

# CULTURAL STUDIES - RELIGIOUS STUDIES CONCENTRATION - FOR STUDENTS MATRICULATED AFTER SEPT. 3, 2014 BUT BEFORE SEPT. 7, 2021

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## Overview

Religious stories and devotional behaviors are a core part of most human societies. Throughout time, religions and their varying communities and traditions of interpretation have played vital roles in culturally and politically shaping and reshaping our lives and world. To elucidate this complex of personal, social and historical interconnections requires multiple perspectives.

The academic study of religious traditions therefore employs multiple disciplinary approaches to analyze and compare the content of, theories about and effects of diverse religious texts, beliefs and practices. This work can be undertaken in several areas of studies, depending on the student's emphasis. For example, the student can create a Cultural Studies, Social Science, or Interdisciplinary Studies degree plan with a concentration in religious studies.

## Skills and Knowledge

Students who graduate with a religious studies concentration should be able to effectively evaluate theories that define the phenomenon of religion. Therefore, they should include studies that:

- Analyze recurring religious themes, patterns, structures, language and practices.
- Identify and analyze core components such as deity, cosmogony, theodicy and ethics.
- Critically examine the significance of sacred texts, scriptures, traditions, rituals and devotional practices.

Students who graduate with a religious studies concentration should develop a multicultural perspective and investigate diverse representations of religious expressions in their ancient, modern and contemporary forms. Therefore, they should compare traditions from at least three of these categories:

- Religions of "The Book" (Judaism, Christianity, Islam).
- Scriptural Asian religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism).
- Indigenous Asian religions (Shintoism, Bonism, Shamanism).
- North and/or South American native religions.
- African and/or African diaspora religions.

Students who graduate with a religious studies concentration should investigate historical contexts of the growth and development of religions in various cultures as affected by significant cross-cultural relationships. Therefore, studies should investigate and compare:

- The place of religion in societies both as an institution and as an ethical and/or moral authority.

- How diverse traditions account for male and female roles.
- The role of religions as a political force from both historical and contemporary perspectives.

Finally, students who graduate with a religious studies concentration should be able to apply diverse disciplinary approaches to the study of religion. Therefore, the degree plan should include theoretical foundations in several fields, such as:

- Anthropology.
- Art.
- Philosophy.
- History.
- Literature.
- Political science.
- Psychology.
- Sociology.

Although individuals may find religious studies useful in the exploration of their personal beliefs, prospective students should be aware that Empire State College is committed to a pluralistic perspective in teaching religious studies, examining multiple schools of religious thought, including critiques of religion itself. This commitment also includes the tacit understanding that no tradition has exclusive access to religious truth, however that is defined.

## College Learning Goals

In keeping with the college guidelines, students should develop the ability to use relevant methods of critical thinking, reading and writing to synthesize their findings. In writing about your degree plan, include how your individual application of religious studies concentration guidelines has helped you to accomplish some of the college learning goals. Some of these learning goals may be met outside your concentration, or may be infused in multiple courses.

**Active Learning:** Assess and build upon previous learning and experiences to pursue new learning, independently and in collaboration with others.

**Breadth and Depth of Knowledge:** Cultivate a broad, interdisciplinary understanding in the liberal arts and sciences, as well as expertise in a particular field.

**Social Responsibility:** Engage in ethical reasoning and reflect on issues such as democratic citizenship, diversity, social justice and environmental sustainability, both locally and globally.

**Communication:** Express and receive ideas effectively, in multiple contexts and through multiple strategies.

**Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** Evaluate, analyze, synthesize and critique key concepts and experiences and apply diverse perspectives to find creative solutions to problems concerning human behavior, society and the natural world.

**Quantitative Literacy:** Read, interpret, use and present quantitative information effectively.

**Information and Digital Media Literacy:** Critically assess, evaluate, understand, create and share information using a range of collaborative technologies to advance learning, as well as personal and professional development.