



What Can You Do With a Religious Studies Degree?

What do basketball player Shane Battier, model Christy Turlington, and actor Maggie Gyllenhaal have in common? They majored in religious studies. This academic discipline has more to do with serving others than with the specifics of any particular faith. Religious studies is an interdisciplinary and nondenominational major that can prepare students for faith-based careers, but it doesn't limit graduates to that. Religious studies degree programs include courses on ancient and modern religious systems, biblical history, moral values, and sociology. At their core, these programs are about human behavior, and employers in numerous fields, such as education, research, and community service, seek workers who have mastered the skills they teach. Religious studies differs from theology, which focuses on the study of God and personal faith. By contrast, religious studies programs provide an immersion into a broad appreciation of religious traditions, and do not lead directly to ordination in a particular faith. In 2020, over 5,600 religious studies degrees were granted, according to a report from Data USA.

Benefits of a Religious Studies Degree

Curriculums in religious studies degree programs include courses from other disciplines, such as language arts, cultural studies, art, philosophy, and history. This scope provides a rounded education that can be useful in many fields, including the following.

Education

Education is a large and broad field for religious studies graduates to pursue a job in, whether it's as an elementary school teacher, a teaching assistant, or an admissions counselor at a college. All of these options are available at denominational and nondenominational organizations.

Community Service

Community service is a wide-ranging field that includes advocacy, counseling, community organization, and program coordination. Many of the roles in this field are in nonprofit organizations. With more experience and an advanced degree, professionals can excel in roles like chaplain or program director. Teamwork, organization, compassion, problem-solving, and communication are essential in this field.

Clergy

Clergy roles are an obvious choice for religious studies graduates. Clergy refers to a group of spiritual leaders in a certain religion such as pastors, ministers, and rabbis. Clergy members perform various spiritual functions and can be employed by churches, religious organizations, or even religious media, such as radio stations.

What Jobs Can You Get With a Religious

Religious studies degree programs focus on a broad set of adaptable skills required in many interdisciplinary or [humanities careers](#), which means they can prepare students for a wide array of career options. Religious studies graduates don't need to limit themselves solely to faith-based jobs.

Social Worker

Social workers provide a lifeline to individuals, groups, and families who need help coping with difficult situations and environments. Their role is to assess, support, and direct people to services that improve their well-being. The compassion, listening skills, and problem-solving skills honed in a religious studies program would be useful in this job. In May 2021, the median salary for social workers was \$50,390, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

Pastoral Leader

Pastoral leaders carry out spiritual duties, such as praying with members of a church, teaching, conducting ceremonies, or offering guidance. Clergy members had a median salary of \$49,720 in May 2021, as reported by the BLS.

Counselor

A job as a counselor requires interpersonal skills, compassion, patience, and critical thinking skills to help individuals overcome and manage an issue or disability. Religious studies graduates can seek employment in rehabilitation, substance abuse, mental health, or educational counseling, among other fields. Counselors had a median salary of \$45,160, according to May 2021 data from the BLS.

Researcher

Survey researchers collect and analyze data for social sciences, governmental, education, and health organizations. They need analytical, critical thinking, and communication

Community Service Manager

Community service managers coordinate and oversee programs that assist members of the community. Such programs could focus on homeless people, veterans, children, individuals involved in the legal or criminal justice systems, or older people. Community service managers analyze data, write proposals, and speak publicly, all of which require skills that can be gained in a religious studies degree program. The BLS reported a median salary of \$74,000 for social and community service managers in May 2021.

Religious Studies Degree Skills

Religious studies degree programs help students develop many hard and soft skills that are transferable to a number of careers.

Research

Whether they are enrolled in a bachelor's or a master's degree program, religious studies students conduct research for assignments and for independent study. Being able to use technology to gather information is a skill that is valuable in any career.

Writing

Writing is the backbone of most humanities and social sciences degree programs. Employees in many workplaces need to be able to write clearly and succinctly to succeed in their jobs.

Leadership

Leadership skills are needed in many careers. Religious studies graduates can be effective leaders who provide guidance and mentorship to others.

Being ethical means being respectful, having integrity, and being disciplined. Understanding the role values play in people's lives and where values come from is part of an ethical mindset. Employers seek trustworthy, accountable, and ethical workers who make thoughtful decisions in the best interest of their organization.

Critical Thinking

Religious studies students use critical thinking skills when they analyze historical data, weigh facts, and then draw a conclusion. Religious studies graduates with strong critical thinking skills can problem solve, recognize inconsistencies, and integrate multiple ideas into their analyses, helping them stand out to their employers.

Take the Leap and Earn a Religious Studies Degree

If you're looking for an area of study that combines interfaith appreciation, an interdisciplinary education, and a host of transferable skills, religious studies may be the major for you. Learn more about the [Bachelor of Arts in Religion](#) and [Master of Arts in Religious Studies](#) programs at Athens State University. These programs are offered online to meet the schedules of students from all backgrounds.

Recommended Readings

[What Is a Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies?](#)

[What Can You Do with an Interdisciplinary Studies Degree?](#)

[Embark on a Career of Impact in the Humanities](#)

Sources:

[Beliefnet, "Hollywood's Famous Religion Majors"](#)

[Data USA, Religious Studies](#)

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Community and Social Service Occupations](#)

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Community Service Managers](#)

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Counselors](#)

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupation Profiles](#)

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Philosophy and Religion Teachers, Postsecondary](#)

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