



CENTER FOR CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Major Possibilities: Religion

Quick Facts

- The Southwestern University Religion major 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. Strong cross-cultural communication skills developed through the Religion major are valuable in many diverse career fields.
- Internships in fields such as non-profit administration, counseling, education, ministry, or other areas of interest to Religion majors help shape professional identities, develop 21st century career-readiness skills, and make meaning of the academic experience.

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).

Sample Occupational Areas

NON-PROFIT ADMINISTRATOR

Making a living making a difference may appeal to Religion majors. Non-profit organizations exist to support all manner of issues and causes – elder care, animal welfare, environmental justice, education and much more. Because non-profits depend on volunteers to accomplish many of their organizational goals, becoming involved with a non-profit in an issue area of your interest as a volunteer is a very viable way to build marketable career experience. Non-profit careers can consist of direct-service roles (e.g. working with survivors of violence or teaching literacy) and program management, including advocacy, fundraising and other capacity-building roles.

LAWYER

Lawyers, also called attorneys, act as both advocates and advisors in our society. As advocates, they represent one of the parties in criminal and civil trials by presenting evidence and arguing in court to support their client. As advisors, lawyers counsel their clients about their legal rights and obligations and suggest particular courses of action in business and personal matters. Lawyers may specialize in a number of areas, such as bankruptcy, probate, international, elder, or environmental law. Most lawyers are in private practice, concentrating on criminal or civil law. Formal requirements to become a lawyer usually include a four-year college degree, three years of law school, and passing a written bar examination; however, some requirements may vary by State. No special undergraduate coursework is needed to apply to law school.

COUNSELOR / SOCIAL WORKER

Counseling and social work are other options for Religion majors wanting to help people. Both fields overlap but have specific distinctions: While counselors focus on helping individuals and families who have a specific set of problems or need treatment for a mental health disorder, social workers provide a wider range of services within larger social service systems. Master's degrees of two to three years of study prepare you for both fields. Counseling with a faith basis is also an option, and some seminary schools have degree plans that integrate both theology and psychology.

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.

CLERGY

Clergy conduct religious worship and perform other spiritual functions associated with beliefs and practices of a 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. SU's Chaplain and Director of Spiritual Life can serve as a resource for students exploring clergy careers in various faith traditions.

Sample Job Titles

GOVERNMENT, SERVICE, AND EDUCATION

AmeriCorps/VISTA Worker
Anthropologist
Campus Religious Coordinator
Church Camp Director
Denominational Executive
Director of Religious Education
Missionary
Nursing Home Director

Professor
Public Policy Manager
Public Relations Representative
Public Service Official
Religious Bookstore Retail
Researcher
Teacher
Seminary Administrator
Social Worker

ARTS, MEDIA, AND ENTERTAINMENT

Advertising Manager
Broadcaster
Correspondent
Journalist
Media Planner
Religious Expert
Staff Writer
Television/Media Analyst

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

Account Management Analyst
Consultant
Counselor
Employee Interviewer
Financial Consultant
Lawyer
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
Hillel

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 (US Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison)
Development Specialist (March of Dimes)
English Teacher (Peace Corps)

Enrollment Specialist (Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Central Texas)
Facilitator (Lifesteps)
Human Quality Review Expert (Facebook)
Teacher (Teach for America)
Youth Campus Organizer (Sierra Club)
Youth and Music Minister (Clarksdale Church)
Volunteer (AmeriCorps)

Professional Associations

American Jewish Historical Society
Christian Association
Franciscan Media
Hindu American Foundation
International Religious Liberty Association
National Christian Counselors Association

National Religious Broadcasters
Religious Research Association
United Christian Ministries International
United Methodist Association of Health and Welfare Ministries
US Ministry Association
World Religious Travel Association