AUTUMN 2020

Special Courses in Divinity

DVSC 30400 - Introduction to the Study of Religion

This course will use the concept of the fetish as a lens to treat the history of the study of religion. It will consider the emergence of the term out of the history of colonisation, track its function in the philosophy of religion through Hume, Kant and Hegel, follow its migration into critical theory as well as its history in Anthropology and close with recent reclamations of the term that are post-colonial, feminist and materialist. Note: All MA and AMRS students are required to take this course. MDiv students are required to take this course or Classical Theories of Religion (HREL 32900). This class is one of the Divinity School's courses that requires a quality grade. Students must earn a B- or above to fulfill the requirement. Discussion sections will be held. Sarah Hammerschlag

DVSC 51000 - Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion

This course is required for all first-year doctoral students in the Divinity School. It is meant to introduce basic issues in theory and method in the contemporary study of religion in the academy, with special focus on the range of approaches and disciplines represented in the field. Note: This course is limited to 1st-year Divinity PhD students only. It is a required course for all 1st-year Divinity PhD students. Richard Rosengarten

Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

AASR 43500 - Islamic Jurisprudence, Reason, and the State
This course will examine anthropological approaches to the study of Islamic jurisprudence and its transformations in the modern context. This may be of interest to students interested in both Sunni and Shi'í jurisprudence, though the emphasis will be on Twelver Shi'í legal reasoning. Prerequisite: Students should be familiar with Anthropological approaches to the study of both Islam and the state. Note: This course is open to undergrads by petition. Elham Mireshghi
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 43500

AASR 50213 - Historical Sociology of Religion - After Max Weber and Emile Durkheim

In the writings of the European classics of sociology the universal history of religion was absolutely crucial. Strangely, and although the reputation of Max Weber and Émile Durkheim has constantly grown over time, this area of their interests later became marginal in the discipline. After briefly suggesting a possible explanation of this phenomenon, this class will deal with the exceptions, scholars who have contributed significantly to the sociological study of the history of religion (H. Richard Niebuhr, Will Herberg, Werner Stark, David Martin, Marcel Gauchet, Robert Bellah, José Casanova). Additional scholars and my own writings in this area can be included if there is an interest in tracing a tradition that should receive new attention after the end of the intellectual hegemony of the secularization thesis. Hans Joas

Biblical Studies

BIBL 31000 - Introduction to the Hebrew Bible

The course will survey the contents of the Hebrew Bible, and introduce critical questions regarding its figures and ideas, its literary qualities and anomalies, the history of its composition and transmission, its relation to other artifacts from the biblical period, its place in the history and society of ancient Israel and Judea, and its relation to the larger culture of the ancient Near East. Note: This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. Simeon Chavel
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 11004

BIBL 33900 - Introductory Biblical Hebrew I

This course is the first of a two-quarter sequence designed to introduce students to the language of biblical Hebrew, with special emphasis on the fundamentals of its morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. The course follows a standard textbook supplemented by lectures, exercises, and oral drills aimed at refining the student’s grasp of grammatically sound interpretation and translation. At the conclusion of the two-quarter sequence students will be prepared to take a biblical Hebrew reading course in the spring quarter. Instructor TBD

BIBL 35100 - Introductory Koine Greek I
In this two-course sequence, students will learn the basic mechanics of Koine Greek and begin reading texts from the Greek New Testament and Septuagint. The autumn course and the first three-fourths or so of the winter course will introduce the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and style of the Greek New Testament, and to a limited degree those of the Septuagint, after which point we will focus on reading and interpreting a New Testament document in Greek at length. Upon the conclusion of the sequence, students will be able to read and comprehend entire passages of Koine Greek text with the aid of a dictionary. This sequence aims to prepare students to successfully participate in a Greek exegesis course. Instructor TBD

BIBL 36500 - The Hidden Pearl: Introduction to Syriac Literature and its Historical Contexts

After Greek and Latin, Syriac literature represents the third largest corpus of writings from the formative centuries of Christianity. This course offers students a comprehensive overview of the dominant genres and history of Syriac-speaking Christians from the early centuries through the modern day. Moving beyond traditional historiography that focuses on early Christianity within the Roman Empire, this class examines Christian traditions that took root in the Persian and later Islamic Empires. Syriac Christians preached the Gospel message from the Arabian Peninsula to early modern China and India. Syriac writers raised female biblical figures and holy women to prominent roles within their works. Students will broaden their understanding of the development of Christian thought as they gain greater familiarity with understudied voices and visions for Christian living found within Syriac literature. Special attention will be paid to biblical translation, asceticism, poetry, mystical and theological writings as well as the changing political fortunes of Syriac-speaking populations. No previous knowledge or study expected. Erin Galgay Walsh
Equivalent Course(s): HCHR 36500, RLST 16500

BIBL 42906 - The Book of Ezekiel

This text-course will read a representative set of excerpts from The Book of Ezekiel, a unique retrospective account of a prophet's speeches and mimes in the sixth century BCE, around the destruction of Judea and exile of its population. We will treat aspects such as its historical setting, literary frame, real and implied audiences, and mode and mood of prophecy. Prerequisite: 1 year biblical Hebrew + 1 course in Hebrew Bible. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Simeon Chavel

Philosophy of Religion

DVPR 34300 - Buddhist Poetry in India

The substantial Buddhist contribution to Indian poetry is of interest for what it teaches us of both Buddhism and the broad development of Indian literature. The present course will focus upon three phases in this history, with attention to what changes of language and literary genre tell us of the transformations of Indian religious culture from the last centuries B.C.E. to about the year 1000. Readings (all in translation) will include the Therīgāthā, a collection of verses written in Pali and the most ancient Indian example of womens' literature, selections from the work of the great Sanskrit poets Aśvaghoṣa,
Āryaśūra, and Mātrćeta, and the mystical songs, in the Apabhraṃśa language, of the Buddhist tantric saints. Prerequisites: General knowledge of Buddhism is desirable. Matthew Kapstein
Equivalent Course(s): RLVC 34300, HREL 34300, RLST 26250

DVPR 39416 - Freud
Course description coming. Francoise Meltzer
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 29416

DVPR 40440 - Pure Land Buddhism
This course will explore the motif of the "Pure Land" in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and its attendant applications to Buddhist practice, faith, devotional, and doctrine. We will examine the textual sources on the bodhisattva vows and specific entailments of various pure lands in Indic Mahāyāna scripture, and then the development of Pure Land thought and practice in China and Japan, including its expression in Tiantai and Jodo Shinshu traditions. Brook Ziporyn
Equivalent Course(s): HREL 40440, RLST 20440

DVPR 41025 - Otherwise than God: Creatorless Religiosity East and West
This course will workshop an in-progress manuscript in the philosophy of religions entitled Otherwise Than God, which explores alternatives to monotheism in the philosophy of religion, mainly in Europe, India and China, centered around the alternative consequences of the assumption of a purposeless or a purposeful cosmos. The main touchpoints in both the course and the book are (on the European side) Spinoza, Schopenhauer, early Schelling and Hegel, Nietzsche and Bataille, with sideswipes at Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as the villians of the piece, various Buddhist texts and thinkers on the Indian side, and classical Confucianism and Daoism philosophy in China. Some familiarity with Tiantai Buddhist thought would be helpful but is not required. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Brook Ziporyn

DVPR 45505 - Heidegger: Religion, Politics, Writing
Religion, Politics, Writing: three concepts that are relatively marginal in Martin Heidegger’s philosophy, but which converge in strange and unexpected ways to play a central role during the most controversial period of his career, from the early 1930s until the late 1940s. In this course we will explore this convergence in key texts during this period, paying particular attention to the Black Notebooks. We will consider Heidegger's interpretations of figures such as Plato, Nietzsche, and Hölderlin. And while exploring crucial themes during this period – e.g. Being as Event, the critique of technology, the flight of the gods – we will also consider the effect that various writing practices (e.g. notebook entries, esoteric treatises, seminar and lecture protocols, dialogues, published essays, poetry) have on their meaning. Ryan Coyne
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 45505, RLST 25505

DVPR 55110 - Reading Religion from a Philosophical Point of View
We will examine the question of what it means to read religious texts and practices from a philosophical point of view. PQ: Enrollment requires the consent of the instructor and the course is only open to advanced graduate students who are writing a thesis or preparing comprehensive exams. For more information contact the instructor. *Arnold Davidson*

**History of Christianity**

**HCHR 30200 - History of Christian Thought II**

This second class in the History of Christian Thought sequence deals with the period from Late Antiquity until the end of the Early Middle Ages, stretching roughly from 450 through 1350. The following authors and themes will be analyzed and discussed:
1. The transition from Roman antiquity to the medieval period: Boethius and Cassiodorus
2. The rise of asceticism in the West: the Rule of St. Benedict and Gregory the Great;
3. Connecting East and West: Dionysius the Areopagite and John Scottus Eriugena
4. Monastic and Scholastic paragons: Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard
5. High-medieval monastic developments: Cistercians (Bernard of Clairvaux) and Victorines (Hugh and Richard of St. Victor), beguines (Hadewijch) and mendicants (Bonaventure).
Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. *Willemien Otten*
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 30200

**HCHR 30900 - History of Christian Thought V: Modern Religious Thought**

This course will consider key figures in 'modern' religious thought, including Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Troeltsch, and Barth, paying particular attention to two issues: the possibility of freedom in the face of law-like necessities, and the possibility of thinking for oneself. *Kevin Hector*
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 30700, RLST 13500

**HCHR 50000 - Theological Criticism: Nature and Creation**

The seminar on theological criticism aims to explore the problem of how constructive theology can best make use of historical sources and do so in a responsible fashion. While simply adhering to one’s confessional tradition yields uncritical positions, an eclectic attitude towards historical sources may not be a wise alternative. Without forcing theologians to become historians, this seminar deals with the larger issue of how to select and use one’s source material in such a way that the historical work is methodologically sound and the theological end product accessible and informative, while remaining properly constructive. The seminar concentrates especially but not exclusively on the use of premodern sources but other, later sources will also be brought to the discussion. As the seminar is in large part student-driven, students are invited to bring in sources of their choice to the table as well. This year’s theological critical focus will be on nature and creation and is loosely structured around Otten's Thinking
Nature and the Nature of Thinking. Authors to be included are Augustine, Maximus, Eriugena, Schleiermacher, William James and Emerson. Willemien Otten
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 50000

History of Judaism

HIJD 31100 - Animal Spirituality in the Middle Ages

In contemporary philosophy, ethics, and literature, a subject attracting more and more attention is animals – human animals, non-human animals, and the complex relation between these paradigmatic others. The aim of this course is to consider many of the same problems and questions raised in modern discourse from the perspective of ancient and medieval sources. Drawing from a diverse corpus of texts – Aristotelian, Neoplatonic, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Muslim – the course will explore the richness of the medieval traditions of animal symbolism, and the complexity of medieval human beings’ understanding of themselves in relationship to their familiar and immanently present confreres in the world of nature. Jim Robinson
Equivalent Course(s): HREL 41101, ISLM 41100, RLVC 41100, RLST 22406

HIJD 45400 - Readings in Maimonides’ Guide of the Perplexed

A careful study of select passages in Maimonides’ Guide of the Perplexed, focusing on the method of the work and its major philosophical-theological themes, including: divine attributes, creation vs. eternity, prophecy, the problem of evil and divine providence, law and ethics, and the final aim of human existence. James Robinson
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 45400, RLVC 45400, HREL 45401, RLST 21107

History of Religions

HREL 32900 - Classical Theories of Religion

This course attempts to historicize the modern academic study of religion by studying systems of classification from many different regions, times, and traditions. Beginning with premodern forms of knowledge, the first half of the course seeks to understand the genres of polemic, doxography, ethnology, and comparativism. Special attention is given to the entwining of race and religion under early modern imperial regimes. The latter half of the course looks at how concepts of religion feature in modern social theory from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Anand Venkatkrishnan
Equivalent Course(s): AASR 32900

HREL 36260 - Buddhist Thought(s) in Southeast Asia
A critical examination of important canonical (Buddhavacana--attributed to the Buddha) and non-canonical Pali literature central to the religious "imaginaire" of Theravada Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Literary texts include Vinayapitaka (Book of Monastic Discipline), Dhammapada (didactic verses attributed to the Buddha), Mahaparinibbana Sutta (sermon recounting the final 3 months of the Buddha's career), Vessantara Jataka (epic narrative of the Buddha's next-to-last rebirth as a king), the Edicts of Asoka (proclamations of the 3rd c. BCE Indian emperor), Anagatavamsa Desana (prophecy of the future Buddha Metteyya), Mahavamsa (the monastic "Great Chronicle" recounting the history of Buddhism) and royal inscriptions and paintings from the late-medieval period. John Holt
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 26260

HREL 40020 - Contemporary Topics in the Study of South Asian Religion: Imagining South Asian Islam

This course is a continuation of the annual seminar on contemporary topics in the Study of South Asian Religion, which takes up theoretical problems in religious studies, issues specific to the study of South Asia, and the intersections between the two. The focus for this year is “Imagining South Asian Islam.” We will read classic debates about the expansion of Islam into the subcontinent, its geographical distribution, and cultural and religious syncretism (while, at the same time, problematizing the syncretic model). We will also take up more recent scholarship that turns to broader conceptual questions about how to describe, name, and understand different moments in the history of South Asian Islam from the “Persianate Cosmopolis” to “Islamic” versus “Islamicate.” The readings assigned in the course bring together diverse scholarship on history, art history, material culture, and literary analysis. By the end of the course, students will be familiar with the longe durée arce of the history of Islam in South Asia as well as the variety of different scholarly approaches that have sought to understand and interpret the specificity of Islam in the context of the subcontinent. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Sarah Pierce Taylor
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 40020, RLVC 40025

HREL 52402 - Readings: Advanced Tibetan III and Introduction to Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit

Complementing the course on Buddhist Poetry in India, we will be reading a celebrated verse scripture, the Prajñā-pāramitā-ratnaguṇa-saṅcaya-gāthā ("Verses Gathering the Jewel-like Qualities of the Perfection of Wisdom") in both its Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit original and its Tibetan translation. (Students are required to have had at least two years of either Sanskrit or Tibetan – it will not be necessary to do both.) Those wishing to take the course for Sanskrit credit should enroll in SALC. Prerequisites
Students must have had two years of Tibetan OR Sanskrit. Note: This course is open to undergrads ONLY by petition. Matthew Kapstein

Islamic Studies

ISLM 30100 - Introductory Qur’anic Arabic I
This course is the first in a 3-quarter sequence “Introduction to Qur’anic Arabic” (IQA), which aims to provide students with foundational philological and reading skills by covering the essentials of Qur’anic/Classical Arabic grammar. The 3 quarters of IQA are sequential, and students are strongly encouraged to join in the first quarter. Exceptions can be made on a case by case basis.

Prerequisites: Graduate and undergraduate students from any department are welcome to register. The absolute minimum prerequisite for IQA I is knowledge of the Arabic script. Training equivalent to at least a quarter of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is highly desirable. The IQA sequence is also open to students who may have had more exposure to Arabic (modern or classical) but wish to acquire a solid foundation in Arabic grammar, and/or students who feel they are not yet ready for third-year Arabic courses. Instructor TBD

Equivalent Course(s): RLST 15100

ISLM 30201 – Islamicate Civilization I: 600-950

This course covers the rise and spread of Islam, the Islamic empire under the Umayyad and early Abbasid caliphs, and the emergence of regional Islamic states from Afghanistan and eastern Iran to North Africa and Spain. The main focus will be on political, economic and social history. Ahmed El-Shamsy

Equivalent Course(s): RLST 20201

Religions in the Americas

Religious Leadership and Practice (MDiv Courses)

RELP 30500 - Colloquium: Introduction to Religious Leadership and Practice

This year-long integration seminar grounds first year M.Div. students in habits and perspectives essential to the practice of religious life and leadership. Students will cultivate the discipline of attention–learning to read closely, to listen deeply, to interrogate their experience, and to participate in rigorous critical conversation, across religious traditions. During the first quarter, students will explore the relationship of language, narrative; and belief: the second quarter will engage students in a close encounter with urban ministry; during the third quarter, students will integrate tradition, reason, and experience as they articulate definitions of ministry. First year MDiv students only. Cynthia Lindner

RELP 35150 - Arts of Religious Leadership and Practice: Ritual and Speaking

This is the first of a three-course sequence in the arts of religious leadership that spans the entire year in the second year MDiv curriculum. In this course students will explore the world-making power of ritual--religious and secular, personal and corporat-- and practice the craft of speaking as meaning-making. Open to second year MDivs; others by permission of instructor. Cynthia Lindner

RELP 40600 - Field Work Practicum I
The course provides a forum for practical theological reflection through ongoing discussion with classmates of both field experience and general issues of ministerial practice. Practicum complements the field placement experience of MDiv students as a source of accountability for student, site, and university, as well as provides space for critical reflection on the experience. Open to Second Year M.Div students only. Must have completed RELP 30500. *Erika Dornfeld*

RELP 42800 - Senior MDiv Thesis Seminar

The seminar meets once a month all year as students craft thesis proposals, short public essays and an original thesis, and offer public presentations of their work in the spring quarter. Third or Fourth year M.Div. students only. Required seminar for M.Div. students in the year in which they are writing and presenting their theses. *Cynthia Lindner*

**Religious Ethics**

RETH 30702 - Introduction to Environmental Ethics

This course will examine answers to four questions that have been foundational to environmental ethics: Are religious traditions responsible for environmental crises? To what degree can religions address environmental crises? Does the natural world have intrinsic value in addition to instrumental value to humans, and does the type of value the world has imply anything about human responsibility? What point of view (anthropocentrism, biocentrism, theocentrism) should ground an environmental ethic? Since all four of the above questions are highly contested questions, we will examine a constellation of responses to each question. During the quarter we will read texts from a wide variety of religious and philosophical perspectives, though I note that the questions we are studying arose out of the western response to environmental crises and so often use that language. Some emphasis will be given to particularly influential texts, thinkers, and points of view in the scholarship of environmental ethics. As the questions above indicate, the course prioritizes theoretical issues in environmental ethics that can relate to many different applied subjects (e.g. energy, water, animals, climate change) rather than emphasizing these applied issues themselves. Taking this focus will give you the background necessary to work on such issues. *Sarah Fredericks*
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 24106

RETH 30802 - Contemporary Religious Ethics I: History and Method

This is the first quarter of a three-quarter sequence surveying the rise and development of contemporary religious ethics. We will examine pioneering work that established a new style of scholarship and ethical argumentation during the “quiet revolution” when the study of religion gained an institutional footing in many North American colleges and universities in the 1950s and 60s. This quarter’s readings developed in the wake of that revolution and address moral controversies that arose within the cultural and intellectual ferment of the 1970s and 80s. The course is reading intensive, and it will focus on attempts to
craft a method for doing religious ethics in the 1970s that aimed to situate the study of ethics within the academic study of religion and the humanities more generally. These efforts were soon challenged by theories about the importance of history, interpretation, and power in the humanities and social sciences in the 1980s. Hence the title of this cycle: Method and History (1970-1990). Readings include works by Gene Outka, Sumner Twiss and David Little, John P. Reeder, Jr., Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Michel Foucault, Michael Walzer, and Stephen Toulmin and Albert Jonsen. The course aims to introduce students to styles, genres, and patterns of moral reasoning and to innovative work in religious ethics as a foundation for future scholarship in the field. Enrollment in other courses in this sequence is not required to enroll in this course. The course is open to graduate and undergraduate students. Richard Miller
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 21406

RETH 54321 - Contagion: Plague, Power, and Epidemics

Plagues always take place within social orders, and human communities, causing havoc and chaos and reordering ideas about power and fate, befallenness, and desert. Plagues play a special role in Biblical traditions and text and in contemporary literature. This seminar will explore how epidemic illness is presented and managed within theological and philosophical literature. Laurie Zoloth
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 24321

Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

RLVC 30659 – The Task of the Self Translator

Walter Benjamin famously wrote that a translation issues from the “afterlife” of the original: “For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origins, their translation marks their stage of continued life.” This graduate seminar focuses on the case of multilingual writers and their self-translations to raise questions concerning the temporality, directionality, and “afterlife” of translated works. The figure of the self-translator challenges models of translation and cross-cultural circulation that assume various cultural and historical gaps between the source and its translation. For one, self-translation calls into question the notions of originality or “the original” and of “fidelity,” and requires us to consider the overlap between translation and rewriting. What brought writers to produce the same texts in different languages, at times for similar audiences of multilingual readers? What theories of translation or world literature might be helpful when approaching the case of Jewish self-translation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? We will discuss these issues also in the context of comparative Jewish studies, considering the difference between internal, Hebrew-Yiddish, self-translation, and the translation between Hebrew or Yiddish and a third “non-Jewish” language, whether European or Middle-Eastern. Na'ama Rokem

RLVC 32104 – Hymns

The course will track hymns from the early modern period through the late eighteenth century. We’ll examine the evolution of the hymn as a literary form, focusing on obsolescence and adaptation in literary
transmission. We’ll start with the Psalms of the Hebrew Bible, and analyze psalters (such as the one produced by Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, and her brother, Sir Philip Sidney) and the metrical psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins that were used in Anglican services. We’ll then take up the development of congregational hymns, hymns sung by everyone in a congregation, to track the way that literary adaptation among Dissenters became both common and controversial. We’ll look at Isaac Watts’s multiple hymns for each of the Psalms, his later Hymns and Spiritual Songs, and his Divine Songs for children to get at the importance he and other Dissenters (such as Anna Letitia Barbauld) attached to supplying words to all who could sing or say them. We’ll end with a discussion of “Amazing Grace” and its use in the British abolition movement, and with a discussion of the movement of the literary hymn away from religion altogether in literary hymns, Shelley’s and Keats’s odes.  

Frances Ferguson

RLVC 32400 - Theory of Literature: The Twentieth Century

This course will cover the major movements in Twentieth Century Criticism from New Criticism to Psychoanalytic theory, New Historicism, Structuralism and Post-structuralism, as well as the various features of the literary text and interpretive dynamics which have played prominent roles in debates surrounding meaning, modes of expression and theories of reception in the last century. The course will not proceed as a survey of these movements, however. Rather it will take up the Nietzschean question of how illusion relates to truth and how literary representation complicates the relation. It will create a series of debates between schools of thought and will consider the social and political ramifications of the question as well as its strictly theoretical consequences.  

Sarah Hammerschlag

RLVC 38775 – Racial Melancholia

This course provides students with an opportunity to think race within a psychoanalytic framework. In particular, we will interrogate how psychoanalytic theories of mourning and melancholia have developed over the past century, especially in relationship to the theories of racial melancholia that emerged at the turn of the twenty-first century. Thus, we will approach Asian America, African American, and Latinx archives, especially as they intersect with psychoanalytic formulations of race, gender, and sexuality. Throughout we will ask: How do literatures of loss enable us to understand the relationship between histories of racial trauma, injury, and grief, on the one hand, and the formation of racial identity, on the other? What might it mean to imagine literary histories of race as grounded fundamentally in the experience of loss? What forms of reparations, redress, and resistance are called for by such literatures of racial grief, mourning, and melancholia? And, finally, how can psychoanalysis retain theoretical currency, and how might the temporalities of grief, loss, and mourning even require a sustained tarrying with psychoanalytic theories of melancholia?  

Kris Trujillo

Theology

THEO 45590 - Memory, Identity, and Religion
This course will consider recent scientific and philosophical work on memory and its relation to personal identity, and then use this work to think about religious approaches to memory and identity-construction (and vice-versa). Kevin Hector
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 45590, RLST 25590

Religious Studies (Undergraduate)

RLST 10101- Religion, Reason, and Critique

This course is part of a two-quarter sequence in Religious Studies (along with “Religion, Reason, and the State”) exploring the work of key theorists and thinkers on the role of religion in the formation of modernity. Central questions in this course include: how do religious belief and practice influence and inform modern accounts of reason? What is critique, and how does religion emerge in modernity as the object of critique par excellence? Note: Students may enroll in either one of the courses in this sequence independently of the other course. This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. Ryan Coyne

RLST 21004 - The Bible and 21st Century American Politics

Since the founding of the United States (and even before), the bible has served an unparalleled role as a source of wisdom and authority for American politicians and jurists at all levels of government. In this course, we will examine ways in which contemporary politicians have appealed to the literature of the Hebrew Bible and New Testaments in support of a variety of arguments concerning how the United States should operate. Beginning with a short introduction to the role of the bible as a foundational and authoritative document in America, we will spend subsequent weeks focusing on particular topics relevant to American politics (the environment, immigration, race, abortion, the Second Amendment) and the biblical materials that are frequently mustered in arguments over these issues. We will endeavor to make sense of the relevant passages in their original historical and cultural contexts as well as their use in contemporary political discourses. Marshall Cunningham

RLST 21010 - God and the Good

Do we need God to know right from wrong? Or should morality shape and limit (or forbid) religious belief? Should we worry more about uncertainty and ignorance or overconfidence and fanaticism? This course focuses on the religious quest for certainty about how we should live. We will explore a variety of perspectives on the possibilities and problems involved in efforts to connect belief in God to moral knowledge and behavior. Readings include the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, the Quran, Plato, Kant, Kierkegaard, and Feuerbach, as well as more recent voices like Martin Luther King and contemporary critics of religion. David Barr

RLST 21330 - Despair and Consolation: Emotion and Affect in Late-Medieval and Reformation Christianity
The course surveys major texts in Christian thought and culture from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries, and it focuses on how these authors understood despair—a central theme in the writings of many women and men, secular and religious—and how, if at all, despair may be remedied. We will think alongside these late-medieval and early-modern figures about the phenomenon of emotion, the relations between of feeling and knowing, possible responses to (especially negative) affects, and how religious belief, practice, and experience shape and are shaped by emotional life. Major historical figures to be read include: Catherine of Siena, Jean Gerson, Christine de Pisan, Julian of Norwich, Heinrich Kramer, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Teresa of Ávila, and Michel de Montaigne. We will also read selected contemporary voices in affect theory and disability studies to hone our critical and analytical resources for interpreting the primary texts. *M. Vanderpoel*

**RLST 22010 - Jewish Civilization I: Ancient Beginnings to Medieval Period**

Jewish Civilization is a three-quarter sequence that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient beginnings through its rabbinic and medieval transformations to its modern manifestations. Through investigation of primary texts-biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, mystical, historical, documentary, and literary-students will acquire a broad overview of Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness while reflecting in greater depth on major themes, ideas, and events in Jewish history. The autumn course will deal with antiquity through the Middle Ages. Its readings will include material from the Bible and writings from the second temple, Hellenistic, rabbinic, and medieval periods. All sections of this course will share a common core of readings; individual instructors will supplement with other materials. It is recommended, though not required, that students take the three Jewish Civilization courses in sequence. Students who register for the Autumn Quarter course will automatically be pre-registered for the winter segment. In the Spring Quarter students have the option of taking a third unit of Jewish Civilization, a course whose topics will vary (JWSC 1200X). *Jim Robinson; David Barak-Gorodetsky*

**RLST 23906 - Ethics, Nature, Dao**

Some worldviews assert that human beings exist somehow apart from the natural world. Humans are to have dominion over it, for example, or to transcend it. In many works of traditional Chinese religion, philosophy, and art, however, we find something quite different, a picture in which the human being is seamlessly of the world. The cosmos is at play within her, Daoist traditions teach; Chinese landscape paintings famously depict a world in which humans appear to have the same status as trees and rivers; the great Song Dynasty poet Su Shi, in a line beloved of later Chan and Zen writers, wrote that “the sounds of valleys are [the Buddha’s] long broad tongue.” These worldviews are not ecological, precisely—ecology is a modern science, not a traditional ethos—but works of Chinese philosophy and art that evince them offer profound resources for thinking in the mode known now as the environmental humanities. We will explore our works as resources for thinking in our age of climate crisis—at least in part. We will also read them, and stay true to them, as works of traditional Chinese art and thought. *Paul Copp*

**RLST 24110 - The Ethics of War: Reading Michael Walzer's Just and Unjust Wars**
Questions about war, the taking of human life, the obligations of citizenship, the role of state power, and international justice are among the most pressing topics in ethics and political life. This class will examine these matters through a close reading of Michael Walzer’s Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations, first published in 1977 and now in its 5th edition. Widely considered a classic in the ethics of war, JUW develops a theory for evaluating whether to enter war as well as decisions within war—what are known as the jus ad bellum and the jus in bello. Walzer applies his theory to a number of actual cases, ranging from military interventions to reprisals to terrorism to insurgencies to nuclear policy, all informed by the history of warfare and arguments in the history of Western thought. We will critically examine Walzer’s theory, his use of cases, and the conclusions to which his arguments lead. Along the way, we’ll examine core ideas in political morality, e.g., human rights; state sovereignty; morality, necessity, and extremity; liability and punishment, nonviolence, and killing and murder. Richard Miller

RLST 24788 - Guilt, Atonement, and Forgiveness After WWII

By what parameters should we assess guilt? What is required to atone for wrong done unto another? Under what circumstances should we forgive harm done to us? This course examines both foundational ethical models and arguments that emerged following the end of WWII concerning issues that arose in the war’s wake. We begin the course by reading significant theological and philosophical accounts of ethics, including Genesis, Aristotle, Mill and Kant, and consider what constitutes “guilt” in each. We then draw on these models as we examine significant questions of guilt and atonement that arose in the wake of the Second World War, and explore the particular concerns involved in wrestling with questions of national guilt, collaboration, and assignation of punishment post-war. We will conclude the course by reading arguments that wrestle with the ethics of forgiveness, exploring arguments by a range of theologians, philosophers and other thinkers both for and against forgiving those who have perpetrated harm. Bevin Blaber

RLST 24800 - Foucault and the History of Sexuality

This course centers on a close reading of the first volume of Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*, with some attention to his writings on the history of ancient conceptualizations of sex. How should a history of sexuality take into account scientific theories, social relations of power, and different experiences of the self? We discuss the contrasting descriptions and conceptions of sexual behavior before and after the emergence of a science of sexuality. Other writers influenced by and critical of Foucault are also discussed. PQ: One prior philosophy course is strongly recommended. Arnold Davidson

RLST 25704 - Environmental Justice in Chicago

This course will examine the development of environmental justice theory and practice through social scientific and ethical literature about the subject. We will focus on environmental justice issues in Chicago including, but not limited to waste disposal, toxic air and water, the Chicago heat wave, and climate change. Particular attention will be paid to environmental racism and the often understudied role of religion in environmental justice theory and practice. Sarah Fredericks

Equivalent Course(s): RETH 35704
RLST 25905 - Prophetic Speech: From Babylon to Birmingham

Oscar Romero said, “The ones who have a voice must speak for those who are voiceless.” How can someone take on this responsibility? How can one person convince others that a better world is possible when no one seems to agree on what really matters? Though religious speech is often used to bless and validate unjust social systems, it also has the power to challenge injustice, call the status quo into question, and galvanize people to work together for those in need. In this course, we will analyze the rhetoric of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible to understand how social activism emerges within a matrix of preexisting beliefs and traditions. Then we will study controversial figures from a range of religious and non-religious backgrounds, paying close attention to the what, the why, and the how of their protests. Comparing Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources, students will discuss what prophetic speech conveys about the relationship between humanity and God. Applying ideas from the philosophy and psychology, students will uncover what makes some speeches and actions seem to have an authority higher than mere opinion. *Russell Johnson*

RLST 27802 - Technology and the Human

Technology is ubiquitous in contemporary life. Yet technological developments continue to infatuate and inspire in us feelings of excitement, hope and fear. How are we to understand the uncanny relationship between the human and technology? What does this relationship disclose about human agency and creativity? If human life is unimaginable without tools, artifacts, memory supports, and machines, how might we gain the critical distance necessary to properly assess the human-technical relation? In this course we will open up an inquiry into the question of technology by considering the ways in which technical objects, processes, and systems interrupt, challenge, and constitute human subjectivity. Readings will include texts by Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Kittler, Bernard Stiegler, Gilbert Simondon, Katherine Hayles and others. *Sara-Jo Swiatek*

**WINTER 2021**

Special Courses in Divinity

Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

AASR 40700 - Religion and Economy

The two main concepts driving our seminar are "religion" and "economy." What is religious about work, consumption, profit and philanthropy? What are the economic aspects of conversion, charisma, political theology and religious freedom? This course is anthropological in orientation. With a focus on the
contemporary world, we will think comparatively about religion and economy across traditions and geographic contexts. *Angie Heo*

**AASR 42808 - Religion and the Cold War**

This is a research and writing seminar that considers the religious aspects and legacies of the Cold War. Special attention will be paid to North America, East Asia, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. Topics include the rise of anti-communism and anti-Americanism, as well as ideologies and practices of religious freedom, atheism, liberation, racial reunification and millenarian salvation. *Angie Heo*

Equivalent Course(s): RAME 42808

**AASR 43310 - Feminism and Islamic Studies**

The goals of this course are three-fold: 1- To examine the (geo)politics of feminism as a Euro-American emancipatory project as it pertains to Muslim-majority societies; 2- to probe the conceptual work made possible by the categories of “woman” and “gender” as pioneered by feminist scholars specifically in relation to the history and anthropology of Islam; and 3- to study and evaluate self-consciously reformist projects engaging with the Islamic tradition in the modern period and the complexities of their relationship with Euro-American feminism. Rather than treating these goals in a strictly chronological manner, we will keep them in tension throughout the course. Course Notes: By permission only. Students should write a one-paragraph statement about why they would like to take this course and what kind of prior preparation they have. *Alireza Doostdar*

Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 43310, RLST 23310

**Biblical Studies**

**BIBL 32500 - Introduction to the New Testament: Texts and Contexts**

An immersion in the texts of the New Testament with the following goals: 1. through careful reading to come to know well some representative pieces of this literature; 2. to gain useful knowledge of the historical, geographical, social, religious, cultural and political contexts of these texts and the events they relate; 3. to learn the major literary genres represented in the canon (“gospels,” “acts,” “letters,” and “apocalypses”) and strategies for reading them; 4. to comprehend the various theological visions and cultural worldviews to which these texts give expression; 5. to situate oneself and one's prevailing questions about this material in the history of research, and to reflect on the goals and methods of interpretation; 6. to become intelligent and critical “consumers” of biblical scholarship as it appears in academic and popular media; 7. to raise questions for further study. PQ: Interest in this literature, and willingness to enter into conversation with like-minded and non-like-minded others on the texts and the issues involved in their interpretation. Note: This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. *Margaret Mitchell*

Equivalent Course(s): RLST 12000
BIBL 32700 - Law in Biblical Literature

The collaborative course will focus on the lawgiving and the laws in Exodus 19–24, examining its narrative framework, values, poetics, comparanda, argument, and historical moment in ancient Israel-Judea. Prerequisite: 1 year biblical Hebrew + 1 course in Hebrew Bible. *Simeon Chavel*
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 22700

BIBL 33520 - Pity: What’s the Good of It?

Andromache famously appealed to her husband Hector to take pity on herself and her infant son, and not go out to fight the Greeks; Hector took pity, but said no. What happened to pity since Homer? Aristotle recognized it as an essential feature of tragedy, along with fear. Surprisingly, however, it did not enter Greco-Roman political theory except for one short, little-noticed mention: Lucretius placed pity for the weak at the foundation of the Epicurean view of justice. This course will delve into the notion of pity from antiquity to Schopenhauer, with attention to Greeks, Romans, Christians, the period of the Enlightenment, and the Romantics. We will ask: can pity serve as the foundation of morality, as Schopenhauer proposed; or is it shameful, or self-serving? *Elizabeth Asmis*
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 23520

BIBL 34000 - Introductory Biblical Hebrew II

This course is the second of a two-quarter sequence designed to introduce students to the language of biblical Hebrew, with special emphasis on the fundamentals of its morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. The course follows a standard textbook supplemented by lectures, exercises, and oral drills aimed at refining the student’s grasp of grammatically sound interpretation and translation. At the conclusion of the two-quarter sequence students will be prepared to take a biblical Hebrew reading course in the spring quarter. Prerequisites: BIBL 33900 in Autumn Quarter. *Instructor TBD*

BIBL 35300 - Introductory Koine Greek II

In this two-course sequence, students will learn the basic mechanics of Koine Greek and begin reading texts from the Greek New Testament and Septuagint. The autumn course and the first three-fourths or so of the winter course will introduce the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and style of the Greek New Testament, and to a limited degree those of the Septuagint, after which point we will focus on reading and interpreting a New Testament document in Greek at length. Upon the conclusion of the sequence, students will be able to read and comprehend entire passages of Koine Greek text with the aid of a dictionary. This sequence aims to prepare students to successfully participate in a Greek exegesis course in Spring quarter or thereafter. Prerequisites: Must have taken BIBL 35100 in Autumn quarter. *Instructor TBD*

BIBL 40360 - Debating Christians and Other Adversaries: Greek and Syriac Dialogues in Late Antiquity
This course will examine the composition and significance of dialogues for Christian polemic and identity formation. The quarter will begin with an overview of dialogues from Classical Antiquity before examining the new directions Christian writers followed as they staged debates with pagans, Jews, Manichaeans, and alleged “heretical” Christians. Reading these works in light of modern scholarship and with an eye to late antique rhetoric, students will gain insights into the ways theological development took place in the crucible of debate. Erin Galgay Walsh
Equivalent Course(s): HCHR 40360, RLST 20360

BIBL 46804 - The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of Barnabas

Tertullian was the first to attribute the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews to Barnabas, and that ascription found favor with no less an ancient figure as Jerome, and even with notable scholars of the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries, such as Albrecht Ritschl and Friedrich Blass. Although no one can know who wrote it, there are fruitful literary and thematic parallels between the Epistle that bears the name Barnabas and the canonical Hebrews, including their critique of Judaism and their interpretatio Christiana of the Hebrew Bible, with particular regard to Levitical institutions and the temple. We will read thoroughly the Greek text of each treatise with focus on the language and style of the two texts, their relation to Hellenistic Judaism, and their respective treatments of Hebrew Bible/Septuagintal themes. PreRec: at least two years of Greek. David Martinez

Philosophy of Religion

DVPR 30201 - Indian Philosophy I: Origins and Orientations

This course introduces some of the early themes and textual traditions that set much of the agenda for the later development of Indian philosophy. Particular attention will be paid to the rivalry that was perhaps most generative throughout the history of Indian philosophy: that between the Hindu schools of thought rooted in the Vedas, and the Buddhists who so powerfully challenged them. Dan Arnold
Equivalent Course(s): HREL 30200, RLST 24201

DVPR 50112 - Deconstruction and Religion

A careful study of the development of deconstruction and the role that religion and religious text play in it. We will pay particular attention to Derrida's writings and lecture courses during the 1970s, from Margins of Philosophy and Glas to The Post Card. We will then use this material to reexamine his later writings on religion. Ryan Coyne
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 50112, RLST 23112

DVPR 50201 - Seminar on Contemporary Critical Theory
This course will examine some of the salient texts of postmodernism. Part of the question of the course will be the status and meaning of “post”-modern, post-structuralist. The course requires active and informed participation.  *Francoise Meltzer*

**DVPR 53601 – The Problem of Evil and Philosophical Commentaries on the Book of Job in Medieval Philosophy: Saadia, Maimonides, Aquinas**

This seminar will examine medieval philosophers’ discussions of evil and suffering, natural, bodily, and mental, in their philosophical treatises and in their commentaries of the Book of Job. We will be concerned both with standard topics such as theodicies or justifications for evil, providence and natural evils, and what exactly ‘the’ problem of evil is as well as with the question whether and how the genre in which one pursues these questions makes a difference. In particular, did the commentary form, especially on a book like Job with its enigmatic literary form, enable medieval thinkers to articulate philosophical issues they could not in their philosophical treatises using discursive argumentation?  

*PQ: Knowledge of Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin is not required, but it can’t hurt. Josef Stern*  

**History of Christianity**

**History of Judaism**

**HIJD 35200 - Maimonides on Hume and Religion**

This course will study in alternation chapters from Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* and David Hume's *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, two major philosophical works whose literary forms are at least as important as their contents. Topics will include human knowledge of the existence and nature of God, anthropomorphism and idolatry, religious language, and the problem of evil. Time permitting, we shall also read other short works by these two authors on related themes.  

*Josef Stern*

**HIJD 53361 - The Philosophy of Modern Orthodox Judaism: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein**

The thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik is the philosophical foundation of Modern Orthodox Judaism. In this course, we will examine R. Soloveitchik's conception of halakhic method, his elaboration of the notion of masorah (tradition), and his idea of halakhic morality. The most significant subsequent development of the philosophy of Modern Orthodox Judaism can be found in the writings of Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein. Among other topics, we may consider R. Lichtenstein's views on the relation between religion and morality, his discussion of character refinement, his conception of serving God and his analysis of the meaning of "mitzvah" as well his response to critiques of Modern Orthodox Judaism. The course will aim to provide a detailed philosophical and theological characterization of Modern Orthodox Judaism, and we will draw some contrasts with both Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) and Reform Judaism.  

*PQ: All students interested in enrolling in this course should send an application to*
Applications should be no longer than one page and should include name, email address, phone number, and department or committee. Applicants should briefly describe their background and explain their interest in, and their reasons for applying to, this course. Advanced undergraduates may also apply. Arnold Davidson
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 53361

History of Religions

HREL 34712- Society and the Supernatural in Late Imperial and Modern China

Introductory studies of Chinese history and culture often ignore religion, treating Confucius’s alleged agnosticism as representative of mainstream culture. But ideas about supernatural entities—souls separated from bodies, ancestral spirits, demons, immortals, the vital energies of mountains and rivers, and many more—and practices aimed at managing those spirits were important elements in pre-1949 life. Spirits testified in court cases, cured or caused illnesses, mediated disputes, changed the weather, and made the realm governable or ungovernable. After declining in the 1950s–1970s, various kinds of worship are immensely popular again today, though usually in altered forms. This course traces changes in the intersection of ideas about spirits and daily social practices from late imperial times forward, focusing on attempts to “standardize the gods,” resistance to such efforts, and the consequences for cohesion, or lack of cohesion, across classes, territory, ethnicity, and other differences. Kenneth Pommeranz
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 24712

HREL 37440 - Buddha Then and Now: Transformations from Amaravati to Anuradhapura

The Buddhist sculptures in Amaravati are arguably the earliest to influence the early Buddhist art of the other parts of the sub-continent as well as south and southeast Asia. The course begins with the discussion of the context in which the Buddha images were made in Amaravati and the factors including Buddhist doctrinal developments that contributed to the spread of these images to various parts of Sri Lanka. Then it traces the course and function of Buddhist iconography in Sri Lanka until into the 21st century to assess the role of geopolitical factors. The positionality and portrayals of the images of Buddha are also considered and analyzed. The course traces the trajectories that transformed the image of the Buddha from a symbol of peace to jingoist assertiveness. Through the study of the images of the Buddha, the aim is to comprehend the ways Buddhism has changed over centuries from an inclusive posture which helped it sustain and spread to different parts of the world only later to become exclusionary. Sree Padma Holt
Equivalent Course(s): RLVC 37440, RLST 27440

Islamic Studies

ISLM 30200 - Introductory Qur’anic Arabic II
This course is the second in a 3-quarter sequence “Introduction to Qur’anic Arabic” (IQA), which aims to provide students with foundational philological and reading skills by covering the essentials of Qur’anic/Classical Arabic grammar. This course also features readings of select passages from the Qur'an, Hadīth and Tafsīr. The 3 quarters of IQA are sequential, and students are strongly encouraged to join in the first quarter. Exceptions can be made on a case by case basis. Prerequisites: Successful completion of Introductory Qur'anic Arabic I. Instructor TBD
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 15200

ISLM 30202 – Islamic Civilization II: 950-1750

This course, a continuation of Islamicate Civilization I, surveys intellectual, cultural, religious and political developments in the Islamic world from Andalusia to the South Asian sub-continent during the periods from ca. 950 to 1750. We trace the arrival and incorporation of the Steppe Peoples (Turks and Mongols) into the central Islamic lands; the splintering of the Abbasid Caliphate and the impact on political theory; the flowering of literature of Arabic, Turkic and Persian expression; the evolution of religious and legal scholarship and devotional life; transformations in the intellectual and philosophical traditions; the emergence of Shi‘i states (Buyids and Fatimids); the Crusades and Mongol conquests; the Mamluks and Timurids, and the "gunpowder empires" of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Moghuls; the dynamics of gender and class relations; etc. This class partially fulfills the requirement for MA students in CMES, as well as for NELC majors and PhD students. Franklin Lewis
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 20202

ISLM 40010 - Introduction to Arabic and Islamic Studies

This course is designed for graduate students who wish to learn about the tools, primary and secondary sources, references, journals, distinct subfields, and electronic resources available to researchers in Arabic and Islamic Studies. We will acquire first-hand knowledge and practice of basic skills that will help professionalize students in the field, and will discuss methodological and historiographical issues related to the study of Islamicate civilization in various historical, cultural, political, and religious frameworks. Prerequisites: 2 years of Arabic. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Yousef Casewit

ISLM 42900 - Readings in Islamic Theology

Advanced Arabic Reading seminar on Ibn al-Mar'a's (d. 1214) commentary on Juwayni's Kitab al-Irshad based on available manuscripts. Prerequisites: 3 years of Arabic. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Yousef Casewit

ISLM 50600 - Readings in Philosophical Sufism

Advanced Arabic reading seminar. We’ll focus on the writings of Afif al-Din al-Tilimsani (a disciple of Ibn Arabi and Qunawi), in particular his commentary on the Fusus al-Hikam, the Fatih, and the Divine Names. Prerequisites: 3 years of Arabic. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Yousef Casewit
Religions in the Americas

Religious Leadership and Practice (MDiv Courses)

RELP 32500 - Theology in the Public Square

This course explores the transformative role of religion in public life, primarily by examining “canonical” mid-twentieth century figures whose thought and leadership remain essential reference points in American public life today, such as Dorothy Day, Thich Nhat Hanh, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Reinhold Niebuhr. These figures are placed in conversation with each other and as engaged as potential resources for contemporary public life. This is a required course for first year MDivs; open to MA students in the Divinity School only with consent of instructor. Kristine Culp

RELP 35202 - Arts of Religious Leadership and Practice: Spiritual Care and Counseling

This course is the second of a three-quarter sequence introducing students to essential aspects of religious leadership; the sequence is required for second-year M.Div. students and complements their work in field education. In this course, students explore and practice the requisite skills for spiritual care and counseling in congregations, hospitals, university chaplaincies and other settings. Participants will interrogate human experience through several lenses, including theological and philosophical anthropologies, family systems theory, and relational and self-psychologies, with special attention to theories of race, ethnicity and gender. Practice labs will help students hone listening skills and narrative therapies, diagnosis and referrals, and healing rituals. Cynthia Lindner

RELP 40700 - Field Work Practicum II

The course provides a forum for practical theological reflection through ongoing discussion with classmates of both field experience and general issues of ministerial practice. Erika Dornfeld

Religious Ethics

RETH 30803 - Contemporary Religious Ethics II: Identity and Difference

This is the second of my three-quarter sequence of courses examining the rise and development of contemporary religious ethics. It will continue examining pioneering work that established a new style of scholarship and ethical argumentation during the “quiet revolution” when the study of religion gained an institutional footing in North American colleges and universities. Readings will examine theories of subject formation; cultural norms and human agency; relationships between human and non-human animals; religion and global conflict; race, gender, and politics; and challenges and opportunities that
encountering the Other poses for ethical responsibility and coexistence in political life. Hence the title of this cycle: Identity and Difference (1990-2010). Authors include William F. May, William LaFleur, Cornel West, Charles Taylor, Judith Butler, Avishai Margalit, Lisa Sideris, Saba Mahmood, Aaron Stalnaker, John Kelsay, and Jeffrey Stout. Over the arc of the quarter we will examine how normative inquiry moves across overlapping domains of religion, culture, politics, and science. This course will be followed by Contemporary Religious Ethics III: Peril and Responsibility (2010-2020), next year. Enrollment in other courses in this sequence is not required to enroll in this course. The course is open to graduate and undergraduate students. Richard Miller
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 21407

RETH 32800 - Religion, Ethics, and the Sciences

Basic concepts in the philosophy and history of science are critical to understanding debates in bioethics, environmental ethics, information technology ethics, and other related fields. This class will examine how scientific authority, methods, and information may relate to ethics, particularly religious ethics. We will also study objectivity, subjectivity, and values in the sciences; the development of scientific knowledge; risk, precaution, and accidents; and the development and use codes of ethics for scientists and engineers. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Sarah Fredericks

RETH 37000 - Moral Theory and Philosophical Ethics

Asking the basic ethical question, “how shall we live?,,” this course explores answers to that question in selected major historical writings in Western moral theory and philosophical ethics. Its purpose is to explain the elements and tasks of moral theory and also to explore the work of seminal philosophical ethical thinkers. One thread through the course will be the question of the relation between ethics, or moral philosophy, and religion. In this way, we are also exploring fundamental questions in religious ethics, including questions about human “nature” and action, the relation between the human good and God, and how to validate moral judgments. Note: Undergraduates should contact professor about enrollment. William Schweiker
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 37000, RLST 24770

RETH 44000 - Methods and Theories in Comparative Religious Ethics

This course explores the major theories and methods for doing comparative religious ethics and also looks at key contemporary works comparing religions ethically. Undergraduates must contact professor in order to enroll. William Schweiker
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 44000

RETH 44802 - Contemporary Political and Social Ethics

In 1971 John Rawls set new terms for political and social ethics with the publication of his landmark work, A Theory of Justice. This seminar will focus on the work of Rawls along with critical engagements with his ideas in the 1980s and 1990s by Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer, Susan Moller Okin, Richard
Rorty, Seyla Benhabib, and Will Kymlicka. In order to provide an understanding of the evolving nature of this engagement, the seminar’s readings are arranged roughly in chronological order. One aim is to make plain the nature of public philosophy regarding social justice as it was carried out from 1971-1996, and to identify how and where Rawls adjusted his ideas in response to his critics during this time. Another aim is to correct for the ongoing misrepresentation of liberal democratic theory in the academy and in public culture more generally. Topics include theories of distributive justice, gender equality, cultural rights, religion and politics, toleration, identity and difference, and, more generally, the relation between the right and the good in political thought. Prerequisite: All students—Please petition Prof. Miller to enroll in this class by describing your background and relevant interests in this course. This course is open to undergrads by petition. Richard Miller

RETH 52555 - Narration and Law: Levinas's Talmudic Readings and the Imperative of Ethics

This is a seminar that will closely read the Jewish writings of Emmanuel Levinas, in particular, the talmudic exegesis that he undertook for the French Jewish Community in the 1990s. Levinas explicates his ethical theories via the recovery of a series of texts from the Babylonian Talmud, the classic text of Jewish law, literature, and theo-philosophic interpretation. Laurie Zoloth
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 22555

Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

RLVC 35900 - Feeling Religious or Emotions as a Variety of Religious Experience

This course takes up the methodological tension between Donovan O. Schaefer’s Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power and William James’ Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature and as a starting point to think religion and emotion. We will then follow the boom of recent scholarship on this topic to think about the variety of ways that scholars have theorized and understood emotion or affect as central to the study of religion. The course also asks: Why emotion? Why right now? In asking these questions, the students will become familiar with this strand of scholarship within religious studies, but also how it fits in with the larger theoretical turn in the humanities. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Sarah Pierce Taylor
Equivalent Course(s): HREL 35900

RLVC 36856 – Queer Theory: Futures

Where has queer theory gone since its inception during the 1980s and 1990s, and where do we imagine it will go? This course will trace developments in queer theory from 2000 to the present. Paying particular attention to theories of queer temporality, we will examine how queer theorists’ recourse to the historical past has shaped contemporary critiques of homonormativity, queer liberalism, and homonationalism. In each instance, we will attend to the intersections of sexuality with gender, race, ethnicity, class, and abilities. Kris Trujillo
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 26856
Apocalyptic fantasies are alive and well today. In beach reads and blue chip fiction; in comic books and YA novels; in streaming TV shows, Hollywood blockbusters, and ironic arthouse cinema. Wherever you look, small groups of beleaguered survivors are banding together to outsmart zombies or crazed survivalists, and generally doing their best to get by on a planet ravaged by disease, pollution, consumerism, and reckless resource extraction. These apocalyptic fantasies follow well-established scripts that often date back millenia. Apocalypse scripts allow their users to make sense of the current crisis and prepare for an uncertain future. The course will be divided into two parts. The first half will be devoted to texts, art, and movies that dwell on the expectation of the end and narratively measure out the time that remains. We will begin with examining the biblical ur-scripts of an apocalyptic imaginary, the Book of Daniel in the Old and the Book of Revelation in the New Testament, as well as Saint Paul’s messianism in the Letter to the Romans; and then move on to medieval apocalyptic fantasies of the Joachim of Fiore and others; and end with the apocalypticism underlying the religious reforms of Girolamo Savonarola and Martin Luther. The discussion of Lars von Trier’s Melancholia will serve as a pivot to modern post-apocalypticism. The second half will focus on life after the apocalypse — the new freedoms, and new forms of political life and sociality that the apocalyptic event affords its survivors. Readings will include the political theory of marronage, capabilities, and neoprimitivism; literary theory of speculative fiction; and the post-apocalyptic narratives by Octavia Butler, Jean Hegland, Richard Jefferies, Cormac McCarthy, and Colson Whitehead. Readings and discussions in English. Mark Payne and Christopher Wild
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 28446

RLVC 38500 - Mythologies of America: 19th Century Novels

Hawthorne, Melville, Stowe, Alcott, and Twain wrote fiction that, in individual novels and also read comparatively, offers a civic template of mythologies of America: its genesis, its composition, its deities, its ritual life. The course considers this writing as both distinctively American, and as engaging central themes of modern novels, e.g. time, history, and memory, the relation of private to civic life, and the shifting role of religious authority. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Richard Rosengarten
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 28510

Theology

THEO 43501 - Contemporary Models of Theology

This class compares and contrasts various systems and methods in contemporary theology. By contemporary, we mean theological developments in the USA from the late 1960s to the present. Specifically, we reflect critically on the following models: progressive liberal, post liberal, black theology, feminist theology, and womanist theology. As we engage these systems of thought, we want to
examine the contexts and logic of their theologies and the sources used to construct theology. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. *Dwight Hopkins*

**Religious Studies (Undergraduate)**

**RLST 10100 - Introduction to Religious Studies**

What are we talking about when we talk about religion? There are a multitude of answers to that question, and this course provides students with an entryway into a longstanding conversation-involving insiders, outsiders, and those in between-around the meanings of a word that indexes ideas of god and the gods, of origins and ends, and of the proper places of humans (and everything else, including animals) above, in, and below the globe. Talk about religion today is, in fact, cheap: this course will aim to promote a grammatical currency (morphology, vocabulary, syntax) to enhance the value of such talk. Note: This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. *Ryan Coyne*

**RLST 10102 - Religion, Reason, and the State**

The second quarter of this sequence explores the work of key theorists on the role of religion in modern society, politics, and the state. Central questions include: How has state power transformed religious institutions, knowledge, and practice? How can we account for the persistence of religious commitments in the face of secularization? What role has religion played in revolutionary movements and in resistance against state power? Note: Students may enroll in either one of the courses in this sequence independently of the other course. This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. *Alireza Doostdar*

**RLST 20235 - The Hebrew Bible and the Shoah**

This course will explore the uses of biblical literature in Holocaust and post-Holocaust works. The first part will be devoted to the work of religious thinkers from across the religious spectrum, from the Warsaw ghetto sermons of the orthodox rabbi Kalonymos Shapira to the unique interpretation of the “suffering servant” by Reform rabbi Ignaz Maybaum. We will see that the question of God’s whereabouts during the massacre produced an explosion of biblically-inspired theologies, stemming from Buber, Heschel, and Berkovits’ different conceptions of a “divine eclipse” (hester panim) to Melissa Raphael’s audacious affirmation of the presence of the female divine face in Auschwitz. The traditional approach to the Hebrew Bible itself was radically questioned: Fackenheim argued that biblical exegesis had to be thoroughly revised, and André Neher sketched a hermeneutics of biblical silence. In the second part of the course we will look at the decisive influence that the Hebrew Bible had on the works of more literarily-oriented writers and how they reflected on the Shoah. In genres as distinct as poetry and testimony, in authors as different as Chava Rosenfarb and Primo Levi, one sees biblical characters, stories, motifs, and literary forms surfacing with unprecedented ambivalence and poignancy. This is true whether the biblical reference is deployed in ironic denunciations of the divine (Simche Shayeitsh, Kadia Modolowski), in subtle appeals to a newfound hope (Elie Wiesel, S. Y. Agnon), or in psalmodic hymns to the senselessness of it all (Nelly Sachs, Paul Celan). *Aslan Mizrahi Cohen*
RLST 21275 - Theologies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America

What were the life factors and specific contexts that amazingly gave rise to religious thinking in the 1960s Third World theologies? And what are the relationships among gender, culture, politics, and economics in these global theologies? This class compares and contrasts various systems and methods in contemporary theologies, male and female, in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. As a backdrop for this critical inter-convosational engagement, we will use the recent theological dialogues taking place in the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). As we engage these systems of thought, we want to examine the logic of their theologies and the sources used to construct theology—particularity the relation between the materiality of context and the imagination of theology. Dwight Hopkins

RLST 22011 - Jewish Civilization II: Early Modern Period to 21st Century

Jewish Civilization is a three-quarter sequence that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient beginnings through its rabbinic and medieval transformations to its modern manifestations. Through investigation of primary texts-biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, mystical, historical, documentary, and literary-students will acquire a broad overview of Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness while reflecting in greater depth on major themes, ideas, and events in Jewish history. The Winter course will begin with the early modern period and continue to the present. It will include discussions of mysticism, the works of Spinoza and Mendelssohn, the nineteenth-century reform, the Holocaust and its reflection in writers such as Primo Levi and Paul Celan, and literary pieces from postwar American Jewish and Israeli authors. All sections of this course will share a common core of readings; individual instructors will supplement with other materials. It is recommended, though not required, that students take the three Jewish Civilization courses in sequence. Students who register for the Autumn Quarter course will automatically be pre-registered for the winter segment. In the Spring Quarter students have the option of taking a third unit of Jewish Civilization, a course whose topics will vary (JWSC 1200X). Sarah Hammerschlag

RLST 22313 - The Lord’s Business: Evangelical Christianity and Corporate Capitalism in Modern America

Throughout the history of the United States, Christianity and capitalism have been inseparable forces for the social and cultural development of the American nation, for better or worse. That is not to say, however, that the relationship between “faith” and “finance” has been stable over time. As economic and religious practices met in fluid social worlds, Christians often debated the boundaries of moral behavior under disparate capitalist regimes. At the end of the nineteenth century, mainline Protestants struggled to reconcile the generous patronage of industrialist benefactors with the social ravages of industrial capitalism. As theologically liberal Protestants moved towards a critique of capitalism under the “Social Gospel,” theologically conservative Protestants came to embrace new forms of capital and their assumed spiritual effects. This course will investigate the history of fundamentalist and evangelical Protestant support for and appropriation of “corporate capitalism” across the twentieth century. We will engage a
series of historical inquiries: On what grounds did early-century conservative Protestants defend capitalist society? How did these groups engage capitalism, its ideals and its markets? Moreover, how did capitalism and capitalists, religious or otherwise, respond to this newfound support? What influences, if any, has conservative Protestantism had on economic practice itself? Finally, how can the legacy of corporate, evangelical capitalism shape our understandings of recent and contemporary religious, economic and political issues?  

Greg Chatterley

RLST 24160 - Whom Am I To Judge? Relativism and Religious Difference

How do we evaluate people who are different from us? What grounds our evaluation of human behaviors or beliefs? At the end of the 20th century, comparative analyses of religious beliefs and ethics were heavily criticized for their ethnocentric tendencies; researchers were blamed for importing their own values on the “other”. More recently, however, the pendulum seems to have swung in the other direction. Comparative religious ethicists often adopt a brand of liberal moral relativism. “To each their own” is their preferred mantra. This dramatic swing within the field of comparative religious ethics opens up questions for future study: Under what conditions can we praise or blame those who are different than us? What virtues of scholarship are necessary for quality comparative work? In this course we will learn about the field of comparative religious ethics and the perils and possibilities that accompany its intellectual projects. In addition to several theoretical texts, we will read two ethnographies (Fernando 2014 and Pandian 2009) that weave in and out of comparative religious ethics. These texts focus on themes of nationalism, post-colonialism, immigration, the production and regulation of religious subjects, and the limits of our judgments on the other.  

Caroline Anglim

RLST 24200 - Philosophy and Literature in India

SIGN 26073

Is philosophy literature? Is literature philosophy? What constitutes either of these seemingly disparate enterprises, formally and thematically, and what kinds of conjunctions can we imagine between them (philosophy in/of/as literature)? Can one translate these terms across cultures? Are they the sole prerogative of leisured elites, or can they harbor and cultivate voices of dissent? Above all, what does it mean to reflect on these categories outside the parochial context of the Western world? This course explores these questions by introducing some of the literary cultures, philosophical traditions, religious poetry, and aesthetic theories of the South Asian subcontinent. Students will encounter a variety of genres including scriptural commentary, drama and courtly poetry, and the autobiography. Readings, all in translation, will range from Sanskrit literature to Sufi romances and more.  

Anand Venkatkrishnan

RLST 25806 - The Political Theologies of Zionism

The relationship between nationalism and religion has throughout history been a stormy one, often characterized by antagonisms and antipathy. In this course we will examine from various aspects the complex nexus of these two sources of repeated ideological and political dispute within Judaism, and more specifically within Zionism as its political manifestation. Zionism has mostly been considered a secular project, yet recently, Zionist theory is scrutinized to identify and unearth its supposedly hidden theological origins. In nowadays Israel, a rise in religious identification alongside an increasing
religionization of the political discourse calls for the consideration of new theopolitical models of Zionism applicable in a post-secular environment.
The aim of this course is to explore this complex intertwining of politics and religion in Israel from both historical and contemporary perspectives. The first part of the course will outline the theoretical foundation of post-secular and political-theological discourses. The second part will address the explicit and implicit political theologies of Zionism. The third part will outline contemporary aspects of political-theological thought in Israel, and their actual appearance in the political sphere. David Barak-Gorodetsky

RLST 26013 - Drinking with God: An Introduction to Sufism

Who is the 13th-century Muslim mystic Jalaluddin Rumi - and why is he so popular on Instagram? Can inebriation lead to divine revelation? Who are the friends of God, and how did they develop fantastic superpowers? How have mystical practices sought to both abandon the world and radically transform it? In this class, we will explore these questions through the study of Sufism - a diverse set of Islamic mystical traditions - from its formative period in the early decades of Islam to the present day. Through poetry, philosophy, music, esoteric sciences, politics, and devotional practices, we will analyze Sufism as a global phenomenon that, while demonstrating remarkable adaptation to local cultural contexts, firmly locates itself within the Islamic tradition. This course will also include a visit to a local Sufi center in Chicago. Francesca Chubb-Confer

RLST 26116 - What is Meaning?

It has been said that before we can ask about the meaning of life, we must address the life of meaning. To that end, this class examines the nature(s) of meaning, variously construed in the following, often overlapping terms: linguistic, aesthetic, moral, scientific, religious, and philosophical. Lisa Landoe Hedrick

RLST 27250 - The Trials of Religion

The rhetoric and practice of "trial" -- as testing and as adjudication -- is central to religious thought and religious practice. This course will examine the idea and the act of "trial" comparatively, via the classics of the religious literatures of Judaism and of Christianity (Genesis 22, Job, the Gospel of Mark, "The Pilgrim's Progress," Kafka), and also cinema (Dreyer's "Joan of Arc," R. & S. Elkabetz's "Gett"). Richard Rosengarten

RLST 27516 – Religious Poetry from Donne to Eliot

This course will study some of the greatest religious poems in our language, focusing on major poets in the 17th century (Donne & Herbert), in the 19th century (Dickinson & Hopkins), and in the 20th century, where we will study T. S. Eliot’s Four Quartets in its entirety. Mid-term exercise and final paper required. Richard Strier
RLST 28307 - Trans/Formations: Changing Bodies and Gender in Premodern Christianity

The course surveys ancient and medieval Christian views on the body and gender with a particular interest in ideas of transformation, supplemented by contemporary readings in trans studies. The course focuses on a series of topics: the creation of human bodies, debates about matter, doctrines of the resurrection, eunuchs, possession, gender (non)conformity, and various modes of gender crossing. Thus, it provides both an introduction to major figures in the history of Christianity and a primer in religious-studies and historical methods in light of trans and queer studies. A central question for the course would be how to think about historical distance and anachronism in our use of theoretical lenses with the interpretation of sources. In addition to readings in contemporary feminist, queer, and trans thought, the course primarily treats Christian sources spanning a number of genres such as narrative, theological treatise, allegory, visionary literature, and forensic transcripts. *M. Vanderpoel*

RLST 28308 – Introduction to Byzantine Art

Course description coming. *Karin Krause*

RLST 28705 - Christian Iconography

In Christian culture, visual images have for many centuries played a pivotal role in ritual, devotion, intellectual thought, and religious instruction. The most important aims of this course are that students understand images convey meaning in very unique ways and learn how to decode their visual messages. The study of iconography encompasses a variety of methods used to identify the subject matter of a pictorial image, describe its contents, and analyze its discursive strategies in view of its original cultural context. We will cover some of the most important themes visualized in the arts of Christianity by analyzing imagery spanning different periods, geographical regions, pictorial media, and artistic techniques.

While special emphasis is placed on the intersections of art and literature, we will also examine pictorial themes that are independent of a specific textual basis. Alongside the study of Christian iconography, this course will address broader issues of visual inquiry, such as patronage, viewer response, emotions, and gender roles. In this course, students will acquire a 'visual literacy' that will enable them to explore all kinds of works of art fruitfully as primary sources in their own right. *Karin Krause*

RLST 29300 - My Body, My Self: Asceticism and Subjectivity

*SIGN 26074*

In recent decades scholars of the pre-modern period have turned to the body as a site of renewed historical inquiry. Within the study of religion, this shift has reanimated discussions around asceticism as a particularly potent techne for self-fashioning. Nevertheless, scholars have struggled to theorize asceticism across religious traditions. The proposed signature course brings together two scholars of religion working in distinct geographical locations and cultures: Eastern Christianity and medieval Indian religious literature. Despite our disparate areas, together we are interested in bringing critical gender theory to bear on asceticism as a discursive and embodied practice. We envision this course as an opportunity for students to engage asceticism as a series of techniques that envision the sexed and
gendered human body as the horizon of corporeal expression and personal imagination. Asceticism serves as a neat conceptual device, allowing us to toggle between the mind and body while tackling questions that fall within the liminal space between them, including debates around gender, sexuality, sovereignty, and biopower. Students along with the instructors will contend with the challenges and opportunities of transnational and transhistorical feminist and queer inquiry as we traverse across the boundaries of tradition, language, and culture. While drawing on rich historical and religious archives, we will anchor our discussions around the interplay of two principal authors: Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault. 

Sarah Pierce Taylor and Erin Galgay Walsh
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 39300, HCHR 39300, HREL 39300, RLVC 39300

SPRING 2021

Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

AASR 54000 - Ethnographic Methods

This is a writing-intensive seminar for doctoral students wishing to explore ethnography as a method and genre of social-cultural analysis. engaged in ethnographic research. Over the course of the quarter, students will work individually and in groups to develop their ethnographic projects. Readings will consist of articles on theory and method, as well as a selection of ethnographic monographs. The final writing assignment is an Assignments will include a variety of ethnographic essay that will grow out of a range of research writing exercises and writing assignments. experiments with genre and form. Course Notes: By permission only. First preference will be given to PhD students. Alireza Doostdar

Biblical Studies

BIBL 36020 - Readings: Introductory Koine Greek III

This is the third course in the Introductory Koine Greek Sequence of the Divinity School. This course will use what students have learned in terms of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary in the first two quarters and will apply these skills to the translation and exegesis of specific Biblical passages. Prerequisite: One year of Koine Greek, or equivalent (BIBL 35100, 35300). Note: This is the introductory Koine Greek exegesis course. Instructor TBD

BIBL 41203 - Illuminating the Bible in Byzantium

The main focus of this seminar will be the study of illustrated manuscripts of the Bible viewed within the larger framework of Byzantine book culture. More generally, students will gain insight into the history, methods and techniques of interdisciplinary research involving Greek (illuminated) manuscripts. We will investigate famous and less well-known examples to identify both the principles guiding Biblical
illumination in Byzantium and topics in need of further research. In addition to printed facsimiles, we will take advantage of digitized material from various Greek manuscript collections. In order to appreciate the auratic qualities of original manuscripts and for a close-up investigation of their codicological features, we will view material preserved in the Goodspeed Manuscript Collection. Karin Krause
Equivalent Course(s): RLVC 41203

BIBL 43300 - Introduction to Papyrology

This course will concentrate on the methods and perspectives of the discipline of papyrology, including the "hands on" experience of working with photographed and scanned texts of various collections. No previous knowledge of the field is assumed; we will begin from the ground up. Approximately the first six weeks of the course will be devoted to an introduction to the study of papyri, in which our concerns will include the following:
1. transcription and analysis of different paleographic styles, including literary hands and documentary Ptolemaic scripts.
2. extensive reading of edited papyrus texts from the Pestman and Loeb editions and elsewhere;
3. careful attention to the linguistic phenomenon of koine Greek with regard to phonology, morphology, and syntax; how the koine differs from the classical language and the relationship of the idiom of the papyri to that of other koine documents, such as the New Testament; the importance of koine linguistics to textual criticism.
4. investigation of the contribution of papyrology to other areas of the study of antiquity such as literature, social history, linguistics, textual criticism, and religion.
Prerequisite: three years of Greek. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. David Martinez

BIBL 44602 - The Song of Songs

In this text-course we will read the entire poetic composition, drawing on theory of literature in general and poetry in particular, tracing its unique forms of continuity, and analyzing its biblically distinctive forms of gender characterization. Prerequisite: 1 year biblical Hebrew/ BIBL 33900 and BIBL 34000. Note: This is the Introductory Biblical Hebrew exegesis course. Simeon Chavel
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 24602

Philosophy of Religion

DVPR 30302 - Indian Philosophy II: The Classical Traditions

This course follows the first module on Indian philosophy by exploring the debates between several classical "schools" or "viewpoints" (darśanas) of Indian philosophy. In addition to expanding upon the methods of systematized reasoning inaugurated by the Nyāya and Buddhist epistemological traditions, particular attention will be given to systems of scriptural hermeneutics -- Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta -- and their consequences for the philosophy of language, theories of cognitive error, and even poetics. Anand Venkattrrishnan
DVPR 33750 - New Cartesian Questions

The course shall be divided, in each class, in two moments. First moment: a close reading of Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy to allow students to reach a direct knowledge of cartesian thought, by presenting text explanations. Second, in each class will be addressed one of the most debated issues in the past or today among the allegedly well-known cartesian doctrines. For instance: Was Descartes more a skeptic than a dogmatic philosopher? (b) How far Descartes has followed Montaigne more than he opposed him? (c) Is the ego in the cogito argument really a “subject” or a “substance”? (c) Why a finite mind can enjoy an infinite will, and why the successors (even the self-proclaimed followers) of Descartes have given up this claim? (d) Is phenomenology (from Husserl to Levinas) qualified to understand itself as “cartesian”? (e) Is there or not a cartesian metaphysics, and why the answer remains difficult today? (f) Which role, if any, play sensation and non-conceptual knowledge in Descartes doctrine of morals.

Jean-Luc Marion

Equivalent Course(s): RLST 23750

DVPR 47902 - Readings: Advanced Sanskrit

An advanced Sanskrit reading course focusing on the development of skills in either classical belles lettres (kāvya) or scholastic, commentarial prose (śāstra). In the former, emphasis is on the ability to rearrange complex poetic forms into digestible prose word order. In the latter, students learn both the stylistic conventions of scholastic Sanskrit and the technical vocabulary of the relevant intellectual discipline. Anand Venkatkrishnan

DVPR 49630 - Madhyamaka in India and China

This seminar will consider exemplary texts from the Madhyamaka school(s) of Buddhist philosophy, particularly focusing on notable points of divergence and/or concord between the Indian schools with which the tradition originated, and the various Chinese schools that reflect China's distinctive appropriation of the tradition. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Brook Ziporyn and Dan Arnold

DVPR 53330 - Revelation, Temporality, Being

Following up the previous seminars on the history of the concept of Revelation and its alternative models (metaphysical, phenomenological, biblical, a.s.o.), this class will be devoted to a reverse interrogation: provided first that the concept of Revelation, in a christian perspective, can only be understood from a trinitarian viewpoint (Barth and Balthasar, Basile of Cesarea and Augustine); provided then that the most crucial issues about Revelation should be addressed from this trinitarian viewpoint, one may try to understand not Trinity on the basis of the philosophical concepts of time and history (as Hegel and Schelling did) or of being (as Thomas Aquinas and Heidegger did), but on a contrary order, to consider
being and time on the basis of Trinity and according to the logic of agapê. This means a reinterpretation of time as eschatology or krisis, and of being as givenness. Jean-Luc Marion

History of Christianity

HCHR 43200 - Colloquium: Ancient Christianity

A critical reading of influential narratives--both ancient and modern--of “the rise of Christianity” in the first four centuries, and the sources from which they are composed, asking the question: can such a narrative be told (if it can be told) in a way other than as a romance or a tragedy? Each week we shall analyze select primary sources (textual, artistic, architectural, on which students will give presentations) that illuminate crucial issues (e.g. demographics, conversion, race, persecution, martyrdom, asceticism, gender, ecclesiological and ritual structures, intellectual lineages, orthodoxy and heresy), personalities (e.g., Ignatius, Perpetua and Felicitas, Irenaeus, Antony, Eusebius, Constantine, Desert Fathers and Mothers, Macrina, Augustine) and events. On-going reflection on the nature of historiography as a science and an art, involving both discovery and invention. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Margaret Mitchell
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 43200

HCHR 43959 - Varieties of Dominican Mysticism: Albert the Great, Meister Eckhart, and Catherine of Siena

This seminar will focus on three major Dominican mystical theologians: Albert the Great, Meister Eckhart and Catherine of Siena and, through a study of their thought, map out developments in late medieval mysticism and intellectual history. The focus will be on the mystical path towards union with God, with a sub focus on the mediating role of nature and natural philosophy on the one hand and of the church and sacraments on the other. Prerequisites: Knowledge of Latin and/or German is recommended but not required. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Willemien Otten
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 43959

History of Judaism

HIJD 40506 - Martin Buber’s Philosophy of Religion and Judaism

Martin Buber was a major philosopher of religion and Judaism. His contributions range from conceptual studies, poetic theology (I and Thou), studies on general and Jewish religiosity (especially Hasidism), and studies in the Bible. We shall explore all genres and study and evaluate Buber's thinking and contributions to contemporary thought and theology. The course will include lectures and close readings of primary sources in translation. Students will be expected to write several short prompt papers and a final essay. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Michael Fishbane
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 40506, DVPR 40506, RLVC 40506, THEO 40506
HIJD 47012 - Readings in Rabbinic Midrash: Theology and Homily in Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana

The Midrash Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana (4-5th cent. CE) is a classic collection of homilies on the Jewish holiday cycle, integrating earlier exegesis and sources. The course will examine several major homiletic units to understand the interplay of theology, homily, and hermeneutics. Opening classes will provide an introduction to Midrash; subsequent sessions will focus on learning how to read and interpret a classic rabbinic homiletical work. Prerequisite: Basic proficiency in Rabbinic Hebrew (translation will be supplemented). Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Michael Fishbane
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 47012, THEO 47012

History of Religions

HREL 47270 - Being Buddhist in Southeast Asia

A study of the various ways in which lay and monastic Buddhists practice and express their understanding of the Theravada religious path in Sri Lanka and SE Asia (Laos, Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia). Ethnographic and historical readings will focus on social (ritual) articulations of Buddhist practice and identity in contemporary cultural contexts. A term paper on topic in consultation with instructor is required. Prerequisite: Previous familiarity with Buddhism in south or southeast Asia. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. John Holt

Islamic Studies

ISLM 30203 – Islamicate Civilization III: 1750-Present

This course covers the period from ca. 1750 to the present, focusing on Western military, economic, and ideological encroachment; the impact of such ideas as nationalism and liberalism; efforts at reform in the Islamic states; the emergence of the "modern" Middle East after World War I; the struggle for liberation from Western colonial and imperial control; the Middle Eastern states in the cold war era; and local and regional conflicts. Holly Shissler
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 20203

ISLM 30300 - Introductory Qur'anic Arabic III

This course is the third in a 3-quarter sequence "Introduction to Qur'anic Arabic" (IQA), which aims to provide students with foundational philological and reading skills by covering the essentials of Qur'anic/Classical Arabic grammar. This course also features readings of select passages from the Qur'an, Hadith and Tafsir. The 3 quarters of IQA are sequential, and students are strongly encouraged to join in the first quarter. Exceptions can be made on a case by case basis.
Prerequisites: Graduate and undergraduate students from any department are welcome to register. The minimum prerequisite for IQA III is the successful completion of IQA II or equivalent training. The IQA sequence is also open to students who may have had more exposure to Arabic (modern or classical) but wish to acquire a solid foundation in Arabic grammar, and/or students who feel they are not yet ready for third-year Arabic courses. Instructor TBD
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 15300

Religions in the Americas

Religious Leadership and Practice (MDiv Courses)

RELP 35300 - Arts of Religious Leadership and Practice: Community, Leadership, and Change

This course is the third of a three-quarter sequence introducing students to essential aspects of religious leadership; the sequence is required for second-year M.Div. students and complements their field education experience. In this final quarter of the year-long sequence, students study varieties of communities that form the ecologies of public life, and their facilitators and leaders as responsible agents of change. Through research projects and case studies, students practice the skills of analysis, decision-making, negotiation and visioning that are essential to organizational vitality and constructive community engagement. This course is the third of a three-quarter sequence introducing students to essential aspects of religious leadership; the sequence is required for second-year M.Div. students and complements their field education experience. In this final quarter of the year-long sequence, students study varieties of communities that form the ecologies of public life, and their facilitators and leaders as responsible agents of change. Through research projects and case studies, students practice the skills of analysis, decision-making, negotiation and visioning that are essential to organizational vitality and constructive community engagement. Cynthia Lindner

RELP 40800 - Field Work Practicum III

The Practicum sequence complements the MDiv Congregational Placement and offers opportunities for students to engage in critical reflection of their respective practical experiences of ministry leadership. In addition to this element of personal and practical reflections, students will engage a range of readings, written exercises, and classroom conversations to assist in articulating and refining their own practice of ministry. Erika Dornfeld

RELP 50403 - Advanced Seminar

A workshop on contemporary issues in preaching. Topic TBA. Prerequisite: open to MDiv students who have taken "Ritual and Speaking" or have equivalent experience. Cynthia Lindner
Religious Ethics

RETH 50800 - God and Morality

Currently the world’s religions are having profound impact on social, cultural, and political realities around the world. From questions in genetics to global conflict, sexuality to the reality of death, the religious have global moral significance. This seminar addresses a basic question within this current reality, namely, what is and ought to be the connection between religious beliefs about the divine and the domain of moral value and right. The seminar addresses a range of contemporary answers to this question mindful of the history of the question, reaching the West at least back to Socrates, and also different religious and philosophical traditions. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. William Schweiker
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 50800

Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

RLVC 39001 - Painting and Description in the Roman World: Philostratus’ Imagines – Religion, Education, Sexuality

This course explores Roman art, especially painting, through the single most thoughtful, playful and creative text on naturalistic painting written in antiquity. Arguably, it is the most interesting examination of the brilliance and the problems of naturalism ever written in the Western tradition, creating a non-historicist, fictive and rhetorically-inflected model for thinking about art. Philostratus took the rhetorical trope of Ekphrasis to new heights, in an extraordinary intermedial investigation of textuality through the prism of visuality and of visual art through the descriptive prism of fictional prose. The course will involve close readings of Philostratus’ descriptions of paintings alongside exploration of the Greek and Roman art of the imperial period from Pompeian paintings via floor Mosaics to sarcophagi. A reading knowledge of Greek could not be described as a disadvantage (!) but is not a requirement. The course will be taught over 5 weeks in the Spring Quarter on an intensive schedule. =Before the course begins, read the Imagines of the Elder Philostratus in the Loeb Classical Library translation (by Arthur Fairbanks, 1931, Harvard U.P., much reprinted). This book is not exorbitantly expensive and is worth buying, as we will all need a copy throughout. Jaś Elsner
Equivalent Course(s): RLST 29001

RLVC 41750 - The Sacred Gaze: Beholding as a Spiritual Exercise in the European Artistic Tradition

This course spans the history of Western Art from the ancient Greeks to the Early Modern Period. It explores the sacred gaze, construed as a series of technologies for constructing the relationship between images and their viewers and as a key piece of social equipment for the ethopoiesis of the human subject. It asks how vision became the object of a moral discourse in Greco-Roman antiquity in both sacred and ‘philosophical’ contexts, and what happened to this problematic in the historical emergence and
development of Christianity. We will do some comparative work on similar processes in relation to Buddhism. Drawing on ideas in the philosophical work of Michel Foucault, Pierre Hadot and Arnold Davidson, our hypothesis is that these issues precipitate in encounters with visual representations, such that the beholding of inter alia statues and paintings became a topic of concern, with the implication that a suitably attentive and informed study of those images will be informative for prehistorians of the aesthetic subject. Although the course will give weight to description and theological/philosophical investigation, the principal focus will be on objects themselves and their own material/visual articulation of the conditions of seeing. *Jaś Elsner and Richard Neer*

**RLVC 45200 - The Holy Land in the Middle Ages**

This course will examine written and visual material that testifies to the medieval encounters of the Abrahamic religions in a sacred landscape where the histories of Jews, Christians, and Muslims overlap. While bearing witness to the cultural wealth and religious pluralism that characterize the Holy Land during the Middle Ages, texts and visual artifacts likewise testify to religious competition, conflict, loss, and exclusion. Among the primary textual sources we will read (in English translation) are accounts by pilgrims and other travelers to the Holy Land, extracts from medieval chronicles, and eye-witness accounts from the period of the Crusades. In addition to the textual material, we will study art and architecture created for different religious communities (e.g., synagogues and their richly decorated mosaic floors, sites and souvenirs of Christian pilgrimage, major works of Islamic art and architecture). We will also investigate phenomena of the reception of the Holy Land’s sacred sites and dynamic history in medieval Europe (e.g., replicas and evocations of the Holy Sepulchre, narratives of the “Holy Grail” and associated artifacts). *Karin Krause*

Equivalent Course(s): HCHR 45200

**RLVC 47200 - History of Criticism**

The second of a two-course sequence that offers a survey of major historical moments in the theory of interpretation. The course will pursue the thesis that the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries are dominated by three cardinal moments in the sociology of modern knowledge: the emergence of the figure of “the critic”; the articulation of “aesthetics” as an independent mode of thought; and the establishment of historical-critical methodology as prerequisite to understanding, and in turn properly interpreting, the Bible. Required of Ph.D. students taking the RLVC 1 exam. *Richard Rosengarten*

**Theology**

**THEO 31600 - Introduction to Theology**

This course will look at a few paradigmatic instances of theology-as-practical-wisdom--theology, that is, that looks to religious traditions as a resource for thinking about how best to handle important life-circumstances. Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. *Kevin Hector*
THEO 40600 - Black Theology: Second Generation

Contemporary black theology, with its beginnings on July 31, 1966, was created by African American clergy who offered one interpretation of the new black consciousness movement of the 1960s. This marked the 1st generation of black theologians. Already, we see that, perhaps, black theology might be the only theological discipline in the USA that did not originate in the academy. Instead, it was birthed out of people’s everyday lives searching for human dignity and a better community on earth. This course examines the 2nd generation of black theologians, starting in 1979. We will explore the responses and critiques internal to the 2nd generation of black theologians. How did they surpass the thinking of the 1st generation and what new theological avenues did they construct? Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Dwight Hopkins

THEO 41101 - Being Human

What does it mean to be a human being – a person who fulfills individual capabilities and contributes to a community’s well-being? Furthermore, what connects the individual and community to an ultimate vision or spirituality? These questions and investigations can be described as an examination of and argument for constructing a theological anthropology. When one thinks intentionally about the being of a human and his or her ties to some concern or force greater than the limited self, then transcendence and materiality involve themselves in a complex dynamic. What is the relation between being in the world and the visions emerging out of that world? Note: This course is open to undergrads by Petition. Dwight Hopkins

Religious Studies (Undergraduate)

RLST 20230 - Jerusalem: The “Holy” City

What makes a city “holy”? How is religious space created and contested? How can one city be claimed by three faiths? This course will attempt to answer these questions and many others by tracing the religious history of Jerusalem—a religious center for Jews, Christians, and Muslims—from its founding under King David to the modern Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Since its beginnings, Jerusalem has served as a site of creation, interaction, and conflict for these traditions and millions of their adherents. Using primary and secondary materials, along with some theoretical works, we will analyze Jerusalem as an object of study in relation to common themes of Religious Studies like sacred space, pilgrimage, holy war, and myth. Marshall Cunningham

RLST 20505 - Pagans and Christians: Greek Background to Early Christianity

This course will examine some of the ancient Greek roots of early Christianity. We will focus on affinities between Christianity and the classical tradition as well as ways in which the Christian faith may be considered radically different from it. Some of the more important issues that we will analyze are: "The spell of Homer." How the Homeric poems exerted immeasurable influence on the religious attitudes and
practices of the Greeks. The theme of creation in Greek and Roman authors such as Hesiod and Ovid. The Orphic account of human origins. The early Christian theme of Christ as Creator/Savior. Greek, specifically Homeric conceptions of the afterlife. The response to the Homeric orientation in the form of the great mystery cults of Demeter, Dionysus, and Orpheus. The views of the philosophers (esp. Plato) of the immortality of the soul compared with the New Testament conception of resurrection of the body. Ancient Greek conceptions of sacrifice and the crucifixion of Christ as archetypal sacrifice. The attempted synthesis of Jewish and Greek philosophic thought by Philo of Alexandria and its importance for early Christianity. *David Martinez*

**RLST 21020 - Is Humanity Doomed?**

This class explores the possibilities and perils of continued human existence on Earth. Taking climate change as a launching point, the class investigates the features of collective human life that make its prolonged existence a perennial challenge. The texts include those on challenges unique to the environment, like Stephen Gardiner’s *A Perfect Moral Storm* and Jared Diamond’s *Collapse*, as well as philosophical and religious theories of progress and their skeptics, centering class discussions on sources of hope and reasons for doubt about the human future. A central question of the course is whether climate change is unique or whether there are characteristics of human beings and human society (freedom, sin, tragedy) that make threats like it inevitable. *David Barr*

**RLST 22012 - Jewish Civilization III: Language, Creation, and Translation in Jewish Thought and Literature**

Jewish Civilization is a three-quarter sequence that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient beginnings through its rabbinic and medieval transformations to its modern manifestations. Through investigation of primary texts-biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, mystical, historical, documentary, and literary-students will acquire a broad overview of Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness while reflecting in greater depth on major themes, ideas, and events in Jewish history. The Spring course in 2021 will start with two stories from Genesis-the creation story and the story of the Tower of Babel in chapter 11-and consider the intertwined dynamics of language, creation, and translation in Jewish thought and literature. In addition to commentaries on both of these key texts, we will read philosophical and literary texts that illuminate the workings of language as a creative force and the dynamics of multilingualism and translation in the creation of Jewish culture. Through this lens, we will consider topics such as gender and sexuality, Jewish national identity, Zionism, the revival of the Hebrew language, Jewish responses to the Holocaust, and contemporary American Jewish culture. *Na’ama Rokem*

**RLST 22132 - Science/Fiction/Theory**

Science fiction has enjoyed an extraordinary and still growing resurgence in popularity over the last two decades - through literature, film, video games, and even universities, where it is the subject of ever more courses being taught. Why has science fiction become so popular? Does it express the anxieties of a way of life that can't be sustained, is in decline, and might soon end, in the face of intractable war, lurching
financial crises, recurrent pandemics and unchecked climate change? Does it speak to the senses of radical hope and irreparable despair about the future that seem to characterize our time? If so, then science fiction today is grappling with traditionally theological themes: fate and finitude, immortality and the nature of divinity, the place of the human within a cosmic scale, and the possibilities for redemption and messianic rupture. This course will explore these themes by pairing sci-fi literature and film with readings in philosophy and social theory. Throughout, we will ask how science fiction's propensity toward the theological allows it to grapple with the unique forms of hope and despair in our time, and in times past. Alireza Doostdar and Hussein Ali Agrama

RLST 23706 - Calvin: Piety, Politics, and the Theater of God’s Glory

This seminar will engage a close reading of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559) in English translation, examining how the masterwork moves and instructs its readers toward correlative knowledge of God and of self. We will attend to Calvin’s elaboration of true religion or “piety”—especially to his picture of the repair and reorientation of the sensing, feeling, willing, and knowing self before God—and to his depiction of rightly ordered individual, corporate, and civic life over against the bondage of the will and tyrannous powers. The course will further a reading of the work as a rhetorical and pedagogical whole. Note: Open to graduate students by permission of instructor. Kristine Culp

RLST 23820 - Shame

This course will consider the nature of shame, its potential harms and benefits, and possible of redeeming/being redeemed from it. Kevin Hector

RLST 23599 - Christian and Anti-Christian: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche on Religion and Morality

This course explores two radically different assessments of religion and morality, one by the Protestant thinker Søren Kierkegaard, and the other by an arch-critic of religion and morality, Friedrich Nietzsche. The course will focus on their assessments of Christian faith and its relation to morality and the human good. Both thinkers wrote in complex and confusing styles: Kierkegaard used pseudonyms; Nietzsche wrote in aphorisms. In order to explore their styles of writing and their critiques of religion and morality we will read Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling as well as Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals. The general aim of the course, then, is to explore two seminal minds in the development of Western thought with the question in mind of their possible contribution to current theological and ethical thinking. William Schweiker
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 33599, THEO 33599

RLST 24103 - Bioethics

This is a lecture and discussion class that will explore how a variety of philosophic and religious thinkers approach the issues and problems of modern dilemmas in medicine and science in a field called bioethics. We will consider a general argument for your consideration: that the arguments and the practices from
faith traditions and from philosophy offer significant contributions that underlie policies and practices in bioethics. We will use a case-based method to study how different traditions describe and defend differences in moral choices in contemporary bioethics. This class is based on the understanding that case narratives serve as another core text for the discipline of bioethics and that complex ethical issues are best considered by a careful examination of the competing theories as work themselves out in specific cases. We will examine both classic cases that have shaped our understanding of the field of bioethics and cases that are newly emerging, including the case of research done at our University. Through these cases, we will ask how religious traditions both collide and cohere over such topics as embryo research, health care reform, terminal illness, issues in epidemics and public health, and our central research question, synthetic biology research. This class will also explore how the discipline of bioethics has emerged to reflect upon such dilemmas, with particular attention to the role that theology and philosophy have played in such reflection. We will look at both how the practice of theologians and philosophers has historically shaped the field of bioethics and at how these claims, methodology, and praxis have continued to shape and inflect bioethics. We will examine the issue of epistemic stance, of truth claims, and of how normative policies are created amid serious controversy. We will explore the nature of the relationship between religion and public policy and study how religious traditions and moral philosophy shape our view of issues as “bioethics controversies” in the first place. Laurie Zoloth

Equivalent Course(s): RETH 30600

RLST 26012 - Introduction to Islam

This course will introduce students to major themes and topics in Islam through encounters with textual, media, film, and digital sources from across the Islamic world. We will critically engage with the diverse ways in which Muslims have lived and defined themselves and the tradition from 7th-century Arabia to South Asia to Harlem. We will explore Islamic belief and practice as a lived tradition, one that is constantly interpreted and contested in modes of expression ranging from scripture, song, and scholarship to poetry and politics to tweets and talismans. In so doing, we will examine the processes by which Islamic traditions have transformed in response to historical factors, influences, and cultural exchange, and how these traditions continue to adapt in dialogue with contemporary contexts. Francesca Chubb-Confer

RLST 27020 - Christianity and Islam in the Western Mediterranean World during the Late Middle Ages

El curso analizará los contactos mantenidos entre mundo cristiano y mundo islámico en el Mediterráneo bajomedieval, tomando la Corona de Aragón y sus ricas fuentes documentales como observatorio privilegiado. Las particularidades de la Corona de Aragón se compararán con las de otros estados cristianos del Occidente mediterráneo que mantuvieron relaciones sostenidas con los musulmanes. Tras la definición de la naturaleza y de las especificidades de los contactos político-diplomáticos, mercantiles y pirático-corsarios entre Cristiandad e Islam, las clases se focalizarán en la identificación y caracterización de colectivos y personas que actuaron como mediadores lingüísticos y culturales entre ambas realidades. Se determinarán las circunstancias y motivos que permitieron que agentes diplomáticos, mercaderes, mercenarios, piratas–corsarios o cautivos–esclavos vehicularen los contactos. Y se analizarán y
compararán las distintas tipologías documentales que son plasmación de todos esos intercambios y contactos culturales y humanos. Note: Taught in Spanish. R. Salicrú i Lluch

RLST 27656 - Pilgrimage, Voyage, Journey

"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness." “Adventure is worthwhile in itself.” “To travel is to live.” In "Pilgrimage, Voyage, Journey," we interrogate and complicate these kinds of platitudes, examining claims about the nature and possibilities of travel in its many iterations. Throughout the quarter, we ask why people travel, what might be gained or lost by traveling, what is unique to the experience of travel, and, ultimately, whether or not we should travel. We draw from memoir, fiction, film, and contemporary journalism as we consider claims about the effects of travel on travelers, non-travelers, local communities, and the world at large. We think about links between conceptions of travel and broader historical and social structures, considering the histories of class-exclusive travel, ways that colonialism has shaped travel, and the ethics of travel with respect to its impact on both local communities and the environment. Central to our inquiry is an examination of claims about both the religious value or potential of travel – including those found in accounts of pilgrimages and monastic journeys – and the ways that travel can often become linked to ideas of the “spiritual.” Bevin Blaber

RLST 27712 - Contemporary Religion in Israel

The complex relationship between religion and state is at the core of current social, cultural and political tensions in Israel. In this course we will explore the manifestation of these relations by focusing on selected ethnographies of religious performance and phenomena in modern Israel, including amongst others a "Women of the Wall" first day of the month prayer, a LGBTQ community's reading of the book of Esther in Tel-Aviv, and a messianic group's attempt to reestablish the Passover sacrifice at the Temple Mount. By exploring these detailed ethnographies against the backdrop of contemporary theory, including secularization and post-secularization, lived religion, fundamentalism and social orthodoxy, this course aims to portray the variety and complexity of religious experience in Israel today. David Barak-Gorodetsky

RLST 27720 - Race and Religion in Chicago

This course is a chronological and thematic overview of a number of key themes and theoretical concerns in the study of race and religion in the U.S. from 1865 to the present. Taking Chicago as a case study, the course will introduce students to key topics in the study of race and religion in the U.S. Most of the course will focus on black-white racialization in Chicago during this period—interrogating the construction of and contestation over whiteness among Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and new religious movements from the late nineteenth century and through much of the twentieth century, as well as tracing the “spiritual afterlife of slavery” in Chicago’s churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship, and also in the everyday lives of Chicago’s religious citizens. The readings and class discussions will also open out to consider other religio-racial issues and projects in Chicago (e.g., Latinx, Indian American, and Indigenous religious communities). Topics for class readings and discussions will be ordered by the week and will alternate between broader theoretical and historiographical issues pertaining to race and religion in the
U.S. (first meeting of the week) and closer examinations of the same themes/questions in the context of the religious life of Chicago (second meeting of the week). In this way, Chicago provides a “laboratory” for observing, testing, and refining historical and theoretical claims about race and religion in the United States. Joel Brown

RLST 27803- Religion and Cognitive Science

Debates about method in the study of religion have historically oscillated between two camps: those who think religion can be explained, and those who think religion can only be interpreted. It is an oversimplification—especially after Geertz—to say that the former describes social scientists and the latter describe humanists. Nevertheless, we could say that there are at least family resemblances between the two dichotomies. However, an increasing number of scholars are promoting "explanatory pluralism," which says that we need both interpretation and explanation. In particular, scholars who identify as cognitive scientists of religion are concerned to show that scientific explanation does not spell reductionism for religious studies. This class will assess the challenges and promises of cognitive scientific approaches to religion, which seek to integrate social scientific and humanist methods. Lisa Landoe Hedrick

RLST 28350 - Chan and Zen Buddhism

An overview of the development of Chan and Zen Buddhism in China and Japan, focusing on the philosophical and doctrinal underpinnings of distinctive Chan and Zen practices and rhetorics (including basic Buddhist premises concerning impermanence and non-self and specifically Mahāyāna ideas such as Emptiness, Two Truths and Buddha-nature) as they morph through the stages of early proto-Chan, East Mountain Chan, the Northern School/Southern School split, the development of "Recorded Sayings" and gong-an (kōan) literatures, and the Linji (Rinzai) and Caodong (Sōtō) schools. Brook Ziporyn

RLST 28508 - Sacred Mushrooms & Spirit Molecules: Uses and Abuses of Religion Under the Influence of Psychedelics

In 2006, a psychopharmacologist at Johns Hopkins’ School of Medicine helped to revitalize the scientific study of psychedelic drugs not by appeal to studied therapeutic application, but rather by quantifying psychedelics’ ability to produce “mystical-type experiences” with “spiritual significance” in “healthy normals.” Since 2006, psychedelics have experienced a renaissance, reaching heights of licit and illicit experimentation not seen since the 1950s and -60s. As in earlier decades, public awareness of psychedelic use and research has been advanced in scientific journals and popular media, including Michael Pollan’s 2018 work, How to Change Your Mind. As Pollan notes, in both historical moments—the present and half a century ago—the use of psychedelics has sparked significant reflection on the meaning of religion and the social or psychological uses of so-called “religious experience.” In fact, psychedelics have long played a role in human culture, many practices of which we now identify as religion. With Pollan’s pop-intellectual reflection as a “trip” guide, this course will investigate the long history of psychedelics and religion, the popular culture of psychedelic religiosity and the scientific appropriation of religious nomenclature to advance the study and social influence of psychedelics. Key theories of religion,
alongside religious studies of mysticism and spiritual experience, will ground course analyses. Greg Chatterley

RLST 28511 - Star Wars and Religion

This course puts religious texts into conversation with George Lucas's popular Star Wars film franchise with an eye toward understanding the power of myth in human life. In interviews, Lucas said he took bits and pieces from a variety of religious traditions to create the mythology of Star Wars. Through close readings of the films and primary texts, students will analyze these influences and evaluate how well the films hold these religious elements together. This course is not an in-depth study of any one religious tradition, but draws elements from different traditions to shed light on the portrayal of religion within Star Wars (i.e., the Force) and the metaphysical and moral themes found in the Star Wars films. Russell Johnson

RLST 28901 - Religion, Science, and Naturalism: Is There a Problem? SIGN 26072

The idea that “religion” and “science” are often fundamentally at odds is familiar, indeed perhaps among the orienting ideas of modernity. Attending to some historically important approaches to the endlessly vexed question of how best to think about religion and science in light of one another, this class will consider such questions as whether the problems seem different if we ask not about religion and science, but rather about religion and nature. Dan Arnold

RLST 29104 - Antisemitism and Islamophobia, Historically and Today

How are antisemitism and Islamophobia linked together? Are they two different modes of oppression and discrimination or are they part of a similar phenomenon? Moreover, are they religious, racial, or ethnic forms of discrimination? Throughout this course, we will complicate the media narrative that sees Jews and Arabs as perpetual enemies through a historical and philosophical exploration into the origins and development of Orientalism, Islamophobia, and antisemitism. Students will think historically about the construction of race, ethnicity, and religion, and the discriminatory modes by which these are employed; and they will use that knowledge to think critically about current depictions of anti-Jewish and anti-Islamic violence.

In the first part of the course, we will consider the historical and conceptual underpinnings of antisemitism and Islamophobia. We will look to 14th and 15th century Spain in order to better understand how and where they originated; we will then track their development through modernity, paying close attention to how these discourses changed and evolved over time; finally, we will look at the impact of the Holocaust and the rise of the State of Israel and consider current iterations of Islamophobia and antisemitism in Europe and America today. Mendel Kranz