The religious studies concentration within the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies provides students with a basic knowledge of the world's major religions (including Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam); a broad understanding of the common elements and themes in religion; and a familiarity with the various approaches and methods used to study the substance and function of religion. The academic study of religion serves to develop intellectual abilities important for life as a whole, beyond the knowledge and skills required for any particular profession. It enhances analytical, critical and interpretive capacities that are applicable to any subject matter, and in any human context.

A concentration in religious studies prepares students for any career that requires a deep understanding of human motivations and an appreciation of diverse perspectives and values, such as social services or cross-cultural endeavors, and for graduate training in religious studies in universities or seminaries with a view toward teaching or church-related vocations. It is also excellent preparation for postgraduate work in other liberal arts disciplines leading to careers in a wide range of scholarly or professional fields. The skills and capacities developed through the disciplined study of religion are applicable to virtually any career and can readily be integrated with the requirements for nearly any entry-level job. More than a preparation to make a living, the academic study of religion prepares one for living as a critical and participating member of the world community.

Religious studies is an academic discipline pursued within the context of the liberal arts. In this discipline religion is approached as a type of human experience and behavior, as a phenomenon found among all peoples of the world throughout history. The academic study of religions does not seek to induce belief or to determine which religion is "correct", but to understand the doctrines and practices of religions and the human sources and consequences of faith. Persons of virtually any or no personal religious faith may profitably engage in the academic study of religion.

Religious studies majors are required to take RELN 112, Survey of World Religions, as part of the core requirements of the major. This course examines the origins, foundational figures, scriptures, beliefs, and practices of the world's major religions. Students interested in broadening their knowledge of religious studies, generally, might also find Introduction to Religion (RELN 111), which focuses on the methods and approaches used in the academic study of religion as well as recurrent forms and issues in religion such as rituals, myths, and the nature of the divine, to be a valuable course.

Religious studies courses differ greatly from one another depending on the topics, the level, and other factors. Typically, religious studies teachers emphasize not only what is said in the texts and what is done in various religious practices, but why it is said and done and what students themselves think about the matter.

Students majoring in religious studies are encouraged to pursue a second major or a minor in any discipline of their interest. Among the most frequently selected fields are History, Psychology, Sociology, and Foreign Languages.

Students intending to go to a seminary or to graduate school in religious studies or another liberal arts field are strongly encouraged to supplement the major with studies in a foreign language.

For a teaching position in religious studies at the college or university level, an advanced degree is essential. Employment in the ministry generally requires specialized training beyond the Bachelor's degree. There are, however, many church-related careers for which advanced study is not required. And because the skills and abilities gained through the academic study of religion are applicable to virtually any vocation, a bachelor's degree in religious studies qualifies one for a wide range of entry-level positions in business, social work, government service, and education.
Career Options

As recent studies show, employers want, and reward, many of the capacities which the academic study of religion develops: the ability to communicate effectively in speech and in writing, to generate and organize ideas, to analyze and summarize complex data, and to perceive issues from many perspectives. Thus, while many Philosophy and Religious Studies majors pursue careers in education and in church-related organizations, there are people trained in religious studies in just about every field: social work, government service, counseling, journalism, law, and international relations.

Extracurricular Activities

The Radford University Philosophy and Religious Studies Club is an organization that provides students an opportunity to discuss philosophical and religious issues. Through monthly meetings, student forums, and movie nights, students interested in philosophy and religion pursue intellectual questions outside the classroom in the company of others with similar interests. The club is open to all Radford University students.

Transfer Opportunities

Students wishing to transfer from the VCCS should complete an Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, or Associate of Arts & Science degree and include courses that will transfer to RU as general education courses. (check the online transfer guide at http://admissions.asp.radford.edu/forms/transferguide.pdf).

To apply for admission:

For undergraduate programs contact the Office of Admissions, Box 6903, Radford, VA 24142 or you may apply online. For specific information on admissions and financial aid, see the RU website at www.radford.edu.