

# Master's Degree Program in Religious Studies



*An intensive program with an  
emphasis on Religions in America,  
Religion and Conflict, and  
Contemplative Studies*



**RUTGERS**  
School of Arts and Sciences

The **Religious Studies Master's Degree and Certificate Program** at Rutgers—The State University of New Jersey offers students an intensive immersion in the discipline with a focus on Religious Pluralism in America. The program focuses on three complementary areas:

- Religions in America
- Religion and Conflict
- Contemplative Studies

This program is designed for:

- Students looking for a “bridge” M.A. program to doctoral studies
- Current and prospective teachers
- Students preparing for professional careers in law, social work, journalism, counseling, medicine, civil service, politics, and ministry
- Yoga teachers and devotees
- Students seeking personal enrichment



The master's degree program addresses several pressing needs of the post-9/11 world by critically studying core components of religion from its most sublime aspects, such as contemplation, to its most horrifying aspects, such as violence, across historical and cultural boundaries.

## Program Features

Centered at the New Brunswick campus of Rutgers University, this master's degree draws on the strength of a faculty with core members who specialize in disciplines such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and American Religious History.



- **Strength of Scholarship.** Faculty have all made major scholarly contributions to a range of fields.
- **Commitment of Scholarship.** Courses are led by fulltime Religion Department faculty committed to teaching and advising.
- **Small Classes.** Enable extensive and personal interaction between faculty and students.
- **Flexibility.** Late afternoon and evening classes are available, as well as a part-time option.
- **Accessibility.** Program offers easy access to the Turnpike and NJ Transit.
- **Educational Value.** As the state university of New Jersey, a Rutgers education offers tremendous value.
- **Research Opportunities.** As a major AAU research university, Rutgers offers unparalleled research opportunities for its student body.

In addition, the Rutgers M.A. in Religious Studies is one of only a handful of such programs in the nation, and the only such program to offer tracks on Religion and Conflict and on Contemplative Studies.

## Core Faculty

*Debra Scoggins Ballentine/Hebrew Bible*

*Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz/Religions of South Asia*

*Edwin F. Bryant/Religions of India*

*Tao Jiang/Buddhism & Chinese Philosophy*

*James T. Johnson/Religious Ethics*

*James W. Jones/Psychology of Religion*

*Tia M. Kolbaba/Byzantine Studies*

*D. Christian Lammerts/Buddhist Studies*

*Jawid Mojaddedi/Islamic Studies*

*Sandy Russell Jones/Islamic Studies*

*Emma J. Wasserman/New Testament*

*Joseph W. Williams/American Religious History*





## Degree Requirements

The completion of thirty course credits is required of all students pursuing a Master's Degree in Religion.

M.A. students are required to take ten courses that comprise these thirty credits:

- Every incoming student will take the "Theories of the Study of Religion" course in the fall semester of the first year of their study.
- All students will take courses in at least four of the following seven areas: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, religion and conflict, contemplative studies, and religions in America.
- A combined maximum of two courses may be taken at other Rutgers departments and other universities, subject to the approval of the Graduate Director.
- 400-level courses taught by full-time department faculty may be counted toward graduate credit, provided that additional work is performed (additional readings and a 25-page term paper).
- Final assessment options are to write an M.A. thesis or complete a capstone project.

## Language Requirements

Acquisition of a foreign language is not required for the M.A. degree. However, to encourage language learning, the program will allow a maximum of two language courses (six credits), relevant to the student's area of study, to be counted toward the degree.

## Program Requirements — Certificate Programs

Certificate students are required to take four courses that comprise twelve credits:

- "Theories of the Study of Religion" course.
- Students specializing in one of the core areas will take three courses in that area. All other students receive a more general "certificate in religious studies."
- One course may be taken at another department within Rutgers or at another university.

## Admissions

### Admission Requirements

Applicants to the Master's Degree program in Religious Studies should normally have a GPA of at least 3.0.

International students for whom English is a foreign language will need TOEFL or IELTS scores demonstrating English proficiency.

### Application Procedures

Application materials should include:

- A completed online application form
- Official transcripts from previous colleges and universities the applicant has attended
- Two letters of recommendation
- A personal statement (1 to 2 pages)
- A writing sample (optional)
- The application fee

Deadline for Fall admission:

**May 1**

*(Extensions and spring admission also available)*

### For More Information

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