

Bible and Religion

"Our study of Bible and religion at Bethel, combined with graduate work in theology and religion, has prepared us for working in contexts in which religious and national identities are intertwined and with issues at the intersection of religion and peacebuilding."

—Alain Epp Weaver '91 and Sonia Weaver '91, Amman, Jordan, for more than 10 years worked in the Middle East; now Alain is Director of the Program Development Department at Mennonite Central Committee in Akron, Pennsylvania.



Question

How will I know if this is the right major for me?

Answer

From the start, your faculty advisor will work with you to set up a course schedule and help you explore options available in Bible and religion as a major (or minor). Would you like to study the Bible in more depth? Are you interested in other religions as well as your own? Does history, and maybe especially church history or religious history, fascinate you? Does pastoral ministry appeal to you as a profession? Maybe you want to spend time figuring out how we should live as responsible and compassionate human beings—in other words, studying ethics. Or perhaps you'd like to explore some of the big questions: Who are we? Who is God? What does life mean? Why does any of this matter? If these resonate with you, Bible and religion may be ideal as a major or minor for you. Bible and religion is one of the most versatile programs at Bethel College, one that could easily be combined with study in many other disciplines such as business, history, communication, philosophy, music or biology.

Question

What courses are required for a degree in Bible and religion from Bethel College?

Answer

These courses are required:

- Introduction to Biblical Studies
- Vocation Seminar
- Advanced Religious Studies
- Topics in Philosophy
- eight hours of foreign language study (or demonstration of equivalent competency)

Also required are courses (which you'll choose based on interest) from areas of world religions, ethics and Old and New Testament studies with electives available in Mennonite History and Religion in American History. Bible and religion majors often choose to add a philosophy minor, which also goes well with other majors. The 15-credit-hour minor requires you to choose from courses such as Christian Social Ethics, Modern Critical Theory, General Philosophy, Western Thought I and II and Topics in Philosophy.

If you have an interest in pastoral ministry, you may be someone who'd like to explore the field of youth ministry. Bethel College offers an 15-credit-hour youth ministry certificate. Required courses include: Introduction to Biblical Studies, Introduction to Youth Ministry and Skills for Human Service Work. A minor within the department of Bible and religion that could also be combined effectively with any major is the peace, justice and conflict studies minor (17-19 credit hours). Requirements include courses from areas of ethics, peace and conflict studies and a major research project.

 Bethel

Seek.
Serve.
Grow.

Question

What practical experience will I get?

Answer

Bethel College provides multiple opportunities for you to put your theories and interest in religion, Christian life, peacemaking and ethics into practice. First of all, the campus has an active spiritual life. There is a weekly chapel service for the whole campus community that is largely planned and led by students. You can be involved in religious organizations such as a Catholic Students group or the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, or help plan and carry out informal worship services and Bible study groups with other students. If you're interested in Christian ministry, consider taking part in the Ministry Inquiry Program one summer. MIP is open to students of any denomination. You'll be placed in a Mennonite congregation where pastor and people are willing to mentor you as you find out what it's like to preach, lead worship, plan youth activities and visit members.

Question

What can I expect after graduation?

Answer

Some of our graduates have taken service assignments or community and church-related jobs. Over the last 30 years, about two-thirds of Bethel graduates and alumni in Bible and religion have gone on for graduate study at Mennonite, United Methodist and other church-related seminaries, as well as widely known institutions such as Harvard, Yale and the University of Chicago. They have entered the following fields and professions, among others:

- bankruptcy law, environmental law
- director of international programs for Mennonite Central Committee
- community organizing
- human rights work with Muslim women in Afghanistan
- pastoral ministry and youth ministry
- director of Mennonite relief and service program in West Bank
- teaching religion at the college and university level
- principal of international school in India
- conflict mediation



"A Bethel College education encouraged me to develop a faith that was authentic and relevant, to ask questions and to dialogue with a variety of perspectives. I found it valuable to study Bible and religion in an interdisciplinary context, which helped prepare me for the work of a pastor who must draw on many disciplines such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, peace studies, music, visual arts, drama, literature, politics and natural sciences."

—Heidi Regier Kreider '83, North Newton, lead pastor, Bethel College Mennonite Church



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