Religious Studies with Language: Indo-Tibetan Buddhism MA

The 61-credit MA Religious Studies with Language program with the Indo-Tibetan Buddhism concentration includes all the course work of the MA Religious Studies degree with the Indo-Tibetan Buddhism concentration, and is enriched by training in either Sanskrit or Tibetan through two years (16 credits) of course work or more. This degree surveys Indian and Tibetan Buddhism with emphasis on textual and meditative lineages, integrating study and practice each semester, with the added dimension of exploring Buddhist texts beyond the filter of a particular English translation through language study. The faculty includes Western-trained academics and acharyas (master teachers) steeped in Tibetan Buddhist practice, as well as English-speaking Tibetan lamas extensively trained in their own traditions.

Sanskrit

Sanskrit is a classical language of South Asia, that is foundational to Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu religious traditions. The formative works of yoga and tantra were also composed in Sanskrit. The Sanskrit language option provides students with a knowledge of Sanskrit grammar and vocabulary, as well as initial reading skills, providing access to the remarkable textual archive of South Asia.

Tibetan

Study of the Tibetan language provides access to the rich and diverse world of Tibetan Buddhist literature, to the oral teachings of contemporary Tibetan masters, and to a great body of Indian texts that survive only in Tibetan translation. The Tibetan language option provides training in both classical Tibetan and the spoken language. Study of classical Tibetan involves learning grammar and vocabulary of the classical language and the reading of texts. Modern Tibetan is learned through the study of the contemporary idiom with practice in hearing and speaking Tibetan.

Meditation Requirements and the Nitartha Institute Shedra-Gomdra Option

In addition to four meditation courses taken simultaneously with their related Buddhist Studies course, there is a non-credit requirement for a Buddhist Meditation Intensive (REL650) for which students have two options: 1) twenty-eight days of intensive Buddhist meditation practice done as a monthlong program or divided into two-week, ten-day, or seven-day programs, in a Buddhist tradition of the student’s choice, e.g., Tibetan, Zen, Theravada, and so forth; or 2) the Nitartha Institute intensive study [Shedra] and meditation [Gomdra] option, in which the students attend a month of the Nitartha Institute Summer program plus, separately, two weeks of intensive Buddhist meditation in the tradition of their choice. With their other degree requirements, the Nitartha option enables the student go on to qualify for the Nitartha Institute Certificates of Completion for its Foundation and Intermediate Curriculums, and to enter its Advanced Curriculum. With the Foundation and Intermediate Certificates, and attendance at a second month-long summer program, they would qualify to enter the Nitartha Teacher-in-Training Program. (For information, see www.nitarthainstitute.org.)

Note on fees: There are occasional course fees associated with individual Naropa classes, which are subject to change. The noncredit requirement of the monthlong Buddhist meditation retreat costs approximately $1,500 (or $750 for two weeks for students choosing the Nitartha Institute Shedra-Gomdra Option). The Nitartha Institute option students also register for a 6-credit Nitartha summer program through Naropa, which will cover the tuition cost, but not the room and board, texts, and other items of the Nitartha program, which add up to approximately $1,700 after receiving a scholarship from Nitartha and Naropa. The prices listed above are estimates based on current costs. These costs are determined by outside organizations and are subject to change.

Tibetan Language Teacher Training Program

Each year, a top student is chosen from the third-year Tibetan language students to help a faculty member teach Tibetan I and II. The student must be concurrently enrolled in Tibetan V and VI.

Tibetan Apprenticeships

Students who have excelled in two semesters of Tibetan may apply for a research assistant position with the Tsadra Foundation Research Center in Boulder. If applicants also have studied Sanskrit, that is a plus, but not required. Students who have completed at least four Tibetan courses are eligible to apply to the Nalanda Translation Committee Apprenticeship program, which provides funding for a year (or more) for further Tibetan language training with the translation committee after they complete their degree.

Culminating Requirements

The degree program concludes with an oral comprehensive exam as well as a master’s paper or project, which can include a translation of Sanskrit or Tibetan.

Degree Requirements

First year, fall

- REL503 Tibetan I (4) or REL507 Sanskrit I (4)
- REL600 Meditation Practicum I: Seeds of Peace (3)
- REL611 First Turning of the Wheel: Nature of Mind and Emotions (3)
- REL614 Mind and Its World (3)
- REL645 Methods and Issues in the Study of Religion (3)

SUBTOTAL 16

First year, spring

- REL533 Tibetan II (4) or REL537 Sanskrit II (4)
- REL620 Meditation Practicum II: Self and No-Self (3)
- REL650 Buddhist Meditation Intensive (noncredit)*
- REL661 Second Turning of the Wheel: The Bodhisattva Path (3)
- REL655 Trends in Religious Studies (3)
- Religious Studies or Graduate Collective elective (3)**
SUBTOTAL 16
First year, summer
Nitartha Institute Shedra-Gomdra Option only: ***
  • REL547 Contemplative Practice Intensive (3) - Mahamudra Shamatha - Nitartha Institute Shedra-Gomdra Option only
  • REL701 The Middle Way School (3) - Nitartha Institute Shedra-Gomdra Option only

SUBTOTAL 6 (Nitartha Institute Shedra-Gomdra Option only uses 6 elective credits)

Second year, fall
  • REL553 Tibetan III (4) or REL557 Sanskrit III (4)
  • REL635 Meditation Practicum III: Mind-Training (3)
  • REL710 Third Turning of the Wheel: Yogacara and Buddha Nature (3)
  • Religious Studies or Graduate Collective elective (3)**

SUBTOTAL 13
Second year, spring
  • REL583 Tibetan IV (4) or REL587 Sanskrit IV (4)
  • REL751 Buddhism in Tibet (3) or REL760 Vajrayana: Symbol, Iconography, and Ritual (3)
  • REL780 Meditation Practicum IV: Maitri and Mandala (3)
  • REL880 Comprehensive Exam (noncredit)
  • REL885 Master’s Project (noncredit)
  • Religious Studies or Graduate Collective electives (6)** Nitartha Institute Shedra-Gomdra Option students (0)**

SUBTOTAL 16 (10 for Nitartha Institute Shedra-Gomdra Option students)

Total Credits: 61
* It is highly recommended that students complete the noncredit monthlong Buddhist Meditation Intensive requirement (REL650) by the winter break between the fall and spring semesters of their first year, or at the latest during the summer following their first year.

Nitartha Institute Shedra-Gomdra Option students only required to do two weeks of this meditation intensive.

** Students can take up 6 of their elective credits in courses from other programs in The Graduate Collective that are designated as open to students outside their programs, with permission of the faculty member.

*** Students choosing the Nitartha Institute Shedra-Gomdra Option should complete this monthlong program in the summer following their first year. This is integral to the sequence of the curriculum. This replaces 6 credits of electives in the final semester.

Religious Studies Electives
Buddhism Electives
  • REL540 Zen Buddhism (3)
  • REL546 Flight of the Swans: Dharma Comes West (3)
  • REL751 Buddhism in Tibet (3)
  • REL760 Vajrayana: Symbol, Iconography, and Ritual (3)

General Electives
  • REL525 Contemplative Christianity (3)
  • REL529 Contemplative Judaism (3)
  • REL530 Yoga and Globalization: The Inception of Postural Yoga (3)
  • REL535 Kabbalah and Consciousness (3)
  • REL545 Contemplative Islam: An Introduction to Its History, Thought, and Practice (3)
  • REL585 Spiritual Models of Social Action (3)
  • REL623 Religious Experience in Africa: Sacred Cosmos, Ritual, and Community (3)
  • REL625 Christian Scripture and Spirituality (3)
  • REL634 Hindu Tantra (3)
  • REL655 Trends in Religious Studies (3)
  • REL672 Non-Dualism in Theory and Practice (3)
  • REL676 Inner Oral Tradition of the Torah (3)
  • REL749 Contemporary American Religion (3)
  • REL779 Interreligious Dialogue (3)

Contemplative Practice Electives
  • REL504W Breeze of Simplicity: Meditation Weekend (1)
  • REL540 Zen Buddhism (3)
  • REL554W Opening the Heart: Meditation Weekend (1)
  • REL571 Christian Prayer and Mystical Practices (3)
  • REL609W Mindfulness Instructor Training I (1)*
  • REL690W–694W Shambhala Training Levels I–V (1)
    • REL690W Shambhala Training Level I: The Art of Being Human (1)
    • REL691W Shambhala Training Level II: Birth of the Warrior (1)
    • REL692W Shambhala Training Level III: Warrior in the World (1)
    • REL693W Shambhala Training Level IV: Awakened Heart (1)
    • REL694W Shambhala Training Level V: Open Sky (1)
  • REL709W Mindfulness Instructor Training II (1)*
  • REL809W Mindfulness Instructor Training III (1)*

* These courses must be taken in sequence. The prerequisites for REL609W are Meditation Practicum I and II, as well as a Buddhist monthlong meditation intensive, two weeks of which must be completed before the class begins.
"vipassana," from the Theravada Buddhist tradition of Southeast Asia. This course includes mindfulness practice in sitting, walking, and daily life through short talks, guided meditations, and the practice of "noble silence." Cross-listed as REL157W.

REL503
Tibetan I (4.0)
This class develops a foundation in literary Tibetan and begins the study of modern spoken Tibetan. The first semester focuses on the grammatical foundation of the language, the acquisition of basic vocabulary, and training in the skills of correct pronunciation, handwriting, and spelling. Students should expect to study at least eight hours per week outside of class. Cross-listed as REL274.

REL504W
Breeze of Simplicity: Meditation Weekend (1.0)
This course introduces spiritual practices, meditation, and various themes from specific spiritual traditions. The spiritual tradition will vary depending on the visiting instructor presenting. Beginning or experienced students are welcome and are guided through the presentations. The weekend includes lectures, discussion, meditation, and/or other spiritual practices. Cross-listed as REL158W.

REL507
Sanskrit I (4.0)
An introduction to the classical Sanskrit language. The first-year course includes developing familiarization with the Sanskrit alphabet (devanagari), mastering the conventions of euphonic combination (sandhi), and learning the basics of Sanskrit grammar. In addition, we begin reading texts from the classical Indian tradition, particularly selections from the Mahabharata and Ramayana and from some simple Buddhist texts (e.g., the Heart Sutra). Students should expect to study at least six hours per week outside of class. Cross-listed as REL277.

REL525
Contemplative Christianity (3.0)
This course examines the contemplative and mystical tradition of Christianity and its recent recovery by mainstream Christians through the work of Thomas Merton and others. Students examine contemplative perspectives on such major topics as God, Christ, salvation, divine union, delification, scripture, and spiritual evolution, especially as these views contrast with modern fundamentalism. This class also studies the contributions of the major historical writers of the tradition. The class includes ample time for contemplative practice. Cross-listed as REL325.

REL529
Contemplative Judaism (3.0)
This course explores the contemplative teachings and practices of traditional Judaism. We will study sacred texts such as the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud, learn about classical Jewish rituals and methods of prayer, and explore contemplative approaches to the Hebrew calendar and the holiday cycle. Our exploration of these topics is approached with an eye toward understanding how these teachings and practices are engaged as a spiritual path. Cross-listed as REL 229.

REL530
Yoga and Globalization: The Inception of Postural Yoga (3.0)
Looking at the textual sources, historical circumstances, and geopolitical processes that helped create the conditions for the emergence of modern postural yoga, this course utilizes a recent swath of critical historical studies on the pioneers of modern yoga and their cultural milieu. Students will also closely study the primary source texts of these architects of modern yoga, such as the writings of Swami Vivekananda, Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, and Swami Kuvalayananda, which will be contextualized through a consideraton of the dynamic cross-cultural encounters that these authors skillfully navigated. This will equip students with the tools to recognize the myriad ways in which modern yogic traditions traced their roots and adapted to new contexts in the great diasporic profusion of yoga into what is now a globalized and heterogeneous "world" tradition.

REL533
Tibetan II (4.0)
A continuation of Tibetan I. The second semester continues the work begun in Tibetan I, with the addition of working on an actual Tibetan text. Students use an integrated approach of developing varied oral, aural, and written skills to produce an overall knowledge of the language. Prerequisite: REL503. Cross-listed as REL284.

REL535
Kabbalah and Consciousness (3.0)
This course explores the mystical teachings of the Kabbalah as a map of consciousness and path of spiritual transformation. Emphasis will be placed on contemporary, universal, and experiential approaches to these mystical teachings and practices. Cross-listed as REL321.

REL537
Sanskrit II (4.0)
This course is a continuation of Sanskrit I. Prerequisite: REL507. Cross-listed as REL287.

REL540
Zen Buddhism (3.0)
In this course, the Zen Buddhist tradition is studied through its meditation practices and through lectures and discussion on the writings and teachings of the Zen masters. The course includes instruction in zazen, periods of sitting zazen, instructions on applying mindfulness to one’s daily life, as well as studying classic texts and teachings of the tradition. The course includes opportunities for a weekend retreat at one of the Zen centers in the Boulder vicinity. Course fee. Cross-listed as REL345.
REL543E
Classical Jewish Mysticism (3.0)
This course outlines the major trends of the Jewish mystical tradition, ranging from the biblical period until the teachings of Isaac Luria in the sixteenth century. The history and contemplative approach of the Hekhalot/Mekavah School, Abraham Abulafia, the Zohar School, and Isaac Luria are covered. Topics include theosophy and theurgy, ecstatic and contemplative prayer, mystical psychology, soul transmigration, and esoteric interpretation of scripture. The course provides a basic kabbalistic vocabulary and introduction to primary mystical sources that prepares the student for further study of contemplative Judaism. Throughout the course, attention is paid to the experiential dimension of the teachings. Co-requisite: REL529 or equivalent.

REL544
Sufism: An Introduction to Its History, Thought, and Practice (3.0)
A historical-experiential introduction to Sufi history, beliefs, and practices in a five-day intensive retreat course. One part of the course will explore the historical development of a mystically oriented movement in Islam, a movement which both understands itself to be older than Islam and which develops widely divergent attitudes to Islam. Its evolution will be pursued from Arabia to Central Asia and Egypt to modern Turkey, India, and the United States. The second part of the course will focus on the distinctive features of Sufi culture, mystical theology, subtle physiology and psychology, as well as training and practice. In this course, students will engage both historical and traditional texts, learn about traditional Sufi teaching and training contexts, and participate in experiential exercises in order to gain a firsthand experience of contemplative practices in Islamic culture. Cross-listed as REL338.

REL545
Contemplative Islam: An Introduction to Its History, Thought, and Practice (3.0)
A historical-experiential introduction to Islamic history, beliefs, and practices in a five-day intensive retreat course. One part of the course will explore the historical development of Islam, a tradition which understands itself to be a sixth-century reform movement restoring the proper understanding of God’s oneness (tawhid), as well as its five core beliefs and five pillars of practice from a contemplative perspective. The second part of the course will focus on contemplative and mystical practices in Islam, including those drawn from Sufism. In this course, students will engage both historical and traditional texts, learn about traditional Islamic teaching and practice, and participate in experiential exercises in order to gain a firsthand experience of contemplative practices in Islamic culture. Cross-listed as REL314.

REL546
Flight of the Swans: Dharma Comes West (3.0)
Buddhist thought, Buddhist practice, and Buddhist poetry have had a huge impact on North American culture since the 1950s. For several decades, the teachings of Buddhist adepts seemed inseparable from cultural revolution, from poetry, from free speech. Writers and artists popularized haiku, poems of enlightenment, the anti-war movement, and the recognition that ecosystems are living beings. They wrote sutras and used magical language. Haiku flourished in WWII internment camps for Japanese-Americans. Much of this counter-culture and tangled history arrived at Naropa University at its founding. This course will delve into the Beats, Dharma bums, ghost tantras, and the empowerment of women. The role of Asian American communities, converts, mountains, and rivers are part of the mix. Cross-listed as REL348.

REL547
Contemplative Practice Intensive (1.5-6.0)
The purpose of this intensive is to give students the opportunity to deepen their discipline and knowledge of their own spiritual tradition in a community setting that offers a prescribed schedule of practice and of service. Undergraduate students may choose to complete a program ranging in length from one week to a maximum of four weeks at a retreat center of their choice. The center or organization must be approved by the Religious Studies program. Some examples of these sites are Tibetan Buddhist meditation centers, Shambhala retreat centers, Zen centers, Christian monasteries, ashrams, and Jewish contemplative retreats. Others choices are possible with the approval of the program. It is advisable to check with the Contemplative Practice Coordinator to make sure that your choice of retreat center can be approved. Students are responsible for paying all program costs charged by the organization or institution that offers the retreat. These costs are in addition to Naropa tuition. This course is offered for variable-credit; the number of credits (1.5 - 6) will be determined by the length of the retreat. Cross-listed as REL258.

REL552W
Zen Intensive Weekend (1.0)
The teaching and practice of Zen Buddhism assumes that there is a Big Mind present in all mental and physical activities, that this Big Mind can be realized, and that its realization can be matured. The class looks at how this Zen paradigm, its teachings, practices, and realization, can be a personal vision and part of professional contemporary psychology. Cross-listed as REL156W.

REL553
Tibetan III (4.0)
This course continues to expand student knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of literary Tibetan, primarily through translating texts in different genres such as sutras, lives of Buddhist saints, history, philosophy, and so forth. It also continues to develop student knowledge of spoken Tibetan. Prerequisite: REL533. Cross-listed as REL375.

REL554W
Opening the Heart (1.0)
This course introduces spiritual practices, meditation, and various themes from specific spiritual traditions. The spiritual tradition will vary depending on the visiting instructor presenting. When the vast network of pain and confusion in the world is experienced, one can become overwhelmed and full of despair. This weekend...
provides tools that allow one to work with this in order to discover compassion and the courageous heart available to everyone. Cross-listed as REL255W.

REL557
Sanskrit III (4.0)
A continuation of the second year of basic Sanskrit grammar, pronunciation, dictionary usage, and vocabulary acquisition. There is strong emphasis on noun compounds (samaasas). We move onwards through the Goldman and Goldman primer, Devavaniupravesika. We read selectively in a range of texts, including Hindu and Buddhist scripture, and secular court poetry. Stanzas from Bhagavad-gita are introduced, as well as the Heart Sutra. Particular attention is given in class to Indic culture, its connection to Sanskrit language and religious traditions, and issues raised by the work of translation. Prerequisite: REL537. Cross-listed as REL577.

REL561E
Hasidism: Movement, Masters, Teaching (3.0)
This course explores the history and contemplative approach of Eastern European Hasidism, the mystical/pietistic revival movement that formed in southeastern Poland in the eighteenth century. Topics include contemplative prayer, mystical/charismatic leadership, mystical immanence of the Divine, worship through materiality, devekut (mystical union), minhag (custom), and ecstatic forms of music and dance. Co-requisite: REL529 or equivalent.

REL571
Christian Prayer and Mystical Practices (3.0)
This course introduces Christian practices of prayer, with particular focus on contemplative and mystical spiritual practices within Christian traditions. The course explores lectio divina, Centering Prayer, Christian meditation, hesychast Jesus prayer, embodied labyrinth walking, praying with icons, liturgical prayers, and chanting. The course places these practices in broader historical and theological contexts of diverse Christian communities. The course includes instruction and active student participation in these practices. Cross-listed as REL271.

REL583
Tibetan IV (4.0)
This course continues to expand student knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of literary Tibetan, primarily through translating texts in different genres such as sutras, lives of Buddhist saints, history, philosophy, and so forth. Also continues to develop student knowledge of spoken Tibetan. Prerequisite: REL553. Cross-listed as REL385.

REL585
Spiritual Models of Social Action (3.0)
A study of historical and contemporary figures who exemplify the spiritual ideals of nonviolent social action, tracing their unique ways of turning their personal challenges into nonviolent leadership. Drawing upon autobiography, biography, critical analysis, and film as source material, students develop a personal dialog with each of these activists, examining how inner and outer journeys join in spiritually based social activism. Cross-listed as REL312.

REL587
Sanskrit IV (4.0)
This semester completes the range of Sanskrit grammar, with secondary conjugations, vocabulary acquisition, an investigation of etymology, and a study of the principles behind words and their meanings. In addition to finishing the textbook on grammar, the Devavaniupravesika, the class reads examples of a range of Buddhist, Hindu, and secular verses. Increased attention is given to translation and the hands-on practice of bringing ancient texts into the contemporary world. Prerequisite: REL557. Cross-listed as REL387.

REL590
Special Topics in Religious Studies (3.0)
The Special Topics course explores topics of general focus and relevance to the field of religious studies, geared toward the research interests of the faculty. Specific topics are announced the semester the course is offered.

REL600
Meditation Practicum I: Seeds of Peace (3.0)
Students are introduced to sitting meditation practice, drawn from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of shamatha-vipashyana. Weekly lectures emphasize experiential aspects of the practice, involving such topics as the discovery of impermanence, working with emotions, and the cultivation of maitri (loving-kindness). This course includes weekly discussion groups, individual meetings with a meditation instructor, and daily meditation practice. MA and MDiv.

REL602
Contemplative Communication in Spiritual Caregiving (3.0)
The discipline of professional spiritual caregiving is both a quality of being in the world and a collection of techniques and skills. Contemplative spiritual caregiving is neither science nor art, but a craft that combines theoretical, technical, theological, and philosophical principles with inner intuition, skillful communication, and a dynamic ability to reside in the present moment. This class examines the nature of human communication and the ways that our habitual patterns of listening, speaking, and making meaning are shaped by our familial and cultural heritage. By learning and practicing contemplative approaches to attending others, students bring awareness to their personal communication styles and cultivate skillful means in helping relationships. Through student presentations of family maps and process exercises built on these presentations, we explore the many faces and aspects of caregiving through the lens of family systems.

REL603
Tibetan V (3.0)
This course continues to expand student knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of literary Tibetan, primarily through translating texts in different genres such as practice instructions, commentaries, songs.
of realization, lives of Buddhist saints, history, philosophy, and so forth. Prerequisite: REL583.

REL609W
Mindfulness Instructor Training I (1.0)
The first in a three-course series training students to offer instruction in shamatha practice and become mindfulness instructors. Participants develop skills in first-time meditation instruction and mentoring new practitioners. Guidance in sitting meditation posture, mindfulness of breathing, walking meditation, and working with some of the main obstacles to shamatha are emphasized. Practical demonstrations, mock interviews with faculty, peer feedback, lectures and discussion, and guided meditation sessions are included. Prerequisite: Students are accepted by application only, must have completed a dathun, and must have maintained a consistent shamatha practice for at least one year.

REL611
First Turning of the Wheel: Nature of Mind and Emotions (3.0)
The first turning introduces the early sutra discourses of the Buddha and the abhidharma [higher dharma] distillation of the Buddhist teachings on the nature, structure, and operation of the mind and emotions. This course provides a selected survey of the essential texts from both the Northern (Vaibhashika) and Southern (Theravada) schools, along with historical context and applications to meditation practice.

REL611E
First Turning of the Wheel: Nature of Mind and Emotions (3.0)
The first turning introduces the early sutra discourses of the Buddha and the abhidharma [higher dharma] distillation of the Buddhist teachings on the nature, structure, and operation of the mind and emotions. This course provides a selected survey of the essential texts from both the Northern (Vaibhashika) and Southern (Theravada) schools, along with historical context and applications to meditation practice.

REL614
Mind and Its World (3.0)
An in-depth exploration of the fundamental Buddhist teachings on how beings produce karma, afflicted mental states, and suffering for themselves and others, and how to reverse that process on the path to liberation, based on the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist monastic university (shedra) tradition. The course examines the relationship of sense perception, concepts/views and emotions, causality and dependent origination, valid and non-valid cognition, conceptual and non-conceptual consciousness, how humans can fabricate and believe in non-existent objects of perception projected onto themselves and others that are typically entwined with their mental afflictions, and the antidotes of the three trainings and the stages of the path.

REL615
Power, Privilege, and Diversity (3.0)
An examination of the nature of the human group-field. Of particular concern is how human groups create both helpful and harmful conditions in the world. This class provides the theoretical underpinnings of the group-field, including living systems theory, group dynamics, liberation theory, conflict theory, and healthy communication models such as mediation and nonviolent communication. Woven throughout is a focus on the dynamics of privilege, power, and diversity, and group-field process work as a way to engage group life.

REL616
Integration Lab I (1.0)
The first in a series of small groups in which students participate throughout their degree program. Emphasis is on providing a reflective container to integrate lived experience, classroom learning, contemplative practice, and exploration of one’s professional journey. Through group process, individual reflection, mentoring, and community engagement, the lab facilitates the integration of personal, communal, and theoretical domains of learning in order to support students in vocational discernment and professional development in religious studies and/or spiritual leadership.

REL620
Meditation Practicum II: Self and No-Self (3.0)
Selflessness is considered a profound and difficult teaching. The subject is first approached indirectly by exploring the deeply conceptualized nature of human experience. This leads to identifying our experience of having a “self” and analyzing this “self” using analytical meditation. Does it exist or is it just an emotionalized fabrication? Based on the Theravada and Tibetan Shedra traditions. Prerequisite: REL600 or permission of instructor.

REL623
Religious Experience in Africa: Sacred Cosmos, Ritual, and Community (3.0)
The course is an introduction to the cultural study of traditional African religions. We begin with close attention to cosmology, the traditional view of the world as filled with living, sacred powers. These powers are experienced in various ways: as ancestral presences; nature deities; and personal guardian spirits. Therefore, we focus on ritual practices, ways of communicating with unseen forces to bring communal and personal healing, restoring balance in the human relationship to nature. Offered alternate years. Cross-listed as REL323.

REL625
Christian Scripture and Spirituality (3.0)
Combining a survey of Christian canonical biblical texts with their contemporaneous ancient near-Eastern literatures, including Gnosticism, this course introduces students to major biblical and theological themes within Christian discourse. The course explores prevailing practices many Christians utilize to integrate sacred scripture within individual and communal rituals, and meets the
needs of MDiv students preparing for professional spiritual care. Western social justice, peacemaking, and mystical traditions will be considered in light of contemporary challenges of textual interpretation, fundamentalism, gender and sexuality, constructions of “God,” and contemporary spirituality. Offered alternate years.

REL628

Studying Buddhism: Methods and Issues (3.0)

Given its diversity, what constitutes Buddhism? This course investigates traditional guidelines for understanding, interpreting, and arranging the diverse teachings and practices of Buddhism. Contemporary transformations and interpretations of Buddhism are also considered. Topics covered include the role of lineages, teachers, and meditation; and the use of intellect, community, personal experience, and so forth.

REL631E

Musar and Pietism: The Jewish Ethical Tradition (3.0)

This course surveys the teachings and literature of the major pietistic trends from the Middle Ages until modern day. Emphasis is placed on the medieval pietistic teachings of Bachya Ibn Pequdah and Abraham Maimonides and their relationship with Sufi teachings; on the pietistic teachings of sixteenth-century Safed as expressed in texts such as Reishit Chochmah; on the writings of Moshe Chayyim Luzatto; on the teachings of the East European Musar schools of Slobodka, Novhorodok, and Salant; and on modern expressions of Musar such as those found in the writings of Levinas, Hutsner, and Soloveichik. The transformational practices of these schools is explored through introspective and interpersonal exercises. Co-requisite: REL529 or equivalent.

REL633

Tibetan VI (3.0)

This course continues to expand student knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of literary Tibetan, primarily through translating texts in different genres such as practice instructions, commentaries, songs of realization, lives of Buddhist saints, history, philosophy, and so forth. Prerequisite: REL603.

REL634

Hindu Tantra (3.0)

What is referred to as “Tantra” encompasses a complex set of traditions, practices, and worldviews that have been subjected to a rather extreme degree of misunderstanding, romanticization, cultural appropriation, as well as vilification. This course aims to demystify “Tantra” and create a solid foundation for understanding, appreciating, and historically navigating its many streams, social dynamics, ritual technologies, and philosophies. The timeline of our inquiry spans from Hindu Tantra’s first beginnings in fifth-to-sixth century India all the way up to its dramatic metamorphosis in twentieth and twenty-first century traditions dubbed “Neo-Tantra.” Cross-listed as REL334.

REL635

Meditation Practicum III: Mind-Training (3.0)

This course continues instruction in meditation practice, emphasizing Mahayana practice, including the generation of an enlightened attitude (bodhicitta), the practice of the perfections (paramitas), the training of the mind (Lojong), and the exchange of the self and other (tonglen). Based on the Indian and Tibetan traditions. Prerequisite: REL620 or permission of the instructor.

REL644E

Contemplative Judaism Practicum: Prayer and Meditation (3.0)

This experiential course provides students with instruction and guidance in traditional and contemporary modes of Jewish contemplative practice. Practices include davenen (traditional liturgical prayer), Hebrew letter manipulation and chanting, visualization practices, contemplative ritual, niggunim (melodic meditation), breathing practices, Lurianic prayer, musar practices, Hasidic dancing, HaBaD hitbonenut (contemplation) practice, and contemporary expressions of Jewish meditation. Prerequisites: REL529, REL543E, and REL561E.

REL645

Methods and Issues in the Study of Religion (3.0)

This course examines a variety of methodologies that have been, and continue to be, used to study religion. Scanning a range of religious phenomena, from the mystical experience, to myth and ritual, sacred image, word, space, and more, we explore the writings of scholars who have drawn on philosophical, sociological, comparative, feminist, and postmodern methodologies. The aim of the course is as much to build a theoretical foundation for the further study of religion as to provide a forum to examine and develop our own understanding and definitions of the religious life.

REL650

Buddhist Meditation Intensive (0.0)

In this twenty-eight-day intensive group meditation, students practice shamatha-vipashayana in Tibetan, Zen, or Insight Meditation traditions under the guidance of trained meditation instructors. The choice of retreat is approved by Religious Studies faculty and school director beforehand. This training can provide experiential, direct insight into the nature of mind and the Buddhist teachings. The meditation intensive is a noncredit requirement for the MA in Religious Studies: Indo-Tibetan Buddhism (with or without Language) and the Master of Divinity programs. Students should complete the meditation intensive during the winter break of their first year or the summer following their first year.

REL651

Contemplative Practice Intensive: Religious Studies Students (0.0)

This twenty-eight-day group contemplative practice intensive can be done at an established contemplative center in a faith tradition of the student’s choice: Christian monastery, Hindu ashram, Tibetan Buddhist meditation center, Jewish contemplative retreat center, Zen monastery, etc. The retreat gives the participant an opportunity
emptiness is explored in the work of Nagarjuna’s Root Verses of in Shantideva’s Bodhicaryavatara. Finally, the ultimate view of provide the ground from which the bodhisattva path is explored in the Mahayana texts. Prajñāparamita and the Vimalakirti Sutras and compassionate action of the bodhisattva path, as expressed This course examines the philosophical view, meditation practice, Second Turning of the Wheel: The Bodhisattva Path (3.0) REL661E
Integration Lab II (1.0) A continuation of REL616. Prerequisite: REL616.
REL655 Trends in Religious Studies (3.0) Can a scholar be both a participant and an observer? The field of religious studies is embroiled in a debate between objectivity and reflexivity. In recent years, a demand for new methods that allow the scholar’s voice and participation to be present and engaged in the process of observation has created space for reflexive, narrative, intertextual, and qualitative methods. In this course, we explore religious studies through the lens of current issues such as ecology, religion and science, postcolonial approaches, politics, and the interaction of religion with race, class, and gender through the social sciences.
REL658 Ritual Arts (3.0) This course examines working with the collective community field through ritual, the art of understanding and embodying the sacred through activities of body, speech, and mind. The course will study and present rituals such as weddings, funerals, blessings, and rites of passage in order to equip chaplains, ministers, and spiritual leaders to serve their constituencies. The course will train students to craft and lead ritual, discerning the needs of the community, the articulation of sacred space, as well as their own authentic voice.
REL661 Second Turning of the Wheel: The Bodhisattva Path (3.0) This course examines the philosophical view, meditation practice, and compassionate action of the bodhisattva path, as expressed in the Mahayana texts. Prajñāparamita and the Vimalakirti Sutras provide the ground from which the bodhisattva path is explored in Shantideva’s Bodhicaryavatara. Finally, the ultimate view of emptiness is explored in the work of Nagarjuna’s Root Verses of the Middle Way and its commentaries. Prerequisite: REL611.
REL661E Second Turning of the Wheel: The Bodhisattva Path (3.0) This course examines the philosophical view, meditation practice, and compassionate action of the bodhisattva path, as expressed in the Mahayana texts. Prajñāparamita and the Vimalakirti Sutras provide the ground from which the bodhisattva path is explored in Shantideva’s Bodhicaryavatara. Finally, the ultimate view of emptiness is explored in the work of Nagarjuna’s Root Verses of

REL663E Jewish Law: Traditional, Progressive, Radical (3.0) This course investigates the philosophical and mystical underpinnings of Jewish law. Issues include tradition and change, interpretive freedom, authority, ritual as magic, kabbalistic vs. philosophical views of halakha (Jewish law), antinomian trends, and contemporary expressions of halakhic practice. Ranging from the Talmudic to modern periods, this course emphasizes the teachings of Mendelssohn, Hirsch, Rosenzweig, Mordechai Kaplan, Soloveitchik, Hartman, Levinas, and Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. Special attention is given to how these teachers understand the relationship between Jewish law and the process of inner transformation. Co-requisite: REL529 or equivalent.
REL672 Non-Dualism in Theory and Practice (3.0) An exploration of issues in the study of what is often regarded as the most profound element of religious life: the non-dual and the mystical. How do we study the deepest elements of our own and other religious traditions? How do we remain conscious of the impact of our own assumptions, experiences, and aspirations? Through these questions, we interrogate and problematize both the non-dual experience and the scholarly endeavor, exploring fundamental considerations for the contemplative study of religion and spirituality.
REL676 Inner Oral Tradition of the Torah (3.0) An examination of the mystical contemplative tradition of Judaism through a demonstration of its approach to Torah texts. The emphasis in the course is on the development and expression of critical thinking and intuition. Good questions are a priority over good answers. Age-old Chassidic methodologies are used toward this end. Dramatization of stories are utilized to access the students’ emotions and intuitive powers. Exposure to practices like shofar and succah give the students a firsthand experience of Jewish contemplative practice. Offered alternative years. Cross-listed as REL376.
REL690W Shambhala Training Level I: The Art of Being Human (1.0) Shambhala Training is the path of study and practice of Shambhala warriorship: the tradition of human bravery, not being afraid of who you are. This path shows how to take the challenges of daily life in our modern society as opportunities for contemplative practice. Shambhala Training is inspired by the ancient legend of the Kingdom of Shambhala, said to be an enlightened society based on gentle and fearless action. The Shambhala Training path of study and practice begins with a series of weekend levels, known as the Heart of Warriorship, which provides the tools you need to establish a personal discipline of meditation practice and to discover the basic principles of warriorship in your daily life.
**REL691W**
**Shambhala Training Level II: Birth of the Warrior (1.0)**
Shambhala Training is the path of study and practice of Shambhala warriorship: the tradition of human bravery, not being afraid of who you are. This path shows how to take the challenges of daily life in our modern society as opportunities for contemplative practice. Shambhala Training is inspired by the ancient legend of the Kingdom of Shambhala, said to be an enlightened society based on gentle and fearless action. The Shambhala Training path of study and practice begins with a series of weekend levels, known as the Heart of Warriorship, which provides the tools you need to establish a personal discipline of meditation practice and to discover the basic principles of warriorship in your daily life.

**REL692W**
**Shambhala Training Level III: Warrior in the World (1.0)**
Shambhala Training is the path of study and practice of Shambhala warriorship: the tradition of human bravery, not being afraid of who you are. This path shows how to take the challenges of daily life in our modern society as opportunities for contemplative practice. Shambhala Training is inspired by the ancient legend of the Kingdom of Shambhala, said to be an enlightened society based on gentle and fearless action. The Shambhala Training path of study and practice begins with a series of weekend levels, known as the Heart of Warriorship, which provides the tools you need to establish a personal discipline of meditation practice and to discover the basic principles of warriorship in your daily life.

**REL693W**
**Shambhala Training Level IV: Awakened Heart (1.0)**
Shambhala Training is the path of study and practice of Shambhala warriorship: the tradition of human bravery, not being afraid of who you are. This path shows how to take the challenges of daily life in our modern society as opportunities for contemplative practice. Shambhala Training is inspired by the ancient legend of the Kingdom of Shambhala, said to be an enlightened society based on gentle and fearless action. The Shambhala Training path of study and practice begins with a series of weekend levels, known as the Heart of Warriorship, which provides the tools you need to establish a personal discipline of meditation practice and to discover the basic principles of warriorship in your daily life.

**REL694W**
**Shambhala Training Level V: Open Sky (1.0)**
Shambhala Training is the path of study and practice of Shambhala warriorship: the tradition of human bravery, not being afraid of who you are. This path shows how to take the challenges of daily life in our modern society as opportunities for contemplative practice. Shambhala Training is inspired by the ancient legend of the Kingdom of Shambhala, said to be an enlightened society based on gentle and fearless action. The Shambhala Training path of study and practice begins with a series of weekend levels, known as the Heart of Warriorship, which provides the tools you need to establish a personal discipline of meditation practice and to discover the basic principles of warriorship in your daily life.

**REL699**
**Independent Study: Religious Studies (0.5-4.0)**
This course offering is an opportunity for students to engage in in-depth, concentrated study with a particular faculty member for a semester. The design of study and course work are decided upon by the student and faculty member. Independent Studies will count for a standard 3 credits. If a variable credit [0.5 - 4 credits] Independent Study is desired, a student must receive additional approval. See the Independent Study Application for further details.

**REL701**
**The Middle Way School (3.0)**
This uncompromising rejection of stable, findable existence in any phenomena as the profound basis for non-dual compassionate action is a radical challenge to our conventional sense of having an existing self that experiences solid objects, with its resulting dualistic approach to ethics. Its famous teachings on emptiness and its union with compassion has generated a range of interpretations, which are explored, particularly in the Indian as well as the Tibetan Kagyu, Nyingma, and Geluk traditions. Prerequisite: REL661.

**REL702**
**Tibetan Translation Project (1.5)**
One-on-one mentoring of a Tibetan language student by a senior translator. The student selects a Tibetan text, or portion of a text, in consultation with the senior translator. The goal is to deepen the student's knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, cultural context, and content of the specific text and genre. Students may only take this class with the permission of the program.

**REL703**
**Sanskrit Translation Project (1.5)**
One-on-one mentoring of a Sanskrit language student by a senior translator. The student selects a Sanskrit text, or portion of a text, in consultation with the senior translator. The goal is to deepen the student's knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, cultural context, and content of the specific text and genre. Students may only take this class with the permission of the program.

**REL705**
**Mind Only School (1.5)**
The Mind Only School provides an insightful exploration into how we create and maintain the illusion of our projections, along with all the suffering that such illusion engenders. Analytical meditation is used to explore this process of conceptual and emotional projection and how we might transform it. Students register for this course through Naropa but take it in their Nitartha Institute summer program. Required for Tibetan Tradition emphasis. Prerequisites: REL614 and REL624.

**REL709W**
**Mindfulness Instructor Training II (1.0)**
Second in a three-course series training students to offer instruction in shamatha mindfulness meditation, this course presents the development of maitri, in the sense of unconditional friendliness toward oneself, as the ground of practice. Students develop skills in
ongoing meditation mentorship, emphasizing guidance in working with conflicting emotions. Practical demonstrations, mock interviews with faculty, peer feedback, lectures and discussions, and guided meditation sessions are included. Prerequisite: REL609W.

REL710
Third Turning of the Wheel: Yogacara and Buddha Nature (3.0)
An examination of the most important perspectives, ideas, and practices of the Third Turning orientation of the Yogacara, which emphasizes meditation and the dynamics of emptiness. Our study includes reading from core sutras such as the Samdhinirmocana and the Uttaratantra Shastra, as well as from commentaries of Asanga, Vasubandhu, and others. Our understanding is illuminated by modern interpretations of both Asian and Western scholars. Prerequisite: REL661.

REL714
Introduction to Pastoral Care (3.0)
This course focuses on the essential elements and specific skills necessary for effective counseling in the context of ministry. It correlates the relationship between pastoral care and religious ethics, with a special emphasis on Buddhist and Christian comparative ethics. The theories and practices of spiritual and psychological assessment are presented, as well as experiential listening, navigating boundaries, ritual, prayer, and self-care.

REL720
The Mahayana Path to Enlightenment (1.5)
This course is a presentation of the five paths on the voyage to awakening, the ten bodhisattvas’ bhumis, or levels of realization, and the result: the enlightenment, Buddha’s kayas and wisdoms, as well as enlightened activity. We will study what is required to embark and progress on the path and what the goal of such spiritual journey is. Students register for this course through Naropa but take it in the Nithartha Institute summer program.

REL725
Contemplative Practice Intensive (Residential Retreat) (3.0)
The residential component of the program aims to facilitate the deeper integration and embodiment of the central contemplative practices covered over the course of the program. The retreat consists of an intensive practice format, with sitting practice, movement-based practice, and process-oriented exercises. During this five-day retreat, each day consists of nine program hours. Note: For MA degree students, residential attendance is required. For online certificate students, residential attendance or participation in the residential retreat through an online format (if available) or attendance at a local retreat approved by the faculty coordinator of the program will be acceptable. Prerequisites: REL543E and REL561E.

REL728
Integration Lab III (1.0)
A continuation of REL654. Prerequisite: REL654.

REL744
Master of Divinity Field Education I (1.5)
Field education is a supervised training experience in which students enhance their learning in ministry and/or social engagement through fieldwork supported with supervision and feedback. Through field education, students learn and serve as healthcare and prison chaplains, social justice advocates, educators, and organizers. Field education bridges and deepens the pastoral education of the Naropa MDiv program with the reflective practice of ministry in congregations and community settings. Field education is different from volunteer work or employment in that it is a supervised program that integrates academic study, spiritual discipline, and the practice of ministry.

REL745
Master of Divinity Field Education II (1.5)
A continuation of REL744.

REL747
Master of Divinity Clinical Pastoral Education (6.0)
Clinical Pastoral Education [CPE] is an interreligious, experiential method of learning that brings students into supervised encounters with persons in crisis. Through lectures, open group process, theological reflection, onsite clinical instruction, and individual supervision, students learn the techniques, skills and self-awareness needed for the competent practice of spiritual care. CPE invites student to grow in awareness of the ways that beliefs, values, family of origin dynamics, and major orienting life events present both resources and challenges to effectively supporting the spiritual health and well-being of others. CPE students are assigned to clinical or community site placements such as hospices, hospitals, religious communities, and non-profits for the duration of the course, where they serve as student chaplains.

REL749
Contemporary American Religion (3.0)
This course explores the diversity of American religious life from numerous perspectives, thereby providing students with the practical vocabulary to both understand and interact with the diversity of contemporary religious life. Students survey American religious communities (Christian, Muslim, Jewish, etc.) and examine specific beliefs, rituals, and liturgical practices and their application in crisis and transition situations that span the human life cycle, such as birth, marriage, illness, and death. The class also provides hands-on opportunities for students to both visit local religious communities and learn from practitioners in these communities.

REL751
Buddhism in Tibet (3.0)
This course traces the development of Buddhism in Tibet, principally during the first and second spreading of Buddhism, when most of the classical forms of Tibetan Buddhism evolved. Attention is given to the various roles of Nikaya, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism, and to the interplay of religious, social, and political factors in this process. Special attention is paid to Tibet’s unique contributions to Buddhism. Offered alternative years.
REL760
Vajrayana: Symbol, Iconography, and Ritual (3.0)
This course explores selected literature of Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet, from its inception in the seventh century until the Tibetan diaspora in 1959, with emphasis upon the tantric saint and the tantric goddess, or dakini. Readings from several genres include biographical and sacred histories, realization literature, and meditation manuals. The challenges of interpreting symbols and iconography in religion, especially when they are gendered, are examined. Offered alternate years. Prerequisite REL614 (Mind and Its World - starting Fall 2018) or REL624 (Mind and Its World II - Prior to Fall 2018) or REL661.

REL763
Dharma Talks and Religious Education (3.0)
This course examines how individuals and communities understand religious and spiritual principles and practices, including history, current trends, foundational theories, and applicable skills. Topics include theories of learning from both Western and Eastern perspectives, stages of faith and moral development, venues for religious education, and skill training in curriculum development and lesson planning. Students will deliver dharma talks, sermons, dialog, and small group teaching utilizing effective methods of discourse and facilitation.

REL768
Integration Lab IV (1.0)
This course is a continuation of REL728. Prerequisite: REL728.

REL779
Interreligious Dialog (3.0)
This course introduces the student to the creative potential of interreligious dialog for expanding one’s theology and communicating effectively and compassionately across the American religious spectrum. After developing savvy views of dialog, students learn essential skills and protocols applicable to a variety of dialog settings. Classes also include practical workshops.

REL780
Meditation Practicum IV: Maitri and Mandala (3.0)
This course continues the practicum sequence, emphasizing Vajrayana topics such as mandala principle and the Buddha Families, including discussion of the neurosis and sanity associated with each family. Space awareness practice (maitri) provides a personal experience of these families, and this practice is a central part of this class. Based on the Indian and Tibetan traditions. Prerequisite: REL635 or permission of the instructor.

REL804
Applied Ethics and Service Learning (3.0)
For third-year MDiv students, this class provides ongoing instruction, direction, and guidance for student fieldwork, with special emphasis on the application of ethical principles in the context of ministry in the community. Students and instructors meet weekly, focusing on the nature and meaning of doing community-based and spiritually engaged fieldwork in the arenas of pastoral care and change agency. The Naropa Chaplaincy Project is the site for the service-learning aspect of the course.

REL809W
Mindfulness Instructor Training III (1.0)
Third in a three-course series training students to offer instruction in shamatha mindfulness meditation. It emphasizes guiding people in practicing with extreme challenges of mind and body. Participants develop skills in offering ongoing guidance in sitting and walking mindfulness meditation, as well as body-scan, practicing with physical pain, and mindfulness in daily life activities. Students train in offering both one-to-one mentorship, small group guided mindfulness instruction, and explaining the view of mindfulness meditation to various populations. Practices to support the well-being of caregivers and teachers are presented. Educational methods of the course include practice demonstrations, mock interviews, lectures, discussions, and individual interviews. Prerequisite: REL709W.

REL820E
Advanced Mystical Text Seminar (3.0)
This course provides the opportunity for advanced study of one or several mystical texts from the Kabbalistic and/or Chassidic traditions. All texts are studied in translation from Hebrew and/or Aramaic. The author, text, or topic changes each semester according to the specific needs of the students. Some of the texts we may study include the works of: Isaac the Blind; Azriel of Gerona; Nachmanides; Joseph Gikatilla; the Zohar; Meir Ibn Gabba; Moses Cordovero; Isaiah Horowitz; Isaac Luria; Hayyim Vital; the Baal Shem Tov; the Maggid of Mezheritch; Ya’aqov Yosef of Polonyaye; Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk; Levi Yizhaq of Berditchev; Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl; Elimelekh of Litzenskeh; Shneur; Zalman of Liadi; Nahman of Breslov; and Mordezhai Yosef Leiner; inter alia. Prerequisites: REL543E and REL561E.

REL853
MDiv Capstone Seminar (3.0)
This course is designed to prepare the Master of Divinity students to undertake the writing of a capstone project required by the program. This final, integrative project offers students an opportunity to integrate assessments and coursework experiences during their matriculation in the MDiv program, and to construct a theological worldview within the professional field of chaplaincy and/or spiritual leadership. This capstone project is intended to not only draw from the full range of MDiv course materials and experiences, but is also designed to encourage students to place their constructive work in conversation with literature and research in their respective field(s). Transpersonal, contemplative, feminist, action/participant, social change, and intuitive inquiry are also explored. This course will be offered for 3 credits to MDiv students who take in the course in the 19-20 academic year and who entered under a catalog prior to 2019-20. This course will be offered for 2 credits for MDiv students who take the course in the 2020-21 academic year (and beyond), and who enter under the 19-20 catalog.
REL880
Comprehensive Exam (0.0)
For students in the MA and MDiv programs only. Please see your advisor for more information.

REL885
Master’s Project (0.0)
MA and MDiv only.

REL886
Extended Master’s Project (0.5)
Students who have not completed the master’s project may qualify for an extension of the master’s project semester. May be repeated. MA and MDiv only.