Requirements: Liberal Arts & Sciences (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/schools/las/academic-units/>)  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences website (<https://las.illinois.edu/>)