

ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

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.
- We encourage double majoring. In the past students have pursued double majors with Biology, Business, English, History, Philosophy and Sociology.
- 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.

Learning from an Excellent Faculty

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



A Sampling of Courses Offered by Religion:

Chinese Religions
Philosophers Read the Bible
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, Witchcraft, 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



“**Majoring in Religion at IWU prepares you for any sort of career imaginable.** Our majors have become doctors, gone into finance, social work,

the FBI, as well as going on to graduate school or seminary. This variety of options makes sense. The department encourages students to double major, and many alumni report back that their background in religious studies is of interest to employers. At Illinois Wesleyan, the religion major (or minor) allows students a lot of freedom to explore areas that interest them, from philosophy of religion to the study of cults, from Buddhism to the Bible. Our courses emphasize critical and independent thinking, written and oral communication. The religion major prepares its students for leadership in a globalized world.”

- **Nawaraj Chaulagain, Ph.D. — Harvard University**

A scholar of South Asian Religious Traditions specializing in Ritual Theory and Ritual Practice. He teaches classes on World Religions, Comparative Religions, Religion and Literature in South Asia, Religion and Modernity, Theory and Method in the Study of Religions, and Yoga and Meditations.

- **Robert Erlewine, Chair, 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.

- **Kevin Sullivan, 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.

Putting Learning into Practice

A degree in Religion from Illinois Wesleyan can be a gateway to a wide variety of challenging and satisfying professional opportunities. Upon graduation, many of our students have pursued their graduate educations at fine institutions including Oxford University, Columbia University and the University of Chicago. Others have pursued ministry degrees at seminaries such as Harvard Divinity School, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, and Lutheran School of Theology. And other recent graduates have joined Teach For America, gone on to careers as surgeons, librarians, social workers, web designers, and more.

Robert Erlewine

Associate Professor of Religion and Department Chair

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

Dr. Robert Erlewine

Chair, Religion Department
Illinois Wesleyan University
P.O. Box 2900
Bloomington, IL 61702-2900
309/556-3138
rerlewin@iwu.edu

www.iwu.edu/religion