CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES (CJST)

CJST151 What is Religion? Kool-Aid, Converts, and the First Amendment
Were the people who "drank the Kool-Aid" at Jonestown brainwashed or did they die for a noble cause? How do evangelical Christians read the Bible and what does that mean for their politics? What is religious experience and what might it look like? Is there really religious freedom under the Constitution? This class will introduce you to the ways in which we study religion by reading critical case studies about Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple, Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority, African Americans and the Racial Limits of Religious Freedom, and "freedom of religion" court cases about peyote, animal sacrifice, and burying the dead. This is not a survey of world religions, but a way of asking how the stuff we call religion has been shaped through colonial intervention, scholarly collaboration, and legal expediency—and how it functions in relation to contemporary politics and popular culture.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: RELI151
Prereq: None

CJST153F Ethnicity, Race, and Religion in the Middle Ages (FYS)
This course concerns the invention of premodern ideas of ethnicity and race. Our focus will be on a selection of medieval texts dealing with the encounters—real and imaginary—of Western European Christians with other cultures, from the Celtic borderlands to the Mongol Empire. The readings will begin historically with the Crusades and the (often grisly) chronicles written by Christian, Muslim, and Jewish authors. Other genres will include religious polemics, autobiographical narratives of religious conversion, and travel accounts by missionaries, spies, and colonial propagandists. We will also read some later “romances” that re-imagine the crusades in terms of exoticized sexuality, racial transformation, cannibalism, and nationalist fantasy.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: ENGL153F
Prereq: None

CJST203 Jews & Judaism: Race, Religion, Culture
What is a Jew? Are Jews white? Must a Jew believe in God? What is at stake when defining someone as a Jew? Using sources ranging from the Hebrew Bible to contemporary films, this course examines various facets of Jewish life, paying special attention to contesting definitions of Jewishness as race, religion, and culture. Building on a chronological discussion of Jewish history, we will ask theoretical questions such as the relation between gender and biblical interpretation, the relevance of religious law in contemporary society, and the challenges of diasporic thinking to national sovereignty.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: RELI203
Prereq: None

CJST214 Refugees & Exiles: Religion in the Diaspora
Recent years have seen the on-going tragic refugee crisis, with millions of people being displaced because of war and ecological disasters. That this crisis also has religious overtones is evident by the so-called travel ban in the United States or the rhetoric used by right wing leaders across Europe. This course deals with the meaning of refuge, exile, and diaspora through three perspectives: philosophical, historical, and literary. A variety of case studies—including the contemporary refugee crises in the Middle East, the black transatlantic, and the destruction of the temple in the Hebrew Bible—will raise for us various questions: What does it mean to be violently forced to leave one’s home? How is it possible to make sense of such a tragedy? What creative power can diaspora muster to the rescue of culture? This course is a Service Learning course in cooperation with WESU 88.1 FM Middletown. Each student’s final project will be a radio show based on an analysis of a selected refugee crisis. To learn more and listen to last year’s shows visit https://reli213.site.wesleyan.edu.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: RELI213
Prereq: None

CJST216 Jesus Through Jewish Eyes
In this course, we explore the visual and textual representations of the vexed relation between Jews and Christians throughout history. Looking at the various ways in which Christianity and Judaism define themselves vis-à-vis the other allows us to understand what mechanisms of cultural appropriation, subversion, and hidden polemics are at work. Special attention will be given to the figure of Jesus as a point of artistic and theological contention. How do artistic representations change our understanding of religious themes? What is at stake for each religion in the encounter with the other? What are the political implications of theological debates? Is this dialogue needed, or even possible, in our post-secular age?
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: RELI216
Prereq: None

CJST234 Israel in Therapy: Society Under the Influence of TV Series
The course deals with the prototypes of the Israeli character as they appear in the original Israeli TV series in Treatment, and other Israeli TV series, such as Florentine and A Touch Away. We will compare the structure and the characters of the series to other dramatic Israeli series, examine the appearance of the characters, and discuss the similarities and differences between the roles they perform. In addition, we will examine the role of television drama series as a tool to define and characterize our societies, and also look over the five characters that appear in the first season of in Treatment, define them, and examine the five prototypes of the Israeli character they represent.

The instructor is the co-creator and head screenwriter of the original version of the TV series in Treatment as well as the Center for Jewish Studies distinguished Visiting Professor.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-CJST
Identical With: FILM311
Prereq: None

CJST241 Judaism(s): Religion, Power, and Identity in Jewish History
This course will offer students an intensive survey of the major currents in Jewish social, political, intellectual, and religious history, while focusing in particular on what it means to be a Jew in the 21st-century. The course explores how Jews are a culture, ethnicity, nation, nationality, race, religion, and more and how Jewishness gets constructed differently across different times and contexts. The course looks both locally and globally at the plurality of Jewish identities.
Students will read primary historical texts from prominent Jewish thinkers and writers, as well as texts written about Jews by non-Jews.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: RELI204
Prereq: None

CJST243 Jewish Graphic Novels
This course will explore issues in Judaism and the Jewish experience through the medium of the graphic novel. Students will not only gain proficiency in critically reading graphic novels and sequential art, they will also gain a grasp of some of the major issues in Jewish history including (but not limited to) immigration, life in America, the Holocaust, and Israel/Palestine.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: RELI217
Prereq: None

CJST244 Introduction to The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)
The Hebrew Bible is one of the most influential texts in the world. From antiquity to the present, it has served as a source of philosophical, literary, and artistic reflection. It is a fascinating document, combining narrative, poetry, law, prophetic proclamations, and puzzling parables. What kind of book is the Hebrew Bible? Who wrote it and why? How do we approach such a text across the distance of time? Through a systematic reading from the very beginning, we will place the Bible in its historical context while giving special attention to the philosophical and literary questions it raises: Is obedience to authority always justified? Why do good people suffer unjustly? What gender is God? In answering these and other questions, you will gain an understanding of the ways contesting interpretations make authoritative claims.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: RELI201, MDST203, COL237, WLIT281
Prereq: None

CJST248 Designing Reality in Israeli Documentary Film
In the last decade, Israeli documentary films have crossed borders not just geographically but also by their form and style. They are bold, courageous and provocative. They have been participating in prestigious international film festivals, receiving important awards and mostly bringing the Israeli audience back to the cinema, having a crowd power like fiction films. So what makes Israeli documentary films a “hot property”? In this class we will look for the answers by watching and discussing 14 Israeli documentary films (among them "Paper Doll, "In Satmar Custody," "Presenting Princess Shaw," "No.17"). The course will raise questions about reality and the construction of reality in Israeli documentary films.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-CJST
Prereq: None

CJST249 From Black and White to Colors: Israeli Cinema, a Melting Pot Fragmented
The course will focus on Israeli cinema as a reflection of a society that was founded as a melting pot for all Jews and became sectorial. Israeli cinema originated as a tool for establishing a unified national identity evolved over the years into a means of expression for ethnically defined subcultures within society. During the course, the students will explore past and contemporary films and will follow the shift they represent in the current Israeli experience turning away from the original Zionist core into several isolated groups distinguished by ethnicity, traditions, and language. We will examine Moroccan, Persian, Georgian, Russian, Yiddish, Ethiopian, Arab, etc. films produced in Israel by local filmmakers digging deep into the experience of immigration, inclusion, rediscovering their roots, and even expressing yearnings to the countries of origin.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-CJST
Prereq: None

CJST272 Ethics After the Holocaust
The philosopher Theodor Adorno declared, “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.” The Holocaust is a challenge to our understanding of modern society, ethics, and what it means to be human after Auschwitz. In this course, we will investigate how the Holocaust orientes contemporary discussions on questions of guilt, forgiveness, and evil. What does it mean to remember, to forgive, and to forget? Can one ethically represent the Holocaust in art? We will explore these questions using various sources, including works by Hannah Arendt, Adorno, and Emmanuel Levinas, as well as museums, memorial sites, and cinematic representations.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: RELI272, GRST266
Prereq: None

CJST278 American Jewish Humor
This course is a look at American Jewish history through one particular lens—that of the peculiar phenomenon of Jewish humor. There is a long history of Jews and humor that has nothing to do with the immigrant experience in America, but the immigrant experience in America nonetheless has a great deal to do with the humor that has been produced by Jews in this country, particularly in the 20th century. We will read some historical background on American Jews and some humor theory as our foundation for our understanding of film viewings, short stories, stand-up comedy performances, and musical recordings. By looking at the way Jewish humor changed throughout the 20th century, we should, in the end, be able to chart the way the lives of American Jews were changing and have a deeper understanding of the American Jewish experience.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: RELI278, AMST292
Prereq: None

CJST308 Funny, You Don’t Look Jewish: Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Judaism
This course will give advanced students the opportunity to engage deeply with critical current issues in Judaism, including race, gender, and sexuality. In both the U.S. and Israel, issues of Jewish whiteness (or not), straightness (or not), and maleness (or not) dominate conversations about the direction Judaism will take in the 21st century and how Judaism can remain relevant in an increasingly globalized and secularized world.

Students in this course will read contemporary scholarship on those who have been traditionally pushed to the margins of Judaism and will be asked to wade into murky ethical waters as they think about the power of naming and who has the authority to determine "in" and "out."

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
CJST319 Crisis, Creativity, and Modernity in the Weimar Republic, 1918–1933
Born in defeat and national bankruptcy; beset by disastrous inflation, unemployment, and frequent changes of government; and nearly toppled by coup attempts, the Weimar Republic (1918–1933) produced some of the most influential and enduring examples of modernism. Whether in music, theater, film, painting, photography, design, or architecture, the Weimar years marked an extraordinary explosion of artistic creativity. New approaches were likewise taken in the humanities, social sciences, psychology, medicine, science, and technology, and new ideas about sexuality, the body, and the role of women were introduced. Nevertheless, Weimar modernism was controversial and generated a backlash that caused forces on the political right to mobilize to ultimately bring down the republic. This advanced seminar explores these developments and seeks to understand them within their political, social, and economic contexts to allow for a deeper understanding of Weimar culture and its place within the longer-term historical trajectory of Germany and Europe. This perspective allows for an appreciation of the important links between Weimar modernism and Imperial Germany, as well as an awareness of some of the important continuities between the Weimar and Nazi years.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: HIST319, GRST264, CHUM319, RELI319
Prereq: None

CJST351 Debate and Destruction: Jews and Christians in the Middle Ages
This course will consider relations between the Jewish minority and their Christian neighbors in England before the Jews’ expulsion in 1290. We will also look at how the Jews are depicted in subsequent Christian writing. We will read texts originally written in Hebrew, French, and Latin (all in translation) as well as English, giving us a sense of the conversations that took place between two groups that were both inextricably bound together and set apart by centuries of conflict and persecution. Among the issues we will explore are the popularity of Jewish-Christian debate as a literary form, the Crusades, gender roles and gender fluidity, Jewish and Christian apocalyptic programs, and the curious afterlife of Jews in Middle English literature.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: ENGL351, MDST351, RELI351
Prereq: None

CJST401 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

CJST402 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

CJST411 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

CJST412 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host

CJST413 From Black and White to Colors: Israeli Cinema (CLAC)
This Hebrew course will be linked to the film course, taught in English, entitled CJST 249: From Black and White to Colors: Israeli Cinema, a Melting Pot Fragmented. This course is targeted towards heritage Hebrew speakers and students with very advanced knowledge of the Hebrew language. Students will mostly view the same films as the parent class, with special attention to the Hebrew language. We will analyze, discuss, and write on each of the films. In addition, students will be required to attend all the screenings in the Ring Family Wesleyan University Israeli Film Festival and to meet with native guest speakers during Lunch & Learn meetings. The focus of the course will be to map the cultural and social changes in Israeli society reflected in the transformation in format and themes of Israeli films. This course may be repeated for credit.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-CJST
Identical With: CGST413, HEBR413
Prereq: None