

Religion, Culture and Society

Department Home Page

The department of Religion, Culture and Society is committed to the academic investigation of religion as an intrinsic and vital dimension of human culture. The scholarly study of religion is an integral facet of a liberal arts education. Students engage in the critical and interpretive task of understanding patterns of religious thought and behavior as aspects of the human cultural experience.

Religion, Culture and Society is an interdisciplinary department that draws upon humanistic and social scientific modes of inquiry. These include historical, philosophical, sociological, anthropological, and psychological perspectives. The study of religion is a cross-cultural, comparative discipline concerned with the character and significance of the major religious traditions of the world. Students confront ethical problems and basic issues of value and meaning raised by modern multicultural and technological society.

MAJOR IN RELIGION, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The major in Religion, Culture, and Society consists of 32 credit hours of coursework (eight courses). In consultation with a major advisor from the departmental faculty, students will devise a balanced plan of study responsive to individual needs and interests. The curriculum for each major will demonstrate exposure to a diversity of approaches to the interdisciplinary, trans-cultural field of religion studies. Requirements include:

BA RELIGION, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

Religion Studies Coursework Chosen in consultation with Major Advisor ¹	28
REL 374 Seminar for Majors	4
Total Credits	32

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At least four courses at the 100-level or above.

The department recommends that in consultation with a major advisor, students concentrate in one of the major religious traditions, or in a comparative or thematic approach to the study of religion. The concentration should include at least four courses. Language study appropriate to the concentration is also desirable.

Students are particularly encouraged to consider a joint or double major with another major field from any of the three colleges at the university.

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

Religion, Culture and Society majors are admitted to honors by invitation of the departmental faculty toward the end of the student's junior year. To be eligible, a student must have attained at least a 3.25 average in his or her major program by the end of the fall semester in the junior year. Upon admittance to honors, the student will work out a special program of studies for the senior year with the major advisor, culminating in the writing of a senior essay.

MINOR IN RELIGION, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The minor in Religion, Culture, and Society consists of a total of 16 credits. The specific courses to be taken by each student are to be decided upon jointly by the student and the departmental advisor. Ordinarily, the student will be expected to take one introductory course unless specifically exempted by the department chair.

Minor in Religion, Culture, and Society

MINOR IN RELIGION, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY	
Religion, Culture, and Society Coursework ¹	16

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Coursework chosen in consultation with the departmental advisor.

Courses

REL 001 Sacred Scriptures in Religious Traditions 4 Credits

An encounter with the different sacred books of the world's major religions. Both the books and differing attitudes in these traditions towards sacred books are examined. Books investigated include the Bhagavad Gita, the Analects of Confucius, the Qur'an and the Jewish and Christian Bibles.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 002 (ETH 002, HMS 002) Death and Dying: Religious and Ethical Perspectives 4 Credits

Introduces students to the study of religion, world religious traditions and ethics through an exploration of death and dying. Rituals, practices and texts focused on death provide the basis for comparative study of Asian and Western religious approaches to the meaning and mystery of death as it confronts individuals and communities. Attention will also be given to moral justification for deaths brought about by human actions (i.e., killings). Specific issues include suicide, war deaths, abortion, euthanasia and state-sponsored execution.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 003 (ETH 003, PHIL 003) Global Religion, Global Ethics 4 Credits

Introduction to philosophical and religious modes of moral thinking, with attention given to ethical issues as they arise cross-culturally in and through religious traditions. The course will reference the United Nations Millennium Goals to consider family life and the role of women, social justice, the environment, and ethical ideals. Particular focus varies but may include one or more of the following: abortion and reproductive health, the death penalty, religiously motivated violence, and problems of personal disorder (heavy drinking, anorexia, vengeance).

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 005 Spiritual Exercises in Religious Traditions 4 Credits

Explores a variety of religious disciplines developed in various traditions, ranging from the practice of yoga and the martial arts to various forms of prayer, meditation, and asceticism.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 007 What Is Religion? 4 Credits

The word "religion" is fairly recent in origin, its linguistic roots unclear, and the phenomena that it has been used to designate both vast and amorphous. This course explores some of the most prominent attempts to define "religion," definitions produced both by religious thinkers and by critics of religion. We will examine some of the methods used by scholars to study religion. Finally, we will ask how the meaning of the word may be shifting in a modern, secular age.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 010 (ASIA 010, PHIL 010) Intro to Buddhism: Love Death and Freedom 4 Credits

This course will introduce students to Buddhist practices, philosophical systems, and cultural forms, from Buddhism's Indian origins to its spread across Asia and globally. Students will explore how Buddhists have approached the problem of death, the possibility of freedom, and the forms of social and individual love and concern. Course materials include poetry, biographies, philosophical writings, art and film.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 011 (GS 011) Introduction to World Religions 4 Credits

Living and working in a globalizing 21st century requires an understanding of diverse religious and cultural identities. In this course, students will be introduced to the history, ideas, and practices from a wide variety of the world's religious traditions.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 012 (ASIA 012) Mountains, Buddhas, Ancestors: Introduction to East Asian Religions 4 Credits

This course explores the principal religions of East Asia, including Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Shinto, and Shamanic Traditions. What is each tradition's view of human potential? How is ultimate reality depicted and experienced? What do home altars, boisterous festivals, and silent meditation halls have in common? Several primary texts are read in translation.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 013 (GS 013) Religion and Food 4 Credits

This course explores the complex connections between religion and food. We will examine food-related rituals, including Jewish Passover seders, Christian communion, and Hindu puja; the role of gastronomy in forming religious and ethnic identity; and the global ethics of food and sustainability. We will also probe the notion of food itself as sacred. Are "foodies" engaging in their own sort of sacred actions? How does food connect with the sublime? The class will include tastings and outings as scheduling permits.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU

REL 014 "Virtual" Religion 4 Credits

The contemporary world is replete with social phenomena that resemble religious thought and practice – sports fandom, trekkies, nationalistic rituals, online gaming, military camaraderie and codes, environmental activism, etc. In this course we will explore and discuss many of these "virtually" religious phenomena through the lens of the study of religion.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 015 Engineering the Impossible 4 Credits

Good intentions do not always lead to good results. Engineering the Impossible turns to religious studies to think through the most amazing technological successes and the social, ecological, and economic costs associated with scientifically and technologically engineering the impossible. Topics include the technological singularity, internet privacy, eugenics, and cutting-edge military research and development, this course is for anyone who might ever have to ask the question: "Sure, we can make that happen, but should we?"

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 025 (AAS 025) Introduction to Black Religions and Hip-Hop 4 Credits

Rapper KRS ONE once stated that, "Rap is something you do and Hip-Hop is something you live." This course thinks through the global evolution of Hip-Hop culture and the public and academic study of Black Religions as responses to structural and historical inequality and the search for meaning in culture by considering themes of resistance, constraint, power, the body, deviance, and morality over and against race, class, gender, and sexuality from a range of academic and cultural sources.

Attribute/Distribution: HU

REL 030 (JST 030) Beyond Bagels: Jews and Food 4 Credits

What does Crisco have to do with Jewish history? What is eco-kashrut? And why do so many Jews eat Chinese food on Christmas? This course explores Jewish life through the diverse history of Jewish foods. From New York deli to matzah ball gumbo, we will dig into a rich stew of diverse Jewish practices, regions, genders, ethics, and rituals.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU

REL 032 Religion of Disney 4 Credits

In its vast scope, power, various forms of consumer products, and enormous intellectual property holdings (including Star Wars and the Marvel Cinematic Universe, as well as its recent acquisition of 20th Century Fox), the Walt Disney Company has tremendous influence over modern American--and global--society. This course uses the rubric of "religion" to investigate both the fan culture surrounding Disney and its many properties, and the company's corporate aspirations, structure and ethos.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU

REL 036 (WGSS 036) New Black Godz 4 Credits

From celebrity self-defining agents of material abundance (Jay Z) to those posthumously made gods after tragically succumbing to socially-sanctioned sacrifice (Breonna Taylor), "New Black Godz" explores black icons at the center and margins of promise and peril. Following hip hop and black expressive cultures' signifying on gods, we explore means/modes of black godz' creative manipulation of identity and social difference, and ingenuity of transmuting "problem" status into creative ingenuity at the crossroads of social mobility and the limits of escape.

Attribute/Distribution: HU

REL 040 (PHIL 040) Is God Dead? Past, Present, Future 4 Credits

Is God Dead? Some people think so. Do you? Come decide for yourself. This course looks at the idea of god in Western philosophy and theology, with particular attention to death of god movement(s), and the changing shape of these movements in light of culture wars and identity politics. The course surveys key thinkers to ask questions about the origins, functions, and future of god and gods in the contemporary world. Posed as an ongoing question-Is god dead?

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU

REL 044 (GS 044) Religious Fundamentalism in Global Perspective 4 Credits

This course will explore the rise of fundamentalist religious movements and their involvement in violent conflicts. Topics to be considered will include the relationship between fundamentalist religious ideologies and terrorism, and the kinds of responses that fundamentalist religious movements present to the development of a global marketplace and the spread of secular nationalisms.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU

REL 060 (ASIA 060) Religions of South Asia 4 Credits

A thematic introduction to the foundational religious traditions of South Asia: Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam. Students explore the social and spiritual dimensions of these religious worlds through scripture, ritual practices, narrative and teaching traditions, music and art.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 066 Religion and the Paranormal 4 Credits

UFOs. Cattle Mutilations. Demonic Possession. Telepathy. Is any of this stuff real? What does real mean, anyway? Ask an "experiencer" and the answer is surely yes, but ask a skeptic and it is all make believe. Following weekly case-studies, students will leave the class with the ability to critically compare various beliefs, and with awareness of the relationship between experience, belief, and what we know about the world.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 070 (JST 070) Antisemitism Past and Present 4 Credits

As a ubiquitously present minority in western Christian societies over time, Jews have served as a foil for western identities in ways that continue to resonate in the modern and contemporary contexts. This course will consider the role that anti-Judaism and antisemitism have played in western culture from the ancient period to the present day.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU

REL 073 (JST 073) The Jewish Tradition 4 Credits

Judaism is both a textual tradition and a lived religion. Students read basic Jewish texts—Bible, Talmud, Midrash—and study the ways Jews sanctify the life cycle through rites of passage, and the round of the year through the festival cycle.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 075 The Christian Tradition 4 Credits

Introduction to the Christian tradition from its early variety and subsequent classical definition in the church councils up to the enlightenment. Special emphasis will be placed on the multiform interpretations of the Christian message.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 077 (ASIA 077, GS 077) The Islamic Tradition 4 Credits

A thematic introduction to Islamic history, doctrine and practice. Topics include: Qur'an; prophecy and sacred history; ritual practices; community life; legal interpretation; art and aesthetics; mysticism; politics and polemics.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 079 Religion and Fantasy Literature 4 Credits

A survey of the religious themes that entered fantasy literature in the 1950s in the works of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, and the humanist resistance to those themes in works by J. K. Rowling, Philip Pullman, or others.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 080 Religion and Violence 4 Credits

In this course we will explore the relationship between religious ideology with acts of violence. By examining a wide range of different instances of religious violence among Christians, Jews and Muslims, along with their accompanying ideologies, we will consider the relationship between religious affiliation, communally shared modes of discourse, and violent conflict.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU

REL 081 (JST 081) Jewish Mysticism 4 Credits

This course will examine both the history and the central texts and ideas of the Jewish mystical tradition. We will read a broad range of texts, including the ancient Sefer Yetzirah or Book of Creation, the Zohar, the works of Isaac Luria and his disciples, and the writings of some of the 18th and 19th century Hasidic rabbis. We will also explore the contemporary emergence of Kabbalah and the activities of the Kabbalah Center in contemporary America.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 088 Religion and Science Fiction 4 Credits

This course explores major concepts in religion studies through science fiction literature, television, and film. Themes to be covered include (but are not limited to): Utopias/Dystopias, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Alternative Worlds, Human and PostHuman Futures, God and Technology. Our investigation of these themes will rely on a wide variety of sources designed to enlighten and illustrate the many different ways both religion and SciFi deal with questions of meaning, identity and the nature of reality.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 091 Special Topics 1-4 Credits

Study of a subject not covered by regular courses.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 099 Special Topics 1-4 Credits

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

REL 102 (AAS 102, ENGL 102, JST 102) Promised Lands: Jewish and African American Children's Literature 4 Credits

In the Hebrew Bible, Psalm 137 asks, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" For Jews, blacks, and black Jews, this was and is a poignant question. This course examines how these two rich, often overlapping and interacting groups tell their stories in literature for children and young adults, with a particular focus on the mediation of traumatic pasts. What does it mean to imagine promised lands beyond such pasts—and can they be reached?

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 106 (ETH 106, HMS 106, PHIL 106) Bioethics and the Law 4 Credits

Students in this course will learn something about the foundations and (nontechnical) workings of the American system of justice, and will combine that understanding with a focus on various topics in bioethics, from the "right to die" to gene-patenting. A key point will be the understanding that, as science and medicine continually move forward, there are always new challenges to existing legal understanding. How should the law respond to new questions, e.g. inheritance rights of posthumously conceived children?

Attribute/Distribution: HU

REL 107 (HMS 107, PHIL 107) Bio-Ethics and the Family 4 Credits

From reproduction to dying, this course will focus on how ethical issues in science and medicine highlight the role of the family. Issues include assisted reproduction and the role of gamete donors; genetic testing and the problem of misattributed paternity; the locus of decision making when patients are terminal or in pvs. Should our individual-orientated medical culture move toward a more family-oriented perspective?

Attribute/Distribution: HU

REL 110 (ASIA 110, MLL 110) Drinking and Immortality 4 Credits

This class explores modes of transcendence and their expression in literature and art, but most especially poetry. The primary focus is the role of drinking alcoholic beverages in traditional Chinese society and religion, but also on other modes and what is meant by the search for immortality - and the use of inner versus outer alchemy - will be examined.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 111 (JST 111) Jewish Scriptures/Old Testament 4 Credits

The religious expression of the Hebrews, Israelites, and Jews as found in the Jewish Scriptures (TANAK/Christian Old Testament). Near Eastern context of Hebrew religion, the Patriarchs, the Exodus, the monarchy, prophecy, Exile and Return. Emphasis on historical, literary, critical problems, and newer socio-historical methods.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 112 (JST 112) The Beginnings of Judaism and Jewish Origins: Jewish Diversity in the Greco-Roman World 4 Credits

The variety of approaches to Judaism in the period following the Babylonian exile through the second century C.E. The literature studied will include Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 114 (CLSS 114, JST 114) Christian Origins: New Testament and the Beginnings of Christianity 4 Credits

Early Christianity from its beginnings until the end of the second century. Coverage includes the Jewish and Hellenistic matrices of Christianity, traditions about the life of Jesus and his significance, and the variety of belief and practice of early Christians. Emphasis on encountering primary texts.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 115 (PSYC 115) Religion And Psychology 4 Credits

A study of the origins, development and consequences of religion from a psychological perspective. Attention will be given to classic and contemporary sources, with a focus on major psychoanalytic theorists of religion (Freud, Jung, Erikson); psychological analyses of religious experience (e.g., Wm. James, Victor Frankl); and the diverse cultural and religious forms that structure the connection between religion and psychology (e.g., Buddhist psychology, Japanese Morita therapy).

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 116 (ETH 116, HMS 116, PHIL 116) Bioethics 4 Credits

Moral issues that arise in the context of health care and related biomedical fields in the United States today, examined in the light of the nature and foundation of moral rights and obligations. Topics include: confidentiality, informed consent, euthanasia, medical research and experimentation, genetics, and the distribution of health care.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU

REL 119 (ASIA 119, GS 119) The Podcast and the Lotus 4 Credits

Buddhism is increasingly a global phenomenon. Contemporary Buddhist teachers stay in touch with students via podcasts, WeChat, Twitter and Facebook. Buddhists from Singapore, Tibet, Japan, Mexico, Taiwan or Pennsylvania now meet via new technology. This class asks, how is Buddhism now a global religion? what effect has this had? How is Buddhism a "modern" religion? Students explore issues of conversion, modernity, globalization, new technology, migration and travel. Sources include autobiography, film, travel writing, political essays, interviews, social media, ethnography.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 121 (JST 121) Sources for the Life of Jesus: the Jewish and Christian Context 4 Credits

Ancient sources that claim to provide information about Jesus of Nazareth. Approaches taken to Jesus' life and career; early Christian interpretations of the significance of Jesus; methodology in assessing evidence for the historical Jesus and his message.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 122 (JST 122) Archaeology and the Bible 4 Credits

In this course we will examine the way that archaeological work can inform the study of the Bible. One important consideration is how archaeological data have been used either to confirm or falsify the biblical texts. We will look at how archaeologists work and how archaeological data and the Bible intersect. We will examine in detail several archaeological sites in order to understand better the difficulties in interpreting the material remains that archaeologists dig up.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 123 (JST 123) Armageddon: Endtime Thinking in Judaism and Christianity 4 Credits

Thinking about how the world will end was an important feature of certain types of ancient Judaism. Early Christianity took over many of these ideas, and they became fundamental to later Christian theologies, including many that continue to be advocated today. This course will look at ancient Jewish and Christian texts that speak about the end of the world and will trace some of them through more contemporary developments in these two religious traditions.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 124 (PHIL 124) Philosophy Of Religion 4 Credits

A critical look, from a philosophical perspective, at some fundamental problems of religion: The nature of religious experience and belief, reason and revelation, the existence and nature of God, the problem of evil, and religious truth.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 125 Comparative Religious Ethics 4 Credits

How have thinkers within the three major Abrahamic traditions handled ethical questions and dilemmas throughout history? This course will focus on many issues including but not limited to violence and pacifism, debates concerning revelation versus reason, the different accounts of justice and peace, the nature of scripture and the divine. We will look comparatively both within and across these traditions.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 126 (POLS 126) Religion, Law and Constitution 4 Credits

An examination of the relationship of religion to American law and the United States Constitution. Course will focus on Supreme Court decisions involving the "establishment" and "free exercise" clauses of the First Amendment. Attention will also be given to the intellectual, historical, religious and theological background behind the American experiment in "church-state" separation, including the thought of Roger Williams, the Founders (Washington, Jefferson, Madison), and contemporary analysts (e.g., M. Nussbaum).

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HU, SW

REL 129 (JST 129, PHIL 129) Jewish Philosophy 4 Credits

Consideration of how major Jewish thinkers from the first to 21st centuries confronted questions at the intersection of religion and philosophy: the existence and nature of God, free will, evil, divine providence, miracles, creation, revelation, and religious obligation.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 130 (ASIA 130, MLL 130) Monkey Business 4 Credits

Read and discuss in English the premodern Chinese enlightenment odyssey, the Journey To The West, featuring the famous mischievous and magical martial arts master, the Monkey King. Familiarize yourself with a cultural icon that has entertained and inspired since the 16th century and continues to inspire spin-off dramas, comics, acrobatic and TV shows, movies, and video games.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 138 (JST 138, WGSS 138) Sex, Gender, Jews 4 Credits

How do Jews of all genders tell their stories? What are the varied Jewish approaches to sexuality? How have feminist movements affected Jewish rituals? In this course, we will consider how religion, gender, sexuality, race, and class intersect in the lives of Jews, with a particular focus on North America. Topics will include: Jewish women's memoirs; the voices of LGBTQ Jews; recent innovations in Jewish ritual and leadership; Jewish masculinities; and the gendering of Jewish children's literature, among others.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 140 (GS 140) Globalization and Religion 4 Credits

This course examines the complexity of globalization and its multi-layered impact on religious identity and piety. Though comparative in methodology and historical framework, the class will give special attention to Islam and Hinduism in South Asia. Topics include: European colonialism; Orientalism and its legacy; religious nationalism; Islamophobia; and the Internet and mass media.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 141 (PHIL 141) Islamic Philosophy 4 Credits

The medieval era was the golden age of Islamic civilization. Science, mathematics, theology, philosophy, logic, jurisprudence, and many other disciplines flourished during that time. The course is an introduction to medieval Islamic philosophy. There is no indigenous Islamic philosophy other than medieval Islamic philosophy and theology, and commentaries on and interpretations of medieval Islamic philosophical and theological texts. The readings cover selections from the writings of al-Kindi, al-Razi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), al-Ghazali, Ibn al-Jawzi, and Ibn Rushd (Averroes).

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 143 (GS 143) Religious Nationalism in a Global Perspective 4 Credits

Religion has become a renewed political force on the world stage in recent years. This course will focus on how religion has often provided both the ideological language and the organizing principles for many modern nationalisms. Our exploration of this topic will take the form of case studies from various parts of the world, including but not limited to Pakistan, Israel, No. Ireland, India, Iran and USA.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HU, SW, W

REL 145 (ASIA 145, GS 145) Islam and the Modern World 4 Credits

Examines how numerous Muslim thinkers-religious scholars, modernists, and Islamists-have responded to the changes and challenges of the colonial and post-colonial eras. Special emphasis is placed on the public debates over Islamic authority and authenticity in contemporary South Asia.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 148 (GS 148) Islam Across Cultures 4 Credits

Explores the Muslim world's diversity and dynamism in multiple cultural contexts-from the Middle East and North Africa, to Asia and America-through literature, ethnography, and films. Topics include: travel and trade networks; education; women and gender; Islam and cultural pluralism; colonialism; and identity politics.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 149 (ETH 149) Modern Islamic Ethics 4 Credits

This course will focus on developments in Islamic thinking and ethics that emerge from the modern encounter between Muslim societies and the West. We will discuss Islamic modernism and fundamentalism through short primary texts from a variety of modern Muslim thinkers.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 151 (HMS 151, JST 151, PHIL 151) Judaism, Medicine, and Bioethics 4 Credits

This class traces the relationship between Jews and medicine from 1100 to 2020. How does Jewish religion and culture cultivate an affinity for the healing arts? How does Jewish law, ethics, and culture inform contemporary bioethics?

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 152 (JST 152) American Judaism 4 Credits

Diverse cultural and social forms through which American Jews express their distinct identity. Is American Jewry an example of assimilation and decline or creative transformation? What, if anything, do American Jews share in common? Compatibility of Judaism with individualism, pluralism, and voluntarism. How have the Holocaust and the State of Israel shaped the self-understanding of American Jewry?

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 154 (HIST 154, JST 154) The Holocaust: History and Meaning 4 Credits

The Nazi Holocaust in its historical, political and religious setting. Emphasis upon the moral, cultural and theological issues raised by the Holocaust.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 156 (JST 156) Judaism and Comic Books 4 Credits

Is The Thing Jewish? What does Superman have to do with the bible? Do Orthodox Jewish girls fight trolls? In this course, we will closely examine comic books and graphic novels in order to expand our understanding of what Jewishness might mean. With a POW! and a BAM!, we will consider many topics "from Krakow to Krypton," including American Jewish history, how representations of Jews are gendered, global Jewish traditions, monsters and mutations, biblical adaptations, and more!

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 159 Roman Catholicism in the Modern World 4 Credits

A survey of the various intellectual, cultural, political and ecclesiastical developments that have shaped contemporary Roman Catholic life and thought.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 161 (GS 161, JST 161) Globalization in the Ancient Mediterranean 4 Credits

We often think of globalization as a modern phenomenon. Yet as early as the twelfth century BCE, transportation, trade, political and religious networks tied the Mediterranean basin together. This course will examine in three periods-the Late Bronze Age, the Hellenistic period, and the Roman period-how these networks were organized and how they affected a range of Mediterranean and Near Eastern peoples. We will use some modern approaches to globalization as analytical tools for understanding the ancient world.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 169 (ASIA 169) Enlightening Lives: Buddhist Auto/Biography in Asia and the US 4 Credits

How do Buddhists imagine a "good life"? Buddhist biographies, autobiographies, poems, paintings, and films from Asia and the US reveal how Buddhists describe an ideal human life, addressing love, art, war, religious awakening.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 171 (SOC 171) Religion And Society 4 Credits

An introduction to the sociology of religion. Covers classical and contemporary approaches to defining and studying the role of religion in society. Emphasis on understanding religious beliefs and practices in the United States, the sources and contours of religious change, and the effects of religion on individuals and society. Specific topics include religious fundamentalism, religious conversion, religious practices and authority, secularization, religion in public life, religion in social change, religious terrorism, and the ways in which religion impacts our personal health, educational attainment, and family life.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, SS, SW

REL 172 (ASIA 172) Tibetan Buddhism and Society 4 Credits

This course examines the history, rituals, practices and art of the Tibetan Buddhist world, and the interaction of Tibetan Buddhism with the Tibetan Bon religion and Tibetan Islam. Students will explore film, autobiography, visual arts, and religious writings, asking, How has Tibetan Buddhism shaped Tibetan societies, as well as neighboring cultures in East Asia and Inner Asia? In what ways is Tibetan Buddhism now a global religion?

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 173 (ASIA 173, WGSS 173) Sex, Celibacy and Sainthood: Buddhism and Gender 4 Credits

This course explores themes of sexuality, celibacy, gender, and sainthood in East Asian religions. We will pay special attention to the experiences of religious women from many walks of life and time periods, from traditions including Buddhism, Daoism, and shamanism. Through film, poetry, autobiography, philosophical writing, visual art, and descriptions of visionary experience, students will encounter Buddhist and Daoist nuns, lay women, mothers, shamanic healers, oracles, activists, and royalty, from Tibet, Korea, Japan, China, and the U.S..

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 174 (JST 174) Modern Theology 4 Credits

Major 20th century movements within Christian and Jewish theology understood as responses to the problems of modern times.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 175 (GS 175, HIST 175, JST 175) History of Racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia 4 Credits

From the history of slavery in the ancient world to Charlottesville 2017. We will read texts and watch movies that discuss the history of slavery, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia. The historical meeting of worlds goes from "social slavery" in the ancient world to the "blood laws" in medieval Spain; colonialism in the New World, the rise of biological racism in the nineteenth century, and of cultural racism in the twentieth century.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, SS, W

REL 177 (JST 177, THTR 177) Jews and the Broadway Musical 4 Credits

The history of American musical theater is deeply interwoven with the history of American Jews. This course examines how Jews have taken part in musical theater on multiple levels-as composers, lyricists, producers, and performers, among other roles. It also examines how Jews are depicted in Broadway musicals, with particular attention to gender and ethnicity.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 180 (HIST 180) Religion and the American Experience 4 Credits

The historical development of major religious groups in this country from colonial times to the present. Their place in social and political life, and the impact of the national experience upon them. Emphasis on religious freedom and pluralism, and the churchstate relationship.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 187 Science, Technology, and the Religious Imagination 4 Credits

Impact of the scientific and technological culture on the Western religious imagination. Roots of science and technology in religious ideas and images. Ways of knowing and concepts of experience in religion and science.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 188 Religion and Literature 4 Credits

Religious themes in the modern novel or the spiritual autobiography. Melville, Tolstoy, Camus, Updike, Walker, and Morrison; or Woolman, Tolstoy, Malcolm X, Wiesel, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Kukai.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 191 Special Topics 1-4 Credits

Study of a subject not covered by regular catalog courses.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 216 (ETH 216, HMS 216, PHIL 216) Research Ethics 4 Credits

Research with human and animal subjects carries with it a host of ethical and legal obligations. Topics include the history of human subjects research; ethical use of placebo studies; the ethics of research in developing countries; whether there is an ethical obligation to volunteer to be a research subject.

Attribute/Distribution: HU

REL 220 (ASIA 220) Poet, Mediator, King: Classics of East Asian Religion 4 Credits

Classic texts of East Asia and an introduction to the traditions they represent. What do these texts teach about reality, humanity, divinity, virtue and society? How is the path of personal and social transformation presented?

Attribute/Distribution: HU

REL 221 (ASIA 221) Topics in Asian Religions 4 Credits

Selected thematic and comparative issues in different Asian religious traditions. May include Buddhism and Christianity, religion and martial arts, Asian religions in America, Taoist meditation, Zen and Japanese business, Buddhist ethics. (H/S).

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

REL 222 Topics In Western Religions 4 Credits

Selected historical, thematic, and comparative issues in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

Attribute/Distribution: HU

REL 224 (PHIL 224) Topics in Philosophy of Religion 4 Credits

Selected problems and issues in the philosophy of religion. Student must have completed at least one Philosophy course at the 100-level.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 225 Topics in Religion and Ethics 4 Credits

Analysis of various moral problems and social value questions.

Possible topics include: environmental and non-human animal ethics; medical ethics; drug and alcohol abuse; spiritual meaning of anorexia.

Attribute/Distribution: HU

REL 226 (ETH 226, HMS 226) From Black Death to Covid-19: Plague, Pandemic, Ethics and Religion 4 Credits

An investigation into the ways religion and morality shape interpretations of plague and pandemics. Three specific pandemics are examined: the bubonic plague of the 14th century, the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, and the current global Covid-19 crisis. Moral issues provoked by institutional, political and social responses to pandemic disease are also considered.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 228 Theories Of Religion 4 Credits

What is religion? Does it have a universal, cross-cultural and trans-creedal essence? Drawing on numerous academic disciplines, the course engages the major issues and most influential authors in the academic study of comparative religions.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU

REL 247 (ASIA 247, GS 247) Islamic Mysticism 4 Credits

Sufism, the inner or 'mystical' dimension of Islam, has deep historical roots and diverse expressions throughout the Muslim world. Students examine Sufi doctrine and ritual, the master-disciple relationship, and the tradition's impact on art and music, poetry and prose.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 254 (ASIA 254, ETH 254, EVST 254) Buddhism and Ecology 4 Credits

Buddhism's intellectual, ethical, and spiritual resources are re-examined in light of contemporary environmental problems. Is Buddhism the most green of the major world religions? What are the moral implications of actions that affect the environment?

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 291 Special Topics 1-4 Credits

Intensive study of a subject not covered by regular catalog courses.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HE, HU, W

REL 300 Apprentice Teaching 1-4 Credits

Supervised participation in various aspects of the teaching of a course. Consent of instructor, department chairperson, and permission of the Dean required.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

REL 317 (ENGL 317) Topics in Jewish Literature 3-4 Credits

Selected topics in Jewish literature, which may include: Contemporary Jewish Literature, Philip Roth's Complaint, and Jewish Women Writers.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

Attribute/Distribution: HE, HU, W

REL 335 (ANTH 335) Religion, Witchcraft, and Shamanism 4 Credits

Addresses broad questions about supernatural beliefs as systems of meaning and as practical and moral guides, with a focus on theoretical explanations for supernatural beliefs and the function of religious specialists in the social organization of cultures.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, SS, SW

REL 347 (PHIL 347) American Religious Thinkers 3-4 Credits

An examination of the writings of key figures in the history of American religious thought (such as Edwards, Emerson, Bushnell, Peirce, James, Royce, Dewey and the Niebuhrs). Attention will be directed both to the historical reception of these writings and to their contemporary significance.

Attribute/Distribution: HU, W

REL 350 Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective 4 Credits

This research seminar attempts to identify the conditions under which religious parties arise and become influential, how religion influences popular understandings of secular politics and the extent to which religion is a necessary feature of modern public discourse. These topics are explored through country specific cases from around the world.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, SS, SW, W

REL 361 Internship 1-4 Credits

Opportunity for students to work, or observe under supervision, religious organizations or institutions. Consent of chair required.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

REL 371 Directed Readings 1-4 Credits

Intensive study in areas appropriate to the interests and needs of students and staff.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, W

REL 374 Seminar for Majors 4 Credits

A capstone seminar for departmental majors. Considers the methodologies of religious studies and assesses current issues in the field. Offers opportunities for in-depth work on a particular tradition under the guidance of a faculty member. Offered in spring semester.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, HU, W

REL 375 (SOC 375) The Christian Right In America 4 Credits

What do we know about the Christian Right? Who are they? What do they believe? Where do they come from? Seminar explores answers to such questions through a focus on the history of the Christian Right as well as its ideologies and beliefs, the people who are a part of it, and its evolving relationship to the American political system.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, SS, SW, W

REL 389 Honors Project for Eckardt Scholars 1-8 Credits

Opportunity for Eckardt Scholars to pursue an extended project for senior honors. May be repeated for credit up to a maximum 12 credit hours. Transcript will identify department in which project was completed. Consent of department required.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, W

REL 391 Senior Thesis in Religion 4 Credits

Opportunity for undergraduate majors in Religion Studies to pursue an honors thesis. Department permission required.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.

Attribute/Distribution: CC, W

REL 392 Supervised Research 1-4 Credits

Research project under the direct supervision of a Religion, Culture, and Society faculty member.

Repeat Status: Course may be repeated.