

Religion

The religion curriculum at California Lutheran University challenges students to engage in the academic study of religion and to explore the religious questions raised in multiple faith traditions, such as the existence and nature of God, how personal and community ethics are shaped, how religion informs our living in a complex and global society, and the role of scriptures in the lives of the faithful. Courses include themes or topics across multiple religious traditions, as well as in-depth studies of specific religious traditions, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism.

The religion degree program at Cal Lutheran provides a solid grounding in the academic study of religion, using the tools of critical thinking, analysis of primary sources, and engagement with diverse religious traditions locally and globally. This program supports the liberal arts emphasis of the University and prepares students to understand and negotiate the myriad complexities of religion they will face after graduation, whether they work in business, law, local government, social services, education, medicine, administration, sales, or the environment. In addition to teaching students the skills of critical thinking and sustained community engagement needed for many careers today, the Religion Major also prepares students for graduate study in religion. Pre-seminary advising is also available to majors and non-majors alike.

Opportunities exist for students to do internships, experiential learning, mentored research, and independent studies, allowing them to explore areas of potential career interest.

Bachelor of Arts in Religion

36 credits minimum.

RLTH 100 or RLTH 300	Religion, Identity and Vocation Religion, Identity and Vocation	4
RLTH 493	Research and Methods	2
RLTH 494	Research and Writing	2
One Course in "Sacred Literature and Languages"		
RLTH 315	Classical Hebrew Lang/Lit I	4
RLTH 316	Classical Hebrew Lang/Lit II	4
RLTH 317	Introduction to Biblical Greek I	4
RLTH 318	Introduction to Biblical Greek II	4
RLTH 320	Bible in the Ancient World	4
RLTH 321	The Bible and the Contemporary World	4
RLTH 323	St. Paul, Identity & Community Org	4
RLTH 328	Exploring the Qur'an	4
One Course in "Theology, Ethics and the Arts"		
RLTH 344	God in Christian Thought	4
RLTH 347	Liberation and Theology	4
RLTH 349	Queer Theology	4
RLTH 350	Contemporary Christian Ethics	4
RLTH 351	Global Ethics	4
RLTH 353	Violence, Religion and Politics	4
RLTH 354	Theology and Business Ethics	4
RLTH 355	Cooperation in Modern India	4
RLTH 356	Sexual Ethics	4
RLTH 381	Religion, Food and the Environment	4
RLTH 382	Religion and Public Life	4
RLTH 384	Religion and Ecological Ethics	4
RLTH 391	Children, Youth and Family Ministry	4
RLTH 392	Christian Liturgy and Worship	4
RLTH 393	Spirituality and the Arts	4
ART 412	Christian Art in the Middle Ages	4
One Course in "Religious Traditions"		
RLTH 331	Topics Medieval/Early Modern Christianity	4
RLTH 332	Luther and the 16th Century Reformations	4
RLTH 334	The American Religious Experience	4

RLTH 360	Jesus in Film and History	4
RLTH 365	Women and Religion	4
RLTH 374	Jews and Judaism	4
RLTH 375	Muslims in the Modern World	4
RLTH 379	Sikhism	4
RLTH 395	Lutheran Spirituality	4
RLTH 396	Christian Spirituality	4
RLTH 397	Islamic Spirituality	4
RLTH 398	Sacred Space and Ritual	4

Four Upper Division Religion and Theology Courses which follow an articulated focus

Minor in Religion:

20 credits minimum;

RLTH 100	Religion, Identity and Vocation	4
or RLTH 300	Religion, Identity and Vocation	
Choose four more courses from at least two different 300-level religion areas		16
Sacred Literature and Languages, Theology, Ethics and The Arts or Religious Traditions		
Total Hours		20

Courses

Lower Division

RLTH 100. Religion, Identity and Vocation. (4).

This course introduces the study of religion. It pursues questions concerning the history, meaning, and interpretation of religious texts and action, and the broader contexts in which religion evolves. In addition to selective focus on the Christian tradition, this course considers core values of Lutheran higher education such as pluralism, interfaith cooperation, and sustainability. Additional religious traditions may be included.

RLTH 291. Intergrative Seminar Vocation & Leadership. (3).

Through reading, group discussion, community engagement, and personal reflection, this course equips students to situate their own vocations and leadership styles in the context of communities to which they belong. Prerequisite: Permission of the Instructor.

RLTH 292. Interfaith Storytelling and Organizing. (2).

Upper Division

RLTH 300. Religion, Identity and Vocation. (4).

This course introduces the study of religion. It pursues questions concerning the history, meaning and interpretation of religious texts and action, and the broader contexts in which religion evolves. In addition to selective focus on the Christian tradition, this course considers core values of Lutheran higher education such as pluralism, interfaith cooperation and sustainability. Additional religious traditions may be included. This course satisfied the Speaking Intensive Core requirement and the RTHL 100 core requirement. It is recommended for transfer students of junior and senior status who have not taken RTHL 100.

RLTH 315. Classical Hebrew Lang/Lit I. (4).

This course is the first of a two-semester sequence of study leading to a reading knowledge of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and other ancient Hebrew texts. Basic Hebrew grammar and vocabulary are studied in conjunction with questions of the literary, religious, and linguistic culture of ancient Israel and early Judaism.

RLTH 316. Classical Hebrew Lang/Lit II. (4).

This course is the second of a two-semester sequence of study leading to a reading knowledge of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and other ancient Hebrew texts. Basic Hebrew grammar and vocabulary are studied in conjunction with questions of the literary, religious, and linguistic culture of ancient Israel and early Judaism. (Cross listed with Hebrew 316; this course fulfills the Core 21 Language Requirement).

RLTH 317. Introduction to Biblical Greek I. (4).

A beginning study of biblical Greek that builds a foundation in the essentials of grammar, vocabulary, and translation. Includes readings in Mark and Philippians, as well as (in the second semester) discussion of theological implications.

RLTH 318. Introduction to Biblical Greek II. (4).

A beginning study of biblical Greek that builds a foundation in the essentials of grammar, vocabulary, and translation. Includes readings in Mark and Philippians, as well as (in the second semester) discussion of theological implications.

RLTH 320. Bible in the Ancient World. (4).

This course surveys biblical writings and examines them in their ancient social, political, and cultural contexts. Students learn comparative methods of literary and historical interpretation with special attention to how reconstructions of the ancient world affect our understanding of these writings. The selection of biblical writings will depend on the instructor.

RLTH 321. The Bible and the Contemporary World. (4).

The Bible is an enduring expression of the Jewish and Christian faiths. It is put to myriad uses and read in a fascinating variety of ways in many different contexts. This course explores the Bible in contemporary history, interpretation, social and political life, theology, and the arts, paying special attention to both its materiality/iconicity and the way its themes are engaged by communities around the world.

RLTH 323. St. Paul, Identity & Community Org. (4).

The Apostle Paul wrote letters that have influenced how people live in community for almost 2000 years. This course examines how Paul argues, encourages, negotiates, and embodies ways of bringing diverse people together in one community. Students then consider Paul's strategies in light of contemporary identities that often divide us today (race, gender, religion, social status, education, and privilege) in order to analyze Paul's proposed solutions and to explore how communities today might navigate identity politics and community unity. This course incorporates site visits and/or service learning assignments.

RLTH 328. Exploring the Qur'an. (4).

This course will expose students to the historical context of the Qur'an and the ways in which Muslims and non-Muslims interpret and interface with the Qur'an. Student will read selections of the Qur'an and interpretations in addition to learning the role of the Qur'an in the lives of Muslims.

RLTH 331. Topics Medieval/Early Modern Christianity. (4).

A survey of the emergence, growth, and development of the Christian movement from the time of the apostles to the disintegration of the Roman Empire in the West and to the fall of Constantinople in the East. This course will focus on Christianity as actually experienced and practiced by its earlier adherents in the multinational context of empire, and will look at textual, artistic, and material sources of evidence to gain a sense of the Christian past.

RLTH 332. Luther and the 16th Century Reformations. (4).

A survey of the development of Christianity in the post-Roman West, focusing on the rise of papacy, the development of distinctive Western Christian practices and doctrines, and the important role of the church in shaping European society. Special attention will be given to ways the medieval church handled difference and dissent, and to the reform movements of the later Middle Ages and the Protestant and Catholic reformations they brought about.

RLTH 334. The American Religious Experience. (4).

The course traces the historical role(s) of religion in the United States of America from Native American religious traditions, through the dominance of Christianity in its multiple expressions, to the modern-day reality of pluralism. Themes include but are not limited to the relationship between religion and politics; the importance of the U.S. as a land of (religious) opportunity; religion and money; pluralism as a religious idea and/or challenge; and social frameworks such as class, sports, gender and sexuality. Offered every fall.

RLTH 344. God in Christian Thought. (4).

An examination of traditional and contemporary Christian understandings of God, including the person and attributes of God, God's creative work, the divine-human relationship, sin, and the traditional problem of evil.

RLTH 347. Liberation and Theology. (4).

An introduction to theologies of liberation in Latin America and in Ventura County, This course asks how social, economic, and political readings of the Bible can be used to dominate and liberate communities.

RLTH 349. Queer Theology. (4).

This seminar course seeks to ask and respond to the theological questions within the context of queer theory. Moving beyond LGBTQ liberation theology, it seeks to (dis)integrate traditional understandings of the divine and consider the theological implications of identity, particularly by dis-/e-/rupting binaries such as good and evil, female and male, straight and gay, divine and human. Offered every other fall.

RLTH 350. Contemporary Christian Ethics. (4).

An introduction to contemporary Christian ethics and its relationship to the Bible and Christian communities; and thinking on such important personal and social issues as sexual behavior, human reproduction, racial and ethnic relations, the taking of human life, poverty and economic issues, and the environment.

RLTH 351. Global Ethics. (4).

A variety of issues have arisen which need to be examined from global perspective: political repression, social change, terrorism and war, economic globalization, immigration, human rights, health, and the environment. This course examines these issues from the perspectives of global religions, ethics, social theory, and social movements.

RLTH 353. Violence, Religion and Politics. (4).

A study of various forms of violence, such as sexual and domestic violence, political repression, terrorism and war. The course examines religious justification of and resistance to violence, using cases from diverse locations and religions.

RLTH 354. Theology and Business Ethics. (4).

This course applies ethical theory to business decisions within the context of theological reflection. With a strategic focus, the course will investigate the relationship between theological ethics and the economic concerns of managers. The course is particularly designed to help students become effective ethical agents by developing the skills to apply ethical principle to strategic business decisions. (cross-listed with BUS 354).

RLTH 355. Cooperation in Modern India. (4).

From colonial encounters to the contemporary period, this course traces the roots of twentieth century interreligious conflict in and between India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Based on the principles of the mererging field of Interfaith Studies, we will take an interdisciplinary approach to understand the underlying causes of conflict, as well as enacted and potential solutions. The course demands intensive reading, regular writing, seminar-style participation, and original research.

RLTH 356. Sexual Ethics. (4).

A study of sexual ethics from religious and examination of understandings of gender, sexuality, and sexual identities to discussion of issues such as marriage and family; contraception, abortion and reproductive technologies; sexual violence, and HIV/AIDS.

RLTH 360. Jesus in Film and History. (4).

A study of the historical person of Jesus through readings in the gospels, historical Jesus research from the past two centuries, and the various cinematic portraits of Jesus from the silent picture era to the present.

RLTH 365. Women and Religion. (4).

A consideration of women and women's issues within the context of the study of world religious traditions.

RLTH 372. South Asian Thought. (4).

Drawing on the religious traditions of South Asia (modern India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, students will consider the varieties of the religious experience, historically and comparatively represented by the adherents of these religious communities.

RLTH 373. Global Jesus. (4).

Who is Jesus? This course begins with the four gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry to learn and how various first century jewish and Roman contexts shaped specific portrayals of Jesus. Then we examine contemporary global prespectives on Jeus. Students research and analyze how Jesus is portrayed in the art, literature, politics, cultures and social constructions of 5-7 non-western countries. Students consider the ways in which cultures shape contemporary theological portrayals of Jesus.

RLTH 374. Jews and Judaism. (4).

A study of the elements of traditional Judaism in biblical, rabbinic and modern times.

RLTH 375. Muslims in the Modern World. (4).

In this introductory course, students learn the history of Islam from the Prophet Mohammed and the roots of the religion in Arab culture, to the spread of Islam as a global religion across many cultures. Students will analyze the variety of social, political, and cultural ways in which Muslims live out their faith around the world and in the U.S. Global Emphases may change year to year but will include 3-5 different geographical areas such as: Egypt, Asia, Turkey, Africa, Spain, Indonesia, and Europe.

RLTH 376. Islam in America. (4).

This course provides an introduction to the presence of Muslims in the United States, starting with a historical survey spanning African Muslim slaves brought in the antebellum period to anti-Muslim rhetoric in 21st century, paying attention to current events in the US involving Muslims. We explore American Muslim communal and demographic diversity, political and civic organizations, political participation, religious practices as well as family, education, music, art, and cultural diversity. Special attention is paid to questions of gender, race, and citizenship, as well as to issues of religious authority and authenticity. The course engages this material within the contexts of both American religious history and Islam as a global tradition.

RLTH 378. Asian Religions in the United States. (4).

This course introduces students to the history of Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Jainism as religions that originated in the Indian Subcontinent (aka, South Asia; modern India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka)), as well as the impact that Islam had on the same. It then traces the migrations of these faiths around the world and their practitioners to the shores of the United States. Drawing on the religious traditions of South Asia, students will consider the varieties of the religious experience, historically and comparatively represented by the adherents of these religious communities. The course will focus on the lived realities of these traditions in the United States. Class period will entail a combination of discussions and lectures intended to illuminate those texts.

RLTH 379. Sikhism. (4).

The Sikh religion, or Sikhism, offers students an educative example of how a religious tradition emerges in the full light of history to become one of the youngest of the "world religions". In this course, students will share in the tradition's intellectual, spiritual, and cultural heritage while exploring the question of how to study religions. By the course's end, students will be able to recapitulate major moments in the tradition's history, and also offer informed comment on its future.

RLTH 381. Religion, Food and the Environment. (4).

Humans eat food. Human cultural and religious phenomena relate intimately to patterns of eating-which is why anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and scholars of religions have long been fascinated with the relationships between sacred stores and ritual practices involving food. This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to studying the intersections between religion, food, and environments. Students will address questions about religious law, mythic narratives, ritual practice, symbolic meaning, identity formation, and animal and ecological ethics, as we explore Jewish kosher observance, Christian Eucharistic practice, Islamic halal, and other kinds of religious eating. Special attention will be given throughout the course to issues of race, ethnicity, and gender across multiple social identities.

RLTH 382. Religion and Public Life. (4).

In modern democracies there is often a provision for religious freedom alongside an exception that the public be secular. Students will explore religious freedom and freedom of conscience in light of the First Amendment and Anglo-Protestant bias. Governed by seminar practices of writing, speaking, and listening, students will examine case studies and constitutional debates; describe and assess the practice of religion in public life; and explain the dynamics of religious pluralism and secularization.

RLTH 384. Religion and Ecological Ethics. (4).

Religion and ecological ethics is the challenging work of 1) gaining clarity about our positions, attitudes, and assumptions with respect to "the environment" by drawing from the disciplines of both religious and philosophical ethics; 2) developing rigorous ways to think about complex issues such as climate change, environmental injustice, ethical treatment of animals, farming and food justice, and others; and 3) outlining practical approaches to local/global issues and short/long term actions. It also demands that we think carefully about how our conceptions of "nature," "environment," "wilderness," etc. shape our attitudes and practices.

RLTH 390. Servant Leadership. (4).

The course will investigate how the deepest meaning of leadership is embodied in the commitment to the growth and well-being of people and the communities in which they belong, all the while meeting organizational purposes and ends.

RLTH 391. Children, Youth and Family Ministry. (4).

Through course readings, practica, guest speakers, and self-reflection, students will be introduced to the theologies, approaches, and organizational models of ministry with children, youth, and families. Students will investigate the analyses of others through written assignments and exams and will construct their own articulations of the purpose and practice of ministry. By hosting guest speakers, practicing theological skills, and locating resources, students will relate their own identities and leadership styles to the identities and leadership styles of fellow classmates and scholar-practitioners.

RLTH 392. Christian Liturgy and Worship. (4).

An introduction to the Christian liturgical tradition, particularly that of Western Christianity. It will include some comparison with non-Christian religious customs, and will give importance to the development of worship in the Protestant traditions. The course's approach is historical, but it may also include some practical training if appropriate to student needs. Christian hymnody and liturgical music will also be introduced, with an emphasis on the distinctive Lutheran contributions in those areas.

RLTH 393. Spirituality and the Arts. (4).

This course explores the use of the arts in (Christian) spirituality, focusing on visual arts, literature and poetry, music, and other forms of special interest to students. We will consider how both works of art and the practice of artistic creation and performance become iconic or transparent to human spiritual experience.

RLTH 394. Jewish Spirituality. (4).

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RLTH 395. Lutheran Spirituality. (4).

This course examines key figures and developments in the lively history of Lutheran spirituality. The first half of the course centers in Luther's spirituality and glimpses of later European Lutheran spirituality of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and expanding into U.S., global and ecological Lutheran voices.

RLTH 396. Christian Spirituality. (4).

This course provides an introduction to diverse forms of Christian spirituality through attention to themes of solitude, community, Sabbath, prayer, discernment, social justice, spiritual practice, and ecology. In this course students will critically engage a range of primary and secondary texts.

RLTH 397. Islamic Spirituality. (4).

Spirituality is an integral of every religious tradition. In recent years, Sufism, or a deep historical tradition of Islamic spirituality, has often been considered separate from Islam itself. This course investigates the historical origins of Sufism and its transnational and local dynamics in the modern world.

RLTH 398. Sacred Space and Ritual. (4).

This course introduces students to theories of space and place applied in the study of religion. Using case studies from one or more non-western religious traditions, students survey sacred spaces in historical and contemporary global contexts. Themes covered may include places of worship and pilgrimage, religious rituals, shared and contested sacred spaces, and the role and construction of gender in sacred spaces. The non-western religious traditions covered in this course will depend on the specialization of instructor.

RLTH 412. Christian Art in the Middle Ages. (4).

Students survey the religious art of the Middle Ages - primarily Christian, but also some early Jewish and Islamic developments - identifying significant works of architecture, sculpture, and painting, while exploring Christian concepts and beliefs, liturgy and worship. Students consider art in relation to cultural needs, examining works in historical, religious social, economic, and political contexts. Students become familiar with visual forms, styles, narratives, and symbols of Christian art, as well as with broader, unifying themes shared by different cultures. The course content covers twelve centuries and geographically spans the Western edges of Europe to the Middle East. We also pay attention to instances of cultural exchange (the circulation of ideas, art forms, and artists through Europe and the Middle East). (cross-listed with ART 412).

RLTH 485. Travel Seminar: Medieval Celtic Christian. (4).

This course investigates medieval Celtic Christianity. Any time a religious tradition is introduced into a culture, both the tradition and the culture are changed; this is what happened when Christianity encountered the Celtic cultures of the lands off the northwest edge of what we now call Western Europe. Some of the changes would have a profound influence on Christianity far beyond the time and space in which they arose, and that influence has experienced a renewed popularity for many Christians today. Our overarching goal in this class is to discover possible answers to the question: "Is there something that we can call 'Celtic Christianity'?" If the answer to that question is "yes," we will follow it up with a second: "What does Celtic Christianity look like, and how can we identify it?"

RLTH 490. Independent Study. (1-4).

RLTH 492. Internship. (2-4).

RLTH 493. Research and Methods. (2).

This course serves as part one of the capstone sequence for Religion and Theology and Christian Leadership Majors. In this course majors of junior and senior standing meet in a seminar style cohort to identify, develop and articulate their capstone research project proposal. Students will explore methodologies in the field of religion and practice the following skills: daily writing weekly planning sessions, exploring, articulating, testing and developing a research topic, and cultivating a communal approach to giving and receiving feedback on their research.

RLTH 494. Research and Writing. (2).

This course serves as part two of the capstone sequence for Religion and Theology and Christian Leadership Majors. In this course, majors of junior or senior standing meet in a seminar style cohort to research, write, and present their capstone research project. Students will practice the following skills; daily writing, weekly planning sessions, writing multiple drafts, and cultivating a communal approach to giving and receiving feedback with their research cohort and faculty instructor.

RLTH 496. Directed Research. (2-4).