Religions in America, a new area of study begun in the academic year 2012-13, is an interdisciplinary program that focuses on religious ideas, practices, institutions, and movements in colonial North America (1600–1787) and the United States (1787–present). The program is interdisciplinary, bringing together faculty and students with historical, sociological, ethnographic, comparative, and theoretical interests in American religion. Students in the program can write dissertations on a wide variety of topics: for example, Native American religion, black Muslims in America, the rise of new forms of religious media, Jewish and Christian attitudes toward the American claim to be a “new Israel,” the meaning of American “secularism” in the late 20th century, the response of different religious communities to free-market capitalism, the emergence of New Thought in the late 19th century, and the Hindu, Muslim, or Buddhist experience in America.

Religions in America stands at the crossroads of several other areas of study at the Divinity School, and interdisciplinary collaboration is expected. Students who are particularly interested in American Christianity have the choice of concentrating in either Religions in America or the History of Christianity area in the Divinity School, which considers American Christianity in relationship to the longer Christian tradition from antiquity to the present. Similarly, students who are interested in other global traditions in America (for example, Buddhism or Hinduism), can choose to concentrate in either Religions in America or the History of Religions area.

For more information, contact Teresa Hord Owens, Dean of Students, tdowens@uchicago.edu, 773.702.8217. For more information, visit divinity.uchicago.edu.
Resources

Students draw on the extensive course offerings throughout the Divinity School and other departments of the University, including History, Sociology, Anthropology, Music, and English. A crucial resource is the Karla Scherer Center for the Study of American Culture, a multidisciplinary center that sponsors courses, lectures, lunch talks, and dissertation fellowships. (For more information, see americanculture.uchicago.edu.) Students are also strongly encouraged to participate in the biweekly meetings of the graduate workshop Religions in America.

Religions in America began admitting students to the PhD program in Autumn 2012. Current students’ areas of interest and research include:

- Secularism in America
- American Religious Historiography
- New Religious Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries
- Religion and the Civil Rights and Women’s Rights Movements
- Religion and Early American Intellectual History

Graduate Workshops

The Council on Advanced Studies (CAS) sponsors interdisciplinary graduate research workshops in the humanities, social sciences, and divinity, designed to bring together faculty and graduate students from the University of Chicago and the wider Chicago area to create scholarly dialogue, to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration, and to foster the exchange of ideas. Workshops include Middle East History and Theory, Medieval Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Jewish Studies. In addition, the Divinity Students Association offers a range of workshops and clubs: one for each area and others according to student interest. Current groups include Buddhist Studies, the Women’s Caucus, and The Sacred Flame. To learn more, visit divinity.uchicago.edu/clubs-and-workshops.

Recent Courses

This is merely a sample of coursework available at the Divinity School. Our faculty teach over 100 courses each year in the academic study of religion. Please visit divinity.uchicago.edu/courses for current and past course offerings.

- Religion in Modern America, 1865–1920 (Evans)
- Religion in 20th-Century America (Evans)
- Religion and the City (McRoberts)
- African American Gospel Music (Butler)
- The Narration of America in Literature and Film (Rosengarten/Howell)
- Christianity and Slavery in America, 1619–1865 (Evans)
- Music and Faith (Butler)
- Ethnographic Methods (McRoberts)
- Urban Structure and Process (McRoberts)
- Music and Creolization (Butler)
- The Age of Walter Rauschenbusch: History and Historiography of the Social Gospel Movement (Evans)
- Music and Trance (Butler)
- African American Religion in the 20th Century: History and Historiography (Evans)

The University of Chicago Library

The University of Chicago Library is one of the largest and richest research collections (both in print and online formats) in the world. Religious Studies has been a core component of the collection since the University’s founding, and its current strengths match the research needs of the areas of study in the Divinity School. The Library has a full-time Bibliographer for Religion and Philosophy who holds workshops specifically designed for those studying religion.

To learn more about library resources at the University of Chicago, visit library.uchicago.edu.

UChicagoGRAD

UChicagoGRAD is a University-wide office committed to ensuring that students and postdocs have the skills they need to become the next generation of leaders in academia, government, industry and non-profits.

grad.uchicago.edu