

# Religious Studies

Religious studies at Guilford explores the mystery and meaning of our existence as selves in the many aspects of the social and natural world. We seek to nurture wonder, insight, clear and creative thinking, to understand humanity's destructive ways with others and the environment, and to imagine ways of mending the world. We want to open heart and mind to the sacred and the problematic in our world today and historically. The burning issues we address are forms of social oppression and environmental destruction, the nature of the divine and the human condition, the development and practice of religious traditions, and the meaning of the religious. We aim to draw forth leadership potential in all students to enable them throughout their lives to be agents of change where they find themselves, overcoming injustice and engendering the fullness of life. The Quaker context of Guilford is fundamental to our ways of teaching. All classes expect and enable students to discover the resources within to engage truth and to take responsibility for their learning and living in this world in ways that foster peace, simplicity, integrity, equality, and community.

Education in religious studies begins from where each student is, descends to the radical center, and draws forth each student's energies of creative, critical, and ethical responses in personal engagement with the multifarious issues of religious studies. Our teaching intends both to challenge and support the process of learning as mind-expanding and transforming. We work intensely on developing capacities of thinking orally and in writing, of listening, and of working together as well as in solitude. We do this not only for self-development and to know truth, but for the good of the community of being.

Religious studies employs many methodologies, such as the theological, philosophical, historical, ethical, literary, psychological, socioeconomic, and anthropological. Exploring religion is inherently interdisciplinary; we consider the interconnections in all our courses and require one explicitly interdisciplinary course for the major. We emphasize careful interpretation of significant works from a variety of religious and ethical traditions. Our global context includes the West, the Middle East, the Far East, Latin America, and indigenous peoples. The formats for learning emphasize seminar discussions, supplemented with individual reading and writing and student collaboration, lectures, role-playing, film analysis, and internships for social service and social action.

The careers our majors enter upon after graduation, often after circuitous journeys, are quite diverse—teaching, law, service and social work, the ministry, counseling, religious education, art, business, government, and non-governmental organizations.

## Why Guilford College?

Consistently rated nationally by *The Princeton Review* as well as being one of the 40 colleges in *Colleges that Change Lives* by Loren Pope, Guilford College inspires each student to achieve excellence through an engaging community, rooted in Quaker values, which nurtures creativity and social responsibility.

## What can a Guilford education offer you?

- An urban setting near other colleges & universities with an area student population of over 27,000 students
- A consortium agreement with University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro College, Bennett College, North Carolina A&T State University, Elon University and High Point University provides students with access to courses free of charge
- A college mission statement & core values based on, and consistent with, Quaker testimonies. Guilford's core values are: Community, Diversity, Equality, Excellence, Integrity, Justice & Stewardship.
- A challenging academic program which emphasizes not only academic tracks and the learning process, but also the interconnection between curricular and co-curricular pursuits
- A diverse student population providing a stimulating peer environment
- Excellent study abroad programs in China, England, France, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Scotland, Spain, and Wales

## The academic program in Religious Studies

The Bachelor of Arts degree is offered in Religious Studies.

A minor is offered in Religious Studies.

## Required courses for the Religious Studies major

The major can be completed by fulfilling one of three tracks: Western, Comparative, or Self-Designed. In both the Western and Comparative Tracks, students take at least one course in each of six areas:

Contemporary Issues  
Ethics  
Western History

Biblical Studies  
Comparative Religions  
Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Western-Track students may count a maximum of two comparative religion courses toward the eight required courses. Students in the Comparative Track take at least four Comparative courses and at least three Western courses (REL 215 or 216, REL 337, and a Contemporary Issues course). In addition to courses in these six areas, majors in the Western and Comparative Tracks are required to take the Junior Year Colloquium (REL 395) plus two additional elective courses, for a minimum total of 33 credits in the major.

The Self-Designed Track is for majors who want to create their own program with a specific focus, such as ethics (for example, race, war, gender, class, environment), religion and interdisciplinary studies (for example, religion and literature, religion and the natural sciences), and philosophy of religion (the nature of the religious or the nature of the different methodologies used in religious studies). Students opting for this track must have demonstrated the ability to engage in substantial independent reflections on religion and must show a sufficient understanding of religious studies and their place within it in order to create their own course of study. In formulating their track, students articulate how their religious studies courses interrelate into a coherent course of study and how they contribute to the chosen focus.

Each self-designed course of study is formulated in conjunction with the student's adviser and is approved by the department as a whole. It is expected that every self-designed course of study will involve at least one course from each of the department's faculty and at least four upper-level courses (300s and 400s). Majors in this track are required to take the Junior Year Colloquium (REL 395) and have a minimum total of 33 credits in the major. Applications for the Self-Designed Track are normally submitted by the first semester of the student's junior year.

The major offers further opportunities for specialized study through independent studies, senior theses, and internships. The Frederic and Margaret Crownfield Prize is awarded annually to the student writing the best paper in religious studies.

### Faculty

Eric D. Mortensen, Assistant Professor, Chair; [emortens@guilford.edu](mailto:emortens@guilford.edu)  
Jane C. Redmont, Assistant Professor  
Parveen Hasanali, Assistant Professor  
Max Carter, Adjunct Professor

**For additional information about Religious Studies at Guilford College visit [www.guilford.edu/academics](http://www.guilford.edu/academics)**

