

The SEE Beyond Awards for Religion majors and minors:

The “Summer Education Experience – Learning Beyond the Campus” awards are designed to allow you to immerse yourself, for the summer, in an educational opportunity not available to you on campus/during the school year, and normally cover a 6-12 week timeframe. The opportunity should be clearly related to your conception of or plans for the Religion major or minor.

The faculty of the Religion program will review applications from any and all majors and minors in the program, and will choose the strongest proposal to forward to the SEE Beyond Award committee for the final competition. Our judgment of the applications will be based on the substance and rigor of the proposed activity, on our assessment of your explanation of how the activity relates to your Religion major/minor or your plans for it, and on whether your performance in Religion classes has indicated that you are capable of successfully pursuing what you have proposed. You must have officially declared a major or minor in the program by the time of your application.

You may propose any sort of summer educational experience, but there are some general guidelines you may find helpful. This program is specifically aimed at experiences and opportunities not otherwise available to you, so focus on things that are only feasible in the summer. These experiences may be thought of as falling into three broad (and overlapping) categories: observation/research, instruction, and participation. Please bear in mind that these are merely illustrative examples, and are neither exhaustive nor specifically prescriptive.

Additionally, check the websites below for updated program information, dates, and deadlines. Please note that links may change over time, so if direct links don’t work, try searching for these or similar programs using the titles, or keywords.

Observation/research:

- Perhaps after a course on Indian goddesses, you very much want to deepen your understanding of the subject, and are particularly interested in the ways in which devotion to these goddesses differs in the US and India, if in fact it does differ. In pursuit of this topic, you propose three weeks in the US and three in India visiting temples and interviewing devotees. That’s nice, but, when we assess your proposal, we will be looking for specifics. How did you choose which US and Indian cities to visit? Do you have a well thought out plan for obtaining permission to visit the temples and to speak with the worshippers? Is it clear that you understand at least some of the difficulties involved in your plan?
- Or, you might be fascinated by, say, a particular American religious figure, and wish to visit the archive where her correspondence and journals are preserved, and spend a couple of months there, working through those papers. Again, nice, but how convincing is your case that you need to go there in order to properly study her? We would expect you to explain what’s there that isn’t available in print or on the web, and why you suspect it is important. On the practical side, where will you stay while

you work in the archive, and will the archive allow you access? Do you have the academic background to be able to make sense of the papers that interest you? All of this, and more, would need to be addressed in your proposal.

- It could be that there is an established program for what you want to do. For instance, if you want to deepen your understanding of ancient religious practices and technologies, you might apply for funding to go on a summer archaeological dig sponsored by a university or governmental agency. The main question here would not be the practicality of the program, since someone else is handling that for you and the other participants, but we would want you to explain how the particular dig you wish to join relates to your major/minor or your plans for it. For archaeological opportunities, you may find archaeologydigs.blogspot.com and the Archaeological Fieldwork Opportunities Bulletin from the Archaeological Institute of America, at <http://www.archaeological.org/fieldwork/afob>, to be useful starting points.

Instruction:

- It's also possible that what you envision is simply going abroad to some country where the religious traditions or practices which interest you are dominant and taking some college classes there. This sounds a lot like something you could do through the semester abroad program. If you were to propose this, you would need to explain, in a clear and convincing fashion, not only how this experience relates to your understanding of or plans for your Religion major or minor, but also how the experience is different than what you can do through other programs. Perhaps you envision taking not the sort of standard college courses you might in a semester abroad, but courses at a religious college or institution. As an example, the Centre for Buddhist Studies at Rangjung Yeshe Institute, associated with Kathmandu University, has summer programs in Buddhist Studies (at <http://cbs.edu.np/summer-courses/>).
- Courses at US colleges and universities might also qualify. Interested in Judaism? The Tikvah Project on Jewish Thought, at Princeton (at <http://www.princeton.edu/tikvah/forum/>), has a summer seminar every year. It is shorter than the usual SEE Beyond project, but might be worth considering.
- Taking a course in a language you believe will be helpful as you pursue and use your degree is not, in and of itself, necessarily a 'beyond the campus' experience. If, however, that course is either an intensive summer program or simply in a language not taught at Skidmore or in the region, it would, assuming a clear explanation of how it relates to your Religion major or minor, probably qualify. If said language course is hosted in a location where that language is spoken and/or with an important component of instruction not only in the language, but also in a culture closely associated with it, that would make your proposal even more compelling as a SEE Beyond experience. Middlebury, Harvard, Michigan, and many other schools offer stateside summer language immersion programs in languages relevant to the study of various religions, and there are useful links to reputable summer-abroad language programs on Princeton's Office of International Programs website, at <http://www.princeton.edu/oip/sap/programs/summer/language/>.

Participation:

Paid internships will not normally qualify for consideration, unless the compensation is so minimal as to make accepting the internship flatly impossible without additional financing. Again, you would have to make the case that the internship relates to your Religion major or minor and/or your plans for it. That said, a wide variety of internships would potentially qualify.

- Work with or for a religious or interfaith agency or institution would, assuming a clear explanation of how it fits in with your views of or plans for the major/minor, be eligible for consideration. Harvard's Pluralism Project maintains a list of some of the possibilities at http://pluralism.org/pages/applications/summer_internships.
- Work with or for a humanitarian non-profit whose work is impacted by the religious beliefs or practices of its clients would also be eligible for consideration. The list of humanitarian and development internships, including volunteer work, at <http://www.campusaccess.com/internships/humanitarian-development.html> is a good place to start thinking about this option if you don't have a particular agency in mind.
- Programs designed to give participants a religious or spiritual experience would also qualify for consideration, whether you are thinking of taking part in the running of the program in an internship or something like it, or of taking part in the program itself in order to understand the experience and the participants. There are a great many of these programs, both stateside and abroad, and we strongly urge you to consider the longevity and national/international reputation of the program, as well as its standing with local governmental and law enforcement agencies as you choose a program.

As you will have noticed, all of the possibilities discussed here require you to do some research, even if you would like to take part in an existing academic summer program. This is by design. Even if you are not proposing something unique and thus entirely self-structured, we expect you to figure out what is that interests you, and how you might pursue it. The Religion program's SEE Beyond point person - currently Professor Burris - will, of course, be glad to talk with you about your interests, which kind of project might best suit your academic background, and your proposal. Other faculty in the department may also have advice for you, if you seek them out. Beyond the program, you should also check out the SEE Beyond resources for other programs. Interested in Native American religions? Anthropology probably has some interesting possibilities. Interested in some aspect of the African-American religious experience? Don't neglect the [Intergroup Relations link](#) on the [SEE Beyond webpage](#). Think broadly and creatively. Imagine what you desperately wish you could do in the Religion program, or with your degree, spend some time thinking about how you might do some part of that over a summer, and then come and talk to us about your ideas.

Good luck!