

**The Department of Religion
Religion Element**

**General Education Program
Pacific Lutheran University**

Framing Language and Program Goals

We live in a world where the practice of religion flourishes in a rich diversity, in a country where many social and political issues contain a religious dimension, and in communities where issues are charged with religious language: abortion, fundamentalism, gay rights, environmental protection, Holocaust studies, poverty, stem-cell research, and war. In such a context, ignorance of religion's role in society is unfortunate. Truly the value of a college education *increases* when graduates have a better understanding of religion's presence, diversity, and influence in regional, national, and global life. Indeed, it is imperative that a liberal arts program speak to why religion gives meaning and purpose to billions of people on the planet.

General Education Element Description

Interpreting Living Traditions for a Humane Future

Drawing on the rich traditions of languages and literatures, religion, and philosophy, the Humanities cultivates an intellectual and imaginative connection between a living past and the global challenges of our future. Humanities courses engage the complex traditions that shape the ways we think about and act in the world.

Religion: The study of religion at PLU builds on the historic strengths of Lutheran higher education and enhances global perspectives that reflect our commitment to human communities and the world. This discipline engages students in the scholarly study of sacred texts and practices, histories, theologies, and ethics. Students are invited to investigate the historical and cultural relevance and implications of religion for individuals, communities, and the earth. Students take one course in Christian Traditions and one course in Global Religious Traditions [GEE Description].

General Education Element Learning Outcomes

The General Education Program at PLU mandates two required courses in religion for all undergraduates: one in Christian Traditions, and one in Global Religious Traditions.

Christian Traditions (4) examines diverse forms of Christianity within their historical, cultural and political contexts.

Global Religious Traditions (4) highlights PLU's commitment to local-global education through analysis of diverse religions, both here and abroad.

The Department of Religion supports the university's integrated learning objectives with objectives and outcomes that guide pedagogy, course construction, and evaluated assignments appropriate to general university students and majors and minors in religion.

Courses in Religion are categorized in terms of upper (300-400 level courses) and lower division (100-200 level courses). Lower-level religion courses introduce students to course-specific content and methods in the study of religion. Upper division courses assume participants already have acquired the basic skills of critical inquiry, interpretation, and competent oral and written expression that are essential to religion and the liberal arts. In addition, upper-division courses push higher-level cognitive skills of analysis and synthetic thinking.

A. Skills

Students in all courses (upper and lower division General Education courses) should accomplish:

1. basic reading: accurate reporting on texts, beginning to identify an author's assumptions and the structures of arguments;
2. basic writing: writing a short paper (5-7 pages) for clear expression and understanding in lower division courses, and a longer paper (15-20 pages) in upper-division courses; command of basic grammar, spelling, and form; capacity to describe a text accurately; capacity to relate one's own ideas clearly and structure an interpretation or argument;
3. basic communication: capacity for oral communication and presentation skills in small group and large group settings;
4. basic thinking: interacting critically with course material; becoming aware of one's own assumptions and biases and how these inform one's understanding of religion's texts, practices, histories, theologies, and ethics; and,
5. beginning facility with academic tools and methods within a disciplinary area (e.g., contextual study of texts, practices, histories, theologies, and ethics).

Students in upper-division courses should be able to:

1. identify and pursue a question or problem independently, using the library and other sources;
2. identify and describe the vision, theme, or argument in primary and secondary sources; and,
3. expand and deepen one's description and interpretation of texts by locating them within their larger social, cultural, and geographic contexts.

B. Knowledge

Students in all courses (upper and lower division General Education courses) should be able:

1. to know the academic tools and methods within a disciplinary area;
2. to be familiar with seminal thinkers who shape the academic study of religion within a disciplinary area or on a topic in the field of religion;
3. to gain a capacity for critical and empathetic understanding of the texts, practices, histories, theologies, and/or ethics within Christian Traditions and Global Religious Traditions; and,
4. to recognize religion's role in shaping human purpose and meaning.

C. Values and Beliefs

Students in all courses (upper and lower division General Education courses) should:

1. develop awareness of and critical empathy for a variety of religious traditions as sources of meaning and purpose in the world;
2. develop a capacity to hold one's convictions and learn from the texts, practices, histories, theologies, and ethics of religious traditions;
3. develop intellectual humility and charity when engaged with others who hold religious convictions different than one's own;
4. develop the ability to think existentially, religiously, and theologically about the meaning of human existence from the perspective of Christian Traditions and Global Religious Traditions;
5. demonstrate maturing understanding of multiple religious perspectives through critical thinking about and interaction with major religious traditions;
6. engage in dialog regarding questions of religious faith and values; this includes encounter with other disciplines and contemporary society; and,
7. develop greater consistency between self-conscious beliefs and behavior in the area of religion.

Alignment to the ILOs:

1. Critical Reflection
2. Expression
3. Interaction with Others
4. Valuing
5. Multiple Frameworks