Religious Studies: Contemplative Religions MA

This 45-credit concentration is designed for students who wish to join the academic study of comparative religions with interreligious dialog, contemplative practice, and personal investigation. Students develop literacy in the living practice traditions of a variety of world religions, with special emphasis on integrating the mystical contemplative dimension with the texts, teachings, and other aspects of the traditions. Students also learn interreligious dialog skills for communicating across religious differences in an environment of global pluralism. Students work with faculty members who are both academically and spiritually trained in the teachings and practices of their respective traditions.

Culminating Requirements

The degree program concludes with an oral comprehensive exam as well as a master’s project paper.

Degree Requirements

First year, fall

- REL645 Methods and Issues in the Study of Religion (3)
- REL779 Interreligious Dialogue: Theory and Practice (3)
- Religious Studies elective (3)
- Contemplative Practice elective (3)

First year, spring

- REL651 Contemplative Practice Intensive: Religious Studies Students (noncredit)*
- Contemplative Practice elective (3)
- Three Religious Studies electives (9)

Second year, fall

- REL585 Spiritual Models of Social Action (3)
- REL655 Trends in Religious Studies (3)
- Two Religious Studies electives (6)

Second year, spring

- REL672 Non-Dualism in Theory and Practice (3)
- REL880 Comprehensive Exam (noncredit)
- REL885 MA/MDiv Final Project (noncredit)
- Contemplative Practice elective (3)
- Religious Studies elective (3)

Total Credits 45

* It is recommended that students complete the noncredit monthlong Contemplative Practice Intensive requirement (REL651) no later than the winter break between the fall and spring semesters of their second year. This requirement can be done in two two-week sections.

Religious Studies Electives

General Electives

- REL525 Contemplative Christianity (3)
- REL529 Contemplative Judaism (3)
- REL530 Contemplative Hinduism (3)
- REL535 Kabbalah and Consciousness (3)
- REL545 Contemplative Islam (3)
- REL623 Religious Experience in Africa: Sacred Cosmos, Ritual, and Community (3)
- REL625 Christian Scripture and Spirituality (3)
- REL634 Hindu Yoga-Tantra (3)
- REL676 Inner Oral Tradition of the Torah (3)
- REL749 Contemporary American Religion (3)

Buddhism Electives

- REL540 Zen Buddhism (3)
- REL546 Flight of the Swans: Dharma Comes West (3)
- REL611 The First Turning of the Wheel: Nature of Mind and Emotions (3)
- REL614 Mind and Its World I (3)
- REL624 Mind and Its World II (3)
- REL661 The Second Turning of the Wheel: The Bodhisatva Path (3)
- REL701 The Middle Way School (3)
- REL710 The Third Turning of the Wheel: Yogacara and Buddha Nature (3)
- REL751 Buddhism in Tibet (3)
- REL760 Vajrayana: Symbol, Iconography, and Ritual (3)

Contemplative Practice Electives

- REL504W The Breeze of Simplicity: Meditation Weekend (1)
- REL540 Zen Buddhism (3)
- REL554W Opening the Heart: Meditation Weekend (1)
- REL571 Christian Prayer and Mystical Practices (3)
- REL600 Meditation Practicum I: Seeds of Peace (3)*
- REL609W Mindfulness Instructor Training I (1)**
- REL620 Meditation Practicum II: Self and No-Self (3)*
- REL635 Meditation Practicum III: Mind-Training (3)*
- REL690W–791W Shambhala Training Levels I–XII (1)
- REL690W Shambhala Training Level I: The Art of Being Human
- REL691W Shambhala Training Level II: Birth of the Warrior
- REL692W Shambhala Training Level III: Warrior in the World
- REL693W Shambhala Training Level IV: Awakened Heart
- REL694W Shambhala Training Level V: Open Sky
- REL695W Shambhala Training Level VI: Great Eastern Sun
- REL790W Shambhala Training Level VII: Windhorse
- REL791W Shambhala Training Level VIII: Draja
- REL792W Shambhala Training Level IX: Meek/Perky
- REL793W Shambhala Training Level X: Perky
- REL794W Shambhala Training Level XI: Outrageous & Inscrutable
- REL795W Shambhala Training Level XII: Golden Key
- REL709W Mindfulness Instructor Training II (1)**
• REL780  Meditation Practicum IV: Maitri and Mandala (3)*
• REL809W Mindfulness Instructor Training III (1)**

* These courses must be taken in sequence.

** These courses must be taken in sequence. The prerequisites for REL609W are Meditation Practicum I and II, as well as a monthlong Buddhist meditation intensive, two weeks of which must be completed before the class begins.

**Course Listings**

**REL501W**
Theravada Vipassana: Weekend (1.0)
When mindfulness meditation is practiced, the exquisite ordinariness of the movement of breath, of the sensation of the body sitting on the earth, and of the busyness of the mind and emotions is discovered. This intensive weekend introduces insight meditation, "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. Course Fee. 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. Ven. Dr. Pannavati, a black, female Buddhist monk ordained in the Theravada and Chan traditions, studies in the Vajrayana tradition, and received transmission from Roshi Bernie Glassman of Zen Peacemaker. A former Christian pastor, she is co-founder and co-Abbot of Embracing-Simplicity Hermitage and Co-Director of Heartwood Refuge, an intentional community and residential retreat and conference center in Hendersonville, NC. She is president of the Treasure Human Life Foundation. Pannavati conducts retreats nationally at over fifty centers each year. She advises the cultivation of both wisdom and compassionate action and believes it is fine to sit, meditate, and pray when things are good; when they are not, we are compelled to get off our pillows and do something.

**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.

**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 REL325.

**REL530**
Contemplative Hinduism (3.0)
An experiential and philosophical introduction to the scriptures and spiritual practices of Hindu traditions with emphasis on the Vedas, early Tantra, and the Yaga Sutras of Patanjali. A portion of each class is devoted to practice: meditation; pranayama; mantra; and ritual. Offered alternate years. Cross-listed as REL330.

**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
Our scope includes spirituality and religion, various local Buddhist centers to experience their religious services communities, both immigrant and convert. This will include visits to turn be influenced by it. We explore the ways in which Buddhism continues to influence contemporary American culture, and in

**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 REL 345.

**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.

**REL545**  
**Contemplative Islam (3.0)**  
An introduction to the belief system and cultures of the Islamic world via an interactive approach. Emphasis is placed on the traditional values, beliefs, and prescribed practices of the Islamic world, as expounded in the key authoritative Islamic sources: the Qur’an and the Sunna of the prophet Muhammad. A central theme that is examined is the doctrine of tawhid, or the unity of God, which underlies all Islamic thought and belief. Students participate in a variety of Islamic rituals and practices in order to gain a firsthand experience of Islam. Offered alternate years.

**REL546**  
**Flight of the Swans: Dharma Comes West (3.0)**  
This course surveys the variety of ways in which Buddhism continues to influence contemporary American culture, and in turn be influenced by it. We explore the ways in which Buddhism has changed and adapted in the different American Buddhist communities, both immigrant and convert. This will include visits to various local Buddhist centers to experience their religious services in social context. Our scope includes spirituality and religion, literature, and social activism, as well as issues of pluralism, class, race, gender, and cultural appropriation. Cross-listed as REL 348.

**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, Devavanipravesika. 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 REL377.

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 REL 271.

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 dialogue 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 Devavanipravesika, 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. Cross-listed as REL190.

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.

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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. Course fee.

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 I (3.0)
An in-depth, systematic exploration of the many types of minds and mental factors that arise and the objects that comprise the world that the mind experiences. Since delusion and suffering arise with respect to these, this study is the basis for understanding our experience, undoing delusion, and generating insight.

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
Process Lab I (1.0)
The first in a series of small groups in which students participate throughout their tenure in the Master of Divinity program. Emphasis is on providing support for the students’ journey. Taken concurrently with REL602. Instructor approval required for non-MDIV students.

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 practice-ways of communicating with unseen forces to bring communal and personal healing, restoring balance in the human relationship to nature. Offered alternate years.

REL624
Mind and Its World II (3.0)
An exploration of the dynamics of samsara and the path to liberation as presented primarily in Foundational Buddhism. Karma, the twelve links of dependent origination, rebirth, Buddhist cosmology, how we generate afflicted mental states and how to reverse them through the three trainings and the stages of the path, the nature of nirvana, and so forth are examined. The historical spread of these teachings is also examined. Prerequisite: REL614. Required for both the History of Religions and Tibetan Tradition emphasis.

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 Paqudah 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, Hutner, 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-Yoga (3.0)
Hindu Tantra envisions Ultimate Reality as intertwined aspects of Shiva and Shakti. We study contemplative theory and practices from Tantric texts and commentaries, including sacred ritual, deity forms, mantra, yantra (sacred geometry), nyasa (sacred energetic placements), chakras, and visualizations. We also explore Kashmir Shaivism, a non-dualistic monism, and the Srijvada Goddess tradition. Tantric influences in Indian poetry, art, and dance/music forms are shared whenever possible. The last class features a culminating class worship ritual (puja) incorporating many Tantric contemplative tools studied all semester. Offered alternate years. 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, litanic prayer, musar practices, Hasidic dancing, HaBaD hitbonenut (contemplation) practice, and contemporary expressions of Jewish meditation. Prerequisites: REL529, REL543e, and REL616e.

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. Readings include work by James, Otto, Buber, Levi-Strauss, Some, Turner, and Eliade.

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 to practice a prescribed discipline while living in community with others in a contemplative environment. The choice of retreat is to be approved by Religious Studies faculty and school director beforehand. The contemplative practice intensive is a non-credit requirement for MA in Religious Studies: Contemplative Religions (with or without Language) and Master of Divinity programs. Students should complete the contemplative practice intensive
REL654
Process Lab II (1.0)
A continuation of REL616. MDiv, taken concurrently with REL615. 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 reflective, 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 Bodhisatta Path (3.0)
This course examines the philosophical view, meditation practice, and compassionate action of the bodhisatta path, as expressed in the Mahayana texts. Prajnaparamita and the Vimalakirti sutras provide the ground from which the bodhisatta path is explored in Santideva’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 Bodhisatta Path (3.0)
This course examines the philosophical view, meditation practice, and compassionate action of the bodhisatta path, as expressed in the Mahayana texts. Prajnaparamita and the Vimalakirti sutras provide the ground from which the bodhisatta path is explored in Santideva’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. Online Course. Prerequisite: REL611.

REL663E
Jewish Law: Traditional, Progressive, Radical (3.0)
This course investigates the philosophic and mystical underpinnings of Jewish law. Issues include tradition and change, interpretive freedom, authority, ritual as magic, kabbalistic vs. philosophic 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 Mendelsohn, 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 warrioship—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.
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.

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.

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.

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.

Shambhala Training Level VI: Great Eastern Sun (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.

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.

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 existent 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.

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.

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. Course fee.

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: REL 661.

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 bodhisattva’s 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 Nitartha 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  
Process Lab III (1.0)  
A continuation of REL654. MDiv only. 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 field work supported with supervision and feedback. Through field education, students learn and serve as health-care 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 (3.0)  
The CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) internship gives Master of Divinity students the opportunity to explore personal and professional growth issues in their roles as interfaith chaplains in various settings. Through weekly seminars, didactics, theological reflections, and individual and group supervision, students explore the purpose and meaning of providing pastoral care to people in crisis. Strong emphasis is placed on the students’ understanding of their own personal issues and dynamics as these arise in the process of helping others. MDiv only.

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 REL624 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, dialogues, and small group teaching utilizing effective methods of discourse and facilitation.

REL768
Process Lab IV (1.0)
This course is a continuation of REL728. MDiv only. 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 dialog 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.

REL790W
Shambhala Training Level VII: Windhorse (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.

REL791W
Shambhala Training Level VIII: Drala (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.

REL792W
Shambhala Training Level IX: Meek/Perky (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.

REL793W
Shambhala Training Level X: Perky (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.

REL794W
Shambhala Training Level XI: Outrageous & Inscrutable (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.

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 Gabbai; Moses Cordovero; Isaiah Horowitz; Isaac Luria; Hayyim Vital; the Baal Shem Tov; the Maggid of Mezheritch; Ya’akov Yosef of Polonyoyye; Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk; Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev; Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl; Elimelekh of Lizhensk; Shneur; Zalman of Liadi; Nahman of Breslov; and Mordekhai Yosef Leiner, inter alia. Prerequisites: REL543e and REL561e.

REL795W
Shambhala Training Level XII: Golden Key (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.

REL804
Applied Ethics and Service Learning (2.0)
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 meditations, 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. Course fee.

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 course-work 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.

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.