Religion

The Religion Department offers a cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and critical program that explores the variety of religious experiences and expressions. In addition to courses that demonstrate the power and limits of various critical approaches to the study of religion, the department provides opportunities to analyze practices of interpretation, systems of belief, and patterns of religious behavior; the history of religious traditions; the effects of religion in society; the ways religions can form collective identity through race, nationalism, gender and sexuality, class, caste, language, and migration; and various forms of religious phenomena such as myth, ritual, texts, and theological and philosophical reflection.

A range of courses is available to students interested in taking one or two courses. Clusters of courses can be devised in consultation with members of the staff for those who wish to develop a modest program in religion in support of another major. A student who chooses a double major must fulfill all requirements for the religion major.

Faculty

Ron Cameron
BA, Western Kentucky Uni; MAA, Wesleyan University; PhD, Harvard University
Professor of Religion; Chair, Religion

Yaniv Feller
BA, Hebrew University; MA, Hebrew University; PhD, University of Toronto
Jeremy Zwelling Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies; Assistant Professor of Religion

Peter S. Gottschalk
BA, College of the Holy Cross; MA, Univ of Wisconsin Fond Du Lac; PhD, University of Chicago
Professor of Religion; Director, Office of Faculty Career Development; Professor, Science in Society; Coordinator, Muslim Studies

Dalit Katz
BA, Hebrew University; MA, Hebrew University
Adjunct Associate Professor of Religion; Director, Jewish Israel Studies

Elizabeth McAlister
BA, Vassar College; MA, Yale University; MA, Yale University; MPHIL, Yale University; PhD, Yale University
Professor of Religion; Chair, African American Studies; Director, Center for African American Studies; Professor, African American Studies; Professor, American Studies; Professor, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; Professor, Latin American Studies

Justine Quijada
BA, University of Chicago; MA, Columbia University; PhD, University of Chicago
Assistant Professor of Religion; Assistant Professor, Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies

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BA, Williams College; MA, Columbia University; MPHIL, Cambridge University; MPHIL, Columbia University; PhD, Columbia University
Professor of Religion; Professor, Science in Society; Professor, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

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Janice D. Willis
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Professor of Religion, Emerita

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Associate Professor of Religion, Emeritus

Department Advising Expert

Elizabeth McAlister

• Undergraduate Religion Major (catalog.wesleyan.edu/departments/reli/ugrd-reli)
• Undergraduate Religion Minor (catalog.wesleyan.edu/departments/reli/ugrd-reli-mn)

REL127 Catholicism and Ideology in the Hispanic World
Catholicism has played a number of roles in the cultural politics of the Hispanic world, appearing as a place of national being, resistance, and conservatism. In this course, we will read a number of texts from different periods and national contexts with a view to understanding how writers and intellectuals from Spain, Latin America, and the U.S. engage with Catholicism and the historical conditions under which they do so.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-LAST
Identical With: FIST127, LAST127
Prereq: None

REL151 Introduction to the Study of Religion
The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the academic study of religion. What is this thing called religion and how do you approach it from an academic perspective? This class is not a survey of global religious diversity, but a survey of how to study religion. We will use a series of empirical case studies, such as the Jonestown mass suicide, Jerry Falwell's tele-evangelism, Buryat-Mongolian shamans, eco-spirituality and religious freedom court cases to explore theoretical issues in the study of religion. Among other topics, we will examine: the construction of religion as a conceptual category, anthropological approaches to religious difference, theories of religious experience, the interpretation of religious texts, and the place of religion in politics, society, and culture. Together, these discussions will offer a set of descriptive, analytical, and
explanatory tools for understanding the role of religion in the contemporary world.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None

RELI201 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: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: MDS203, CJST244
Prereq: None

RELI203 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: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: CJST203
Prereq: None

RELI204 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: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: CJST241
Prereq: None

RELI205 Dharma, Karma, and Living Among the God/desses: Hindu Lives
Through fiction, autobiography, biography, art, a comic book, a city, and a village, this course explores some of the myriad understandings of what it is to be Hindu. In an effort to introduce students to Hindu culture and religion, a number of approaches shall engage the questions, What is Hindu dharma? and What is it to be Hindu? The class will also investigate the issue of "Hinduism," a term created in the 19th century to identify a Hindu "religion" rejected by many 21st-century Hindus. This issue expresses just one of many arising from the Indian experience of contact with the West. Overall, the course immerses students in the lives of Hindu individuals and communities so that we, as a class, can draw our conclusions about Hindu practices and meanings in different political, mythic, social, and cultural contexts.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None

RELI208 The Buddha: His Life and Teachings
Gautama Shakyamuni, known to us as the Buddha. This course looks closely at this lore is of great interest to modern psychologists, scientific researchers, and philosophers of mind, and is having an impact on a wide range of contemporary fields. This course begins with a survey of the core ideas of Buddhist psychology as they are presented in classical texts, then goes on to explore how these ideas are influencing the work of mental health professionals, cognitive scientists, social scientists, and others.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None

RELI206 Neo-Confucian Chinese Philosophy
This course will present critical discussion of issues central to Neo-Confucian (11th--19th centuries CE) philosophers that in many cases are still central in Chinese thought today. Topics will include the relation between knowledge and action, Neo-Confucian conceptions of idealism and materialism, and the connection between Neo-Confucian philosophy and spirituality.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: CEAS256, PHIL259
Prereq: None

RELI207F Who is the Dalai Lama? (FYS)
This First Year Seminar introduces the institution of the Dalai Lama of Tibet and the individuals who have filled that role from a wide range of sources and perspectives. Topics include regional histories of Buddhism; the unique Tibetan tradition of recognized reincarnations (tulkus) and the Buddhist philosophical principles that support it; and a survey of prominent Dalai Lamas from the 15th century to the present day. The seminar examines the activities of the current Dalai Lama in his role as traditional Buddhist teacher, political leader, and international superstar, through the lenses of the PRC government media, Indian exile communities, and the modern West. Later classes will also address issues of Western and Chinese forms of Orientalism and myth-making about Tibet. Readings include the writings of past and current Dalai Lamas as well as supporting secondary literature.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None

RELI207 Buddhist Psychology in Modern Perspective
The Buddhist tradition preserves a sophisticated model of mind and behavior in the early literature of the Pali Canon, along with a profound set of practices for transforming human experience from unhealthy to healthy states. Much of this lore is of great interest to modern psychologists, scientific researchers, and philosophers of mind, and is having an impact on a wide range of contemporary fields. This course begins with a survey of the core ideas of Buddhist psychology as they are presented in classical texts, then goes on to explore how these ideas are influencing the work of mental health professionals, cognitive scientists, social scientists, and others.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None

RELI208 The Buddha: His Life and Teachings
Few human beings have had as much impact upon the world as Siddhartha Gautama Shakyamuni, known to us as the Buddha. This course looks closely at
the world he inhabited, the ways he transformed it, and the body of work left behind after a lifetime of teaching. Beginning with challenges of interpretation and literary sources, the course consists of equal parts historical and doctrinal investigation of the classical texts of the Pali Canon. We seek to get a sense of both the man behind the myth and the meaning of his message, while appreciating in the process the extent to which all such investigation is shaped by one’s own cultural and historical viewpoints.

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

RELI211 Religion, Peace, and Violence: Muslim, Hindu, Christian, and Secular Politics
Why did Martin Luther King Jr. believe that Christianity could cure American racism, while Malcolm X thought the religion promoted it? If Islam is a religion of peace as advocated by many Muslims, how do we understand the so-called Islamic State’s reign of terror? How has Hindu nationalism led to violence against Muslims and Christians if Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated the essential tolerance of Hindu traditions? Secularists often claim that removing religion from politics creates a more peaceful society, yet the most violent states in the past century have been professedly secular ones.

This seminar looks to explore the complexities of present-day religions and politics by investigating specific case studies in Egypt, India, France, and the U.S. While developing a better understanding of Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and secular traditions (no background in these necessary), we will develop analytic tools to critically comprehend the political dynamics of modern religions and the religious dynamics of contemporary politics.

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

RELI212 Introduction to the New Testament
The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to those writings of the earliest Christians that came to be included in the New Testament. These writings will be examined critically with respect to their social-historical origin, religious content, and place within the development of early Christianities. Interpreting early Christian texts constitutes the most important task in the study of the New Testament. We will, therefore, focus on a close reading of the New Testament in light of historical situations and social contexts in the Greco-Roman world, having as one of the chief aims of the course the acquisition of critical skills in reading and understanding the New Testament. In the process, we will necessarily engage secondary scholarship and wider theoretical interests, thereby providing students with a general introduction to the academic study of religion.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: MDST214
Prereq: None

RELI213 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 ethical responsibility do we have toward refugees? What creative power can diaspora muster to the rescue of culture? Assignments in this course will be based on an analysis of a refugee crisis selected by the students.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: CJST214
Prereq: None

RELI214 Buddhism and the Body: Desire, Disgust, and Transcendence
This is a course about the body and the various ways that Buddhists have constructed, disciplined, despised, and venerated the human body. We will explore the Buddhist body in its various incarnations: the disciplined monastic body of monks and nuns, the hyper-masculine body of the Buddha, the sacred corpses of saints, the body given away in sacrifice, the body as marker of virtue and vice, the sexual body, the body transformed in ritual, and the body as understood in Buddhist medicine. Careful attention to ancient and modern Buddhist writing should enrich our understanding of what it means to inhabit a human body.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: FGSS215
Prereq: None

RELI215 Politics and Piety in Early Christianities
The first four centuries of the Christian era will illustrate the lively twists and turns of social experimentation that set the stage for the emergence of the Christian religion. This course will be concerned with fundamental arenas of intellectual and social conflict, including constructions of Christian myths of apostolic origins and authority; the appropriation of the Jewish epic; the challenge of gnosticism; the domestication of Greek philosophy; interpretations of sexuality and gender; experiences of martyrdom and prosecution; theological reflections on human nature and society; and the ways Christians were seen by Romans. The objective will be to grasp the beginnings of the Christian religion as a human achievement of cultural consequence.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: CCIV212, MDST215
Prereq: None

RELI216 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: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: CJST216
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 on some of the major issues in Jewish history including (but not limited to) immigration, life in America, the Holocaust, and Israel/Palestine.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: CJST243
Prereq: None

This course provides an in-depth introduction to Dante Alighieri’s 14th-century masterpiece as a point of entry to the history of Western literature, philosophy, and science. The core of the course consists of an intensive study of Dante’s encyclopedic poem in relation to the culture and history of Medieval Europe. Major topics include: representations of the afterlife; the soul’s relation to the divine; concepts of modernity and antiquity in the Middle Ages; notions of authorship and authority during the 13th and 14th centuries; vernacular poetics and the medieval genre system; the culture and materiality of manuscripts in the Middle Ages; gender and genre in Dante and the 12th- to 14th-century lyric; intertextuality and imitation; classical and medieval language theory; the role of the classics in the Middle Ages; Dante’s concepts of governance; myth and theology in Dante’s Christian poetics; and the reception to Dante’s work from the 14th-century to present. The course combines a close analysis of Dante’s literary strategies with exercises in critical writing and in multimedia translation and adaptation, aimed at prompting critical reflection on the ways in which present cultural practices are built upon the practices of the past. This course is conducted in English; no previous knowledge of Italian is required.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: ITAL226, FIST226, COL234, MDST226
Prereq: None

This course will provide an introduction to the field of Christian thought by exploring the relationship between conceptions of God and conceptions of selfhood, from St. Augustine through liberation, feminist, evangelical, process, and eco-theologies. How do the ways people think about God reflect, support, or interrupt the ways they think about the human subject? And what sorts of ethics, communities, and political decisions do these models underwrite?

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: COL220
Prereq: None

This course provides an introduction to Islam traditions and Muslim societies. No background is required. Using a variety of in-depth case studies, the course familiarizes students with many of the beliefs and practices Muslims associate with Islam and examines commonalities and diversity in how Muslims live their religion. While paying particular attention to peoples and places in South Asia, the Middle East, and the U.S., the course will demonstrate how contemporary Muslim communities exist within global networks that shape local and transnational religion, cultures, and politics.

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

This course provides an introduction to Islam traditions and Muslim societies. No background is required. Using a variety of in-depth case studies, the course familiarizes students with many of the beliefs and practices Muslims associate with Islam and examines commonalities and diversity in how Muslims live their religion. While paying particular attention to peoples and places in South Asia, the Middle East, and the U.S., the course will demonstrate how contemporary Muslim communities exist within global networks that shape local and transnational religion, cultures, and politics.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None

This course will provide an introduction to the field of Christian thought by exploring the relationship between conceptions of God and conceptions of selfhood, from St. Augustine through liberation, feminist, evangelical, process, and eco-theologies. How do the ways people think about God reflect, support, or interrupt the ways they think about the human subject? And what sorts of ethics, communities, and political decisions do these models underwrite?

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: PHIL205, CEAS261
Prereq: None

This course provides an introduction to Islam traditions and Muslim societies. No background is required. Using a variety of in-depth case studies, the course familiarizes students with many of the beliefs and practices Muslims associate with Islam and examines commonalities and diversity in how Muslims live their religion. While paying particular attention to peoples and places in South Asia, the Middle East, and the U.S., the course will demonstrate how contemporary Muslim communities exist within global networks that shape local and transnational religion, cultures, and politics.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None
analysis of present-day realities. Readings will draw from primary Buddhist texts, histories, autobiographies, and scholarly journals and will be complemented by in-class film screenings.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: CEAS343
Prereq: None

RELI230 Cinematic Encounters: Muslims and/in/of the West
Examining contemporary films by Americans, Britons, Egyptians, Indians, Pakistanis, and Afghans offers the opportunity to challenge the simplistic binaries of West vs. Islam upon which popular representations often rely. Themes that will be explored include Muslim emigration, European imperialism and colonialism, religion and secularism in the formation of national identity, terrorism and state violence, representation of gender differences, and the problem of multiple identities. Films will include “The Kingdom of God,” “The Battle of Algiers,” “Of Gods and Men,” “Baby Doll Night,” “The Beauty Shop of Kabul,” “Restrepo,” “Khuda ke Liye,” “My Name is Khan,” “Babel,” “AmericanEast,” and “Brick Lane,” plus episodes of “Battlestar Galactica.”

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

RELI232 Religions of China: The Ways and Their Power
In this course, we examine the religious worlds of China from antiquity to the present. Not only will we read key works of Chinese philosophy from the Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions, we will also investigate how these traditions find expression in art and architecture, poetry and prose, and in the lived realities of Chinese history.

In this exploration of Chinese religions, we will pay special attention to the question of what “counts” as religion, to the role of the state in defining and establishing Chinese religions, and to the power of new religious movements to intervene dramatically (and sometimes violently) in Chinese history.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: CEAS344
Prereq: None

RELI233 The People of the Book: Jewish Cultures and Jewish Canons
Jewish cultures and Jewish canonical literatures have long existed in a mutually reinforcing and creative tension. This course is designed as an introduction to Jewish cultural and religious canonical literature, from biblical antiquity to modern times, through the lens of the religious, political, and social contexts of Jewish history. We will trace the evolution of Jewish literature from its origins in ancient Israel to its reinvention in modern America, paying careful attention to the process of evolution and expansion by which new ideas and changing sensibilities were either integrated with, or broke from, the voices of the past as they responded to the challenges of the present.

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

RELI236 Duty, Power, Pleasure, Release: Key Themes in Classical Indian Thought
According to thinkers in classical India, the goals of life were fourfold: encompassing the pursuit of social-moral duty (dharma), economic and political power (artha), bodily pleasure (kama), and, finally, release from the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (moksha). The four goals provide a useful key for understanding Indian intellectual history in its classical moment—roughly, the half millennium between the second and seventh centuries. This pivotal era witnessed the definition of new forms of social and political thought, the creation of new types of expressive literature in Sanskrit, and the cristalization of the Hindu religion. In this course, we explore classical Indian thought through a variety of theoretical and literary texts articulating the ideas and values of the age. Most of these works were originally written in Sanskrit, the ancient Indian language of culture and power that served as a lingua franca uniting vast portions of Southern Asia. The emphasis is on close reading and discussion of the translated texts themselves and critical engagement with the ideas and values they present.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ART
Identical With: ARHA291, HIST277
Prereq: None

RELI238 Jewish Mysticism: Literature and Legacy of the Kabbalah
Mysticism challenges our conventional modes of experiencing reality and describing the mystery of being. It transcends commonplace distinctions between the sacred and the profane and upends traditional definitions of the human and the divine. Mystical contemplation and meditative practice have long occupied a central role in the Jewish religious tradition and have succeeded in transforming and remaking that tradition in every generation. This course will examine the central teachings and ongoing legacy of Jewish mysticism from its classical origins to modern times, with special emphasis on Kabbalah, Hasidism, and modern movements of Jewish renewal. We will consider the questions and controversies that defined Kabbalah and Hasidism in their formative contexts and the reasons for their revival among Jews and non-Jews alike in our day.

In our study of Jewish mysticism, we will take the core texts of the mystical tradition as our starting point while paying close attention to alternative forms of creative expression, from poetry and storytelling to music and dance.

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

RELI239 Modern Shamanism: Ecstasy and Ancestors in the New Age
The wise and mysterious native shaman has long held a particular fascination for Western scholars of religion, but does this figure even exist? What does it mean to be a practicing shaman today? Beginning with Eliade’s definition of “archaic ecstasy,” we examine the idea of the shaman, its role in the New Age movement, and the challenges faced by contemporary indigenous shamans, from negotiating international intellectual property rights laws to Ayahuasca tourism. Course materials are supplemented by A/V materials from the instructor’s fieldwork in Siberia.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: REES5282
Prereq: None

RELI240 Religion in the Roman Empire
This course is an introduction to the religious practices of ancient Rome, from the Republic to the Empire and its conversion to Christianity. Attention will be given to the gods and their veneration, divination and sacrifice, religion and the family, religion and the state, and official attitudes toward foreign cults.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
song, dance, drumming, and medicine-making? How do these religions continue
produced through aesthetics and the ritual arts of spiritual talk and sermons,
shaped, and what shapes did they take? How are African-based religions
created under colonial domination? Under what conditions were religions
communities throughout the Atlantic world. How were religious communities
This course examines Afro-Creole religions and cultural expressions in selected

RELI268 Anthropology of Black Religions in the Americas
This course examines Afro-Creole religions and cultural expressions in selected
communities throughout the Atlantic world. How were religious communities
created under colonial domination? Under what conditions were religions
shaped, and what shapes did they take? How are African-based religions
produced through aesthetics and the ritual arts of spiritual talk and sermons,
song, dance, drumming, and medicine-making? How do these religions continue
to survive, thrive, and, in some cases, grow in the current historical period?
This course will pay special attention to the yearly ritual cycle and its attendant
festivals: Christmas, carnivals, Lent, Easter, saints’ days, feasts, and pilgrimages,
as well as the emergent spiritual and aesthetic traditions such as Capoeira and
Rara. We will study Orisha religions such as La Regla de Ocha, or Lukumi, in Cuba
and the Latino U.S.; Candomble in Brazil; Vodou in Haiti; and Garifuna traditions
and spiritism in Puerto Rico.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: LAST268, AFAM387, ANTH267
Prereq: None

RELI272 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 orients 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: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI

RELI270 Magical Money and Enchanted Capitalisms
In the early days of the 20th century, Max Weber foresaw that with the
rise of capitalism and modernity, the world would become increasingly
disenchanted. Now, with the turn of the 21st century, people all over the world experience capitalism as a realm of enchantment. In Malaysia, ghosts possess factory workers; in South Africa, capitalism produces zombies; and in Bolivia, mines eat their miners. Instead of Weber’s “iron cage,” we live in a world of “voodoo economics” where Korean shamans conduct ceremonies to bless new businesses, Russian psychics curse business competitors, and prosperity theology preaches that God will make you rich. This class explores the enchantment of the financial sphere, combining theory on the disenchantment of modernity (Max Weber) and commodity fetishism (Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, William Pietz) with ethnographic accounts of how capitalism and the economy become mystified and enchanted.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None

RELI225 Islamic Movements and Modernities
The so-called Islamic State grabs headlines daily with criminal acts primarily
committed against other Muslims, but also against non-Muslims. Its violence
has overshadowed even al-Qaeda and the Taliban in media coverage. This seminar will track the development of these groups as well as the many more Islamic movements that reject violence and seek peaceful social change. Indeed, many Muslims object to the name “Islamic State” because they recognize the group as neither Islamic nor a legitimate state. The seminar examines how specific Muslim communities in the Middle East, South Asia, and the U.S. have engaged the modern conditions of Western imperialism, nationalism, and globalization and shaped their own forms of modernity. The seminar also investigates the increasingly digital, transnational, and intercultural realms of Muslim experiences.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI

RELI259 Islam and/or the West
Is there a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West? What distinguishes the two and why the conflict? This course, which assumes no familiarity with Islam, explores these questions and the assumptions underlying them. Through a historical and thematic exploration, we will delve into the notions of difference and the interests these have served, as well as the cultural, religious, and political dimensions of interaction at specific historical moments. These will include Arab imperialism, the Crusades, the Spanish Reconquista, European imperialism, Zionism, Islamist revivalism, Western Muslims, and the War Against Terror.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None

RELI242 Introduction to Buddhist Thought and Practice
This course will introduce significant aspects of Buddhist thought and practice,
primarily as it manifested through the literature of India and South Asia. It begins
with an overview of the historical Buddha’s life and the development of early
Buddhist ideas and practices. The course then introduces the Mahayana or Great Vehicle tradition that began to emerge around the first century BCE, as well as later forms of esoteric Buddhism known as Tantra. The course concludes with the development of modern Buddhism in Asia and its manifestation in the West. Readings consist mainly of primary Buddhist texts in translation, which are supplemented as necessary by works of secondary scholarship. The course broadly examines the topics of Buddhist philosophy and ethics, monastic and ascetic life, meditation and ritual practices, and the material culture of Buddhist societies, including artistic traditions, architecture, and book culture.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Prereq: None

RELI271 Secularism: An Introduction
This course traces the idea and ideal of secularism as an ideological project from
classic Enlightenment texts to its contemporary incarnations. We begin with
philosophical arguments for the separation of church and state as well as the
utopian ideals of secular humanism. We then trace how these underpinnings were embodied in state-sponsored atheism in the Soviet Union, in contrast to liberal democratic principles in the U.S. and Europe. Finally, we examine critiques of the secular project, focusing on secularism as a realpolitik approach to governing multi-religious societies and the idea of religious freedom as a universal human right.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: REES216
Prereq: None

RELI268 Anthropology of Black Religions in the Americas
This course examines Afro-Creole religions and cultural expressions in selected
communities throughout the Atlantic world. How were religious communities
created under colonial domination? Under what conditions were religions
shaped, and what shapes did they take? How are African-based religions
produced through aesthetics and the ritual arts of spiritual talk and sermons,
song, dance, drumming, and medicine-making? How do these religions continue
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: GRST266, CJST272
Prereq: None
RELI273 Vodou in Haiti—Vodou in Hollywood
The Afro-Creole religion of the Haitian majority is a complex system of inherited roles and rituals that Afro-Creole people remembered and created during and after plantation slavery. Called "serving the spirits," or "Vodou," this religion and cultural system continues as a spiritual method and family obligation in Haiti and its diaspora and draws constantly on new symbols and ideas. Vodou has also captured the imagination of Hollywood and television, and the entertainment industry has produced numerous films and television episodes, and now computer games, with "Voodoo" themes. This course explores the anthropology of Vodou as a religious practice and relates it to the cultural studies of North American representations of Voodoo. We will ask, What constitutes the thought and practice of Haitian Vodou? How is Vodou represented in American media? How can we analyze the patterns and tropes that operate in images of Voodoo? We will explore questions of religious ritual, political resistance and orality, secrecy and spectacle, authenticity and commodification, racism, media studies, and the ethics of representation.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: AMST283, AFAM273
Prereq: None
RELI274 Romans and Christians: The World of Late Antiquity
The emperor Diocletian's administrative and financial reforms, closely followed by the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, mark a watershed in the history of the late Roman Empire. From AD 284 (accession of Diocletian) until the establishment of the Germanic successor kingdoms (roughly in the sixth century)--the period known as late antiquity--the Roman West presents a fascinating picture of cultural change. In this course we will study the period (fourth to sixth century) from three different perspectives: the conversion of Romans to Christians and of Christians to "Romans"; the material world of late antiquity--especially the changes to the city of Rome--and the art, architecture, and literature of the period; and the rise of the cult of the saints and of monasticism and the lives of the holy men and women. The course will conclude with an epilogue pursuing these themes in Ostrogothic Italy and Merovingian Gaul.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-CLAS
Identical With: CIVC275, MDST275, HIST250
Prereq: None
RELI275F Religions Resisting Modernity (FYS)
Why did the Taliban forbid television? Why do creationists reject evolution? Why did Gandhi insist that Indian nationalists spin their own thread? Throughout the last century, resistance has risen to modernity, and religion has played an increasingly important role in challenging the globalization of modern Western values. This seminar will explore how Europe transformed itself into a modern society with worldwide influence. Then it will investigate how the Lakota Sioux, Christian creationists, Mohandas Gandhi, the Branch Davidians, and Egyptian Islamists each have used religion in an attempt to resist some aspect of modernity, either outside the Western world or within it. Ultimately, the course will challenge our very understandings and expectations of modernity.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None
RELI276 The Gospels and Jesus
In this examination of the history and literature of the earliest writings about Jesus, attention will be given to the literary forms used in the composition of gospel literature, the social and religious functions of the traditions, the role of imagination in the production of gospel texts, and the diversity of interpretations of Jesus in the early church. Readings will focus on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Thomas, and "Q."
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None
RELI277 Arts of Zen in East Asia
Zen, a school of Buddhism that originated in China and later spread to Japan and Korea, is considered a gateway to East Asian thought and a force that challenges modern materialism. The nature of abstraction, spirituality, and enlightenment can best be approached through the arts associated with this religious school, which include ink painting, calligraphy, ceramics, architecture, and garden design. In this course, we will discuss how the ideas of Zen were elucidated in the visual arts by looking at major works from the 13th through the 20th centuries. We will also examine the ways in which artworks were incorporated in the practice of Zen rituals, especially those related to meditation and the tea ceremony. In addition, we will explore the meanings of pictorial and literary ko'an and how they form visual and textual riddles based on allusion and wordplay. Through a comparative approach, we will analyze the development in the form, style, and iconography of Zen art in East Asia, while tracing the history of Zen Buddhism and its underpinning philosophical concepts related to enlightenment, emptiness, and beauty. The goal of this course is to form an in-depth appreciation for the arts of Zen in their historical, philosophical, and cultural context.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ART
Identical With: CEAS288, ARHA277
Prereq: None
RELI278 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: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: AMST292, CJST278
Prereq: None
RELI279 Liberation Theology and Pentecostalism in the Americas and Africa
This course tackles the question: If liberation theology advocates a preferential option for the poor, why do the poor in Africa and the Americas often choose evangelical Protestantism? For evangelical Christianity, the common good is a by-product of the righteous lives of believers as they enact the outward signs
of personal salvation. This course examines both religious thought and analysis of various Christianities of the Americas and Africa, with particular attention to the ways religious thinkers and communities grapple with and resolve questions of human rights, evangelizing race, and structural inequalities that arise in the recent era of globalization and neoliberal capitalism. Other topics will include the prosperity gospel, the growth of Christian NGOs, gender and machismo, and spiritual warfare. Case studies will include readings on the U.S., Colombia, Brazil, Haiti, and Zimbabwe.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: LAST306
Prereq: None

RELI280 Mixed in America: Race, Religion, and Memoir

This course examines the history of mixed-race and interfaith identities in America. Using the genre of the memoir as a focusing lens, we will look at the various ways that Americans of mixed heritage have found a place, crafted an identity, and made meaning out of being considered “mixed.” How has being multiracial or bi-religious changed in the course of history in this country? What has occasioned these changes, and what patterns can we observe? We will explore questions of racial construction; religious boundary-making; rites of passage; gender, sexuality, and marriage; and some literary and media representations of mixed-heritage people.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: AFAM282, AMST242
Prereq: None

RELI282 Mixed in America: Race, Religion, and Memoir (FYS)

This first-year seminar course examines the history of mixed-race and interfaith identities in America. Using the genre of the memoir as a focusing lens, we will look at the various ways that Americans of mixed heritage have found a place, crafted an identity, and made meaning out of being considered “mixed.” How has being multiracial or bi-religious changed in the course of history in this country? What has occasioned these changes, and what patterns can we observe? We will explore questions of racial construction; religious boundary-making; rites of passage; gender, sexuality, and marriage; and some literary and media representations of mixed-heritage people.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: AFAM282, AMST242
Prereq: None

RELI285 Religion and National Culture in the United States

This lecture/discussion course offers sustained analysis of the role of religion in the intellectual life of the nation. We will examine both the work of American theologians and the ways that other American intellectuals have thought about religion and its function as a language of authority in both state and society. We will consider the ramifications of conceptions of the United States as a Protestant and millennial nation and the challenges to that conception posed by the growing diversity of religions in the country. The variety of spiritual practices and the clashes between religion and science generated debates that continue to haunt both the study of religion and political life. From participation in a transatlantic evangelical culture to the rise of the social gospel and theological modernism through the fundamentalist response to liberal religion and Darwinism, the course charts the influence of Protestant Christianity in American culture and evaluates claims about the development of a distinctively American religious style. The replacement of overt anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism with the notion of a Judeo-Christian heritage that celebrated the incorporation of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish traditions into American civil religion figures as the central dynamic of the 20th century. The course concludes with a consideration of contemporary religious developments, including New Age formations and the growing presence of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam, and the continuing centrality of religion(s) in the national culture.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: HIST236, AMST236
Prereq: None

RELI286 The Examined Life: Religion and Philosophy on the Art of Living

What kind of life is worthy of a human being? How do you examine what W. B. Yeats called "the dark corners of your own soul" with the same scrutiny you give the world around you? To live a noble life is the most critical challenge we face as individuals, the courage to confront ourselves and our most cherished assumptions, and to face the world, in turn, as a conscious steward. To live an examined life, as Socrates implored over 2,400 years ago, is to be actively engaged in the world and to take ownership of our choices. It is to live in the sacred space between thought and action, truth and justice, philosophy and life.

Both philosophy and religion, for all their differences, ask the same perennial questions of humanity: How do you create a flourishing human life? Philosophy is not the possession of wisdom, but the love of wisdom, an orientation to truth and justice constantly in the making, demanding renewed devotion to conscious living. Diverse religious traditions, in turn, define the religious life as the striving for sanctity and human wisdom, in short, a way of life in harmony with the deepest truths of existence. In this seminar, we will explore classics of religious thought and Western philosophy as complementary responses to the deepest questions of humanity and the quest for a noble life. We begin at the beginning, with Socrates' challenge that the unexamined life is not fit for a human being, and explore how this challenge was put into practice in medieval and modern times. We will conclude with contemporary philosophers, both religious and secular, who challenge us anew to live up to the ancient Socratic ideal.

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

RELI288 Buddhism in America: The Dharma Comes to Main Street

The American understanding of Buddhist ideas and acceptance of Buddhist practices, which has been growing slowly for some time, has quickened significantly in the last few decades. In this course we examine this process, from its early phases in the 19th century, through the impact of population displacement and increasing spiritual diversity in the 20th century, to the virtual explosion in the current century of creative engagement between Buddhism and a wide range of fields. We cover such topics as environmentalism; physical and mental health; issues of conflict resolution, social justice, race, and gender; practices relating to optimal performance, end-of-life care, and prison ministry; and the emerging fields of cognitive science, contemplative studies, and the philosophy of mind.

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

RELI289 Indigenous Religions: Politics, Land, Healing

From wise old shamans to heroic pipeline protestors, the media is full of romantic representations of indigenous religion, but what do you really know beyond the stereotypes? If indigenous religion is just religion practiced by indigenous people, is it a category at all? Since the first days of colonialism
the question of whether or not the "natives" have or are capable of having religion has had political consequences. This class introduces students to the historical and political contexts within which indigenous peoples practice their religions, and critically engages with popular stereotypes. Using ethnography, fiction, critical theory, and the instructor's own fieldwork materials, we will examine some of the criteria by which indigenous religious practices have been romanticized or judged lacking by outsiders: What does an oral tradition sound like? What does it mean to engage in place-based religion? What is a "noble savage," what are sacred sites, animate landscapes, and what are some of the ways indigenous peoples really do relate to the environment in radically different ways? What are some of the contradictions and complications of multiculturalism and the politics of recognition when it comes to indigenous populations? While this is not a survey course, students will be introduced to case studies of indigenous religious practices from North America, Australia, and Siberia.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: REES289
Prereq: None

RELI290 Pantheologies: Animal, Vegetable, Mineral, World
Pantheism teaches that the world itself is divine. The idea seems simple enough, yet it has suffered extraordinary ridicule at the hands of Western philosophers and theologians who have considered "matter" to be lifeless, dark, and feminine, which is to say as different as possible from "God." This course will explore this generalized panic over pantheism—in particular, the anxieties it encodes over gender, race, nationality, and class—before turning to contemporary constructive pantheologies. To what extent are recent theories of cosmology, complexity, and materiality setting forth subtle pantheisms? What are the feminist, antiracist, and ecological stances of these theories? Properly conceived, what is pantheism, and is it ultimately distinguishable from atheism?

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: FGSS290
Prereq: None

RELI291 From Jerusalem to Ground Zero: Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Sioux, and Hindu Notions of Sacredness
Many Jews, Christians, and Muslims view Jerusalem as a "sacred" place. But what does this mean? How does a place—or an object or person—become sacred, holy, revered? Is Ground Zero sacred? If so, how do we compare the destruction of an office building that makes part of Manhattan sacred and Native American reverence? Is Ground Zero sacred? If so, how do we compare the destruction of that place to the destruction of other religious or secular sites? How do we compare the destruction of that place to the destruction of other religious or secular sites?

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: ARHA239
Prereq: None

RELI292 Reason and Revelation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion
Throughout the medieval period in Europe, philosophy and theology were thought to be compatible, if not completely coextensive. With the dawning of modernity, however, a distinction of mutual suspicion began to emerge between the secular and sacred disciplines. Broadly speaking, "philosophy of religion" is the effort to evaluate the claims of revelation and reason in terms of one another, revealing either consonance or dissonance between the two. We will examine some of the major texts within this field, whose authors include deep skeptics, committed Christians, committed anti-Christians, secular and nonsecular Jews, feminists, ethicists, idealists, empiricists, and Romantics. Themes to be explored include proofs of God's existence—along with refutations of those proofs and rebuttals to those refutations—the problem of evil, religious ethics, religious experience, the possibility of a universal religion, and the relationships between monotheism, race, ecology, and gender.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: PHIL282
Prereq: None

RELI296 Judaism and the Politics of Identity
The extraordinary diversity of Jews and Jewish expression in the modern period defies simple categorization. Secularism and history are as much a part of the politics of Jewish identity as are religion and race. How has Jewish identity been defined historically, and who decides who is a Jew today? How is Jewish identity defined and debated among the Jews of the Middle East, India, China, and sub-Saharan Africa? How is Jewish identity negotiated in the State of Israel? How have secular ideologies impacted the construction of Jewish identity in recent times? This course will examine the diversity of Jewish cultures and the paradigms and politics of Jewish identity on a global scale.

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

RELI298 Religion and History
This course will examine some ways that scholars have understood the role of religion in history. Readings will reflect a wide variety of theoretical, theological, and disciplinary perspectives.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: HIST323
Prereq: None

RELI299 Imagining Communities: National Religions and Political Rituals
From the Catholic-Protestant troubles in Northern Ireland, Christian nationalism in Serbia, Hindu-Buddhist conflict in Sri Lanka, and the Taliban in Afghanistan, religious nationalism often produces virulent and violent conflict. Yet the Virgin of Guadalupe is a national symbol of Mexico, Catholicism was central to the Polish Solidarity movement, and America defines itself as "one nation under God." How are we to understand the relationship between religion and national identity, and how do political rituals, both religious and secular, help form communities? Popular media and political science analysis define religious nationalism as dangerous and secular nationalism as good. We will investigate this claim over the course of the semester by asking what the study of religion and ritual can bring to the topic. Are religious and secular political rituals really as different as they seem? We will read and discuss the classic social theories of Samuel Huntington, Benedict Anderson, Emile Durkheim, Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, and Talal Asad, and these readings will be interspersed with case studies that illustrate how these theories help us understand the world.
Case studies include the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the arrest and trial of the punk band Pussy Riot in Russia, and the Yasukuni shrine in Japan, where the souls of kamikaze pilots and World War II war criminals are enshrined. In addition, students will pick a case study of their own for a research project. This project will be conducted through multiple small assignments over the course of the semester that will be combined into a final research paper and class presentation.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-REL
Identical With: REES299
Prereq: None

RELI301 Jesus and the Gods: Christianity and the Religions of Antiquity
This course will focus on the politics and methods of comparison in order to reveal how thinkers have described the myths and practices of early Christianity as they relate to the religions of ancient Israel, Greece, and Rome. In reading carefully a wide range of ancient texts and modern scholarly discussions, we will be thinking on several levels at once. That is, we will learn about the gods and ritual practices of ancient Greece and Rome and also think critically about the agendas of the many writers—from Plato to Thomas Jefferson and beyond—who described them for their own purposes. How did Jesus of Nazareth come to be understood as a god, who dies and rises, in a world brimming with gods? Why was he remembered as a philosopher and a martyr, like Socrates? How—and with what motives—did writers throughout history compare Jesus with the priests and kings of ancient Israel or with the gods and goddesses of the Hellenistic Mystery Religions? What is the place of Demeter, Isis, and Osiris in the history of religion? How did early Christians understand their rituals of death and resurrection in terms of rebirth, salvation, and martyrdom? Considering themes and theories of piety and sacrifice, purity and prophecy, wisdom and narrative, ethics and philosophy, mythmaking and cultural critique, we will ask how the politics of comparison and classification have shaped not only our understanding of Jesus and Judaism, ancient Greece and Rome, but also the construction of "Judaism" and "Christianity" as religions—and the very category of religion itself.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-REL

RELI302 Kierkegaard: An Advanced Seminar in Absurdity
Throughout Kierkegaard’s "pseudonymous authorship"—a set of books written by different characters he dreamed up to remove the burden of authorship from himself—we encounter the possibility that from the perspective of ethics, philosophy, and even religion, the truth will seem ridiculous. Truth, for these pseudonymous authors, takes the form of paradox, that reason and common sense can only call "absurd." Of course, it is no surprise that a paradox seems absurd; if it is not absurd, it is not a paradox. For the pseudonyms, it is therefore either the case (1) that truth is paradoxical, exceeding the realms of ordinary thinking and existing, or (2) that it is not. If it is not, then the absurd is simply absurd and both philosophy and religion are right to reject it. But if truth “is” paradoxical, then we are faced with the problem of thinking the unthinkable, communicating the incomunicable, and getting serious about absurdity. In this seminar, we will wrangle some of these pseudonyms' best-known, most exciting, and crankiest books, along with a few of Kierkegaard's signed, vitriolic attacks on the established church.

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

RELI303 God After the Death of God: Postmodern Echoes of Premodern Thought
The proclamation is well known: Nietzsche's madman cries throughout the marketplace that "God himself is dead, and we have killed him." This message has appeared on magazine covers, T-shirts, and coffee mugs—but what, exactly, does it mean? Which "God" is it that "we" have killed, and how? Even more puzzling, how is it that Christian thought is not entirely disabled by this claim? This advanced seminar will explore various post-Nietzschean attempts to come to terms with the eclipse of the very source of traditional Christian thinking and will track the ways in which these strategies resonate with premodern, mystical theologies.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-REL
Identical With: MDST305
Prereq: None

RELI304 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: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-REL
Identical With: FGSS313, CJST308
Prereq: None
RELI310 Constructing Hinduism and Islam
What is Hinduism? What is not? Is Islam a religion or a way of life? What is the difference? The meanings of few words are as greatly contested as is "religion." For Western (primarily Christian) observers, Hinduism and Islam have acted as foils for their self-perceptions of faith, practice, modernity, and culture. More significantly, Western scholars of religion, in the course of their studies, have influenced the self-understanding of those who identify themselves as Hindu and Muslim while, undeterred, many Hindus and Muslims have advocated their own practices, beliefs, and sensibilities. The concept of religion continues to play a significant role in both nation formation and international affairs. Using theory critiquing the category of religion, we will explore the application of this term by Westerners in South Asia and the Middle East and investigate the continuing debate regarding the identities of these religions both by those within and outside these traditions.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: HIST276
Prereq: None

RELI312 Indigenous Religion and the New Age: Inspiration or Appropriation?
Is imitation the sincerest form of flattery? This course examines the way in which indigenous religious practices, images, and ideas become appropriated into New Age religion. In GOD IS RED, Native American philosopher Vine Deloria Jr. argued that indigenous religion is superior to western Christianity and the Christian West has much to learn from it, but many indigenous people understandably object when their practices are copied by outsiders, decontextualized, and used to make a profit. Where is the line between respectfully learning from and disrespectfully appropriating? Why are indigenous practices so appealing to the New Age? How do New Age desires intersect with the needs and desires of contemporary indigenous practitioners, as well as national legal structures and neo-liberal economies? What are the contexts within which decontextualized indigenous practices and ideas become re-contextualized as New Age? We will read and deconstruct the classic manifesto of New Age spirituality THE TEACHINGS OF DON JUAN, examine the Ayahuasca patent case, and consider questions of intellectual property, cultural appropriation, and spiritual tourism.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-CHUM
Identical With: CHUM312
Prereq: None

RELI315 Ethics and Action in the Buddhist Cosmos
We often think about nirvana, or "enlightenment," as the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice. But the reality is much more complex. Buddhist traditions imagine a huge range of positive outcomes for moral behavior: immediate material benefits, rebirth in a better body or in a wealthier family, and enjoyment of gold-paved heavens or eternally blissful Pure Lands.
In this seminar we will read Buddhist scriptures, commentaries, biographies, narrative anthologies, and scholarly works that trace the many ways of thinking about ethics, action, and rebirth in the vast Buddhist cosmos. We will tour Buddhist heavens and hells, Pure Lands and political dystopias, as well as the complex worlds of Buddhist modernity. Along the way we will begin to think about key issues in the study of religion: narrative and ethics, magic and material culture, cosmology and sacred presence, modernity and globalization.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: CEAS345

Prereq: None

RELI319 Zionism: A Political Theology
This seminar examines the political theology of Zionism by focusing on the intersections of secular aspirations and theological notions embedded in the ideology and practice of the national Jewish mission.
To this end, the seminar is designed to explore the modern concept of political theology. In analyzing a range of selected primary and secondary sources, it will also bring this concept to bear on an understanding of the Zionist secular adaptations of theological concepts, such as heresy, faith, inner experience, and redemption. Finally, the seminar will focus on how this type of political-theology informed the national Jewish language, symbolism, literature, social institutions, and social and political imagination.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-CHUM
Identical With: CHUM319, CJST319
Prereq: None

RELI330 American Utopias in the 19th Century
This seminar will examine expressions, both religious and secular, of the utopian impulse in 19th-century American culture. Communitarian experiments launched by Shakers, transcendentalists, perfectionists, and feminists will be studied as manifestations of social and religious turmoil and will be compared with their literary analogues. Utopianism as a philosophical, literary, and literal approach to solving social problems and constructing a more perfect nation-state has been a persistent and recurrent feature in American history. This seminar explores precursors in the long 19th century to more recent utopian theory and experimentation.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: AMST330, HIST330
Prereq: None

RELI348 Magic, Sex, and Scholasticism: Tantric Traditions in Asia and Beyond
The word “tantra” conjures many images: ritual feasts on illicit substances, sexual union in the service of religious transformation, alchemical journeys, and explorations of the erotic, the terrifying, and the sublime. But what precisely did tantra look like in practice? Were the worlds of tantra imagined by marginal outcasts? Monastic elites? Or were they just the wild fantasies of Western imperialists?
In this course, we will immerse ourselves in the worlds of tantra, through scriptures, ritual manuals, and art. We will read scholarship on tantra to probe the social and philosophical contexts in which tantra thrived. Finally, we will investigate the history of Western encounters with and appropriations of tantra, from Aleister Crowley to Sting.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: FGSS348
Prereq: None

RELI350 Women and Buddhism
This seminar will seek to investigate the complex and changing status of women in relationship to Buddhist doctrine and practice. Using Buddhist texts that present traditional views of women as well as a variety of contemporary materials that reveal aspects of the lives of Buddhist women in ancient and contemporary times, we will attempt to understand the values and concerns that drive, restrain, and/or empower such women.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: FGSS264, CEAS350
Prereq: RELI242 OR RELI151

RELI351 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, CJST351
Prereq: None

RELI355 Mystical Traditions in Islam
Muslim scholars today often condemn the mystical traditions of Sufism as being un-Islamic. But for almost 1,000 years, mysticism provided an alternative voice to Muslim believers. This course will explore the origins and development of Sufism and its extraordinary impact on the cultural life of Muslims over the past millennium.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: HIST337
Prereq: None

RELI372 Jewish Politics, Jewish Power
What has Judaism to do with politics? Is there such a thing as a Jewish political tradition before the establishment of the modern State of Israel? This course will take a close look at the history of Jewish political thought and the implementation of Jewish power, both in the past and in the present. We will begin with an overview of the current debate over religion and politics and how it impacts the case of Jewish statehood. We will then look at the roots of Jewish power in antiquity and the development of political thought in classical and medieval Jewish sources before turning to the challenges and controversies associated with modern Jewish politics and statehood and the ambiguous relationship between religion and politics. In addition to numerous sources from the Jewish tradition, we will explore the implications of Jewish power and powerlessness in contemporary Jewish literature and film.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Prereq: None

RELI373 Religion, Science, and Empire: Crucible of a Globalized World
The development of modern science—and of modernity itself—not only coincided with the rise of European imperialism, it was abetted by it. Meanwhile, religion was integral to both the roots of European imperialism and Western encounters with others. This class will explore how the intersections of religion, science, and empire have formed a globalized world with examples of European engagement with the Americas, Middle East, and, particularly, India from the age of Columbus through to the space race. We will examine how the disciplines we know today as biology, anthropology, archaeology, folklore, and the history of religions all crystallized in the crucible of imperial encounter and how non-Westerners have embraced, engaged, and resisted these epistemes.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-RELI
Identical With: SISP373
Prereq: None

RELI375 Relic and Image: The Archaeology and Social History of Indian Buddhism
This course investigates the social history and material culture of Indian Buddhism from the fifth century BCE through the period of the Kushan empire (1st–3rd century CE). The course begins with the examination of the basic teachings of Buddhism as presented in canonical texts and then turns to consideration of the organization and functioning of the early Buddhist community, or sangha. The focus then shifts to the popular practice of Buddhism in early India and the varied forms of interaction between lay and monastic populations. Although canonical texts will be examined, primary emphasis in this segment of the course is given to the archaeology and material culture of Buddhist sites and their associated historical inscriptions. Specific topics to be covered include the cult of the Buddha’s relics, pilgrimage to the sites of the Eight Great Events in the Buddha’s life, the rise and spread of image worship, and the Buddhist appropriation and reinterpretation of folk religious practices. Key archaeological sites to be studied include the monastic complex at Sanchi, the pilgrimage center at Bodh Gaya (site of the Buddha’s enlightenment), the city of Taxila (capital of the Indo-Greek kings and a major educational center), and the rock-cut cave monasteries along the trade routes of western India.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ART
Identical With: CEAS381, ARCP380, ARHA381
Prereq: None

RELI377 Worlding the World: Creation Myths from Ancient Greece to the Multiverse
This course will focus on two questions that have thwarted and enthralled scientists, philosophers, and theologians for millennia: Where have we come from? and Where are we going? By reading ancient Greek and early Christian sources alongside contemporary astrophysicists, we will witness the reconfigured resurrection of some very old debates about the creation and unmaking of the world. Is the universe eternal, or was it created? Is it finite or infinite? Destructible or indestructible? Linear or cyclical? And is ours the only universe, or are there others?
The semester will be divided into four sections. The first will explore the dominant, or “inflationary,” version of the big bang hypothesis in relation to the Christian doctrine of creation. The second will consider the possibility that the whole universe might be a negligible part of a vast “multiverse” in conversation with the early Greek atomists, who posited an extra-cosmic space teeming with other worlds. The third will explore contemporary cyclical cosmologies—that is, theories that posit a rebirth of the cosmos out of its fiery destruction—in relation to early Stoic philosophy and cross-cultural cyclic mythologies. The fourth will explore quantum cosmologies, in which the universe fragments into parallel branches each time a particle “decides” upon a position. We will examine these varied cosmologies of multiplicity, not with a view toward adjudicating among them, but toward pointing out their mythic and ontological genealogies and consequences.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
In Fyodor Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov, Dmitri Karamazov famously asked, "If there is no God, then everything is permitted?" Moral Life in a Secular World
In Fyodor Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov, Dmitri Karamazov famously poses the question of whether this means that "all things are permitted." Made famous by Dostoevsky, the question of whether we can be moral without God has always haunted secularism and has consistently been the most vocal criticism of unbelievers. From papal condemnations of secularism and "godless Soviets," to the contemporary consensus that belief in God is evidence of moral goodness and its absence a sign of a broken ethical barometer, the assumption has been that transcendental authority is all that stands between us and moral abyss. When the atrocities committed by "totalitarian" regimes are cited as evidence of this, it is only the most radical articulation of a broader narrative of secular modernity.

One of modernity's master narratives is that people go from being under the care of the church to being under the care of the state, and our focus will be on historical cases where the question of secular values was explicitly engaged by the state. We will examine individual and collective articulations of morality in three prominent models of secularism: American civil religion, French laïcité, and Communist official atheism. What constitutes the moral foundation of a world without God? Can religion's moral and spiritual function be performed by a different kind of belief system?

In this course we examine aspects of the intersections between race and religion in a number of historical and social contexts. We place at the center of our discussions the question of how race and religion are co-constructed interpreted and experienced, and explained. Students planning theses or other research projects with an ethnographic component, in any social science field, may use the class and the final assignment to conceptualize and plan their projects.

**RELI395 The Anthropology of Religion**

What do we study when we study religion? We can observe practices, record speech, examine objects and actions—but what do these things tell us? If religion is about belief, what can we say about belief from documenting actions? Perhaps we must conclude that religion is not about belief, but if so, are in danger of "explaining away" the very phenomena we seek to understand? This course will introduce students to a cross-cultural, comparative perspective on religious practice and belief in order to critically reflect on the role of methodology and research design in the study of religion and the social sciences more broadly. How do we know what we know? How do we plan research in order to find out what we want to know? The course has a significant methods component. Students will be expected to do field research exercises in a local religious community and prepare a methodology research proposal for a fictional or real project as a final assignment. Methodological exercises will be interspersed with ethnographic texts that allow us to reflect on how religion is studied, experienced, and explained. Students planning theses or other research projects with an ethnographic component, in any social science field, may use the class and the final assignment to conceptualize and plan their projects.

**RELI390 Christianity and Sexuality**

This seminar provides an opportunity for majors to reflect even more critically on the intersections between race and religion in a number of historical and social contexts. We place at the center of our discussions the question of how race and religion are co-constructed interpreted and experienced, and explained. Students planning theses or other research projects with an ethnographic component, in any social science field, may use the class and the final assignment to conceptualize and plan their projects.
Each member of the seminar will choose a local religious community to engage throughout the semester as a further opportunity to consider the choices scholarship entails.

### RELI401 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate

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

**Topic:** To be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

### RELI402 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** OPT

**Topic:** To be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

### RELI403 Department/Program Project or Essay

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** A-F

**Project:** To be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

### RELI404 Department/Program Project or Essay

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** OPT

**Project:** To be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

### RELI407 Senior Tutorial (downgraded thesis)

**Downgraded Senior Thesis Tutorial - Project:** To be arranged in consultation with the tutor. Only enrolled in through the Honors Coordinator.

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** A-F

### RELI408 Senior Tutorial (downgraded thesis)

**Downgraded Senior Thesis Tutorial - Project:** To be arranged in consultation with the tutor. Only enrolled in through the Honors Coordinator.

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** A-F

### RELI409 Senior Thesis Tutorial

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** OPT

**Topic:** To be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

### RELI410 Senior Thesis Tutorial

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** OPT

**Topic:** To be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

### RELI411 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** OPT

**Topic:** To be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

### RELI412 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** OPT

**Topic:** To be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

### RELI420 Student Forum

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** Cr/U

**Student-run group tutorial, sponsored by a faculty member and approved by the chair of a department or program.

### RELI466 Education in the Field, Undergraduate

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** A-F

**Students must consult with the department and class dean in advance of undertaking education in the field for approval of the nature of the responsibilities and method of evaluation.

### RELI467 Independent Study, Undergraduate

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** OPT

**Credit may be earned for an independent study during a summer or authorized leave of absence provided that (1) plans have been approved in advance, and (2) all specified requirements have been satisfied.

### RELI468 Independent Study, Undergraduate

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** OPT

**Credit may be earned for an independent study during a summer or authorized leave of absence provided that (1) plans have been approved in advance, and (2) all specified requirements have been satisfied.

### RELI469 Education in the Field, Undergraduate

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** OPT

**Credit may be earned for an independent study during a summer or authorized leave of absence provided that (1) plans have been approved in advance, and (2) all specified requirements have been satisfied.

### RELI478 Buddhist Art of Asia

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** A-F

**Credits:** 1.00
- **Gen Ed Area:** HA-RELI
- **Prereq:** None

**This course is a study of the philosophical underpinnings, use, and social significance of select genres of Buddhist art in India, China, Tibet, and Indonesia. Special attention will be given to ways of representing Buddhist concepts, values, and practices through visual narrative strategies.

### RELI483 Constructions and Re-Constructions of Buddhism

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** A-F

**Credits:** 1.00
- **Gen Ed Area:** SBS-RELI
- **Prereq:** None

**Identical With:** CEAS245

### RELI4878 Buddhist Art of Asia

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** A-F

**Credits:** 1.00
- **Gen Ed Area:** HA-RELI
- **Prereq:** None

### RELI483 Constructions and Re-Constructions of Buddhism

**Is Buddhism a philosophy? A mind science? An ancient mystical path? A modern construct? This seminar will evaluate a variety of answers to these questions by exploring how Buddhism has been understood in colonial and postcolonial periods. Our primary-source materials include Orientalist poetry, Zen essays, Insight Meditation manuals, 21st-century films, and contemporary academic critiques. We will examine the shape Buddhism takes in these works and turn to recent scholarship to discuss how romantic, imperialist, anti-modern, nationalist, therapeutic, and scientific frames depict one of today’s most popular religions.

### RELI491 Teaching Apprentice Tutorial

- **Offering:** Host
- **Grading:** A-F

**Credits:** 1.00
- **Gen Ed Area:** SBS-RELI
- **Identical With:** CEAS245
- **Prereq:** None

### RELI491 Teaching Apprentice Tutorial

**The teaching apprentice program offers undergraduate students the opportunity to assist in teaching a faculty member's course for academic credit.

- **Offering:** Host
Grading: OPT

RELI492 Teaching Apprentice Tutorial
The teaching apprentice program offers undergraduate students the opportunity to assist in teaching a faculty member’s course for academic credit.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

RELI495 Research Apprentice, Undergraduate
Project to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: Cr/U

RELI496 Research Apprentice, Undergraduate
Project to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: Cr/U