The Department of Religious Studies
Fall 2014 Course Guide

The Roof of the Tomb of Hafez
The Department of Religious Studies is the principal, though not the sole, site on campus to engage in research and teaching that pertains to the various manifestations of religion. The Department employs those academic approaches that one typically associates with the liberal arts, especially the social sciences and the humanities. This includes, but is not limited to, a commitment to developing skills and habits of thought that enable students to interpret and engage with a complex world, past and present, near and far, familiar and unfamiliar, natural and social. Religious Studies fosters such scholarly capacities and skills as close reading (of texts and other social and material data), excellence in writing and verbal expression, interpretation of the past from written and physical evidence, interpretation of contemporary society by not only studying it directly but by applying knowledge of other times and other places.

Many of today’s pressing political and social concerns are illuminated by an understanding of the religious beliefs and practices that lie beneath and within the news headlines. By exploring the public and private concerns that religions engage—for example, the nature of community and solitude, suffering and death, good and evil—students discover new ways of interpreting the complex world in which they live. As students venture into the religions of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas, and Europe, they learn about the formation and transmission of beliefs, behaviors, values, rituals, texts, institutions, and forms of community. Students also learn about conflict and accord within and between religions, as well as between religious and non-religious perspectives. In sum, Brown’s graduate and undergraduate students acquire a variety of scholarly tools for understanding and interpreting religions in various historical, cultural, and social contexts.

The Department of Religious Studies at Brown offers students a wide selection of courses that represent various academic approaches to the study of religion including socio-historical, textual, ethnographical, ethical, and philosophical, among others. The academic study of religion at Brown, then, includes a wide array of interests, questions, and approaches. Nonetheless, while respecting diversity in interest and approach, the Department of Religious Studies endeavors to foster an intellectual community among its faculty and students that is coherent, identifiable, and collegial.
Faculty

- **Stephen Bush**
  Manning Assistant Professor of the Humanities
  [Stephen_Bush@brown.edu](mailto:Stephen_Bush@brown.edu)

- **Mark Cladis**
  Brooke Russell Astor Professor of the Humanities
  [Mark_Cladis@brown.edu](mailto:Mark_Cladis@brown.edu)

- **Nicola Denzey-Lewis**
  Visiting Associate Professor of Religious Studies
  [Nicola_Denzey@brown.edu](mailto:Nicola_Denzey@brown.edu)

- **Susan Ashbrook Harvey**
  Department Chair
  Royce Family Professor of Teaching Excellence
  Willard Prescott and Annie McClelland Smith Professor of Religious Studies
  [Susan_Harvey@brown.edu](mailto:Susan_Harvey@brown.edu)

- **Nancy Khalek**
  Director of Undergraduate Studies
  William A. Dyer Jr. Assistant Professor of the Humanities
  [Nancy_Khalek@brown.edu](mailto:Nancy_Khalek@brown.edu)

- **Jared Lindahl**
  Visiting Assistant Professor of Religious Studies
  [Jared_Lindahl@brown.edu](mailto:Jared_Lindahl@brown.edu)

- **Finnian Moore-Gerety**
  Visiting Lecturer in Religious Studies
  [Finnian_Gerety@brown.edu](mailto:Finnian_Gerety@brown.edu)

- **Thomas Lewis**
  Director of Graduate Studies
  Associate Professor of Religious Studies
  [Thomas_Lewis@brown.edu](mailto:Thomas_Lewis@brown.edu)

- **Paul Nahme**
  Assistant Professor of Religious Studies & Judaic Studies
  [Paul_Nahme@brown.edu](mailto:Paul_Nahme@brown.edu)

- **Elayne Oliphant**
  Post-doctoral Fellow
  [Elayne_Oliphant@brown.edu](mailto:Elayne_Oliphant@brown.edu)

- **Saul Olyan**
  Director of the Program in Judaic Studies
  Samual Ungerleider Jr. Professor of Judaic Studies and Professor of Religious Studies
  [Saul_Olyan@brown.edu](mailto:Saul_Olyan@brown.edu)

- **Harold Roth**
  Director of the Contemplative Studies Initiative
  Professor of Religious Studies
  [Harold_Roth@brown.edu](mailto:Harold_Roth@brown.edu)

- **Michael Satlow**
  Professor of Religious Studies and Judaic Studies
  [Michael_Satlow@brown.edu](mailto:Michael_Satlow@brown.edu)

- **Janine Sawada**
  Professor of Religious Studies and East Asian Studies
  [Janine_Sawada@brown.edu](mailto:Janine_Sawada@brown.edu)

- **Daniel Vaca**
  Assistant Professor of Religious Studies
  [Daniel_Vaca@brown.edu](mailto:Daniel_Vaca@brown.edu)

- **Andre Willis**
  Assistant Professor of Religious Studies
  [Andre_Willis@brown.edu](mailto:Andre_Willis@brown.edu)
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<td>RELS 0050</td>
<td>Love the Concept &amp; Practice</td>
<td>M. Cladis</td>
<td>MWF 2-2:50pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0071</td>
<td>Believers, Agnostics &amp; Atheists in Contemporary Fiction</td>
<td>D. Jacobson</td>
<td>MWF 10-10:50am</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0071A</td>
<td>*Must register for JUDS 0050A</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0090IL</td>
<td>Radical Romantics: Politics, Ecology, &amp; Religion</td>
<td>M. Cladis</td>
<td>W 3-5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0120</td>
<td>The Classical Chinese Philosophy of Life</td>
<td>H. Roth</td>
<td>TTh 2:30-3:50pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0145</td>
<td>Karma, Liberation &amp; Rebirth</td>
<td>F. Moore-Gerety</td>
<td>Th 4-6:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0150</td>
<td>Islam Unveiled</td>
<td>N. Khalek</td>
<td>MWF 10-10:50am</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0200</td>
<td>Christianity &amp; Economic Inequality</td>
<td>A. Willis</td>
<td>W 3-5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0200</td>
<td>*Must register for JUDS 0830</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0322</td>
<td>Great Jewish Books</td>
<td>M. Satlow</td>
<td>W 3-5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0322</td>
<td>*Must register for JUDS 0681</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0400</td>
<td>New Testament &amp; the Beginnings of Christianity</td>
<td>N. Denzey-Lewis</td>
<td>MWF 12-12:50pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0500</td>
<td>The Theory &amp; Practice of Buddhist Meditation</td>
<td>H. Roth</td>
<td>MWF 3-5:30pm; Lab MWF 9-9:50am</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0550</td>
<td>Tibetan Buddhism &amp; the West</td>
<td>J. Lindahl</td>
<td>TTh 9-10:20am</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0825</td>
<td>Foundational Texts in African American Theology</td>
<td>A. Willis</td>
<td>TTh 10:30-11:50am</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0830</td>
<td>Religion, Reason &amp; Ethics from Kant to Nietzsche</td>
<td>T.. Lewis</td>
<td>MWF 11-11:50am</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 0845</td>
<td>Religious Freedom in America</td>
<td>D. Vaca</td>
<td>Th 4-6:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 1000</td>
<td>Methods in Religious Studies</td>
<td>P. Nahme</td>
<td>M 3-5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 1190</td>
<td>Japanese Religious Traditions</td>
<td>J. Sawada</td>
<td>TTh 10:30-11:50am</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 1325A</td>
<td>Educating Bodies in Ancient Christianity</td>
<td>S. Harvey</td>
<td>TTh 1-2:20pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 1145T</td>
<td>The Karma of Words</td>
<td>J. Sawada</td>
<td>W 3-5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 1525</td>
<td>Christian-Muslim Relations in the Middle Ages</td>
<td>A. Watson</td>
<td>T 4-6:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 1725</td>
<td>Religion &amp; Visual Culture</td>
<td>E. Oliphant</td>
<td>T 4-6:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 1990</td>
<td>Individual Study Project</td>
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<td>To be arranged with instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 1999</td>
<td>Thesis Preparation</td>
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<td>To be arranged with instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 2011</td>
<td>Religion, Race &amp; Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean</td>
<td>M. Satlow</td>
<td>Th 12-2:20pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 2100E</td>
<td>Literature of the Early Second Temple Period</td>
<td>S. Olyan</td>
<td>M 5:30-7:30pm</td>
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<td>RELS 2105</td>
<td>Akkadian Literary &amp; Religious Texts</td>
<td>M. Rutz</td>
<td>W 3-5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 2105</td>
<td>*Must register for AWAS 2400</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 2200R</td>
<td>Lived Religion in the High Empire &amp; Late Antiquity</td>
<td>N. Denzey- Lewis</td>
<td>M 3-5:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 2890</td>
<td>Preliminary Exam Prep, To be arranged with instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 2910</td>
<td>Independent Research, To be arranged with instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 2990</td>
<td>Thesis Prep, To be arranged with instructor</td>
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**Course Descriptions**

**RELS 0050: Love: the Concept & Practice; M. Cladis**

A study of love (in classical and modern texts and in film) that provides a window into a host of religious, philosophical, and ethical issues. Topics include the potential conflict between divine and human love, between transcendent and earthly love, and the nature of friendship, romance, marriage, and love at the crossroads. Although the scope is love in the West, the Kamasutra and other texts furnish a comparative component.

**RELS 0071 (JUDS 0050A): Believers, Agnostics, and Atheists in Contemporary Fiction; D. Jacobson**

Contemporary society is divided over issues of religious faith. In recent decades there has been a resurgence of religious faith, while at the same time many have been skeptical and even hostile to religious belief and practice. Others are just not sure what to believe. In this seminar, we will read and discuss contemporary short stories that explore the ways that these ongoing differences over spiritual matters affect people. These works portray a variety of human situations: this affirmation and rejection of religious faith, confusion over the existence and nature of God, and positive and negative views of religious institutions and the clergy who lead them. Writers of both Christian and Jewish backgrounds will be studied.

**RELS 0090I: Radical Romantics: Politics, Ecology, and Religion; M. Cladis**

We will endeavor to create an intimate community of learning as we jointly explore political, environmental, and religious aspects of Romanticism (especially British Romanticism). It has become commonplace to think of Romanticism as nostalgic notions of the pastoral or narcissistic reports of the individual’s private gaze on the sublime. In contrast to this approach, we will focus on the radical political and environmental perspectives embedded within Romantic religious and poetic sensibilities. In the process, we will reflect on how this Romantic heritage can serve as a contemporary public resource for the cultivation of interrelated environmental and democratic beliefs and practices.
RELS 0120: The Classical Chinese Philosophy of Life; H. Roth
An introduction to the origins and early development of the indigenous religious thought of China from the oracle bone divination of the Shang Dynasty to the ethical philosophy of Confucianism and the cosmology and mysticism of Daoism. The course will seek to identify and elucidate the basic elements of the distinctive Chinese world view and demonstrate how they have shaped the nature of religious practice and experience and how they have been shaped by them. Works of interpretive scholarship will be used to supplement the primary texts in translation that will form the course.

RELS 0145: Karma, Liberation & Rebirth; F. Moore-Gerety
Karma, Sanskrit for the “action” that makes up a human life, has been a central concern for the religious traditions of South Asia throughout their history. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism share the belief that after death people are reborn, taking on lives according to their actions in lives previous. In these traditions, liberation from the cycle of rebirth becomes the ultimate goal of human existence. This course examines the ideas of karma, rebirth and liberation in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism from historical, cosmological, ritual, narrative, iconographic, and theological points of view. We also look at these ideas in Western culture.

RELS 0150: Islam Unveiled; N. Khalek
In this course, the historical origins and development of Islam will be studied in light of the sources and communities that shaped it. Themes to be explored include the central doctrines of Islam as derived from the Qur’an and traditions (sunna), the development of Islamic law (shari‘ah), the Shi‘I alternative, the growth of Muslim theology, philosophy, and mysticism (Sufism), and controversial issues among contemporary Muslims.
RELS 0200A: Christianity & Income Inequality; A. Willis
In the face of the vast, increasing economic inequality, this sophomore seminar interrogates the role of religious institutions and individuals. Do our religious institutions sustain or challenge economic inequality, and how? We will attempt to answer this question with a focus on three types of texts: classical texts that shaped 20th Century Christian consciousness (e.g., Weber, Niebur, and Ayn Rand); contemporary works that analyze the effects of economic inequality on the social fabric (e.g., Stiglitz, Freeland, Wilkinson/Picket); and texts that clarify the vital roles some contemporary religious movements are playing supporting economic inequality (e.g., Bowler, Walton, Byrne).

RELS 0322 (JUDS 0681): Great Jewish Books; M. Satlow
A survey of classic Jewish texts, from the Bible to modern literature. Each text will be discussed from the perspective of both its own historical and social context and its engagement with earlier ones. Attention will be paid on how these authors address perennial issues of human concern and how their answers are shaped by their experiences.

RELS 0360 (JUDS 0830): The Bible as Literature; D. Jacobson
Explores how methods of literary analysis can be applied to the reading of narratives of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible (in English Translation). Also compares the ways that modern writers have transformed biblical stories into new interpretive literary works. For students interested in an introduction to the Bible, as well as students with a knowledge of the Bible who want to deepen their understanding of biblical narratives and investigate the influence of the Bible on modern literature. All readings in English.
RELS 0500: The Theory & Practice of Buddhist Meditation; H. Roth
Examines the theory and practice of Buddhist meditation in historical and modern contexts. Traces this practice from its origins in 6th-century B.C.E. India to its transmission to China, Korea, and Japan. Studies selected normative texts and explore how Buddhist meditation is practiced today in each of these regions, both as an individual practice and as part of a monastic regimen. Meditation lab related to weekly seminar. Prerequisite: Preference given to students who have taken one or more of the following courses: RELS 0040; UNIV 0540; RELS 100; RELS 0911; RELS 1430; RELS 1440.

RELS 0550: Tibetan Buddhism & the West; J. Lindahl
This course traces the history and development of the various lineages of Tibetan Buddhism from its origins in Indian Buddhism through to encounters between Tibet and the West in the modern period. The course investigates the religious, political, and geographical conditions in Tibet that influenced the development of some of the unique characteristics of the lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. The course explores key doctrines, practices, institutions, and religious leaders of the major lineages, and delves into key events in the modern period, beginning with the age of missionaries and explorers and ending with the Cultural Revolution and subsequent diaspora.

RELS 0400: New Testament & the Beginnings of Christianity; N. Denzey-Lewis
How and why Christianity emerged in various forms in the ancient Mediterranean. Insights from religious studies, gender studies, literary studies, anthropology, and other fields. Careful critical readings of New Testament books, non-canonical gospels, early Christian letters, ancient apocalypses. Topics include: Jewish contexts; representations of Jesus; Paul and early communities; Christians and imperial Rome; gender constructions; canonization; eventual separation of Christianity & Judaism.
RELS 0825: Foundational Texts in African American Theology; A. Willis
Central topics and foundational texts in the field of scholarship historically known as Black Theology. Major African American responses to those writings by Marxists, Womanists, process theologians, and religious humanists.

RELS 0845: Religious Freedom in America; D. Vaca
“Religious Freedom,” former Secretary Hilary Rodham Clinton remarked in 2009, “provides a cornerstone for every healthy society.” It is, Clinton continued, “a founding principle of our nation.” As Clinton’s remarks illustrate, the concept of religious freedom is central to how people perceive the history of the United States and its position in the world today. But what is religious freedom? Does it actually exist? Has it ever? This seminar invites students to ask and answer these and other questions about the contested concept, engaging such varied issues as race, secularism, law, media, money, pluralism, and foreign policy.

RELS 0830: Religion, Reason, and Ethics from Kant to Nietzsche; T. Lewis
The nineteenth century witnessed revolutionary transformations in thinking about the power and limits of human reason, the relation between reason and religion, revelation, the role of humanity in creating religion, morality and religion, the significance of history, and the plurality of religions. This course examines major thinkers from this period who continue to shape our own assumptions and reflection.
RELS 1190: Japanese Religious Traditions;  
J. Sawada
An introduction to the history of Japanese religion in the early and medieval periods, with some attention to related modern and contemporary manifestations. Emphasis on the development of both native practices (“Shinto”) and Buddhism, and on the historical interaction between them. Readings include primary texts in translation and selected modern interpretations. A previous course in Asian religion or culture is recommended but not required.

RELS 1325A: Educating Bodies in Ancient Christianity; S. Harvey
Education in the ancient Mediterranean world served multiple purposes. It formed citizens, moral and ethical agency, and religious identities. It took place in a variety of settings and through diverse disciplinary methods, physical, intellectual, and social. This course will examine the primary modes of instruction through which ancient Christians undertook self-formation: the family, the civic community, monasteries, and liturgical communities. Seminar. Prior coursework in early Christianity (RELS 0400 or 0410) or Classics recommended.

RELS 1000: Methods in Religious Studies; P. Nahme
Intensive introduction to classical and contemporary theories of religion and the principal methods for the study of religion. Junior seminar for religious studies concentrators.
**RELS 1445T (EAST 1950F): The Karma of Words; J. Sawada**

This course is an opportunity for students to further their understanding of East Asian Buddhist attitudes and values by investigating characteristic themes in literature as a whole, rather than by studying formal scriptures and doctrinal tracts. Participants will explore tensions between the religious and poetic impulses and learn to recognize Buddhist symbols in Chinese and Japanese poetry, fiction, and plays. Recommended: A course in Asian religions.

**RELS 1525 (HIST 19970N): Christian Muslim Relations in the Middle Ages; A. Watson**

This course will examine Christian-Muslim relations during the eleventh through fifteenth centuries. It takes a broad definition of Christianity and includes the experiences of the Roman, Byzantine and Eastern churches. As a result, students will examine Christian-Muslim relations in a number of locations throughout the Mediterranean and Near East, ranging from Spain, the Levant, and Persia. Comparative views on sacred land, political and religious views, philosophy, polemics, learning and scientific understanding will be examined, with particular reference to primary texts in translation.

**RELS 1725: Religion & Visual Culture; E. Oliphant**

This course examines questions of representation and image through the lens of religion and secularism. Art is often imagined as the replacement for religion in a secular age, with the museum serving as a site of reverence and awe. With the rise of modern and contemporary art, however, the coherence of the social value of the “aesthetic” has, like that of religion, faltered. This course is offered in connection with a project entitled “The Art of Invisibility.” The key assignment will be the production of an online catalogue to accompany an art exhibit, which will include works by RISD students.
RELS 2011: Religion, Race, and Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean; M. Satlow
An examination of the categories of race, religion, and ethnicity among Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians in antiquity. How did they use (or not) these different modes of identity?

RELS 1990: Individual Study Project
Directed reading and research arranged with individual faculty. Section numbers vary by instructor. Please check Banner for the correct section number and CRN to use when registering for this course.

RELS 1999: Thesis Preparation
Required of seniors in the honors program. Open to others only by permission of the chair of the department. Section numbers vary by instructor. Please check Banner for the correct section number and CRN to use when registering for this course.

RELS 2100E: Literature of the Early Second Temple Period; S. Olyan
A close reading of selections from surviving literary texts of the late sixth century (e.g., Isaiah 56-66, Zechariah 1-8, Haggai) and the fifth century (Ezra0Nehemiah, Malachi). Prerequisite: An advanced knowledge of biblical Hebrew and permission of the instructor.
RELS 2105 (AWAS 2400): Akkadian Literary and Religious Texts; M. Rutz
Readings in Akkadian literary and religious texts in the original language and script. Possible genres include myths, proverbs, and literary miscellanea as well as prayers, hymns incantations, rituals, prophecies, and divinatory texts. This course is intended primarily for graduate students and may be repeated for credit. A reading knowledge of Akkadian cuneiform is required. A reading knowledge of both German and French is recommended but not required.

Giant Vishnu Statue, Bali, Indonesia

RELS 2200R: Lived Religion in the High Empire & Late Antiquity; N. Denzey-Lewis
This graduate course will use the theoretical work of Robert Orsi and Michel de Certeau to recover aspects of “lived” or “quotidian” religious experience in the High Roman Empire and Late Antiquity, particularly (but not exclusively) in the city of Rome. We will use as our data set not only textual sources in the original language and translation, but also elements of material culture (amulets, pyxides, reliquaries, crepundia, textiles, sortes, etc.), funerary epigraphy, and papyri.

RELS 2890: Preliminary Examination Preparation
For graduate students who have met the tuition requirement and are paying the registration fee to continue active enrollment while preparing for preliminary examinations.

RELS 2910: Independent Research
The staff is willing to offer independent reading courses in selected areas. See the instructor for more information. Please check Banner for the correct section number and CRN to use when registering.

RELS 2990: Thesis Preparation
For graduate students who have met the tuition requirement and are paying the registration fee to continue active enrollment while preparing a thesis.
Brown University
Department of Religious Studies
Shirley Miller House
59 George Street
Providence, RI 02912
401-863-3104
www.brown.edu/academics/religious-studies