

**Proposal:  
Minor in Religion and Media**

**Advisory Board:**     Michelene Pesantubbee (Co-Chair)  
                              Jenna Supp-Montgomerie (Co-Chair)  
                              Paul Dilley

**BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

A happy coincidence of interests in religion and media have emerged between the Department of Religious Studies and the Department of Communication Studies, in step with increased attention to the importance of religion in public life, the digital humanities, and the shaping role of media in public and religious culture. While there are centers for the study of religion and media in three other major U.S. Universities (University of Colorado-Boulder, New York University, and University of Southern California), none currently offer a humanities-focused program in undergraduate study. Only Syracuse University offers a similar degree, a minor in religion and the media, however the program of study does not include courses in media studies. The University of Iowa is uniquely positioned to offer the only religion and media minor in the United States that emphasizes the study of religion *and* the study of media in a rigorous address of this crucial aspect of contemporary culture.

This minor is designed to capitalize on student interest in the intersection of religion and media and build critical skills in cultural and media literacy. It will educate students on the vital role that religion and media play both historically and today by introducing interdisciplinary perspectives at the intersection of public and private life. This minor will broaden student capacities for critical thinking in their chosen major field while also providing robust engagement with issues of religion and media in historical and contemporary contexts. Participation in the minor will give students valuable experience in interdisciplinary scholarship and prepare them to be informed citizens of a world in which religion and media matter.

**ADMINISTRATIVE HOME AND ADVISORY BOARD**

Since the minor represents one of the areas of research and teaching in Religious Studies, Religious Studies will function as the minor's initial administrative home, organizing such details as a review of the curriculum and catalog revisions. The minor can be moved to Communication Studies when and if needed. An interdisciplinary advisory board will also help to oversee the minor, particularly reviewing curricular additions or revisions or requests by students for exceptions. The board will also encourage participation from additional departments and help to create networks across areas. The board will provide outreach to students and Admissions about the minor, encouraging enrollment.

## **ADVISING**

Minors are not assigned advisors by the College but members of the advisory board will be able to work with students interested in the minor or who have questions.

## **DOUBLE COUNTING AND DUPLICATION**

When completing the requirements specified for multiple programs of study, such as for a minor, certificate, or major, double counting of course work is limited by the College to 6 s.h.

## **RESOURCES**

The minor requires no new resources since the courses for the minor are currently taught at least once a year and have seats available in them.

## **CURRICULAR DETAILS**

This minor requires a minimum of 18 s.h., including 12 s.h. in courses taken at The University of Iowa. Students must maintain a cumulative g.p.a. of at least 2.00 in UI courses for the minor and a g.p.a. of 2.00 in all courses completed for the minor. Course work in the minor may not be taken pass/nonpass.

While completing the minor, students must choose at least 6 s.h from Communication Studies courses and 6 s.h. from Religious Studies courses listed below. To ensure a robust and focused interdisciplinary course of study, students must take 3 s.h. from area A, 3 s.h. from area B, 6 s.h. from area C, and 6 s.h. from area D.

### **A. Methods and Approaches in Media Studies**

These courses teach students the major methodological approaches to the study of media.

A minimum of 3 s.h. is required.

COMM:1168 Media, Music, and Culture 3 s.h.

COMM:1174 Media and Society 3 s.h.

### **B. Methods and Approaches in Religious Studies**

These courses teach students the major methodological approaches to the study of religion.

A minimum of 3 s.h. is required.

RELS:1001 Judaism, Christianity and Islam 3 s.h.

RELS:1015 Religions in a Global Context: The Critical Role of Religion  
in International Affairs 3 s.h.

### **C. Themes of Religion and Media**

These courses raise broad thematic questions about the relationship of religion and media in diverse historical, geographical, and social contexts.

A minimum of 6 s.h. is required.

COMM:4153 Magic Machines: Technology and Social Change *Cross-listed as RELS:4153	3 s.h.
RELS:2182 Ancient Mediterranean Religions	3 s.h.
RELS:2272 Religion and Film	3 s.h.
RELS:2930 Digital Media and Religion *Cross-listed as COMM:2079	3 s.h.
RELS:3524 The Devil in Judaism & Christianity	3 s.h.

### **D. Religion and Media in Context**

These courses engage specific historical, geographical, and cultural contexts in which a relationship between religion and media is important. They teach students to think about the way religion and media matter to every day life in particular environments and times.

A minimum of 6 s.h. is required.

COMM:2080 Public Life in the U.S.: Religion and Media *Cross-listed as RELS:2080	3 s.h.
COMM:2088 Media and Democracy	3 s.h.
RELS:2064 Tricksters, Fools and Creators	3 s.h.
RELS:2260 Hard Cases in Health Care: The Beginning of Life	3 s.h.
RELS:2877 Sport and Religion in America *Cross-listed as SPST:2077	3 s.h.
RELS:3243 Early Christianity: From Jesus to the Rise of Islam	3 s.h.
RELS:3247 Banned from the Bible: Pseudepigrapha & Apocrypha *Cross-listed as CLSA:3247	3 s.h.
RELS:3276 American Indian Environmentalism *Cross-listed as AINS3276	3 s.h.

RELS: 3745 Twentieth-Century African American Religion: Civil Rights to Hip-Hop 3 s.h.

RELS:3834 Arab Spring in Context 3 s.h.

\*Cross-listed as COMM:3834, JMC:3146, WLLC:3834, and IS:3834



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October 21, 2015

Dear Helena,

With the full support of the Department of Religious Studies faculty, I strongly endorse Dr. Jenna Supp-Montgomerie's proposal to create a new minor in Religion and Media with its administrative home in the Department of Religious Studies. We are prepared to invest human resources in this endeavor because it offers new and creative possibilities for cross-disciplinary cooperation between Religious Studies and Communication Studies, as well as great opportunities for undergraduates to study topics that are deeply philosophical and, at the same time, eminently practical. In our view, critical inquiry *and* the possibility of meaningful practical application to everyday life are essential to a robust education in the liberal arts and sciences. I am grateful for Jenna's work on this proposal, and I also thank you and Kathy for your support of Jenna's efforts.

Sincerely yours,

Diana Fritz Cates  
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October 22, 2015

Dear Helena,

The Department of Communication Studies strongly supports the proposed minor in **Religion and Media**, with its administrative home in the Department of Religious Studies. The minor takes advantage of the opportunities for inter-disciplinarity that grew from Dr. Jenna Supp-Montgomerie's hiring in 2014 as a jointly-appointed faculty member, with 0.5 FTE in each of the two represented departments. Most importantly, the minor situates the University and the College as unique in its ability to offer an emphasis in a domain – the intersections of religion and media – that is increasingly salient in the lives of our students and that is at the heart of recruitment and/or persuasion efforts for a wide variety of movements, organizations, and even states.

The Communication Studies course included in the proposal, while more limited than those in Religious Studies, are offered with sufficient frequency (generally on a yearly rotation) as to make it feasible for students to fulfill the minor's requirement of at least two CS courses (i.e., 6 credit hours). We look forward to adding additional CS coursework to the minor as our offerings in either of the relevant areas expand.

If I can be of additional assistance in this proposal, do not hesitate to contact me at [valid-afifi@uiowa.edu](mailto:valid-afifi@uiowa.edu). Otherwise, I look forward to adding this minor to the growing list of certificates, minors, and majors in which Communication Studies is involved.

Sincerely,

Walid Afifi  
Professor & Chair