# Major Possibilities: Religion



## **Summary**

- The religion program at Southwestern University facilitates interdisciplinary engagement with the study of religion and other human
  endeavors by encouraging students to learn and use a variety of methodologies, including textual, social-scientific, historical,
  feminist and post-colonial.
- A major in Religion is good preparation for graduate work in a number of liberal arts fields, and is also an excellent complementary major to other liberal arts majors. It is a good undergraduate major for seminary school.
- Besides working in actual religious institutions, religion majors can transfer their strong research, writing and analytical skills, as well as their interest in the human condition, into a broad variety of other occupations.

## Religion major synopsis

The Religion program introduces students to a variety of global religious traditions, experiences and expressions, and invites an empathetic understanding of difference. The program provides students with tools to critically engage religious texts, including written, oral, performative, and symbolic ones. Within the Religion major, students at Southwestern take courses in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, as well as in Greek and Roman mythology, Ancient China, and feminism in religion. Religion majors can also take philosophy classes that count toward their degree and may pair the Feminist Studies and Religion majors by double counting certain cross-listed courses (see catalog for more details).

# Seminary

A seminary college can also be referred to as a theological college or divinity school, and usually refers to Christian educational institutes including Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglicans. Graduates from a four-year institution like Southwestern University typically continue their education at a seminary school. Those who feel called to pastoral ministry typically seek to prepare at a theological seminary, but people can go to seminary school for a myriad of reasons. Missionary work, a closer connection to God, research, global work, and counseling are other reasons to pursuer a master's from a seminary college.

## Sample occupational areas

#### Clergy

Clergy conduct religious worship and perform other spiritual functions associated with beliefs and practices of religious faith or denomination. They provide spiritual and moral guidance and assistance to members. Each religion is unique, and the clergy have different titles and duties in each religion. In Christianity, the pastor is the guardian of his congregation, and can also be called a minister. In Catholicism it is a priest, in Islam an imam, in Hinduism a guru, and in Buddhism the Sangha, or monks and nuns, are the clergy. For Christianity, an education of some sort is preferred. Many churches prefer a seminary degree. The Master of Divinity is a three year degree most common to pastors. A more advanced four year option is the Master of Theology. A master's degree in religion enables clergy to gain expertise in their religion. Learning Greek or Hebrew would also be beneficial to a Christian looking to go into pastoral work. For questions regarding education for other religions, contact the Religion Department.

#### Missionary

Missionaries travel both locally, nationally, and abroad, giving aid to people and preaching a message. Historically, many Catholics and Protestants have been missionaries, especially during the exploration of the New World. Today, almost every Christian church has a mission program and connections to other organizations that try to prepare missionaries for their work. Missionaries can travel to the ghetto of a large city, to exotic Peru, or all the way to China, and a program will be available to help them fulfill their mission. A Religion major would help someone wanting to become a missionary because it teaches the student not only more about their own religion, but also about the religions and cultures of people from other places of the world.

#### Chaplain

A chaplain is a clergyperson made available by a program or institution to serve the spiritual needs of a group. Customarily, the chaplain's duties involve counseling, worship leadership, and relations with the families of the group. The chaplain is generally expected to serve as the religious adviser of the whole program and its staff. Chaplains can serve in hospitals, correctional institutions, the military, or campuses.

#### Teacher

For people who have a passion for teaching young children, a career as an elementary school teacher might be rewarding. Teachers of grades K-6 also need to complete a general studies curriculum. High school teachers need to have more specific knowledge of particular religions because classes can focus on the Old or New Testament within Christianity or compare two or more different religions, for example. Religion majors can also continue their education and become a university or college professor. Teaching and instructing jobs may also be available at places of worship.

#### Counselor

Faith-based counseling is another option for Religion majors wanting to help people. Religious counseling draws upon psychology within the perspective of a specific religion. A doctoral degree usually is required for independent practice as a psychologist. PhDs or PsyDs normally require about five to seven years of study, culminating in a dissertation. People with master's degrees in psychology have a few job options. Some seminary schools have degree plans that integrate both theology and psychology.

## Sample job titles

Government, Service & Education AmeriCorps/VISTA Worker

**Anthropologist** 

Campus Religious Coordinator

Chaplain

Church Camp Director **Denominational Executive** Director of Religious Education Minister

Missionary

Nursing Home Director

Pastor

**Priest** Professor

Public Policy Manager

Public Relations Representative

Public Service Official

Rabbi

Religious Bookstore Retail Religious Education Researcher

Researcher Teacher

Seminary Administrator

Social Worker

YMCA/YWCA Worker

Arts, Media, and Entertainment

Advertising Manager **Broadcaster** Correspondent

Media Planner Music Therapist **Public Relations** Religious Expert

**Journalist** 

Staff Writer Television/Media Analyst **Industry and Commerce** 

Account Management Analyst

Administrator Claims Adjuster Consultant Counselor

**Employee Interviewer** Financial Consultant

Lawver Lobbyist

# Sample internship employers of SU students

American Friends Service Committee Canary Strategies, LLC First United Methodist Church Friends Committee of National Legislation

Georgetown Project

Habitat for Humanity International

Law Office of Cathleen Riedel Lindsay Lane Baptist Church Smithsonian Museum of American History Texas Wesley Campus Ministry

The American University - Washington, DC

Westlake Clinic/Children's Hospital

**YMCA** 

## Sample full-time employers of SU grads

Admissions Counselor (Centenary College) Assistant Director to Executive Director (Texas Inter-Faith) Cancer Information Specialist (American Cancer Society)

Case Worker (Samaritan Ministries)

Constituent Liaison (U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison)

English Teacher (Peace Corps)

Enrollment Specialist (Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Central Texas)

Facilitator (Lifesteps)

Youth Campus Organizer (Sierra Club)

Volunteer (AmeriCorps)

## Professional associations

American Catholic: www.americancatholic.org American Hindu Association: www.americanhindu.net American Jewish Historical Society: www.ajhs.org Christian Association: www.upennca.org

International Religious Liberty Association: www.irla.org National Christian Counselors Association: www.ncca.org

National Religious Broadcasters: www.nrb.org

Religious Research Association: www.rra.hartsem.edu United Christian Ministries International: www.ucmi.org

United Methodist Association of Health and Welfare Ministries: www.umassociation.org World Religious Travel Association: www.worldreligioustravelassociation.blogspot.com

The National Muslim Law Students Association: www.nmlsa.org

#### Additional Web resources

Church/Ecumenical Resources: www.oikoumene.org

Islamic Resource: <a href="https://www.islaam.net/main">www.islaam.net/main</a>

Judaica Collection: www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs.cmu.edu/user/clamen/misc/Judaica/README.html

Theravada Buddhist Society of America: www.tbsa.org Study Religion: www.studyreligion.org/where/teaching.html

Women's Studies in Religion: www.hds.harvard.edu/wsrp/index.htm Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry: www.clgs.org

## Career Services' print resources

Career Opportunities in the Nonprofit Sector

Careers for Born Leaders and Other Decisive Types Careers for Talkative Types and Others with the Gift of Gab Careers for Caring People & Other Sensitive Types Careers for Good Samaritans & Other Humanitarian Types

Caring Ministry: A Contemplative Approach to Pastoral Care

Caring Beyond Words

Leaving a Career to Follow a Call

Opportunities in Religious Service Careers

2011 Response: A Directory of Full Time, Faith Based, Volunteer **Opportunities**