

November 4, 2008

To: St. Olaf Faculty
From: Curriculum Committee
Re: Revised Requirements for Religion Major

At the November Faculty Meeting the Curriculum Committee will move that the faculty approve revised requirements for the religion major.

The religion department seeks to revise the requirements for the religion major by specifying that one of eight required courses must be Religion 285 "What is Religion?"

A proposed new catalog description of the major, and a brief rationale follow.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR

The religion major consists of eight courses and requires both broad exposure to major approaches to studying religion and concentrated study in some aspect of religion. The requirements are organized in five parts:

1. General education courses in religion: Religion 121 (BTS-B) and a course in theological studies (BTS-T).
2. Religion 285.
3. Study of at least two religious traditions using three different academic approaches: a) sacred texts, b) religion in history and culture, and c) religious thought.
4. Intensive studies in religion: At least two Level III courses, at least one of which must be a seminar.
5. Elective courses.

Rationale:

Following departmental self-study and assessment of student essays completed in level III courses and seminars, the department sought means to develop major's awareness of the diversity of methods available for the study of religion. Two years ago the faculty approved a new course, Religion 285 "What Is Religion?" that introduces a variety of methods for studying religion and intends to help students become more deliberate about the use of particular methods. The course has been offered with success as an elective for two years. The department seeks to require the course for religion majors in the future.