Religious Studies (RELS) Courses

RELS 100B. Introduction to Biblical Literature. 1 Unit.
A study of the contents and development of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament, with emphasis on critical methods for biblical study, the influence of the cultures of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds on the Bible, the formative traditions of Judaism and Christianity, and the interpretation of biblical texts. Offered every semester.

RELS 103B. Religions of the East. 1 Unit.
An introduction to the beliefs and practices of the religions of the East, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. By tracing the historical development of these religious traditions and studying the scriptures, doctrines, rituals, ethics, and social institutions, students enter into the worldview of the East. Offered every semester.

RELS 105B. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. 1 Unit.
This course will provide students with an introduction to the history, beliefs, and practices of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. A central premise of the course is that religious traditions are best understood as communities of discourses and practices which shape the subjectivities of their adherents. As a result, comparative analysis of the narrative frameworks, foundational beliefs, and devotional practices which constitute these three Abrahamic faiths provides insight into how their members imagine and act in the world. In taking this approach, students will learn to understand and appreciate the common lineages of these religious traditions, as well as their major differences. The course will also serve as an introduction to studying and thinking about religion in an academic setting, helping students to describe, compare, and interpret religious phenomena.

RELS 107B. Introduction to Judaism. 1 Unit.
Examines the development of Judaism from its ancient biblical beginnings to the creation of the modern state of Israel. The course includes a study of rituals, practices, and literature of Judaism. Special attention is given to the role of the Holocaust and Diaspora in Jewish history. Offered every semester.

RELS 108B. Christian Thought and Doctrine. 1 Unit.
A study of the development of Christian theologies and doctrines from their roots in Judaism and Greco-Roman philosophies to contemporary understandings. Special attention is given to the development of Christian beliefs as seen in Christian scripture and later writings. Offered every three years.

RELS 109B. Sacred Traditions of the World. 1 Unit.
An introduction to prehistoric religions, new religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, with attention to scriptures, rituals, ethics, and alternative conceptions of human nature, enlightenment, community life, divinity, gender norms, and life after death. Offered every semester.

RELS 110. Elementary New Testament Greek. 1 Unit.
An introductory study of the written Greek language of the New Testament period. Emphasis is on grammar and vocabulary, leading to translation of selected texts from the Greek New Testament. Offered every other spring semester.

RELS 111. Elementary Biblical Hebrew. 1 Unit.
An introductory study of classical biblical Hebrew. This course concentrates on basic Hebrew vocabulary and grammar, thus preparing the student to translate various readings from the Hebrew Bible. Offered every other spring semester.

RELS 168A. The Bible in Art and Artifact. 1 Unit.
A course that includes optional spring break travel and has two primary aims: (1) to examine artifacts from the ancient Near Eastern world and the Mediterranean world that have a connection to biblical studies, and (2) to study art works in major museums that portray scenes from the Bible. In addition to classroom study of these objects, the course includes optional travel during spring break to major world museums (such as the British Museum, the National Gallery of Art in London, the Louvre, and the Orsay) to examine these objects first-hand. Offered every other spring semester.

RELS 190. Special Topics in Religious Studies. 1 Unit.
Varied subject matter according to the interests and expertise of faculty. May be taken more than once for credit.

RELS 210. Readings in New Testament Greek. 0.5 Units.
A course designed to help students improve their ability to read ancient Koine Greek. Reading passages will be selected primarily from the New Testament, with some selections chosen from the Septuagint. Prerequisite: RELS 110. Offered every other fall semester.

RELS 211. Readings in Biblical Hebrew. 0.5 Units.
A course designed to help students improve their ability to read biblical Hebrew. Selected passages from the Hebrew Bible will be analyzed for grammatical forms and translated. This course presupposes a basic knowledge of biblical Hebrew. Prerequisite: RELS 111. Offered every other fall semester.

RELS 221H. History of Early Christianity. 1 Unit.
An exploration of Christianity in terms of five essential dimensions: prophetic, ethical, revelatory, monotheistic, and historical dimensions. Students learn the complexities of the development of each dimension during the formative centuries of the church, as well as alternative understandings that competed for attention. Offered every fall semester.
RELS 222B. Heretical Christianities of the Early Church. 1 Unit.
An investigation of forms of Christianity that flourished in the early life of the movement but that have been lost to the modern world. Students look at the origins of the movements, their scriptures, and their influence on what came to be known as “orthodox” Christianity. Offered every three years.

RELS 231V. The Bible and Ethics. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. A critical inquiry into the complexities and challenges of using the Bible to make ethical judgments. Students focus on methodological issues that influence how one relates the Bible and ethics, application of different types of biblical traditions to ethical issues, and specific contemporary issues for which the Bible has been used. Offered every other spring semester.

RELS 242A. Sacred Arts of Asia. 1 Unit.
An exploration of the sacred aesthetic in the religions of Asia. Through a combination of lectures, discussions, films, and field trips, students learn how art is used effectively to express deep religious concepts and principles, while serving to inspire, reform, and educate the religious believer. The course also encourages students to examine critically the relationship between ritual, myth, and symbolism in the creation and function of art.

RELS 252B. Religions of China and Japan. 1 Unit.
An examination of religious traditions of East Asia, including Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. The course traces the historical development of these traditions and considers the lived experience of believers in the modern world. Students explore religious scriptures, doctrines, rituals, ethics, social institutions, spiritualities, and art and consider alternative conceptions of human nature, enlightenment, community life, divinity, gender roles, and life after death. Offered every two years.

RELS 255B. Apocalyptic Visions and American Culture. 1 Unit.
A study of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings, both biblical writings (primarily Daniel and Revelation) and non-biblical texts, culminating in an examination of the extensive use of apocalyptic ideas and imagery in American culture (art, music, literature, movies, religious beliefs).

RELS 256V. Gender and Difference in Biblical Texts and Traditions. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Human Diversity Value. An examination of the role that gender plays in the biblical texts, giving attention to feminist methods of interpretation. Texts that suppress the power of the feminine are examined against those that bring to light positive images. The influence of these texts both in establishing traditional roles for women historically and in shaping patriarchal theologies in our contemporary world is investigated. Offered every fall semester.

RELS 258B. Religions of India. 1 Unit.
An introduction to three major religious traditions originating in India including Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism. Student explore the variety of religious experiences available in India by studying and comparing the basic historical, philosophical, spiritual, sociological, ritual, and mythological dimensions of these traditions. Offered every spring semester.

RELS 268. The World of the Bible I: The Middle East. 0.5 or 1 Units.
A travel course, providing a study of major historical, archaeological, and religious (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) sites in selected countries of the Middle East, such as Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. The major focus of the course is on the ancient world. Offered every four years.

RELS 269. The World of the Bible II: The Mediterranean World. 0.5 or 1 Units.
A travel course, providing a study of major historical, archaeological, and religious sites in selected Mediterranean countries, such as Italy, Greece, and Turkey. The major focus of the course is on the ancient world. Offered every four years.

RELS 272. Religion and Sport. 1 Unit.
An introduction to the ways in which religion and sport share commonalities in form and experiences. Students develop an understanding of the basic structures, goals, and experiences of the religious and then consider how those characteristics are also found in sport. Offered every three years.

RELS 275B. Religion and the Civil Rights Movement. 1 Unit.
An introduction to the role that religion played in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Students will study the ideas of Movement leaders who were, primarily, religious leaders to understand the religious force driving the Movement. We will also consider opposition to the Movement that was also based on religion. Offered every summer.

RELS 281V. Moral Reflections on the Holocaust. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. An examination of the theological and ethical questions raised by the Holocaust, which saw the murder of six million Jews and five million non-Jews between the years 1933 and 1945. The course evaluates contemporary philosophical, ethical, and theological responses to the Holocaust, addressing such topics as the absence of God, religious faith in a post-Holocaust age, and the problem of evil and suffering. Offered every spring semester.

RELS 282B. The American Jewish Experience. 1 Unit.
An exploration of the unique experience of Jews in America. Immigrant biographies and personal reflections, together with journals and historical records, are studied in order to understand both early and contemporary “American Jewish life” as a dynamic phenomenon that has adapted to a variety of social and cultural challenges. Offered every fall semester.

RELS 285. Independent Study. 0.5 or 1 Units.
This course is initiated by student interest and contingent upon the expertise of current departmental faculty. Students may take more than one RELS 285, RELS 385, or RELS 485 course during their career with different titles and content.

RELS 290. Special Topics in Religious Studies. 1 Unit.
Varied subject matter according to the interests and expertise of faculty. May be taken more than once for credit.
RELS 290B. Muhammad and the Qur’an. 1 Unit.
This course examines the biography of the founder of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad, as well as the Qur’an, the sacred scripture of the Muslims. Using primary sources in conjunction with critical secondary literature, we will explore both Muhammad and the Qur’an in historical and contemporary perspective, with particular attention given to modern controversies surrounding the life of Muhammad as well as his and the Qur’an’s roles in Muslim devotional life.

RELS 302V. American Christian Experience. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. An examination of the history, beliefs, and practices of significant Christian churches in the United States, including the Puritans, Baptists, Quakers, Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Pentecostals. The course also explores controversial ethical issues in the historical development of American Christian churches. Offered every two years.

RELS 305B. Shapers of Christian Thought. 1 Unit.
An introduction to individuals whose ideas and writings have influenced the formation and development of Christian thought, such as Plato, Pelagius, Augustine, and Anselm. May be taken more than once for credit. Offered every three years.

RELS 307V. Varieties of American Religion. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. This course focuses on sectarian, minority, and new religious movements (NRMS) in the United States. Students examine the teachings and practices of groups such as the Mormons, Asian-inspired NRMs, the Branch Davidians, UFO churches, Jehovah's Witnesses, and contemporary Pagan religions. Students also analyze critical ethical issues such as government intervention in new and minority religions, “revolutionary suicide,” charismatic leadership, and coercive “deprogramming” of NRM members. Offered every two years.

RELS 309. Hebrew Festival Scrolls. 1 Unit.
An examination of the five festival scrolls of the Hebrew Bible: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. Attention is given to historical context, literary analysis, theological implications, and history of usage within Jewish and Christian contexts for each of the five writings. Offered every other spring semester.

RELS 311H. The Dead Sea Scrolls. 1 Unit.
A study of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, their contents, the community that produced them, the historical events that shaped the origin and development of the community, and the continuing significance of these Jewish writings. Offered every three years.

RELS 313V. Prophets of Social Justice. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Social Justice Value. An examination of the call for social justice found in the Hebrew prophets and the appropriation of their message by voices for liberation. Modern calls for social justice are examined against biblical demands. Offered every other spring semester.

RELS 316V. In Search of Jesus. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. An examination of major historical and theological questions surrounding Jesus of Nazareth. How reliable are the accounts in the New Testament gospels? What were his teachings and beliefs? How were the Jesus traditions shaped by the early Christian communities and the gospel writers? The course also explores how various ancient and modern portrayals of Jesus are shaped by individual and cultural expectations. Offered every spring semester. Junior Seminar.

RELS 317V. The Gospels. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. A study of the life and teachings of Jesus as presented in the four gospels in the New Testament. This course gives major attention to the differences among the gospel accounts and the emphases of the individual gospel writers. Offered every three years.

RELS 318V. Life and Letters of Paul. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. A study of one of the most important figures in the history of Christianity - Paul of Tarsus. The course includes an examination of the life and background of Paul and an investigation of the purpose and content of his letters. Offered every three years.

RELS 331B. Islam: Religion of the Prophet. 1 Unit.
An examination of Islam’s history, theology, rituals, spirituality, social organization, scriptures, art, and its cultural and political expressions in the modern world. Offered every two years.

RELS 332. Asian Philosophy. 1 Unit.
An introduction to the philosophical foundations of Asian thought. Students gain an understanding of key schools and philosophers of Indian and East-Asian philosophy. Emphasis is given to comparing ideas of selfhood, divinity, salvation, community, and ethics found in different Eastern philosophical systems.

RELS 334V. Buddhism: The Middle Way. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. An examination of the history, philosophy, rituals, mythology, and art of Buddhism. Beginning with the life of the Buddha, the course traces the development of Buddhism in India and its transplantation to other parts of Asia. Schools studied include Tibetan Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and American forms of Buddhism. The course also discusses the complex interaction between Buddhism and Hinduism. Offered every two years.

RELS 335V. Religion and Violence in Asia. 1 Unit.
This course will examine instances across Asia where religion and violence intersect. Through the lens of conflict, this course will examine traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Daoism, and Shinto. The goal of the course will be to dispel stereotypes concerning religious violence and to explore the religious arguments used to justify violence. Offered every two years.
RELS 336B. Society and the Supernatural in Asia. 1 Unit.
An exploration of literary and folkloric accounts of the supernatural in several Asian milieus. Students will explore beliefs about Indian demons, Chinese fox spirits, and Japanese ghosts, and examine how these beliefs are shaped by history and religious traditions. Major themes will include family life, religious specialists, and community activities, all of which respond to the threat or promise of the supernatural in various ways. Offered every two years.

RELS 337B. The Religion and Culture of Hinduism. 1 Unit.
A study of the religious life and practices of Hindus, examining the pre-Aryan roots of Hinduism, the philosophy of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita, the mythological and iconography of key Hindu gods and goddesses, primary modes of Hindu worship and devotion, and emerging forms of Hinduism in America. Offered every two years.

RELS 339V. Women in Asia. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Human Diversity Value. An introduction to key thinkers and movements in the field of gender studies. The course encourages students to consider how the issues raised by these thinkers relate to the lives of women in Asia. This course also examines how religious phenomena (symbols, ritual, narrative, text) relate to 'genderedness'–to people's experiences as females and males.

RELS 341B. The Idea of the Devil. 1 Unit.
An exploration of the origins of the idea of a supreme, evil being and the various shapes that idea has taken from ancient Zoroastrianism to contemporary Christianity. Offered every two years.

RELS 344B. Religion and American Politics. 1 Unit.
An exploration of the ideologies of the founders of the United States with regard to the relationship of religion and public policy. Students reflect critically on that relationship and consider the proper role of religion in politics in contemporary culture, addressing such issues as school vouchers, stem-cell research, same-sex marriage, and religious affiliation of candidates for political office. Offered every four years.

RELS 352V. Nature, the Sacred, and Ethics. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. An investigation of religious traditions about nature and their relevance for developing an ecological ethic. Central to this study is an understanding of the significant relationship between particular religious views and an ethic of the natural world. Also included is inquiry about concepts of the sacred in connection to nature, as well as conflicts and connections with science. Offered every fall semester.

RELS 358V. Frontiers in Bioethics. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. An investigation of contemporary ethical issues about human life: How ought we to define life? When does it begin and end? Should we technologically assist reproduction? Should we select the sex of our children? Should we allow humans to be cloned? Should we use stem cells to repair the body? Should we genetically engineer humans? This inquiry will necessitate the integration of multiple fields of inquiry, especially biology, philosophy, religion, and law. Offered every spring semester. Junior Seminar.

RELS 352V. Religion and Human Rights. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Social Justice Value. An exploration of the relationship between religious traditions across cultures and the theory and practice of human rights. Students examine the history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the debates concerning the concept of human rights in different cultural settings. Students pay close attention to the ways that religious traditions can both protect and endanger universal human rights. Junior Seminar.

RELS 365B. Mary, Max, and Mozart: Religion and European Culture. 1 Unit.
This course examines the interplay of religion and culture within Europe and particularly Austria. Participants consider the impact of the Grail Legends, the cult of Mary, and the Reformation and Counter Reformation on Medieval Tyrol, and visit several relevant sites. The music of Mozart and Wagner, challengers to National Socialism, and current post-war efforts at restitution and reconciliation are also discussed. A summer Innsbruck study abroad course. Offered every other summer.

RELS 370. Methods and Theories in the Study of Religion. 1 Unit.
An examination of the scholarly attempts to understand, describe, and relate to the sacred. Attention is given to critical methods of social science, philosophy, theology, history, textual studies, and phenomenology. The course also focuses on preparation for the senior research project. Prerequisites: Restricted to majors; Junior standing. Writing enhanced course. Offered every fall semester.

RELS 380. Department Colloquium. 0.0 Units.
Pass/Fail only. A critical examination of current developments in religious studies. Prerequisite: RELS major or minor. Offered every fall semester.

RELS 385. Independent Study. 0.5 or 1 Units.
This course is initiated by student interest and contingent upon the expertise of current departmental faculty. Students may take more than one RELS 285, RELS 385, or RELS 485 course during their career with different titles and content.

RELS 390. Special Topics in Religious Studies. 1 Unit.
Varied subject matter according to the interests and expertise of faculty. May be taken more than once for credit.

RELS 395. Teaching Apprenticeship. 0.5 Units.
Pass/Fail only. Provides an opportunity for select religious studies majors or minors to work closely with a faculty member in planning, teaching, and evaluating a lower-division course. The student also pursues independent study in the subject matter of the course. Prerequisite: junior or senior status and permission of the department chair. May be repeated once.
RELS 397. Internship in Religious Studies. 0.5 or 1 Units.
Pass/Fail only. Through placement in an approved setting such as a religious institution, a non-profit organization, or a social-service agency, students will have an opportunity to enrich their classroom knowledge with experience in religious, ethical, or social justice issues. Typically, full unit internships require 140 hours for the semester. Specific requirements will be presented by way of a contract signed by the student. Requirements may include a journal, research paper, or appropriate work product, and a letter of evaluation from the site supervisor. Prerequisites: permission of department chair and instructor, religious studies major or minor, successful completion of two courses in religious studies, and junior or senior status. May be repeated for credit, but a maximum of one credit may be applied to the major or minor. Enrollment in an internship course requires students to attend an orientation prior to beginning work at their internship site. For more information regarding internship orientations, please contact Career & Professional Development at career@stetson.edu or 386-822-7315.

RELS 412V. Envisioning the Psalms. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. An introduction to the world of the psalmists, examining the prayers and laments of ancient Israel. The images and metaphors of the psalms are explored in order to comprehend the world view behind the texts. Students explore how both ancient and modern readers find instruction, prayer, and praise in the poetry of the psalms. Offered every other spring semester.

RELS 415. Alternative Scriptures: Jewish and Christian Noncanonical Texts. 1 Unit.
A study of early Jewish and Christian writings that are not included in all Jewish and Christian Bibles. Texts that will be studied include works from the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi writings, and the New Testament Apocrypha. The course will also examine the process of canonization, the reasons why certain works were excluded, and the value of noncanonical writings.

RELS 435V. Spiritualities East and West. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. An examination of the perennial human striving across cultures to communicate with, worship, and enter into an intimate relationship with the sacred. Students explore Roman Catholic spirituality, Pentecostal worship, Jewish Kabbalah, Islamic Sufism, the New Spirituality movement, Nature Spirituality, Hindu spirituality, Tibetan Buddhist meditation, and Zen Buddhism. Offered every two years.

RELS 446V. Slaves, Whores, and Poors: Religion and Oppression. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Social Justice Value. An examination of both historical and contemporary events and movements shaped by the interplay of religion with race-gender-class issues. Topics include the marginalization of humans along race, gender, and class lines, justified by traditions of religious domination and oppression. Equally significant are religious voices that challenge these traditions, resulting in calls for liberation, freedom, and equality. Offered every other spring semester.

RELS 459V. The Ethics of Mortality. 1 Unit.
This course focuses on Stetson's Ethical or Spiritual Inquiry Value. An inquiry into the religious ethics of death and dying. Students study different religious traditions with regard to their attitudes toward definitions of death, termination of treatment, and actively causing death. Secular challenges to religious involvement are also included. Offered every fall semester.

RELS 480. Department Colloquium. 0.0 Units.
Pass/Fail only. A critical examination of current developments in religious studies. Prerequisite: RELS major or minor. Offered every fall semester.

RELS 485. Independent Study. 0.5 or 1 Units.
This course is initiated by student interest and contingent upon the expertise of current departmental faculty. Students may take more than one RELS 385, RELS 385, or RELS 485 course during their career with different titles and content.

RELS 490. Special Topics in Religious Studies. 1 Unit.
Varied subject matter according to the interests and expertise of faculty. May be taken more than once for credit.

RELS 499. Senior Project. 1 Unit.
Directed, independent research, culminating in a major research paper and an oral presentation. It is a capstone course in which the student demonstrates her/his research, critical thinking, and communication skills. Prerequisites: RELS 370, senior status, and permission of the department chair. Writing enhanced course. Offered every semester.