

Carleton

Department of Religion

507-222-4232

Dear Future Carl,

Congratulations on being accepted to Carleton! I am thrilled to hear about your interest in the Department of Religion. [The study of religion](#) draws upon multiple disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences. We offer [a wide range of courses](#) dealing with various historic traditions (including Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Native American religions, Black religious traditions, Chinese and Japanese religions, Hinduism, and Buddhism). Some courses introduce a religious tradition and trace its development historically; others examine in a cross-cultural context the issues faced by various religious communities and individuals; and still others explore diverse theories and methods employed in the study of religions.

At Carleton we respect the diversity, integrity, and richness of the traditions we study while we also cultivate analytic skills that enable critical empathy and enquiry. Our aim is never to convert students to any religion but to help students understand religious traditions on their own terms, and also to understand that they are historically and culturally grounded. Cultivating critical empathy in the study of religion, we believe, allows us to engage with others reflectively. At the same time, we recognize that many students who take our courses have deep religious commitments or significant religious questions that have stimulated their interest in the study of religion. We honor the personal religious, and non-religious, beliefs and values of our students, which need not interfere with the academic study of religion. Indeed, for some students, this academic work deepens their personal engagement with religious life.

A popular course among first year students is our main introductory course *Understanding Religion*, which explores the role of religion in the world today through selected themes—from politics and pop culture to religious philosophies, ecology and bioethics, race, gender, class, and more. You may also enroll in our Argument and Inquiry (A&I) seminars, or introductory courses that survey the history of a particular religious tradition or the presence of a theme across numerous religions.

While some have argued that our world is becoming increasingly secularized, we also see evidence to the contrary—and regardless, religion remains a vital component of most human cultures of the twenty-first century. Understanding religious texts, persons, and practices is indispensable for appreciating not just the human quest for meaning in life, but also the ways in which current social and political movements and institutions have developed and how new ones continue to appear.

As for life after Carleton, our students move on to [successful careers](#) in non-profit social justice organizations, law, medicine, public health, journalism, community service, politics, education, ministry, money management, and tech companies. I'd be glad to be in touch with you about any of your interests. If you have questions about the study of religion at Carleton, please feel free to email me (kbloomer@carleton.edu).

Sincerely yours,



Kristin Bloomer
Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Religion

