

## Religion

Jennifer Schultz, Old Main 130

507-786-3080

[schultzj@stolaf.edu](mailto:schultzj@stolaf.edu)

[wp.stolaf.edu/religion](http://wp.stolaf.edu/religion) (<http://wp.stolaf.edu/religion>)

**The Religion Department of St. Olaf College seeks to enliven and deepen academic reflection on religion and theology in a liberal arts setting. We equip students of all backgrounds and traditions to interpret, evaluate, and respond to religious ideas and practices.**

Our work is shaped by the college's Lutheran heritage and commitments as these unfold in a world of many faiths. In teaching and scholarship, we take up the college's founding conviction that scholarly study of religion is basic to liberal arts learning. Through general education courses and the religion major, we advance the college's goal of cultivating theological literacy. At the center of this work is scholarly study of the Bible and of Christian theology, understood as reasoned reflection on the meaning and truth of Christian faith. We also study Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions, and regard the opportunities afforded by comparative study and religious dialogue as essential to our common goals of understanding religion and theology. Members of the department work with many religious traditions and areas of specialization, and all contribute to the college's general education requirements in religion.

### Overview of the Major

Since the study of religion involves the use of a variety of methodologies and intersects with many other fields of study, students often find that a major in religion helps them integrate their work in other disciplines and develop a focus for their whole liberal arts education. Many students also choose to major in religion as a preparation for seminary or graduate work in religion.

### Intended Learning Outcomes for the Major (<http://wp.stolaf.edu/curriculum-committee/religion-major-ilos>)

### Distinction

See Academic Honors (<http://catalog.stolaf.edu/archive/2015-2016/academic-regulations-procedures/academic-honors/#distinction>)

Religion majors may graduate with distinction if their grade point average is 3.5 in religion and they submit a research project that meets the approval of a departmental review committee. The Junia Prize is usually awarded annually to the best distinction project of the year.

### Special Programs

The Religion Department participates in Foreign Language Across the Curriculum Program (<http://catalog.stolaf.edu/archive/2015-2016/academic-programs/foreign-languages-across-curriculum>), which offers students the opportunity to use their foreign language skills in selected courses. Each year the department offers Interim courses abroad, some carrying general education credit.

## Recommendations for Graduate Study

The religion major offers excellent preparation in breadth and depth of study for graduate programs. We encourage students to take additional level III courses, religion seminars, independent studies, and to develop competence in a foreign language. Distinction in religion is also recommended. Students should consult with their academic advisor and the religion department chair on specific programs and interests.

## Requirements

The religion major consists of eight courses and requires both broad exposure to major approaches to studying religion and concentrated study in some aspect of religion. The requirements are organized in five parts as follows:

General education courses in religion:

REL 121	Bible in Culture and Community (BTS-B)	1.00
One course in theological studies (BTS-T)		1.00
REL 285	What is Religion? Approaches and Methods	1.00

Study of at least two religious traditions using three different academic approaches:

Sacred texts
Religion in history and culture
Religious thought

Intensive studies in religion: 2.00

Select at least two level III courses, at least one of which must be a seminar

Elective courses 1.00

**Total Credits 8**

## Courses

Religion courses fulfill a variety of general education requirements. The department offers several options to complete the Biblical Studies (BTS-B), Theological Studies (BTS-T), and Ethical Issues (EIN) requirements. Additional courses count towards requirements in Historical Studies in Western Culture (HWC), Multicultural Studies (MCD; MCG), and Literary Studies (ALS-L).

### REL 121: *Bible in Culture and Community*

This course introduces first-year students to the dialogue between Biblical traditions and the cultures and communities related to them. Students study major Biblical texts and their interaction with, for example, theology, religious practice, ethics, and social values, while considering methods and fields in the study of religion in a liberal arts setting. An additional prospectus describes the theme of each section.

### REL 202: *Classics and Moderns*

This course introduces the central matters for argument in Christian theology -- God and Christ -- through close reading and critical analysis of selected classic (pre-1700) and modern theological texts. Students focus on the reasons supporting classic Christian beliefs about God, Christ and related topics and on the modern theological criticism of those beliefs. Is it still possible to be a Christian in the beginning of the 21st century?

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 203: *The Greats of Christianity***

This course treats the major moments of theology by focusing on five or six important theological figures, movements or texts spanning ancient, medieval and modern Christian theology.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 207: *Christian Theology and the Moral Life***

Examining essential Christian beliefs with special attention to their implications for the moral life, students in this course analyze the meaning and truth of Christian symbols and claims about God, Christ, creation, fall, providence, redemption, etc., and explore their bearing upon ethical perspectives and principles, moral character and community and societal institutions and practices. Readings include classical and contemporary Christian theological sources.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 208: *Christian Theology and Human Existence***

This course traces the significance of essential Christian theological doctrines (e.g., God, Christ, sin, salvation) for contemporary understandings of human beings and human behavior. Selected comparisons with alternative and/or complementary views of human nature (for example, philosophical, psychological, sociological, literary) are also included.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 209: *Introduction to Feminist Theology***

Students examine traditional Christian doctrines in light of feminist critiques and reformulations. The course focuses especially upon language and images of God, the person of Christ and the work of redemption and understandings of human nature. Students evaluate arguments for and against the compatibility of Christianity and feminism. Counts toward women's and gender studies major and concentration.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 210: *Theology of Food***

Food holds a central place in many world religions. In their feasts and fasts, holy and forbidden foods, community suppers, festivals, and food shelves, people of faith develop and express their theologies. This course examines food beliefs and practices for religion, in particular the theological significance of food in Christianity and how it compares with other faith traditions. The relation of food to the doctrines of God, Christ, and salvation will have special attention. Offered periodically during Interim.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 212: *Christian Theology in Historical Context***

This course offers an overview of the development of Christian thought and practice in the ancient, medieval and modern periods and analyzes the way Christian beliefs have evolved in response to changing historical situations. Special consideration is given to how different theological perspectives have influenced the activities of religious communities and lives of notable individuals.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 213: *Lutheran Heritage***

Analyzing continuity and change within the Lutheran tradition, students consider Luther's theology and proposals for the reform of Catholicism and evaluate major reappraisals of Lutheran beliefs and practices that developed in response to new issues and social situations. Topics include Orthodoxy and Pietism, conservative and liberal responses to the Enlightenment, modern European Lutheranism and issues of particular importance to Lutheranism in Scandinavia, America, and developing countries. Offered periodically during Interim. Counts toward German studies concentration.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 214: *Reformation Theology***

Students analyze 16th-century reform movements in light of their theological and historical contexts and their significance for contemporary theology. The course focuses on contributions and lives of the major figures in the Protestant Reformations (e.g., Luther, Calvin, Zwingli) and the Roman Catholic Reform. Counts toward German studies concentration.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 217: *Christian and Islamic Ethics: Conflicts and Cross-Pollination***

This course compares Christian and Islamic conceptions of the relationship between God and humanity, as foundations for thinking about moral excellence and obligation. It also considers and compares how theological commitments and methods in each religious tradition affect approaches to particular ethical issues such as sexuality, war, and politics. Students work with scripture, film, polemical literature, judicial texts, and theological texts.

**Prerequisites:** BTS-T or permission of instructor.

**REL 218: *Political and Liberation Theology***

This course examines the rise of political and liberation theology movements, the situations and issues to which they respond, theological formulations of political/liberation theologies, and the relationship of these theologies to traditional Christian doctrines. Special focus on the relationship between the theological and political, nature of christology and redemption, images and role of God, and understandings of human nature.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 221: *Jesus in Scripture and Tradition***

This course explores the meaning and significance of Jesus Christ in major New Testament writings: the Gospels, the letters of Paul, Hebrews, Revelation. Students also examine the development of New Testament ideas about Christ in subsequent Christian tradition, both classical and contemporary. Counts toward ancient studies major.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 222: *The Biblical God***

Students examine key texts in the Old and New Testaments with the aim of exploring the issues such writings pose for Christian theological reflection. In addition, they explore selected readings on the doctrine of scripture and language about God. Counts toward ancient studies major.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 223: *Paul: His Letters, His Gospel***

Students read Pauline letters carefully for their major issues, such as apocalyptic, gospel, apostleship, Jew and Gentile, faith, Torah, community. Considering Paul in the context of his times and Paul in the context of later Christianity, students discuss topics such as Jews and Christians, men and women, creation, grace in Paul, and present-day experience. Counts toward ancient studies major.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 225: God and Human Suffering**

Why does human life involve suffering? If God is omnipotent and good, why does evil exist? Is God responsible, or can all evil -- and the suffering that accompanies it -- be explained by sin or human frailty? Students explore some of the ways that Christian theology has attempted to respond to these questions, and they also examine challenges to the Christian perspective.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 227: Jews and Christians after Christendom**

This course explores the interaction between Jews, Christians, and their respective religions in historical and theological perspective. Students consider basic features of Jewish belief and practice, past and present views of Jews and Christians about each other's beliefs, impact of Christ attitudes toward the Jews on the formation and development of Christian doctrines, relation between Christian theology and anti-Semitism, and the possibilities for a new relationship between Christians and Jews.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 230: Theology of Creation**

Christians affirm that God created the world in and through Christ and continues to sustain it by the Holy Spirit. This course attends to the themes of creation and new creation in relation to Biblical texts, to problems posed by science (including evolution and Creationism), and the theological reflections of the created world as fallen and redeemed. Major attention is paid to classic and modern theological discussions of creation and new creation.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 233: God and Faith in Autobiography**

This course focuses on autobiographical texts in which the writer describes his or her life in relationship to God. The course is based on the central Christian theological belief that God is known in historical experience. Students study the different ways in which Christians have sought to understand God's role in their lives by correlating their own experiences with the classic beliefs, symbols, and values of the Christian faith.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 234: Luther and Aquinas: Protestant and Catholic Theology in Dialogue**

The theologies of Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther influence the lives and beliefs of Catholics and Protestants, yet cause persistent division between them. Students examine the distinctive theological contributions of the two theologians, particularly their respective doctrines of justification, sacraments, and God. Students interpret and evaluate each theologian's doctrines as well as modern efforts to reconcile their differences. Offered annually or in alternate years. Counts toward medieval studies major and German studies concentration.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 238: Quest of the Ring, the Grail, and the Cross**

Nordic sagas and modern fantastic works pose important theological questions such as the nature of reality in fantasy, the Eucharist, honor, gift, the grotesque, evil, salvation in Christ, and life as a quest and pilgrimage. They also raise valuable problems about the relationship of Christian beliefs to cultural narratives. Students may read J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, G.K. Chesterton, and selected sagas, alongside theological writings. Offered periodically during Interim.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 239: Beyond Narnia: The Theology of C. S. Lewis**

This course introduces students to Christian theology through examination of selected works of C.S. Lewis. The course considers both Lewis's explicitly theological writings and his fictional works as resources for theological reflection. Offered annually.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 240: Understanding Religious Traditions**

The themes of this introduction to major religious traditions including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam vary from semester to semester; possible topics include sacred texts, religious experience, images of the divine, and the understanding of death and afterlife.

**REL 242: The Religious and the Political: Gandhi, Niebuhr, and King**

This course explores the interface between religion and politics in the lives and thought of Mahatma Gandhi, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Focus will be upon the distinctive ways in which each one appropriated the theological resources of his tradition to justify and analyze the connection between religion and politics. Offered periodically during Interim.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 243: Living Faith: Theology and Practice at Holden Village (off campus)**

This course examines how the gospel transforms the practices of personal and social life. Students explore the nature of Christian community and the connections between Christian theological beliefs and practices. Students participate in the life of Holden Village, an isolated Lutheran retreat center in the Cascade Mountains of Washington. Offered alternate years during Interim.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 244: The Death of God: Reason, Cross, and Theology**

The death of God refers to both the absence of God in a post-Christian culture and the death of Jesus on the cross. These two meanings have a significance for the religious and non-religious alike. Students evaluate the challenges that the death of God has for the concept of God, the meaning and purpose of Jesus, religious belief, reason, and the secular by reading classical and contemporary theological work on the death of Jesus and the death of God. Offered alternate years.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 245: Theology of Religions & Interreligious Dialogue**

Christians and people of other faiths seek to be faithful to their own traditions and also to attend to each other's claims. This course examines ways Christians and other believers develop their doctrinal traditions in the context of religious pluralism. This course gives specific attention to Christian reflection on the doctrines of God, Christ, and salvation in relation to religious reflection by people of other faiths.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 246: Islam -- Religion and Community**

Students examine the formation of Islamic traditions and institutions and their religious meaning, paying special attention to the dynamism and crises of Islam in the 19th and 20th centuries. Counts toward medieval studies major.

**REL 248: Judaism**

This survey of the historical, cultural, and theological developments within Judaism pays special attention to major periods and themes in Jewish life and thought, as well as to contemporary Judaism. Counts toward middle eastern studies concentration.

**Prerequisite:** sophomore status or higher. Open to first-year students with permission of the instructor.

**REL 249: Modern Jewish Thought**

This course examines Jewish religious and philosophical thought in Europe, the United States, and Israel. Social/cultural history and literature provide additional lenses on the modern Jewish experience. Important themes include emancipation, integration, and acculturation; the Enlightenment and its challenges to the authority of Jewish religious tradition; the changing role of religion in the emergent secular nation-state; and negotiations of minority/majority status in modern societies.

**Prerequisite:** sophomore status or higher. Open to first-year students with permission of the instructor.

**AS/RE 253: Hinduism**

This course, surveying the general nature and assumptions of Hindu thought, focuses on the diversity of doctrines and practices within some of its major traditions. Students analyze selections from authoritative Sanskrit texts like the Upanishads and Bhagavad-gita, directing special attention to the central issues and developments in Hindu-Christian dialogue.

**AS/RE 254: Jesus on the Indian Road: A Perspective on Christianity**

The Indian Church, which claims the apostle Thomas as its founder, is the "home base" for this historical exploration of Christianity from the apostolic age to the present. The course considers Christian teachings about God and Jesus, biblical interpretation, worship, response to social, political, and cultural practices through encounters between Indian Christians and other churches. The multiple religions of India, its colonial experience, and its contemporary society are essential context.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 254: Theology in Comparative Perspective**

Comparative theology is the study and interpretation of one religion in conversation with the texts, symbols, and practices of other religious traditions. It aims to discover new theological insights from another or from one's own tradition. This course explores the nature of comparative theology as a method of doing theology. Students read and assess seminal works of comparative theology from the traditions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. Counts toward religion major. Offered once each academic year.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 256: Gender and Religion**

All religious systems organize gender in different ways. This course examines gender as a critical category of analysis for religion by using contemporary scholarly perspectives on religion. Anthropology and other social sciences, history, film, fiction, and other sources may be used. The instructor in any given semester will draw on one or more religious traditions to provide case studies.

**AS/RE 256: Religions of China and Japan**

This course introduces the religious and philosophical traditions of China and Japan: Confucianism, Chinese Taoism, Buddhism, Japanese Shinto, and the folk traditions. Students read classical texts such as Zhuangzi and Mencius and analyze fundamental values and concepts such as Tao, yin/yang, and humaneness.

**AS/RE 257: Buddhism**

This course studies the Buddhist view of the human predicament and its solution. Students examine the life of the Buddha, Buddhist scriptures, and the historical and philosophical development of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism in East and Southeast Asia.

**REL 259: Religion, the Visual Arts, and Culture in Rome (abroad)**

This course traces the influences of religion in Rome as it was gradually transformed from the capital city of a pagan empire into the administrative center of Catholic Christianity. Students conduct a selective comparison of ancient, medieval, renaissance, baroque, and modern religion through visits to historical sites, churches, museums, and contemporary cultural events in Rome and to other Italian cities that interacted with Rome. Offered periodically during Interim.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 260: Religion in America**

This course introduces students to the history of religion in America in the context of American culture, paying attention to the formal structures and to questions of what "being religious" has meant to Americans. The course considers the range of religious traditions in the U.S.A. while attending to the Christian majority and variety within it. The course focuses specifically on the experiences and contributions of women and minorities. Counts toward women's and gender studies major and concentration.

**REL 262: Catholic Rome, Lutheran Wittenberg (abroad)**

This course examines religion in Italy and Germany at several decisive turning points in the past and today. Students analyze Catholic theology and church practices, from ancient times to the Renaissance, through site visits and events in Rome (city of the popes) and Florence. They examine emergence of Protestantism through activities in the region around Wittenberg, birthplace of Martin Luther's Reformation. They compare the influence of religion in Italian and German culture. Offered periodically during Interim. Counts toward medieval studies major and German studies concentration.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 263: Roman Catholic Theology**

Students consider the present situation and future prospects of Roman Catholic theology through an engagement with the figures and events that have most deeply shaped Catholic theology in the 20th and 21st centuries. The course also examines recent Catholic views on the central topics of Christian theology, God, Christ, salvation and the Church, and the relationship of these views to Protestant ideas about the same issues.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 264: Theology and Sexuality**

This course addresses theological understandings of love, desire, embodiment, and relationship in the context of human sexuality. Students study classic theological treatments of sexuality, with attention to the tensions among divergent appraisals of sex; and they study contemporary theological discussions about subjects that have given rise to controversy, such as marriage, gender, same-sex relations, family, or commodification. Counts toward women's and gender studies major and concentration.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 267: African-American Religious Thought in the 20th Century**

This course offers an intensive study of African-American religious thought with particular emphasis on the 20th century. Structured thematically, the course covers: African-American religious roots; African-American Christian thought with particular emphasis on the Christ event in terms of redemption, salvation, and liberation; Africentrism and Black Nationalism as interpretive and critical lenses of African-American religious experience; and African-American responses to the theodical, i.e., the problem of evil and suffering.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.



**REL 271: Bible in Context: Hist/Geography/Culture in Israel & Palestine (abroad)**

This course studies the historical, geographical, and cultural background of Judaism and Christianity, focusing on major biblical sites in the Holy Land. Through the intersection of textual study, archaeology, and history, students explore biblical events from the time of Israel's ancestors to Jesus and the early church in, for example, Jerusalem, Galilee, and Jordan. The course also examines the history of conflict among Jews, Christians, and Muslims over the meaning and possession of the land. Offered alternate years during Interim. Counts toward ancient studies major.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 272: Sacred Places in Greece and Turkey (abroad)**

This course explores the notion of sacred places and examines specific sites sacred to ancient people, to Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Students visit both natural places and constructed sites (i.e., temples, churches, mosques, and synagogues). Students attend to scholarly theory, sites' physical characteristics and history, ongoing human interaction, inter-religious dynamics, and their own responses. The interplay of religion, social life, and political power relative to sacred space provides additional thematic focus. Offered alternate years during Interim. Counts toward ancient studies major.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 273: Hebrew Prophets in History and Christian Tradition**

Students examine the theological significance of the Israelite prophetic literature by tracing its origin and composition in ancient Israelite contexts, its appropriate and reinterpretation in the New Testament writings in light of early Christian experiences of Jesus Christ, and its continuing influence on postbiblical Christian worship and theology. Offered periodically. Counts toward ancient studies major.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 275: Historical Geography and the Bible - Greece and Turkey (abroad)**

This course presents an opportunity to study the life, thought, and historical significance of the Apostle Paul in the very settings in which he traveled and lived. Visits to archaeological sites in Greece and Turkey enable students to explore: 1) the relationship of geography, culture and religion in the Book of Acts, the Letters of Paul and the Bible generally; and 2) the religious pluralism of the first century Roman world, including the Jewish and Hellenistic roots of Christianity. The course also explores other significant developments in the early church of this region, and considers the Christian encounter with Islam.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B. Offered during Interim.

**REL 276: The Ethics of Jesus**

This course examines the ethical teachings of Jesus as found in the canonical Gospels (with special focus on the Sermon on the Mount), explores how these teachings have been understood at some major moments in Western history, and brings them to bear on the task of contemporary ethical reflection. Issues examined include, for example, non-violence, social and economic justice, sexuality, and ethnic conflict. Counts toward ancient studies major.

**Prerequisites:** completion of BTS-T or permission of instructor.

**REL 277: Travel and Ethics**

This course examines ethical issues raised by travel as well as the ways that various ethical perspectives address these issues. Students consider the ethics of pilgrimage in world religions, tourism and its critics, Christian perspectives on intercultural travel, issues raised by study abroad, and theories of ethical travel in relation to ecotourism, sustainability, service, and other ideals.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-T.

**PH/RE 278: The Ethics of War**

This course is a philosophical and theological reflection on the moral evaluation of war. Can war ever be morally justified? If so, what are the criteria for determining a war's just initiation, just conduct and just termination? Topics considered include a range of normative perspectives in their religious and secular expressions, for example, principled and pragmatic pacifism, just war tradition, realism, crusader ethics, utilitarianism, Kantianism, communitarianism, natural-law theory, feminism.

**Prerequisite:** completion of BTS-T or permission of instructor.

**REL 278: Christian Ethics and Ecological Justice**

Within the contemporary context, humanity's place within Earth's ecological system is fraught with ethical challenges. This course examines the Christian ethical tradition as a means to identify ethical resources for addressing ecological problems as well as reflect on how nature itself challenges ethical reflection. Students will investigate particular moral issues relating to sustainability and ecological concerns. The course will cover why and how God calls Christians to tend and sustain creation. Counts toward religion major and environmental studies major (all emphases) and concentration.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-T.

**REL 280: Religion and Literature**

Students explore the religious significance of selected works of literature and examine how literary plot, character, symbolism, and theme raise religious questions, reveal ethical concerns and imply theological convictions.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 282: "Obama's Theologian": Reinhold Niebuhr**

Reinhold Niebuhr was arguably the most important American Christian theologian of the 20th century. He continues to inspire in the 21st with Barack Obama himself claiming Niebuhr as a central intellectual, moral, and spiritual influence. This course examines Niebuhr's "Christian Realism" and the implications of that view for understanding God, Christ, creation, sin, nature, grace, history, love, justice, and morality in economics, war, domestic politics, and international relations. Offered periodically.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 285: What is Religion? Approaches and Methods**

A study of competing and complementary approaches to the study of religion prevalent in the contemporary academy, this course prepares sophomore and junior religion majors for more advanced research seminars. Paying attention to the emphases and presuppositions of each approach, students develop an improved ability to understand the way that these different approaches affect scholarship and contribute to agreements and disagreements about what religion is and should be.

**Prerequisites:** BTS-T or permission of instructor.

**AS/RE 289: Buddhism, Peace and Justice**

Students examine contemporary Buddhist moral teachings on social issues such as violence and peacemaking, human rights and social justice, and humanity and the environment. Coursework focuses on the writings of Vietnamese monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh, Tibetan leader-in-exile Tenzin Gyatso (Fourteenth Dalai Lama), American ecologist Joanna Macy, and others. Students consider the moral paradigms of Christianity and Buddhism: Christ and the Bodhisattva.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-T or permission of instructor.

**REL 293: Religious Pluralism and the Nature of Community**

The nature and boundaries of communities, as well as the quality of relationships within communities, are determined by theology as well as by social, political, and ethnic factors. Students examine the ways in which the world's religions, particularly Christianity, have interpreted each other's significance and truth claims and considers the ethical implications of these different responses.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-T or permission of instructor.

**REL 294: Academic Internship****REL 296: Love, Justice and Social Relations**

This course examines theological and ethical aspects of Christian social responsibility. It examines the meaning and normative import of Christian faith for justice and love in relational spheres (politics, economics, marriage and family, gender relations). It also explores the ethical implications of central Christian doctrines (vocation, sin, grace, two kingdoms, creation). Issues raised include civil disobedience, use of lethal force, distributive justice, love and self-sacrifice, and gender roles.

**Prerequisites:** BTS-T or permission of instructor.

**REL 297: Christian Ethics, Life and Death**

An examination of the ethics of killing and letting die from the perspective of Christian belief. Possible topics include abortion, suicide, euthanasia, war, capital punishment, global hunger and starvation, and the killing of non-human animals. Special attention to the place of Christian moral views in modern secular or pluralistic societies. Readings from classic and contemporary Christian ethical sources as well as from contemporary secular, moral, legal, and political theory.

**Prerequisites:** BTS-T or permission of instructor.

**REL 298: Independent Study****REL 302: History of Christian Thought I**

Students critically analyze the development of Christian thought from its beginnings to the 9th century. Special attention is placed on the theological controversies which led to the formation of the Christian community's central doctrines: God as Trinity, Jesus Christ as divine and human, salvation as divine action and human response. Students read from Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, Augustine, and others. Counts toward ancient studies and medieval studies majors.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 303: History of Christian Thought II**

This course provides a critical analysis of the development of Christian thought in the Middle Ages and Reformation, 11th through 16th centuries. Particular attention is paid to the great theological systems of the Middle Ages and to the theological aims of the 16th-century reforming movements, drawing upon readings from Anselm, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Luther, Calvin, and others. Counts toward medieval studies major.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 304: History of Christian Thought III**

This course offers a critical analysis of the development of Christian thought in the modern period, 17th century to 1970. Students pay special attention to the rise of modern historical and philosophical outlooks that challenge traditional Christian claims and to the appropriation and criticism of these outlooks in modern theology. Students read from Edwards, Schleiermacher, Barth, Bultmann, and others.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 320: Interpreting Sacred Texts**

Careful study of selected sacred texts provides students with the opportunity to learn and use various tools and methods of interpretation. Students increase their understanding of the origins, structure, use and interpretation of sacred texts in various religious communities. Specific texts and traditions vary. Students may repeat the course with different primary texts. Counts toward ancient studies major.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 341: Conscience and Its Critics**

Students examine traditional and recent Christian views of conscience, as well as alternative views and criticisms from various normative perspectives. Considering philosophical theories, psychological views, feminist thought, political issues, and literary texts, students explore difficult cases of conscience.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-T or permission of instructor.

**REL 344: Feminist Perspectives and Christian Ethics**

How might the Christian ethical systems that have dominated western culture look different if women's experiences and perspectives had been more centrally included? This course focuses on the continuities and contrasts between traditional Jewish and Christian ethics and the feminist and womanist ethical challenges to them which have emerged over the last quarter century. Counts toward women's and gender studies major and concentration.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-T or permission of instructor.

## Level III Seminars for Majors

**REL 390: History of Religions Seminar**

May be repeated if topic is different.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 391: Biblical Seminar**

May be repeated if topic is different. Counts toward ancient studies major.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 392: Studies in Religion Seminar**

May be repeated if topic is different. May count toward ancient studies and medieval studies majors.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 393: Theological Seminar**

May be repeated if topic is different.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 394: Academic Internship****REL 395: Ethics Seminar**

May be repeated if topic is different.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 396: Directed Undergraduate Research**

This course provides a comprehensive research opportunity, including an introduction to relevant background material, technical instruction, identification of a meaningful project, and data collection. The topic is determined by the faculty member in charge of the course and may relate to his/her research interests. Offered based on department decision. May be offered as a 1.00 credit course or .50 credit course.

**Prerequisite:** determined by individual instructor.

**REL 397: Religion in Dialogue**

May be repeated if topics are different.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

**REL 398: Independent Research****REL 399: Thematic Seminar**

This integrative seminar focuses on the pursuit of research, the explanation of research to fellow students and the exploration of connections among diverse approaches to the selected topic, which changes annually. May be repeated if topic is different. May count toward ancient studies and medieval studies majors.

**Prerequisite:** BTS-B.

## Faculty

**Chair, 2015-2016****Jamie A. Schillinger**

Associate Professor of Religion

Christian thought and ethics; Islamic thought and ethics

**John D. Barbour**

Professor of Religion

religion and literature; ethics

**Anthony Bateza**

Instructor in Religion

reformation studies

**Patricia Z. Beckman**

Assistant Professor of Religion

Christian mysticism; history of Christianity; women and religions

**Mara H. Benjamin**

Associate Professor of Religion

Jewish studies

**David Booth**

Associate Professor of Religion

history of theology; philosophy and psychology of religion; feminist theology; theology and sexuality

**Jacob J. Erickson**

Instructor in Religion and Environmental Studies

theology; religion and ecology; queer theory

**Kiara Esterbrooks**

Instructor in Religion

**James S. Hanson**

Associate Professor of Religion

New Testament

**Peder J. Jøthen**

Assistant Professor of Religion

religious ethics

**L. DeAne Lagerquist** (on leave)

Professor of Religion

church history; American religion; Christianity in India; Lutheranism

**Margaret S. Odell**

Professor of Religion

Old Testament

**Anantanand Rambachan**

Professor of Religion

Hinduism

**Barbara Reed**

Professor of Religion and Asian Studies

Buddhism; East Asian religions; women and religion in Asia; religious myths and rituals; Taoist literature

**Jason J. Ripley**

Assistant Professor of Religion

Biblical theology; Gospel of John; imperial; gender; postcolonial interpretation

**Edmund N. Santurri**

Professor of Religion and Philosophy

ethics; philosophical theology

**Douglas J. Schuurman**

Professor of Religion

history of ethical theory; vocation; theology and ethics; theology and science

**Gregory A. Walter**

Associate Professor of Religion

theology

**Charles A. Wilson**

Professor of Religion

theology