

Without a knowledge of religion, it is difficult to understand daily newspapers, modern history, and many of our own behavior patterns. Familiarity with a wide range of religious traditions and the ways in which religions shape society, culture, and world affairs provides scholarly tools for coming to terms with the wide variety of sometimes strange, always interesting phenomena that occur in modern society. Many students take religion courses to learn more about their own religious traditions, the traditions of others, or to clarify their own thinking in the process.

THE PROGRAM

The religious studies program at Virginia Wesleyan is a field of inquiry located within the humanities that provides students with a basic understanding of historical religious tradition, exposure to religious traditions other than their own, and familiarity with more than one approach to the study of religion. The methods and interests of the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences converge in this program as students examine the role of religion in history, literature, and science; in human experience and diversity; and in culture, politics, and society. The religious studies curriculum introduces students to major fields of scholarship including biblical studies, ethics, theology, and world religions.

THE MAJOR

The religious studies major is designed to introduce students to the diversity of religious beliefs and values. Students will develop “cultural literacy” in the major religions of the world and be able to understand concrete ethical/social issues from different faith perspectives. The courses in this major involve analysis, comparison, and interpretation and require sensitivity to the perspectives and practices of others.

THE COURSES

Classes at VWU are small and interactive. Some of the courses within the religious studies program are World Religions, The Old Testament World, The New Testament World, Christian History, Religion and American Politics, and Thinkers/Topics in Religion. Special topics include Religion in the News, Sociology of Religion, War, Peace, and Christian Ethics, Science and Religion, and a Seminar in C.S. Lewis. A student majoring in religious studies is required to complete a minimum of 36 hours in specified coursework.

INTERNSHIPS/UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

All students at VWU complete a capstone course called the Senior Integrative Experience (SIE). The goal is to produce a major project that characterizes and integrates knowledge from multiple disciplines and responds to complex issues, problems, and questions within the student's major area of study. Students majoring in religious studies can fulfill the SIE requirements by completing a course in Topics in Religion or Sports and Religion. Many students also take an internship course on Servant Leadership that allows them to both work in a particular ministry setting and then, with others, reflect academically on that experience.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The study of religion prepares students well for careers in ministry, education, social services, politics, journalism, public health, and administration. Some students will go on to seminary, law school, or graduate school.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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