

Dear Hygan,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You told us that you were thinking of minoring in religious studies at the University of California. However, someone told you that taking such a course of study "can ruin religion" if you are a "religious" person. You wondered if you would be "digging yourself into a hole" or could such a course of study be a challenge from God to be faithful even when the facts presented do not match your beliefs.

We looked at the web site for the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California and found the course study to be a comparison of various religious traditions throughout the world, including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Native American Religions, Shinto and Taoism. Quoting from the chair of the department, "The faculty and students draw on methodological insights from anthropology, cognitive science, folklore studies, history, philology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, the study of race and ethnicity, sociology, theology, and the study of gender and sexuality."

We think that if you are interested in learning about the various religions of the world then that course of study may be useful. The knowledge you acquire may aid you when you are witnessing about Jesus to those of diverse faiths, since you will better know how to answer them when they present you with a question. The Apostle Paul was knowledgeable of the Greeks' objects of worship and was able to use this knowledge to his advantage when he witnessed about the one true God. (See Acts 17:22-34.) However, if you do not want to be challenged, or told that your religion is just tradition, or even have it ridiculed by unbelievers, but, instead, want to be uplifted as you study the Bible, this course may not be for you.

Should you enroll in the program of religious studies that is offered at the University of California? The answer depends upon what your objectives are. If you are strong in your faith and want to learn about the religions of the world just for your own knowledge or so that you can be a better witness to those who are not Christians, then the course of study might be useful. On the other hand, you may find the course to be offensive to both Christianity and Judaism, as these religions will not be portrayed as special religions given to us directly from the one true God. You may have to listen to and react to ideas that you find offensive. How will you handle such situations? If your objective is to be uplifted and grow stronger as a Christian by studying more of God's precious word, the course of study you are considering is not designed to address that objective and we would not advise taking it.

We hope we have answered your question. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio