

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### UNDERGRADUATE FACT SHEET

From the dawn of civilization, people have used rituals and symbols to express their deepest hopes, celebrate major milestones, and mourn their losses. This program offers an opportunity to explore religion as a human phenomenon in all its diversity, using a variety of interdisciplinary tools.

The field of religious studies is particularly pertinent today, given the intersection between religious belief, public policy, and international politics. With a focus on careful reading, critical thinking, and engagement with perspectives quite different from our own, a degree in religious studies also develops skills easily transferable to a wide variety of career options.

West Chester University offers a focused course of study in religion through the Department of Philosophy. Religious studies, as a major or minor, serves to broaden perspectives through the exploration of Eastern and Western world views. It encourages an increase in self-knowledge by illuminating how assumptions of others differ from our own, fosters interdisciplinary appreciation of humankind's diverse religious heritage, and develops philosophical and descriptive writing ability. The religious studies program gives students sound training in religious classics – in philosophical method coupled with the empirical study of religion.

### Career Opportunities

A degree or minor in religious studies is valuable training for careers where an understanding of religious cultural background and diversity is crucial, such as education, ministry, public relations, international relations, and international business. Undergraduate work in religious studies prepares students for graduate work in seminary, and beyond, and can be an enriching experience regardless of one's goals.

### Undergraduate Majors

**Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy.** This degree explores basic philosophical themes but encourages you to develop personal interests. Seven required courses provide a strong foundation for the major; you may choose three electives needed to complete the concentration from a variety of other philosophy courses, all taught by experts in the field.

**Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy – Religious Studies Concentration.** This degree explores the individual and social expression of Western and non-Western

philosophic and religious traditions, and relationships to other disciplines in the arts and sciences. Five required courses serve as the foundation for the major; you may choose five electives from a wide array of offerings, depending on your areas of interest and career plans.

Both of these degrees have the advantage of allowing a maximum number of electives, permitting a fuller personal choice than is often available in other programs. Many of our students are double majors, taking advantage of our flexible curriculum to enhance their background or focus their preparation for particular career goals.

### Undergraduate Minors

Applied Ethics

Peace and Conflict Studies (an interdisciplinary program administered by the Department of Philosophy)

Philosophy

Religious Studies

A minor provides transcript recognition of proficiency in a supplementary field. It can serve to strengthen a major or to broaden your interests.

### Typical Courses

History of Medieval Philosophy

Ideas of the Bible

Introduction to Islam

Introduction to Religious Studies

New Religious Movements

Philosophies and Religions of India

Philosophies and Religions of the Far East

Philosophy of Religion

Religion in the U.S.

Religions of the West

Sociology of Religion

Theology and Science

Women and Religion

### Advanced Degrees

Master of Arts in Philosophy

Master of Arts in Philosophy: Applied Ethics

Students who wish to continue in the religious studies field may find that the philosophy graduate program has

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courses of interest. West Chester University is the only institution in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education to offer a master's degree in philosophy.

The master of arts is a stepping stone for many to a range of career possibilities, including admission to doctoral degree programs and college teaching positions.

## Special Study Opportunities

Study abroad opportunities are readily available.

## Related Student Activities

The WCU Philosophical Society, a forum for discussions, panels, and social activities, is open to all majors, minors, and graduate students. Phi Sigma Tau, the international honor society in philosophy, holds inductee ceremonies every other year for qualified students.

In addition to these activities, the Department of Philosophy sometimes presents nationally known philosophers who visit the campus and speak on various issues. One recent guest lecturer was Joseph Margolis, distinguished Temple University philosophy professor.

West Chester University is also a member of the Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium (GPPC), a cooperative effort of leading colleges and universities in the area. Most recently, West Chester University hosted a GPPC conference on Buddhist ethics, which brought speakers of international repute, as well as students and faculty from the other schools in the consortium, to the campus. All majors have the opportunity to participate in consortium discussions, forums, contests, and other activities.

## Faculty

The current religious studies faculty carry on an active research program which includes publication of journal articles, chapters in anthologies, and books, as well as presentations at national and international conferences, including the American Academy of Religion and the Mid-Atlantic Region Association for Asian Studies. You can obtain a listing of faculty and their academic qualifications from the Department of Philosophy at the address and telephone number listed below, or on our website, [http://www.wcupa.edu/\\_academics/sch\\_cas.phil/](http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/sch_cas.phil/).

## For More Information

Department of Philosophy

West Chester University

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West Chester, PA 19383

610-436-2841

Web page: [http://www.wcupa.edu/\\_academics/sch\\_cas.phil/](http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/sch_cas.phil/)

Undergraduate Catalog: [http://www.wcupa.edu/\\_information/official.documents/undergrad.catalog/](http://www.wcupa.edu/_information/official.documents/undergrad.catalog/)

## About West Chester University

A comprehensive, public institution, West Chester University of Pennsylvania offers high-quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs in more than 100 subject areas, as well as certification and certificate programs. As one of the largest members of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, West Chester offers a full and rewarding educational experience as well as reasonable tuition. More than 15,400 graduate and undergraduate students, as well as 1,500 faculty and staff, study and work on the picturesque, 406-acre campus. Strategically located at the center of the mid-Atlantic corridor between New York City and Washington, D.C., West Chester University is just 25 miles west of Philadelphia and 17 miles north of Wilmington.

## Information on Admission Office of Admissions

Emil H. Messikomer Hall, 100 West Rosedale Ave.

West Chester University, West Chester, PA 19383

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/wcupa](https://www.facebook.com/wcupa)

