Religious Studies programs introduce students to a vibrant and interdisciplinary academic field that is global in scope and attends to some of the key challenges facing citizens of the twenty-first century. Religious Studies asks not only how religion in its many forms has addressed fundamental human questions about life and death, truth and belief, and ethics and social justice. It also considers the political, social, and cultural effects of religion in both the ancient and the modern world. Rather than promoting any particular set of beliefs, the academic study of religion teaches about religion. That is, it provides students with a rich body of factual knowledge about the global history of religion, as well as the critical thinking skills necessary for interpreting that knowledge.

As students of history, they will learn the skills necessary to research, analyze, and interpret the past. In this program they focus on the general study and interpretation of the past, including gathering, recording, synthesizing and criticizing evidence and theories about past events. They will also study historical research methods, historic preservation, public policy, and records administration, and interpret historical data in order to understand current events and conditions. Training in religious studies can be valuable in a variety of areas, such as business, the ministry and missions, the social sciences, human services, medicine, mathematics, and science. Persons wishing to teach religious studies at the college level need a doctoral degree.

Programs at Montana State University provide a basic “religious literacy” so that they can understand the role that religion plays in public life, both at home and abroad. To this end, MSU’s Religious Studies faculty offers two kinds of courses. First, we teach courses that train students in the history of the major world religions, including their textual, philosophical, and material cultures. Second, we offer courses and seminars that ask students to analyze how religion intersects with other cultural forms, including politics, science and technology, literature, and visual and material culture. Our courses ask students to think critically about the production of knowledge and to consider how Religious Studies draws on the methods of other disciplines, including history and philosophy, as well as archaeology, literary analysis, critical theory, cultural studies, anthropology, etc. At all levels of the Religious Studies curriculum, we stress the development of skills in close reading, analytic writing, oral presentation, primary research, and critical thinking. Globally oriented and inherently interdisciplinary, Religious Studies is now, more than ever, a vital component of a liberal arts education.

Characteristics associated with success include an interest in reading and literature and in human issues such as morality and faith.

Occupations in this field require the ability to:

- Have above average oral and written communication skills
- Be able to think critically
- Be interested in understanding human issues such as birth, growth, love, forgiveness, faith, and death
- Have good analytical and organizational skills
- Work independently or as part of a team, and be patient and disciplined
- Be imaginative and curious
- Be able to communicate clearly and with conviction
- Be organized and work well with details
- Have a strong sense of curiosity about different cultures (past and present)

Related occupations include:

- Anthropologist
- Archaeologist
- Rabbi
- Minister
- Priest
- Lawyer
- Research Analyst
- Youth Minister
- Administrator
- Historian
- Policy Analyst
- College/University Faculty
The Religious Studies program has graduated 6 students from 2009-2012, therefore because of this limited data set*, please review the following information for additional context for educational outcomes.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers report the starting salaries for new college graduates as reported by employers annually. The following starting salaries represent "Humanities and Social Science Majors:"

2013: $34,400
2012: $37,300

**Other Sources of Information:**

American Academy of Religion: www.aarweb.org
American Philosophical Association: www.apaonline.org
National Endowment for the Humanities: www.neh.gov
Philosophy of Science Association: www.philsci.org
Department of History & Philosophy - Montana State University: www.montana.edu/history

*Insufficient Data: Each year the Career, Internship & Student Employment Services Office at Montana State University conducts a survey to determine placement rates and salary survey information from recent MSU graduates. Graduates were requested to participate in the survey to provide relevant information regarding the transition from college to career/graduate school. At times, there are limited or no respondents. Statistics, therefore, are not always based upon the response of the total sample group and are sometimes listed as “Insufficient Data”.

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*Montana State University Department of History and Philosophy
*Montana State University Career & Internship Services
*NACE, 2013.
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Number of graduates/number of respondents: 2012: 1/1; 2011: N/A; 2010: 4/3; 2009: 1/1