MAJOR

The major in Religion is designed to perform two related functions: to expose the student to the methods and issues involved in the study of religion as a phenomenon of psychological, sociological, and cultural/historical dimensions; and to confront students with the beliefs, practices, and values of specific religions through a study of particular religious traditions. It is a program that affords each student an opportunity to fashion their own sequence of study within a prescribed basic pattern constructed to ensure both coherence and variety. Beginning with the class of 2016, the major in Religion will consist of at least nine semester courses as follows:

Required Sequence Courses

- REL 200 Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion
- One 300-level seminar or tutorial
- REL 401 Senior seminar

Elective Courses

Six electives at the 100-, 200-, or 300-level (with a maximum of one 100-level class to count towards major).

In addition, each major will select a specialization route in the major in conversation with and with the approval of the department. The specialization will consist of at least four courses. There are two ways to meet this requirement. A major could fulfill the requirement by concentration in one of the College’s coordinate programs or by designating four specialization courses that can be supported by the resources of the Religion department faculty and the College. In other words, these four courses might be from among the six electives and one 300-level seminar or tutorial or might include additional coursework from other programs and departments (whether cross-listed or not).

The major will culminate in a year-long senior project. The first semester will remain a seminar (REL 401) on a topic in the study of religion set by the faculty member in consultation with incoming seniors. The spring semester will consist of participation in a research colloquium (not a course taken for credit). In this colloquium, each senior major will present their individual research projects, begun in the senior seminar, drawing on their specializations and advised by members of the faculty.

For those who wish to go beyond the formally-listed courses into a more intensive study of a particular religious tradition, methodological trend, or religious phenomenon (e.g., ritual, symbol-formation, mysticism, theology, etc.), there is the opportunity to undertake independent study or, with the approval of the department, to pursue a thesis project.

The value of the major in Religion derives from its fostering of a critical appreciation of the complex role religion plays in every society, even those that consider themselves non-religious. The major makes one sensitive to the role religion plays in shaping the terms of cultural discourse, of social attitudes and behavior, and of moral reflection. But it also discloses the ways in which religion and its social effects represent the experience of individual persons and communities. In doing these things, the major further provides one with interdisciplinary analytical tools and cross-cultural experience and opens up new avenues for dealing with both the history of a society and culture and the relationships between different societies and cultures. What one learns as a Religion major is therefore remarkably applicable to a wide range of other fields of study or professions.

The department will work with students in the classes of 2014-2015 to adapt these new guidelines for the major. Beginning in spring 2012, students declaring Religion as a major will identify an area of specialization and link it to their senior seminar final paper and be expected to present it in a spring colloquium during their senior year.

THE DEGREE WITH HONORS IN RELIGION

The degree with honors in Religion requires the above-mentioned nine courses and the preparation of a thesis of 75+ pages with a grade of B+ or better. A thesis may combine revised work done in other courses with new material prepared while enrolled either in Religion 493-W31 or Religion W31-494. Up to two-thirds of the work in the thesis may be such revised work, but at least one-third must represent new work. The thesis must constitute a coherent whole either by its organizing theme or by a focus on a particular religious tradition. Candidates will also be expected to present
the results of their thesis orally in a public presentation. Students who wish to be candidates for honors in Religion will submit proposals and at least one paper that may be included in the thesis to the department in the spring of their junior year. Students must normally have at least a 3.5 GPA in Religion to be considered for the honors program.

The chair will serve as advisor to non-majors.

STUDY ABROAD

The Williams College Religion Department encourages potential majors to study abroad in order to enhance their education and gain international perspectives on religious studies. There are many excellent study abroad opportunities offering students a variety of possible experiences: among them cultural immersion, field work, intensive language learning, independent study, participation in another educational system. Many of our majors study in the Williams College Oxford Program, but our majors also regularly pursue a semester or year-long study in other programs.

FAQ

Students MUST contact departments/programs BEFORE assuming study away credit will be granted toward the major or concentration.

Can your department or program typically pre-approve courses for major/concentration credit?

Yes, in many cases, though students should be sure to contact the department.

What criteria will typically be used/required to determine whether a student may receive major/concentration credit for a course taken while on study away?

Course title and description. Sometimes a course title is sufficient, but for many courses we also need to see a description of some sort because the title is unclear.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the number of major/concentration credits that a student might earn through study away?

No.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the types of courses that can be awarded credit towards your major?

No.

Are there specific major requirements that cannot be fulfilled while on study away?

Yes. 3 courses: Religion 200, one 300-level Religion seminar or tutorial, and Religion 401 Senior Seminar.

Are there specific major requirements in your department/program that students should be particularly aware of when weighing study away options? (Some examples might include a required course that is always taught in one semester, laboratory requirements.)

Yes. Make sure that they have or will be able to take REL 200, because it is offered only once a year.

Give examples in which students thought or assumed that courses taken away would count toward the major or concentration and then learned they wouldn’t:

None to date.

REL 104  (S)  Religious Conflict and Cooperation

Violent conflicts throughout the world are animated by religious rhetoric, driven by religious actors, and sanctioned by religious authorities. At the same time, religious and “interfaith” organizations are often prominent participants in peace advocacy and conflict resolution. What are the varieties of religious involvement in war and peace? What can we learn about “religion” from the conflicts and cooperative initiatives that are labeled “religious”? Does the modern nation-state increase the likelihood of religious conflict? Will 21st century globalization support more or less conflict and/or cooperation? We will investigate these and other questions through contemporary case studies. In some cases we will focus on conflicts over territory: the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem, the Babri Mosque/Birthplace of Rama in Ayodhya, India, the Black Hills in South Dakota. But we will also study the rhetoric of Usama Bin Laden and the role of spirit possession in the formation of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. Finally, we will consider efforts to end such conflicts peacefully and delegitimize militant groups. In each case, we will see how competition for control over what counts as "Judaism," "Hinduism," "religion," "religious," and so forth is central to these conflicts and to the goals of those who seek to resolve them. Along with primary and secondary sources related to each case study, we will also read theoretical works by authors that may include Mark Juergensmeyer, Samuel Huntington, Scott Appleby, Bruce Lincoln, Saba Mahmood, Olivier Roy, Ananda Abeysekara, Talal Asad, Tomoko Masuzawa, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, and others.

Class Format: lecture

Requirements/Evaluation: two short papers, an in-class mid-term exam, and a final paper or project
REL 108  (F)  Technologies of Religious Experience

In 1962, ten Harvard Divinity School students received a capsule of white powder before Good Friday services. The powder was psilocybin, a psychedelic. One of them soon ran out of chapel to announce that the Messiah had arrived. Seven others reported profound mystical experiences, which they reported even years later as exerting continued influence on their life and work. Is psilocybin a technology for producing religious experience? Should religions find and employ technologies that engender religious feeling? Are such experiences any less true or authentic than ones that aren't technologically mediated? More humbly, how is a religious service experienced differently when it's viewed online or through a TV? How can an amulet, icon, or statue be used as a technology of religion? Drawing from a broad range of sources, this course will introduce students to the critical study of religion through its consideration of religious experience as both central to religious life and as (almost always) technologically mediated. The course thus aims to expose students to a wide variety of religions and technologies of religion, while simultaneously offering them a chance to explore Technology Studies as one critical lens for studying religion and religious experience.

Class Format: lecture
Requirements/Evaluation: short response papers, one longer non-research paper
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: none
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors
Expected Class Size: 25
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 109  Apocalypse  (WS)

An end of days. A utopia to come. A great cosmic reversal of fortune. A revelation of truth that leads to radical transformation. Each of these themes and many more fall under the genre of imagination that we associate with the apocalypse. In order to understand the persistence and prevalence of apocalyptic imaginations, we will move back and forth through time. On the one hand, we will read the Book of Revelation in relationship to a selection of ancient Zoroastrian, Jewish, Greek, Christian, and Muslim texts identified with apocalyptic traditions. On the other hand, we will read these texts in relationship to and alongside select literature and movements of apocalypse in the U.S.A. We will pay particular attention to how apocalyptic imaginations reflect upon and interact with social structures of class, colonization, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexuality.

Class Format: Seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: grading will be based on participation, short P/F papers, a graded 3-page essay that will be revised, a 5-page second essay, and a final 7- to 10-page paper
Prerequisites: None
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: first-years and sophomores preferred or Religion and/or American Studies majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading:
Distributions: (D2)  (WS)
Writing Skills Notes: As a WS course, grading will be based on short, weekly P/F papers, a graded 3-page essay that will be revised for credit, a 5-page second essay, and a final 7- to 10-page paper for which a draft will be peer reviewed. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Not offered current academic year

REL 110  (F)  Living Religion: The Study of Religion in Everyday Life
When studying religions, people generally turn to studying scriptures, the life and teachings of the religion's founder, and the fundamental doctrines of the religion. What this approach does not allow us to understand, however, is the way that such religious traditions actually manifest themselves in the world. This course introduces students to an alternative approach to studying religion, by exploring the way these religions are lived and experienced by individuals and communities in a variety of contexts. We will see how religion intersects with people's lived experiences of gender, race, class, sexuality, and broader socio-cultural and political contexts. We will explore this approach to religion through an engagement with ethnography (the qualitative research method in the social-sciences generally described as "participant-observation"). Students will not only learn about the theory and practice of this methodology, but will also conduct their own ethnographic research project over the course of the semester. This will involve: designing a feasible project and research question, selecting local research sites and subjects, taking field-notes and conducting interviews, and finally analyzing data and writing an ethnographic essay.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: regular reading responses, semester-long research project with frequent small assignments building up to the final product (class presentation and approximately 10-page paper)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: first-year students and sophomores

Expected Class Size: 12-12

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: EXPE Experiential Education Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 134  (S) Leaving the World Behind: The Literature of Reclusion  (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: CHIN 134  REL 134  COMP 134  ANTH 134

Secondary Cross-listing

Living in a time of political and social turmoil, Confucius told his followers: "When the realm has the Way, show yourself; when it lacks the way, hide." Reclusion here is a moral choice, justified by the ethical decline of the state. But it could also be a mortal necessity in a period in which government service was a distinctly hazardous pursuit. In other contexts becoming a hermit could instead be figured as aesthetic stance meant to preserve one's artistic integrity against the dominant claims of society. This course looks at the literature of reclusion-living a life of seclusion from society-in a range of different cultures and periods, from ancient China to contemporary America. With sources that include poems, essays, novels, and films, we will investigate a set of issues surrounding radical seclusion. What different forms does reclusion take? Can one be a hermit without being completely separated from society? What is the relationship between hermits and the state-to what extent does one depend on the other? What are the philosophical and moral implications of eremitism? Is separating oneself from human society an inherently immoral act? What is the relationship between reclusion and technology in the contemporary world? What is the nature of solitude and can it be experienced in a group (for example, in contemporary "intentional communities")? While most of our work will focus on textual analysis, there will be an experiential component to the course as well. Each student will design and implement their own experiment in (short-term) eremitism.

Class Format: tutorial course will involve an experiential component

Requirements/Evaluation: tutorial papers, responses, and an individual project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: first-year students, Chinese majors, Religion majors, Anthropology majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

CHIN 134 (D1) REL 134 (D2) COMP 134 (D1) ANTH 134 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write a 5- to 7-page paper every other week for a total of five papers. On weeks in which they are not writing, they will critique their partner's paper. Papers will receive substantial writing-based feedback from both the instructor and partner.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course provides students with the opportunity to analyze the shaping of social differences and dynamics of unequal power. Acts of reclusion are often ways that individuals can challenge the dominance of the state and other structures of authority indirectly. Modes of reclusion can differ substantially depending on the social standing of the recluse. These are issues that we will examine in the course.

Spring 2020

TUT Section: T1    TBA     Christopher M. B. Nugent

REL 171  (S) Music and Spirituality: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Cross-listings: MUS 171  REL 171

Secondary Cross-listing

How does the sacred sound? Across cultures and across millennia, music has served to enable, inspire, and express the spiritual life experiences of communities and individuals. Why is this so? In what contexts and through what means can making and hearing music reflect and produce spiritual experience? This team-taught course will take a comparative approach to exploring music's spiritual power, considering such areas as the function of music in ritual practices from various cultures and times, the use of music to tell sacred stories, music and dance in spiritual practice, and the role of music created in the face of death and its aftermath. Working from both musicological and ethnomusicological perspectives, we will explore the possibilities of sensory ethnography for better understanding the role of perception and the body in spiritual experiences with music. Our comparisons will draw from Western and world Christian traditions from medieval to modern times, and on conversations with musicians immersed in the music of other faith traditions (including Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim). We will explore connections between music and spirituality through a wide variety of repertoires, including plainchant and Renaissance sacred choral music; the music and dance of traditional West African religions like vodun and orisa; music from the Western classical tradition by such composers as Bach, Beethoven, and Messiaen; American hymnody and spirituals; gospel music in the U.S. and Africa; and selected artists from the world of jazz and popular music, such as John Coltrane and Leonard Cohen.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation; class journal; presentation with annotated bibliography; ethnographic field study; final project with presentation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: students with a demonstrated interest in music, religion, and/or anthropology/sociology

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

MUS 171 (D1) REL 171 (D1)

Not offered current academic year

REL 200  (S) What is Religion? Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion

As recently as the 1960s, the most influential theorists of modernity were predicting that religion would eventually vanish, while theologians lamented what they called the "Death of God." But one has only to glance at today's headlines to see that accounts of religion's demise were premature. Indeed a basic knowledge of religion is indispensable to understanding the current global moment as well as a range of fields from political science to English literature and history. To explore the meaning of religion, this course will introduce the debates around which the discipline of religious studies has been constituted. It will familiarize students with the discipline's most significant theorists (both foundational and contemporary) and trace their multidisciplinary—philosophical, sociological, anthropological, and psychological—modes of inquiry. At stake are questions such as: How does one go

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, three short (2-3 pages) writing assignments, a 5-page midterm paper, and a 10-page final paper
Prerequisites: none, although a previous course on religion is recommended
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2020
SEM Section: 01 TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm Jeffrey I. Israel

REL 201 (F) The Hebrew Bible
Cross-listings: COMP 201 REL 201 JWST 201
Primary Cross-listing
The Hebrew Bible is perhaps the single most influential work in the history of Western philosophy, literature, and art. But the overwhelming presence of the text in nearly every aspect of modern culture often obscures the sheer brilliance of its narrative technique as well as the complex interplay between law, history, prophecy, and poetry. This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the literary, historical, and theological aspects of the Hebrew Bible with an eye towards developing a sophisticated understanding of the text in its ancient context. Through the close reading of substantial portions of the Hebrew Scripture in translation and the application of various modern critical approaches to culture and literature, students will explore fundamental questions about the social, ritual, and philosophical history of ancient Israel, as well as the fundamental power of storytelling that has resonated across two millennia.
Class Format: lecture/discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, short written assignments, and two to three longer papers
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 40
Enrollment Preferences: Jewish Studies concentrators, Religion and Comparative Literature majors
Expected Class Size: 40
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 201 (D1) REL 201 (D2) JWST 201 (D2)
Attributes: JWST Gateway Courses
Not offered current academic year

REL 202 (S) Moses: Stranger in a Strange Land
Cross-listings: JWST 202 COMP 214 REL 202
Primary Cross-listing
As chieftain, priest, prophet, and lawgiver all in one, Moses occupies the central place in the history of Israelite and Jewish leaders. However, he is a somewhat unlikely candidate for such an important role. He is God's chosen leader among the enslaved Israelites, but he is raised as an Egyptian prince. He is a spokesman for his people, but he is slow of speech. He is the lawgiver and first judge of his nation, yet he is quick-tempered and impatient. The story of the most revered figure in the Jewish tradition, who nevertheless remains an outsider to the very end, has fascinated commentators and inspired countless artistic and literary interpretations. This course will engage in a close study of the figure of Moses by examining
the biblical narrative of his life and career from Exodus through Deuteronomy with an eye towards understanding the complex and often contradictory portrait of this self-described "stranger in a strange land." We will also examine some of the ancient legendary and folkloric accounts about Moses, as well as philosophical and allegorical treatments in Hellenistic Jewish, early Christian, and Muslim biographies. We will then proceed to investigate key modern reconfigurations and critiques of Moses in several genres, which may include renaissance visual depictions, literary works by Sigmund Freud, George Eliot, Thomas Mann, and Zora Neale Hurston, and even musical and cinematic renditions. All readings are in translation.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, short written assignments, and two or three longer papers
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: students who have already taken a course in biblical literature
Expected Class Size: 19
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
JWST 202 (D2) COMP 214 (D1) REL 202 (D2)
Attributes: JWST Core Electives
Not offered current academic year

REL 203 (F) Judaism: Before The Law
Cross-listings: REL 203 JWST 101
Primary Cross-listing
This course introduces the academic study of Judaism through a humanistic exploration of "the Law" as a concept in Jewish thought and practice. Coverage will include the Law of Moses in the Hebrew Bible, the rabbinic distinction between "Oral Law" and "Written Law," medieval philosophical justifications for the Law, modern interpretations of the Law as Moral Law, Hasidic challenges to the centrality of the Law, and twentieth-century Jewish fiction that is haunted by a felt absence of the Law. Topics may also include the nature of rabbinic authority, methods of Jewish legal interpretation and innovation, and Jewish law as it pertains specifically to women, gentiles, idolaters, food consumption, and the Land of Israel. Course materials will include classical sources such as the Talmud and Midrash, modern philosophical texts by Franz Rosenzweig, Leo Strauss and Joseph Soloveitchik, Kafka's The Trial with his parable "Before The Law," Woody Allen's film Crimes and Misdemeanors, and ethnographic accounts of contemporary Jewish observance. All readings will be in translation.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, three short papers, and a final longer paper
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 30
Enrollment Preferences: Jewish Studies concentrators, Religion majors and students who are considering these options
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 203 (D2) JWST 101 (D2)
Attributes: JLST Interdepartmental Electives JWST Gateway Courses
Not offered current academic year

REL 204 (F) Jesus and Judaism
Cross-listings: JWST 204 REL 204
Primary Cross-listing
Was Jesus a Christian? Was he Jewish? And if Christianity's ostensible founder was Jewish, what does that mean for his Christianness? This course
will explore Christian, Jewish, and secular depictions of Jesus’ Jewishness to see what they reveal about the nature and history of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Broad in its historical scope, the course will include examinations of ancient Jewish messianic expectations, New Testament depictions of Jesus’ Jewishness, covert references to Jesus in the Talmud, medieval debates between Jews and Christians, and modern scholarly “quests” for the historical Jesus. Was Jesus Jewish? How so and for whom?

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: active preparation and participation, papers

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 21

Enrollment Preferences: Religion Majors and Jewish Studies concentrators get preference

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

JWST 204 (D2) REL 204 (D2)
The Book of Job has often been described as the most philosophical book of the Hebrew Bible. The story of one man's struggle to understand the cause of his suffering and his relationship to God represents the finest flowering of the Near Eastern wisdom literature tradition. Through its exploration of fundamental issues concerning human suffering, fate and divinity, and the nature of philosophical self-examination, Job has served as a touchstone for the entire history of existential literature. At the same time, the sheer poetic force of the story has inspired some of the greatest artistic and literary meditations in the Western tradition. This course will engage in a close reading of the Book of Job in its full cultural, religious, and historical context with special attention to its literary, philosophical, and psychological dimensions. We will then proceed to investigate key modern works in several genres that involve Joban motifs, themes, and text both explicitly and implicitly. These texts will include Franz Kafka's The Trial, Archibald MacLeish's J.B., Robert Frost's "Masque of Reason," Carl Jung's Answer to Job, and William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job. All readings are in translation.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, weekly short written assignments, and two longer papers

Prerequisites: none

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 206 (D2) REL 206 (D2) JWST 206 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

REL 207 (F) From Adam to Noah: Literary Imagination and the Primeval History in Genesis

Cross-listings: CLAS 207 COMP 250 REL 207 JWST 207

Primary Cross-listing

How long did Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden? What was the mark of Cain? Why did Enoch not die? Who was Noah's wife? How did Giants survive the Flood? These are only a few of the fascinating questions that ancient readers and interpreters of the Book of Genesis asked and attempted to answer. The first ten chapters of Genesis present a tantalizingly brief narrative account of the earliest history of humankind. The text moves swiftly from the Creation to the Flood and its immediate aftermath, but this masterful economy of style leaves many details unexplained. This course will explore the rich and varied literary traditions associated with the primeval history in the Genesis. Through a close reading of ancient noncanonical sources such as the Book of Enoch, Jubilees, and the Life of Adam and Eve, as well as Jewish traditions represented in Josephus, Philo, and Rabbinic literature and other accounts presented in early Christian and Gnostic texts, we will investigate the ways in which the elliptical style of Genesis generated a massive body of ancient folklore, creative exegesis, and explicit literary re-imagining of the early history of humankind. We will then turn to several continuations of these variant traditions in medieval and early modern literature, with particular attention to the extensive material on the figures of Cain and Noah. All readings are in translation.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation and several writing assignments

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Preferences: students who have already taken a course in Biblical literature

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

CLAS 207 (D1) COMP 250 (D2) REL 207 (D2) JWST 207 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year
The Book of Genesis has rightly been described as the masterpiece of Hebrew biblical narrative. In particular, the continuous tale that begins with Abraham and Sarah and extends four generations to the children of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel is one of the most extraordinary examples of literary artistry in any time or tradition. As one family wrestles with the promise of becoming a chosen people, the narrative explores themes of marriage, parenthood, sibling rivalry, land, violence, wandering, and, above all, the complex relationship between humanity and God. This course will examine those themes through a close reading of Genesis in translation, from Abraham and Sarah's first appearance on the scene to the death of Jacob. We will consider the text from multiple perspectives with an eye toward understanding the literary, philosophical, and psychological dimensions that continue to amaze and perplex readers to this day.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, a series of short writing assignments, and two longer papers

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: students who have already taken a course in Biblical literature

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 208 (D2) COMP 207 (D1) JWST 208 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am Edan Dekel

Who and what counts as "Jewish" in America? Does stand-up comedy have a distinctly Jewish pedigree? What about neoconservatism? How is it possible to answer such questions without falling into what David Hollinger has called the "booster-bigot trap"? How is it possible, that is, to avoid answers that uncritically celebrate "Jewish contributions" or perniciously suggest "Jewish influence"? This course will explore the various meanings of Jewishness in American culture as expressed by artists, rabbis, activists, intellectuals, boosters, bigots and others. We will seek to avoid the booster-bigot trap by focusing vigilantly on what is at stake wherever Jewishness is invoked, defined or ascribed. We will draw methodological support from scholars like Hollinger, Jonathan Freedman, Laura Levitt, Yuri Slezkine, Shaul Magid, Andrea Most and others. Particular attention will be given to the appearance of Jewish themes and involvement in popular culture and political action, as well as to Jewish American communal institutions, the everyday lives of Jewish Americans, and Jewish variations on American religion. Coursework will involve some historical, sociological and ethnographic readings, but will focus primarily on close analysis of films, literary fiction, stand-up comedy, political magazines, theological texts, and television shows. We may, for instance, watch films like The Jazz Singer (1927 and 1980), Exodus and Annie Hall; read John Updike's Bech: A Book, Philip Roth's Operation Shylock or Cynthia Ozick's The Puttermesser Papers; listen to the comedy of Mort Sahl, Lenny Bruce and Sarah Silverman; read from Henry Ford's Dearborn Independent, the Menorah Journal or Commentary; study works by Rabbis Stephen Wise, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Meir Kahane; and watch episodes of Bridget Loves Bernie, Northern Exposure and Curb Your Enthusiasm. We will also study arguments about the role and meaning of Jewishness in American secularization, "therapeutic culture," the civil rights movement, the sexual revolution, and feminism.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, two short papers, a midterm take-home exam, and a final paper interpreting an example of Jewishness in America chosen by the student

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 30
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies concentrators, and students who are interested in either of these options

Expected Class Size: 25

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
JWST 209 (D2) REL 209 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

REL 210  (S)  Distant Encounters: East Meets West in the Art of the European Middle Ages

Cross-listings: ARAB 212  REL 210  ARTH 212

Secondary Cross-listing

This lecture course investigates the rich artistic consequences--in architecture, manuscript illumination, mosaic, sculpture, panel painting, fresco, metalwork, and other minor arts--of European contact with the Eastern Mediterranean between approximately 300 and 1450 CE. From the beginnings of Christianity, pilgrims from Europe made the long journey to sacred sites in the Holy Land (extending across parts of present-day Egypt, Israel, Syria, and Turkey). When these sites became less accessible with the spread of Islam in the seventh century, Europeans sought to recreate the sites at home. Later, from 1095 onward, Christian Europeans attempted to reclaim and hold the Holy Land from non-Christians by force, through an ill-fated series of five major and several lesser “crusades.” Over the centuries, before, during, and after the Crusades, exposure to the peoples, ideas, and cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean also came through trade and through the travel and settlement of non-Europeans in Europe itself, particularly in Spain, Sicily, and Venice. The course aims to survey artistic production within each of these different cross-cultural contexts of East-West encounter.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: quiz, two short papers, midterm, and final exam

Prerequisites: none, but previous coursework in art or medieval history helpful

Enrollment Limit: 30

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ARAB 212 (D1) REL 210 (D2) ARTH 212 (D1)

Attributes: ARTH pre-1800 Courses

Spring 2020

LEC Section: 01  MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm  Peter D. Low

REL 211  (F)  Earliest Christianities

This history course explores the diversity and development of early Christianity primarily through the writings of early Christians beyond the New Testament canon. Attention is given to diverse interpretations of Jesus and Judaism, the emergence of church structures and rituals, and the construction of the categories “orthodoxy” and “heresy” in the context of the struggle for authority and identity in the Roman Empire as well as at the intersections between historiography and contemporary religious and political debates.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: active preparation and participation, 1 text analysis paper (5 pages), midterm, and take home final

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
REL 213 (F) Ancient Christianity on Gender and Sexuality: Legacies and Prospects

Cross-listings: REL 213 WGSS 216

Primary Cross-listing

This course will examine a set of case studies from ancient Christianity and contemporary literature that address topics in gender and sexuality, such as the masculinity of Jesus; portraits of Mary Magdalene as leader and prostitute; desire, marriage, and celibacy; gender and violence in martyr narratives; the sex/gender of God; and sexual slander of heretics and Jews. We will consider social and theological intersections with feminist, masculinity, and trans* studies.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: regular class attendance, active participation in discussions, careful reading of all assigned materials, three 5- to 7-page papers (c. 2000-2300 words)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 16

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 213 (D2) WGSS 216 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 214 (F) Religion and the State

Cross-listings: REL 214 PSCI 271

Primary Cross-listing

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution begins: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” What does “religion” mean in this formulation? Should “religion” be singled-out for exclusion from government? Are “religious” reasons ever legitimate reasons for laws, policies or popular political action? Should “religious” organizations be exempt from otherwise generally applicable laws? Is “religion” good or necessary for democratic societies? In this course we will respond to these and related questions through an investigation of “religion” as a concept in political theory. Particular attention will be given to the modern liberal tradition and its critics. Coverage will range from modern classics to innovative contemporary arguments. Classics may include John Locke’s A Letter Concerning Toleration, selections from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s The Social Contract, James Madison’s Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments, Immanuel Kant’s Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, John Stewart Mill’s Three Essays On Religion, and John Dewey’s A Common Faith. More recent arguments may come from John Rawls, Alasdair MacIntyre, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Martha Nussbaum, Jeffrey Stout, Winnifred Sullivan, Brian Leiter and Andrew Koppelman.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, two short papers, a midterm take-home exam, and a final take-home exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 30

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, those interested in being Religion majors, and Political Science majors concentrating on Political Theory

Expected Class Size: 25

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 214 (D2) PSCI 271 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

Cross-listings:  REL 215  CLAS 215

Primary Cross-listing

In this course, students will be introduced to the New Testament through an exploration of how the New Testament became a book. We will start by examining the letters of Paul--its earliest texts--in terms of the habits and traditions of ancient letter-writing. We will similarly place the other texts of the New Testament in the context of Greek, Roman, and Jewish literary traditions and conventions. As the semester moves forward, we will examine how the New Testament itself became a material object--a book--and how its changing material status shaped its meaning and functioning. We will see the New Testament transform from a library of separate scrolls and/or codices (a library which was occasionally bound together into a single codex), to a luxury object in the Middle Ages, to a cheap printed object in the wake of the printing revolution of the 19th century, to its modern life as both a highly marketed object and a searchable digital "thing" in online spaces and mobile apps.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation:  active participation and preparation, papers

Prerequisites:  none

Enrollment Limit:  none

Enrollment Preferences:  Religion Majors, Then Classics Majors

Expected Class Size:  25

Grading:  yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions:  (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 215 (D2) CLAS 215 (D1)

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01    TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm     Phillip J. Webster

REL 216  (S)  Greek Art and the Gods

Cross-listings:  CLAS 248  ARTH 238  REL 216

Secondary Cross-listing

In the Iliad, when the god Apollo is visualized, it is as a man, angry in his heart, coming down from the peaks of Olympos, bow and quiver on his shoulders, the arrows clanging as the god moves, "like the coming of night," to bring dogs, horses, and men to their deaths. By the end of the Classical period, one statue of the archer god depicted him as a boy teasing a lizard. In this course, we will examine the development of the images the Greek gods and goddesses, from their superhuman engagement in the heroic world of epic, to their sometimes sublime artistic presence, complex religious function, and transformation into metaphors in aesthetic and philosophical thought. The course will cover the basic stylistic, iconographical, narrative, and ritual aspects of the gods and goddesses in ancient Greek culture. The course will address in detail influential artistic monuments, literary forms, and social phenomena, including the sculptures of Olympia and the Parthenon; divine corporeality in poetry; the theology of mortal-immortal relations; the cultural functions of visual representations of gods, and the continued interest in the gods long after the end of antiquity.

Readings assignments will include selections from Homer, Hesiod, Sappho, Aischylos, Euripides, Plato, Walter Burkert, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Nikolaus Himmelmann, Erika Simon, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

Class Format: lecture and discussion

Requirements/Evaluation:  short writing assignments, midterm exam, final exam, final paper

Prerequisites:  none

Enrollment Limit:  40

Enrollment Preferences:  preference will be given to pre-registered Art-History majors needing to fulfill the pre-1400 requirement; otherwise, the course is open to any interested student
This course examines the intersection of religion and American politics, from the colonial era to the present. It focuses especially on electoral politics and social movements, exploring the role of religion in conflicts over racial equality, capitalism, gender and sexuality, and church-state relations. Students will tackle questions with both historical and present-day relevance, such as: Was America founded as a Christian nation? Has religion been a source of revolutionary change, or a mere 'opiate of the masses'? How have religious ethics shaped the politics of race, gender, and class? How has growing religious diversity affected civic unity? What role should religion play in American political life? The course will cover such topics as the religious views of the 'Founders;' debates over slavery; spiritualism & women's rights; state treatment of religious minorities; the Scopes Trial and scientific modernity; the Social Gospel and modern capitalism; the New Left and the Moral Majority; and late 20th-century religious battles over war, civil rights, feminism, and democracy itself.

Class Format: Seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation; six informal response papers (300-400 words); two unit papers (4-6 pages); final paper (8-10 pages)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: none, open to all students

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

HIST 257 (D2) REL 217 (D2)

Attributes: HIST Group F Electives - U.S. + Canada
**REL 219 (S) Judaism Under Ancient Greek and Roman Imperialisms**

**Cross-listings:** CLAS 219 REL 219 JWST 219

**Primary Cross-listing**

How did ancient Greek and Roman empires shape the beginnings of Judaism? In this course, we will examine how Greek and Roman imperial systems of identity, ethnicity, law, religion, and knowledge affected Judaism as a religious and cultural system. We will pay particular attention to the ways that Jews/Judaeans responded to these imperial pressures, especially as those responses articulated "hybrid" versions of Judaism that were informed both by resistance to imperial centers as well as the sheer hegemony of those cultural systems. The course thus uses (and introduces students to) postcolonial theory to study the history of Judaism under Greek and Roman empires. Readings for this course will include a wide array of ancient Jewish works, such as the books of Maccabees, Flavius Josephus, Philo of Alexandria, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Mishnah. The course will also include select readings from early Christian texts and postcolonial theory.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Active participation and preparation, papers

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 21

**Enrollment Preferences:** Religion Majors, Jewish Studies Concentrators, Classics Majors

**Expected Class Size:** 14

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

CLAS 219 (D1) REL 219 (D2) JWST 219 (D2)

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**REL 220 (S) Spiritualities of Dissent**

**Cross-listings:** AFR 219 REL 220

**Primary Cross-listing**

This course seeks to understand how protest fuels the creation and sustenance of black religious movements and novel spiritual systems in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We will examine the dissentive qualities of selected African-descended activists, community workers, scholars, spiritual/religious leaders and creative writers. By the end of this course, students will be able to thoughtfully respond to the questions, "What is spirituality?"; "What is dissent?"; and "Has blackness required resistive spiritual communities?"

**Class Format:** seminar
**REL 221 (F) Technologies of Religion in the Early Christian World**

**Cross-listings:** REL 221 CLAS 221

**Primary Cross-listing**

What is the relationship between religion and technology? How do various technologies affect the production and distribution of religious knowledge? Facilitate communication and interaction with the divine? Transform the religious self? In this course, we will look specifically at the uses and effects of technology on religion in the early Christian world. While focused most directly on the influence of technology on the development of early Christianity, the course will also explore the place of technology in coterminous movements: in "pagan" sacrifice, Neoplatonic divination, and Stoic practices of the self. By examining technologies of text production, sacrifice, memory, and the self, the course will shed light on early Christianity and its competing religious and philosophical movements, as well as on the nature of technology's relationship to religion.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** active preparation and participation, short reading response papers (1 page), and a final exam

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** none

**Enrollment Preferences:** none

**Expected Class Size:** 10-12

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 221 (D2) CLAS 221 (D1)

Not offered current academic year

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**REL 222 (F) The Jewish Art of Interpretation**

**Cross-listings:** REL 222 JWST 222 COMP 211

**Primary Cross-listing**

*Turn it and turn it, for everything is in it.* This famous rabbinic dictum offers an enigmatic yet comprehensive account of the principles that have defined the Jewish practice of interpretation for over two millennia. The imperative to keep a text, word, image, or concept in constant motion, in order to generate as many meanings and cross-meanings as possible, challenges us to transform the act of interpretation itself into a virtuosic craft or art that can engage the human imagination as diversely and powerfully as the creation of the works being interpreted. At the same time, emphasis on the dynamism between text and interpreter should dispel the notion that only expansive works have expansive meanings. If interpretation itself is an art, then even the shortest text can contain "everything" within it when it participates in that art. This course will engage students in a radical experiment in the art of interpretation. Through a deep encounter with a selection of miniature texts, ranging from ancient rabbinic proverbs and medieval fables to the modern parables and fragments of Franz Kafka, as well as folklore and jokelore from every period in Jewish history up to the present, we will develop an interpretive practice that combines analytic, critical, and creative principles in both written and oral contexts. The goal throughout is to explore interactively how the making of meaning is an integral part of the human experience.

**Class Format:** seminar
**REL 223 (F) Revolt and Revelation in 20th-Century Americas**

**Cross-listings:** AMST 228 AFR 228 LATS 228 REL 223

*Secondary Cross-listing*

Writing in 1971, Dominican priest and Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez asked “Is the Church fulfilling a purely religious role when by its silence or friendly relationships it lends legitimacy to dictatorial and oppressive government?” Such a question encapsulates the sometimes agonistic and other times deeply intertwined relationships between religious institutions, religious thought, and movements for political transformation in the 20th century Americas. This course examines those forms of “God-talk” broadly termed “liberation theologies” that responded to and challenged social relationships of class, colonization, race, culture, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, and ecology. These theologies were borne out of and in turn deeply shaped struggles against oppressive regimes and structures in the Americas, and as such we will focus on some specific theological writings--such as those of Gutierrez--and their relationship to distinct social movements and struggles over land, economy, and political power, especially in Brazil, El Salvador, Perú, and the United States of America between 1960-2000.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** participation, short writing exercises, a 5- to 6-page take-home midterm essay, and an 8- to 12-page final review essay

**Enrollment Limit:** 25

**Enrollment Preferences:** majors and concentrators

**Expected Class Size:** 12

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

AMST 228 (D2) AFR 228 (D2) LATS 228 (D2) REL 223 (D2)

**Attributes:** LATS Core Electives

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**REL 224 (S) U.S. Latinx Religions**

**Cross-listings:** AMST 224 REL 224 LATS 224

*Secondary Cross-listing*

In this course, we will engage aspects of Latinx religious experiences, practices, and expressions in the United States of America. We examine moments where religious expressions intersect with politics, popular culture, and daily life in the U.S.A. Given the plurality of Latinx communities and religious lives in the U.S.A., we will engage certain selected religious traditions and practices --such as popular Catholic devotions to Guadalupe, crypto-Judaism, curanderismo, Latinx Muslims, and Santería--by focusing on particular moments of religious expression as elucidated in specific historiographies, ethnographies, art, literature, and film. We will also consider, though more briefly, questions of how one studies Latinx religions.
REL 225  (S)  Culture and Morality

Cross-listings: REL 225  ANTH 224

Secondary Cross-listing

Moral judgments differ across cultures, within cultures, and across time. How do we account for this variation, and what does it tell us about human nature and the nature of moral reasoning? This course examines practical and theoretical orientations for the descriptive study of morality. We will read about and analyze moral life in a range of cultural and historical settings, from Africa and Oceania to North America and the Upper Amazon. As an object of academic inquiry, morality has historically been resistant to classification under any one discipline, recognized at various times to be the exclusive province of philosophy, psychology, religion, and so on; so we will draw on works from across a range of fields in order to better understand morality and its relationship with other significant dimensions of human social life (political economy, religion, gender, etc.). Specific topics will include: the relationship between morality and freedom; the apparent intractability of moral disagreements; the role of intuition and emotion in moral reasoning; and the influence of power and hierarchy on moral judgment.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: a midterm project and a final paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Preferences: ANSO students

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 225 (D2) ANTH 224 (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 226  (F)  Spiritual But Not Religious

Cross-listings: ANTH 226  REL 226

Primary Cross-listing

Today, more than one in five people in the United States identify as “none” when asked about their religious affiliation. Yet that does not mean that religious sentiment or spirituality is on the decline. On the contrary, talk of “spirituality” is more pervasive than ever in popular discourse. Increasingly Americans claim that they are “spiritual but not religious” or that they prefer “individual religion” over “organized religion.” This course seeks to understand and investigate this phenomenon. What is the lived experience of being “spiritual but not religious”? What counts as spirituality? Is there a meaningful distinction between spirituality and religion? What does this distinction assume about the nature of organized religion? What is the history that led us to this ideology of individualized spirituality? And what are the social and political implications of this trend? We will explore these questions and study this phenomenon through an engagement with ethnography (the qualitative research method generally described as
"participant-observation"). Over the course of the semester, students will be expected to conduct an ethnographic research project within local communities in Williams College and Williamstown. Alongside our central readings on spirituality, we will also be studying some background in the theory and practice of this methodology. Throughout the semester, students will work together on developing the practical skills necessary to conduct an ethnographic project, and will be gradually executing their own individual projects. This will include: designing a feasible project and research question, selecting research sites and interlocutors, taking field-notes and conducting interviews, and finally analyzing data and writing an ethnographic essay.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: regular reading responses; semester-long research project with frequent small assignments building up to the final product (15- to 20-page paper)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 10-15

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ANTH 226 (D2) REL 226 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 228 (F) Zen and the Art of American Literature

Cross-listings: AMST 238 COMP 238 REL 228 ENGL 239

Secondary Cross-listing

In 1844, the Transcendentalist magazine, The Dial, published an excerpt from the Lotus Sutra, translated into English by Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. It was the first English-language version of any Buddhist text to be published in the United States. At the time, very few Americans knew the first thing about what Buddhism was, but now, a little over a century and a half later, Buddhist ideas and practices seem ubiquitous (available even in the form of apps like Headspace and Calm). At the time, very few Americans knew the first thing about what Buddhism was, but now, a little over a century and a half later, Buddhist ideas and practices seem ubiquitous (available even in the form of apps like Headspace and Calm). In this class, we'll explore how Buddhism came to be the profoundly important cultural force in American life that it is today, looking particularly at the influence of Zen on American literature. We'll read an array of Buddhist-influenced literary texts, from the Beat poetry of the 1950s to novels like Middle Passage, A Tale for the Time Being, and Lincoln in the Bardo. But we'll also range far beyond the world of literature into a variety of other cultural domains in which Buddhism has had a deep impact, like environmentalism and deep ecology, Western psychotherapy, and Western attitudes towards death and dying. We'll also explore the role that Buddhism is playing in the fight against racism and racial injustice (from bell hooks to Black Lives Matter). And we'll engage in an experiential investigation of the benefits of incorporating contemplative practices like meditation into the classroom: students in the course will learn a variety of meditation techniques, and we'll spend some time each class practicing and reflecting upon those practices. Students will be expected to meditate outside of class as well (2-3 times per week) and keep a meditation journal. No prior experience with meditation is necessary. Just an open mind.

Class Format: lecture

Requirements/Evaluation: regular attendance, a weekly meditation journal, various informal in-class and take-home writing assignments, and a final 7- to 10-page essay

Prerequisites: any literature course at Williams or permission of the instructor

Enrollment Limit: 45

Enrollment Preferences: students will be asked to submit emails explaining why they want to take this course, which will be used to determine final enrollment; no first-years

Expected Class Size: 35

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

AMST 238 (D2) COMP 238 (D1) REL 228 (D2) ENGL 239 (D1)

Attributes: ENGL Literary Histories C EXPE Experiential Education Courses
REL 229 (S) Reel Jesus: Reading the Christian Bible and Film in the U.S.A.

Cross-listings: AMST 229 REL 229

Primary Cross-listing

In this course we examine some of the ways that Christian biblical narratives have appeared in late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century Hollywood movies, looking in particular at films such as The Matrix (1999), The Passion of the Christ (2004), Jesus Christ Superstar (1973), The Shawshank Redemption (1994), The Omen (1976), Children of Men (2006), and The Book of Eli (2010). What are the overt and subtle ways that these films seek to interpret and employ biblical texts? Why do they draw upon the texts they do and read them as they read them? What can cinematic interpretations of biblical texts reveal to us about how these texts are used in broader U.S. culture, especially to crystallize and reflect certain political, economic, ethnic, racial, sexual, and social parameters of U.S. cultures? How does an awareness of this scriptural dimension in a work of "popular culture" affect our interpretation of both the film and the scriptural text's meanings? How do varying interpretations of biblical texts help us to understand cinematic meaning? By assuming that we can read both biblical texts and films in multiple and contradictory ways, this class can use film as the occasion for interpreting, analyzing, and debating the meanings, cultural functions, and affective responses generated by biblical narratives in film. Finally, this course asks us to analyze the implications of ways in which we read texts and films. For this interdisciplinary course we will read selected biblical and extra-canonical texts, including selections from canonical and non-canonical gospels, the letters of Paul, and the book of Revelation, but our focus will be on the way that movies (and the people who make them and watch them) make meaning out of these biblical texts.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation based on participation, short writing exercises (1-pg response papers), one 3-pg analytical essay that will also be revised, a 6-pg synthetic midterm essay, and a final 10-pg review essay

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

AMST 229 (D2) REL 229 (D2)

Attributes: AMST Arts in Context Electives AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora FMST Core Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 230 (F) Who was Muhammad?

Cross-listings: REL 230 GBST 230 ARAB 230

Primary Cross-listing

Considered the Messenger of God, Muhammad is a central character of the Islamic tradition and has been the object of love and devotion for centuries. Recent outbursts sparked by controversial cartoons depicting Muhammad have made clear that he remains a revered and controversial figure even today. This course takes a critical historical perspective to the biographies of Muhammad, the founder of Islam. Rather than focus on the "facts" of his life, we will think about the ways in which historical context, political interests, and shifting conceptions of religion have influenced the way in which Muhammad has been imagined and remembered. We will also consider the ways in which Muslim and non-Muslims biographies of Muhammad are intertwined and interdependent, often developing in tandem with one another. By exploring Muslim and non-Muslim, pre-modern and modern accounts of Muhammad's life, we will think about the many ways in which Muhammad's life has been told and re-told over the centuries. In this course we will consider some of the following depictions of Muhammad: Muhammad as the object of ritual devotion; Muhammad as statesman and military leader; Muhammad's polygynous marriages and his young wife, Aisha; Muhammad as social reformer and revolutionary. Course readings will include pre-modern biographies (in translation) as well as contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim biographies.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: reading responses, 3 short essays (3-4 pages double-spaced), and final exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 230 (D2) GBST 230 (D2) ARAB 230 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 232 (S) Buddhist Economics

Cross-listings: ASST 232 REL 232

Primary Cross-listing

Or, "From 'Shark Tank' to 'Monk Cave': Business and Socially Engaged Buddhism". Television shows like Shark Tank, featuring a panel of potential investors who consider propositions from aspiring entrepreneurs, evinces that popular culture values only the making of profit. In such a capitalistic world, who are the "winners" and "losers"? What impact does a business/product have beyond its intended consumer benefits? What is the Buddhist response to business and commerce and its overall effects on individuals, society, and ecology? This course will challenge students to research, analyze, and devise resolutions for real world issues, by having students employ Buddhist solutions informed by concepts such as compassion, interconnectedness, and Socially Engaged Buddhism. Students will scrutinize the related concept of "structural violence". We will look at examples from Bhutan's "Gross Domestic Happiness", Thailand's "Sufficiency Economy", China's state-led religious charities under the name of "Humanistic Buddhism", as well as the ordination of trees. This course hopes to prepare students to be critical, rather than merely passive, world citizens, especially in the realm of business, and to be more conscious and aware of their everyday life choices and its impact on every aspect of society.

Class Format: Seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and active participation 15%; short writing assignments 25%; mid-term exam 20%; final project and presentation 40%

Prerequisites: None

Enrollment Limit: 16

Enrollment Preferences: Religious Studies majors and Asian Studies majors

Expected Class Size: 16

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ASST 232 (D2) REL 232 (D2)

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01 MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Susanne Ryuyin Kerekes

REL 233 (S) Islam and the West: A Clash of Civilizations?

"This idea that all religions share the same values is bulls**t and we need to call it bulls**t," the popular political commentator and critic Bill Maher has said on multiple occasions. "If you are in this religion [Islam], you probably do have values that are at odds [with American values]. This is what liberals don't want to recognize." Maher has acquired a reputation for making strong statements like this about the need for Americans (and liberals in particular) to stand up for their secular liberal values, which are in conflict with and superior to the values of Islam. Maher's comments are only one recent manifestation of a long line of pundits making such claims. This is best exemplified by Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis, which famously predicted that there would inevitably be a violent clash between the Islamic and Western Civilizations. This course investigates such ideas about the inherent conflict between Islam and the West. How should we understand the nature of Islamic and Western civilizations and the relation between them? What is the history of this relationship? What has given rise to these standard representations of Islam and Muslims? What are the political stakes and consequences of these representations? How should we understand the phenomenon of "Islamophobia"? We will explore these questions through an in-depth and critical investigation into the history of Euro-American nationalism and colonialism, the concepts of "civilizations" and "religions", the history of modern Islam, and the nature of Orientalism and secularism.
REL 234  (F)  What is Islam?  (DPE)

Cross-listings:  GBST 234 ARAB 234 REL 234 HIST 208

Primary Cross-listing
This course introduces students to Islam as a varied and contested historical tradition. The course will trace the historical development of Islam, focusing on religious and intellectual thought, political developments, and the practices and lived lives of Muslims. We will begin with situating the rise of Islam within the context of late antiquity, followed by an examination of the life of Muhammad, and the rise of Muslim empires. These developments will form the framework through which we investigate the theological, philosophical, legal, mystical, and literary writings of Muslims from the classical to the early modern periods of Islamic history. The main aim of the course is to develop a framework for understanding the historical developments through which Muslims have constructed ideas about normativity, authority, and orthodoxy in debates around Islam. Sources will include pre-modern historical and religious texts (in translation).

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: reading responses, two essays, final exam
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors (or those considering Religion as a major), then Arabic Studies and History majors
Expected Class Size: 20
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)  (DPE)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
GBST 234 (D2) ARAB 234 (D2) REL 234 (D2) HIST 208 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course looks role of power, in particular imperial and colonial power in the construction of religion. To that end, the course will explore how the rise of Muslim empires shaped the construction of pre-modern Islam and subsequently the role of European colonialism in shaping the emergence of modern Islam. This course will teach students critical tools in postcolonial theory about the relationship between power and the production of knowledge and the agency of the colonized.
Attributes: HIST Group E Electives - Middle East  HIST Group P Electives - Premodern
Not offered current academic year

REL 235  (S)  The Garden in the Ancient World

Cross-listings:  CLAS 235 REL 235 ENVI 232 COMP 235

Secondary Cross-listing
Drawing on the literature, art, and archaeology of ancient gardens and on real gardens of the present day, this course examines the very nature and experience of the garden and the act of gardening. Using a multi-disciplinary approach, we will explore the garden as a paradise; as a locus for philosophical discussion and religious encounter; as a site of labor, conquest, and resistance; and as a place for solace, inspiration, and desire. This course will be grounded in crucial readings from antiquity, such as the Hebrew Bible, Homer, Sappho, Cicero, Lucretius, Vergil, Horace, Columella, and Augustine, and in the perspectives of more modern writers, from Jane Austen and Tom Stoppard to contemporary cultural historian George McKay. Ultimately, our goal is to analyze conceptions and expressions of beauty, power, and love-in the garden. All readings are in translation.
REL 235 (D1) REL 235 (D2) ENVI 232 (D1) COMP 235 (D1)

Not offered current academic year

REL 236 (S) Reading the Qur'an

Cross-listings: ARAB 236 COMP 213 GBST 236 REL 236

Primary Cross-listing

In the nearly 1500 years of Islamic history, the Qur'an has been a central source of spiritual insight, ethical and legal guidance, sacred stories, and theological principles. Considered the divine word of God, the Qur'an is central to devotional life. This course will explore the Qur'an as a text that is always in a state of production. We will focus significantly on close readings of the text of the Qur'an, in addition to pre-modern and modern Qur'anic exegesis. The course will begin with a historical account of the revelation and collection of the Qur'an, placing the form and content of the text in the context of 7th century Arab society and the life of the Prophet. We will then study Qur'anic commentaries to discuss how Muslims have drawn theological, legal, philosophical, and mystical meaning from the Qur'an. We will pose some of the following questions: What do the different exegetical methods tell us about the intertextual nature of the Qur'an? How have these shifting notions affected the meaning made from Qur'anic verses and passages? What role do interpretive communities play in determining what the Qur'an says? Lastly, through an exploration of the art of Qur'an recitation, calligraphy, and Qur'an manuscripts, we will explore the ways in which the Qur'an is also an object of devotion in Muslim life.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, weekly reading responses, 3- to 4-page midterm paper, and a final project with a media component and a 4- to 6-page analytical essay

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Religion and Arabic Studies majors

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ARAB 236 (D2) COMP 213 (D1) GBST 236 (D2) REL 236 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 237 (F) Islam in the United States: From Black Muslims to the War on Terror

Cross-listings: AMST 237 AFR 237 REL 237

Primary Cross-listing

Malcolm X is likely the most prominent and influential Muslim figure in the history of the United States. His story represents two fundamental themes in the history of Islam in America: conflict between Muslims over what is "authentic" or "orthodox" Islam; and the ways that American history, politics, and culture determine the contours of "American Islam". This course will explore these two themes through an array of topics in the history of American Islam. In so doing, we will examine the complex relation between religion, politics, and culture in the United States. Beginning with the story of Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, and other African-American Muslim movements, we will try to understand: What made Islam so appealing to millions of African-Americans throughout the 20th century? And were these genuinely "religious" and "Islamic" movements, or just racial/political "black
nationalist" movements in the guise of religion? What counts as legitimately "Islamic", and who gets to decide? We will then move into the latter half of the 20th century and the post-9/11 debates over authentic Islam. What happened to American Muslim communities and organizations after the waves of post-1965 immigration from Muslim countries? How have debates about Muslim identity shifted over time, from being configured in terms of black separatism, to transnational/diasporic identity, to the attempts at articulating an indigenous "American-Muslim" identity? How have national narratives around 9/11 and the "War on Terror" impacted these debates over identity and "true Islam"? And how have these debates intersected with gender, racial, and ethnic politics? Throughout the course, we will be studying historical and anthropological material, autobiographies, novels, documentaries, films, and social media. The course fosters critical thinking about diversity by challenging assumptions of who Muslims are, what being American means, and what Islam is. It also focuses on the complex interaction of different dimensions of diversity, from religion to race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, language, and age.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: in-class participation and presentations; 3 short essays; final project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

AMST 237 (D2) AFR 237 (D2) REL 237 (D2)

Attributes: AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora

Not offered current academic year

REL 238 (F) Faith and Rationality in Islam: Skepticism and the Quest for Certainty

Religious faith is generally perceived as being diametrically opposed to reason and rationality. Islam in particular is often assumed to be even more dogmatic in its demand for blind unquestioning faith. This course will explore the lively debates among Muslim theologians regarding the complex relationship between faith, rationality, and skepticism. Is faith compatible with reason and rationality? Can the foundations of Islamic belief be proven to be true? Are there limits to what can be known rationally? Are people justified in holding religious beliefs? Does faith require absolute certainty? What room is there for doubt and skepticism in Islam? We will explore these questions through an array of primary and secondary readings in Islamic theology, philosophy, and mysticism from the medieval period.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: essays and exams

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Expected Class Size: 5-10

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 239 (F) The Modern Middle East (DPE)

Cross-listings: HIST 207 ARAB 207 GBST 101 REL 239 LEAD 207 JWST 217

Secondary Cross-listing

This survey course addresses the main economic, religious, political and cultural trends in the modern Middle East. Topics to be covered include the cultural diversity of the Middle East, relations with Great Powers, the impact of imperialism, the challenge of modernity, the creation of nation states and nationalist ideologies, the discovery of oil, radical religious groups, and war and peace. Throughout the course these significant changes will be evaluated in light of their impact on the lives of a variety of individuals in the region and especially how they have grappled differently with increasing Western political and economic domination.

Class Format: lecture
Requirements/Evaluation: participation, two short papers, quizzes, midterm, and final exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 40

Enrollment Preferences: History & Arabic majors, and Jewish studies concentrators; completion of course admission survey if overenrolled

Expected Class Size: 30-40

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

HIST 207 (D2) ARAB 207 (D2) GBST 101 (D2) REL 239 (D2) LEAD 207 (D2) JWST 217 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course introduces students to the incredible diversity of the Middle East. It will explore how people of different backgrounds and in different situations have responded in diverse ways to the problems of the day. Students will acquire the critical tools to assess a number of interpretations of the past and how to understand and appreciate the many narratives in the Middle East today that have profound political and cultural implications.

Attributes: GBST Middle Eastern Studies Electives  HIST Group E Electives - Middle East  JWST Elective Courses  LEAD Facets or Domains of Leadership

Fall 2019
LEC Section: 01  TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm  Magnús T. Bernhardsson

REL 240  (S)  The Challenge of ISIS

Cross-listings: HIST 210  ANTH 210  GBST 210  ARAB 210  REL 240

Secondary Cross-listing

What is ISIS and what does it want? Using historical and anthropological sources and perspectives, the course considers the origins, ideology and organization of the Islamic State. Beginning with an examination of early radical movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood, the Afghan mujahedin and Taliban, and al-Qaeda, the course will go on to investigate how ISIS derives important aspects of its ideology and organization from these earlier movements and how it deviates from them. We will look at unique aspects of the movement, such as its use of social media, its extensive destruction of ancient historical sites, its staging of spectacles of violence, and its recruitment of Muslims from Europe and North America. We will also examine the ideological constitution of the movement, including its attitude toward and treatment of non-Muslims, its conceptualization of itself as a modern incarnation of the original Islamic caliphate, the ways in which it justifies its use of violence, and its apocalyptic vision of the present-day as End Time. Finally, we will evaluate current responses to ISIS, in the West and among Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere, in terms of their effectiveness and strategic coherence.

Class Format: lecture

Requirements/Evaluation: blogs (4 main blog posts, responses to at least 3-4 other blogs each week) (30%); analytic paper or class history paper (35%); 2 midterms (35%)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 40

Expected Class Size: 40

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

HIST 210 (D2) ANTH 210 (D2) GBST 210 (D2) ARAB 210 (D2) REL 240 (D2)

Attributes: GBST Middle Eastern Studies Electives  HIST Group E Electives - Middle East

Not offered current academic year

REL 241  (S)  History of Sexuality

Cross-listings: GBST 241  REL 241  HIST 292  WGSS 239
Primary Cross-listing

Is sexuality an immutable aspect of who we are or is it socially constructed? How have people understood sex and sexuality throughout history? Why does religion have any say in the sexual lives of individuals and society? What are sexual transgressions and why are they punished? Is sex a commodity that can be exchanged for money? Is sex political? This course will explore these questions through a historical approach, focusing in particular on the shifting understanding of sex and sexuality across historical time and different geographical regions. In investigating the category of sexuality, this course will push us to consider three key questions: 1) Is sexuality a useful category for historical analysis, 2) how have our assumptions regarding sexuality and sexual ethics taken shape and changed over time and 3) how do social, cultural, political, and economic conditions affect changing meanings of sexuality. Historical studies will be read in conjunction with different theoretical frameworks about sexuality. Reading historical accounts of sexuality alongside theoretical pieces will allow us to consider how historians construct an argument and the influence of theoretical frameworks in shaping scholarship. Some of the theorists we will read in the course include: Michel Foucault, David Halperin, Afsaneh Najmabadi, Valerie Traub, and Carla Freccero.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: reading responses, two essays, and final research paper
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: Religion, History, and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

GBST 241 (D2) REL 241 (D2) HIST 292 (D2) WGSS 239 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 242 (S) Women, Gender, and Sexuality in Islam (DPE)
Cross-listings: ARAB 242 REL 242 WGSS 242

Primary Cross-listing

The figure of the Muslim woman is an object of intense scrutiny in Western society. Claims that Muslim women are oppressed and the incompatibility of Islam and feminism abound. This course will consider women and gender roles in the Islamic tradition and how Muslim women have interpreted and negotiated these discourses. We will explore questions of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality across various historical periods as well as through contemporary Muslim feminist scholarship and literature (including film and novels). We will begin with insights into the politics of representing Muslim women, exploring how Muslim women are depicted in popular culture and media and ask the crucial question: do Muslim women need saving? We will then explore: how Muslim women have claimed religious authority through scriptural interpretation; how they have negotiated their position in Islamic law both historically and in contemporary Muslim societies; and the lives of pious women in Sufism—the mystical tradition of Islam. We will conclude with Muslim feminist scholarship and recent works on Islamic masculinities. Throughout the course, emphasis will be placed on the diversity of interpretations in Islam around women, gender, and sexuality and on Muslim women's own articulations about their religious identity and experiences. Some of the topics covered in this course include: marriage and divorce, slavery, modesty and veiling, and homosexuality.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: weekly discussion post, midterm essay, and final paper (6-8 pages)
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Religion, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Arabic majors
Expected Class Size: 14
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ARAB 242 (D2) REL 242 (D2) WGSS 242 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course explores the relationship between gender, authority, and civilizational discourse. To that end, the
course will explore: 1) how assumptions about gender shaped the legal and Quranic exegetical tradition and Muslim feminist critiques. 2) The construction of the oppressed Muslim woman in justifying military invasion and nationalistic rhetoric. This course will introduce students to critical tools in decolonial feminism and the relationship between gender and power.

Not offered current academic year

REL 243 (F) Islamic Law: Past and Present
Cross-listings: WGSS 243 ARAB 243 REL 243 HIST 302

Primary Cross-listing

From fear of the Shari'a to its implementation in so called "Islamic countries," Islamic law is perhaps best associated with draconian punishments and the oppression of women. Islamic law is ever present in our public discourse today and yet little is known about it. This course is designed to give students a foundation in the substantive teachings of Islamic law. Islamic law stretches back over 1400 years and is grounded in the Quran, the life example of the Prophet Muhammad, and juridical discourse. Teetering between legal and ethical discourse, the Shari'a moves between what we normally consider law as well as ethics and etiquette. The course will explore four key aspects of the law: its historical development, its ethical and legal content, the law in practice, and the transformation of Islamic law through colonialism and into the contemporary. Specific areas we will cover include: ritual piety, family and personal status law, criminal law, and dietary rules.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: weekly responses, four 2- to 3-page essays
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: majors
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

WGSS 243 (D2) ARAB 243 (D2) REL 243 (D2) HIST 302 (D2)

Attributes: HIST Group B Electives - Asia HIST Group E Electives - Middle East HIST Group P Electives - Premodern JLST Interdepartmental Electives

Not offered current academic year

REL 244 (S) Mind and Persons in Indian Thought
Cross-listings: REL 244 ASST 244

Primary Cross-listing

In this course, we follow the conversation among Indian philosophers concerning the self and the nature of consciousness. We start with some of the Hindu views about the self and the mind and consider their ethical implications. We then consider a range of Buddhist critiques of these views, focusing more particularly on the Madhyamaka philosophy, which radicalizes the critique of the self into a global anti-realist and skeptical stance. We also examine the Yogacara school, which offers a process view of reality focusing on the analysis of experience. We conclude by considering some of the later Hindu holistic views of the self as responses to the Buddhist critique. In this way we come to realize that far from being the irrational foil of "the West," Indian tradition is a rich resource for thinking through some of the central ideas that have challenged philosophers in both traditions.

Class Format: lecture/discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: full attendance and participation, three short essays (6 pages)
Prerequisites: prior exposure to Buddhism or philosophy, or permission of instructor
Enrollment Limit: 18
Enrollment Preferences: selection based on the basis of relevant background
Expected Class Size: 18
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 244 (D2) ASST 244 (D2)
Attributes: PHIL Related Courses
Not offered current academic year

REL 246 (F)(S) India’s Identities: Reproducing the Nation, Community and Individual
Cross-listings: ASST 246 ANTH 246 WGSS 246 REL 246

Primary Cross-listing

This course considers India’s contradictory legacy as a booming Asian democracy and fragile society built upon deep and enduring divisions. Why is India’s growing population so often described in terms of multiple identities or fragmenting oppositions -- Hindu/Muslim, rich/poor, high caste/outcaste, male/female? What are the historic roots and ongoing causes that produce structural violence around these axes of difference? We pay particular attention to key moments (Partition, communal riots in Gujarat in 2003, Hyderabad in 1990, Delhi in 1984), and places (Punjab, Bengal, Jammu & Kashmir) for our analysis of how religion, gender, and caste intersect to produce a landscape of communal violence, social hierarchy, and fragmented subjectivity in India today. We are as interested in discourses and practices that shore up these binaries as well as the third terms that attempt to transcend or diffuse them. For instance, we look at how Buddhism is and is not a middle path between Hindu/Muslim conflict in Indian Kashmir. Our course readings include ethnographic, sociological, and historical analyses, as well as oral histories and popular media.

Class Format: tutorial
Requirements/Evaluation: weekly writing assignments and tutorial attendance every week
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: majors in Anthropology and Sociology, Religion, Asian Studies, or Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ASST 246 (D2) ANTH 246 (D2) WGSS 246 (D2) REL 246 (D2)
Attributes: GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies Electives PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health WGSS Racial Sexual + Cultural Diversity Courses

Fall 2019
TUT Section: T1 Cancelled
Spring 2020
TUT Section: T1 TBA Kim Gutschow

REL 247 (S) Race and Religion in the American West
Cross-listings: LATS 247 REL 247 AMST 247 ENVI 247

Primary Cross-listing

From the "Land of Enchantment" of New Mexico in the far reaches of the desert to the sacred temples on the West Coast that overlook Pacific Ocean, this course examines the peoples and the "sacroscapes" of the American West. Historian Patricia Limerick regards this region as an extraordinary site of convergence and one of "the greatest meeting places on the planet." The region is a site of cultural complexity where Penitentes maintained a sacred order, Pentecostals attracted a global audience, Native Americans forged legal/protected definitions of "religion," and Asian immigrants built the first Buddhist and Sikh temples. Until recently, standard surveys of religious history in North America have devoted minimal attention to the distinctive role of religion in the American West. They have focused on religious history in the flow of events westward from the Plymouth Rock landing and Puritan establishment while generally overlooking the Pueblo Revolt in modern-day New Mexico which occurred in that same century and marked the temporary suspension of Spanish encroachment. How do scholars of religion and history account for these renditions between the past and present? Most mainstream religious histories treat religious experience and identity in the U.S. West as additive rather than complementary to or constitutive of its mainstream narratives. Contemporary historians of religion note the need for new "sights," "sites," and "sites" in order to deconstruct and
reconstruct this incomplete meta-narrative, taking into account such factors as migration, gender, region, and the environment.

Class Format: seminar/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: student participation, weekly reflection papers (up to half page), midterm primary source paper (up to 5 pages), and a final research paper on Religion and the Environment (8-10 page paper with a media/visual component)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: none

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Unit Notes: Religion elective course; this course is part of the 2016-17 Climate Change Initiative

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
LATS 247 (D2) REL 247 (D2) AMST 247 (D2) ENVI 247 (D2)

Attributes: AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives LATS Comparative Race + Ethnic Studies Electives

Not offered current academic year

REL 249  (F)  Anti-Semitism  (DPE)

Cross-listings: REL 249  JWST 249

Primary Cross-listing

This course will investigate intellectual traditions, political movements, and cultural objects that portray Jews, Jewishness, or Judaism as essentially pernicious. We will analyze materials from a variety of times and places, including the ancient world, the medieval period, and the present day. We will assess the impact of anti-Semitism on the lives of Jews and non-Jews. But we will also read theoretical approaches to the study of anti-Semitism that raise key questions for our investigation. Where does the term "anti-Semitism" come from and how exactly should it be defined? Is anti-Semitism a continuous phenomenon that connects every claim of Jewish perniciousness, wherever it is alleged, for over two thousand years of human history? Or should every context be treated as fundamentally distinct, so that the claim of Jewish perniciousness is presumed to have a distinct meaning, origin, and purpose in each case? What motivates charges of Jewish perniciousness? What are the particular threats typically alleged to be posed by Jews, Jewishness, and Judaism? How do constructions of Jewish perniciousness fit with constructions of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, and nationality in different times and places?

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: three short papers (4-5 pages), one longer final paper (6-8 pages)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 30

Enrollment Preferences: Jewish Studies concentrators, Religion majors, and students who have taken JWST 203

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 249 (D2) JWST 249 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course will introduce students to discursive, institutional, and social structures that have organized the stigmatization, domination, and persecution of Jews in various geographic locations for over two thousand years. An understanding of these structures is crucial to understanding contemporary dynamics of difference and power. Students will also learn how anti-Semitism intersects with constructions of race, gender, class, religion, ethnicity, and nation.

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

REL 250  (F)  Scholars, Saints and Immortals: Virtue Ethics in East Asia
Cross-listings: ASST 250  REL 250

Primary Cross-listing

In East Asian cultures, as in the United States, popular conceptions of morality typically take their shape, not from explicit rules, but from moral paragons--stylized figures that are said to embody a distinctive cluster of virtues. For example, American Christians invoke not only Jesus, but also a pantheon of "secular saints" as diverse as Martin Luther King Jr. and General Patton, George Washington and Cesar Chavez. This course will explore the cultural functions of moral paragons and philosophies of virtue in East Asia by introducing students to examples from Chinese and Japanese history, ranging from Confucian articulations of the ideal scholar-bureaucrat to Buddhist conceptions of the Bodhisattva to Taoist immortals. It will also address the history of ethical thought in East Asia, focusing particular attention on conceptions of "Virtue Ethics." This approach has come to be seen by some contemporary analytic philosophers as a way out of the impasse produced by ethical relativism and the loss of theological rationales for moral action. Readings will include Euro-American philosophers such as Nietzsche and MacIntyre as well as primary texts in translation by Chuang-tzu, Confucius, Shantideva and others.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: active participation, short writing assignments, midterm, and a self-scheduled final exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 30

Enrollment Preferences: Religious Studies and Asian Studies majors

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ASST 250 (D2) REL 250 (D2)

Attributes: GBST East Asian Studies Electives  PHIL Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 252 (S) Zen Buddhist Visual Culture: The Path to Nirvana

Cross-listings: ASST 376  ARTH 376  REL 252

Secondary Cross-listing

This course is about the ways in which images are produced, viewed, and used in the Zen Buddhist tradition. It explores the various ways in which visual culture is a key part of Zen Buddhist teaching in China and Japan. In this class we will look at both high art and popular expressions of Zen Buddhist visual culture. Topics of interest include: 1) Buddhist image making and icon worship; 2) Gardens; 3) tearooms, tea ceremony and tea bowls; 4) The Zen temples Ryoan-ji, Daisen-in, and Daitoku-ji; 5) The political function of Zen and its art in Japan's samurai culture; 6) The popular Zen Buddhist cult of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and his gender transformation; and 7) Daruma (Bodhidharma) imagery in popular culture. This course is a CRAAS (critical reasoning and analytical skills) course. The class format also offers students opportunities to practice public speaking and writing skills.

Class Format: lecture/class discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: class discussions and participation; oral presentations, short papers; and a research paper

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: sophomores, juniors and seniors

Expected Class Size: 8

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D1)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ASST 376 (D1) ARTH 376 (D1) REL 252 (D1)

Not offered current academic year

REL 253 (S) Spiritual Crossroads: Religious Life in Southeast Asia
No region of the world presents a richer tapestry of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions than Southeast Asia. Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam are all to be found and all of them interpenetrate and contend with each other and with a deep undergirding of animism, shamanism, and mystical folk belief systems. This course will survey these religious traditions through time and space, looking in particular at the growing tension between religion and the state as fundamentalism and religious militancy have spread into the region in recent times. All of Southeast Asia will be covered, but particular attention will be devoted to Indonesia, where religious blending and the growth of new fundamentalism are both especially marked.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: midterm, short essays, term paper
Prerequisites: none; open to non-majors
Enrollment Limit: 19
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ASST 233 (D2) REL 253 (D2) ANTH 233 (D2)
Attributes: GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies Electives
Not offered current academic year

REL 254 (F) The Theory and Practice of Meditation in the Modern World
This course invites students to examine theoretically and experientially meditation. Throughout the course, we examine meditations belonging to various Buddhist traditions through our own practice. We study some of the manuals where these meditations are taught and connect these practices to some of the more important ideas of the tradition. In studying and practicing meditation, we follow a gradual approach, starting from the most basic practices to more advanced ones. We also connect the practices and ideas we consider with modern scientific approaches, examining practices such as mindfulness therapy and the practice of positive emotions from a psychological perspective. In the process, we re-contextualize Buddhist ideas by connecting them with modern approaches, particularly those inspired by biology, psychology and ecology. Throughout the course, students will keep a daily practice of meditation and record their experiences in a journal so as to be able to come to an informed understanding combining a theoretical grasp of the issues raised by meditation and their own personal appreciation.

Class Format: lecture; mixture of lecture, discussion, and practice of meditation
Requirements/Evaluation: full attendance and participation, regular practice of meditation, two middle-length essays, and a meditation journal
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, students who have taken REL 288
Expected Class Size: 18
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2019
LEC Section: 01 MWF 8:30 am - 9:45 am Georges B. Dreyfus

REL 255 (S) Buddhism: Ideas and Practices
This course introduces students to Buddhism by examining its ideas and practices as they have taken place in actual social contexts rather than as disembodied textual objects. After examining the main ideas and narratives of the tradition, we turn our attention to Thailand where we examine how
these ideas and narratives have shaped a whole range of practices, from meditation to shamanistic rituals. We then consider the transformations that Buddhism is undergoing in contemporary society, examining the rise of meditation movement, the changing role of monks and laity, the resurgence of the nun order, the rise of Buddhist social activism and the development of new Buddhist social philosophies. We ask questions such as: How can Buddhism adapt to a modern global consumerist society? What are the transformations involved in this process and the role that Buddhism can play in such a global society? Should Buddhists take advantage of the opportunities of this new global culture or should they adopt a critical stance toward its consumerist values?

Class Format: lecture/discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: full attendance and active participation; two essays
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: none
Expected Class Size: 25
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ANTH 255 (D2) REL 255 (D2) ASST 255 (D2)
Attributes: GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies Electives PHIL Related Courses
Not offered current academic year

REL 256 (F) Buddhism, Sex, & Gender: #MeToo Then and Now (DPE)
Cross-listings: ANTH 256 REL 256 ASST 256 WGSS 256
Primary Cross-listing
This course considers the feminist voices that have been part and parcel of Buddhist practices, texts, and institutions for most of its 2500-year history. We will conduct a historical genealogy of Buddhist voices that illustrate the fluid and disruptive role of sex, gender, caste, and class in relation to individual behavior and social relations. How did the Buddha's inner revolution produce a set of practices that both reject and reinforce existing binaries and social hierarchies of sex and gender, and with what effects? We will trace a feminist voice that decries harassment, assault, and systemic sexism within Buddhist communities from the first female disciples (Theri) of the Buddha to the current #MeToo era of embattled toxic masculinity. Along the way, we explore a literary canon that contains misogyny and 'she devils' alongside a rich tapestry of female divinities, transgender fluidity, and female liberation. We pursue and intersectional analysis of Buddhist traditions and texts by considering the multiple forms of social hierarchy—gender, sexuality, race, and class—that Buddhism has attempted to transcend. We begin by considering three women in the Buddha's life—his mother (Maya), his stepmother/aunt (Gotami), and his wife (Yashodhara)—as well as the tales of the first enlightened Buddhist women whose topics include prostitution, patriarchy, sexism, and pathetic husbands, as well as their own decaying bodies and beauty. Our next theme is the myriad ways that gender is both produced and deconstructed in Buddhist discourses on enlightenment and the human body. Our final theme considers a range of monastic memoirs, including a Buddhist black nun who left Harvard to take ordination in Thailand, and a Dutchman who studied Zen Japan. We close by examining the current debates in the U.S. and Asia that seek to combat systemic racism, sexism, and casteism in Buddhist traditions.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: class discussion, reading responses (3-4 pages), writing chat, final research paper (12 pages)
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology, Religion, Asian Studies, Women's, Gender and Sexuality majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ANTH 256 (D2) REL 256 (D2) ASST 256 (D2) WGSS 256 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: The course fulfills DPE because it seeks to theorize the role of difference (gender, sex, class, and race) and intersectionality within Buddhist texts, practices, and institutions. It considers how Buddhist practices and institutions both deconstruct and reproduce
REL 257 (S) Tibetan Buddhism: Embodying Wisdom and Compassion

We begin by considering the basic ideas and practices of Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the ways in which the ideals of wisdom and compassion have shaped Tibetan culture. We then proceed to examine particular aspects of the tradition such as the role of the teacher or lama and their various manifestations, from the exotic figure of the tantric guru to that of the Dalai Lama, a charismatic world teacher engaged in both religious and political affairs. We also examine a wide range of lay and monastic practices, from the life of large monasteries and their unique culture to the practices of nuns and lay people. Throughout this course, we consider not just the variety of exoteric practice forms but also the esoteric tantric tradition that pervades Tibetan life. We examine the various meditative practices that revolve around this profound and often misunderstood tradition. In doing so, we do not consider tantra as just a set of strange practices sometimes revolving around sex and violence. Rather we examine how it manifests a philosophy of embodiment that has profound implications for thinking about who we are as human beings.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: full attendance and participation, two essays

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 259 (S) Ethics of Jewish American Fiction

Cross-listings: REL 259 ENGL 259 JWST 259

Primary Cross-listing

After the Second World War, Jewish American writers who wrote about Jewish characters and Jewish themes were increasingly celebrated as central figures in American fiction. Isaac Bashevis Singer, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, Cynthia Ozick and Philip Roth are among those who gained prominence in this period. These writers were literary innovators and often addressed broad humanistic themes. But they also struggled with profound questions that arose in the postwar period about Jewishness, the legacy of the Holocaust, and what it means to be an American. In this course we will read the above authors and others. We will focus, in particular, on the distinctive ethical and political ideas, emotions, and aspirations that animate their work. The course will begin with a study of theoretical approaches that will provide the basis for our ethical criticism: we will read, for instance, Lionel Trilling, Wayne Booth, Martha Nussbaum, and Noël Carroll. Then we will delve into the fiction, following a trail that begins in the postwar period and continues in fictions by Erica Jong, Rebecca Goldstein, Michael Chabon, Gary Shteyngart, and others. Can we find a distinctive Jewish American ethics in Jewish American fiction?

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, one take-home exam on theoretical approaches to ethical criticism; four short essays

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies concentrators, and English majors

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 259 (D2) ENGL 259 (D1) JWST 259 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2020
REL 261 (F)  *Rastafari: Dread, Politics, Agency*

**Cross-listings:** REL 261  AFR 299  PSCI 233

**Secondary Cross-listing**

The emergence of Rastafari in the twentieth century marked a distinct phase in the theory and practice of political agency. From its heretical roots in Jamaica, Garveyism, Ethiopianism, and Pan-Africanism, Rastafari has evolved from a Caribbean theological movement to an international political actor. This course investigates the political theory of Rastafari in order to develop intellectual resources for theorizing the concept of agency in contemporary Africana thought and political theory. We will analyze texts and audio-visual works on the political economy of late colonial Jamaica, core Rastafari thinking, political theology, the role of reggae music, the notion of agency, and the influence of Rastafari on global politics.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** attendance and participation, weekly reading e-response papers, two short essays, and a 12- to 15- page final paper

**Prerequisites:** none; open to all

**Enrollment Limit:** 15

**Enrollment Preferences:** Africana Studies concentrators and majors in Political Science and Religion

**Expected Class Size:** 12

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

REL 261 (D2) AFR 299 (D2) PSCI 233 (D2)

**Attributes:** AFR Core Electives  AMST Arts in Context Electives  AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora  AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives

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REL 262 (F)  *Time and Blackness*

**Cross-listings:** REL 262  AMST 208  AFR 208

**Secondary Cross-listing**

The concept of time is one of the most examined, yet least theorized, concepts in Africana Studies. While the field is saturated with historical studies and literary analyses that take up issues of cultural memory, both of which involve thinking about time, time itself is rarely the subject of sustained inquiry. This may be due to its abstractness as an idea and the level of analysis its conceptualization demands, or because time in the African American experience cannot be understood outside of the meaning of race, which itself is far from tangible. In this tutorial, “Time and Blackness,” we will explore how African American writers across a number of genres understand time. We will read select texts of fiction as well as spiritual autobiographies, historical narratives, and sociological studies to understand how writers draw from—and create—paradigms of time to organize their work. The following questions will structure our investigation: What are the constituent elements of time in African American writing? How does race shape the ways a writer conceives of the experience of time? In examining writings across genres, is there something that we can call an identifiable African-American “timescape”?

**Class Format:** tutorial

**Requirements/Evaluation:** assignments will include six 2-page response papers; two 5-page writing assignments; and a final, 10-page review essay on how time is understood in a genre of writing

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** concentrators in Africana Studies, majors in Religious Studies, and majors in American Studies

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)
REL 263  (S)  Giving God a Backbeat: Rap Music, Religion & Spirituality  
**Cross-listings:** REL 263  AFR 221  
**Secondary Cross-listing**
On the surface, religion and rap music may seem as if they have little in common. Yet, like other Black musical traditions such as spirituals and the blues, rap is rooted in African American religious traditions. In this course, we will explore the ways in which rap music intersects with the sacred and secular worlds. Through an examination of black religious traditions, lyrics, music videos, and digital media, we will unearth what Anthony Pinn calls the "spiritual and religious sensibilities" of rap music. Grounded in culture-centered criticism, we will investigate the rhetoric of rap and religion through the theoretical ideas of Black Liberation Theology and hip-hop feminism.

**Class Format:** seminar  
**Requirements/Evaluation:** students will be evaluated on their class participation, response papers, quizzes, and a final class group project  
**Prerequisites:** none  
**Enrollment Limit:** 25  
**Expected Class Size:** 20  
**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option  
**Distributions:** (D2)  
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:  
REL 263 (D2) AFR 221 (D2)  
**Attributes:** AFR Core Electives  AMST Arts in Context Electives  AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora  
Not offered current academic year  

REL 264  (F)  Bodies, Genders, and Sexualities in the Early Christian World  (DPE)  
**Cross-listings:** REL 264  WGSS 264  
**Primary Cross-listing**
What does it mean to be a woman or a man? To have body? A gender? A sexuality? In this course we will explore the ways in which bodies, genders, and sexualities were experienced and described in Mediterranean antiquity. Ancient experiences of and ideas about bodies, genders, and sexualities were often very different than those of the contemporary world. Nevertheless, because Greek and Roman antiquity and Christian beginnings often function as the imagined origins of "Western" (or European and American) "civilization," these ancient ideas about bodies, genders, and sexuality maintain an out-sized presence in current debates about the "normal" body, gender practices, and the contour of sexuality. With a focus on early Christianity, the course seeks, on the one hand, to introduce students to the early history of Christianity through an inspection of its pluralistic discourses on the meaning and regulation of bodies, genders, and sexuality, even as it keeps an eye toward the modern legacy of these ideas. On the other hand, the course gives students the opportunity to be introduced to key questions and theories in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies through the study of early Christianity and its environs.

**Class Format:** seminar  
**Requirements/Evaluation:** weekly response papers, 5- to 6-page paper, 8- to 10-page pap  
**Prerequisites:** none  
**Enrollment Limit:** 19  
**Enrollment Preferences:** majors, student seniority by class  
**Expected Class Size:** 19  
**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option  
**Distributions:** (D2) (DPE)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 264 (D2) WGSS 264 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: The course’s focus on the production and use of difference in terms of bodies, genders, and sexualities, and how those putative differences were used to authorize the social distribution of power, qualify this course as meeting the DPE distribution requirement.

Not offered current academic year

REL 266 (S) Being American, Being Muslim: American Muslim Literature in the 21st century (DPE)
Cross-listings: ENGL 268 AMST 266 COMP 228 REL 266

Primary Cross-listing
Islam and Muslims in the United States are the subject of extensive public scrutiny and media coverage in broader public discourses. It is less common, however, to hear Muslims’ own voices speak about their lives, experiences, beliefs, and commitments. This course will take a literary approach to exploring American Muslims’ own narratives about themselves. We will address questions such as: How have American Muslims understood their identity in the wake of 9/11? What are the pressures and demands of American national belonging and cultural citizenship that Muslims must navigate? How are race, gender, ethnic heritage, and immigration definitive of Muslim experiences and self-understandings? What are the competing claims and contestations about authentic expressions of Islam? How are Muslims approaching the tensions between communal belonging and individuality? We will be engaging such questions primarily through an analysis of popular memoirs, autobiographies, novels, and short stories, but will also explore some plays, films, poetry, and comedy.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: regular reading responses, two short essays (3-4 pages), final presentation, and final paper (7-8 pages)
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: none
Enrollment Preferences: none
Expected Class Size: 20
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ENGL 268 (D2) AMST 266 (D2) COMP 228 (D2) REL 266 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course will explore the intersections of power in American Muslim life, such as: Muslims as a religious minority in the context of the War on Terror; racial and ethnic differences in Muslim communities; immigration and national belonging; competing claims to religious authenticity and authority; and conflicting gendered norms. Students will learn to identify these multiple layers and configurations in the texts, and how to analyze their workings in nuanced multidimensional ways.

Not offered current academic year

REL 267 (F) The Art of Friendship
Cross-listings: REL 267 COMP 267 CLAS 212

Secondary Cross-listing
The idea of friendship has captivated poets, philosophers, and their audiences for over three millennia. The subtle dynamics of this fundamental relationship between humans have been a source of inspiration, consolation, and consternation for countless writers and readers. What are the different types of friendship? How does one make a friend, and what makes a good friend? How does a friend differ from an acquaintance, an ally, an accomplice, an enemy? Can the beloved also be a friend? Ancient Greek and Latin writers took up these and other questions about friendship in philosophical dialogues and treatises, epic and lyric poems, tragic and comic plays, oratory, and correspondence. This course will explore ancient theories and representations of friendship through readings from many of the most important texts and authors of antiquity, including Gilgamesh, the Hebrew Bible, Homer, Sappho, Euripides, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Virgil, Seneca, and the Epistles of Paul. We will also consider the wide-ranging responses to these meditations and depictions in later traditions from the Middle Ages to modernity, in such writers as Heloise and Abelard, Aelred of Rievaulx, Aquinas, Montaigne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Bishop, Jack Kerouac, and Susan Sontag. All readings are in translation.

Class Format: seminar
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 267 (D1) COMP 267 (D1) CLAS 212 (D1)

Not offered current academic year

REL 268 (S) Where are all the Jews? (DPE) (WS)

Cross listings: ARAB 363 COMP 363 JWST 268 HIST 311 REL 268

Secondary Cross-listing

Until four decades ago, many Maghrebi and Middle Eastern cities and villages teemed with Jewish populations. However, the creation of the Alliance Israélite Universelle’s schools (1830s), the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the decolonization process in the Maghreb and the Middle East, and the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War accelerated the departure of Arab and Berber Jews from their homelands to other destinations, including France, Israel, Canada, the United States, and different Latin American countries. Arab and Berber Jews’ departure from their ancestral lands left a socioeconomic and cultural void that Maghrebi and Middle Eastern cultural production has finally started to address, albeit shyly. The course will help students understand the depth of Jewish life in the Maghreb and the Middle East, and interrogate the local and global factors that led to their sudden disappearance from both social and cultural memories for a long time. Reading fiction, autobiographies, historiographical works, ethnographies, and anthropological texts alongside films and documentaries, the students will understand how literature and film have become a locus in which historiographical amnesia about Arab/Berber Jews is actively contested by recreating a bygone world, which, until fairly recently, both Jews and Muslims occupied and negotiated successfully for millennia. Reading against both conflict and nostalgia as the primary determinants of Jewish-Muslim relations, the course will help students think about multiple ways in which Jews and Muslims formed communities of citizens despite their differences and disagreements.

Class Format: Seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: 400-word weekly, focused responses on Glow; a book review (600 words); two five-page papers as mid-terms; one ten-page final paper; one presentation

Prerequisites: None

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: None

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ARAB 363 (D1) COMP 363 (D1) JWST 268 (D2) HIST 311 (D2) REL 268 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Students are required to present an outline of their papers before submitting a draft paper. The professor will give feedback on each written work to improve students’ writing skills. Students are required to incorporate the feedback to improve their drafts before they become final. Students will receive detailed and consistent feedback about their writing in Arabic language. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Students in this course will understand the historical process that lead to the disappearance of Arab/Berber Jews. Students also will work out alternative ways to grasp Jewish-Muslim relations beyond nostalgia and conflict. Finally, students enrolled in the course will grapple with and try to disentangle the complexity of Jewish-Muslim citizenship in both pre-colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01 Cancelled
REL 269 (F)(S) Mindsight: Mindfulness and Medicine (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: REL 269 STS 269 ANTH 269 ASST 269

Secondary Cross-listing

This course offers a social analysis and historical genealogy of meditation and mindfulness from its roots as a Buddhist practice through its modern applications in a variety of social settings including hospitals and clinics, schools & communities where it has been used to improve health outcomes, education outcomes, and other social outcomes. Throughout, we are interested in the scientific evidence that have tried to show how meditation and mindfulness can alter human experience, behavior, and well-being. We begin by considering how mindfulness and meditation practices were introduced and developed by the Buddha and continue to be taught and practiced today in contemporary settings, before turning to the rapid rise of scientific research on mindfulness in recent decades. How and why has research on mindfulness and meditation exploded since 2000 and how does this relate to better understandings of human emotions, human behavior, and human development? We critically examine the use and misuse of modern technologies and models developed by clinical psychiatry and biomedicine to better understand the relationship between the human brain, behavior, and emotions. We ask how meditation and mindfulness has been used to improve the training of doctors & teachers, as well as patient/provider encounters. Throughout, we are interested in how applied research and interventions of mindfulness training with medical training, schools, and other social domains has been used to generate a 'science of personal transformation' that is trying to harness the adaptability of human minds, brains, & behaviors. Students will be expected to engage in mindfulness practices during the semester.

Class Format: weekly tutorial, context-based learning, experiential learning

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly tutorial papers and discussion

Prerequisites: a course on Buddhism is preferred but not required

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: ANTH, SOC, REL, ASST majors; PHLH, STS concentrators; seniors and juniors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 269 (D2) STS 269 (D2) ANTH 269 (D2) ASST 269 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: This class will involve weekly tutorial essays of 1200 or 600 words, written feedback on every essay, and a mid-semester 'writing chat' with the instructor to improve patterns in writing.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This class fulfills the Difference, Power, and Equity requirement because it will explore the ways that mindfulness can alleviate pervasive and population wide health issues in the US including rising rates of hypertension, anxiety, and mental health issues that are exacerbated by stress related to social inequality and structural violence. It explores and critiques the ways that mindfulness has been marketed as an elite and non-inclusive practice within the US.

Attributes: GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies Electives PHLH Social Determinants of Health

Fall 2019
TUT Section: T1 TBA Kim Gutschow

Spring 2020
TUT Section: T1 Cancelled

REL 270 (S) Jewish and Christian Identity in the Ancient World

Cross-listings: REL 270 JWST 270

Primary Cross-listing

The modern engagement with the many ways that we construct identity has been matched by a similar wave of studies about identity construction in the ancient world. In this course, we will discuss the rise of "Judaism" and "Jewish identity" in the ancient period (looking at roughly 400 BCE-200 CE), and compare it with the movement of the followers of Jesus as a negotiation of a new identity within Judaism (roughly 30 CE-200 CE). We will conclude with the question of the "Parting of the Ways" of these two groups.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: three short papers (4-5 pages), one final paper (10-15 pages), close reading of materials, engagement with class discussion

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies concentrators

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 270 (D2) JWST 270 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 271 (F) Erotic, Grotesque, Sublime: Ghosts and Monsters in East Asian Religion and Popular Culture

Cross-listings: COMP 279 REL 271 WGSS 279 ASST 271

Primary Cross-listing

"Ghosts and monsters" (Chinese yaoguai, Japanese yokai, Korean yogoe) have long figured prominently in East Asian cultural history. In medieval East Asian chronicles, wrathful demons attacked the imperial palace, ghosts haunted abandoned temples, and shape-shifting foxes infiltrated the bedrooms of royal concubines. These creatures persisted into the modern era when nineteenth century tabloids reported the existence of demon-foxes, giant serpents, and vengeful spirits. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, monsters began crossing over into the realm of fiction, and Japanese, Chinese, and Korean popular novels and films continue to crawl with images of traditional dark beasts. The opening contention of this course is that ghosts and monsters signify deviancies from "the normal" as it is constructed in a given culture and time period--they often come to represent transgressions of nature, gender, sexuality, race, morality, or to subvert distinctions such as those between human and animal, man and woman, animate and inanimate, present and past, or living and dead. This course will analyze East Asian ghosts and monsters in their historical cultural context, thinking about how they come to embody particular cultural fears and desires. We will use a range of East Asian materials in translation--including folktale, medieval bestiaries, short stories, and films, alongside a heavy dose of theory including works by feminist scholars Julia Kristeva, Ilka Quindeau, Susan Sontag and various others who attempt to understand the monstrous and the uncanny. Students will undertake an extended research project on a ghost or monster of their choice and locate it in its broader cultural context. Doing so should put us in a position to explore central themes, such as the connection between the grotesque and the erotic, the cultural performance of gender, the social construction of illness, the trauma of memory, the commodification of the supernatural, and the boundaries of the human.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and participation, weekly responses, final 15- to 18-page research paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: REL, ASST, WGSS, and COMP majors will be given preference

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 279 (D2) REL 271 (D2) WGSS 279 (D2) ASST 271 (D2)

Attributes: FMST Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 272 (F) Art of the Noble Path: Buddhist Material Culture Across Asia

Cross-listings: REL 272 ARTH 272 ASST 272

Secondary Cross-listing

Buddhism has spread throughout Asia and beyond since its emergence in India in the 5th century BCE, providing a shared philosophical and cosmological framework for diverse cultures. Artistic expression, regional politics and cultural landscapes have been shaped by its remarkable
influence. With patrons ranging from powerful monarchs and monks to merchants and tradespeople, Buddhist art has historically reflected the religion's social inclusivity. This course will survey the architecture, painting and material culture of Buddhism in Asia, tracing its influence in diverse media, from rock-cut architecture to Zen painting. A close reading of primary texts, such as architectural inscriptions in India, manuscripts from Tibet, and travelogues of Chinese pilgrims, will provide greater context for the artworks.

Requirements/Evaluation: 3 fifteen-minute quizzes, 1 three to five-page paper, 1 eight to ten-page paper, a midterm, and a final exam

Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: none
Expected Class Size: 25
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 272 (D2) ARTH 272 (D1) ASST 272 (D1)

Fall 2019
LEC Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am Murad K. Mumtaz

REL 273 (F) Heroes, Saints and Celebrity
Cross-listings: ANTH 222 REL 273
Secondary Cross-listing
This course examines the ways in which cultures select, ritually celebrate, institutionally harness, and ultimately devour people designated as 'extraordinary'. We will begin by considering cultural archetypes and theories of the hero and how heroism has been understood in different eras and cultural contexts. Using Weber's theory of charisma as a foundation, we will look at a number of specific case studies to evaluate the relationship between individual creativity and action and the demands of social conformity and control. Finally, we will examine how charisma is commoditized in the form of the celebrity in contemporary American culture.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, two short response papers, research paper, final exam
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors
Expected Class Size: 19
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ANTH 222 (D2) REL 273 (D2)
Not offered current academic year

REL 274 (S) The Body in Power
Cross-listings: ANTH 299 REL 274
Secondary Cross-listing
The thesis of this course is that ritual plays a crucial role not only in legitimizing and mobilizing political power, but also in determining whether people decide to act in defense of or dissent against the status quo. In the first part of the semester, we focus on the ways in which different cultures construct categories of inclusion and exclusion, safe and dangerous, while also creating rituals for ensuring the preservation of the dominant social order against all that is transgressive and undermining to those in power. Of particular importance to our discussion will be consideration of how the body is ritually mobilized as an instrument of persuasion and control. On this foundation, we move to an examination of how political rituals are used to undermine established orthodoxies, mobilize popular dissent, and bring down those on top. Among the topics to be discussed are the role of martyrdom and
beheadings in the rise of the Islamic State, the use of symbols and ritual interventions in framing both sides of the abortion debate, and the expanding importance of social media in protests movements around the world. The final unit of the course will consider a current controversy (e.g., police violence against African-American men) in light of the concepts discussed during the semester.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** class participation, three short response papers, and one 10- to 12-page research paper

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 19

**Enrollment Preferences:** open to first years

**Expected Class Size:** 19

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ANTH 299 (D2) REL 274 (D2)

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01    MWF 11:00 am - 12:15 pm     David B. Edwards

**REL 275 (S) Paul the Apostle: Then and Now**

**Cross-listings:** PSCI 275 REL 275

**Primary Cross-listing**

The Apostle Paul is the most important thinker in the history of Christianity. He wrote much of the New Testament and was the first to formulate and articulate the basic message of Christianity. In this course, we'll first explore Paul's thought in its original context, probing what his message would have meant for the inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Special attention will be paid to Paul's contribution to ancient debates about Judaism, conversion, and ethnic difference. In addition to examining the first contexts and meanings of his writings, we'll be especially interested in the legacy of Paul's thought on modern political thought in Europe and America in the 20th and 21st centuries. In this portion of the course, we'll see how Paul's influence has shaped current theories of citizenship and sovereignty, with or without the knowledge or consent of modern thinkers and societies. The course thus explores the original significance of Paul's thought as well as his hidden influence upon the political structures of secular modernity.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** papers, participation

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 19

**Enrollment Preferences:** majors

**Expected Class Size:** 14

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PSCI 275 (D2) REL 275 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

**REL 276 (S) Islam and Capitalism (DPE)**

Islam's relationship with capitalism, in popular media as well as mainstream scholarship, is often posed as a question of compatibility. "Is Islam compatible with capitalism?" experts ask. The question itself rests on historical, epistemic, and moral premises that frame Islam and capitalism as distinct categories of comparison. Their juxtaposition, however, is beset with conceptual difficulty and anachronism: do religion and economics overlap, or do they demarcate discrete configurations of reality? Does religion latently influence economics or has capitalism subsumed all forms of spirituality? Is Islam's regulation of commercial conduct a symptom of insufficient modernization? Conversely, is faith in the rationality of free markets akin to religious belief? What makes Islamic values, rituals, and institutions "religious" and those of capitalism "secular"? What are the historical conditions,
disciplinary practices, and forms of desire that have led to the articulation of "homoislamicus" as a rival to the "homoeconomicus" of consumer capitalism? Finally, how do Islamic conceptions of human prosperity, socioeconomic justice, and ecological preservation relate to neoliberalism, socialism, and other religious traditions? We will explore these questions and unpack their underlying assumptions through the disciplinary frameworks of religious studies, history, and anthropology. Students will develop a critical appreciation of both Islam and capitalism as complex assemblages of cultural, institutional, and discursive formations with intersecting genealogies. In addition to thinking critically about religion and economy as conceptual categories, students will acquire a concrete understanding of the Shar¿‘a, its commercial laws and institutions. Students will also examine the history of Muslim societies through economic regimes of agrarianism, mercantilism, extractive/settler colonialism, postcolonial development, petrodollar capitalism, and modern Islamic finance.

Class Format: The class will be conducted in a seminar format. Students will submit weekly responses to the readings. For each session, two students will be assigned as leaders of the discussion who will be assisted by the instructor

Requirements/Evaluation: Weekly reading responses (300 words): 20%; Class participation: 15%; Leading class discussion: 15%; 2 short essays (750 words each): 20%; Research paper (3000 words): 30%

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for enrollment. However, an elementary exposure to the history of economic thought will be useful.

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course examines trajectories of capitalism--beyond its isomorphic relationship with Western culture--in the Muslim world. It offers a critical perspective on economic inequality and underdevelopment in postcolonial Muslim states and their historical linkages with extractive/settler colonialism. Students explore connections between petrodollar capitalism, climate change, exploitation of migrant labor in the Arabian Gulf, and the fight for regional domination through proxy religious wars.

Spring 2020

REL 277  (F)  Meditation and Modern American Life

Cross-listings: ENGL 277 REL 277

Secondary Cross-listing

The first English translation of a Buddhist text was published in the United States in 1844. At the time, few Americans knew the first thing about what Buddhism was, but now, a little over a century and a half later, Buddhist ideas and practices (meditation, in particular) can be found everywhere. In this class, we'll explore how Buddhism came to be the profoundly important cultural force in American life that it is today, looking particularly at the increasingly mainstream role of meditation in modern American life. We'll study how traditional Buddhist meditation practices were transmitted to the West, and then track the way those practices changed over time, as they were adapted to the radically new context of American culture. And we'll study the way meditation is impacting a wide array of cultural domains, including: literature, psychology, education, environmentalism, Western attitudes towards death and dying, and the fight against racism. A key part of the course will be an introduction to the theory and practice of meditation: we'll learn a variety of meditation techniques, and we'll spend a significant amount of time each class practicing and reflecting upon those practices. This course is a part of a joint program between Williams' Center for Learning in Action and the Berkshire County Jail, in Pittsfield, MA. The class will be composed equally of nine Williams students and nine inmates. An important goal of the course is to encourage students from different backgrounds to think together about issues of common human concern. Classes will be held at the jail, with transportation provided by the college. *Please note the atypical class hours, Thursdays, 4:45-8:30 pm.*

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: full attendance and participation; meditation 2-3 times a week outside of class; a meditation journal; and a final 10-page essay

Enrollment Limit: 18

Enrollment Preferences: final selection will be made on the basis of (a) statements of interest sent via email to brhie@williams.edu by June 26 and (b) brief interviews with the instructor.

Expected Class Size: 18
REL 278 (S) Buddhist Material Culture: Objects of Practice and Merit (DPE)

Cross-listings: ASST 278 REL 278

Primary Cross-listing

What is material culture? What is considered Buddhist material culture? If Buddhism is a tradition that encourages non-attachment, then what is meant by "Buddhist material culture"? Shouldn't Buddhists be "free" from material things? Is it necessary for a Buddhist to be free from material things or rather that material things should be free from Buddhists? This course will introduce students to a material culture approach to the study of religion, which acknowledges the agency of not only humans but also the agency of objects/things/stuff, and it emphasizes relationships and networks between people and things. The course will begin with basic foundational theories that make up the burgeoning field of "material culture" within Religious Studies. We focus on various relationships: "internal" (our body and senses in relation to things) and "external" (things themselves, and their connections to other things). We will learn about these relationships by looking closely at Buddhist "stuff" and investigating what such relationships can tell us about Buddhism. Things act upon us, and we (re)act upon them. They shape identity, create meaning, and maintain relationships. We will learn that things are never just things. They help us better understand what people do in Buddhism, not just what people believe. In a nutshell, this course is about the "social life of [Buddhist] things". For students without a background in Buddhism, this course will introduce them to Buddhism as lived in China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, and particularly Southeast Asia.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: Attendance and active participation: 15%; Short Writing Assignments, 8 total (1 page): 25%; Midterm Exam (in-class): 25%; Group Presentation of Object: 35%

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Religion and Asian Studies majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ASST 278 (D2) REL 278 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: The material world of contemporary Buddhism is often condemned for "adulterating" "real" Buddhism because it does not fit stereotypical buzzwords like tranquil, austere, non-commercial. Yet, materiality is essential to Asian Buddhist practitioners, who are the 90%. Students will hone skills to seek the unseen by tracing networks of a New Materialism approach, which can reveal relationships that demonstrate power struggle and inequality, even within a "loving-kindness" tradition like Buddhism.

Not offered current academic year

REL 279 (S) What is the Shari'a? Law, Power, and Ethics in Islam (DPE)

Discussions of the Shari'a or Islamic law in American public discourse conjure images of veiled women, girls barred from attending school, and public spectacles of flogging and stoning to death. Such a caricature of Islamic law as a medieval but draconian penal code elicits public fear and state suspicion. In the West, legislative measures are taken to curb the Shari'a's perceived threat to security, democracy, and human rights. On the other hand, Islamists seek to harness the Shari'a as an instrument of political legitimacy and authoritarian rule. Both instances reify the Shari'a in ways that erode its regional diversity, intellectual versatility, and socially embedded practices and modes of interpretation. This course offers an in-depth introduction to the Shari'a through an examination of major themes in its substantive content and historical evolution. While students will gain an integrated view of the Shari'a from its origins in 7th century Arabia to the modern era, our primary emphasis will be on the Shari'a's tumultuous relationship with liberal democracy and the secular nation-state. Students will probe the history of the Shari'a's present by pursuing a genealogical
inquiry in two parts: (a) precolonial, and (b) postcolonial. Module (a) comprises Islamic legal theory, its scriptural sources, and the formation of schools of jurisprudence; Shari'a governance in the imperial age; and the institution of slavery. Module (b) covers colonial transformations and reforms; state-sponsored projects of restoration and codification; blasphemy and religious minorities; and gender and sexuality. Apart from learning substantive content through the course of our genealogical inquiry, students will also develop a theoretical foundation in anthropological approaches to the study of Islam as law (discursive tradition, symbolism, custom), power (sovereignty, discipline, biopolitics), and as ethics (subjectivity, self-cultivation, ordinary ethics).

Class Format: The class will be conducted in a seminar format. Students will submit weekly responses to the readings. For each session, two students will be assigned as leaders of the discussion who will be assisted by the instructor.

Requirements/Evaluation: Weekly reading responses (300 words): 20%; Class participation: 15%; Leading class discussion: 15% 2 short essays (750 words each): 20%; Research paper (3000 words): 30%

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course exposes students to the diversity of Islamic legal interpretations on questions of gender, sexuality, and religious freedom across a variety of regions and cultures. Students gain a critical appreciation of how present-day authoritative readings of Islamic law, its punitive practices and legalized forms of gender discrimination are sanctioned by patriarchal norms, the colonial construction of Islam as a scriptural religion, and regulatory powers of the modern state.

Spring 2020

REL 280 (S) The Seeds of Divinity: Exploring Precolumbian Art & Civilization in a Museum Exhibit

Cross-listings: REL 280 ARTH 281 ANTH 281

Secondary Cross-listing

For all ancient civilizations, the gods were a powerful force, affecting all aspects of human lives and dominating ancient art. This course will explore concepts of divinity in five civilizations in Precolumbian Central America: Aztec, Maya, Zapotec, Teotihuacan, and Nayarit. The course examines how the broad concept of divinity is materialized in everyday life. We will query how the human body is used as the prism through which concepts about humanity, the human soul and the supernatural are perceived and depicted in the art of these civilizations. This is a project based course, and each student will study one or more art objects from these five civilizations, and consider how these objects could be presented in a museum exhibit.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: active class participation; three short papers; 15-page research paper and presentation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: ANTH, SOC and ARTH majors

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 280 (D2) ARTH 281 (D2) ANTH 281 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 281 (F) Religion and Science

Cross-listings: SCST 281 REL 281
Primary Cross-listing

In the last few years the deniers of religion such as Dennett and Dawkins have forcefully argued that recent scientific developments show the degree to which religion is irrelevant to a modern understanding of what it means to be human. Atran and Boyer have made a similar case, arguing that recent progresses in our understanding of human cognition demonstrate that religion is a purely natural phenomenon that has little if any value for human development. Theologians such as Haught and Polkinghorne have rejected these views, arguing that a proper understanding of scientific developments such as evolution and quantum mechanics suggests religiously relevant views of the universe and our place therein. This course considers these competing perspectives while offering critical reflections on the views and categories involved in these controversies. We also examine the works of reflective naturalists such as Bellah and Herrstein, who argue that far from showing the irrelevance of religious ideas and practices, the new mind and life sciences suggest a much more nuanced view according to which religion is both grounded in the natural world and central to the development of human culture. Hence, it cannot be easily discounted as irrelevant to a scientifically informed understanding of what it means to be human.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: full attendance and participation, two essays

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 18

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

SCST 281 (D2) REL 281 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 286 (F) Moral Life in the Modern World

Cross-listings: SOC 252 REL 286

Secondary Cross-listing

This interdisciplinary seminar attempts to locate and examine modern moral life (i.e., the ethical dimension of modern culture) in its broader historical and cultural context. The aim of the course is less to analyze and debate the theoretical moralities of philosophers and theologians, than it is to interpret and attempt to understand the lived moralities that people actually practice and carry out; that shape conduct and selfhood in the modern world. Part I of the course will provide a guided introduction to a range of contested issues in the study of ethics and morality: moralism, moral relativism, and the nature of modern moral discourse; moral truth, and value freedom; the differences between normative and descriptive ethical inquiry; "thick" and "thin" moral concepts, and the historically variable relationships between lived moralities, theoretical moralities, and moral customs. In Part II we will work through a series of case studies that take up the following issues: moral life in corporate, urban, and suburban contexts; media, moralism, and moral panics; business ethics; race and racism; depersonalization, war and genocide. The course will furthermore examine ethics and morality "in," "through," and "of" literature, as students will select, read, and critique a work of fiction.

Class Format: lecture

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly discussion précis, film screenings, two book review essays, class presentations, and a take-home midterm

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Sociology and Anthropology students

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

SOC 252 (D2) REL 286 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 288 (F) Embodiment and Consciousness: A Cross-Cultural Exploration

Cross-listings: PHIL 288 REL 288
This course examines some of the central questions raised by the study of the consciousness: the place of intentionality, the role of emotions, the relation with the body, the nature of subjectivity, the scope of reflexivity, the nature of perceptual presence, etc. In confronting these difficult questions, we do not proceed purely theoretically but consider the contributions of various observation-based traditions, from Buddhist psychology and meditative practices to phenomenology to neurosciences. We begin by examining some of the central concepts of Buddhist psychology, its treatment of the mind as a selfless stream of consciousness, its examination of the variety of mental factors and its accounts of the relation between cognition and affects. We also introduce the practice of meditation as a way to observe the mind and raise questions concerning the place of its study in the mind-sciences. We pursue this reflection by examining the views of James, Husserl, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, particularly as they concern the methods for the study of the mind and the relation between consciousness, reflexivity and the body. In this way, we develop a rich array of analytical tools and observational practices to further our understanding of the mind. But we also question the value of these tools based on first person approaches by relating them to the third person studies of the mind. In this way, we come to appreciate the importance of considering the biology on which mental processes are based and the light that this approach throws on the nature of consciousness. We conclude by considering the relation between first and third person studies of the mind, focusing on the concept of the embodied mind as a fruitful bridge between these different traditions.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: regular practice of meditation, a class presentation, a short essay (6-pages); a long final research paper (15 pages)
Prerequisites: any introduction to philosophy and at least two upper level courses in PHIL, at least one of which meets the Contemporary Metaphysics or Epistemology distribution requirement for the major, no exceptions;
Enrollment Limit: 18
Enrollment Preferences: Religion and Philosophy majors
Expected Class Size: 18
Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Unit Notes: there is no need to email the professor in advance to indicate interest in the course
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
PHIL 288 (D2) REL 288 (D2)
Attributes: COGS Interdepartmental Electives PHIL Contemp Metaphysics & Epistemology Courses

REL 289 (F) The Talmud on What it Means to be Human
Cross-listings: JWST 289 REL 289

The Talmud, a central text in Judaism, is one of the richest and most sophisticated works of literature and thought ever produced. In this course, students will be introduced to the challenges and thrills of reading the Talmud as they consider how the Talmud asks and answers the question of what it means to be human. We will be particularly interested in exploring how the Talmud envisions human difference and similarity in terms of humans’ relationships with animals and material things. In addition to learning how to read the Talmud, therefore, students will also be introduced to burgeoning interdisciplinary theories and methods (Posthumanism and New Materialism) for considering what it means to be human in a world of animals and things.

Class Format: tutorial
Requirements/Evaluation: weekly papers, final paper
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies students
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
JWST 289 (D2) REL 289 (D2)
Not offered current academic year

REL 291 (S) Religion and the American Environmental Imagination
Cross-listings: REL 291 SOC 291 ENVI 291
Secondary Cross-listing
This course examines the relationship between religious and environmental thought in modern America. Exploring a broad range of practices and beliefs, we will examine the religious (and anti-religious) roots of contemporary environmental discourse. Rather than survey the environmental teachings of organized religious groups, our focus throughout will be on ambiguous, eclectic, and fascinating traditions of "eco-spirituality" and popular "nature religion." Where do these traditions come from? What is their relationship to science, to secularism, to politics, and to the search for environmental justice? Starting with the Transcendentalist movement of the 19th century, we will trace a roughly chronological line to the present, taking long detours into several modern religious trends and movements, including the revitalization and contestation of Native American religions, Wicca and neo-pagan ecofeminism, and evangelical Creation Care. Focusing on the writings of activists and radicals from a variety of religious backgrounds, our overarching question throughout the semester is one of the most critical we face in modern environmental thought: what is the relationship between spirituality and the just, sustainable society?
Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: a 15- to 18-page research paper and several shorter writing assignments
Prerequisites: ENVI 101 or permission of instructor
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Environmental Studies majors and concentrators
Expected Class Size: 12
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 291 (D2) SOC 291 (D2) ENVI 291 (D2)
Attributes: AMST Space and Place Electives ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives
Not offered current academic year

REL 293 (S) Religion, Play, and Fantasy
Religion is sometimes described as separate from everyday life, a source of transcendence, offering practices that allow you to lose yourself and be absorbed into another level of consciousness, or a realm of supernatural forces. These could also be descriptions of "play." In this course we will explore the play element in culture and how it relates to what we usually describe as "religious." We will investigate video games, fantasy novels and films, Live Action Role-Playing, war reenactment, pop culture fandom, BDSM, festivals like Mardi Gras, and places that are "set apart" for play like Las Vegas. How do the ways that we play involve religious ideas like sin, redemption, supernatural forces of good and evil, canonization, countercultural community, tradition, submission, and purgation? Is play at the core of what we usually deem religious? What, for instance, is the play element in ritual, myth, and the devotional interpretation of texts? How important is play? Should we accept the conventional assumption that religion is more important than play? Is playing, perhaps, what we most want to do? Is playing what we would do if all of our practical needs were already met and we didn't have to do anything at all? In addition to exploring particular kinds of play, we will read theorists of play from a variety of disciplines, including: Johan Huizinga, Roger Caillois, Brian Sutton-Smith, Victor Turner, Donald Winnicott, Bernard Suits, Sam Gill, Robert Bellah, and Wendy Doniger. In a final paper, each student will have an opportunity to investigate in depth and interpret a particular form or instance of play that they choose.
Class Format: lecture
Requirements/Evaluation: three short papers (3-pages) and one final research paper or project
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 30
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors
Expected Class Size: 30
REL 296 (F) The History of the Holocaust

Cross-listings: HIST 338 JWST 338 REL 296

Secondary Cross-listing
In twenty-first century United States, the murder of approximately six million European Jews by Nazi Germany remains a central event in our political, moral, and cultural universe. Nevertheless, the Holocaust still confounds historians efforts to understand both the motivations of the perpetrators and the suffering of the victims. In this course, we will study the origins and unfolding of Nazi Germany's genocidal policies, taking into consideration the perspectives of those who carried out mass murder as well as the experiences and responses of Jews and other victim groups to persecution. We will also examine the Holocaust within the larger context of the history of World War II in Europe and historians debates about Germany's exterminatory war aims. Course materials will include diaries, speeches, bureaucratic documents, memoirs, films, and historical scholarship.

Class Format: mostly discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, weekly reading responses, a map quiz, two papers (5-7 pages) on class readings, a final research paper (10-12 pages)
Prerequisites: none; open to first-year students with instructors permission
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: History majors and Jewish Studies concentrators
Expected Class Size: 20-25
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
HIST 338 (D2) JWST 338 (D2) REL 296 (D2)
Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia JWST Core Electives

REL 297 (F) Theorizing Magic

Cross-listings: COMP 289 ANTH 297 REL 297

Primary Cross-listing
This is a course about magic. It is not about stage magic, sleight of hand, or the art of pulling rabbits out of hats. You will learn no card tricks. But instead we will learn about those people who believed in the reality of certain powers; from the ability to summon good or evil spirits, transform base metals into gold, predict the future, or manipulate matter by thought alone. The problem of how to theorize magic has long been a cause of concern for the natural and social sciences. Many a sociologist and anthropologist has imagined that belief in magic should have vanished with modernity (despite much evidence to the contrary). Meanwhile, philosophers of science have been long fascinated with the demarcation problem-figuring out grounds by which to distinguish legitimate sciences (like astronomy) from their magical or pseudoscientific cousins (like astrology). We will trace these discussions and problematize them by looking at the beliefs of self-defined witches and magicians. This should put us in a position to interrogate the construction of concepts of magic, science, and religion and show how the boundaries between these categories emerged historically. Topics to be discussed will include: the rationality of magic, the fine lines separating magic, science and religion, the persecution of witches, and the role notions of magic and superstition played in European modernization and colonization projects. The tutorial sessions will be customized to student interests, but texts will likely include selections from primary works in translation, such as Cornelius Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy*, Giordano Bruno's *On Magic*, Aleister Crowley's *Magick Liber Aba*, as well as selections from secondary literature, perhaps including Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, Max Weber, "Science as Vocation," Tanya Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witches' Craft*, Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Larry Laudan, "The Demise of the Demarcation Problem," E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft and Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*, and/or Kelly Hayes, *Holy Harlots: Femininity, Sexuality and Black Magic in Brazil*. 

Holy Harlots: Femininity, Sexuality and Black Magic in Brazil.
**Class Format:** tutorial  
**Requirements/Evaluation:** weekly writing assignments and tutorial attendance every week  
**Prerequisites:** none  
**Enrollment Limit:** 10  
**Enrollment Preferences:** potential Religion or Comparative Literature majors  
**Expected Class Size:** 10  
**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option  
**Distributions:** (D2)  

*This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:*  
COMP 289 (D2) ANTH 297 (D2) REL 297 (D2)  

Not offered current academic year  

**REL 301 (F) Social Construction (DPE)**  
**Cross-listings:** SCST 301 COMP 315 REL 301 SOC 301 WGSS 302  
**Primary Cross-listing**  
"Social construction" can often seem like the great collegial insight. By now, you've all heard that categories such as race, gender, and sexuality are in some sense not part of nature, but instead are created and maintained socially or culturally. The idea of social construction has been vital to critical race theory and queer theory, and, in this course, we will push ourselves into philosophy of science to see whether or not these same insights apply to everything. If we know that “Whiteness,” “heterosexuality,” and “masculinity,” for instance, are all socially constructed, we will ask if the same is true of “electrons,” “money,” “the solar system,” and “climate change.” Can it be that all of our reality is socially constructed? Or does social construction have limits? If so, what are they? We will also ask more fundamental questions, such as: What does it mean to say something is socially constructed? How does social construction relate to claims that an aspect of the world is "real" or "not real?" Is social construction a theory about language, power, culture, societies, human perceptions, or the limits of science? What kind of political, ethical, ontological, or epistemological work do theories of social construction do? We will begin with different accounts of the social construction of race, gender, and sexuality. In the second part of the course, we will dig deeper into philosophical debates about social construction as such. Then we will explore constructionism about natural science. In the last part of the course, we will change gears and explore look at cutting-edge work in the theory of social science aimed at explaining the construction and ontology of social worlds. The class will culminate in a project in which students will put their social construction theories into practice.  

**Class Format:** seminar  
**Requirements/Evaluation:** regular attendance and participation, short weekly reflection papers, a 10-page research paper, and final project  
**Prerequisites:** none  
**Enrollment Limit:** 15  
**Enrollment Preferences:** Religion majors, then majors from cross-listed departments  
**Expected Class Size:** 15  
**Grading:** no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option  
**Distributions:** (D2) (DPE)  

*This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:*  
SCST 301 (D2) COMP 315 (D1) REL 301 (D2) SOC 301 (D2) WGSS 302 (D2)  

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** Central to REL 301 will be an analysis of the social construction of race, gender, and sexuality. It will show how power and difference are tied up in their construction and maintenance of these categories. Students will be taught how to critically analyze race, gender, and sexuality as well as social construction as such. Students will also learn sophisticated tools for studying systems of social power and difference.  

**Attributes:** PHIL Related Courses  

Not offered current academic year  

**REL 302 (S) Philosophy of Religion (WS)**  
**Cross-listings:** PHIL 281 REL 302
Our goal will be to determine how far reason can justify belief in God. We will examine well-known philosophical arguments for and against the existence of God (including the ontological argument, the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, the argument from religious experience, and the argument from evil). For each argument, we will first look at historically important formulations and then turn to contemporary reformulations. Our aim will be to identify and evaluate the strongest version of each argument. After working through these arguments, we will reflect more generally on the proper roles of reason and faith in justifying religious belief. Near the end of the semester, we'll also examine some evolutionary explanations of religious belief. Our tools in this course will be logic and reason, even when we are trying to determine what the limits of reason might be. Authors will include Plato, Anselm, Aquinas, Pascal, Paley, Hume, Kant, Kierkegaard, and several contemporary philosophers.

Class Format: tutorial; students meet with instructor in pairs for an hour each week; emphasis will be placed on developing skills in reading, interpretation and oral argument as well as critical reasoning and writing

Requirements/Evaluation: five 5-page papers and five 2-page papers

Prerequisites: one PHIL course

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: current and prospective Philosophy majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PHIL 281 (D2) REL 302 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Five 5-page papers and five 2-page papers, evenly spaced throughout the semester. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Attributes: PHIL History Courses

Spring 2020

TUT Section: T1 TBA Melissa J. Barry

REL 305 (S) The Black Atlantic as Scriptural Formation

Cross-listings: REL 305 AFR 355

Primary Cross-listing

"...I don't read such small stuff as letters, I read men and nations..." The unpacking of this provocative and unsettling statement ascribed to Sojourner Truth can be taken as a springboard for this seminar that explores the politics of the scriptural (or writing) as analytical window onto the complex formation of the circum-Black Atlantic (and its complex relationships to colonial and post-colonial Atlantic worlds). The isolation of selected Black Atlantic "readings" as cultural sites, rituals, performances, institutions, as different and conflicting types of politics and social orientation---from first contacts through slavery to the contemporary irruptions of protest and fundamentalist movements--will structure the seminar.

Class Format: seminar-style discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: consistent participation (informed by engagement of selected readings); and submission of mid-term prospectus (1-2pp) and end-of-term research paper (15-20pp)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: religion; African American (and other American ethnic groups); cultural studies; history; literature; social sciences

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 305 (D2) AFR 355 (D2)

Not offered current academic year
REL 309 (S) Scriptures and Race

Cross-listings: LATS 309 REL 309 AFR 309

Primary Cross-listing

This course focuses on the relationships between constructions of race in the post-1492 American world and “Christian scriptures.” The big questions of the course examine the ways that contestations of power are intertwined with the making of, interpretation, and transformation of sacred texts. Both scriptures and race are conceptual constellations of human social imagination, and yet their conceptualization has often been embroiled in the hopes and traumas of everyday life in the Americas. How and why did these two terms come to have any relationship to each other? How and why do peoples engage “scriptures”? In what ways have “scriptures” informed how people imagine themselves, their communities, and their relationship to religious and racial “others”? How did “scriptures” and “race” inform each other in modern colonialisms and imperialisms? In this course, we will examine the ways that scriptures have been employed in order to understand and develop notions of race, and we will examine how ideas about and lived experiences of race have informed the concept of scriptures as well as practices of scriptural interpretation.

Class Format: tutorial

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation based upon participation, short writing exercises, a 5- to 8-page take-home midterm essay, and a 10- to 15-page final essay

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

LATS 309 (D2) REL 309 (D2) AFR 309 (D2)

Attributes: LATS Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

REL 310 (F) Womanist/Black Feminist Thought

Cross-listings: REL 310 AFR 310 WGSS 310 AMST 309

Secondary Cross-listing

This course explores the genealogy and development of black feminist and womanist thought. We will investigate the expansion of womanist thought from a theologically dominated discourse to a broader category of critical reflection associated more commonly with black feminism, analyze the relationship between womanism and black feminism, and review the historical interventions of black feminism. As critical reflections upon western norms of patriarchy, heterosexism, and racism, womanism and black feminism begin with the assumption that the experiences of women of color--particularly black women--are significant standpoints in modern western society. Through the examination of interdisciplinary and methodological diversity within these fields, students will be introduced to key figures including Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston, and Katie Cannon, and will engage materials that draw from multiple fields, including, but not limited to, literature, history, anthropology, and religious studies.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, three short response papers, and the completion of an original research paper or project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: Africana Studies concentrators, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies majors, Religion majors

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 310 (D2) AFR 310 (D2) WGSS 310 (D2) AMST 309 (D2)
REL 312  (F)  The Mughal Empire: Power, Art, and Religion in India

Cross-listings:  HIST 312  ASST 312  REL 312  GBST 312

Secondary Cross-listing

Established in the early 1500s, the Mughal Empire was one of the grandest and the longest to rule the Indian subcontinent for over three hundred years. Commanding unprecedented resources and administering a population of 100 to 150 million at its zenith--much larger than any European empire in the early modern world--the Mughals established a centralized administration, with a vast complex of personnel, money, and information networks. Mughal emperors were also political and cultural innovators of global repute. Moreover, while the Mughal dynasty was brought to an end with British colonial rule over India in 1857, the Mughal administrative structures and cultural influences continued to have a lasting impact on the British and later Indian states that followed. Centered around the intersection of the themes of power, patronage of art and architecture and religion, this course will ask: What factors contributed to the durability of the Mughal Empire for three centuries? How did global trade and innovations in taxation contribute to its wealth and stability? How did this dynasty of Muslim monarchs rule over diverse, and largely non-Muslim populations? How did they combine Persian cultural elements with regional ones to establish an empire that was truly Indian in nature? How were the Mughals viewed in their contemporary world of gunpowder empires like the Safavids of Persia and the Ottomans of Turkey? Readings will include the best of the recent scholarship on this vastly influential empire and a rich collection of primary sources, including emperor's memoirs, accounts of European travelers, and racy biographies, which will allow students make their own analysis. They will also have the opportunity to interpret paintings (some of which are held in the WCMA collections) and architecture. They will also discuss how the Mughals are remembered in South Asian film and music.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation:  participation, response papers/short essays, one final paper

Prerequisites:  none, open to first-year students with instructor permission

Enrollment Limit:  25

Enrollment Preferences:  History majors and potential History majors

Expected Class Size:  20

Grading:  no pass/fail option,  no fifth course option

Distributions:  (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

HIST 312 (D2) ASST 312 (D2) REL 312 (D2) GBST 312 (D2)

Attributes:  HIST Group B Electives - Asia  HIST Group G Electives - Global History  HIST Group P Electives - Premodern

Not offered current academic year

REL 313  (S)  Humans and Bodies: Theories of Embodiment

Cross-listings:  WGSS 303  REL 313

Primary Cross-listing

What is the body? Does "the body" precede culture, or is "the body" society's own creation, a contingent assemblage of matter, sensations, and psychosomatics? How does the self, and various types of self, relate to the body? How do sexual selves, racial selves, and gendered selves relate to their own bodies, to other bodies and selves? How are these selves produced through or with the body? How does the self-sense its "own" body? And does the body construct the self, or the self the body? In this course, we'll ask big questions about the body, its relation to the self, and about embodiment, through reading the most important and timely theories of the body, the self, and embodiment, especially as found in psychoanalytic, phenomenological, feminist, trans, and queer theories and methods.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation:  papers, class participation

Prerequisites:  none

Enrollment Limit:  19

Enrollment Preferences:  majors
Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

WGSS 303 (D2) REL 313 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 314 (S) Racial and Religious Mixture  (DPE)

Cross-listings: AMST 327 AFR 357 LATS 327 REL 314

Secondary Cross-listing

The very term "mixture" implies that two or more distinct substances have been brought together. Distinctions of race and religion are social fictions; yet, the lived ramifications of these social fictions involve tense struggles over the boundaries of racial and religious communities. These boundaries are not just ideas but also practices. In the history of the Americas, mixed racial and religious identities and experiences have more often been the result of violent clashes than romantic encounters. Still, the romanticization of the New World as a geography that makes such mixtures possible reaches back to the earliest days of Spanish conquest in the Americas. This course critically reconsiders varying ways that racial and religious mixtures have been imagined, defined, challenged, negotiated, and survived under imaginative and legal rubrics of mestizaje, creolization, transculturation, passing, syncretism, religious hybridity, and mixed race studies.

Class Format: mostly discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: participation, short writing exercises, a 3-page first essay, a 5- to 8-page second essay, and a 10- to 14-page final paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: seniors, concentrators, majors, those with prior relevant coursework

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

AMST 327 (D2) AFR 357 (D2) LATS 327 (D2) REL 314 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Focusing on how different peoples have critically theorized and made meaning about and out of racial and religious differences and interconnections, this Difference, Power, and Equity course investigates the ways that knowledge about mixture and difference—and their roles in hierarchical distributions of social and political power—have been critically constructed and transformed.

Attributes: AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01 MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Jacqueline Hidalgo

REL 318 (F) California: Myths, Peoples, Places

Cross-listings: COMP 328 AMST 318 ENVI 318 LATS 318 REL 318

Secondary Cross-listing

Crosslisting Between Paradise and Hell, between environmental disaster and agricultural wonderland, between Reagan and Berkeley, between a land of all nations and a land of multiracial enmity, a diversity of myths have been inscribed onto and pursued within the space we call California. How did certain narratives of California come to be, who has imagined California in certain ways, and why? What is the relationship between certain myths, the peoples who have imagined them, and the other peoples who have shared California dreams? In this course, we will examine some of the myths that surround California by looking at a few specific moments of interaction between the peoples who have come to make California home and the specific places in which they have interacted with each other. Of special interest will be imaginations of the Spanish missions, the Gold Rush, agricultural California, wilderness California, California as "sprawling multicultural dystopia," and California as "west of the west."

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: this course will be mostly discussion oriented, with grading based upon participation, short writing exercises, one 3-page review essay with mandatory revision, one 5- to 8-page midterm review essay, and a final 10- to 15-page comparative review essay

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

COMP 328 (D1) AMST 318 (D2) ENVI 318 (D2) LATS 318 (D2) REL 318 (D2)

Attributes: AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora  AMST Space and Place Electives  ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives  LATS Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

REL 319 (S) Milton

Cross-listings: ENGL 315  REL 319

Secondary Cross-listing

If you know anything about John Milton, you probably think of him as some blind guy who wrote a really long poem about the Bible. It's hard to shake the feeling that Milton is the fustiest of English poets--dull, pious, brilliant and all, and not someone you would read if you didn't have to. But then what are we to make of the following? The first piece that Milton wrote that was read widely throughout Europe was a boisterous defense of the English Revolution. Milton was most famous in his lifetime as the poet who went to bat for the Puritan insurgents--the poet who came right out and said that the king looked better without his head. Of all the major English poets, Milton is the revolutionary. So a course on Milton is by necessity a course on literature and revolution. We will read Paradise Lost, widely regarded as the greatest non-dramatic poem in English, and a few other books to help us prepare for that big one. Some questions: How did the mid-seventeenth century, probably the most tumultuous decades in the history of modern Britain, transform the culture of the English-speaking world? What is the relationship between literature and the state or between literature and radical politics? Is there a poetics of revolution? How can a poet who seems to be writing for Sunday school--about God and Adam and Eve and the serpent--really have been writing about rebellion all along?

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: one 6- to 8-page paper, one 10- to 12-page paper, regular informal writing, and active seminar participation

Prerequisites: a 100-level ENGL course, or a score of 5 on the AP English Literature exam, or a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: seniors, English majors

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ENGL 315 (D1) REL 319 (D2)

Attributes: ENGL Pre-1700 Courses  ENGL Literary Histories A

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01  TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm  Christian Thorne

REL 321 (F) Happy Holidays! A Comparative History of Commemorations and Festivals

Cross-listings: HIST 411  REL 321  ARAB 411

Secondary Cross-listing

What do our holidays tell us about ourselves and our societies? This seminar in religious, political and cultural history is in two parts. In the first half,
we will explore the major holidays and festivals that emerged in the Middle East among the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). It will examine how certain events became ritualized and then spread to different parts of the globe and were adapted to specific cultural situations. We will consider the role of myth and commemoration and how various religious holidays are celebrated in different ways around the world. The second part of the seminar focuses on secular holidays with particular attention to the Modern Middle East. Which events are commemorated and how and what are the political implications of these celebrations?

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: several short response papers and a 20- to 25-page final paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: seniors, especially History and Arabic Studies majors

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

HIST 411 (D2) REL 321 (D2) ARAB 411 (D2)

Attributes: HIST Group E Electives - Middle East

Not offered current academic year

REL 326 (S) Queer Temporalities

Cross-listings: REL 326 LATS 426 COMP 326 WGSS 326

Primary Cross-listing

Birth, childhood, adolescence, college, adulthood, career, marriage, family, mid-life, old age, death, afterlife. How are all these facets of being human imagined as stages in time, as axes on certain progressive lines that delineate human social relations? How do we experience and represent time, and what factors might account for both our experiences and our representations? What are some of the ways that people experience and mark the passing of time? What are some of the different ways that people have made sense of time and themselves in time? How have our conceptions of time and our demarcations of lifecycles shifted historically? How do people whose experiences do not align with dominant cultural social stages negotiate ideas of lifecycle and timing? Especially for individuals and peoples who have been denied self-representation and narratives of place, how do competing notions of time, history, space, and location get negotiated? In this course, drawing from within the broad corpus of queer theory (including theorists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Elizabeth Freeman, J. Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz) we will examine some non-linear, non-normative, and interruptive approaches to making sense of time, space-time, and self within time.

Class Format: tutorial

Requirements/Evaluation: Class attendance, analytical essays, responses, and revised essays. Pairs will meet with the instructor for one hour each week. Almost every week, one student from the pair will write a 5-page analysis of the week’s reading. The other student will respond orally with a 2-page response to their partner’s paper. Pairs will also prepare a midterm synthesis, students will revise two of their 5-page analytical papers: one from the first half of the semester, one from the second half due at the end of the semester.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: majors and concentrators in Religion, Latina/o Studies, Comparative Literature, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies or students who have previous coursework in those programs

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 326 (D2) LATS 426 (D2) COMP 326 (D1) WGSS 326 (D2)

Attributes: AMST Space and Place Electives LATS Core Electives

Not offered current academic year
REL 330 (S) Modern Jewish Political Theory

Cross-listings: PSCI 375 JWST 492 REL 330

Primary Cross-listing

By the late 19th century, Jews across Europe were faced with an urgent political problem. Amidst bourgeoning national self-consciousness throughout the continent, despite the liberatory promises of the Enlightenment, Jews remained a vulnerable, segregated, and stigmatized minority population. Jews had to decide where to pin their hopes. Should they ally themselves with the liberals or the communists? Should they embrace nationalism or cosmopolitanism? Should they, perhaps, abandon Europe altogether and re-constitute themselves elsewhere? If so, should they focus their efforts on relocation to the historical land of Israel? Or could they go anywhere? Wherever they might go, should they aspire to build a modern Jewish nation-state, a semi-autonomous Jewish community, or some other arrangement? Should this coincide with the cultivation of a distinctively Jewish modern language? If so, should it be Hebrew or Yiddish? In this course we will assess various answers to these questions proffered by Jewish political thinkers in the modern period. We will pay particular attention to the construction of “Jews” and “Judaism” in these arguments. And we will ask persistently: what constitutes a “Jewish justification” for a political claim in modern Jewish political theory? Coverage will include: Jewish liberalism, political Zionism, Yiddishist autonomism, messianic quietism, and other views. We will read mostly primary sources, including texts by: Hermann Cohen, Theodore Herzl, Chaim Zhitlowsky, Franz Rosenzweig, Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt, and many others.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: six short (1-2 pages) response papers; two 6- to 8-page papers, each analyzing a different view in depth; a final 18- to 20-page paper that incorporates the two previously submitted 6-8 page papers, but also compares the two views and adjudicates between them

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies concentrators, and Political Science students on the “Theory” track

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
PSCI 375 (D2) JWST 492 (D2) REL 330 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Capstone Course JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

REL 331 (S) Reformation: Faith, Politics, and the World

Cross-listings: HIST 330 REL 331

Secondary Cross-listing

The Protestant Reformation has long been understood as the first salvo of modernity. Martin Luther and his followers upheld the faith of the individual believer against the authority of the established Church. They sparked a series of transformations that created not just Protestantism in all its varieties but, it has been argued, the state as we know it, the modern self, capitalism and even, as an unintended consequence, secularism. While considering these classic interpretations, this seminar will also probe more recent research on the plural Reformations: not just Protestant but also Catholic, and not solely the elite movement of Luther and John Calvin but also the less orthodox Reformation of non-elite believers such as tradesmen, artisans, and peasants. Moreover, in this same period, European missionaries traveled to Africa and Asia, making Christianity a global religion. We will ask: what was at stake in these sweeping transformations of what it meant to be a Christian? To what extent was the Reformation a step towards the disenchantment of the world? And how did Reformations of the faith intersect with the expansion of Europe? Historical developments to be considered include theological debates about human agency, the changing relationship of religion and the state, female mysticism, religious warfare, and overseas missions. Authors to be read include Luther, Calvin, Teresa of Ávila, John Hooper, Ignatius of Loyola, and others.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: two short papers (5-7 pages) and a longer final paper (10-12 pages)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: History majors

Expected Class Size: 18
REL 332  (F) Islam and Feminism

Cross-listings: REL 332  ARAB 332  WGSS 334

Primary Cross-listing

This course examines the relationship between feminism and Islam, focusing particularly on Islamic feminist scholarship. We will take a genealogical approach to our study of Islamic feminism tracing the different discourses that have informed and shaped the field. The first part of the course will begin with a critical examination of orientalist and colonial representations of Muslim women as oppressed and in need of liberation. We will then explore Muslim responses to such critiques that were entwined with nationalist and independence movements. This historical backdrop is critical to understanding why the question of women and their rights and roles become crucial to Muslim self-understanding and Islamic reform. The second part of the course will focus on major intellectuals and thinkers who have influenced Islamic feminism. Finally, the last part of our course will explore the breadth of Islamic feminist literature, covering the following themes: 1) feminist readings of scripture; 2) feminist critiques of Islamic law; and 3) feminist theology.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly responses, four 2- to 3-page essays

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Religion, Arabic Studies, Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, History majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 332 (D2) ARAB 332 (D2) WGSS 334 (D2)

Not offered current academic year
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 12
Enrollment Preferences: based on responses to a questionnaire
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 334 (D1) REL 334 (D2) ANTH 334 (D2) JWST 334 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2020
SEM Section: 01    W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm    Peter Just

REL 335 (S) The Meaning of Diaspora and the Jews of Europe  (WS)

Cross-listings: HIST 434 REL 335 JWST 434

Secondary Cross-listing

Dispersion, exile, migration, statelessness are all aspects of diaspora. In the study of diasporic peoples and cultures, the Jews have long figured as the archetype. As a result, Jewish political figures, intellectuals, social activists and scholars have played a central role in discussions of the meaning of diaspora, including debates about its political and social implications, economic value, and cultural significance. In the first half of the semester, in discussions of common readings, we will examine various historical interpretations of Jews¿ diasporic existence from the nineteenth century to the present and its implications for humanitarianism. Beginning in the first half of the semester and with greater intensity in the second half of the semester, you will conduct independent archival research on some aspect of the history of the Jewish diaspora using the digitized archives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee that will culminate in a twenty-plus-page paper. In the second half, the seminar will continue to meet weekly as a research colloquium, to provide a forum for you to present your research and drafts in progress and to give feedback on fellow students¿ work. In this seminar, we are not merely studying history; you are actually doing history. That is to say, you will be more than students of history in this course: you will become historians in your own right. Over the semester, you will learn how to pose historical questions; to engage critically with readings beyond summarizing them; to synthesize an enormous amount of source material; and to learn how to write more clearly. By the end of the semester, the goal is for each student to produce a polished research paper based on substantial engagement with archival sources and relevant secondary literature that will serve as a capstone to your coursework at Williams or as a potential jumping-off point for future research projects, including a senior thesis in History or Jewish Studies.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, several short papers, oral presentations, and a 20-page research paper
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: History majors and Jewish Studies concentrators
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
HIST 434 (D2) REL 335 (D2) JWST 434 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write two drafts of their research paper before submitting the final paper for a grade. They will receive timely comments on drafts from professor and peers, to be incorporated into their final paper.

Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia  JWST Capstone Course  JWST Core Electives

Spring 2020
SEM Section: 01    M 7:00 pm - 9:40 pm    Alexandra Garbarini
REL 338 (F) Transhumanism: Religion, Technoscience, Obsolescence

Cross-listings: STS 338 HSCI 338 REL 338 SOC 338

Secondary Cross-listing

This interdisciplinary seminar invites students to pursue sociohistorical analysis and sustained critical discussion of the so-called “transhumanist movement” and its overriding aim: the transformation and eventual transcendence of human biological constitution; the realization, through highly speculative technoscientific means, of an enhanced or even “postbiological” existence, the so-called “posthuman condition,” “Humanity 2.0.” Through close readings of historical documents, transhumanist texts, scholarship on transhumanism, and relevant works of science-fiction film and literature, we will position the movement as an empirical conduit through which to explore the sociohistorical conditions under which transhumanist ideas have emerged, circulated, and taken up residence. To this end, we will consider transhumanism’s ties to some of the most objectionable aspects of modern technology and late capitalism: eugenics, the commodification of health, and massive investments pharmaceuticals, anti-aging medicine, and so-called “GNR” technologies (i.e. genetics, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence and robotics); the movement’s affinities with neoliberalism and Euro-American (cyber) libertarian politics; and what some have pointed to as transhumanism’s racialized subtext of whiteness. We will furthermore devote considerable attention to the technological singularity, artificial intelligence, the figure of the cyborg, mind-uploading, space colonization, and cryonic suspension, all of which, like transhumanism broadly, suggest that science and technology have in some sense come to operate as powerful channeling agents for the very sorts of magical beliefs, practices, and forms of expectation and association that theorists of secularization expected modernity to displace. Lastly, throughout the course of the seminar we will take transhumanism as a provocation to think broadly and seriously about embodiment, culture, and ways of being human.

Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and participation, informal weekly writing, 15- to 20-page seminar paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology and Sociology majors and Science and Technology Studies concentrators

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

STS 338 (D2) HSCI 338 (D2) REL 338 (D2) SOC 338 (D2)

Fall 2019

SEM Section: 01 W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm Grant Shoffstall

REL 344 (F) Sex, Money, Power, and the Bible (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: WGSS 344 REL 344

Primary Cross-listing

Some of the most destructive and constructive endeavors and experiences throughout human history have to do with sex, money, and power. Religion has created conditions for not only subordination but also the possibilities for liberation. In this course we will explore how our readings of the Bible figure and reconfigure our understandings and practices of sex, money, and power in both helpful and harming ways. This course presupposes no specific work in the Bible or in studies of sexuality or the economy.

Class Format: discussion seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: one final paper (10 pages), three short papers (five pages each), weekly reflections (1000 words), facilitation of one class discussion, attendance and participation

Prerequisites: None

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: sophomores, juniors, seniors, and majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
**Writing Skills Notes:** Weekly (1000 words) papers to be graded P/F; three letter-graded papers (five pages each), and one final paper (10 pages). Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** DPE themes are central to this course, given how most societies discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual practice, money, power, and, yes, religion.

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**REL 348 (S) Religion and Reason**

In his most famous and provocative book, *The End of Faith*, the "New Atheist" author Sam Harris very forcefully brings our attention to the dangerous clash between faith and reason, lamenting humanity's willingness to suspend reason in favor of religious beliefs. This represents a pervasive trend of thought in the modern world that sees religion as being diametrically opposed to reason and rationality. This course is an in-depth investigation of this notion through the lenses of philosophy, theology, anthropology, and history, asking questions such as: What is reason, and what counts as a rational belief? Are there other grounds that might make one justified in holding a belief? What is the nature of religious belief or faith? Is religious belief uniquely irrational? What gave rise to this discourse on religion? We will be reading primary and secondary materials representing a variety academic disciplines, intellectual traditions, and geographic contexts.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** regular reading responses, 6- to 8-page midterm essay, final 10- to 12-page essay

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 15

**Enrollment Preferences:** none

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

**Attributes:** PHIL Related Courses

**Not offered current academic year**

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**REL 350 (S) Max Weber & Critical Theory or Rationalization & Its Discontents**

We live in an age characterized by unprecedented technological and scientific progress--we have unraveled the building blocks of life, witnessed the birth of stars at the edge of the galaxy, and harnessed the power of the atom--and yet modern life often appears fundamentally meaningless and lacking in ultimate value--we work, we eat, we excrete, we die, perhaps in the interim shuffling paperwork, sucking up to our boss, and asking ourselves, "What kind of dining set defines me as a person?" Few thinkers have explored the roots of this modern ennui as thoroughly as Max Weber, a German sociologist often regarded as the single most important social theorist of the twentieth century. Weber wanted to know why it was European civilization in particular that gave birth to the grand trifecta of rationality, science, and capitalism and how we have become enslaved by the very things that were supposed to have set us free. Weber's key innovation was to trace the grand trajectory of Western "rationalization"--the historical attempt to produce a world in which "one can, in principle, master all things by calculation." Further, he demonstrated how this rationalization produced not just mastery over nature, but also "the disenchantment of the world" - value fragmentation, hyper-specialization, bureaucracy, and ultimately the "iron cage" of modernity. The first part of this course will follow in Weber's footsteps by studying his theory of rationalization and by exploring it in different social spheres, such as the economy, the law, the professions, and the secularization of religion. The second half of the course will look at Weber's legacy in Critical Theory. It will show how thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Georges Bataille, Jürgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer, Michael Löwy, and Alasdair MacIntyre suggested various lines of flight from the iron cage of modernity.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** attendance and participation, weekly critical reflections, 5- to 6-page midterm paper, 10- to 15-page final essay

**Prerequisites:** none
**REL 352** Mystic Spirituality in Black Women’s Social Justice Activism: Brazil-USA

**Cross-listings:** REL 352, WGSS 352, AFR 352

**Secondary Cross-listing**
This course examines the meanings and manifestations of mystic spirituality in the lives and work of selected Black women artists/activists in the USA and Brazil. The writings of Lucille Clifton (poet), Rosemarie Freeney Harding (activist and counselor) and Makota Valdina Pinto (activist and Candomblé ritual elder) are key texts for our exploration of the uses of mystic sensibilities and Afro-Atlantic ritual traditions--such as dreams and visions, prayer, divination, sacred dance, healing rites and other forms of unmediated intimate encounter with the sacred--as resources for creativity, community organizing, self-care and as aspects of political and social critique in African American and Afro-Brazilian contexts. The methodology of the course blends historical, literary and womanist approaches in an investigation of the conjunctions of spiritual practice and activism in the experience of women in the Afro-Atlantic diaspora.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** class participation, 2-3 short papers (5-7 pages) and a final project

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 15

**Enrollment Preferences:** AFR, REL, and WGSS concentrators

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 352 (D2) WGSS 352 (D2) AFR 352 (D2)

**Not offered current academic year**

**REL 354** Friedrich Nietzsche: Philosophizing with a Hammer

**Cross-listings:** REL 354, COMP 351

**Primary Cross-listing**
In one of his last major writings, *Twilight of the Idols* (*Götzen-Dämmerung*, 1889), Friedrich Nietzsche described his project as an attempt to sound out various established philosophical truths or intellectual "idols," saying, "they will be touched here with a hammer as with a tuning fork, these are the oldest, most convinced, puffed-up, and fat-headed idols you will ever find...And also the most hollow." To be sure, Nietzsche directed his often combative prose against everything from traditional religion to philosophy itself. Nietzsche is one of the most frequently cited and most frequently misunderstood philosophers of our current era. By reading Nietzsche’s writings in context, this course will attempt to liberate Nietzsche from his later reputation. We will think with and sometimes against Nietzsche, focusing on his notions of religion, mythology, power, morality, and enlightenment, and we will pay special attention to his reflections on the limits of reason/knowledge. Along the way, students will get a new sense of Nietzsche’s most famous theoretical formulations including "the death of God," the *Übermensch*, and the split between Dionysian/Apollonian modes of thought.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** class participation, weekly responses, 10- to 12-page final paper

**Prerequisites:** none
Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: In-depth seminar on a difficult philosopher who we'll be reading closely.

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 354 (D2) COMP 351 (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 358 (S) Religion and Law (DPE)

Cross-listings: GBST 358 REL 358

Primary Cross-listing

This course explores the concept of "law" through an investigation of the complex relationship between law, ethics, and religion. In doing so, we will look at legal theoretical texts as well as legal anthropological studies to pose critical questions about the nature of law, the functioning logic of law, the relationship between law and lived experience, and the legal construction of categories and facts. In the course, we will consider two intersections of religion and law: the particularities of religious legal traditions and the relationship between religion and secular law. Topics will include the secular legal construction of religion, the relationship between law and ethics, the nature of legal hermeneutics, and the racial, gender, and sexual politics of legal interpretation.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: reading response, two essays, final research paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

GBST 358 (D2) REL 358 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Law is seen as both a repressive and liberatory force. In taking a critical approach to the nature of law and legal interpretation, this course prepares students to think about the language of "rule of law," "order," and "justice" as a complex relationship between law and power.

Not offered current academic year

REL 374 (S) Mysticism: Vision, Writing, History (WS)

Cross-listings: ENGL 374 REL 374 COMP 352

Secondary Cross-listing

The promise of God's real presence in the world lies at the heart of Christianity as a messianic and scriptural faith. But mystics, who seek out and bear witness to their own experiences of the divine, have often been viewed with suspicion by church and state authorities. At stake in these confrontations between orthodoxy and the individual witness are questions of knowledge and power. To whom does God speak, who speaks for God, and how can anyone, whether mystic or priest, be certain? We will learn how these questions have inflected certain passages in the history of Christian belief and practice: the flourishing culture of mystical writing by medieval women, the efforts of some Protestant sects to distribute authority more horizontally, and early modern philosophers' criticisms of prophecy and fanaticism. But our deepest concerns will be literary and aesthetic. What modes of writing did mystics use to express what was, in fact, inexpressible? What role did visual art play in visionary experience? And how has mysticism influenced the work two of the twentieth century's most significant theorists of language, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Jacques Derrida?

Class Format: Tutorial
**Requirements/Evaluation:** biweekly 5-page papers, biweekly 2-page response papers, thoughtful participation in class discussions

**Prerequisites:** a 100-level ENGL course, or a score of 5 on the AP English Literature exam, or a score of 6 or 7 on the Higher Level IB English exam

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** English majors and those intending to major in English

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2) (WS)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

ENGL 374 (D1) REL 374 (D2) COMP 352 (D1)

**Writing Skills Notes:** This course will develop students’ writing skills through biweekly 5-page analytical papers and biweekly 2-page response papers. Written feedback will be provided by the instructor and by the tutorial partner. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

**Attributes:** ENGL Literary Histories A

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REL 378 (S) American Conservatism

**Cross-listings:** REL 378 HIST 378

**Secondary Cross-listing**

This course will explore the history of modern conservatism in the United States, from the early 20th century to today. Employing a chronological approach, it will examine the key intellectuals, politicians, and social movements that have fueled the rise and ascendance of the modern right. Going beyond formal politics, students will explore the influence of conservatism on American life more broadly--especially in the realms of race relations, gender and sexuality, religion, global capitalism, and international relations. Students will be asked to think historically, considering how the right rose from obscurity to political ascendance over the course of the 20th century. And they will be asked to engage theoretically, considering what (if anything) has defined conservatism in principle and in practice. In the process, they will learn to think critically in the broadest sense: situating texts within their context, engaging with diverse perspectives, and gaining an appreciation for the complexity of human experience. The course will cover such topics as Cold War nationalism; the GOP’s “Southern Strategy;” law and order politics; anti-feminism and the culture wars; neoliberal economics; neoconservative foreign policy; and late-20th century battles over such divisive issues as affirmative action, abortion, and taxation.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** participation in group discussion; six informal response papers (300-400 words); two unit essays (4-6 pages); final paper (8-10 pages)

**Prerequisites:** none, open to all students

**Enrollment Limit:** 25

**Enrollment Preferences:** History and Religion majors, and students with a demonstrated interest in either field

**Expected Class Size:** 20

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

REL 378 (D2) HIST 378 (D2)

**Attributes:** HIST Group F Electives - U.S. + Canada

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REL 388 (S) Gandhi: Nationalism, Philosophy, and Legacy

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Secondary Cross-listing

This course studies the work and ideas of M.K. Gandhi (1869-1948, one of the most influential thinkers of the non-western world. Gandhi is well known today for his philosophy of non-violent resistance and its application in India's freedom struggle as well as his influence on the work of leaders like Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. Hailed as the 'father of the Indian nation', however, Gandhi is not only known for his political ideas but also for his deep engagement with aspect of everyday human behavior and morality: truth, vegetarianism, sex and celibacy, to name just a few of his obsessions which contributed to making his broader philosophy. It is this commitment to a morally pure life that earned him the title of 'Mahatma' or Great Soul in India. The tutorial will focus on three key aspects of Gandhi: his ideas of peaceful protest as means of social and political change, his contemplations on moral philosophy, and on his legacy in modern India and the world. Students will read a combination of Gandhi's own writings as well as journal articles, monographs and films. The course will probe questions such as: What was the nature of Gandhian nationalism? Did it help to integrate the Indian nation? How, if at all, was shaped by Gandhi's engagements with moral philosophy and human behavior? Was Gandhi truly a Great Soul, a saint or a shrewd politician? In what ways is Gandhi received and remembered by the Indian nation today? How does understanding a figure like Gandhi facilitate our understanding of modern nationalism, citizenship and political action?

Class Format: tutorial; students will meet with the instructor each week for one hour sessions in pairs

Requirements/Evaluation: 5 to 7-page essays or 2-page critiques due each week and a final report (3-4 pages) at the end of the semester

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: upper level History majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
GBST 488 (D2) HIST 488 (D2) REL 388 (D2) ASST 488 (D2)

Attributes: GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies Electives HIST Group B Electives - Asia

Not offered current academic year

REL 397 (F) Independent Study: Religion
Religion independent study.

Class Format: independent study

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2019
IND Section: 01 TBA Jacqueline Hidalgo

REL 398 (S) Independent Study: Religion
Religion independent study.

Class Format: independent study

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2020
IND Section: 01 TBA Jacqueline Hidalgo

REL 401 (F) Issues in the Study of Religion
To be conducted as a working seminar or colloquium. Major issues in the study of religious thought and behavior will be taken up in a cross-cultural
context enabling the student to consolidate and expand perspectives gained in the course of the major sequence. Topics will vary from year to year. In keeping with the seminar framework, opportunity will be afforded the student to pursue independent reading and research.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** class reports, papers, and substantial research projects

**Prerequisites:** senior Religion major or permission of instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 15

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

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**REL 422 (S) Art, Architecture, and Poetry: Islamic Devotional Culture in South Asia**

**Cross-listings:** REL 422 COMP 422 ARTH 422

**Secondary Cross-listing**

How have scholars interpreted and classified terms such as "Islamic art" and "Muslim culture," and how have these classifications affected the interpretation of the arts in South Asia? There are different points of view regarding what constitutes as "Islamic" art and culture. Is an imperial wine cup with "God is Great" inscribed on it an "Islamic" object? How is an erotic epic narrating the romance of a Hindu prince understood as embodying the principles of Muslim devotion? This interdisciplinary seminar, focusing on South Asian Muslim devotional culture as articulated through the material culture, the arts of the book, architecture, and poetry, will navigate these questions from two perspectives. The first is to understand how Muslim devotional cultural expression in South Asia circumscribes and interprets itself. The second viewpoint is that of scholarship and the various interpretive voices that have framed the field over the last century.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** class participation, 2-page response papers on class readings, leading class discussion, final 15-20-page research paper

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 14

**Enrollment Preferences:** preference will be given to Art Majors, and then to students of any major interested in art and culture of Islam

**Expected Class Size:** 12

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D1)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

REL 422 (D2) COMP 422 (D1) ARTH 422 (D1)

Not offered current academic year

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**REL 486 (S) Islam in European Culture from Muhammad to Modernity** (DPE)

**Cross-listings:** REL 486 HIST 486

**Secondary Cross-listing**

From the Crusades to modern colonialism, the relationship between Muslims and Western Christians has often been recounted as the clash of two opposing civilizations, a history of warfare and of incompatible values. This tutorial takes a different point of departure, namely the recent scholarly recognition that relationships between Muslims and Western Christians were often rooted in the intimacy of frequent interaction. We will delve into the many ways in which Muslim peoples shaped European culture from the Middle Ages to the present. We will explore different domains, from one of the first translations of the Qur'an into any language, the Latin version done in Toledo in 1143, to the many goods made by Muslim craftsmen that filled the homes of Renaissance Europe, and the roles of early modern Muslims as captives, slaves, diplomats, travelers, and converts. In the modern period, Muslims continued to inflect European culture both as colonial subjects and as domestic minorities, producing and inspiring art, imaginative literature, and critiques of European power. Our investigation will encompass music, visual art and film in addition to written works. How do we make sense of this intricately interwoven history? And what are its legacies for the present? Sources both primary and secondary will include Leo Africanus, Lady
Montagu, Montesquieu, Mozart, al-Tahtawi, Flaubert, Sayyid Qutb and Fatima Mernissi.

Class Format: Tutorial

Requirements/Evaluation: five tutorial papers (5-7 pages.) and five shorter responses; occasional presentations

Prerequisites: History majors; juniors and seniors

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: if the course is overenrolled, a statement of interest will be requested

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 486 (D2) HIST 486 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This tutorial takes the approach of cultural history; discussions will heed the politics of translation across religious, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. We will historicize the way "difference" has been understood, and see that the alterity that was once viewed as theological was in other eras seen as the product of culture or politics. In addition, the tutorial recovers the rich artistic and literary production that intercultural interactions inspired—a legacy worthy of study.

Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia HIST Group G Electives - Global History HIST Group P Electives - Premodern

Spring 2020
TUT Section: T1 TBA Alexander Bevilacqua

REL 493 (F) Senior Thesis: Religion

Religion senior thesis; this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494).

Class Format: independent study

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2019
HON Section: 01 TBA Jacqueline Hidalgo

REL 494 (S) Senior Thesis: Religion

Religion senior thesis; this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494).

Class Format: independent study

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2020
HON Section: 01 TBA Jacqueline Hidalgo

REL 497 (F) Independent Study: Religion

Religion independent study.

Class Format: independent study

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2019
REL 498 (S) Independent Study: Religion

Religion independent study.

Class Format: independent study

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2020

REL 14 (W) Yogic Meditation: A Dynamic Synergy of Experience and Understanding

Would you like to learn to meditate with ease? Are you interested in texts and explanations that support a meditation practice? This course is an experiential immersion into a deep practice of meditation that works with the nature of the body and the mind. It is also an exploration and familiarization with key ideas and understandings about how meditation actually works. No particular faith or beliefs are necessary for this practice. This course is not about becoming part of any group, but rather establishing yourself in deep meditation practice that supports your life. At the beginning of the course, you receive personal instruction and learn your meditation practice. Having learned an effective practice you are not required to forcefully concentrate or wrestle with your mind. Instead the practice unfolds naturally. Understanding how this might work involves study. To anchor key understandings of yogic meditation in a larger context, we study important texts from the non-dual Shaiva Tantras. Moreover we delve into some of the roots of this particular meditation practice in the earlier Classical Yoga. In addition to written texts, you will work with audio recordings and study guides that explore both the theory and the practice of Neelakantha Meditation. This particular practice, Neelakantha Meditation as taught in Blue Throat Yoga (https://www.bluethroatyoga.com/), is specifically intended for those of us active in the world. So it is oriented to provide rest, restore well being, and also to up level our capacities for skillful, wise and compassionate activity in the world. This class meets four times a week for 1.5 hours to meditate and discuss the foundational concepts. We also learn additional practices that support meditation including chanting, breathing and light yoga asana. On your own you meditate twice a day, read and contemplate texts, listen to audio recordings, and journal. Each week you submit a 3-4 pg. journal reflecting on your practice and study. Before registering for this course, students are REQUIRED to attend an informational meeting on Sunday, November 3, 2019 at 4 p.m. (room TBA--watch for daily messages). Interested students who are not able to attend this informational meeting should contact the instructor. Adjunct Instructor Bio: Tasha Judson is director and teacher at Tasha Yoga in Williamstown. She has been teaching yoga asana for over 25 years. In 2016, she became an Authorized Teacher of Neelakantha Meditation as taught in Blue Throat Yoga after eight years of intensive study and practice. She has travelled to India multiple times to related sacred places and communities.

Requirements/Evaluation: three papers of 3-4 pages each

Prerequisites: interest in learning a natural and easeful meditation practice; interested students are required to attend an informational session prior to registering for the course

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: based on statement of interest and seniority

Grading: pass/fail only

Materials/Lab Fee: $300 and cost of books

Winter 2020

REL 18 (W) Rare and Wondrous Bibles of the Chapin Library

What does a Bible from 1462 feel like? Smell like? In this course, students will touch, smell, and examine early and rare Bibles from the world-class collection of Bibles housed in Williams's own Chapin Library. Highlights of the collection include multiple significant 15th and 16th century Bibles, as well as a 1611 King James Bible. Through class readings and discussions, as well as a small project, students will learn about the history of the book,
the history of the Bible as a book, and the specific histories of one or more rare Chapin Bibles of their choosing. The major project for the course will be for students to experiment with and curate an Instagram account together as an online "exhibit" of the rare and wondrous Bibles of the Chapin Library.

Requirements/Evaluation: final project or presentation
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 14
Enrollment Preferences: preference will be given to Religion majors, followed by History majors, and then by seniority
Grading: pass/fail only
Materials/Lab Fee: approximately $80 for books

Winter 2020
LEC Section: 01 TBA Phillip J. Webster

REL 19 (W) Charmed: Amulets and Talismans to Protect, Heal, Curse, and Influence Others
For much of human history, if you wanted healing from illness, to get someone to like you, or to make your enemies fail, and you lacked money or political influence, you would turn to an amulet maker. But what were these amulets, how did they function, and how were they made? In this course, we will explore the role of amulets in popular religious cultures around the world, and we'll even take a crack at making our own. This course is recommended for students interested in religion or who want to learn how to get someone to fall in love with them. ;-) Rabbi Seth Wax is the Jewish Chaplain at Williams.

Requirements/Evaluation: final project or presentation
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: lottery
Grading: pass/fail only
Materials/Lab Fee: $60

Winter 2020
LEC Section: 01 TBA Seth M. Wax

REL 30 (W) Senior Project: Religion
An advanced course for senior Religion majors (who are not writing theses) to further develop their senior seminar paper into a polished 25 page research paper (which will also be the focus of a brown-bag presentation during the spring semester). The course will help the students with general research methods, workshop, paper writing, and presentation practice.

Class Format: senior project
Grading: pass/fail only

Winter 2020
IND Section: 01 TBA Jacqueline Hidalgo

REL 31 (W) Senior Thesis: Religion
Religion senior thesis.

Class Format: thesis
Grading: pass/fail only

Winter 2020
REL 99 (W) Independent Study: Religion

Open to upperclass students. Students interested in doing an independent project (99) during Winter Study must make prior arrangements with a faculty sponsor. The student and professor then complete the independent study proposal form available online. The deadline is typically in late September. Proposals are reviewed by the pertinent department and the Winter Study Committee. Students will be notified if their proposal is approved prior to the Winter Study registration period.

Class Format: independent study

Grading: pass/fail only