

# RELIGION

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM INFORMATION



"Centre puts an emphasis on critical analysis and asking the difficult questions. For me, being a religion major means studying faiths through their traditions and cultures around the world but never taking anything I read, hear, see, or learn at face value."

### ADEEL AHMED

Centre Class of 2018

Double Major: Religion and History

THE BEST WAY TO INTRODUCE CENTRE'S RELIGION PROGRAM IS BY WAY OF THE COURSE THAT CONCLUDES THE MAJOR. STUDENTS OFTEN CALL IT THE MOST FRIGHTENING AND MOST INTELLECTUALLY STIMULATING EXPERIENCE OF THEIR COLLEGE CAREERS. STUDENTS START THE SEMINAR WITH THEIR REACTIONS TO THE READINGS, AND A LIVELY DEBATE SOON FOLLOWS. INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE, CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE FACULTY, AND A SENSE OF SHARED CONVERSATION ARE ALL VITAL FOR THE RELIGION PROGRAM AT CENTRE.

### THE MAJOR

Religious studies at Centre is an ideal major for the liberal arts student. Religion courses regularly involve or relate to language, history, literature, philosophy, archaeology, anthropology, and even science — religion courses are a veritable liberal arts curriculum. Students are encouraged to raise the most basic questions of life in a serious way and to seek the answers wherever they may be found, even across traditional disciplinary boundaries. Through a critical reading of religious texts and an exploration of history, beliefs, ethics, and rituals, the program offers an opportunity to deepen the understanding of one's own religious tradition as well as to explore those of others. At the same time, it helps illuminate political, economic, social, and artistic behaviors that reflect those religious traditions.

The major requirements allow for much freedom in the choice of courses. Beyond the introductory courses, students take courses focused on particular religious traditions, the senior

seminar, and upper-level courses of their choice. The courses range from studies of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, to social ethics, religious art and architecture, archaeology and material culture, science and religion, and scriptural studies.

### GRADUATE SCHOOL AND JOBS

Graduates who have majored in religion at Centre have proved themselves to be well prepared for graduate and professional study in religion. They have acquitted themselves well in the nation's best divinity schools and graduate departments of religion including Harvard University, Duke Divinity School, Yale Divinity School, Union Theological Seminary in New York, Vanderbilt Divinity School, Claremont School of Theology, The University of Chicago Divinity School, and Princeton Theological Seminary.

Of course, not all our graduates pursue a post-graduate degree. Many have taken jobs in a variety of fields including writing, social work, computer science, youth ministry, banking, and teaching. Those who have taken jobs or pursued professions not directly related to their religious studies often comment that the religion major nonetheless proved important as it prepared them to write effectively, think critically, and respond to an increasingly complex world with tolerance, compassion, and understanding.

### FACULTY

**RICK AXTELL** (B.A., Mississippi College; M.Div., Ph.D., Southern Baptist theological seminary; postgraduate study, University of Notre Dame), Stodghill Professor of Religion, College Chaplain. Axtell's interests and teaching focus on religious social ethics, human rights, justice, and sustainable development.

**W. DAVID HALL** (B.A., California State University-Sacramento; M.Div., Ph.D., University of Chicago), Professor of Religion and Philosophy. Hall's research interests include 19th- and 20th-century European thought, political philosophy, philosophy and rhetoric, and philosophical theology.

**CHRIS HASKETT** (B.A., Marywood University; M.A., Columbia University; PhD University of Wisconsin-Madison), Assistant Professor of Religion. Haskett specializes in South Asian religions, and researching in Himalayan Buddhist monasteries and communities in India. His research focuses on the history of Buddhism in ancient and medieval India, Hinduism and Jainism, and the Tibetan Buddhist canon.

**LEE M. JEFFERSON** (B.A., Sewanee-The University of the South; M.Div., Southern Methodist University; M.A., Ph.D., Vanderbilt University), NEH Associate Professor of Religion. Jefferson's primary area of interest is the development of the Christian tradition and art and imagery of Late Antiquity. He has also developed a study abroad course on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

**MATTHEW PIERCE** (B.A., Bryan College; M.A., Ph.D., Boston University), Assistant Professor of Religion. Pierce specializes in pre-modern Islamic history and thought. His current research focuses on medieval Arabic and Persian biographies, analyzing the production of cultural symbols related to gender, authority, and identity.

**SHAYNA SHEINFELD** (B.A., DePaul University; M.T.S., Harvard Divinity School; Ph.D. McGill University), Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion. Sheinfeld specializes in Second Temple Judaism, early Christianity, Judaism, and apocalypses. She also analyzes religion in popular culture including TV shows (e.g. *Battlestar Galactica*) and literature (e.g. *The Magicians Series*).

**SHANA L. SIPPY** (A.B., Barnard College, Columbia University; M.T.S., Harvard Divinity School; Ph.D. candidate, Columbia University), Visiting Instructor of Religion. Sippy's research examines the articulation of identities and the making of Hindu and Jewish selves and communities in modernity, as well as the intersection of religious traditions with colonialism, social movements and globalization. She combines textual analysis with anthropological work on ritual, education, the body, race, nationalism, migration, gender, and sexuality.



## VISIT CENTRE

The best way to judge Centre is to tour the campus, talk to the professors and students, attend a class, and spend the night in a residence hall. We invite you to visit and encourage you to contact the Admission Office if you have any questions.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE RELIGION PROGRAM AT CENTRE, CONTACT:

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## TO COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH A CENTRE STUDENT MAJORING IN RELIGION, CONTACT:

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## RELIGION WEB PAGE

[www.centre.edu/academics/majors-minors/religion](http://www.centre.edu/academics/majors-minors/religion)

