RELIGION (Div II)
Chair: Associate Professor Jason Storm


On leave Fall/Spring: Associate Professor J. Hidalgo.
On leave Fall only:
On leave Spring only:

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 102 (F) The Meaning of Life**

As Henry David Thoreau put it, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," attempting to fill the void of their existence with sex, money, ephemeral amusements, and the steady accumulation of unnecessary possessions - basically killing time until the day they die. For some people this might seem to be enough, but this course is for those of us who lie awake at night wondering things like: "Why are we here?" "What does it mean to live a good life?" "How can I be happy?" "What is our duty to others?" "What really matters?" and the biggest question of them all: "What is the Meaning of Life?" This course will trace the diverse responses to these important questions offered by philosophers and religious thinkers in different cultures and time periods. We will read their texts critically and discuss how they can be directly relevant to our lives. Students will also be introduced to abstract theorizing in Religious Studies about how different cultures and traditions have historically come to live meaningfully. Authors and texts to be read may include Aristotle, Hannah Arendt, Marcus Aurelius, the Bhagavad Gita, H. H. Dalai Lama, the Dhammapada, Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Luther King Jr, Jean-Paul Sartre, Shantideva, Peter Singer, Leo Tolstoy, Max Weber, and Slavoj Zizek.

**Class Format:** lecture

**Requirements/Evaluation:** attendance and participation, journal and short writing assignments, midterm and final exams

**Prerequisites:** none
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

Extra Info: not available for the fifth course option

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: first-year students and potential Religion majors

Expected Class Size: 30

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2019
LEC Section: 01    TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm    Jeffrey I. Israel

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

Crosslistings: ANTH134 / REL134 / COMP134 / CHIN134

Secondary Crosslisting

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

Requirements/Evaluation: tutorial papers, responses, and a final project

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

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

Expected Class Size: 10

Distributions: (D2) (WI)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under CHIN or COMP; meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ANTH or REL WI. 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. The final project will be a self-designed experiment in reclusion.

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

Crosslistings: MUS171 / REL171

Secondary Crosslisting

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 Messiah; 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.
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 about studying religion? Is "religion" even a cultural universal? Or is it merely the byproduct of the European Enlightenment? What is religion's relationship to God? to science? to society? to secularism? to colonialism? to ethics? to politics? to violence? to sex? to freedom? Has religion changed fundamentally in modernity? And if so, what is its future?

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
Extra Info: not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none, although a previous course on religion is recommended
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2019
SEM Section: 01    TR 11:20 am - 12:35 pm    Zaid Adhami

REL 201 (F) The Hebrew Bible

Crosslistings: COMP201 / JWST201 / REL201
Primary Crosslisting

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
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP
Attributes: JWST Gateway Courses

Fall 2018
LEC Section: 01  TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am  Edan Dekel

REL 202 (S) Moses: Stranger in a Strange Land
Crosslistings: COMP214 / JWST202 / REL202

Primary Crosslisting
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 Elliot, 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
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP
Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2019
SEM Section: 01  TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am  Edan Dekel

REL 203 (F) Judaism: Before The Law
Crosslistings: JWST101 / REL203

Primary Crosslisting
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

Extra Info: not available for the fifth course option

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 30

Enrollment Preferences: Jewish Studies concentrators, Religion majors and students who are considering these options

Expected Class Size: 15

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: JLST Interdepartmental Electives; JWST Gateway Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 204 (F) Jesus and Judaism

Crosslistings: REL204 / JWST204

Primary Crosslisting

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, short papers (3-5 pages), and final exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 10-12

Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 205 (S) Ancient Wisdom Literature

Crosslistings: JWST205 / REL205 / COMP217 / CLAS205

Primary Crosslisting

The Biblical books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job are often grouped together under the Hebrew category of hokhmah, 'wisdom.' Although these books are very different in content, they can all be interpreted as meditations on ethical and practical philosophy. In this way, they represent the Hebrew Bible's canonical embrace of a widespread Near Eastern literary phenomenon. From the instructional literature of Egypt and Mesopotamia to Greek didactic poetry and fables, ancient Mediterranean cultures offer a wide range of texts that engage the issues of personal behavior, leadership, and justice. Starting with the central wisdom books of the Hebrew Bible and moving through relevant material from the Apocrypha, New Testament, and the Egyptian and Babylonian traditions, this course will examine the literature of wisdom throughout the ancient world with an eye toward understanding its various social, political, and philosophical contexts. We will then consider the Greek wisdom tradition in such texts as Hesiod's Works and Days, Aesop's fables, and fragments from the pre-Socratic philosophers. Finally, we will explore the influence of these ancient sources on later expressions of wisdom in medieval European literature, as well as more recent examples such as Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanack. All readings are in translation.

Class Format: seminar

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

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19
REL 206 (S) The Book of Job and Joban Literature  (WI)
Crosslistings: COMP206 / JWST206 / REL206

Primary Crosslisting
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
Enrollment Limit: 19

REL 207 (F) From Adam to Noah: Literary Imagination and the Primeval History in Genesis
Crosslistings: COMP250 / REL207 / JWST207 / CLAS207

Primary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: core course for COMP
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: students who have already taken a course in Biblical literature

Expected Class Size: 19

Distributions: (D2)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP or CLAS

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

REL 209 (S) Jewish America

Crosslistings: JWST209 / REL209

Primary Crosslisting

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

Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year

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

Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year
REL 213 (F) Ancient Christianity on Gender and Sexuality: Legacies and Prospects
Crosslistings: WGSS216 / REL213

Primary Crosslisting
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
Distributions: (D2)
Not offered current academic year

REL 214 (F) Religion and the State
Crosslistings: REL214 / PSCI271

Primary Crosslisting
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
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: JLST Interdepartmental Electives

Crosslistings: CLAS215 / REL215

Primary Crosslisting
In this course, students will be introduced to the New Testament through an exploration of how the New Testament became--and continues to be produced as--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 preparation and participation, two short papers (3-5 pages), midterm, and final exam

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** none

**Enrollment Preferences:** none

**Expected Class Size:** 10-12

**Distributions:** (D2)

**Distribution Notes:** meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under CLAS

**Not offered current academic year**

**REL 216 (S) Greek Art and the Gods**

Crosslistings: CLAS248 / REL216 / ARTH238

**Secondary Crosslisting**

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

**Expected Class Size:** 30

**Department Notes:** satisfies the pre-1400 requirement; satisfies the pre-1600 elective requirement in the art-history major.

**Distributions:** (D1)

**Distribution Notes:** meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under ARTH and CLAS; meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL

**Attributes:** ARTH pre-1600 Courses;

**Not offered current academic year**

**REL 217 (S) Medieval England**

Crosslistings: REL217 / HIST231

**Secondary Crosslisting**

Across the entire world of the Middle Ages, no region has captured the modern imagination as much as medieval England. From the Battle of Hastings
to Magna Carta, from Braveheart to King Arthur, medieval English history and popular knowledge of the medieval past are closely linked. This course will survey the history of England from the Roman period through the reign of Richard II (AD 43-1399). We will find a great deal to detain us in these thirteen centuries, including the Anglo-Saxon settlement of England and subsequent conversion to Christianity, the Viking raids of the ninth and tenth centuries, the Norman Conquest, the growth of English common law, the murder of Thomas Beckett, Edward I’s campaigns in Wales and Scotland, the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381, and the beginning of the Hundred Years War. We will focus particularly on power and politics, but primary readings will add important social, cultural and religious context. Our meetings will emphasize lectures and discussion equally. No prior knowledge is expected.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based upon a series of 500-word papers and weekly quizzes

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 40

Enrollment Preferences: History majors

Expected Class Size: 35

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia; HIST Group P Electives - Premodern

Not offered current academic year

REL 218 (F)  Foundations of China

Crosslistings: ANTH212 / CHIN214 / REL218 / HIST214 / GBST212

Secondary Crosslisting

This course examines the foundational period of Chinese civilization, from the earliest evidence of human activity in the geographical region we now call China, through the end of the Han dynasty in the early third-century CE. This is the period that saw the creation and spread of the Chinese script (a writing system that would be the dominant one in East Asia for thousands of years), the teachings of Confucius (whose ideas continue to play a role in the lives of billions of people today), the construction of the Great Wall (which is not, as it turns out, visible from space), and the creation of the imperial bureaucratic system (that was, in essence, the progenitor of the modern bureaucratic state). We will proceed chronologically but focus on a set of thematic topics, including language and writing, religion and philosophy, art and architecture, politics and economics, and science and technology. While this course is entitled "Foundations of China," we will take a critical perspective on narratives, both Chinese and Western, that see Chinese history as an unbroken history of a single "civilization."

Class Format: lecture

Requirements/Evaluation: short writing assignments (approximately 750 words each), quizzes, a mid-term, and a final exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 40

Enrollment Preferences: Chinese majors, History majors, Religion majors, and Anthropology majors

Expected Class Size: 25

Distributions: (D2)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under CHIN; meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ANTH, REL, HIST OR GBST

Attributes: HIST Group B Electives - Asia

Fall 2018

LEC Section: 01    MWF 12:00 pm - 12:50 pm     Christopher M. B. Nugent

REL 219 (S)  Judaism Under Ancient Greek and Roman Imperialisms

Crosslistings: JWST219 / CLAS219 / REL219

Primary Crosslisting

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/Judaean 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 preparation and participation, short reading response papers (1-page), midterm, and final exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 10-12

Distributions: (D2)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under CLAS

REL 220 (S) Spiritualities of Dissent

Crosslistings: REL220 / AFR219

Primary Crosslisting

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

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, weekly reading responses, a critical book review, and a final paper or project

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors; Africana Studies concentrators

Expected Class Size: 15

Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 221 (F) Technologies of Religion in the Early Christian World

Crosslistings: CLAS221 / REL221

Primary Crosslisting

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
REL 223 (F) Revolt and Revelation in 20th-Century Americas
Crosslistings: AMST228 / AFR228 / LATS228 / REL223

Secondary Crosslisting

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
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: majors and concentrators
Expected Class Size: 12
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: LATS Core Electives
Not offered current academic year

REL 224 (S) U.S. Latinx Religions
Crosslistings: REL224 / AMST224 / LATS224

Secondary Crosslisting

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.

Class Format: discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: based upon class participation, short writing exercises, a 5-page essay, and an 8-12-page final review essay
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora; LATS Core Electives
Not offered current academic year

REL 225 (S) Culture and Morality
Crosslistings: ANTH224 / REL225

Secondary Crosslisting
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

Extra Info: not available for the fifth course option

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: ANSO students

Expected Class Size: 19

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 226 (F) Spiritual But Not Religious (WI)

Crosslistings: ANTH226 / REL226

Primary Crosslisting

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)

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 10-15

Distributions: (D2) (WI)

Not offered current academic year

REL 229 (S) Reel Jesus: Reading the Christian Bible and Film in the U.S.A. (WI)
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

**Distributions:** (D2) (WI)

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

Not offered current academic year
"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.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: regular reading responses, 5- to 6-page midterm essay, group social-media project (research-based, creating a video essay), final 7- to 8-page essay
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: none
Expected Class Size: 20
Distributions: (D2)
Not offered current academic year

REL 234 (F) What is Islam? (DPE)
Crosslistings: ARAB234 / GBST234 / REL234

Primary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
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
Distributions: (D2) (DPE)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ARAB. DPE: 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.

Fall 2018
SEM Section: 01 MR 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm Saadia Yacoob
REL 235 (S) The Garden in the Ancient World
Crosslistings: ENVI232 / REL235 / CLAS235 / COMP235

Secondary Crosslisting
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.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, short written assignments, and a final project
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: Classics majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under CLAS, COMP or ENVI; meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL

Spring 2019
SEM Section: 01    MR 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm    Nicole G. Brown

REL 236 (S) Reading the Qur'an (WI)
Crosslistings: ARAB236 / REL236 / COMP213 / GBST236

Primary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Religion and Arabic Studies majors
Expected Class Size: 19
Distributions: (D2) (WI)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or GBST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under ARAB or COMP

Not offered current academic year
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
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora;
Not offered current academic year

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
Distributions: (D2)
Secondary Crosslisting

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

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ARAB. DPE: This course introduces students to the incredible diversity of the Middle East and offers a critical assessment of difference, power, and equity in the Middle East. In particular 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 2018

LEC Section: 01 TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm Magnus T. Bernhardsson

REL 240 (S) The Challenge of ISIS

Crosslistings: REL240 / HIST210 / ANTH210 / ARAB210 / GBST210

Secondary Crosslisting

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 mujahidin 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%)

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 40

Expected Class Size: 40

Distributions: (D2)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ARAB

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

Not offered current academic year
REL 241 (S) History of Sexuality (WI)
Crosslistings: HIST292 / GBST241 / WGSS239 / REL241

Primary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: Religion, History, and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies majors
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2) (WI)
Not offered current academic year

REL 242 (S) Women, Gender, and Sexuality in Islam
Crosslistings: WGSS242 / REL242 / ARAB242

Primary Crosslisting
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: active class participation (including a presentation on the reading materials), short weekly reflections, and one final research paper (10-15 pages)
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Religion, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Arabic majors
Expected Class Size: 10
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ARAB
REL 243 (F) Islamic Law: Past and Present
Crosslistings: REL243 / WGSS243 / ARAB243 / HIST302

Primary Crosslisting
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

Distributions: (D2)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ARAB

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

REL 244 (S) Mind and Persons in Indian Thought
Crosslistings: ASST244 / REL244

Primary Crosslisting
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

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses
REL 246 (F)  India's Identities: Reproducing the Nation, Community and Individual (WI)

Crosslistings: ANTH246 / ASST246 / WGSS246 / REL246

Primary Crosslisting

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

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: majors in Anthropology and Sociology, Religion, Asian Studies, or Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies

Distribution: (D2) (WI)

Attributes: GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies Electives; PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health; WGSS Racial Sexual + Cultural Diversity Courses

Not offered current academic year

REL 247 (S) Race and Religion in the American West

Crosslistings: LATS247 / ENVI247 / REL247 / AMST247

Primary Crosslisting

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," "cites," 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)

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

Extra Info 2: course is part of the 2016-17 Climate Change Initiative

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: none
REL 249 (F) Anti-Semitism (DPE)
Crosslistings: JWST249 / REL249

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)
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 30
Enrollment Preferences: Jewish Studies concentrators, Religion majors, and students who have taken JWST 203
Expected Class Size: 18
Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

Fall 2018
SEM Section: 01    TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm    Jeffrey I. Israel

REL 250 (F) Scholars, Saints and Immortals: Virtue Ethics in East Asia
Crosslistings: REL250 / ASST250

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

Distributions: (D2) (WI)

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

Crosslistings: ARTH376 / REL252 / ASST376

Secondary Crosslisting

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

Distributions: (D2) (WI)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under ARTH or ASST; meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL

Attributes: ARTH pre-1600 Courses;

Spring 2019

LEC Section: 01    W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm     Ju-Yu Scarlett Jang

REL 253 (S) Spiritual Crossroads: Religious Life in Southeast Asia

Crosslistings: ANTH233 / ASST233 / REL253

Secondary Crosslisting

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

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies Electives

Spring 2019

SEM Section: 01    TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am     Peter Just
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

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2018

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

REL 255 (S)  Buddhism: Ideas and Practices

Crosslistings: REL255 / ANTH255 / ASST255

Primary Crosslisting

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

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies Electives; PHIL Related Courses

Spring 2019

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

REL 256 (F)  Buddhism, Sex, & Gender: #MeToo Then and Now (DPE) (WI)

Crosslistings: ANTH256 / REL256 / WGSS256 / ASST256
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)

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Anthropology, Religion, Asian Studies, Women's, Gender and Sexuality majors

Expected Class Size: 15

Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WI)

Distribution Notes: DPE: 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 social inequality. WI: Class is WI because of its reading responses, in-class writing, a final research paper, and required writing chats with the instructor where we identify patterns, strengths, and weaknesses in student writing.

Attributes: GBST East Asian Studies Electives; WGSS Racial Sexual + Cultural Diversity Courses

Fall 2018

SEM Section: 01    M 7:00 pm - 9:40 pm    Kim Gutschow

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

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

Not offered current academic year
REL 258 (S)  The Rhetoric(s) of Black Religious Traditions
Crosslistings: REL258 / AFR258

Secondary Crosslisting
This course will introduce students to the rich religious expressions of Black Americans through their rhetorical traditions. We will begin with a survey of rhetorical productions like sermons, music, and other forms of public address in the historical literatures on Black religions. Our review will yield some of the primary themes of Black religious experiences--the injustices of modern racism, the significance of liberation, and continued meaning of Africa as a homeland. We will then investigate how secular processes like commodification alter rhetorical practices.

Class Format: lecture
Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation in this course will be based upon class participation, response papers, one 8-page paper, and a formal group presentation
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: none
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2)
Not offered current academic year

REL 259 (F)  Ethics of Jewish American Fiction  (WI)
Crosslistings: JWST259 / ENGL259 / REL259

Primary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies concentrators, and English majors
Expected Class Size: 18
Distributions: (D2) (WI)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement is registration is under ENGL
Attributes: JWST Core Electives;
Not offered current academic year

REL 261 (S)  Rastafari: Dread, Politics, Agency
Crosslistings: REL261 / PSCI233 / AFR299

Secondary Crosslisting
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
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.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and participation, weekly reading e-response papers, two short essays, and a 12- to 15-page final paper
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis
Prerequisites: none; open to all
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: Africana Studies concentrators and majors in Political Science and Religion
Expected Class Size: 12
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: AFR Core Electives; AMST Arts in Context Electives; AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora; AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives;
Not offered current academic year

REL 262 (F) Time and Blackness (WI)
Crosslistings: AFR208 / REL262 / AMST208
Secondary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: concentrators in Africana Studies, majors in Religious Studies, and majors in American Studies
Expected Class Size: 10
Distributions: (D2) (WI)
Attributes: AFR Core Electives; AMST Arts in Context Electives; AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora;

REL 263 (S) Giving God a Backbeat: Rap Music, Religion & Spirituality
Crosslistings: AFR221 / REL263
Secondary Crosslisting
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

**Extra Info:** may not be taken on a pass/fail basis

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 25

**Expected Class Size:** 20

**Distributions:** (D2)

**Attributes:** AFR Core Electives; AMST Arts in Context Electives;

Not offered current academic year

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**REL 264 (F) Bodies, Genders, and Sexualities in the Early Christian World** *(DPE)*

**Crosslistings:** REL264 / WGSS264

**Primary Crosslisting**

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 pluriform 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 paper

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 19

**Enrollment Preferences:** majors, student seniority by class

**Expected Class Size:** 19

**Distributions:** (D2) *(DPE)*

**Distribution Notes:** DPE: 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.

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**REL 266 (S) Being American, Being Muslim: American Muslim Literature in the 21st century** *(DPE)*

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)

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: none

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 20

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

Distribution Notes: DPE: This course will explore the many complex 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 internal to 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 and power and difference in the texts that we will read, and how to analyze their workings in nuanced multidimensional ways.

Spring 2019

SEM Section: 01    MW 11:00 am - 12:15 pm     Zaid Adhami

REL 267 (F) The Art of Friendship

Crosslistings: CLAS212 / COMP267 / REL267

Secondary Crosslisting

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

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, short written assignments, and a final paper/project

Prerequisites: none

Expected Class Size: 25

Distributions: (D1)

Not offered current academic year

REL 269 (S) Mindsight: Mindfulness and Medicine (DPE) (WI)

Crosslistings: REL269 / ASST269 / ANTH269

Secondary Crosslisting

This course offers a social analysis and historical genealogy of mindfulness meditations from its roots as a Buddhist practice through its modern applications in a variety of social settings including hospitals, clinics, schools, communities, and even prisons to improve health and other social outcomes. We explore the scientific evidence including clinical research and other qualitative studies that have shown how mindfulness can alter human experience, behavior, and well-being. We begin by considering how mindfulness and meditation practices were first taught the Buddha two millennia ago in monastic and lay settings before turning to the modern studies and applications of mindfulness training. How has research on mindfulness exploded since 2000 and how does this relate to better models of the human brain and behavior? We critically examine the models
developed by clinical psychiatry, neuroscience, and biomedicine, including brain imaging technologies like the fMRI, that have improved our understanding of the relationship between the brain, behavior, and emotions. We consider research on mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) within clinical medicine, the rise of the 'kindness curriculum' in schools, and other areas of applied research on mindfulness that have generated a 'science of personal transformation'. Last but not least, we ask how mindfulness has been used to improve the interpersonal skills and training of doctors, teachers, and social workers to help improve social and learning outcomes as well as enhance patient/provider encounters. Students will be expected to engage in a mindfulness practice during the semester.

Class Format: tutorial
Requirements/Evaluation: weekly papers, 4- to 8-pages
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Expected Class Size: 10
Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WI)
Distribution Notes: DPE: This class fulfills the DPE requirement because it will explore the ways that stress related to poverty, social inequality, and structural violence can and have been alleviated by mindfulness-based practices. Further it critiques the continuing misperception that mindfulness practices are elite, non-inclusive practices that cannot benefit populations suffering from pervasive NCDs (non-communicable diseases) like obesity and high blood pressure that are related to broader social inequities. WI: This course is a tutorial and there will be weekly writing assignments.
Attributes: GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies Electives; PHLH Social Determinants of Health;

Spring 2019
TUT Section: T1 TBA Kim Gutschow

REL 270 (S) Jewish and Christian Identity in the Ancient World
Crosslistings: JWST270 / REL270
Primary Crosslisting

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
Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2019
SEM Section: 01 W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm Lawrence M. Wills

REL 271 (F) Erotic, Grotesque, Sublime: Ghosts and Monsters in East Asian Religion and Popular Culture
Crosslistings: ASST271 / REL271 / WGSS279 / COMP279
Primary Crosslisting
"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 folktales, 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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: REL, ASST, WGSS, and COMP majors will be given preference
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL, ASST or WGSS; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP
Attributes: FMST Related Courses
Not offered current academic year

REL 273 (F) Heroes, Saints and Celebrity (WI)
Crosslistings: ANTH222 / REL273
Secondary Crosslisting
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
Distributions: (D2) (WI)

REL 274 (F) The Body in Power

Fall 2018
SEM Section: 01    TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am    David B. Edwards

REL 274 (F) The Body in Power
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

**Distributions:** (D2)

*Not offered current academic year*

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

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

**Distributions:** (D2)

Spring 2019

SEM Section: 01    TR 11:20 am - 12:35 pm    Phillip J. Webster

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**REL 278 (S) Buddhist Material Culture: Objects of Practice and Merit (DPE)**

Crosslistings: REL278 / ASST278

**Primary Crosslisting**

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

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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

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

Distribution Notes: DPE: 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.

Spring 2019

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

Crosslistings: REL280 / ANTH281 / ARTH281

Secondary Crosslisting

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 be presented in a museum exhibit.

Class Format: seminar

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

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: ANTH, SOC and ARTH majors

Expected Class Size: 12

Distributions: (D2)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ANTH or REL; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under ARTH

Spring 2019

REL 281 (F) Religion and Science

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

**Distributions:** (D2)

**Attributes:** SCST Related Courses

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**REL 282 (S) Religion and Capitalism (WI)**

Crosslistings: REL282 / PSCI140 / SOC283

**Secondary Crosslisting**

Up through the 1960s it was popular to claim that the world was becoming increasingly and inevitably secular, with the development of modern capitalist social relations as a signature cause. Today the 'secularization thesis' is largely defunct. Instead one sees the vibrant return of religion to social, economic, and political prominence in most parts of the world--at the very same time we are experiencing through globalization and the information revolution the most dramatic economic advances in a century. This course investigates the historical and contemporary relationship between culture and economics, religion and capitalism, in their most encompassing forms. In investigating this theme, our cornerstone will be Max Weber's famous argument from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Along the way we will discuss both the origins of capitalist society as well as its more recent transformations through the rise of the welfare state, consumerism, and globalization. We will also discuss changes in religion under the influence of capitalism including romanticism, Pentecostalism, moralistic therapeutic Deism, and the 'God gap' between largely theist Africa, South and West Asia, and the Americas on the one hand and largely atheist Europe and East Asia on the other. The focus of the course is on Christianity in Western countries both historically and in the present, but we will spend time discussing religion (particularly Pentecostalism) and capitalism in the contemporary Global South as well.

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** regular discussion questions, three 5- to 6-page papers, in-class paper workshops, 20- to 24-page final term paper incorporating earlier papers

**Extra Info:** may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 16

**Enrollment Preferences:** open to first-years and sophomores only

**Expected Class Size:** 14

**Distributions:** (D2) (WI)

**Attributes:** PSCI Comparative Politics Courses; PSCI Political Theory Courses;

Not offered current academic year

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**REL 286 (F) Moral Life in the Modern World**

Crosslistings: REL286 / SOC252

**Secondary Crosslisting**

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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Sociology and Anthropology students
Expected Class Size: 19
Distributions: (D2)
Not offered current academic year

REL 288 (S) Embodiment and Consciousness: A Cross-Cultural Exploration
Crosslistings: PHIL288 / REL288
Primary Crosslisting
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)
Extra Info: not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: some background in either PSYC, COGS, PHIL or permission of instructor
Enrollment Limit: 18
Enrollment Preferences: Religion and Philosophy majors
Expected Class Size: 18
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: COGS Interdepartmental Electives; PHIL Contemp Metaphysics & Epistemology Courses
Not offered current academic year

REL 289 (F) The Talmud on What it Means to be Human
Crosslistings: JWST289 / REL289
Primary Crosslisting
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

**Extra Info:** may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** Religion majors, Jewish Studies students

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Distributions:** (D2)

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**REL 291 (S) Religion and the American Environmental Imagination (WI)**

Crosslistings: ENVI291 / REL291 / SOC291

**Secondary Crosslisting**

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

**Extra Info:** may not be taken on a pass/fail basis

**Prerequisites:** ENVI 101 or permission of instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 19

**Enrollment Preferences:** Environmental Studies majors and concentrators

**Expected Class Size:** 12

**Distributions:** (D2) (WI)

**Attributes:** AMST Space and Place Electives; ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives;

Not offered current academic year

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**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 (3-5 pages) and one final research paper or project

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 30

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors

Expected Class Size: 30

Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year

REL 296 (F) The History of the Holocaust

Crosslistings: HIST338 / REL296 / JWST338

Secondary Crosslisting

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, a map quiz, four papers (4 pages) based on class readings, and a final research paper (6-8 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

Distributions: (D2)

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

Not offered current academic year

REL 297 (F) Theorizing Magic (WI)

Crosslistings: ANTH297 / COMP289 / REL297

Primary Crosslisting

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.*

**Class Format:** tutorial

**Requirements/Evaluation:** weekly writing assignments and tutorial attendance every week

**Extra Info:** may not be taken on a pass/fail basis

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** potential Religion or Comparative Literature majors

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Distributions:** (D2) (WI)

**Distribution Notes:** meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or ANTH; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP

Not offered current academic year

REL 301 (F)  Social Construction  (DPE)

Crosslistings: WGSS302 / REL301 / COMP315 / SOC301 / SCST301

**Primary Crosslisting**

"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

**Extra Info:** may not be taken on a pass/fail basis

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 15

**Enrollment Preferences:** Religion majors, then majors from cross-listed departments

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Distributions:** (D2) (DPE)

**Distribution Notes:** meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL, SOC, WGSS or SCST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP. DPE: 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.

Fall 2018
REL 303 (F) A History of Islam in Africa
Crosslistings: HIST303 / REL303 / ARAB303 / GBST303 / AFR303

Secondary Crosslisting
This course examines the history of Islam in Africa from the seventh century to the present. We will start off by looking at the spread of Islam in different parts of Africa. We will then analyze the social, political, economic, and cultural impact of Islam on African societies, the interaction between Islam and indigenous African institutions, the Islamic revolutions in the nineteenth century, the impact of European colonial rule on Muslim societies, and the development of Islam in the post-independence period. We will also examine how African Muslims reconstructed and asserted their religious identities by localizing Islamic intellectual traditions, healing practices, music, arts, cultural norms, and formal and informal religious festivals. By the end of the semester students should be able to appreciate Islam's common framework as well as its diversity and dynamics within that larger framework and over time.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: two 7-page papers and one 12- to 15-page paper
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: lottery
Expected Class Size: 25
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ARAB
Attributes: GBST African Studies Electives; HIST Group A Electives - Africa
Not offered current academic year

REL 305 (S) The Black Atlantic as Scriptural Formation
Crosslistings: REL305 / AFR355

Primary Crosslisting
"...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
Distributions: (D2)
Not offered current academic year

REL 309 (S) Scriptures and Race
Crosslistings: AFR309 / LATS309 / REL309

Primary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Expected Class Size: 10
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: LATS Core Electives

REL 310 (F) Womanist/Black Feminist Thought
Crosslistings: AMST309 / AFR310 / WGSS310 / REL310
Secondary Crosslisting
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. Fulfilling the EDI requirement, this course will explore how womanism/black feminism can be a bridge for empathetic understanding of diverse experiences, and will examine the varied social, political, and historical contexts that led to the formulation of womanism/black feminism as a tool to critique power and privilege.
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
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: AFR Core Electives; AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora; AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives; WGSS Racial Sexual + Cultural Diversity Courses; WGSS Theory Courses

REL 312 (F) The Mughal Empire: Power, Art, and Religion in India
Crosslistings: ASST312 / HIST312 / GBST312 / REL312
Secondary Crosslisting

Fall 2018
LEC Section: 01   M 7:00 pm - 9:40 pm   Rhon S. Manigault-Bryant
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

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

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

Distributions: (D2)

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

Fall 2018

SEM Section: 01 Wi 11:00 am - 12:15 pm Aparna Kapadia

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

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

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2019

SEM Section: 01 TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Phillip J. Webster

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

Crosslistings: AMST327 / AFR427 / LATS427 / REL314

Secondary Crosslisting
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:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** evaluation based on participation, presentations, annotated bibliography, short writing assignments, writing workshop participation, and a 20- to 25-page research paper

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 19

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

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Distributions:** (D2) (WI)

**Attributes:** AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora;

**Not offered current academic year**

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

Crosslistings: ENVI318 / LATS318 / REL318 / AMST318 / COMP328

Secondary Crosslisting

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

**Distributions:** (D2) (WI)

**Distribution Notes:** meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP; meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under LATS, AMST, ENVI or REL

**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**

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**REL 319 (S) Milton**

Crosslistings: ENGL315 / REL319

Secondary Crosslisting

John Milton is an odd case. Paradise Lost is more central to the English literary tradition than any other single work in the canon; to be a poet at all, you had to contend with that scarily formidable thing. And yet, Milton is also an outlier in the mainstream--a political radical whose conceptions of
categories such as gender, liberty, what it means to have a voice at all placed him athwart received conceptions of what literature should be. Taken together, such contradictions suggest the possibility of something alien and perhaps seismic at the very core of our literary tradition. We'll focus on Paradise Lost, though gathering around that poem a few other of Milton's works ("Lycidas," "Areopagitica"). But we also bring to bear a range of recent critical and theoretical writing both to illuminate the poem and to discern how the poet remains a durable and telltale symptom of the discipline of literary studies today.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: one 6- to 8-page paper, one 10- to 12-page paper, several shorter writing assignments, 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
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under ENGL; meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL
Attributes: ENGL Pre-1700 Courses; ENGL Literary Histories A

Spring 2019
SEM Section: 01 MR 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm Christopher L. Pye

REL 321 (F) Happy Holidays! A Comparative History of Commemorations and Festivals (WI)
Crosslistings: ARAB411 / HIST411 / REL321
Secondary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 12
Enrollment Preferences: seniors, especially History and Arabic Studies majors
Expected Class Size: 12
Distributions: (D2) (WI)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ARAB
Attributes: HIST Group E Electives - Middle East;
Not offered current academic year

REL 326 (S) Queer Temporalities (WI)
Crosslistings: REL326 / WGSS326 / COMP326 / LATS426
Primary Crosslisting
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: evaluation will be based on class attendance, analytical essays, responses, and revised essays

Extra Info: 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.

Extra Info 2: 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. may not be taken pass/fail or fifth course

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

Distributions: (D2) (WI)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL, LATS or WGSS; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP

Attributes: AMST Space and Place Electives; LATS Core Electives;

Not offered current academic year

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REL 328 (S) Witchcraft

Crosslistings: HIST328 / REL328

Secondary Crosslisting

A wide variety of human cultures have accepted the existence of the supernatural, the reality of magic, and the possibility of magical transgression. Among the most common supernatural crimes is witchcraft, which societies can invoke to explain natural disasters and disease, and to blame these occurrences on specific individuals, often social outcasts. Witchcraft became a particular focus of fear and fascination in Early Modern Europe, when inquisitors, theologians and many ordinary people came to believe that Western Christendom was threatened by a vast, covert conspiracy of witches in league with the devil. Countless "witches"--most of them women--were accordingly tried, tortured and sometimes even executed. Our course will examine these bizarre events and consider what religious, cultural and intellectual factors might help explain them. We will begin by investigating the medieval legal and theological developments that enabled and encouraged the persecution of witches, and go on to study some of the most important and sensational witch trials of the later medieval and early modern periods. Throughout, we will encounter many strange and intriguing documents produced by the inquisitors who persecuted witches, the scholars who imagined their activities, and the laws that defined their crimes. No prior experience with European history is required for this seminar, which will emphasize thoughtful writing and discussion.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly 500-word essays and one class presentation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: History and Religion majors

Expected Class Size: 25

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia; HIST Group P Electives - Premodern

Not offered current academic year

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REL 330 (S) Modern Jewish Political Theory (WI)

Crosslistings: JWST492 / PSCI375 / REL330
Primary Crosslisting

By the late 19th century, Jews across Europe were faced with an urgent political problem. Amidst burgeoning 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;

Extra Info: 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

Extra Info 2: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

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

Expected Class Size: 18

Distributions: (D2) (WI)

Attributes: JWST Capstone Course; JWST Core Electives;

Spring 2019

SEM Section: 01    W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm    Jeffrey I. Israel

REL 332 (F) Islam and Feminism

Crosslistings: ARAB332 / WGSS334 / REL332

Primary Crosslisting

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 so 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

Distributions: (D2)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ARAB

Not offered current academic year
REL 334 (S) Imagining Joseph  (WI)
Crosslistings: REL334 / COMP334 / ANTH334 / JWST334

Secondary Crosslisting

Beloved son, rival brother, faithful servant, dreamer, seer, object of desire, lover, husband, bureaucrat, Joseph is one of the most fully-limned and compelling figures in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scriptural traditions. The story of Joseph unfolds over fourteen chapters in the Hebrew Bible, and is the subject of the fourth longest sura in the Qur'an. Through millennia, the story of Joseph has inspired a wealth of interpretations, commentary, apocrypha, re-tellings, and back-story, including an apocryphal book of scripture about Joseph and his wife, Asenath, Sufi poetry about Joseph and Zuleikha (Potiphar's wife), a trilogy by the 20th century German novelist Thomas Mann, a musical by Andrew Lloyd Weber, and many expressions in Western visual art. The course will explore these various expressions, looking to them for the ways in which Joseph has captured the imaginations of peoples and cultures across time and space. The course will be organized as a collaborative seminar in which the class will read the foundational scriptures together, followed by thematic discussions to which students will contribute insights from their own readings of particular peripheral texts. Students will learn the pleasures of close and intense exegetical reading in approaching the Hebrew Bible and Qur'an, as well as the more expansive pleasures of linking post-scriptural expressions together.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: 3- to 5-page weekly response papers; 15-page final paper; class participation
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 12
Enrollment Preferences: based on responses to a questionnaire
Expected Class Size: 10
Distributions: (D2) (WI)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ANTH, JWST, or REL; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP
Attributes: JWST Core Electives;

Spring 2019
SEM Section: 01    W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm     Peter  Just

REL 338 (F) Transhumanism: Religion, Technoscience, Obsolescence
Crosslistings: SOC338 / REL338 / HSCI338 / SCST338

Secondary Crosslisting

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.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: attendance and participation, informal weekly writing, 15- to 20-page seminar paper
Extra Info: not available for the fifth course option
REL 340 (S) African Diaspora Religions in the Americas and the Caribbean
Crosslistings: GBST340 / AFR340 / REL340
Secondary Crosslisting
Over the last century, historians, social scientists, and religionists have labored to discover the meaning of African dispersal beyond the African continent and its accompanying spiritual lineages. What did it mean to move from the African continent (as opposed to the Australian continent, for example)? What theories of encounter sufficiently adjudicate the synthetic religious cultures of African descended persons in North America, South America, and the Caribbean? What are the cross-disciplinary methodologies that scholars utilize to understand African religious cultures in the Western hemisphere? Firstly, this course will consider a brief historiography of Africana Religious Studies. This background will inform the second and primary objective of the course: privileging knowledge, place, and performance as central lenses for thematizing and exploring West and Central African religious traditions housed in the Americas. We will cover diverse African diasporic religious traditions including Conjure, Dagara, Kumina, New Orleans Voodoo, Spiritual Baptist, Winti, and Yoruba (Candomblé, Ifa, Lucumi, and "Orisha-Vodu"). We will also explore other African diasporic religious sensibilities that transgress regional and institutional boundaries.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, discussion leadership, two scholarly journal entries, and a final seminar paper of 18-20 pages (which will require working in stages on a proposal, an 8-page draft, and a 15-page draft)
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: Africana Studies concentrators
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2)
Not offered current academic year

REL 346 (S) Islam and Anthropology
Crosslistings: REL346 / ANTH346 / ASST346 / ARAB280
Secondary Crosslisting
If anthropology has helped to define Islam in global thought, Islam has returned the favor, holding a critical mirror to the anthropological endeavor perhaps more than any other traditional "object" of study. This course examines anthropological studies of Islamic societies for what they teach us both about Islam and about anthropology. We begin with foundational social theorists whose studies of religious phenomena helped give rise to the field of anthropology of religion. We then survey influential efforts to construct "ideal-type" models of Muslim society based on anthropological and historical knowledge, alongside efforts to critique, historicize, and redirect the model-building project (notably by Talal Asad and Edward Said). The second half of the course is devoted to ethnographies that explore, from a variety of perspectives and in several regions (Morocco, India, Egypt, Syria), questions of human agency, hierarchy and resistance, and Islam as discursive resource, ethical project, and embodied community.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: weekly postings, one 5-page paper, one 10-page paper, discussion leading
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: juniors and seniors, Anthropology, Sociology or Religion majors
Expected Class Size: 19
Distributions: (D2)
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

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

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

Crosslistings: SOC350 / REL350 / COMP349

Primary Crosslisting

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 Maclntyre 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

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: preference will be given to REL, ANSO and COMP majors

Expected Class Size: 15

Distributions: (D2)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or SOC; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP

Attributes: AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives;
REL 352 (S) Mystic Spirituality in Black Women's Social Justice Activism: Brazil-USA
Crosslistings: REL352 / AFR352 / WGSS352

Secondary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: AFR, REL, and WGSS concentrators
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2)

REL 354 (S) Friedrich Nietzsche: Philosophizing with a Hammer
Crosslistings: REL354 / COMP351

Primary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: In-depth seminar on a difficult philosopher who we'll be reading closely.
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP
Attributes: PHIL Related Courses

REL 358 (S) Religion and Law (DPE)
Crosslistings: REL358 / GBST358

Primary Crosslisting

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

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

Distribution Notes: DPE: 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

Spring 2019

SEM Section: 01    TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am    Saadia Yacoob

REL 361 (F)  Zen and the Art of American Literature

Crosslistings: ENGL312 / REL361 / AMST361 / COMP361

Secondary Crosslisting

In 1844, the Transcendentalist magazine, The Dial, published an excerpt from the Lotus Sutra, translated into English by a young writer named Henry David Thoreau. 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). 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 also 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 20-30 minutes each week practicing and reflecting upon those practices during class hours. 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: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: a weekly meditation journal, various informal in-class and take-home writing assignments, a final 12- to 15-page essay

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

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

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: none

Expected Class Size: 20

Distributions: (D2)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under ENGL or COMP; meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or
REL 388 (S)  Gandhi: Nationalism, Philosophy, and Legacy  (WI)
Crosslistings: HIST488 / ASST488 / GBST488 / REL388

Secondary Crosslisting
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 aspects 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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: upper level History majors
Expected Class Size: 10
Distributions: (D2) (WI)
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
Distributions: (D2)

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REL 398 (S)  Independent Study: Religion
Religion independent study.
Class Format: independent study
Distributions: (D2)
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

Distributions: (D2)

REL 493 (F)  Senior Thesis: Religion
Religion senior thesis.

Class Format: independent study

Extra Info: this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494)

Distributions: (D2)

REL 494 (S)  Senior Thesis: Religion
Religion senior thesis.

Class Format: independent study

Extra Info: this is part of a full-year thesis (493-494)

Distributions: (D2)

REL 497 (F)  Independent Study: Religion

Class Format: independent study

Distributions: (D2)

REL 498 (S)  Independent Study: Religion
Class Format: independent study
Distributions: (D2)

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