

Major Possibilities: Religion



Career Services

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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 program in the study of religion 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.

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 would 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 pursue 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 could 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 clergy person 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 & Educ.	Professor	Arts, Media, and Entertainment	Industry and Commerce
AmeriCorps/VISTA Worker	Public Policy Manager	Advertising Manager	Account Management Analyst
Campus Religious Coordinator	Public Relations Rep.	Broadcaster	Business Administration
Chaplain	Public Service Official	Correspondent	Church Building Engineer
Church Camp Director	Rabbi	Journalist	Claims Adjuster
Denominational Executive	Religious Bookstore Retail	Media Planner	Consultant
Director of Religious Education	Religious Education Researcher	Music Therapist	Counselor
Minister	Religious Education Teacher	Press Liaison	Critic
Minister of Music	Researcher	Public Relations	Employee Interviewer
Missionary	Salvation Army	Religious Expert	Financial Consultant
Nursing Home Director	Seminary Administrator	Researcher	Insurance Underwriter
Pastor	Social Worker	Staff Writer	Lawyer
Priest	YMCA/YWCA Worker	Television/Media Analyst	Lobbyist

Sample internship employers of SU students

American Friends Service Committee	Hillel
Canary Strategies, LLC	Law Office of Cathleen Riedel
Coke United Methodist Church	Lindsay Lane Baptist Church
First United Methodist Church	St. David's Episcopal Church
Friends Committee of National Legislation	The American University - Washington, DC
Georgetown Project	Westlake Clinic/Children's Hospital
Habitat for Humanity International	YMCA

Sample full-time employers of SU grads

Admissions Counselor (Centenary College)	Minister/Priest
Assistant Director to Youth Minister Director of Music Humanities	Pastor
Cancer Information Specialist	Social Worker
English Teacher (Peace Corps)	Teacher (St. Andrews Episcopal)
Mentor (ATCAP)	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: ra.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.religioustravelassociation.com
The National Muslim Law Students Association: www.nmlsa.org

Additional Web resources

Church/Ecumenical Resources: www.oikoumene.org
Islamic Resource: www.islaam.com
Judaica Collection: www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs.cmu.edu/user/clamen/misc/Judaica/README.html
Theravada Buddhist Society of America: www.tbsa.org

Career Services' print resources

Opportunities in Religious Service Careers	Leaving a Career to Follow a Call
Careers for Born Leaders and Other Decisive Types	Ministry Opportunities
Careers for Talkative Types and Others with the Gift of Gab	Opportunities in Non-profit Organization Careers
Caring Ministry: A Contemplative Approach to Pastoral Care	Opportunities in Religious Service Careers
Caring Beyond Words	The FTE Guide to Theological Education