



Religious Studies

As a liberal arts institution, the College of Charleston seeks to educate students in critical thinking, multi-cultural perspectives, aesthetic sensitivity, and broad factual knowledge. The Religious Studies major is a particularly effective and rewarding way of achieving this kind of education and making the college experience a life-long influence. The study of religion is an important part of understanding the world in all its diversity. By acquainting yourself with religious traditions from around the world and throughout history, by sympathetically grasping their force in culture, you gain a greater understanding of the world. In many circumstances, religion is the key for understanding other cultures and important historical events.

The Religious Studies Department introduces students to the academic study of religion, which engages in the cross-cultural description and analysis of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions, both past and present. The teaching orientation is comparative, rather than sectarian or theological, in that it does not promote any specific religious tradition to the exclusion of others. The department offers a broad range of courses in religious traditions from around the world. It encourages students to complete courses in the areas of western traditions (such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), eastern traditions (such as Hinduism,

Buddhism, Chinese & Japanese religions), and American religions (including Native American, African American, and New Religious Movements). Students become more deeply aware of their own cultural traditions by studying those of others, and will approach other religions with greater empathy and sensitivity to their complexity.

Students are also encouraged to participate in field observation, to visit the numerous sacred sites and places of worship in the Charleston area, and to learn the skills of ethnography as part of their training. Known as "the Holy City," Charleston has a rich and fascinating religious history with many churches, temples, and mosques worth exploring, and students can learn to use the city's religious sites as their laboratory.

Religious Studies at the College of Charleston is both a comparative and interdisciplinary enterprise. It serves as a bridge between disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, particularly those of history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and literature, and language programs. Courses explore different religions through a variety of dimensions and themes—ritual, myth, symbol, mystical experience, cognitive patterns, gender, ethnicity, social identity—and they also consider the role played by political, economic, and social factors on the transformation of religions in their global context. Religious Studies thus provides an integrative disciplinary environment where students can pursue the holistic study of the history, diversity, and ingenuity of human belief and behavior, a hallmark of a liberal arts education.

ACADEMIC AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

There are two distinctly different methods of teaching religion in colleges and universities today. The academic approach is taught in public colleges and universities and emphasizes a tolerant and unbiased attitude towards the world's religions. All religions are treated with respect, and none are evaluated in terms of which may be right or wrong. Many kinds of questions are explored, such as: "What do people believe and practice? How have their beliefs and practices changed over time? What texts do they regard as sacred and authoritative, and why are some texts deemed canonical while others are regarded as heretical? How do the 'insiders' of one religion view 'outsiders' from other religious traditions?" The approach is interdisciplinary, historical, and

comparative and it underscores the value in understanding many different religious perspectives.

The theological approach is found in seminaries and schools with religious affiliations. A theological approach is often used in training students for careers in religion. It is a faith-oriented approach that asks different types of questions: "Which religion do I believe to be right or why is another religion inappropriate for me? Is there a religion that is right for all people? What is the proper moral approach to a positive religious life in my faith?" This type of education supports a particular religion and argues in support of the validity of faith claims. It speaks primarily to others who share similar religious commitments.

The Department of Religious Studies follows the academic rather than the theological style of teaching. Faculty take a sympathetic and yet properly critical approach to all religious traditions and present them as both interesting and provocative. The various religious traditions are understood as humanity's seeking after ultimate concerns, and as such, warranting respect.

WHAT CAN I DO WITH A RELS MAJOR?

While some students who major in Religious Studies go on to graduate school in Religious Studies or to the ministry, many more students follow post-graduate paths to law school, medical school, foreign service, education or business. In today's professional job market, admissions committees and personnel offices seek applicants with a well-rounded education who have truly profited from a liberal arts education, who are intellectually curious with a thirst for learning. A degree in Religious Studies prepares you to be empathetic to diverse points of view, an attribute increasingly needed and valued in medical and law schools.

For jobs in foreign or civil service, you will be expected to demonstrate some ability to negotiate cross-cultural and geographic boundaries and understand regional conflicts, and your Religious Studies training hones these important skills. Any business requiring international trade will look favorably upon the kind of intellectual training offered by a Religious Studies degree from the College of Charleston. Indeed, even

the business community at home is growing more ethnically diverse; and as a prospective businessperson you will inevitably encounter people of other cultures and value systems in your workplace.

Finally, as the American public education system finds itself increasingly confronted with the necessity of teaching religious history and topics in a pluralistic society, a background in the academic study of religion will prove an important credential for aspiring teachers. In today's employment market, it is your experience in the world and your critical thinking skills that count. Many religious studies majors will attest that their skills in cross-cultural understanding and critical analysis have served them well in a wide variety of careers.

For more reasons to study religion, and what you can do with a Religious Studies degree, see: www.studyreligion.org/why/index.html, which can be found as a link on the RELS website.

DIVINITY SCHOOL & GRADUATE SCHOOL IN RELS

If you aspire to go on to the ministry, you will generally have the sponsorship and direction of a denomination or tradition. For you, especially, the Religious Studies curriculum can offer advanced preparation in the standard critical methods used for interpreting scripture, along with the comparative and theoretical issues that drive contemporary theology, liturgy, and inter-religious dialogue.

Graduate work in Religious Studies generally requires a focus on one particular region or cultural tradition. There are Masters Programs in Religious Studies that allow one to pursue broader coursework, whether as additional humanities training in the liberal arts, or as preparation for doctoral work. Religious Studies faculty at the College of Charleston have trained in a variety of Doctoral and Masters programs, and are interested in advising you concerning graduate work in this field. Some of our recent outstanding graduates have been accepted to prestigious graduate programs at Boston University, University of Chicago, University of California Riverside, University of Colorado, University of Georgia, University of Michigan, University of Virginia, and the University of Washington.

For resources for Graduate Study in Religious Studies, see the site organized by the Department of Religious Studies at Cal State Chico: www.csuchico.edu/corh/crel/student-resources/jobs-for-grads.shtml.

CHOOSING COURSES IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Within the field of Religious Studies, there are many different religious traditions that students might choose to study. This often leads students to wonder how to choose from so many interesting alternatives. Are the worldviews, texts, practices, and institutions distinctly different or similar between religious traditions? Why study one religion rather than another? Which aspects of a religious tradition are most important to study? While one of the goals of the Religious Studies program is to help you to answer these questions for yourself, the structure of the department's course offerings is to guide students towards developing a distinctive comparative, cross-cultural, historical and interdisciplinary approach to the subject.

The 100-level courses introduce students to some of the different religions of the world and to the academic study of religion. These introductory courses are especially popular for students who wish to satisfy the general Humanities requirement at the College of Charleston, although every course in the Religious Studies department satisfies this requirement. Many 200-level courses are historical surveys of particular religious traditions, or an introduction to the religions of a particular geographical region. At a more advanced level of study, the 300 and 400 level courses offer an opportunity to learn about religions and religious phenomena in a comparative and thematic fashion. Courses are organized around such topics as death and the afterlife, mysticism and religious experience, women and religion, religion and the environment, millenarian movements and apocalypticism, and gnosticism and esoteric spirituality. Faculty members have a strong interest in providing a multi-disciplinary approach to the academic study of religions, and students are encouraged to develop a broad interdisciplinary awareness of the methods used in the field.

THE THREE TRACKS APPROACH

Many students come into the Religious Studies Department with a

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particular interest in either western religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), or eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism). However, the requirements for the major are designed to guide your course of study in both areas, as well as in the diversity of religions found in America (including Native American, African-American, and New Religious traditions). The expectation that students take at least one course in American religions will further students' understanding of the American religious landscape, a landscape that cannot be properly understood simply as an extension of Christian and European history. Religious Studies majors must satisfy a distribution requirement in all three areas (see Groups A, B, C below), and each of these courses provides a historical survey of particular religious traditions or of the religions of a specific geographical area. The study of sacred texts is also important, as students learn how foundational scriptures are written, read, interpreted, and canonized; at the 200-level students may choose between courses on the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, or Asian sacred texts.

The Religious Studies major is also expected to learn about the history and formation of the discipline in order to understand the variety of theories and methods available for describing, interpreting, and explaining religious phenomena. RELS 210 introduces students to the theoretical and methodological tools used in the academic study of religion, and to the debates within the field over how best to define religion, what its origins are, and whether religion can be explained in social, psychological, economic, and/or political terms. At the advanced level of study, the 300 and 400 level courses offer an opportunity to learn about religions and religious phenomena in a comparative and thematic fashion. For example, students can explore the complex relationships between the elite "great traditions" (featured in groups A and B below) and the popular "little traditions" that are represented by tribal and indigenous peoples. Courses are offered on the study of Native American religions, folk religion, and charismatic New Religious Movements, and how these indigenous traditions interact with missionary traditions and elite religious institutions. The Senior Seminar serves as a capstone experience that integrates the theoretical and methodological issues introduced in RELS 210 and applies them to specific religious phenomena or to a theme that varies each year.

THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

The Requirements for the Major in Religious Studies are **34 hours**, or **twelve** courses, which must include the following:

- 1) **RELS 101 Approaches to Religion or RELS 105 World Religions**
- 2) **RELS 210 Theories in the Study of Religions**
- 3) **One (1) Sacred Text Course, chosen from:**

RELS 201 The Hebrew Bible: History and Interpretation

RELS 202 The New Testament: History and Interpretation

RELS 205 Sacred Texts of the East

RELS 310 Sacred Texts*

- 4) **Three (3) Religious Traditions courses, one selected from Group A, one selected from Group B, one selected from Group C:**

Group A: RELS 225 The Jewish Tradition

RELS 230 The Christian Tradition

RELS 235 The Islamic Tradition

Group B: RELS 240 The Buddhist Tradition

RELS 245 The Religions of India

RELS 248 Religious Traditions of China & Japan

Group C: RELS 250 Religions in America

RELS 260 Native American Religions

RELS 270 African-American Religions

- 5) **RELS 450 Senior Seminar in Religious Studies**
- 6) **RELS 451 Capstone Colloquium (one credit hour)**
- 7) **One (1) additional course at the 200 level or above**
- 8) **Two (2) additional courses at the 300 level or above**
- 9) **One (1) additional course in Religious Studies**

With the approval of the Chair in Religious Studies, one course (200 level or above) in a related discipline may be substituted for one of the additional courses listed under 7 or 8 above.

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THE MINOR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The minor in Religious Studies can be effectively combined with a complementary major in another field. For example, to combine the minor with History or Political Science allows for deeper insight into the profound historical connections between events and religious motivations, or between political ideologies and religious discourse. Students majoring in literature, art, or philosophy learn to recognize the symbols and ideas arising from the classical religious traditions and their texts. Students in the social sciences, especially in psychology, sociology, and anthropology, will find that the Religious Studies minor complements and focuses their major course work.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES MINOR REQUIREMENTS

The minor in Religious Studies requires a minimum of **18 semester hours**. At least **nine** hours in the minor at the 200 level or above must be earned at the College of Charleston.

1) **RELS 101 Approaches to Religion** or **RELS 105 World Religions**

2) **One (1)** religious traditions course selected from:

RELS 225 The Jewish Tradition

RELS 230 The Christian Tradition

RELS 235 The Islamic Tradition

RELS 240 The Buddhist Tradition

RELS 245 Religions of India

RELS 248 The Religious Traditions of China & Japan

3) **One (1)** sacred text course chosen from:

RELS 201 The Hebrew Bible: History and Interpretation

RELS 202 The New Testament: History and Interpretation

RELS 205 Sacred Texts of the East

4) **One (1)** course in Religious Studies at the 300-level or above

5) **Two (2)** additional courses in Religious Studies

With the approval of the Chair of Religious Studies, one course (200-level or above) in a related discipline may be substituted for one of these Religious Studies courses in 4 or 5 above.

ETHNOGRAPHY IN CHARLESTON & LOWCOUNTRY

One of the most exciting components about studying in Charleston is learning how to study religion "on the ground" as a facet of daily life by engaging in fieldwork and participant observation. Some of the most exciting research being done in the study of religion today is the analysis of how immigrant religious communities adapt to the American landscape, interact with it, and contribute to a new formulation of American identity. The study of religion is now one of the disciplines most vital to understanding the development of American pluralism and issues of diversity. The pioneering scholar of religion, Ninian Smart, often remarked that it is no longer necessary to travel to exotic locations to study world religions; they are now down the block. Nowhere is this phenomenon truer than in Charleston. Indeed, on Glebe Street one will find the Department of Religious Studies located next to the Jewish Studies Center and across from Grace Episcopal Church (founded 1846) and Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church (founded 1847). Charleston is thus an ideal place to learn about local religious history and to engage in fieldwork, and the current faculty encourages students to explore projects in the Charleston community.

If you are interested in Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, you can review materials that would enhance your own contact with a local synagogue, mosque, or church and guide you in becoming a more observant participant in local festivals or ceremonies. Those interested in Asian religions will find ethnographic materials that will help them to appreciate local groups such as the Buddhist community at the Charleston Tibetan Society, or they might arrange a visit to the Hindu temple in Columbia South Carolina. Local Native American pow-wows are held in nearby Summerville, and Yoruba festivals and ritual ceremonies take place in Oyotunji African village near Beaufort. Students may study religion in the day-to-day life of a religious practitioner through film, video, music, and other media that document the multifaceted reality of religious life. In this way students gain a more direct impression of the ways in which religion permeates ordinary communal life. Engaging in fieldwork and ethnography also prepares students to visit other cultures and immerse themselves in the study of their religions, thereby gaining insights into the religious worlds of others that can rarely be attained by only studying texts.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES TUTORIAL (RELS 399)

The Religious Studies Tutorial course requires supervised reading and/or research on a specific or project agreed upon by the student and the supervising tutor and carries one to three (3) semester hours of credit. Individual instruction is given in regularly scheduled meetings, usually once a week. To enroll in RELS 399, a student must make arrangements with the supervising professor during the previous term and decide upon an appropriate subject or area of investigation. The student will then prepare a plan of study and reading list (if applicable) to be submitted to the Tutor and the Chair of the Religious Studies Department. This plan must be approved by the department faculty. RELS 399 is repeatable for up to 12 hours.

Tutorials may be used for a number of purposes: to “fill gaps” in a student’s knowledge by investigating new areas within the discipline; to increase the student’s knowledge in a particular area, for example by reading more deeply in an author or period or tradition; or to cross the usual lines between disciplines in a plan of study which integrates areas of knowledge that are usually examined separately (for example: Religion and Anthropology, Sociology, Literature, or History). Students should not be discouraged from suggesting a special program of study merely because it is unusually imaginative. The Religious Studies program considers independent work a vital part of the undergraduate experience and will try to accommodate students who propose a serious, workable, and sound program of study.

The Tutorial does not usually entail a final examination, or any specific amount of writing, as long as the quantity and quality of the independent research demonstrate significant effort and thought. However, instructors are free to make individual arrangements for keeping track of a student’s work—including tests, a final examination, or a term paper of set length. The Tutorial as a method of instruction emphasizes flexibility. Some latitude will be allowed to both the student and the instructor to vary the arrangements suggested above, and to revise or adjust the reading or research, without being held rigidly to the plan of study submitted the previous term. The RELS 399 Tutorial can also be used for credit by students engaged in research off campus, such as study abroad, fieldwork, or internships.

Such projects will require specific planning prior to the off-campus research, and regular communication between student and tutor while in the field. The tutor will establish a timetable and guidelines for assessing the progress of the student's research, culminating in the submission of a final research paper or project agreed upon by the student and tutor.

Recent Individual Tutorials - RELS 399

- Death and the Afterlife in Native American Religions
- Luther & Erasmus on Freewill
- Voodoo and the Media
- Buddhist Themes in Classical Tibetan Poetry & Song
- The Feminine in Gnostic Texts
- Women's Rights in Islam
- Celtic Animism
- Changing Perceptions of Medicine and Witchcraft
- Sleeping, Dreaming, and Dying in Tibetan Buddhism
- Ghanaian Religious Dance and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences
- Breathing Religious Diversity in Singapore
- Readings in Ancient Hebrew
- Platonic Theories of Metempsychosis in the Early Greco-Roman World
- Conceptual Metaphors of the Body/Self/Cosmos in Ancient Chinese Texts
- Transpersonal Experience: A Survey of Contemporary Theories
- Esoteric Roots of Mormonism: Hermetic Influences and Contemporary Beliefs
- Transpersonal Theory and American Pentecostalism
- Plato's Theories of Reincarnation
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BACHELOR'S ESSAY (RELS 499)

RELS 499 is a yearlong research and writing project carrying six (6) hours of credit. It is normally taken during the senior year under the close guidance of a tutor, the supervising professor. The student must

take the initiative in seeking an appropriate supervisor to help in both the design and supervision of the project. To enroll, the student must decide during the previous term on a subject appropriate for a substantial research project that will result in an essay of approximately 40 to 60 pages. The exact length of the essay and the method of documentation will vary and the length and style should be appropriate for a major research paper in Religious Studies.

A proposal, approved and signed by the student and the supervising professor, must be submitted to the Chair of Religious Studies prior to registering for the course. In the case of proposals submitted for HONS 499, these proposals must be approved by the Honors Program Committee prior to registration for the course. Normally such proposals should be submitted by the middle of the Spring semester of the student's junior year. Students who will be away from the College during any of the last three semesters, or who will be doing student teaching in their final semester, should normally submit the proposal no later than the middle of the Fall semester of their Junior year.

A student should expect to begin the first semester of work on their Bachelor's Essay with a well-defined topic. He or she will investigate the subject thoroughly and assiduously during the early part of the year. They should work closely with their supervisor and discuss their progress and receive feedback as they clarify and redefine their topic. As researching and writing the essay extends over both semesters of the senior year, students should begin writing early. They should submit one or more drafts of the essay for critical review to allow time for proper revision. The final version of the essay should be completed and submitted at least three weeks before the start of the final examination period in the second semester. The grade of In Progress (IP) will be assigned for RELS 499 until the essay is complete.

When the Bachelor's Essay is completed, the student will give an oral presentation and defense of their thesis to an audience of fellow students in Religious Studies, the Bachelor's Essay supervisor, and other interested faculty and students. The Bachelor's Essay should be the capstone of a student's undergraduate career and is designed to give the advanced student of exceptional ability an opportunity to explore intensively an area of particular interest.

Recent Bachelors Essays-RELS 499

- What Our Fathers Taught Us. Mormon Mainstreaming and Methods of Social Adaptation: An Emergent American Mormonism
- Hallowed Ground: Religious Agriculture in South Carolina
- The Religious Strategies Used in Presidential Campaigns
- Japanese Rituals and the Ethics of Personhood
- Kabbalah and the Origins of Evil
- The Religious Symbolism of Blood in Judaism and Hinduism
- Gender Identity in Native American Religions
- The Woodcrafts Movement
- Religion and Political Identity in Modern Lebanon
- African Christian Syncretism in Sea Island Religion
- Death Rituals in Balinese Religion & Culture
- Religious Conceptions of Causality in Tibet
- Sacred Sound: Language, Prayer & Songs of the Cherokee

RELIGIOUS STUDIES CLUB

The Religious Studies Club was formed by a group of students interested in discussing issues in the academic study of religion. Unlike other student religious clubs and organizations on campus, there is no sectarian focus in the Religious Studies Club. The Club allows students to engage in more extensive dialogue and personal discussion of topics and issues that arise in the classroom setting. The Club has sponsored movies and invited guest speakers, it has organized a panel discussion on holy war, convened speakers on the near-death experience, and arranged field trips to local sites of religious interest, among other events. The Club is open to all students at the College of Charleston. For more information about the Club, speak to any faculty member in Religious Studies.

FACULTY IN THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPARTMENT

Zeff Bjerken is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies. He received a BA in Religion from Reed College; an MA in comparative philosophy of religion from the University of California, Santa Barbara; an MA in Buddhist Studies from the University of Michigan; and a Ph.D. on Tibetan religious history from the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Michigan. He teaches courses on the religions and cultures of India, Tibet, China, and Japan, on the sacred texts of Asia, and on theory and method in the study of religions. His research interests include Buddhist historiography, Asian religious syncretism, the formation of religious and nationalist identity, and the use of critical theory in understanding and explaining religions. He served as the editorial assistant for *Religions of Tibet in Practice* (Princeton University Press, 1995), and is the author of journal articles on the Bon religion and Buddhism in Tibet.

Margaret Cormack is a Professor of Religious Studies. She is a graduate of Harvard University (B.A. cum laude in Linguistics and Germanic Languages) and Yale University (Ph.D. Medieval Studies). She has studied and taught in Iceland, Denmark, and Germany. Her main interests are religious conversion and the cult of saints. The topics of her upper level seminars include Medieval Christianity and the Cult of Saints. Her research focuses on the religious history of Europe, in particular, Scandinavia. She is currently working on a project to map electronically the cult of saints throughout Europe. She is the author of *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400* (Societe des Bollandistes, 1994). She was co-organizer of the conference on "Saints and Pilgrims around the Atlantic" which met at the College of Charleston Feb. 20-21, 2004. She has edited a selection of articles from this conference as *Saints and Their Cults in the Atlantic World* (USC Press 2007)

Matthew Cressler is a Professor whose teaching and research areas include African American religions, Catholic studies, religion in America, and theory in the study of religion, with a special interest in the intersection of religion, race, and nationalism. He specializes in black Catholic history and is currently at work on a book manuscript titled *From Conversion to Revolution: The Rise of Black Catholic Chicago*. Matthew is coming to the College of Charleston by way of Earlham College, where he served as a jointly-appointed visiting professor of Religion and African and African American Studies, and Northwestern University, where he earned his doctorate in 2014. As someone raised in Alabama, Matthew is excited to be returning home to the South!

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Louise Doire is a Senior Instructor of Religious Studies. She earned her B.A. at the University of Rhode Island, and her Masters in Divinity from Harvard University, where she wrote a Master's Thesis on "The Pastoral Language of Suffering." Her primary areas of expertise are the History of Christianity, Religious Ethics, and Feminism in Religion. Professor Doire teaches World Religions, Evil and Suffering, Christian Tradition, Religion and Culture, Comparative Religious Ethics, Women and Religion, Religion and Feminism. Through her study of feminist theology and a general study of the philosophy of religion, she came to understand how vital the critical analysis of religion is for engendering ethical 'ways of being' in the world.

John Huddleston is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies (1996) whose areas of specialization include Biblical Studies (Hebrew Bible), religion in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East, and Judaica. With a Ph.D. in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies from the University of Michigan (1996), he has done additional postgraduate work in Biblical/Modern Hebrew, Egyptology, and archaeology, in Jerusalem, Italy, and Denmark. His principle focus has been the cultural and literary connections between ancient Egypt and Israel. Current and future areas of research include a study of the first biblical plague in its ancient Near Eastern context, a book manuscript dealing with issues of the reputation and repentance of God in biblical tradition and beyond, and a study of the history of Jewish biblical criticism in America. The topics offered in Dr. Huddleston's advanced seminars include Ancient Egyptian Religion, Prophecy and Divination, and the Problem of Theodicy in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East.

Todd LeVasseur, Ph.D., is a Visiting Assistant Professor who also teaches in the Environmental Studies Program. His research and teaching moves between the environmental humanities and religious studies, given his specialty in religion and nature theory. He also teaches about religion and nature in South Asia; religion and nature in North America; environmental ethics; religion and sustainability, focusing on sustainable agriculture; religion and animals; religion and science; and other topics at the nexus of humans-religion-the natural world. His research and teaching focuses on questions of how humans, in various cultural and geographic settings, conceive of and thus interact with the natural world, and how the natural world influences human perceptions and lifestyle practices. He utilizes various theories in this endeavor, from postcolonial theory to lived religion social construction theory to eco-phenomenology to eco-criticism to environmental history to religion and nature theory. He has traveled to India, Australia, Europe, and throughout North America researching, where he researches farming, eco-villages, and eco-spiritual retreat centers, as well as other sustainability-related initiatives undertaken by religious institutions and places of religious practice.

Lee Irwin is a Professor at the Religious Studies Department at the College. He holds a double BA in Philosophy and in English from the University of Delaware; an MA in English and an MA in Comparative Religion, Indiana University; and an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Folklore, Religion and Anthropology from Indiana University. His areas of specialization are Native American religions and western esotericism. He is the author of *The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains* (University of Oklahoma, 1994) and *Visionary Worlds: The Making and Unmaking of Reality* (SUNY Press, 1996). His journal publications include such topics as Chinese female soteriology, Greek mystery religion, Western Hermeticism, and Native American myth and religion. His research involves material culture and iconography, comparative mythology and anthropology, and studies in religious methods, theory and hermeneutics.

June McDaniel is a Professor in Religious Studies. Her Ph.D. is from the University of Chicago in History of Religions, specializing in South Asian devotional religions; her MTS is from Candler School of Theology at Emory University, where she focused on Theology and Psychology of Religion; her BA is from SUNY Albany in Studio Art. She has done fieldwork in India, of which some is described in her book *The Madness of the Saints: Ecstatic Religion in Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Her current research is on goddess worship in West Bengal, religious emotion and ecstatic states, based on her Fulbright research in India. Her publications include work on philosophy of emotion, holy women, ritual and tantric studies, trance possession and mysticism.

Elijah Siegler is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department. He has a B.A. in the Comparative Study of Religion from Harvard University (1992) and a Ph.D in Religious Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara (2003). He teaches courses on new religious movements, religion and popular culture (religion and film, religion and television), Asian religions in America (especially Daoism in America) and the religions of China and Japan. He has led summer study abroad tours twice to China and to India too.

Further information may be obtained by contacting Zeff Bjerken, Chair of the Religious Studies BA program, or Tracie Mitchum, Administrative Assistant of the Religious Studies Department, 4 Glebe Street, Department Phone, 953-0895. Students wishing to either register for the BA or minor in Religious Studies should fill out the appropriate declaration form, which may be obtained in the Departmental office at 4 Glebe.