

# DIVINITY COURSE CATALOG 2024-2025

This is a reference document only. All courses are organized by their parent identity code (ie BIBL). Similarly, just because a course is in the RLST category does not mean it is not open to graduate students as well, and vice versa. Keep an eye on the codes—100 and 200 level is the undergraduate class designation, 300 level and above for graduate students. A class that has both a 100 or 200 level and a 300 level or above means that the class is open to both graduates and undergraduates. This catalog does not include cross-listed idents outside of the Divinity School. For dates and times, please refer to the Registrar's website at the top of week 6 each quarter. You can also visit our website for a preliminary/tentative schedule.

## AUTUMN 2024

### Special Courses in Divinity

#### DVSC 30500 – Introduction to the Study of Religion

This course is the first of a two-part introductory sequence for Masters students in the Divinity School. This first course in this sequence will pursue two main questions: What is religion, and what are we doing when we study it? It is thus an opportunity to consider various descriptions that have been proposed for what religion is and what it does; to survey the theoretical orientations that are taken in the study of religion; and especially to think about the applicability of each, and the results they produce, in relation to various religious expression, from antiquity to the present. As a special focus of our inquiry, we will consider the positionality of the scholar/researcher in relation to their subject of inquiry: what does it mean to study religions with which, and religious people with whom, one does or does not affiliate? Finally, by highlighting the scholarship of faculty and graduates of the Divinity School (both in readings and in-class interviews), this course will provide some introduction to the distinctives of Chicago and its approach to the study of religion. Our inquiry is intended to be cumulative, with the different readings and topics that we engage building upon, implicating, and sometimes challenging each other. We will thus have opportunity to think and rethink concepts, ideas, and arguments as we proceed across the quarter. Course Note: All MA, AMRS, and MDiv students are required to take this course. 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 groups will be held. *Jeffrey Stackert*

### Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

#### AASR 35305 – Anthropology of Food and Cuisine

Contemporary human foodways are not only highly differentiated in cultural and social terms, but often have long and complicated histories. Anthropologists have long given attention to food. But, until quite recently, they did so in an unsystematic, haphazard fashion. This course explores several related themes with a view towards both the micro- and macro-politics of food by examining a range of ethnographic and historical case studies and theoretical texts. It takes the format of a seminar augmented by lectures (during the first few weeks), scheduled video screenings, and individual student presentations during the rest of the course. *Stephan Palmie*

#### AASR 35530 – Critical Development Theories and Approaches

This course provides an introductory overview of Critical Development Studies (CDS), covering the main critical historical, philosophical and theoretical undercurrents that shape and inform the field of global development. In the first part of the course we delve into key philosophical concepts and major theoretical frameworks and trends of international development from the post-World War II era to the present. Students will explore the underlying assumptions and modalities of modernization theory, dependency and world-systems theory, post-colonial and post-development thought and the contemporary articulation of decoloniality by Latin American and African scholars. The latter part of the course delves into major trends, approaches, and best practices of CDS. This course is designed to be a theory-intensive reading course, appropriate for students interested in the theoretical debates and the ethico-political tensions that continue to shape and inform the field and practice of global development. *Maliba Chishty*

#### AASR 44400 – Anthropology of Public Policy and Bureaucracy

This course offers anthropological approaches to the study of policy formation and bureaucratic administration. We will take policy as an assemblage of actors, material things, ideas, and moralities that come together through at times ad hoc and contested processes, rather than coherent and pre-given administrative rules. We will also engage larger theoretical questions on modern governance, the violence and necessity of bureaucratic rational administration, and the role of objectivity and expertise in secular and religious forms of governance. PQ: Consent Only: Students should be comfortable reading and engaging anthropological scholarship. Those interested in enrolling should email a statement explaining how the course may advance their academic interests and list relevant courses (particularly in anthropology/sociology) they have taken in the past. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition the instructor to enroll. *Elham Mireshghi*

#### AASR 54000 – Ethnographic Methods

This is a writing-intensive seminar for graduate students wishing to explore ethnography as a method and genre of social-cultural analysis. Over the course of the quarter, students will work individually and in groups to develop their ethnographic projects. The final writing assignment is an ethnographic essay that will grow out of a range of research and writing exercises. PQ: Consent only: Please send one or two paragraphs to the instructor explaining your interest. *Alireza Doostdar*

### Biblical Studies

#### BIBL 31000 – Introduction to the Hebrew Bible

The course introduces the Jewish/Hebrew Bible as a literary treasury with a material history. We will survey the genres and the different works, review scholarly theories about the texts and about ideas in them, and situate them in the history of Israel and Judea and in the culture of ancient Southwest Asia. We will also engage theories of history, literature, and narrative. The course includes a weekly

Discussion Section for mixed-modes activities and conceptual discussions. Course Note: This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. *Simeon Chavel*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 31004, 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. *Emily Thomassen*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 13900

#### 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. *Doug Hoffer*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 14100

#### BIBL 43100 – Interpreting the Gospel According to Matthew

An exegesis course on “the church’s gospel,” which will seek to create a constructive conversation between modern redaction-critical readings of Matthew as a document forged in heated interaction with a specific historical context (particularly defined by inter-/intra-Jewish polemics and the emergence of the “ekklesia” as distinct from the synagogue) and the history of interpretation and effects of this gospel in the ancient church and up to the present, including in film and other media. Each student will select an interpreter or interpretation--ancient, medieval, modern, post-modern--to impersonate in class discussions. PQ: No language prerequisites. Greek skills are not required for this course, but ample opportunity will be provided for those who have Greek skills to exercise them (in reading the gospel itself in its original language), and students are encouraged to exercise their skills in any languages of translation and interpretation of this gospel, ancient, medieval, or modern. *Margaret M. Mitchell*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 43103, RLST 22023

#### BIBL 53510 – Early Jewish Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible

In this seminar we will survey together the literary form and hermeneutical manner of ancient Jewish works that engage the biblical text - rewritings, retellings, commentaries, translations, and midrash. We will also read scholarship on Jewish interpretation and interpretive works. PQ: Biblical Hebrew and either Aramaic or Greek (Koine or Septuagint). *Simeon Chavel*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 53510, RLST 20510

#### Philosophy of Religion

#### DVPR 33908 – Bergson and China: Buddhist and Confucian Reboots

This course will explore Henri Bergson's philosophy as set forth in *Time and Free Will*, *Matter and Memory*, and *Creative Evolution*, and its reception in late Imperial and early Republican China (late 19th and early 20th centuries). Of special interest will be the role played by Bergsonian ideas in the Yogacara revival and the formation of New Confucianism during this period, with particular focus on figures like Zhang Taiyan, Xiong Shili and Liang Shumin. This will require us to deeply engage Bergson's idea of "duration" (*durée*) and its interpretation, particularly in relation to a reconsideration of the Yogacara Buddhist notion of *ālaya-consciousness* (storehouse consciousness) and the Confucian idea of ceaseless generation and regeneration (*shengsheng bu xi*) as derived from interpretive traditions centered on the Book of Changes (*Yijing*). Course Note: All readings will be available in English. Chinese reading proficiency is recommended but not required. *Brook Ziporyn*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 33908, RLST 23908

#### DVPR 35122 – Modern Philosophy of Religion: A Historical Perspective

The course will start by looking at the intellectual connections of several major figures in 18th and 19th century philosophy of religion. We will examine David Hume's "Essay on Miracles" and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, John Stuart Mill's "The Utility of Religion," Friedrich Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality*, and selections from William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. In the last third of the course we will examine more recent writers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Emmanuel Levinas. The goal of the course is to present and to assess different ways in which philosophers have conceived of and argued for or against religious belief. (IV) *Dan Brudney*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 25122

#### DVPR 43830 – Simone Weil: Spirituality, Metaphysics, and Politics

Simone Weil, one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century, developed her thought as an extension of her spirituality and her political commitments. In this course, then, we will read her principal works together in order to see how these three themes hang together: spirituality, metaphysics, and politics. *Kevin Hector*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 23830

#### DVPR 56800 – Philosophical Literary Criticism

What is the relationship between literature and philosophy? This class attempts to answer this question by reading two philosophically rich literary texts (Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Jane Austen's *Persuasion*) in relation to a variety of thinkers--from Aristotle to Robert Pippin---who have developed their own, often conflicting accounts of this relationship. (18th/19th, Med/Ren) *Timothy Harrison, Heather Keenleyside*

### History of Christianity

#### HCHR 30200 – History of Christian Thought II: The Middle Ages

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). 6. Scholastic synthesis and spiritual alternatives: Thomas Aquinas, Marguerite Porete and Eckhart. Course Notes: Latin is helpful but not needed. Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Willemien Otten*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 30200

#### HCHR 31613 – Saints and Sinners in Late Antiquity

Between the third and seventh centuries, Christian communities came to flourish throughout the Middle East and neighboring regions in the Roman and Iranian empires as well as the kingdoms of the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Ethiopia. This course will examine the development of Christian institutions and ideologies in relation to the distinctive social structures, political cultures, economies, and environments of the Middle East, with a focus on the Fertile Crescent. The makers of Middle Eastern Christianities were both saints and sinners. Holy men and women, monks, and sometimes bishops withdrew from what they often called "the world" with the intention of reshaping society through prayer, asceticism, and writing; some also intervened directly in social, political, and economic relations. The work of these saints depended on the cooperation of aristocrats, merchants, and rulers who established enduring worldly institutions. To explore the dialectical relationship between saints and sinners, we will read lives of saints in various Middle Eastern languages in translation. *Richard Payne*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 21613

#### History of Judaism

HIJD 36702 – Arabic into Hebrew: Translation and Cultural Change during the Middle Ages  
Religions, like all cultural phenomena, are akin to organic beings: they change, grow and adapt, absorb and assimilate what they encounter, become transformed constantly in relation to challenges and opportunities – and sometimes react against them. This course will focus on one example of religious-cultural-philosophical adaptation and change through a study of the medieval translation of Arabic and Judeo-Arabic works into Hebrew during the 12th-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. We will focus on the translations themselves and translation technique, but principally on what was translated and why, when and where, by whom and for whom. All this with an added emphasis on the result: how did Judaism and Jewish culture change through translation – in all its forms – during the high middle ages. *James T. Robinson, Dean of the Divinity School*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): ISLM 36702, HREL 36702, RLST 26702

#### History of Religions

##### HREL 32900 – Classical Theories of Religion

This course surveys the development of theoretical perspectives on religion and religions in the 19th and early-20th centuries, and the institutional and historical contexts within which they developed. Thinkers to be studied include Kant, Hume, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Marx, Muller, Tiele, Comte, Tylor, Robertson Smith, Frazer, Durkheim, Weber, Nietzsche, Freud, James, Otto, van der Leeuw, Boas, Radcliffe-Brown, Wach, and Eliade. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Christian Wedemeyer*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 32900

### HREL 33400 – Contemporary Topics in the Study of South Asian Religion

This course is a research-oriented seminar dealing with topics in the scholarly study of South Asian religion. It focuses on contemporary themes and methodologies in the field. Readings come from prominent books and/or articles in the field published in the last five to six years. Themes explored will include art and artifice, caste, class, and capital, faith and friendship, and memory and modernity. *Anand Venkatkrishnan*

### Islamic Studies

#### ISLM 30022 – Documentary Cultures in Early Islamicate Societies

This Seminar for graduate students centers on the use of material and documentary sources for the study of early Islamic history (ca. 640-1000 CE), particularly looking at multiple religious groups, languages, and literary traditions. It will introduce the students to the study of documentary texts such as the Arabic papyri, the expansion of Arabic papyrology as a field, and the integration of literary and non-literary sources. Students will be encouraged and challenged to think of texts also as material objects. We will talk about sources and resources for the study of political, economic, social, and intellectual histories of the Islamicate world; in so doing, we will discuss also methods, problems, and perspectives. *Cecelia Palombo*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20122

#### ISLM 30201 – Islamicate Civilization I: 600-950

This course is an introduction to the history and the study of early Islamicate societies, from the rise of Islam in late antiquity to the early Abbasid period (ca. 600-950 CE), considering various religious and social groups. We will look at the same historical arc from multiple perspectives: political events, such as the Muslim conquests and the rise of ruling dynasties, but also other factors that impacted people's lives in the early centuries of Islamic rule—the environment they inhabited and transformed, documents they created, social institutions, and economic activities. What broad developments characterized the early Islamic period? Who brought those changes about? And how are they studied today? Course Note: The Islamic Civilization sequence does not fulfill the General Ed requirements. *Cecelia Palombo*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20201

#### ISLM 32451 – Readings in Islamic Law

This course explores theological, philosophical, and Sufi approaches to Islamic law in the premodern Islamic world, with a focus on the acts of worship (*ʿibādāt*) such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage (*ḥajj*). In addition to discussing secondary literature addressing themes of agency, reason and scripture, sources of law, the epistemic foundations of legal reasoning, and embodiment, we will study selected texts authored by key figures such as Ghazālī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Ibn ʿArabī, Mullā Ṣadrā, and Qāḍī Saʿīd Qummī [in translation]. All readings will be available in English. PQ: No prerequisites, but there will be opportunities for students with Arabic or Persian proficiency to make use of it. *Nariman Aavani*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20300

#### ISLM 36717 – Diasporic Literature and Modern Islam in the Imperial Core

The 19<sup>th</sup> century enslaved scholar Omar Ibn Said opens his autobiography with the words: “I cannot write my life.” This seminar takes this starting point –the thick of chattel slavery, mercantile capitalism, and colonial violence – to investigate literary productions by racialized others dispersed in and by the so-called era of modernity. We will complicate what constitutes the modernity and how Islam, perhaps more than any other tradition, has been configured as its inverse. In doing so, we will read works ranging from poetry, novels, short stories, comics, and memoirs as they relate to encounters and engagements particularly with Islam as a religious tradition, colonialism, industrialization, and nationalism, even as global understandings of tradition, genre, and form are being contested and rapidly changing. In addition to these primary sources, we will theoretically situate these works within larger discussions of racecraft, oral transmission and culture, “folk” vs. “high” literature, Orientalism, politics, gender, sexuality, and identity. We will look at this is articulated in diasporic literary forms written within – and sometimes for - the imperial core. Through in-class discussions, readings, and a final paper, students will strengthen their global literacy, demonstrate knowledge of global historical trends, analyze the shifting and even contradictory interpretations of the role of religion in racial formations, all while identifying, critiquing, and assessing these key course themes within our primary source material. *Samah Choudhury*

Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 36717, RLST 26717

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 issues related to the study of Islamicate civilization in various historical, cultural, political, and religious frameworks. PQ: Basic ability to work with Classical Arabic is required. *Mehmetcan Akpınar*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20410

### Religions in the Americas

RAME 32600 – Race, Justice, and the Assemblage of American Moralities

This course explores the racial and moral imperatives that are encapsulated within concepts of “Americanness” and the theoretical notions that define the discursive, historical, and sociopolitical boundaries of American identities. How have claims to American identity relied on created religious or religiously-inflected Others? Together, we will consider how the human phenomena of religion and race have developed across our histories in concert with one another. How do racial and moral imperatives the define discursive, historical, and sociopolitical boundaries of American identities? We will examine how these formations have been deployed, defined, and bent to fit particular historical and cultural contexts while continuing to inform each other in a variety of permutations, especially in the United States. How do race and religion also intersect with gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and politics? Our theoretical grounding in migration, encounters, and transnational mobilities will provide insight into how race is imagined on and into differently minoritized people while considering what it means to be participants in the project of racecraft today. Our readings will include historical materials, literary texts, theological reflections, and examples from popular culture that meditate on these topics. *Samah Choudhury*

Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 32600, ISLM 32600, RLST 26337

## Religious Leadership and Practice (M.Div. 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 M.Div. 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 M.Div. 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 M.Divs; 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 M.Div. 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*

## 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 later. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Sarah Fredericks*

### RETH 31000 – Good Hands: Research Ethics

Basic research is intended to explore and evaluate truth claims at the edge of our understanding of the natural and physical world, and it is this very quality that renders it useful as science. Yet, this often creates significant ethical questions for the research as well as for the social order in which all research takes place. Often, courses in research ethics focus on the establishment and enforcement of canonical rules of behavior, where the goal is to inform the investigator about how to follow these established rules. This course will turn to a different set of problems in research ethics. While we will begin with a foundation in the history of research ethics, reviewing the key cases that shaped the policies about which we have consensus, (human and animal subject protections; authorship, etc.) will consider the problems about which there is not yet a clear ethical course: what are the limits of human mastery? Why is research deception so prevalent? Are there experiments which are impermissible and why? What is the obligation of the researcher toward their community? How can we think clearly and ethically in situations of deep uncertainty? We will consider how moral philosophy as well as theological arguments have shaped research science and reflect on the nature, goal and meaning of basic and translational research in modernity. Course Note: Required course for MS program in Biological Sciences. *Laurie Zoloth*

#### RETH 50900 – Collective Agency and Responsibility

In the twentieth and twenty-first century, modern western notions of individual identity, agency, and responsibility have been challenged by collective experiences. Studies of collective atrocities such as the Holocaust, apartheid, racism and sexism have informed research on collective identity, agency, and responsibility. Research and legal developments on corporate agency and responsibility add to the discussion. Finally, global environmental challenges such as climate change raise questions about the types of agents responsible for these harms and for combating them. This class will explore a number of theories of collective agency and responsibility to interrogate the differences and relationships between individuals and collectives. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Sarah Fredericks*

#### Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

##### RLVC 46677 – American Jewish Literature

Is there an American Jewish literature? At the heart of this question is a reckoning with what constitutes American Jewish experience. Literary expression has played an outsized role in the way that American Jews view themselves, exploring a vocabulary and an idiom of immigration and religion, of ethnic identity and of political consciousness. In this class we will study a selection of the fiction, poetry, essays and films of American Jewish experience with an eye towards the varieties of American-Jewish experience and the role of literature in forging that experience. *Sheila Jelen*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 46677, RLST 26677

##### RLVC 53400 – Salvage Poetics: Literature as Ethnography

This interdisciplinary course will synthesize ethnographic and literary discourses to consider the ways in which the culture of the Jewish “shtetl,” the small towns and villages in eastern Europe where Jewish culture thrived for nearly a millennium, has been represented in the United States after the Holocaust, from the 1940s to the present day. We will read a wide variety of materials within the field of anthropology as well as Jewish literatures and cultures to tease out the concept of “salvage poetics” or a literary poetics that has been forged in popular attempts to bridge dramatically different historical moments, different geographic locations, and different cultures across the abyss of the Holocaust. *Sheila Jelen*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 53400, AASR 53400

### Theology

THEO 33023 – Self-Deception: What is it and How is it Possible?

This seminar considers philosophical, theological, and literary accounts of self-deception, with the goal of helping participants understand why the very idea of self-deception seems paradoxical, even as it also seems to be a ubiquitous phenomenon. Self-deception seems paradoxical because the very same agent is both the deceiver and the deceived. What must the self be like, such that this paradoxical behavior is possible? The seminar will first consider a variety of theoretical accounts of self-deception and related phenomena, drawn from a wide array of sources, that range from Freud and Sartre to contemporary analytic philosophy. We will then consider whether literary portraits of self-deception do a better job of revealing its key aspects. Finally, we will consider the original question, “What must the self be like, such that self-deception is possible?” as a religious and theological question that invites to think about self-deception functions in the lives of religious adherents. *William Wood*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 23023

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? Course Note: This course is open to undergrads by petition. *Dwight Hopkins*

THEO 43816 – Hope in Theological, Philosophical, and Political Perspective

What is hope? What role does it play in our lives? What role can it play in our politics? Is it a virtue—theological or otherwise? When is hope problematic? What happens when people lose hope? To address questions like these, this course will consider a wide range of recent work on the topic, from authors including Gabriel Marcel, Josef Pieper, Adrienne Martin, Cheshire Calhoun, Katie Stockdale, Kelly Brown Douglas, and Michael Lamb. *Kevin Hector*

Equivalent Div Course(s): DVPR 43816, RLST 23816

### Religious Studies (Undergraduate Designation)

RLST 10100 – Introduction to Religious Studies

This course introduces students to the field of Religious Studies through addressing a foundational question: “What is religion?” We will approach this question from multiple angles. We will study the cults, codes, and creeds of a range of religions with reference both to their self-understandings and to modes of analysis (chiefly from the humanities and the social sciences) that concern themselves explicitly with religion. The scope of the course is in principle limitless: as old as the Vedas and the Epic of Gilgamesh and as recent as the front page of your preferred news source. The selections for the first five weeks will provide an overview of religions that have a global

presence, and of theoretical perspectives that aspire to give a comprehensive account of religion. Each of the last four weeks will be a “case study” of a specific religion and its theorization that will be determined by the class from a list provided by the instructor. Three short (1-3 pp.) analytic essays (submitted on Fridays and returned the following Mondays) during the first five weeks will be followed by a final assignment synthesizing the material of the course. No prior knowledge of the religious traditions or the theoretical perspectives covered is expected. Course Note: This is the required introductory course for RLST majors. *Richard Rosengarten*

#### RLST 20228 – History of Jews in Middle East 1492-1947

This class examines the history of Jews in the Middle East from the early modern period, when many Jewish refugees fleeing Spain and Portugal settled in the Ottoman Empire, to the modern Period, when Jews debated and challenged colonialist, reformist, nationalist, leftist, and secular ideologies. Reading novels, memoirs, and new works in the fields of Jewish and Middle Eastern Studies, we will examine how early modernity and modernity gave birth to new identity formations and new frames of belonging. We will visit the unknown histories of early modern Jews who produced translations and explications of the Hebrew Bible in Arabic, of Jews and Muslims who fought together Christian missionary activities, of Arab Jewish feminists, and of Jewish communists who established anti-Zionist societies in the Middle East. *Orit Bashkin*

#### RLST 20401 – Islamic Thought and Literature I

In the first quarter of Islamic Thought and Literature, students will explore the intellectual and cultural history of the Islamic world in its various political and social contexts. Chronologically, the course begins with emergence of Islam in the 7th century CE and continues through the Mongol conquests until the rise of the “gunpowder empires” circa 1500. Students will leave the course with a historical and geographical framework for understanding the history of the Middle East and a familiarity with the major forms of premodern Islamic cultural production (e.g., history-writing, scriptural exegesis, poetry, philosophy, jurisprudence, etc.). Students will also develop the skills and contextual knowledge necessary for analyzing these sources in English translation; they will thus come to appreciate premodern Islamic cultural products on their own terms while engaging in the collective work of historical interpretation. No prior background in the subject is required. This sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies. *Austin O’Malley, Jack Buredn*

#### 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). *Larisa Reznik*

#### RLST 22401 – Zen Before Zen: Chan Buddhism in China

This course is part of a two-sequence series, to be followed by a course on Japanese Zen Buddhism taught by Professor Stephan Licha in Winter 2025. "Chan" is a partial Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit word "Dhyana," meaning meditation practice; the same Chinese character is pronounced "Zen" in Japanese. This course will consist of the close reading (in English translation) and discussion of both the Indian Buddhist scriptures and indigenous Chinese sources that form the core of the tradition spanning Chan and Zen, with a few secondary descriptions of Chan institutions and cultural influences. Our focus will be on the development of ideas concerning the nature of sentience and the implications this has for understanding the existential predicament of sentient beings, touching on central themes of dependent co-arising, non-self, Emptiness, consciousness-only, Buddha-nature and original enlightenment, and the methods of realization (doctrinal, non-doctrinal, and indeed anti-doctrinal) proposed to redress this existential predicament at each stage of Chan history. This will be done both with an eye to the historical continuity of these sometimes seemingly contradictory forms thought and practice, and also to extract from them whatever transhistorical philosophical and spiritual valences we care to derive from the texts. *Brook Ziporyn*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): DVPR 32402, HREL 32400

#### RLST 23150 – Capitalism and Doing Good?

This class asks the question: is it possible to believe in capitalism (i.e., the private ownership of wealth) and do good for society? Restated, are there values that can accompany capital accumulation for positive social impact on people and the environment? Course Note: This course meets the Perspectives requirement for the Business Economics Specialization in ECON. *Dwight Hopkins*

#### RLST 23304 – Abolitionist Theologies

How might religions activate the abolitionist imagination? The contemporary abolition movement is not just about dismantling prisons or the police. It is about imagining alternatives to this apparatus of fear, punishment, and scarcity—and experimenting with new modes of living together premised on mutual aid rather than state power. Many abolitionist thinkers thus see abolition as a sacred force interrupting the normalized brutalities of everyday life. This course focuses on Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theologies that interrogate incarceration, capitalism, the war on terror, and the settler colonial state. We will analyze the possibilities and limits of these theologies as revolutionary resources. Our readings will include a variety of genres: scriptural interpretation, spiritual autobiography, and speculative fiction. No prior experience with academic theology or abolition required. *Olivia Bustin*

#### RLST 23550 – Slavery and Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible

What is a "just" society? And how do we know if justice has been achieved? This course is both an overview of the concept of a "just society" and a thematic survey of the narratives of the Hebrew Bible (the Jewish Tanak, the Christian Old Testament) through the lens of social justice. In this course we will examine several perspectives within the Hebrew Bible on what makes a just society, with particular emphasis on the narratives and legal corpora of the Pentateuch, the historical narratives of the former prophets, and the sayings and exhortations of the "writing" prophets. We will aim to understand more clearly what the ancient Israelites would have likely understood by the notion of a "just society," and how those understandings may differ from our own. Through our discussions, students will develop their skills in close-reading of texts and literary analysis of biblical narratives. In this course we will study several social issues and their reflections in biblical texts. Among the possibilities are: slavery, the treatment of the poor, the rights of the community vs. the individual, the treatment of the disabled, homicide, war, revenge, animal rights and environmentalism, inheritance, and immigration. *David Harris*

### RLST 23906 – Nature and Dao

This course is about ways some fundamental questions about life have been asked and answered in Chinese traditions. What is the world—especially what we today might call the “natural” or “more-than-human” world? How should one live, and see one’s life, within it? What is our relationship with it? How can we best understand it? How should our understanding guide our own lives and practices? We’ll explore some traditional Chinese responses to these questions as they have been expressed in philosophy, religious practice, painting, literature, gardening, and travel. Course Note: This course is open only to students in the College. There are no prerequisites. *Paul Copp*

### RLST 24200 – Philosophy and Literature in India

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 questions, storytelling traditions, 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 25591 – Never Forget? Memorialization and the Ethics of Memory

Philosopher George Santayana famously stated that “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” This widely shared sentiment presupposes an uncomplicated responsibility to remember the past. Is memory, however, an unalloyed good? Can there ever be too much memory or even harmful memory? How do we commemorate past injustices? Do we ever have an obligation to forgive and forget? In this course, we will examine different conceptions of memory offered by religious thinkers, philosophers, and historians. We will then compare theories that articulate the basis for memorial norms, duties, and responsibilities. To conclude the course, we will use the theories canvassed in the first two parts to evaluate two contemporary memory issues: the debate over “working-off-the-past” (*Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*) in relation to crimes perpetrated by Nazi Germany, and the legacy of the Civil War in the United States. By the end of this course, students will be able to address a wide array of moral problems related to memory, such as whether and how we should remember the dead, past atrocities, revolutionary triumphs, and terrorist attacks. There are no prerequisites for this course. *Zachary Taylor*

### RLST 26304 – Religion and Abortion in American Culture

In American public discourse, it is common to hear abortion referred to as a “religious issue.” But is abortion a religious issue? If so, in what ways, to whom, and why? In this course we will answer these questions by tracing the relationship between religion and abortion in American history. We will examine the kinds of claims religious groups have made about abortion; how religion has shaped the development of medical, legal, economic, and cultural perspectives on the topic; how debates over abortion have led to the rise of a certain kind of religious politics in the United States; and how issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and the body are implicated in this conversation. Although the course will cover a range of time periods, religious traditions, and types of data (abortion records from Puritan New England, enslaved people’s use of herbal medicine to induce miscarriage, and Jewish considerations of the personhood of the fetus,

among others), we will give particular attention to the significance of Christianity in legal and political debates about abortion in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

There are no prerequisites for this course and no background in Religious Studies is required. However, this course may be particularly well-suited to students interested in thinking about how certain themes or areas of study—medicine and medical sciences, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, political science—converge with religion and Religious Studies. *Emily D. Crews, Executive Director of the Martin Marty Center for the Public Study of Religion*

#### RLST 26400 – John Milton's *Paradise Lost*

In this course, we will read Milton's *Paradise Lost*, paying close attention to questions of genre, style, and poetics as well as the theological, philosophical, anthropological, and political commitments that shape its verse. Although we will focus on the epic itself, we will also consider highlights from the history of criticism and scholarship dedicated to the poem. (Poetry, 1650-1830) *Timothy Harrison*

#### RLST 26635 – Liberatory Violence

From 18th century slave rebellions in the Americas to 20th and 21st century anticolonial revolutions, oppressed peoples' struggles for liberation have often incorporated violent tactics, even against non-combatants. This course examines anticolonial violence in light of the work of the Martiniquan revolutionary Frantz Fanon and some of his interlocutors. We study specific freedom movements: Nat Turner's slave rebellion, the Haitian and Algerian revolutions against French colonialism, Malcolm X and the Black Panthers' mobilization against white supremacy and police violence, and the ongoing Palestinian struggle against Zionist settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing, and apartheid. Throughout, we will pay attention to how revolutionaries evaluated the place of violence in their own movements, including religious criteria for justifiable and unjustifiable use of force. PQ: Graduate student enrollment by permission only. Please send one or two paragraphs explaining your interest and prior preparation. *Alireza Doostdar*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 46635

#### RLST 26815 – Strange Lit: Estrangement and Literature

This course explores the genre of the strange, weird, bizarre and wondrous in literary works from around the world and across various time periods. In contrast to the voyeuristic and expected othering of the 'exotic', the course interrogates the strange as an aesthetic mode that estranges the reader and disturbs and upends our familiar and predictable worlds. Theorists have explored art's ability to unsettle our automatized perception, interrogating our relationship to reality, the way we know things, and the basis on which we make assumptions. This course will trace how specific literary forms (like magical-realism, fantasy, sci-fi, miracle literature, comedy/dark comedy, and even scripture) evoke wonder and a sense of the strange. We will explore how these genres mystify and make strange things like the individual, society, modernity, the nation-state, the secular, economy, and more to unearth the myth-making inherent in processes of world-building, as well as in narrative. We will see ghosts in court, hallucinating nation-states, dead narrators, animated-inanimate objects as we move into the world of dreams, madness, and the supernatural in literary works from Iceland, Iran, Palestine, Japan, Egypt and more. *Rana Ghuloom*

#### RLST 27657 – Rethinking Pilgrimage: Pop-culture Tourism and Religious Travel

The term pilgrimage is usually associated with journeys to ancient religious sites such as the Vatican or Mecca. But why do superfans who travel to Disney World often describe this in terms of a pilgrimage? Why is it that when anime fans visit real-life sites from their favorite shows, this is frequently called a "journey to sacred sites" (seiichi junrei)? In this course we will discuss these and

other questions about pilgrimage in its religious and secular forms. We will consider examples such as the Islamic Hajj, the Crusades, and a 750-mile Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan, alongside journeys to Platform 9¾ at King’s Cross, Elvis’s Graceland, and the sets of Hobbiton. After first exploring theories of travel, tourism, and pilgrimage through a global array of examples, the second half of the course consists of a deep dive into connections between anime tourism, religious travel in Japan, and the worldwide boom of Japanese pop culture. At the end of the course students will present a small research project on a pilgrimage/tourist destination of their own choosing. No prior coursework on religion required. *Bruce Winkelman*

RLST 28447 – It’s the End of the World as We Know It: Apocalypticism and Religious Thinking about the End Times

Why and how will the world end? How much time is left? What happens to humans in those final days—and after? This course will examine art, rituals, and sacred texts — along with the movements that produced them — in order to understand how religious communities have answered such questions throughout history. Along the way, we will learn about the circumstances that have inspired Apocalyptic movements, the religious traditions that they have emerged from, and the theological and political principles that have animated them. We will cover a wide range of contexts, including Roman-occupied Judea during the first century CE, the Xhosaland of southern Africa in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the rise of QAnon and climate activism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century United States. No prerequisite knowledge of the historical periods or religious traditions examined required.

*Marshall Cunningham*

RLST 29024 – The Election Race of 2024: Ethics, Religion, and the American Polity

This course will follow the ongoing Presidential election of 2024 as it unfolds in real time during this quarter. We will read, as primary texts, newspapers from across the political spectrum and consider the claims therein. In parallel, we will explore theoretical and historical writing about democracy and its challenges. We will consider how religion and culture affect the American political process and critically examine social the competing truth claims and values that structure these processes. Course Note: Graduates can petition to enroll. *Laurie Zoloth*

RLST 29068 – Christianity and Consumer Culture in the United States

In the United States, everything is for sale—including religion. Religious books, objects, and films are produced and marketed to recruit converts and to entertain and edify adherents. Churches can be seen as commodities as people “shop” for a new congregation or sect. Some scholars have suggested that consumption itself has become a religious act, with its own rites, rituals, and promises of salvation. In this course we will explore the intersecting histories of Christianity and consumer culture in the US from the late nineteenth century to the present day. Reading classic texts in history and sociology, as well as more contemporary scholarship on American consumer culture, we will attend to the questions that consumer culture poses for American Christians and for scholars of religion. Has consumer culture contributed to the secularization of American society? Has Christianity been corrupted by consumer culture? Can Christians redeem the marketplace? How can the study of religion help us understand our culture of consumption, and how can consumerism help us understand religion? *Hannah Ozmun*

RLST 29110 – Media Islam

Media are increasingly integrated into contemporary life. As in the past, we consume media—watching movies and television, listening to music and podcasts, and following influencers on social media. However, these passive activities now overlap with media production, participation, and

commentary. For Muslims negotiating identity in diverse global society, media figure into representation and self-representation in complex, often subtle, ways. Intersecting with the family, mosque, community, and other core social institutions, media play a central role in contemporary Muslim experience. This class will examine religious media, i.e. those branded as “Islamic” in some fashion, such as television programs on Islamic law, or social media content with explicit religious commitments and claims to authority. It will also consider how Islam has been represented in popular culture, and the ways Muslims have related to those constructions of their faith. However, this dichotomy of religious and popular media no longer holds with Muslim-oriented television shows like *Ramy*, *Ms. Marvel*, the integration of Islam into popular American entertainment from *Jack Ryan* to *Mr. Robot*, and the complex engagement with religion in media across the historically Muslim world. *Tom Maguire*

#### RLST 29800 – BA Research Seminar I

This class meets weekly to provide guidance for planning, researching, and writing the BA research paper. The two-quarter senior sequence will assist students in the Research Track with the preparation of the required BA paper. During May of their third year, students will work with the preceptor to choose a faculty adviser and a topic for research, and to plan a course of study for the following year. These must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students will take part in the BA Research Seminar convened by a preceptor during Autumn and Winter Quarters of their senior year. This seminar will allow students to prepare their bibliographies, hone their writing, and present their research. PQ: Consent of faculty supervisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies. Course Note: RLST 29800 and 29900 form a two-quarter sequence that is required of fourth-year students who are majoring in Religious Studies. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form. *Pieter Hoekstra*

## WINTER 2025

### Special Courses in Divinity

#### DVSC 30600 – Theory and Method

The first part of the introductory sequence examined how scholars have defined “religion” and undertaken its study. Building on this foundation, students will explore four interrelated themes within the contemporary academic study of religion through readings, site visits, and interviews with scholars working within the field. From these thematic vantage points, we will query various methodologies and the types of scholarship they produce. First, students will consider the study of religious literature through questions of interpretation and authority. Next, we will turn to critical issues surrounding the study of practice. What constitutes a religious practice? What are the consequences of employing commonplace categories such as belief (as opposed to practice)? The third theme is embodiment, a broad subject we will pursue through the intersection of religion with medicine and healing. How does religious belief inform ideas about the body, its ailments, and its treatment? The final theme extends our discussion of embodiment to the further consideration of religion and society. We will examine how scholars tease out the role of religion within a political landscape, especially around questions of law. Throughout the course, students will be encouraged

to reflect on the implications of what they are learning for their own areas of interest and developing methodological frameworks. Course Notes: All MA, AMRS, and MDiv students are required to take this course and achieve a quality grade (B- or above). Discussion groups will be held. *Erin Walsh*

#### DVSC 51000 – Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion

This course will consider contemporary trends within the study of religion by focusing on new work by current scholars in the field. Some themes to be considered are: Reason, power, faith, materiality, humanity, animality, reality and virtual reality. We will take as our guiding thread the new volume of the *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* and consider as well what it tells us about how the field has changed over the last thirty years both in terms of theory and method. Course Note: This course is limited to 1st-year Divinity PhD students only. It is a required course for all 1st-year Divinity PhD students. *Sarah Hammerschlag*

#### Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

##### AASR 33000 – Problems in the Anthropology of Religion

We examine some of the central problems in the anthropology of religion. Topics include: definitions of religion, belief, performativity, mediation, embodiment, power, ethics, and authority. Course Note: Undergraduates can petition the instructor to enroll. *Angie Heo*

##### AASR 40000 – Adventures in Speculative Environments – Readings in Anthropology and Environment

This graduate seminar explores topics in environmental anthropology and science and technology studies through instances of ecological experimentation. By reading ethnographic accounts of experimentation alongside speculative ecosophies and climate fiction, it will consider the ways in which such ecological experimentations pose conceptual, methodological, and ethical challenges that help us develop an anthropological engagement adequate to an era dominated by concerns with the constant threat of pandemics and the declining condition of our global ecology. It will aim, as well, to elaborate the implicit possibilities born of thinking not only in terms of relation but also in relation to a politics and ethics of process. Of particular concern will be a number of questions, such as: how to (re)imagine the conceptual currency of nature as an analytic category or even object of inquiry; how ethnography might reshape technologies of nature; and what sort of social transformations might this reshaping render imaginable. *Michael Fisch*

##### AASR 42808 – Cold War Religion

This seminar considers the religious legacies and exigencies of the Cold War as it played out in the U.S. and throughout the post-WWII order of nation-states and 'rogue states.' Special attention will be paid to Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East as well as to post-1965 diasporic communities in the U.S. Topics include the rise of anti-communism and anti-Americanism, relations between Islamism and communism, discourses and practices of religious freedom, atheism, liberation, reunification and millenarian salvation. *Angie Heo*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RAME 42808

##### AASR 50092 – Seminar: Religion and Politics

In this seminar we will consider meanings of religion and politics and examine their interactions from a comparative perspective. After digesting alternative theoretical understandings of the relationship between religion, states, and political processes, we will turn to empirical accounts that

illuminate historical and local issues at points around the globe. Among other phenomena, students will explore patterns of secularization, religious nationalism, fundamentalisms, and policy-oriented religious social movements. *Omar McRoberts*

#### AASR 50522 – Reading Walter Benjamin’s ‘Artwork’ Essay

Seldom has a canonical essay been at once so widely and so carelessly read as Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility.’ This seminar takes a deep dive into the text, reading it alongside writings by Benjamin’s contemporaries as well as more recent analyses. We will discuss themes including the technological transformation of the conditions of experience amid the rise of fascism, the significance of Benjamin’s highly complex conception of aura, the indexicality of the photographic image, the political potentialities of innervation, the psychoanalytic implications of the notion of the optical unconscious, the redemption of distraction and mimesis (including Benjamin’s mimetic theory of language), and Benjamin’s productively ambivalent relation to right-wing cultural theorists. *William Mazzarella*

### Biblical Studies

#### BIBL 32500 – Introduction to the New Testament: Texts and Contexts of Interpretation

This class introduces students to the texts that make up the New Testament through close readings of representative examples. Through course lectures and readings, students will gain familiarity with the historical, geographical, social, religious, cultural, and political contexts of New Testament literature and the events they narrate. We will also learn about the central literary genres found within the collection of texts that came to form the canonical New Testament, including “gospels,” “acts,” “letters,” and “apocalypses”), and we will examine how awareness of genre conventions enhances our reading of these works. Students will also learn about the distinctive theological and cultural viewpoints contained within various New Testament texts. As we learn about the history of biblical scholarship, especially the goals and methods of biblical interpretation, we will practice refining our questions. Assignments and discussion will allow students to develop their skills as attuned readers of both ancient texts as well as modern biblical scholarship. PQ: No prior knowledge of biblical literature, the ancient world, or Christianity is expected. The only expectation is commitment to engaged discussion about the challenges of interpretation with classmates holding various viewpoints. Course Note: This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. *Erin Walsh*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 12000

#### 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. PQ: BIBL 33900 in Autumn Quarter. *Emily Thomassen*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 14000

#### 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. PQ: Must have taken BIBL 35100 in Autumn quarter. *Doug Hoffer*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 14200

#### BIBL 44608 – The Book of Hosea

The Book of Hosea has some of the earliest Prophetic material in the Bible, in the 8th cent. BCE, from the northern kingdom of Israel in the period when the Assyrians. It contains classic ideas about kingship, politics, religion, and social order. It features unique and enticing poetry, poses distinct literary challenges, and also includes late scripturalizing elements. In this text-course, we will read the book together in the original Hebrew. PQ: Two quarters of Biblical Hebrew and one text course. *Simeon Chavel*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 44608

#### 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 five 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. The last four weeks will focus on student presentations of a papyrus text which they have edited and translated. PQ: 2 years of Greek. *David Martinez*

#### Philosophy of Religion

##### DVPR 50100 – Dialectics and its Afterlives: Hegel and Derrida

"We will never be finished with the reading or the re-reading of Hegel, and, in a certain way, I do nothing other than attempt to explain myself on this point," Derrida once famously remarked. And yet, despite his extensive efforts (or perhaps because of them), the relationship Derrida establishes between deconstruction and dialectics remains a tortured one. Its implications for the history of philosophy are still unclear, especially as they concern the philosophy of religion. In this seminar we will reconsider the relation in light of more recently published material, including Derrida's seminars and lecture courses. We will read closely Hegel's early theological writings and analyze their relation to the rest of his corpus. We will also read closely Derrida's major attempts to come to terms with

Hegel (e.g. in Glas). We will also situate Derrida's work on Hegel alongside his contemporaries and his inheritors, including figures such as Kojève, Hyppolite, Ricoeur, Adorno, and Butler. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Ryan Coyne*

### History of Christianity

#### HCHR 30300 – History of Christian Thought III

This is the third course in the History of Christian Thought sequence, covering foundational Reformation-era thinkers from Catholic, Protestant, and 'radical' traditions. We will cover 1) the rise of Christian humanism in the Northern European Renaissance; 2) key texts and ideas within the German Lutheran, Swiss Reformed, and Genevan (Calvinist) Reformations; 3) important developments within Counter-Reformation thought, including the rise of the Jesuit Order, Spanish Catholic mysticism, as well as shifts within Catholic understandings of temporal and spiritual authority; and 4) seminal writings within Baptist, rationalist and anti-trinitarian thought. Classes will be based closely around the readings of primary texts representing important intellectual and theological developments, while remaining grounded thoroughly within the historical context of the period and paying attention to the debates historians have had over their influence, significance, and legacy. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition the instructor to enroll. *Kirsten Macfarlane*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 30300

### History of Judaism

(none)

### History of Religions

#### HREL 35811 – Foundations of East Asian Buddhism

This course is an introduction to Buddhism in East Asia, examined through lenses of texts, art, and thought. We will examine important sources of the major currents of East Asian Buddhist thought and practice stretching from the earliest days of the religion in China to the East Asian Buddhist world of today, giving special consideration to major textual and artistic monuments, such as translated scriptures, Chan/Zen literature, paintings and sculptures, and pilgrimage sites. *Paul Copp*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 22501

#### HREL 37702 – Music and Love in South Asia

This course explores the relationship between the musical arts and forms of love in South Asian history. We will trace the complex and ambivalent contours of love in several genres including premodern poetry, stage performance, and Bollywood movies. We will examine issues such as poetics and theology, opposition to orthodox social conventions, the intensity of emotion expressed through multiple senses, the social sites of forbidden love, women and gender as poets and performers, and the intersection of sexuality and spirituality. *Anand Venkatkrishnan and Anna Schultz*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 27702

HREL 50000 – The Divinity School, The Study of Religion, and Society in the Long American 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The goal of this seminar is to explore the historical development of the study of religion in the United States, with particular attention to the establishment and growth of university divinity schools and departments of religion. The University of Chicago Divinity School will serve as a “privileged case study” for the purposes of comparing and contrasting the historical experience t/here with larger trends in higher education, religion, and society. Students will consider historical perspectives on religion in America, the development of colleges, seminaries, and universities, and specifically the experience of university divinity schools and departments of religion in North America. Attention will be directed to economic and demographic factors, state management of religion and its study, social movements, juridical and legislative developments, and changes in employment and the professions in America.

Students are encouraged to engage in (and present) their own granular-level inquiries of curriculum, degree requirements, faculty and student demographics, and similar aspects of the internal ecosystems of centers for the study of religion(s). Students will develop their own research projects centered on primary source material to present in the closing weeks of the term. PQ: Consent Only: Course admission is based on application. There is a stipend for admitted students. More information about Brauer Seminar classes can be found here: <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/martin-marty-center/brauer-seminar>. *Richard Rosengarten and Christian Wedemeyer*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 50000

HREL 52200 – Problems in the History of Religions

A research seminar for students either in the PhD program in the History of Religions (allgemeine Religionswissenschaft, la science des religions) or doctoral students working in related fields in the scientific study of religions (anthropology, sociology, history, area studies, e.g.). Participants will both present an original written work-in-progress of their own and give a formal oral response to the paper of another. Students typically present (e.g.) colloquium (“second-year conference”) papers, orals statements for the Qualifying Examination, or dissertation chapters. PQ: Open to doctoral students in HREL, AASR, RAME, SALC, EALC, HIST, ANTH, e.g. *Christian Wedemeyer*

Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 52200

### Islamic Studies

ISLM 30040 – Introduction to the Qur’an

The primary goal of this course is to introduce students to the text and context of the Qur’an. Emphasis is placed upon both the historical setting as well as the thematic and literary features, major biblical figures, and foundational narratives of the Qur’an. Explorations of medieval exegetical literature on the Qur’an and its reception in the early (8th - 10th century CE) and medieval periods (11th - 15th century CE) will feature in this course. Course Note: This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. *Mehmetcan Akpınar*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 11040

ISLM 30202 – Islamicate 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. PQ: Islamicate Civilization I (NEHC 20201) or Islamic Thought & Literature-1 (NEHC 20601), or the equivalent. Course Note: The Islamicate Civilization sequence does not fulfill the General Ed requirements. *Staff*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20202

#### ISLM 32419 – Major Trends in Islamic Mysticism

An examination of Islamic mysticism, commonly known as Sufism, through secondary English literature and translations of premodern Arabic Sufi texts. The goal is to gain firsthand insight into the diverse literary expressions of Islamic spirituality in their historical context, and to understand exactly what, how, and why Sufis say what they say. *Yousef Casewit*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 24550

#### ISLM 32706 – Love and Devotion in Islamic South Asia

This English-medium seminar for undergraduate and graduate students surveys the scholarship on nearly a millennium of Islamic devotional literatures and practices in South Asia. Combining theoretical, historical, and literary studies with sources in English translation, it invites students to consider comparatively a range of disciplinary approaches to the study of Islam in the subcontinent. The wide range of linguistic traditions that we will encounter in English analysis and English translation, which include Arabic, Awadhi, Bangla, Deccani, Hindi, Persian, and Urdu, gestures toward the broader themes of multi-regionalism, trans-communalism, and ecumenicalism highlighted in our readings. Some familiarity with the academic study of Islam will be helpful, but is not a prerequisite, since we will begin our quarter asking broad questions that we will continue to refine as we progress. Likewise, the class does not suppose any familiarity with languages other than English. *Gregory Max Bruce*

#### ISLM 34567 – Islamic Psychology

An exploration of the growing body of secondary literature on Islamic psychology. Relevant premodern approaches to mental well-being, rooted in scriptural, theological, philosophical, and mystical sources will be examined alongside contemporary literature that synthesizes modern psychology with Islamic teachings. No Arabic required. *Yousef Casewit*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 24567

#### ISLM 39030 – Islam, Race, and Decoloniality

This course explores western perspectives, attitudes and representations of Muslims and Islam from medieval European thought, through liberal colonial encounters to contemporary media and political discourses. Students will examine the intersection of race and religion as it applies to the construction of Muslim identity and alterity in the Western imagination. We will explore the remarkable consistency across centuries of the threatening, menacing, barbaric and uncivilized Muslim "Other". The course centers around these Orientalist constructions and will explore the power structures, colonial modalities, epistemological frameworks, and ideological assumptions that perpetuate the racialization of Islam and Muslims within the United States and abroad. This course

ultimately aims to uncover potentials for resistance, recovery and renewal through the politics and praxis of decoloniality. Students will gain familiarity with decolonial theory and practices, as well as the important project of ‘epistemic delinking’ as it is framed by contemporary scholars intent on challenging, possibly undoing and remapping the Muslim experience within global liberal political modernity. *Maliba Chishti*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 29030

### Religions in the Americas

RAME 38100 – New Studies in African American Religion

This seminar will focus on studies of African American religion published within the last five years. We will explore how classic questions of the field are being asked and answered with new sources and methods, as well as what problems remain for future consideration. The selected books will range in topic and method (historical, ethnographic, and theoretical), with a focus on the twentieth century. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Matt Harris*

RAME 39402 – Race and Religion in the U.S.

This course examines how religion has been shaped, constructed, and formed in response to and in the context of changing racial realities in America in the 20th century. The structure of the course is designed to approach and understand the intersection and melding of race and religion through literary, social scientific, historical and biographical angles. It is hoped that such variant approaches will deepen our understanding of a complex and changing reality, keeping in mind that “race” as a category and political and social reality has experienced profoundly different meanings in the course of the 20th century. Most of our emphasis will be attuned to the central black/white divide and Christian communities, though you are encouraged to write your final paper on a topic of your choosing that does not fit into any of these categories. *Curtis Evans*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 28402

RAME 42500 – Experiments in the Study of Religion, Solidarity, and Hope

The title of this course takes its inspiration from the way Vincent Harding (UChicago PhD, 1965) described his monumental work of black history, *There Is a River*, which was produced, he writes, in the “creative tension” between his responsibility as a historian and his commitment to human liberation. What might it mean to begin the study of religion from this experimental space? This course begins with that question and proceeds to read recent works in and adjacent to religious studies that operate from a place of solidarity with liberation struggles and everyday resistance. We will consider a variety of approaches—oral history, speculative theory, ethnography, history from below—which will be supplemented by theories and methods deriving from social movements. Throughout, we will also consider the possibilities and limits of university-based scholarship in the struggle to create a more just society. *Matthew Harris*

Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 42501

### Religious Leadership and Practice (MDiv Courses)

RELP 32600 – An Introduction to Public Theology and Moral Action

What is “public theology?” This course grapples with this question while engaging thinkers such as Martin Marty, Toni Morrison and Howard Thurman. Ultimately, students are invited to imagine,

discuss and embody theologies in their own “publics.” Through his work at the westside of Chicago-based MAAFA Redemption Project, lecturer Rev. Marshall Hatch Jr (M.Div. '17) offers an example of a public theology that is contextual, organic and dynamic. *Marshall Hatch Jr.*

#### 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 33300 – Reading your Neighbor’s Scripture: Scriptural Reasoning

Scriptural Reasoning is a method of approaching the scholarly study of texts of the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and the Qur’an, by reading them as if they are to be understood as in conversation with one another, and as in reception communities that have historically understood them as such. This seminar will explore the practices and methods of a distinctive academic methodology of study, as well as the theoretical and philosophical scaffolding that has emerged from these practices. We will consider both the scholarly work that extends and recommends the practice, and the critiques of the practice. Reading from the perspectives of theology and philosophy, we will consider how the academic reading of Scriptures frames the narrative and the ethical perspectives within the text and how that framing might be disrupted/repaid/interrogated by new exegetical interpretations. Scriptural Reasoning is both a method and a feature of the academy (in journals, in a section at the AAR, and in scholarly books and articles); and it is also a way of making Scriptural reception and interpretation publicly legible. The seminar will allow graduate students an entrance into understanding the Scriptures of their own tradition or research interest, and those of others, with which they may not be conversant, and thus create the possibility for new avenues of comparative scholarship. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Laurie Zoloth*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): ISLM 33300, THEO 33300

#### RETH 37000 – Moral Theory and Philosophical Ethics

How ought we live? That is the basic question of ethics or moral philosophy and religious ethics. It is a deceptively simple question. Why do human beings ask let alone are perplexed by this question? Is this a matter of human distinctiveness? Who is the “we” in question: is it a specific community defined by race, language, ethnicity, history, or gender, or does it include all human beings? What is the origin and meaning of an obligation, an “ought,” about how to live: is it from God or the gods, nature, human reason, social mores and custom or some combination of these sources? What does it mean to be genuinely alive amid the daily routines and demands of staying alive? Does our living include obligations to others and their well-being and to the common good, or should we be self-

seeking creatures interested only in our own happiness? This course explores the major thinkers and texts in Western moral theory and philosophical ethics that address these and other questions that surround every human life and every human society. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *William Schweiker*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 37000

RETH 37378 – Ethics of Rest

In today's capitalistic world in which technology enables expectations that we are always able to be connected, rest can seem far away. In this course we will read classic and contemporary texts from a variety of religious traditions on the priority of rest, leisure, and/or a change from one's daily life. Themes to be explored include the purpose of such breaks (worship, care for one's self, building relationships, enabling one's work); how rest is conceived and practiced; and the varying expectations and opportunities for rest among people of different ages, genders, races, financial statuses, and roles in society. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Sarah Frederick*

RETH 42100 – Problems in Theology and Ethics: Humanism and Anti-Humanism

This seminar is an inquiry into debates surrounding human dignity and capabilities. With developments in Artificial Intelligence, biological engineering, and computer science the ancient question of the meaning of being human is again a pressing one. The seminar probes interlocking and basic questions. What is a human being? What are human capacities? What are the insights and problems, theologically and ethically, with "humanism?" The seminar thereby revolves around the theme of "humanism" mindful of the larger question, "what is a human being?" It begins with paradigmatic statements of humanism, philosophical and theological, and moves towards criticism and revisions with respect to theological themes and also the relation between human beings and other species. Thinkers range from Nietzsche to Mary Midgley, Tzvetan Todorov, Karl Barth, and others. PQ: Previous graduate work in ethics or theology. *William Schweiker*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 42100

RETH 52555 – Narrating the Law: Levinas and the Talmud

This is a seminar that will closely read the Jewish theological/ethical writing of Emmanuel Levinas, in particular, the Talmudic exegesis that he undertook for the French Jewish community circa 1970, collected and published from 1968 to 1994 as well as other essays about Jewish ethics and Jewish thought. 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.

Course Note: Course is in English translation. *Laurie Zoloth*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 52555, THEO 52555

### Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

RLVC 31700 – Reading Religion in South Asia

This course alternates between primary source texts from South Asia in translation and secondary scholarship. All course materials will be drawn from premodern Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain contexts and from a range of languages. This course structure provides students with the opportunity to see how scholars have interpreted South Asian literature as well as to practice textual interpretation. We will think through the particular constraints of South Asian literary scholars from new historicism to post-colonial critique. *Sarah Pierce Taylor*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 31700

## Theology

### THEO 45800 – Black Ownership of Wealth: A Theological Consideration

Since Africans were brought to the Virginia Colony (August 1619), throughout slavery and segregation until today, black Americans (men and women) have always owned wealth. They have always had human agency. These black families accumulated wealth and offered a concurrent narrative and framing from the mainstream understanding of black Americans as victims. Who are these black families who remain mainly invisible from the dominant black story? What is material, financial wealth? Who has it? And how did they get it? *Dwight Hopkins*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 25800

THEO 46006 – Approaches to Suffering: Theological Perspectives and Contemporary Meditations Framed by a consideration of Susan Sontag on the representation of suffering, Elaine Scarry on *The Body in Pain*, and Judith Butler on grievable life, this seminar will seek to extend and enrich such contemporary meditations through conversation with varied theological approaches to suffering. One thesis of the course is that theodicy need not be viewed as the chief theological approach to suffering. Through close reading of selected works, we will consider interpretive frames such as creation and providence, wounding and healing, and crucifixion and resurrection, together with religious responses such as introspection, contemplation, mourning, witness, and resistance. PQ: Previous work in theology. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Kristine Culp*

### THEO 48701 – Late Medieval Women: Sanctity, Gender, Authorship and Authority

The position of women in the late Middle Ages is often found connected to the problem of female authorship. Initially, female authorship was treated emphatically if not exclusively in the context of vernacular theology, which was seen as complementing and complicating the more traditional division of medieval intellectual texts into monastic and scholastic theology. Furthermore, the consistent focus on the emancipatory power of female authorship led to a situation whereby texts written by women were put in stark opposition to texts written by male authors on women; as a result, gender became the dominant category of interpreting texts written by late medieval women. This course will focus on the position of late medieval women especially, most if not all of them authors, while some others are known to have been in conversation with male confessors. The seminar aims to analyze the remarkable religious and theological texts written by them and about them. In the process we will also analyze some paradigmatic titles related to modern historiographical and theoretical scholarship both to draw on them and to show how the approach to late medieval women authors and women saints has changed over the last decades, most recently because of the interest in nonbinary gender. Course Notes: Latin is helpful but not needed.

Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Willemien Otten*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 48700

### THEO 52225 – Social Entrepreneurship

This course is an experiment. We will explore the possibility or reality of the following. Doing good requires capital and capital can do good. This is a major debate. Even before the 2008 financial crisis, most Divinity Schools, seminaries, and theological schools probably held the view that money is the root of all evil. Specifically, at the University of Chicago business school, Milton Friedman, one of its noted Nobel Prize winning thinkers, argued that the purpose of business is to maximize profits for its shareholders. And, for business to engage in the social is tantamount to dabbling in

socialism. So, on one side of the campus, we find a legacy of bottom line profit for the wealthy. On the other side of the campus, we find a tradition of transcendent values for the people and notions of the common good. Is it God versus Mammon? The Divinity School versus the Business School? Can profit and purpose and cause and commercialization work together in harmony toward the same transcendent goals? *Dwight Hopkins*

### Religious Studies (Undergraduate Designation)

#### RLST 10100 – Introduction to Religious Studies

This course introduces students to the field of Religious Studies through addressing a foundational question: “What is religion?” We will approach this question from multiple angles. We will study the cults, codes, and creeds of a range of religions with reference both to their self-understandings and to modes of analysis (chiefly from the humanities and the social sciences) that concern themselves explicitly with religion. The scope of the course is in principle limitless: as old as the Vedas and the Epic of Gilgamesh and as recent as the front page of your preferred news source. The selections for the first five weeks will provide an overview of religions that have a global presence, and of theoretical perspectives that aspire to give a comprehensive account of religion. Each of the last four weeks will be a “case study” of a specific religion and its theorization that will be determined by the class from a list provided by the instructor. Three short (1-3 pp.) analytic essays (submitted on Fridays and returned the following Mondays) during the first five weeks will be followed by a final assignment synthesizing the material of the course. No prior knowledge of the religious traditions or the theoretical perspectives covered is expected. Course Note: This is the required introductory course for RLST majors. *Foster Pinkney*

#### RLST 20402 – Islamic Thought and Literature II

What are the major developments in thinking and in literature in the Islamic world of the “middle periods” (c. 950-1800 C.E.). How did noteworthy Muslims at various points and places think through questions of life and death, man and God, faith and belief, the sacred and the profane, law and ethics, tradition vs. innovation, power and politics, class and gender, self and other? How did they wage war; make love; shape the built environment; eat and drink; tell stories; educate their youth; preserve the past; imagine the future; perform piety, devotion, and spirituality; construe the virtuous life and righteous community, etc.? How did these ideas change over time? What are some of the famous, funny, naughty, and nice books read in the pre-modern Muslim world? We will survey a broad geographic area stretching from Morocco and Iberia to the Maldives and India--even into the New World--through lectures, secondary readings, and discussion. We will engage with a variety of primary texts in English translation, as well as various visual, aural, and material artifacts. Course Notes: Taking these courses in sequence is recommended but not required. This sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies. *Holly Shissler*

#### RLST 22011 – Jewish Civilization II: Early Modern Period to 21<sup>st</sup> 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). *Sheila Jelen*

#### RLST 22402 – Japanese Zen Buddhism

What is Zen? Impossibly, seemingly, everything to everybody. In this course, we will explore Zen's protean transformations through a close reading of primary sources in translation. Rather than asking what Zen is, we will focus on how in these materials the Zen traditions are continually de/re-constructed as contingent religious identities from medieval Japan to the contemporary United States and Europe. The focus of the course will be the premodern Japanese Zen tradition, its background in Chinese Chan, and its reception in the West. The course will include field trips to Zen communities in the Chicago area. Students wishing to take this course are strongly encouraged to also take Prof. Ziporyn's course on Chan during the fall quarter. *Stephan Licha*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 32402

#### RLST 22655 – Themes in the European Reformation(s)

This course provides an introduction to the study of the Reformation(s) in early modern Europe. As well as covering the key theological ideas of famous Protestant reformers (Luther; Zwingli; Calvin), it will give ample space to the impact that these religious revolutions had on contemporary society, including attitudes to gender, politics, economics, and visual/material culture. It will cover the reformations and renewals undergone by Catholicism in the same period, and discuss the key arguments, questions, and concerns which have preoccupied historians of the Reformation since the nineteenth century. Students will have the opportunity to read and engage with famous texts from the period (for instance Erasmus's *On Free Will*; Luther's *95 Theses*; Calvin's *Institutes*) as well as lesser-known but still influential works (e.g. the poetry of the female Italian humanist Olympia Fulvia Morata and the writings of early Jesuit missionaries to China and Japan), in addition to historically significant documents (such as contemporary witchcraft confessions and extracts from Reformation demonologies). Finally, there will be time devoted to unpacking the complex legacies of the Reformation and the 'unintended consequences' attributed to it, focusing especially on the afterlives of Max Weber's analyses. *Kirsten Macfarlane*

#### RLST 24003 – Death and Dying

Death happens to everyone. However, dying is as much a social process as an individual one. The factors that impact how, when and where people die, and how societies handle death and dying, are shaped by the structural and cultural forces in our world. These range from economic, geographic, and religious forces to the institutional politics of health care systems. The sociology of death and dying is the systematic study of the structure of the human response to death, dying, and bereavement in their socio-cultural, interpersonal, and individual contexts. Often conceptualized as a discrete event, death is a process that is shaped over the life course. In this course, we will analyze the socio-demographic patterns of death, the factors that shape the process of dying, the economics of dying, and the ways that individuals and groups respond to death. We will also consider the social factors that shape a "good death" and discuss current policies and debates surrounding end-of-life care and aid-in-dying. *Alex Tate*

#### RLST 24116 – Buddhism and the Good Life

Forbes Magazine has styled the Tibetan Buddhist monk Mingyur Rinpoche, “the happiest man alive.” Like no other religion, Buddhism in the public imagination is associated with providing us with an accessible way towards leading a good and happy life. But what is the “good life” according to the Buddhist tradition, and what is “happiness” supposed to lead us towards? In this course, we will explore these questions through a close reading of Buddhist sources in translation. Through these readings the course will introduce the doctrinal and practical foundations of the Buddhist traditions and serve as a gateway to more specialized studies. Course Note: This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. *Stephan Licha*

#### RLST 25301 – History, Religion, and Politics in Augustine’s *City of God*

Augustine’s *City of God* is a major work of history, politics, and religion. Written after Rome was sacked by the Visigoths in 410, the work begins an apology (justification) of the Empire’s turn to Christianity and expands to offer a sweeping and deeply theological account of human history and society in terms of earth-bound versus heaven-centered community. Augustine’s citizenship and politics entails living out membership in either fellowship while commingled on earth with the other. Augustine analyzes Roman history and politics as well as the new religion first encouraged and eventually imposed in the wake of Constantine’s conversion.

We shall read the entire work in translation, attending to historical observations, political stances, and religious views. Augustine made arguments of his own but saved huge swaths of Varro and other otherwise lost sources to fashion his historical critique of Rome, social analysis, and many ultimately fresh views on matters like human sexuality in paradise and in heaven.

The class will meet once a week. A supplementary Latin reading group will also convene once a week for close reading of important and demanding selections in the original. There will be some invited international guest speakers. Course Note: Latin is helpful but not necessary. There will be a weekly Latin reading group for Classics and other students who want to tackle Augustine’s Latin.

*Willemien Otten and Michael I. Allen*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 35301, THEO 35301, BIBL 35301, RETH 35301

#### 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 as well as primary source accounts of environmental injustices. 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. Throughout the course we will explore how normative commitments are expressed in different types of literature as well as the basis for normative judgments and the types of authorities authors utilize and claim as they consider environmental justice. *Sarah Fredericks*

#### RLST 26107 – Moving Objects, Dispersed Cultures: Case Studies from China and the Middle East

In this course, we will delve into “big problems” created by the movement, relocation, or displacement of objects that are assigned special cultural, artistic, and historical values in new contexts. We will follow the movement of artifacts across both geographical and disciplinary boundaries, challenging established notions of cultural heritage and art. We often study and read ancient texts as primary sources, but we don’t always pause to consider that those texts were written on physical objects like pieces of wood, leaves, or animal skin. Similarly, we’re familiar with the display of ancient artwork inside museums or galleries, but have we wondered about the journey of

individual objects to those new locations? How do objects move from their original place to modern collections? How do they become art? And how do they become historical sources?

Guided by an art historian and a social historian, this course presents different ways to look at “objects that move”, both as sources about past societies and as mirrors for contemporary ones.

Through studying examples from the history of China and the Middle East, we will reconsider concepts such as cultural heritage, national patrimony, or even art (especially non-Western) that have been taken unproblematically or for granted. We will learn about the different histories of the dispersal of cultural heritages in those two regions, from nation-building and colonial projects in the twentieth century to the illicit trade in antiquities and to the creation of digital replicas today. *Cecelia Palombo and Wei-Cheng Lin*

#### RLST 26620 – Tradition and Modernity in Jewish Thought and Literature

The concept of tradition often takes a back seat to modernity but what does it mean to be part of a tradition in the modern world? How does tradition challenge received views and stimulate creativity, against the modern view of tradition as the “dead hand of the past”? How have the concept; ideology; and cultural role of tradition changed in Jewish culture since the Enlightenment? This course explores those questions in three bodies of work: (1) late 18th- to mid-20th-century German-Jewish historians, critics, & theologians; (2) modern Hebrew & Yiddish writers; and (3) their shared biblical, rabbinic, and mystical inspirations. Through close readings of these writers' reflections on their own literary traditions, tradition emerges as both a resource and a problem for Jewish cultural creativity; one that calls for its own theoretical vocabulary and can be set in dialogue with the modern evolution of other traditional cultures. *James A. Redfield*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 36620

#### RLST 27310 – American Islam

The American Muslim community hails from all corners of the globe, and represents a diverse mix of ethnic groups, socio-economic backgrounds, political persuasions, and theological positions. American Islam is older than the nation itself, and Muslims have contributed to the American project throughout its history. Today, the United States represents one unique node in a complex, global Muslim world, with deep and active relationships connecting the United States to the historic centers of Muslim life. Conspicuously religious Muslims also occupy greater positions of power and visibility across American society, from the halls of Congress to the comedy club stage. This course will provide a historically-informed, globally-inflected exploration of contemporary American Islam. Students will engage primary texts of American Muslim life and consider them within social, cultural, and historical context. *Tom Maguire*

#### RLST 27522 – The Poetry and Prose of John Donne

This course will examine the life and career of John Donne, one of the most important and influential early modern poets and thinkers writing in English. We will read Donne's love poetry, his religious poetry, his satirical poems, and his progress poems. We will also read some of his prose works: *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* along with selections from his sermons and polemical treatises. Throughout, we will engage with the history of criticism and scholarship dedicated to Donne and his writings. (Pre-1650, Poetry) *Timothy Harrison*

#### RLST 27707 – Anthropological Theory

Since its inception as an academically institutionalized discipline, anthropology has always addressed the relation between a self-consciously modernizing “West” and its various and changing “others.” Yet it has not always done so with sufficient critical attention to its own concepts and categories – a

fact that has led, since at least the 1980s, to considerable debate about the nature of the anthropological enterprise and its epistemological foundations. This course provides a brief critical introduction to the history of anthropological thought over the course of the discipline's "long" twentieth century, from the 1880s to the present. Although it centers on the North American and British traditions, we will review important strains of French and, to a lesser extent, German social theory in chronicling the emergence and transformation of "modern" anthropology as an empirically based, but theoretically informed practice of knowledge production about human sociality and culture. PQ: Preference for Anthropology majors. *Stephan Palmie*

RLST 28280 – *The Good Place* and the Bad Place: Judgement, Punishment, and Living a Good Life  
Do you believe that you are a good person and, if so, why are you good? This course will investigate the connections between personal intentions to be a "good person" and the fear of punishment. What do we owe each other as ethical actors? Do the intentions of our actions matter or only the results of our actions? How can one be good in an increasingly complicated web of intersecting needs, social developments, and understandings of morality? This course will examine conceptions of hell, eternal punishment, and justice in a variety of religious traditions. In addition to reading authors such as Dante and John Milton, students will critically engage *The Good Place*, a sitcom which tackles deep questions of faith, morality, and the complexity of the human person. We will think through competing understandings of justice (retributive, distributive, and restorative) alongside our individual beliefs surrounding fairness and deservingness. No prior knowledge of religious studies or ethics is expected. *Foster Pinkney*

RLST 28405 – Religion in Anime and Japanese Pop Culture  
How does *Spirited Away* reflect teachings of Japanese Buddhism and Shinto? Or what about *Neon Genesis Evangelion*? What can pop culture tell us about religion? In this course, we will consider what Japanese religions are (and are not) by looking at their representations in popular cultural forms of past and present. Sources are drawn from a range of popular cultural forms including anime and manga, but also literature, artistic performances, visual arts, and live-action movies. The course covers foundational aspects of Japanese religious life through non-traditional sources like *Bleach*, *The Tale of Genji*, and *Your Name*. At the end of the course, students will be able to speak to the great diversity of religious practices and viewpoints in Japan, not only its centers but also its peripheries and minorities. Meanwhile, we will consider broader questions about the complex connections between religion and popular culture. No prior knowledge of Buddhism, Shinto, or Japanese history is expected. *Stephan Licha*

RLST 28810 – Devotion-Dissent-Disenchantment: Art in the Age of the Reformation  
In the years leading up to Martin Luther's radical transformation of the political-religious landscape, late medieval and early modern Europeans were inundated with a flood of "alternative facts" that called into question the intellectual, ethical, and religious values governing their lives. With the advent of new media technologies, images became important vehicles of commentary and disputation for Reformers, leading to the formation of a public sphere of discourse to which the image was central; yet, at the same time, the image itself and its role in daily life came increasingly under attack. This course provides an introduction to artistic production in northern Europe from the late fourteenth century through the sixteenth century through the lens of the productive, if tumultuous, relationship between art and the epistemological challenges of the Reformation. Particular attention will be paid to the shifting status of the artist, focusing on the historical and cultural circumstances that led to the elevation of artists such as Albrecht Dürer, Hans Baldung, and Pieter Bruegel the Elder, as well as their relationship to the world outside the Alps, including Italy,

Spain, and the New World. This course will also examine topics such as the relationship between word and image, iconoclasm and iconophilia, public and private spheres of patronage, and strategies of visual polemics. Readings will include primary sources in translation and selected works of modern scholarship. Course Note: Students must attend the first class to confirm enrollment. If a student is not yet enrolled in this course, s/he must fill out the online consent form and attend the first class. This course meets the general education requirement in the arts. *Tamara Golan*

#### RLST 29900 – BA Research Seminar II

This class meets weekly to assist students in the preparation of drafts of their BA paper, which are formally presented and critiqued. The two-quarter senior sequence will assist students in the Research Track with the preparation of the required BA paper. During May of their third year, students will work with the preceptor to choose a faculty adviser and a topic for research, and to plan a course of study for the following year. These must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students will take part in the BA Paper Seminar convened by a preceptor during Autumn and Winter Quarters of their senior year. This seminar will allow students to prepare their bibliographies, hone their writing, and present their research. Course Note: Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form. *Pieter Hoekstra*

## **SPRING 2025**

### Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

#### AASR 58370 – Divination

This seminar is an opportunity to explore divination across historical and social contexts from the ancient world, through the sorts of sites examined by classic anthropological works and the uptake of divinatory strategies by psychoanalysis, and on to present-day engagements with tarot, algorithms, and artificial intelligence. Going far beyond the banal popular notion of ‘fortune telling,’ we will consider divination as a question of the arts of attention and interpretation with profound truth-disclosing and world-making implications. *William Mazzarella*

### Biblical Studies

#### BIBL 33909 – Stoics and Epicureans

Ancient Greek Philosophy was remarkable for the creation of three main types of philosophy after Aristotle: Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism. Marx admired this trio as a highlight of Greek philosophy. Differing fundamentally from each other, Epicureanism relies on the evidence of the senses and proposes pleasure as the goal of life; Stoicism values morality as a way of attaining union with god; the Skeptics reject both. Each type of philosophy responded dynamically to the others and kept evolving by continually adapting to diverse social circumstances, both Greek and Roman. Each also had a lasting influence on the development of later European philosophy. We will trace their significance by reading texts in English translation; no Greek or Latin is required. *Elizabeth Asmis*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 21909

### BIBL 36000 – The Johannine Epistles

The Johannine Epistles raise fascinating theological and interpretative questions. In this course students will read the Greek text closely, examining the composition, genre, structure, theology, and purpose of these letters. Readings will also include New Testament and early Christian texts that help illuminate the hermeneutical questions and place of the Johannine epistles. Special attention will be paid to the questions surrounding the texts' authorship and reception within later Christian traditions. PQ: Students must have completed two quarters of Koine Greek or equivalent to enroll.

*Erin Walsh*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 22036

### BIBL 40490 – The Plagues in Egypt: Tradition and Composition

This course will pursue an in-depth investigation of the plagues in Egypt as presented at length in Exodus 7–12 and Psalms 78 and 105 and in brief in several other biblical texts. It will focus especially on source-critical and tradition-historical issues in these texts. All texts will be read in their original languages. PQ: Strong biblical Hebrew; those with questions about their Hebrew proficiency should consult with the instructor. *Jeffrey Stackert*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20490

### BIBL 40600 – Deuteronomy

This course is an exegetical study of selected texts from the Deuteronomistic source of the Torah (Deut 1:1–32:47). We will focus on the setting of this text within the larger pentateuchal plot, its legal revision, its historical context, and the purpose of its authors in relation to their source texts. This course will serve as the reading course for students coming out of the first year Hebrew sequence, but all students with facility in biblical Hebrew are welcome. All biblical texts will be read in Hebrew. PQ: At least one year of biblical Hebrew. *Jeffrey Stackert*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20600

## Philosophy of Religion

### DVPR 43002 – Technê and Technique

In European thought, the relationship between technê (craft or art) and epistêmê (knowledge) has long been a fraught one. Crucially, the practical knowledge associated with skill or art in making is often subordinated to more abstract forms of knowledge production such as mathematics or philosophy itself; and in the sphere of art, poets and critics often make a distinction between 'mere' technique and higher or unmediated forms of artistic expression. In this course, we will examine philosophical and artistic assumptions and arguments about technê, technics, and technique by staging a broad conversation between poets and philosophers; and we will consider recent discussions of technê and the impact that modern scientific technology has on the nature of thinking and artistic making. Readings will be drawn from philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Heidegger, and from poetic works ranging from ancient epics to Wallace Stevens and beyond. Final projects may include critical essays, creative projects, or creative/critical works. *Ryan Coyne and Srikanth Reddy*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 23002

## History of Christianity

### HCHR 32604 – The Reformation in Britain, 1450-1660

The Reformation in Britain is one of the most contested areas in early modern history. Was it mostly a political event, triggered by Henry VIII's desire for a divorce? Was it an organic movement from the ground up, inspired by the enthusiasm of ordinary believers in the same way as many reform movements in continental Europe? Did it have a distinctive theology of its own: can we call this 'Anglicanism'? Should we be studying the 'British Reformation' on its own terms at all, or should it be viewed simply as an offshoot of the continental European Reformations? And did the puritans really want to cancel Christmas? This course will give students a thorough grounding in the Reformation in Britain c.1450-1660, paying especial attention to the complex historiographical issues that still plague the topic to this day. Students will have the opportunity to study a range of key primary texts from the era, from John Foxe's Book of Martyrs to the letters of Queen Elizabeth I, as well as to examine the modern-day legacies of English reform. *Kirsten Macfarlane*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 22604

### HCHR 42800 – Christianity and Judaism in Early Modern Europe

Early modernity has long been recognized as a crucial stage in the history of Western Europe. Beginning with the Reformation and ending with the Enlightenment, it is to this period that historians have attributed the rise of modern political thought; the growth of religious toleration; as well as the formation of radically historical biblical criticism. Recently, however, historians have realized that many of these developments did not originate solely within Christian intellectual traditions, but from the exchanges, conflicts, and interactions between Christianity and Judaism, with a particularly important role granted to the phenomenon commonly known as 'Christian Hebraism'. This course will examine some of the most significant of these interactions with a focus on four areas: 1) interpersonal relations between Jews and Christians; 2) biblical criticism; 3) political thought; and 4) mysticism and Christian Kabbalah. It will explore questions such as how sixteenth-century Jewish writings fueled a seventeenth-century Christian crisis in the Bible's authority; why the ancient Jewish commonwealth became an unlikely source of inspiration for early modern political theorists; how to understand the relationship between Jewish mysticism and 'Christian Kabbalah'; and how interfaith millenarianism fed into debates over the readmission of Jews into England. PQ: No prerequisites, but there will be opportunities for students with Latin and/or Hebrew to make use of those languages. *Kirsten Macfarlane*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 42800

### HCHR 43200 – Colloquium on 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, Melania the Elder and Melania the Younger, Eusebius, desert Fathers and Mothers, Constantine, Macrina, Augustine) and events. On-going reflection on the nature of historiography as a science and an art, involving both discovery and invention. PQ: Knowledge of ancient languages is not required for the course, but those who have such facility are strongly encouraged to use it in their study and assignments. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Margaret M. Mitchell*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): BIBL 43200, RLST 22320

### HCHR 48900 – Priesthood, Philosophy, and Power

This course will explore the central theme of priesthood as imbuing a distinct philosophy and power to its inhabitants. From the Pastoral Epistles, with their division between episkopos and paratheke, through the “upstarts” (a term invented by Robert Bellah) that explains the power and community-building skills of third and fourth-century bishops like Tertullian, Cyprian and Gregory of Nazianzen, through some medieval figures and ending with a late Romantic German author like Herder, this course will focus on the ways in which power is given to priests, and received by them. The course will set up a dialogue between early Christian and medieval priests and later writings on the priesthood by Weber, Nietzsche and Foucault. We will try to as much as possible to read these sources “side by side,” joining the historical and the theoretical/theological sides. PQ: Knowledge of German and French is recommended. *Willemien Otten and Philippe Büttgen*

### History of Judaism

(none)

### History of Religions

#### HREL 33900 – Esoteric Buddhism in East Asia

The tantric or esoteric traditions exerted a profound if often covert influence on the development of East Asian Buddhism as a whole and on Japanese Buddhism in specific. In this course, we will trace their development through a close reading of selected sources in translation, focusing on the Ben kenmitsu nikyô ron attributed to Kūkai (774–835), the first systematizer of esoteric Buddhist thought in Japan. We will pay especially close attention to how the label of the “esoteric” or “tantric” is used to define specific religious identities. Students wishing to take this class should have a grounding in (East Asian) Buddhist thought. PQ: Basic familiarity with Buddhist thought. *Stephan Licha*

#### HREL 42907 – Contemporary Theories of Religion

Despite its often and always prematurely announced demise, religion continues to play a fundamental role in our communal and individual lives. Yet the specific conditions of late modernity have sharpened the theoretical and methodological problems involved in thinking about “religion.” In this course we will explore recent developments in the study of religion from the Marburg Declaration of 1960 to the present. Participants will attend to the recent history of the field, intellectually and institutionally; to the analysis of select theoretical developments in this period, their prospects, accomplishments, and challenges; and to the social location(s) of the study of religion in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. PQ: HREL 32900 / AASR 32900 "Classical Theories of Religion." *Stephan Licha*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 42907

### 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. PQ: Islamicate Civilization II (NEHC 20202) or Islamic Thought & Literature-2 (NEHC 20602), or the equivalent. Course Note: The Islamicate Civilization sequence does not fulfill the General Ed requirements. *Carl Shook*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20203

#### ISLM 30630 – Introduction to Islamic Philosophy

This course offers an introduction to the terms and concepts current in Arabic philosophical writings in the classical period of Islamic thought (roughly 9th to 17th century). It begins with the movement to translate Greek texts into Arabic and the debate among Muslims about the validity of philosophy versus revelation. From a close reading of key works (in English) by important philosophers such as al-Kindī, al-Rāzī, al-Sijistānī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), al-Ghazzālī, Ibn Bājja, Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Suhrawardī, and Mullā Ṣadrā, a series of lectures will follow the career of philosophy in the Islamic world, first as a 'foreign' science and then, later, as selectively rejected but also substantially accepted as a natural component of sophisticated discourse. *Abdallah Soufan*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 23630

#### ISLM 32800 – Power and Authority after the Prophet Muhammad

The question of power and authority after the Prophet Muhammad has been a topic of significant disagreement among various denominations of early and medieval Islam. Discussions regarding the prerequisites of legitimate leadership and authority in the Islamic tradition can be found in a substantial body of theological, legal, political, and historical writings, dating back to as early as the 8th century CE. This seminar delves into a diverse range of writings addressing the issue of religious and political leadership. It explores topics such as the necessity of leadership, qualifications required, and the status of the early caliphs etc. The course will engage with writings that are representative of different Islamic schools of theology such as Hanbalism, Mu'tazila, Asharism, Maturidism, Shi'ism, and Ibadism, spanning until the 15th century CE. PQ: Minimum of two years of Arabic. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition the instructor to enroll. *Mehmetcan Akpınar*

#### ISLM 37555 – Seeing Islam and the Politics of Visual Culture

From terrorists to "good Muslims," standards in the racial, cultural, and religious representations surrounding Islam have fluctuated across U.S. media. How do we conceptualize the nature of visual perception and reception? The history of colonialism, secular modernity, gender, patriarchy, and the blurred distinctions between religion and racialization have all contributed to a milieu of visual cultures that stage visions of and arguments about Islam. Hostility towards Muslims has not abated as we venture well into the 21st century, and many remain quick to blame an amorphous media for fomenting animosity towards the "real" Islam. We use these terms of engagement as the start of our inquiry: what is the promise of a meaningful image? What processes of secular translation are at work in its creation and consumption? Is there room for resistance, legibility, and representation in U.S. popular culture, and what does representation buy you in this age? We will pair theoretical methods for thinking about imagery, optics, perception, and perspective alongside case studies from film, stage, comedy, streaming content, and television shows, among others. Students will critically engage and analyze these theories in the contexts from which these works emerge and meld into a mobile and diasporic U.S. context. Together, we will reflect on the moral, political, and categorical

commitments vested in different forms of media against historical trends of the 20th and 21st century. *Samah Choudhury*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 27555

ISLM 39031 – Sufism and Coloniality

A close reading of 19th-20th century Sufi figures who engaged in peaceful and armed resistance against British and French colonial powers in North and West Africa. This course centers Sufi figures often overlooked in decolonial and anti-colonial literature, such as Amadou Bamba, Haj Umar Tal, Usman Dan Fodio, Emir Abdelkader al-Jaza'iri, Abdul Karim al-Khattabi, and Ahmad al-'Alawi. The mystical teachings and political activities of these leading figures will be examined within the broader context of decolonial theory and anti-colonial resistance. No Arabic required. PQ:

None, but a general knowledge of Islam is preferred. *Yousef Casewit and Maliba Chishti*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 29031

ISLM 42780 – Readings: Sufism in Morocco

A close reading 18th-19th century Moroccan Sufi texts with a focus on the Shadhili writings of Sidi Ali al-Jamal and Mulay al-'Arabi al-Darqawi. PQ: Arabic reading proficiency required. *Yousef Casewit*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 22780

### Religions in the Americas

RAME 32418 – The Scopes Trial in Historical Perspective

This course will explore in depth and in detail the 1925 Scopes Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, especially in light of its centennial. We will examine the transcript of the trial, newspaper editorials, cartoons, scholarly analyses, and various contemporary observations on the meaning and significance of the trial. Among the topics covered are the fundamentalist/modernist controversy of the 1920s and its consequences, interpretations of the origins and tenacity of the anti-evolution campaign, and broader debates about science and religion and the contested authority of experts in American society. Though much of the historical analysis will focus on the 1920s, some attention will be paid to the implications of this highly publicized trial and what it came to signify about larger cultural, political, and religious divisions in the United States. *Curtis Evans*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 32418, RLST 22418

RAME 35700 – The Christian Right

From the Gilded Age to the age of Donald Trump, conservatives Christians have played a major role in shaping American politics and culture. This course will use primary and secondary sources to explore the development of the Christian Right in the United States. We will answer essential questions about the movement: Who joins it? Who leads it? And who funds it? We will examine how conservative Christians approach not only “moral” issues like abortion but also issues like economic regulation and foreign policy. Finally, we will seek to answer the question: What is the future of the Christian Right in an increasingly diverse America? *William Schultz*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 35700, RLST 22667

RAME 50000 – Sacred Geographies: Religion in Chicago

This course is designed as a Brauer Seminar and entitled “Sacred Geographies: Religion in Chicago.” Focusing primarily though not exclusively on African American religion, the seminar will take up the history of Chicago through an examination of the relationship between the city’s religious history

and its natural and built environments. We will consider theories of religion, space, and place alongside readings that explore the overlapping and conflicting ways Chicago's pastoral and urban landscapes have shaped religious identities and traditions—and how Chicago itself has been transformed by religious practices and imaginations. The seminar will also examine privately and publicly funded attempts to preserve, publicize, and capitalize on Chicago's distinct religious history and the ways that has shaped historical memory. To this end, we will also inquire into the relationship between tourism, museums, public art, and creation of archives to the making of Chicago's sacred geographies. The purpose of the seminar is to provide students with a deeper understanding of how religion takes place by exploring the unique religious history that surrounds them. We hope the seminar fosters new questions and connections about not only what we study, but also about where the Divinity School's study of religion takes place. PQ: Consent Only: Course admission is based on application. There is a stipend for admitted students. More information about Brauer Seminar classes can be found here: <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/martin-marty-center/brauer-seminar>. *Emily Crews and Curtis Evans and Matthew Harris*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 50000

### Religious Leadership and Practice (M.Div. 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 M.Div. 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 42800 – Senior M.Div. Thesis Seminar

The senior thesis is the culminating project of the M.Div. degree, bringing the student's academic and field work to bear on an issue of significance for religious leadership and practice or public theology, broadly construed. The project involves a written thesis, a public "presentation" of some aspect of the thesis' learning, and a short essay that brings some insight from the project to bear on a contemporary situation or issue. The seminar focuses on thinking and writing in a constructive genre that is at once academically responsible and publicly accessible. and is often interdisciplinary in

nature. The seminar meets once a month throughout the entire academic year--October through May--and involves engaged dialogue around portions of student theses in progress. PQ: Third or Fourth year M.Div. students only. Course Notes: Required seminar for M.Div. students in the year in which they are writing and presenting their theses. *Cynthia Lindner*

#### RELP 50404 – Spiritual Care at the End of the World: Loss, Vulnerability, and Grief

In recent years, whether it is due to our acute or chronic awareness that we are living on a dying planet or that a micro-organism can threaten to decimate the entire human population, it has felt like one existential crisis is just around the corner from another. Terms like polytraumas and poly-crisis have seamlessly integrated into our vocabulary and become topics of public discourse. In such a rapidly changing world, how do spiritual caregivers continue to hold on to the goodness of human life and spirit and not be crushed by the immensity of pending loss? Even more, how do we attend to the flourishing of the human spirit (namely, locating hope and joy) when faced with loss more profound than it can bear?

To explore these questions, the course will draw from global religious/spiritual traditions to explore themes of loss, vulnerability, and grief in the context of spiritual care of communities in this acutely injured, actively changing world. The students will reflect on and practice acts of care drawing from their traditions and within their worlds (or context of care). Particular attention will be given to the integration of psychological and anthropological approaches to human care while considering social, political, and environmental perspectives. The course will utilize specific case examples to discuss vulnerability, survival, and resilience. Prerequisite: RELP 35202 or permission of instructor. Course Note: This course satisfies a requirement for the chaplaincy concentration. *Sunil Yadav*

#### Religious Ethics

##### RETH 33029 – Justice for Animals in Ethics and Law

Animals are in trouble all over the world. Intelligent sentient beings suffer countless injustices at human hands: the cruelties of the factory farming industry, poaching and trophy hunting, assaults on the habitats of many creatures, and innumerable other instances of cruelty and neglect. Human domination is everywhere: in the seas, where marine mammals die from ingesting plastic, from entanglement with fishing lines, and from lethal harpooning; in the skies, where migratory birds die in large numbers from air pollution and collisions with buildings; and, obviously, on the land, where the habitats of many large mammals have been destroyed almost beyond repair. Addressing these large problems requires dedicated work and effort. But it also requires a good normative theory to direct our efforts.

This class is theoretical and philosophical. Because all good theorizing requires scientific knowledge, we will be reading a good deal of current science about animal abilities and animal lives. But the focus will be on normative theory. We will study four theories currently directing practical efforts in animal welfare: the anthropocentric theory of the Non-Human Rights Project; the Utilitarian theory of Jeremy Bentham, J. S. Mill, and Peter Singer; the Kantian theory of Christine Korsgaard; and an approach using the Capabilities Approach, recently developed by Martha Nussbaum. PQ: This is a new 1L elective, in connection with the Law School's new program in Animal Law. Law students and PhD students may register without permission. MA students and undergrads need the instructor's permission, and to receive permission they must be third or fourth-year Philosophy concentrator with a letter of recommendation from a faculty member in the Philosophy Department. Because all assessment is by an eight-hour take-home exam at the end of the class, the

letter should describe, among other things, the student's ability in self-monitored disciplined preparation. Martha Nussbaum

#### RETH 38400 – Third Millennium Ethics: New Trends in Living the Good Life

This seminar focuses on contemporary developments in the study of Religious Ethics. These include—but are not limited to—attention to a variety of concerns such as religious diversity, atheism, gender, sexuality, race, the environment, and non-human animals; as well as inclusion of methods such as ethnography, attention to faith-based activism, and comparison. We will proceed via an examination of 'classical' and most recent scholarly works in pairs. And ultimately labor towards a better sense of the development of religious ethics as an inter- and multi-disciplinary endeavor of capturing visions of a life lived well. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Raissa von Doetinchem de Rande*

#### RETH 42501 – Islamic Ethics I: Foundations

A graduate seminar that familiarizes students with a field without sharp counters through an encounter with basic theoretical issues and classical texts. We set the Islamic tradition in conversation with issues ranging from individual flourishing and the organization of society to conceptions of law and prophecy. The course is framed by consideration of the possibilities and pitfalls of the field as presently construed, understanding the contested nature of both 'ethics' and 'Islam.' Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Raissa von Doetinchem de Rande*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): ISLM 42501

#### RETH 49700 – The Theological Ethics of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth

This course is organized to explore methodological and substantive issues in theological ethics through examining the thought of two giants in Christian theology and ethics: Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth. The method of this course is critical, analytic, and comparative rather than historical. Several basic questions will orient our work. Consider a few: What is the conception of "theology" and "ethics" in these Christian thinkers and how are these related? What are the source of authority and the criteria of judgment in both theological and ethical argument? How do theological ethical arguments relate to philosophical ones and with respect to what sources and criteria? Do theological-ethical positions fit standard distinctions within moral philosophy? How are various sources—Christian and non-Christian—used within theological and ethical arguments? How do theological claims about God's relation to the world, sin, redemption, creation, love, and Christ relate to the ethical outlook of each theologian? What are the view of persons as moral beings and also societies and communities in these positions? How are judgments about specific moral questions developed, argued, and validated? PQ: Previous work in theology and/or ethics. *William Schweiker*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 49701

### Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

#### RLVC 38717 – The Veil and the Vision: Image and Cover in the Western Artistic Tradition

This course will explore the fascinating culture of covering and veiling sacred icons, portraits and images that were thought to cause trauma or outrage in the European tradition. It will begin in the ancient world and explore mediaeval, Renaissance and modern art – both paintings and sculptures, as well as images that represent the covering of images... It will attempt to restore the sensual, the tactile and the performative to the experience of viewing art and engaging with its powers, by

contrast to the prevailing regime of disinterested contemplation encouraged by the modernist art gallery. The course will be taught with much encouragement to students to experiment and think against the grain. Course Note: The course will be taught over 4.5 weeks in the Spring Quarter on an intensive schedule. *Jaś Elsner*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 28717

#### RLVC 38775 – Racial Melancholia

This course provides students with an opportunity to think race both within a psychoanalytic framework and alongside rituals of loss, grief, and mourning. In particular, we will interrogate how psychoanalytic formulations of mourning and melancholia have shaped theories of racial melancholia that emerged at the turn of the twenty-first century. Turning to Asian American, African American, and Latinx theoretical and literary archives, we will interrogate the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality and 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, if understood as themselves rituals of grief, might psychoanalysis and the writing of literature assume the role of religious devotion in the face of loss and trauma? *Kris Trujillo*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 28775

#### RLVC 38802 – Art and Pilgrimage from Antiquity to Christianity

This course will present an interdisciplinary interrogation into the nature of pilgrimage in pre-Christian antiquity and the rise of Christian pilgrimage in the years after Constantine. It will simultaneously be a reflection on the disciplinary problems of examining the phenomena of pilgrimage from various standpoints including art history, archaeology, anthropology, the history of religions, the literary study of travel writing, as well as on the difficulties of reading broad and general theories against the bitty minutiae of ancient evidence and source material. The core material, beyond the theoretical overview, will be largely limited to antiquity and early Christianity; but if students wish to write their papers on areas beyond this relatively narrow remit (in other religions, in the Middle Ages, modern or early modern periods), this will be positively encouraged! The course will be examined by a paper due at the end of the quarter. Course Note: The course will be taught over 4.5 weeks in the Spring Quarter on an intensive schedule. *Jaś Elsner*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 28802

#### RLVC 47100 – History of Criticism: Dante to Hegel

This course pursues the claim that the distinctly modern notion of “criticism” can be traced to the confluence of the biblical hermeneutics (in Spinoza, Luther, and the translators of the King James Bible), aesthetics (in Winkelmann, Burke, Kant, and Hegel), and the emergence of the figure of the literary critic (in Sydney, Addison, Johnson, and Goethe). Key concepts link these: the emergence of the vernacular (Dante, and again the KJB translators); “literature” as a national and a world phenomenon (Johnson, Goethe); and revisionist articulations of form and beauty and, with these, the category of the sublime (Longinus, Burke, Kant.) The authority of “judgment” in relation to criticism, with particular reference to newly reconfigured and still intersecting institutions (religious, political, individual, etc.) will be an overarching theme throughout the course. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Richard Rosengarten*

#### RLVC 47724 – Diasporism in Modern Judaism

This course will consider the fate of arguments for Diasporic Jewish Identity and thought in the 20th and 21st centuries in philosophical and literary sources and will consider the relationship between debates within Jewish thought and correlates in Black Studies and Post-colonial Studies. Thinkers to be read include Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacob Gordon, Jacques Derrida, Sarah Kofman, Susan Taubes, Philip Roth, Fred Moten, Christina Sharpe and others. *Sarah Hammerschlag*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 47724, DVPR 47724, RLST 27724

RLVC 50201 – Pre-Modern Critical Theory: Theory, Critique, and The Making of The Past  
This course introduces students to ancient, medieval, and early modern literary theory and to modern engagements with these theoretical interventions. We will explore how communities in the past imagined their practices of reading, writing, and interpretation—with especial emphasis on scriptural exegesis—but also what constituted a text, in the first place. How, indeed, were these practices foundational to the formation of communities and, in turn, to alterity? And what role do these literary theories and practices play in longer histories of "theory" and "critique." Staging dialogues between the past and the present, this course will ask what the political implications of designating an archive as "ancient," "archaic," "medieval," or "premodern" are in order to understand how and why the past is continually made and remade. Course Note: This course fulfills the winter core requirement for first-year Ph.D. students in Comparative Literature. *Kris Trujillo*

### Theology

THEO 42001 – Feminist Theory and Theology  
In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* took up the old question of sexual difference; it was never the same question again. This seminar will engage a close reading of *The Second Sex* in English translation, considering Beauvoir's picture of freedom, desire, and subjectivity as situated, and attending to her interpretation of mysticism, "vocation," and transcendence. We will consider the reception of Beauvoir's work by selected feminist, womanist, and queer thinkers, and critically assess that legacy. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Kristine Culp*

THEO 44920 – Platonic Theologies  
This course will examine the platonic theologies of Simone Weil, Iris Murdoch, and Robert Adams, with an eye to answering questions such as the following: what qualifies a theology as 'platonic'? What is the role of contemplation in such theologies? How do they approach metaphysics, ethics, and politics? *Kevin Hector*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): DVPR 44920, RLST 24920

### Religious Studies (Undergraduate Designation)

RLST 20250 – Mormons and Armenians in the Modern Middle East: Conversion, Persecution, and Immigration  
This course explores the contours, types, and impacts of encounters between Western Protestant Missionaries and the Armenian populations of the late Ottoman and post-Ottoman Middle East, particularly between Mormon missionaries and local Armenian populations. The status of Mormons and their Armenian converts in the late Ottoman Empire is best understood within a framework of "compounding marginalization." Mormons were extremely marginalized in the United States as a

distinct religious community known for their controversial religious practice of polygamy. Mormon Missionaries were marginalized by other Western Missionaries, local Christian Clergies, and by the Ottoman administration. Armenians were a marginalized ethno-religious community in the late Ottoman Empire, and Mormon Armenians were doubly marginalized by the broader Armenian community and the Ottoman state. These intersecting degrees of compounding marginality greatly affected the LDS Armenian community, particularly in terms of increased persecution and hardship. *Kent Schull*

#### RLST 20403 – Islamic Thought and Literature III: Education, Students, and Protests in the Modern MENA

In the modern MENA, universities, schools and campuses were important arenas of intellectual life, political formations, and democratic, anticolonial and feminist struggles. In these educational venues, professors and teachers encouraged debates about Islam as a faith, a civilization, and a culture. This class will thus follow the history of MENA educational institutions, like the Syrian Protestant College (later the American University of Beirut), and the ways in which they shaped ideas about Enlightenment, science and modernity. We will likewise explore the careers and writings of teachers, pedagogues and theoreticians of education, like Butrus al-Bustani, Khalil al-Sakakini, Mary Ajami, Sati al-Husri, Taha Hussein, and Ghassan Kanafani. In tandem, we will look at students' activism in the Middle East. Some of the case studies we will examine include: students in the Levant who defended a professor persecuted for his support of Darwinism in 1882; anticolonial student activism in Egypt in 1919; students' demonstrations against the British and French mandates and the spread of Zionism, which took place in Baghdad, Jerusalem, and Damascus during the interwar period; campus activism of nationalists, communists, and Muslim Brothers in the 1940s and 1950s and the radicalization of universities and schools following the Nakba and global processes of decolonization; and education in Palestinian refugee camps and Israeli transit camps. This course sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies. *Orit Bashkin*

#### 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 22014 – Jewish Civilization III: Narratives of Assimilation

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. This Jewish Civilization III course offers a survey into the manifold strategies of

representing the Jewish community in East Central Europe beginning from the nineteenth century to the Holocaust. Engaging the concept of liminality-of a society at the threshold of radical transformation-it will analyze Jewry facing uncertainties and challenges of the modern era and its radical changes. Students will be acquainted with problems of cultural and linguistic isolation, hybrid identity, assimilation, and cultural transmission through a wide array of genres-novel, short story, epic poem, memoir, painting, illustration, film. The course draws on both Jewish and Polish-Jewish sources; all texts are read in English translation. Course Notes: In order for Jewish Civilization III to qualify for the general education requirement in civilization studies, the student must have completed Jewish Civilization I and II. Jewish Civilization III, however, may also be taken as an independent elective. *Bożena Shallcross*

RLST 22203 – Italian Renaissance: Petrarch, Machiavelli, and The Wars of Popes and Kings  
Florence, Rome, and the Italian city-states in the age of plagues and cathedrals, Petrarch and Machiavelli, Medici and Borgia (1250–1600), with a focus on literature, philosophy, primary sources, the revival of antiquity, and the papacy's entanglement with pan-European politics. We will examine humanism, patronage, politics, corruption, assassination, feuds, art, music, magic, censorship, education, science, heresy, and the roots of the Reformation. Writing assignments focus on higher level writing skills, with a creative writing component linked to our in-class role-played reenactment of a Renaissance papal election (LARP). First-year students and non-History majors welcome. PQ: Graduate students by consent only; register for the course as HIST 90000 Reading and Research: History. Course Note: Assignments: short papers, alternative projects. *Ada Palmer*

RLST 22812 – Introduction to Hinduism

What is Hinduism? Various described as a world religion, a way of life, the basis of a national culture, and more, this course will consider how a multiplicity of traditions has become a singular “Hinduism” and, critically, what is left out. Beginning with the Vedic period in the first-millennium B.C.E and moving to our present day, we will track how complex historical interactions between Buddhists, Jains, Muslims—and eventually the British—produced the modern category of Hinduism. Students will become familiar with central religious tenets (including dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa), sectarian traditions such as Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and Śāktism, and religious literature ranging from epic to devotional poetry. As we will see, Hinduism is a flexible and elastic term that names a shifting religious identity and community. Course Note: This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. *Sarah Pierce Taylor*

RLST 23200 – Faith: A Conceptual History

A close examination of the concept of faith in Christian theological sources and in modern European philosophy: what is faith? How does its meaning change over time? What are the major models of faith among recent and contemporary Christian theologians? To what extent is theology the “self-understanding of faith”? In this course we will ask these and other questions while reading closely thinkers including Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Bultmann, Barth, and Gutierrez, among others. *Ryan Coyne*

RLST 23300 – Religion and Psychiatry

This course will investigate the many theoretical and practical problems which emerge where the domains of psychiatry and religion overlap. We will explore questions such as: What are the common realities that religious and psychiatric frameworks seek to explain? Are being “divinely inspired” and being “mad” mutually exclusive? How do religious and other cultural categories shape

the development of what are called “mental disorders”? Are cognitive behavioral therapists more effective than witchdoctors at restoring people to health? We will begin with a brief overview of the history of psychiatry, before analyzing a famous case of mass demonic possession in 17th century France. We will take several weeks to explore contemporary psychiatric diagnoses, contrasting how psychiatrists and religious authors describe similar symptoms in different ways. We will compare diverse therapeutic methods, modern and traditional, to ask what makes each of them effective or ineffective. Finally, we will survey proposed alternatives to the prevailing diagnostic frameworks within psychiatry, asking which, if any, our study of the overlapping domains of religion and psychiatry might lend support. *Owen Joyce-Coughlan*

#### RLST 23507 – Power and Responsibility in the Anthropocene

Humanity’s immense impact on Earth’s systems has led some scientists to claim that we have entered a new geological epoch: the Anthropocene. Humans’ influence on Earth’s landscape, climate system, and biodiversity inspires many to ask, in turn, What should be done about humankind’s planetary powers? Some scholars and religious leaders claim that people should take responsibility and influence Earth’s systems for good ends, while others argue that we should radically scale down such power. Still others suggest that the Anthropocene requires us to entirely revise our ideas of power and responsibility and even develop new religious sensibilities. Through discussions and focused writing assignments, students in this class will explore and evaluate these and additional responses to the Anthropocene, paying specific attention to how Anthropocene ethical thought wrestles with the place of religion on a changing planet. The course culminates in an extended examination of how Anthropocene discourse conceals racial antagonisms and contemporary decolonial struggles. *Colin Weaver*

#### 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 religious faith and its relation to morality and the human good. We will explore Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling* and also Nietzsche’s works, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. The course moves in interlocking moments: an inquiry into Kierkegaard’s and Nietzsche’s account of religion and its moral outlook, and their outlooks on how best to live given their assessments of religion and morality. Additionally, the course will explore their styles of writing and the relation between style and the purpose and content of their thought. 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 religious and ethical thinking. *William Schweiker*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RETH 33599, THEO 33599

#### RLST 23608 – Worshipping the God that Dances: Embodied Forms of Knowledge, Self, and Divinity

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, “I would only believe in a god that knows how to dance.” This course will use Nietzsche’s comment as a springboard for critical philosophical exploration of embodied theories of knowledge, reality, and the divine. Along the way, we will leverage the image of a ‘dancing god’ to interrogate philosophical and religious dichotomies in both Western and Eastern traditions (e.g., between sacred/profane, theory/praxis, transcendence/immanence, masculine/feminine). Some traditions have used the metaphor of dance to theorize about a god of dynamic becoming vs. a “wallflower” god of static being. Contemporary cognitive scientists, inspired by Buddhist philosophy, speculate that selfhood might resemble something like an

embodied form of “dance,” rather than a substantial mode of existence. How, then, can the notion of a “dancing god” challenge orthodox, atemporal, or disembodied conceptions of God, reality, and human experience? In what ways does a practical ‘knowing how’ differ from a purely theoretical ‘knowing that’—and how does this impact the meaning and purpose of religious life? Readings will include Nietzsche, Durkheim, William James, Charles Hartshorne, Michael Polanyi, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others; no prior experience with the philosophy of religion is required. *Jesse Berger*

#### RLST 24002 – Is Religion Bad for Women?

Some scholars working in the study of gender and sexuality view religion as the conservative enemy of progress, irreconcilably antagonistic to the flourishing of any non-normative gender or sexuality. At the same time, some religious practitioners view feminism as a Western or liberal invention, an imposition that attempts to manage the lives of religious subjects. Still others find feminism and religious commitment mutually reinforcing, and have developed feminist, womanist, and queer rituals and theologies. This course examines contemporary texts, ethnographies, memoirs, and films that grapple with these tensions. In so doing, the course also helps students develop familiarity with foundational categories both in religious studies and in the study of gender and sexuality. Further questions to be explored include: Does religion facilitate or oppose the flourishing of women, queers, and people of color? Is religion a guardian of tradition that resists politically progressive aims, or do religions offer resources for interrogating secular liberalism? The course primarily considers Islamic, Christian, and Jewish traditions. Prior coursework in religious studies or gender and sexuality studies is helpful but not necessary. *Hannah Jones*

#### RLST 24055 – Understanding Practical Wisdom

Thinking about the nature of wisdom goes back to the Greek philosophers and the classical religious sages, but the concept of wisdom has changed in many ways over the history of thought. While wisdom has received less scholarly attention in modern times, it has recently re-emerged in popular discourse with a growing recognition of its potential importance for addressing complex issues in many domains. But what is wisdom? It’s often used with a meaning more akin to “smart” or “clever.” Is it just vast knowledge? This course will examine the nature of wisdom—how it has been defined in philosophy and psychological science, how its meaning has changed, and what its essential components might be. We will discuss how current philosophical and psychological theories conceptualize wisdom and consider whether, and how, wisdom can be studied scientifically; that is, can wisdom be measured and experimentally manipulated to illuminate its underlying mechanisms and understand its functions? Finally, we will explore how concepts of wisdom can be applied in business, education, medicine, the law, and in the course of our everyday lives. Readings will be drawn from a wide array of disciplines including philosophy, classics, history, psychology, behavioral economics, medicine, and public policy. The course will include lectures by philosophers and psychologists. This course is offered in association with the Chicago Moral Philosophy Project and the Good Life program (the Hyde Park Institute). PQ: Third- or fourth-year standing. *Anne Henley and Howard Nussbaum*

#### RLST 24240 – Buddhism and Science: A Critical Introduction

“Buddhism is the only religion able to cope with modern scientific needs.” This quotation, often erroneously attributed to Albert Einstein, prompts the question: Why are such statements about Buddhism so easily taken nowadays as credible and plausible? Currently, it seems no other religion is held as compatible with science as Buddhism: From the recent ‘mindfulness’ craze in psychology and medicine, to the ‘Emptiness’ of quantum physics, Buddhism is uniquely hailed as a ‘rational

religion' whose insights anticipated modern science by millennia. Some even suggest it is not a 'religion' at all, but rather a sort of 'mind-science.' This course functions as both an introduction to Buddhism and a critical survey of its modern scientific reception. As we explore Buddhism's relationship to contemporary scientific theories in psychology and physics, we will be guided by questions such as: What methodological principles distinguish the practices of religion and science? What are the different ways they can be brought into relation? Why is Buddhism, in particular, singled out as uniquely scientific? What modern historical factors, like colonialism and secularization, contribute to this contemporary meme? Why does it matter whether Buddhism is compatible with science or not? What, exactly, is at stake in this relationship? And for whom? No prior study of Buddhism or the philosophy of science is expected. Course Note: This course counts as a Cognitive Science extra-disciplinary course. *Jesse Berger*

#### RLST 25510 – Christianity, Nonviolence, and Realism

This course investigates the connections between personal spiritual development and social engagement with justice movements. What, if any, effect does personal belief and faith have in directing political will? How does nonviolent resistance encounter the institutional realities of social advocacy? And lastly, in what ways are religious orientations challenged by globalized financial systems and power structures? The nonviolent religious philosophies of Howard Thurman and Daniel Berrigan will be contextualized within their respective Christian traditions and interreligious commitments. We will then encounter the challenge of Political Realism through the works of Reinhold Niebuhr and Samantha Power to interrogate the place of personal faith commitments within a pluralized society and the concrete realities of war, peace, and international conflict. *Foster Pinkney*

#### RLST 26001 – Religion and Visual Culture in the Late Antique Mediterranean

In this seminar, we examine sacred sites and artifacts of early Christians and their neighbors in the regions around the Mediterranean from the third century to about 750 CE. Case studies will illustrate the wealth of religious art and architecture associated with different religions that existed side by side—Christianity, Judaism, polytheism, and emerging Islam. This course has five main objectives: (1) to examine how the designs of religious spaces, buildings, and objects respond to specific spiritual or ritualistic needs; (2) to gain familiarity with typical features characterizing the arts of each religion or sect; (3) to identify elements of a common visual language that result from shared traditions or artistic cross-pollination; (4) to examine different ways in which material artifacts were employed as means of ideological propaganda; and (5) to study art and architecture as evidence of doctrinal competition and conflict. While this course foregrounds the study of material culture, written sources (in translation) complement the analysis of the visual evidence. *Karin Krause*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 36001, HCHR 36001

#### RLST 26062 – Jewish Graphic Narrative: Between Memory and Caricature

This course explores the history of comics through the lens of its Jewish creators and Jewish themes, and the history of Jewish culture and society through the lens of graphic storytelling. We learn to interpret this complex art form that combines words and hand-drawn images, translating temporal progression into a spatial form. Reading American, European, and Israeli narratives, our discussions will focus on autobiographical and journalistic accounts of uprooting, immigration, conflict, and loss. We will ask: how do Jewish graphic novelists use the conventions and the grammar of this medium? How do they grapple with the proximity between caricature and comics, and with the legacy of racist caricatures? And what is the relationship between graphic narrative and memory

culture? A central concept or figure we will keep returning to is the face, which is a central element in the aesthetics of comics and graphic narrative, and a key to its meaning-making. *Na'ama Rokem*

#### RLST 26306 – Religion, Medicine, and Human Flourishing on the South Side of Chicago

Modern medicine historically promotes health as central to the good life. The contemporary turn in the medical and social sciences to the more capacious concept of human flourishing, however, presses these disciplines into conversation with longer traditions of inquiry on the nature of the good life for individuals and within community. How might philosophical, cultural, and religious traditions reveal the powers and limits of contemporary views of human flourishing? How does the on-the-ground experience of those pushing to advance human flourishing on the south side of Chicago challenge these categories?

Sponsored by the Program on Medicine and Religion, the Hyde Park Institute, and the Chicago Collective on Faith & Flourishing, this course is an innovative experiential course open to undergraduates in the College. This course seeks to expose students to traditional and contemporary perspectives of health and human flourishing, while offering opportunities to engage local faith-based non-profit organizations that seek to promote human flourishing among underserved communities in the South Side of Chicago.

Note: Instructor's prior consent required for course enrollment to ensure students fully appreciate the dimensions of field education and experiential learning expected from this course. *John Yoon, MD*

#### RLST 26501 – Renaissance Demonology

In this course we analyze the complex concept of demonology according to early modern European culture from a theological, historical, philosophical, and literary point of view. The term 'demon' in the Renaissance encompasses a vast variety of meanings. Demons are hybrids. They are both the Christian devils, but also synonyms for classical deities, and Neo-platonic spiritual beings. As far as Christian theology is concerned, we read selections from Augustine's and Thomas Aquinas's treatises, some complex exorcisms written in Italy, and a recent translation of the infamous "Malleus maleficarum," the most important treatise on witch-hunt. We pay close attention to the historical evolution of the so-called witch-craze in Europe through a selection of the best secondary literature on this subject, with special emphasis on Michel de Certeau's "The Possession at Loudun." We also study how major Italian and Spanish women mystics, such as Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi and Teresa of Avila, approach the issue of demonic temptation and possession. As far as Renaissance Neoplatonic philosophy is concerned, we read selections from Marsilio Ficino's "Platonic Theology" and Girolamo Cardano's mesmerizing autobiography. We also investigate the connection between demonology and melancholy through a close reading of the initial section of Robert Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" and Cervantes's short story "The Glass Graduate" ("El licenciado Vidriera"). Course Note: Course taught in English. *Armando Maggi*

#### RLST 26636 – Liberatory Violence: Part II

This course continues exploring liberatory violence by engaging the works of a selection of political theorists, historians, anthropologists, and revolutionary leaders engaged in armed struggle. Readings may include Georges Sorel and Walter Benjamin on violence; Talal Asad on suicide bombing; speeches and writings by Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara, and Nelson Mandela; women guerrillas in the South African anti-apartheid struggle; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad; the German Red Army Faction; and violence inflicted on the self, such as among hunger strikers in Ireland, Palestine, and Turkey. PQ: Open to student who took RLST 26635/AASR 46635 "Liberatory Violence" in autumn 2024, or by instructor's permission. *Alireza Doostdar*

Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 46636

RLST 27005 –Reality TV in East Asia and Beyond

Over the last several decades, reality television has become a central ingredient in media diets all across the world. One can practically trace a line from early hits like *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, which were quickly formatted for global circulation, to the recent viral success of *Squid Game*, a fictionalized account of a death-game tournament that spawned its own reality show. Why do audiences everywhere find reality TV so entertaining? What moral lessons do viewers take away from these shows? And what might scholars learn by taking this popular aesthetic form, in all its cultural variation, seriously? This course brings together media studies, aesthetic criticism, area studies, and the sociology of religion to try to answer some of these questions. The course will help students to think about the moral and spiritual beliefs embedded in popular cultural forms, but also to understand how these forms are now circulated and consumed in our contemporary media environment and what they tell us about late-stage global capitalism. Course readings will introduce students to scholarship in television studies, aesthetic criticism, religious studies, and cultural studies, providing them with the necessary foundations to analyze reality TV from multiple disciplinary perspectives. We will also screen examples of reality TV and its offshoots, with a specific focus on East Asian shows and the competition or elimination format. PQ: Students will develop skills in visual analysis, interpretation of secular religion and belief structures, social theory, and basic research and writing methods. *Angie Heo and Hoyt Long*

Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 33005

RLST 27107 – *Frankenstein*: Making Monsters in Science and Religion

“And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper,” writes Mary Shelley of *Frankenstein*. In framing her 1818 novel as itself a monster with agency, she raises questions about why and how we continue to create and regard our creations as monstrous. Why has the creation of artificial life fascinated us from ancient times to modern A.I.? How do we recognize and identify monsters, and what role do we have in their creation? Are creators responsible for their creations, or alienated from them? This class combines close reading of *Frankenstein* with religious and scientific texts on monsters, the creation of artificial life, and our moral responsibilities to our creations. We will discuss what narratives about the monstrous tell us about our values, how the “human” is contrasted with its opposites, and why the story of *Frankenstein*—as well as its predecessors and imitators—remains so hauntingly compelling. *Alex Matthews*

RLST 27332 – Themes in the Anthropology of Islam: Debates, Tradition and Critiques

The course begins by examining principal themes and debates the anthropology of Islam has engaged with in its attempt to undo Western universalist concepts such as secularism and the anthropological categories of culture and religion. We will learn to historicize these concepts and explore alternative frameworks anthropologists have offered for studying Muslim societies. We will turn an ethnographic lens towards studies on the Islamic Revival in Egypt, Turkey, Europe, and East Asia in order to study how Muslims cultivate piety, relate to the unseen, and retain cultural ties alongside their religious identities. In the process, we will learn the ways they trouble conventional notions around women’s agency, ideas around modernity’s “disenchantment,” and secular conceptions of belief. We will then explore texts that indirectly problematize the anthropology of Islam’s coordinates around orthopraxy, authority, and ritual. As we do so, we will interrogate the relationship between U.S. Blackness and Islam, religious piety and consumer capitalism, as well as transnationalism and incarceration. We will situate our readings and discussions within the broader

political context of the Global War on Terror and secular governmentality, with a particular attention to questions of race, gender, and political struggle. *Alexis Chavez*

#### RLST 27607 – Gender and Sexuality in World Civilizations III: Sex and Mysticism

Can you have sex with God? And, if so, what then does sex mean? What, as a matter of fact, might spiritual sex mean for the cultivation of virtues like celibacy or virginity? While early Christianity and the Christian Middle Ages are often characterized by a disciplined asceticism, erotic desire was just as central to cultivating mystical love for God. In fact, the significance of the language of love, passion, loss, nuptial bliss, jubilation, and the body has rendered the Christian mystical tradition a useful resource for contemporary—and especially psychoanalytic—theories of sex, gender, and sexuality. This course will look both to the past and the present in order to explore the workings of pre- and postmodern desire and to draw connections between Christian mysticism and theories and practices of sex. Working across historical periods, we will read exemplary pieces of Christian mystical literature, psychoanalytic theory, and contemporary literature that draws from the medieval past. PQ: This course counts as the third quarter of Civ for students who have completed the first two quarters of the sequence (GNSE 15002 and 15003). Priority will be given to students who enrolled in GNSE 15002 and 15003. If there is space, the course will be open to any student during add/drop. *Kris Trujillo*

#### RLST 27653 – Judaism and Ethnography

Defining ethnography broadly as curiosity about human difference, this course engages close readings in a vast gallery of ethnographic portraits both of and by Jews, from the Bible to the early modern period. Together, we will construct a history of this tradition by tracing patterns in how Jews are represented and how they represent themselves, as well as their own Others, in dialogue with those cultures. While anthropologists and literary theorists will help us to appreciate the diversity and fluidity of Jewish (auto-)ethnography, these thinkers will also turn our critical gaze on Greek, Roman, and European Christian images of Jews and Judaism. This history is not simply a case-study in an overlooked ethnographic tradition but an archive where influential and often oppressive "Western" ways of thinking about human difference have been spawned, cross-fertilized, resisted, and transformed. *James A. Redfield*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 37653, AASR 37653

#### RLST 28308 – Introduction to Byzantine Art

In this course we will explore works of art and architecture as primary sources on the civilization of Byzantium. Through the close investigation of artifacts of different media and techniques, students will gain insight into the artistic production of the Byzantine Empire from its beginnings in the fourth century C.E. to the Ottoman conquest in 1453. We will employ different methodological approaches and scholarly resources that are relevant for the fruitful investigation of artifacts in their respective cultural setting. In order to fully assess the pivotal importance of the visual arts in Byzantine culture, we will address a wide array of topics, including art and ritual, patronage, the interrelation of art and text, the classical heritage, art and theology, Iconoclasm, etc. *Karin Krause*

#### RLST 28312 – Iconoclasm

The recent removal of Confederate statues in the US and ISIL's destruction of ancient sites in Iraq and Syria, while motivated by different aims, find a common solution in dealing with images deemed inappropriate. Context is crucial to understanding what is at stake in these different iconoclastic acts: What is being destroyed? Who is destroying it and why? Although the term "iconoclasm" initially was used to describe the violent clashes between rival Christian ideologies over the status of images

in a religious context in the 8th century, scholars now use it more capaciously and it refers to any movement dedicated to the destruction of images, be it in ancient Mesopotamia, Reformist Europe, or Talibanist Afghanistan. While the term offers syntactical clarity, it simultaneously obscures the various processes that go into practicing iconoclasm; for example, what motivated Byzantine destruction of icons is distinct from why European colonizers destroyed Native American heritage. This seminar proposes a broad and historically contingent study of iconoclasm. By looking at a range of examples from different periods and geographical contexts, we will examine the ways in which images have been perceived as threats, aberrations, seductions, or inconveniences best removed. We will also explore the various ways in which removed images continue to resonate with new meanings. The seminar spends a week defining the key terms before delving into particular case studies of iconoclasm. PQ: Consent required. *Mobit Manohar*

#### RLST 28498 – Myth and Its Critics

Myth is essential to how humans make sense of the world: our foundational stories explain the nature of the world; they justify and explore social and sexual difference; they teach and test the limits of human agency. The course will survey contexts and uses of myth-making in the ancient Mediterranean world. We will also explore the many traditions of critique and anxiety about myth-making, among philosophers, literary critics and religious authorities. *Carolina López-Ruiz*

#### RLST 28511 – Star Wars and Religion

This course puts religious texts in 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 confessed 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 from different religions, 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. [This course features additional Monday discussion sections, scheduled in accordance with students' availability.] *Russell Johnson*

#### RLST 28711 – Law and Religion in the Modern United States

This course explores the persistent tension between law and religious faith in the United States. It will proceed loosely chronologically, beginning with the Supreme Court's first rulings on religious liberty following the Civil War and continuing into the twenty-first century. The course will also introduce students to a range of thematic issues, such as the use of state power by religious actors to regulate behavior, the place of believers (and nonbelievers) within a liberal democracy, the religious rights of corporations, and the emergence of forms of legal pluralism as religious law and civil law increasingly intersect. Readings will include case law, legal and political theorists, as well as religious voices. Students will complete a significant literature review on a topic of their choosing. Course Notes: This course counts as an LLSO junior colloquium. Preference is given to LLSO juniors. *Jacob Betz*

#### RLST 28803 – Magical Politics

Following Donald Trump's election to the presidency in 2016, witches all over North America collaborated on spells to resist him and his politics by 'binding' his administration. Alt-right activists had already for some time been engaged in 'meme magic' against Trump's liberal critics. How can we begin to understand these magical interventions in present-day politics? Rather than presuming that 'magical politics' is a fringe or crackpot phenomenon, this class draws on activist, esoteric, and

academic materials to suggest that our thinking about everyday life and ordinary politics can be fundamentally enlivened and enhanced by taking ‘magic’ seriously. Course Note: This is a 3CT Capstone Course. *William Mazzearella*

RLST 28883 – Occult Powers: Divinatory and Magical Sciences in the Indian and Islamicate Worlds  
This course offers a historical survey of occult sciences and practices in regions spanning from the Arab world to South Asia and focuses on the medieval and early modern periods. Far from being marginal, practices pertaining to what is now seen as the supernatural realm, such as magic and divination, were classified as sciences by reputable scholars, were sponsored by rulers, and had their specific written corpus and techniques. The practice of the occult also involved vernacular disciplines practiced by healers and fortune tellers for any client seeking help or advice. This course will look at a vast range of written and visual sources on subjects ranging from astrology, alchemy and magical cures, subjugation of planets and spirits, yogic superpowers, bibliomancy (book divination), oneiromancy (dream divination), physiognomy, letterism, charm making. It will look at the dynamics of cultural transfers as occult sciences were borrowed and adapted from the Greek to the Arab world and back to Latin Europe, and from Sanskrit to Persian in the Indian subcontinent. *Jean Arzoumanov*

RLST 28929 – Cabal, Cult, and Crisis: Religion and Contemporary Conspiracy Theory  
We live in an age of crisis for liberal democracy, and conspiracy theories are often said to be at the heart of this crisis. While Alex Jones, Infowars, and QAnon have become household names, there is still no consensus on what makes a “conspiracy theory” or how scholars should approach these topics. Are “New World Order”-style conspiracy beliefs irrational or false on their face? Can liberal-democratic regimes which pride themselves on their ability to accommodate diverse religious viewpoints successfully integrate conspiracy believers? In this course, we will approach the subject of conspiracy theory by engaging with theorists in their own words, videos, and images, while sampling a range of academic and public-facing literature on new religious movements, religion and politics, and epistemology. In so doing, we will apply critical lenses of diverse sorts to mixed media, as we collectively develop methodologies for carrying out original research on “low-status” subjects using un-curated archives. No prior acquaintance with conspiracy-oriented materials required. *Justin Smolin*

RLST 29300 – Asceticism: Forming the Self  
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 technē for self-fashioning. Nevertheless, scholars have struggled to theorize asceticism across religious traditions. This signature course, taught by two scholars working in disparate historical periods and religious traditions (early Christianity and medieval Indian religious literature), explores how gender theory has engaged ascetic practices for understanding the body and human potential. Students will engage asceticism as a series of techniques or forms of life 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. PQ: No prior knowledge of the religious traditions or critical theory discussed is expected. *Erin Walsh and Sarah Pierce Taylor*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 39300, RLVC 39300, BIBL 39300, HREL 39300