

Religion

The Religion Department views religion as a significant dimension of all human cultures, past and present. The academic study of religion offers an interdisciplinary approach to the ways in which human thought, values and ceremonies, literature, architecture, art, community and politics are woven into a cultural religious fabric.

Why Religion at Illinois Wesleyan?

- You will explore the religious traditions of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas and Europe. We expect students to engage in critical and constructive thinking, develop their reading, writing and speaking skills, and expand their aesthetic awareness.
- Classes, especially through the major and minor program in religion, investigate beliefs and practices of world religions, including: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. Study also includes analysis of the texts of the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament, as well as discovery of new religious movements. Comparative religious study is emphasized. Your major courses will help you polish your writing and speaking skills through debates, position papers and in-class discussion.
- A major in religion is appropriate preparation for graduate school in religious studies or theology, as well as for advanced work at a seminary or in counseling. Double majors, combining religion with a second field such as philosophy, sociology, English, history or business, are also possible.
- A minor in religion complements majors in diverse fields such as psychology, history, art and international studies.
- As a religion major or minor, students choose primary courses from five different categories and add courses that appeal to their interests. Majors conclude their study with the Senior Project, an independent research project conducted with one of the Religion Department faculty members.
- IWU's flexible curriculum enables you to have a minor or second major in such fields as political science, literature, foreign language or economics.

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A Sampling of Courses Offered by Religion:

- Chinese Religions
- Exploring Mysticism
- God & Post-Modernism
- Greek Myth and the Hero
- Hindus and Christians
- Introduction to Myths and Rituals
- Introduction to Religious Thought
- Jesus and the Gospels
- Judaism and Christianity in the Greco-Roman World
- Judaism through the Ages
- Lost Books of the Bible
- Magic and Religion
- Native American & African Religions
- Religions of the World
- Religious Tolerance and Pluralism

Recent May Term Courses Related to Religion:

- African American Religions
- Chinese Religions
- Islam from Mecca to Malcolm X
- Religion and Violence
- Spirituality and Popular Culture
- Who is (not) a Jew?
- Women, Religion and Spirituality



“Why should I study Religion?’ ‘What kind of job can I get with a Religion major?’ These are questions that prospective majors regularly ask me, but the

answers that I can give them are not always as straightforward as they might like. For unlike many other areas of study that seemingly set a clear course for life beyond college, the study of religion opens up many possibilities. The Religion Department at IWU is committed to the academic study of religion. It is our goal that the students we teach leave with a broader and deeper understanding of the world through the lens of religion. To achieve this goal, we give our students not only knowledge, but more importantly, the ability to communicate in oral and written form, to think critically, and to empathize with other peoples and cultures. These skills allow them to live in a global society and to continue to develop as individuals on whatever path they choose.”

Kevin Sullivan
Associate Professor of Religion



**For Further Information,
Write or Call:**

Dr. Kevin Sullivan
Chair, Religion Department
Illinois Wesleyan University
P.O. Box 2900
Bloomington, IL 61702-2900
309/556-3886
ksullivan@iwu.edu

www.iwu.edu/religion

Learning from a Quality Faculty

Learning is enriched at Illinois Wesleyan by the close, personal instruction you'll receive from our faculty. Our religion professors were trained at the best institutions in the United States, and they are eager to share both their learning and their excitement for religion with you.

- **Kevin Sullivan, Chair (D.Phil., The University of Oxford)**, a scholar of the New Testament and Christian origins, whose classes focus on the study of early Jewish and Christian literatures in their historical contexts, with special research interests in early Jewish and Christian Mysticism.
- **Robert Erlewine (Ph.D., Rice University)**, a scholar of modern and post-modern religious thought, especially its Jewish, Christian and post-Christian varieties, whose courses investigate the Jewish religious tradition, religious responses to the Holocaust, and philosophical and theological accounts of tolerance and pluralism.
- **Tao Jin (Ph.D., University of Illinois)**, a scholar of East Asian Buddhism, with a special interest in Buddhist commentary and exegesis who teaches courses on Asian Religious Literature, Buddhism in East Asia, Zen, and Chinese Religions.
- **Carole Myscofski, (Ph.D., University of Chicago)**, a historian of religions whose classes include the study of myths, women and religion, the religions of Native America and Africa, with special interests in colonial Brazil, magic, and new religious movements.

Putting Learning into Practice

As a student in the Religion Department, you may prepare for a variety of careers in academia, counseling, law, social work, business or ministry. Many graduates of our department have continued their education at major graduate institutions, including Oxford University, Columbia University and the University of Chicago, on their way to careers in college or university teaching. Others have pursued ministry degrees at seminaries such as Harvard Divinity School, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. Recent graduates have joined Teach For America, the national corps of college graduates who commit to teaching low-income students for two years. A degree in religion from Illinois Wesleyan University can be a gateway to a wide variety of challenging and satisfying professional opportunities.