

# DIVINITY COURSE CATALOG 2025-2026

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 2025

### 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. *Dan Arnold*

### Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

#### AASR 35100 – Religion and Performance

This course explores the intersection of religion and performance/theatre through the lenses of performance studies that highlight religious practices, investigate worship practices that incorporate theatrical modes, and examine representations of religion and faith practices in and through secular performances. We will study disparate performances of religion (such as prayer, dances, stage plays, music, and art) that involve major religions of the world and some minor ones. Performance activities allow the experimentation and embodied expressions that can authorize normativity as well as enable transgressions. What this homology of religion and performance ultimately shows is a recognition of their mutual expressive force, infinite creative potential, and the power of human imagination. Students will learn practices of meaning that play on all the chords of the sensorium from where cognition and experience emerge or co-arise. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Abimbola Adelakun*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RAME 35100, HCHR 35100

#### 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 35500 – Money and Morality

In this course we will study anthropological perspectives on economic behavior and the moral ideas that guide them. We will ask how material conditions and specific social contexts shape religious and moral attitudes towards the exchange of things (e.g. human body parts, heirlooms, and commodity goods). This course will be of benefit to anyone seeking to bring the theoretical tools of economic anthropology to bear on the study of religious practice and ideology, as well as those more broadly interested in critical perspectives on capitalism and social theories of gift and commodity exchanges. PQ: Enrollment by Consent Only. Students (grad and undergrad) should email the professor a couple of paragraphs on their preparedness for a theory heavy anthropological course and how this course relates to their research interests. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll.

*Elham Miresghbi*

#### AASR 35530 – Introduction to Critical Development Studies

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. This course was previously named Critical Development Theories and Approaches. *Maliba Chishti*

### 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 Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) is a complex anthology of disparate texts and reflects a diversity of religious, political, and historical perspectives from ancient Israel and Judah. Because this collection of texts continues to play an important role in modern religions, new significances are often imposed upon this ancient literature. In this course, we will attempt to read biblical texts on their own terms and will also contextualize their ideas and goals with texts and material culture from ancient Mesopotamia, Syro-Palestine, and Egypt. In this way, we will discover that the Hebrew Bible is fully part of the cultural milieu of the ancient Near East. We will read a significant portion of the Hebrew Bible in English, along with selections from other ancient Near Eastern texts as well as secondary literature. This course will include discussion sections. Course Note: This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. *Jeffrey Stackert*  
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. *Jaeseok Heo*  
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 41100 – The Composition of the Pentateuch

This course will be an in-depth study of the composition of the Pentateuch/Torah and the various scholarly analyses that have been proposed for it. We will consider the origins and implications of different theories and examine various texts as case studies for understanding how the different

approaches work. All biblical texts will be read in Hebrew. PQ: Strong biblical Hebrew. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Jeffrey Stackert*

BIBL 44602 – The Song of Songs

In this text course, we will combine philology and literary theory to describe the work's coherence as a single speech event -- as a single poem and not a collection. We will also analyze its distinctive word-smithing and tones. We will also attend to its paratext, at 1:1; in the rubrics in the ancient Greek witnesses; and in the chapter division. PQ: 1 year of biblical Hebrew and 1 text course.

Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Simeon Chavel*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 44602

### Philosophy of Religion

DVPR 41100 – Anglo-American Philosophy of/and Religion

This course will examine key texts and figures in twentieth-century Anglo-American philosophy, with particular attention to their implications for the study of religion. The course is thus meant to correlate with, and prepare students for, the PR2 Exam, though exam-preparation is not its primary goal. Course Note: Undergraduates can enroll via petition. *Kevin Hector*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RAME 41100

DVPR 44276 – Tiantai Buddhism and Neo-Tiantai Thinking: Recontextualizations of Recontextualizationism

This course will explore the philosophical doctrines of classical Tiantai Buddhism and their extensions and reconfigurations as developed in the ideas of later thinkers, both Tiantai and non-Tiantai, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Readings will be drawn from the classical Tiantai thinkers Zhiyi, Zhanran and Zhili, followed by writings of early Chinese Chan Buddhism, Japanese Tendai “Original Enlightenment” thought, Kamakura Buddhist reformers including Dōgen, Nichiren and Shinran, the 20th century Confucian Mou Zongsan, and contemporary Anglophone “Neo-Tiantai” thinking. *Brook Ziporyn*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 44276, RLST 24276

DVPR 51588 – Milton and Hobbes

This course will examine two of the most important works to come out of the English civil wars: Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667, 1674). Both works deal, in radically different ways, with fundamental questions about the nature of human life and human politics. Throughout, we will contextualize each of these works with other texts written by Hobbes, Milton, and their contemporaries, as well as recent work by historians of philosophy, political theorists, and literary critics. *Timothy Harrison*

### History of Christianity

HCHR 41500 – Theology, Society, and Culture in Early Modern Europe

This course will give students a thorough grounding in Reformation-era Europe. It focusses both on the Reformation as a theological phenomenon, giving ample space to the key arguments and ideas of famous Protestant reformers (Luther; Zwingli; Calvin), while also taking seriously the impact that reform movements had on contemporary society, including attitudes to gender, sexuality, 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. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Kirsten Macfarlane*

#### HCHR 50400 – Early Christian Rhetoric

An examination of the rhetorics (persuasive strategies) of early Christian literature, and how they were rooted in the ancient paideia (education system) and forms of public life in the Greco-Roman world. We shall focus on significant points of intersection with the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition in terms of the five “works of the *rhētor*” (invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery [with a focus on the first three]) by triangulated close readings each week in samples of rhetorical theor, textbooks and progymnasmata (preparatory assignments), majority culture (Greco-Roman) rhetorical compositions and select early Christian Greek texts. Early Christian sources studied will range from the Pauline letters to the fourth century, and (depending upon student interests) may include, in addition to Pauline texts and speeches in Acts, such authors and works as 1 Clement, Athenagoras, Origen of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, and John Chrysostom. PQ: Strong Greek skills (Attic and Koine), normally at least two years of formal instruction. Those who are interested but unsure of their preparation should feel free to contact the instructor. *Margaret Mitchell*

Equivalent Div Course(s): BIBL 50400

#### History of Judaism

##### HIJD 36314 – Judaism and Science

We shall examine how Jewish thinkers examined the interplay between science and the Jewish intellectual tradition, with particular focus on the Middle Ages and Renaissance. This course will explore questions such as: Is the study of science opposed to the study of Jewish texts? Should one study science differently from the way of studying traditional Jewish texts? Are different logical syllogisms appropriate for science and for religious texts? Additionally, we shall examine the materials and formal structures that Jewish thinkers had to study science. We shall begin with the introduction of translations in the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries among Hebrew readers who had no access to Universities and continue through to the opening of (some) Universities to Jewish students in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Readings include Maimonides, Jacob Anatoli, Gersonides, Albo, Judah Messer Leon, Alemanno, Isaac Abravanel, and Obadiah Sforno. *Yehuda Halper*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 26314

##### HIJD 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. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition the instructor to enroll. *Sheila Jelen*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 53400, AASR 53400

HIJD 34109 – Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* Project

Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985) is a 9 ½ hour film comprised of Holocaust testimonies – by survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders. It represents the streamlining of 150 hours of film footage collected over the course of nearly a decade all over the world. In this class, we will explore the film and the discourses that have grown up around it, such as the nature of Holocaust representation, the ontology of Holocaust testimonies, and the limits of translation in understanding the history of the Holocaust. We will work with the outtakes from the film at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to better understand the narrative Lanzmann constructed not only through what he chose to include in the final cut, but also what he chose to exclude. As we analyze Lanzmann’s magnum opus, we will also explore associated films – by Lanzmann and by others – that grew out of Shoah and that shed further light on it. A final “Outtakes” project will give students the opportunity to suggest their own version of the film, with materials from the archive. *Sheila Jelen*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 34109, RLST 24109

### 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.  
*Stephan Licha*

Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 32900

HREL 34309 – History of Censorship from the Inquisition to the Internet

Censorship over time and space, with a focus on the history of books and information technologies. The class will meet in Special Collections, and students will work with rare books and archival materials. Half the course will focus on censorship in early modern Europe, Latin America and Iberian Asia, including the Inquisition, the printing press, and clandestine literature in the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Special focus on the effects of censorship on classical literature, both newly rediscovered works like Lucretius and lost books of Plato, and authors like Pliny the Elder and Seneca who had been available in the Middle Ages but became newly controversial in the Renaissance. The other half of the course will look at modern and contemporary issues, from wartime censorship, to comic books, to digital-rights management, to free speech on our own campus. *Ada Palmer*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 22121

HREL 38140 – Golems, Angels, and AI

What makes us human? Is it our bodies or our souls? Our propensity to reason or our capacity for love? Or is it our ability to select all squares containing bicycles?

In this interdisciplinary course, we consider what it means to be human by contrasting the human with the non-human. We think with sci-fi authors about how humans are different from androids and aliens. We think with scientists about how humans are different from animals and algorithms. We think with religious traditions about how humans are different from angels and abominations. Topics to be discussed include what we owe to our creators and our creations, what dehumanization is and why we do it, how people throughout history have tried to transcend their physical forms, and what monsters have to tell us about the good life. *James T. Robinson and Russell Johnson*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 38140, ISLM 38140, RLST 28140

HREL 38777 – Black and Brown in Babylon

In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W.E.B. Du Bois proclaimed that "the problem of the color line [is] the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea." Du Bois imagined one solution to this problem in his novel *Dark Princess* (1928) through the romance of an African American man with an Indian princess. What other relationships have Black and South Asian people imagined and concretized in their struggles for freedom? This course explores the braided histories of Black and South Asian peoples in their various diasporas in order to interrogate the world-systems of race, caste, and colonialism. We study how the connections between Blacks and South Asians have generated new modes of critical analysis, knowledge production, and artistic creation to imagine possible worlds beyond the conditions imposed by racial capitalism. *Anand Venkatkrishnan and Matthew Harris*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RAME 38777, AASR 38777, RLST 28777

HREL 40020 – Contemporary Topics in the Study of South Asian Religion: The Hinduism Debate

This annual course, taught by rotating faculty, explores contemporary topics in the study of South Asian religion. This year, it focuses on the debate about the origins of Hinduism as an organic and emic category that historically developed within the subcontinent, a creation of the colonial knowledge encounter, or a hybrid formation of the two. Starting with Richard King's *Orientalism and Religion* (1999) and Brian K. Pennington's *Was Hinduism Invented?* (2005) the course will cover the last twenty-five years of scholarly debate that moved beyond the initial excavation of the colonial archive. The course will conclude with an analysis of "the Hinduism Debate" and how it has contributed to the rise of certain forms of politicized Hinduism within the United States and the diaspora. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Sarah Pierce Taylor*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 40025

## Islamic Studies

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. *Pamela Klasova*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20201

#### ISLM 36211 – Poetry and Empire: Readings in Abbasid Arabic Poetry

Arabic poetry has been a major force in Middle Eastern societies since the seventh century when it became the elite culture of the Arabo-Islamic empire until today. This course focuses on poetry from the "Golden Age of Islam" during the Abbasid period and especially on three famous poets: Abū Nuwās (d. 814), al-Mutanabbī (d. 965), and al-Ma‘arrī (d. 1057). While the emphasis will be on close reading of their poems (in Arabic), we will also discuss broader questions: How does this poetry reflect the world of the vast and quickly evolving world of the Islamic empire? How does it relate to its societies, political structures, and religious institutions? PQ: Ideally, students with 3 years of Arabic (or equivalent) would take this class. If you have less and have a good reason to take it, please contact the instructor. *Pamela Klasova*

#### ISLM 37520 – Eros, Religion, and Poetry: The Ghazal

The ghazal is one of the oldest genres of poetry that continues to thrive to this day. This course examines ghazals across multiple languages, with a focus on the Persian and Urdu tradition. We will learn how to read a ghazal, as well as how not to read one. We will meet a large number of ghazal poets, and the many kinds of things for which they use this remarkably adaptable genre. We will also consider significant events in the ghazal's long life, especially the threat it faced in the face of colonial modernity, as well as its spectacular survival. Finally, we will consider the place of the ghazal within Islamic lifeworlds, exploring the connection between the ghazal's poetics and questions of truth, ethics, and religion, challenging the category of the "literary" itself. *Shariq Khan*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 27520

#### 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 Chishty*

Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 39030, RLST 29030

#### ISLM 49003 – Islam Beyond the Human: Spirits, Demons, Devils, and Ghosts

This seminar explores the diverse spiritual and sentient lifeforms within Islamic cosmology that exist beyond the human—from jinn, angels, and ghosts to demons and devils. We will focus on theological, scientific, philosophical, anthropological, and historical accounts of these creatures across a variety of texts, as well as their literary and filmic afterlives in contemporary cultural

representations. In so doing, we consider the various religious, social, and cultural inflections that shape local cosmological imaginaries. We ask how reflecting on the nonhuman world puts the human itself in question, including such concerns as sexuality and sexual difference, the boundaries of the body, reason and madness, as well as the limits of knowledge. PQ: Enrollment by consent only for graduate students. Grad students should send the instructors a paragraph explaining their interest and prior preparation or familiarity with the themes in the course. *Alireza Doostdar and Hoda El Shakry*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 49003, RLST 29003

### Religions in the Americas

RAME 42901 – Christianity and Slavery in America, 1619-1865  
We will be examining the relationship between Christian thought/practice and the institutions of slavery as they evolved historically, especially in the context of European enslavement of peoples of African descent in the colonies of British North America and in the antebellum South. The following questions will be addressed in some form through our readings and class discussions: How and why did slavery become a moral problem for abolitionists? How and why did white evangelical Christians, especially in the South, become the most prominent defenders of slavery? What role did race play in the historical development of slavery and how did Christianity sustain and perpetuate racial divisions and sanction for human bondage? How did people of African descent shape and practice Christianity in British North America and in the Southern states? *Curtis Evans*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 42901, RLST 21303

### Religious Leadership and Practice (MDiv Courses)

RELP 30500 – Colloquium: Introduction to Religious Leadership and Practice  
This year-long integration seminar grounds first year M.Div. students in habits and perspectives essential to the practice of religious life and leadership. Students will cultivate the discipline of attention--learning to read closely, to listen deeply, to interrogate their experience, and to participate in rigorous critical conversation, across religious traditions. During the first quarter, students will explore the relationship of language, narrative; and belief: the second quarter will engage students in a close encounter with urban ministry; during the third quarter, students will integrate tradition, reason, and experience as they articulate definitions of ministry. First year MDiv students only.  
*Cynthia Lindner*

RELP 35100 – Arts of Religious Leadership and Practice: Ritual and Speaking  
This is the first of a three-course sequence in the arts of religious leadership that spans the entire year in the second year MDiv curriculum. In this course students will explore the world-making power of ritual--religious and secular, personal and corporat-- and practice the craft of speaking as meaning-making. Open to second year MDivs; others by permission of instructor. *Cynthia Lindner*

RELP 40600 – Field Work Practicum I  
The course provides a forum for practical theological reflection through ongoing discussion with classmates of both field experience and general issues of ministerial practice. Practicum complements the field placement experience of MDiv students as a source of accountability for

student, site, and university, as well as provides space for critical reflection on the experience. Open to Second Year M.Div students only. Must have completed RELP 30500. *Erika Dornfeld*

#### RELP 42800 – Senior MDiv Thesis Seminar

The 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 Note: Required seminar for M.Div. students in the year in which they are writing and presenting their theses. *Cynthia Lindner*

### Religious Ethics

#### RETH 31101 – History of Religious and Theological Ethics I

The religions are powerful moral forces in our age of global dynamics and interactions. In this context, understanding the history of these moral forces is crucial for contemporary life and thought. This is a course in the first part of a two-part history of theological and religious ethics. It is conducted through lectures and the study of basic, classic texts. The course moves from the forms of ethics or moral philosophy in the Greek and Roman worlds through strands of the Hebrew scriptures, the origins of the Christian movement, the end of the Roman Empire to the emergence of Islam, and, finally, scholastic and mystical thought (Christian, Jewish and Islamic) in the Western middle ages. The golden thread of the history is the origin and differentiation of Christian moral and theological thinking. Yet Christian theological ethics is set within and compared to others traditions (Hellenistic philosophical, Jewish, Islamic) that intersect and often collide throughout the formative centuries of Western thought. The purpose of the course is threefold: (1) to enable one a grasp of part of the history of theological and religious ethics in the West; (2) to explore the thought of specific thinkers; and, (3) to engage in reflection on the task and topics of the discipline in a global and comparative context. *William Schweiker*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 31101

#### RETH 32700 – Religion, Society, and Culture

Classic and contemporary theories of society and culture help frame concepts of religion and ethics. This course will examine social and cultural sources of and challenges to ethics, religion, and the relationship of individuals, culture, and society. Universal theories of society that do not necessarily take account of race, class, and gender will be considered alongside those self-consciously informed by these issues. The relationship between human and nonhuman animals will also be considered. Throughout the class we will pay particular attention to what is implicitly and explicitly normative in these texts as well as who/what is left in and out of the texts as they consider human society, culture, and religion. In these ways we seek to both understand the texts on their own terms, their possibilities for extension, and their weaknesses. This class will emphasize engaging with and understanding the texts to give students a solid foundation for other classes and comprehensive exams. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Sarah Frederickes*

### RETH 35404 – Religion, Ethics, and Politics

This course focuses on illustrative examples of the interaction of religious, ethical, and politics concerns across religious traditions and from a variety of spatial and temporal locations. We will consider central questions such as: what is the right structure of society for human flourishing? What is divine and what is human justice and how do they relate? What does a good ruler look like and how do they interact with (divine) law and human or divine requests for accountability? *Raissa de Rande*

Equivalent Div Course(s): ISLM 35404, RLST 25404

### RETH 50000 – Brauer Seminar: Qur'anic Ethics

This Brauer Seminar has two primary objectives: first, to familiarize students with specific Qur'anic verses and teachings that address central ethical concerns, such as warfare and the rights of the marginalized. Second, the seminar aims to equip students with the theoretical tools necessary to think critically and creatively, both within the Qur'anic ethical tradition and in relation to the interpretive traditions that have evolved around the Qur'an, as well as relevant contemporary ethical theories. 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>. *Raissa de Rande and Yousef Casewit*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): ISLM 50000

### RETH 55818 – Hellenistic Ethics

The three leading schools of the Hellenistic era (starting in Greece in the late fourth century B. C. E. and extending through the second century C. E. in Rome) – Epicureans, Sceptics, and Stoics – produced philosophical work of lasting value, frequently neglected because of the fragmentary nature of the Greek evidence and people's (unjustified) contempt for Roman philosophy. We will study in a detailed and philosophically careful way the major ethical arguments of all three schools. Topics to be addressed include: the nature and role of pleasure; the role of the fear of death in human life; other sources of disturbance (such as having definite ethical beliefs?); the nature of the emotions and their role in a moral life; the nature of appropriate action; the meaning of the injunction to "live in accordance with nature". If time permits we will say something about Stoic political philosophy and its idea of global duty. Major sources (read in English) will include the three surviving letters of Epicurus and other fragments; the skeptical writings of Sextus Empiricus; the presentation of Stoic ideas in the Greek biographer Diogenes Laertius and the Roman philosophers Cicero and Seneca. PQ: Admission by permission of the instructor. Permission must be sought in writing by the beginning of registration. PhD students in Philosophy, Classics, and Political theory do not need permission to enroll. Law students and others should inform me of their background in philosophy. This is a 500-level course. An undergraduate major in philosophy or some equivalent solid philosophy preparation, is what I'm looking for. MAPH and MAPSS students are not allowed to take a 500-level course in their first quarter. Undergraduates may not enroll. *Martha Nussbaum*

### Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

#### RLVC 34109 – Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* Project

Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) is a 9 ½ hour film comprised of Holocaust testimonies – by survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders. It represents the streamlining of 150 hours of film footage collected over the course of nearly a decade all over the world. In this class, we will explore the film and the discourses that have grown up around it, such as the nature of Holocaust representation, the

ontology of Holocaust testimonies, and the limits of translation in understanding the history of the Holocaust. We will work with the outtakes from the film at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to better understand the narrative Lanzmann constructed not only through what he chose to include in the final cut, but also what he chose to exclude. As we analyze Lanzmann's magnum opus, we will also explore associated films – by Lanzmann and by others – that grew out of Shoah and that shed further light on it. A final “Outtakes” project will give students the opportunity to suggest their own version of the film, with materials from the archive. *Sheila Jelen*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 34109, RLST 24109

#### RLVC 38995 – Queer Love Poetry

This course examines the long history of queer love poetry, from the ancient world to postmodernism. Its readings are particularly interested in how modernists claimed literary lineages of queer poetics, queered social practices and communal literary spaces, and reinvented verse forms to reflect queer eros. We will study works from Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, Spanish, Greek, and several other languages. No prerequisites. Open to undergrad and grad students. *Anna Elena Torres*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 28995

#### 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. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition the instructor to enroll. *Sheila Jelen*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 53400, AASR 53400

### Theology

(none)

### Religious Studies (Undergraduate Designation)

#### 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. *Staff*

### RLST 20808 – Biography of the Prophet Muhammad

This introductory course offers an overview of Prophet Muhammad's life as portrayed in the early and medieval Arabic narrative tradition and through the lens of modern scholarship. We will discuss a diverse range of topics, such as life in pre-Islamic Arabia, the Prophet's early life before prophethood, the first revelations, the Meccan period, his migration to Medina, his religio-political leadership and the military expeditions during the Medinan period, his reported miracles, etc. At the same time, students will gain an overview of the *sira*/maghazi literature, i.e., the texts devoted to the life of the Prophet Muhammad in the Muslim tradition. Modern methodological questions which concern the reliability of the narrative traditions in reconstructing the biography of the "historical Muhammad" and a wide range of approaches developed in Western academia to overcome problems related to the source material will also be addressed. Course Note: No background in Islamic studies or Arabic language required. *Mehmetcan Akpınar*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): ISLM 30808

### RLST 21270 – In the Beginning: Reading Genesis Now

How does one begin something new? What accounts for our ability to do things that have not been done before or to create something new? And how can we draw on this fundamental human capacity in moments of crisis? This seminar turns to the Hebrew Bible to think through these timely questions. We will read the book of Genesis in different English translations, think of its reception through the millennia that have passed since it was created, and reflect on its relevance to our current moment of crisis. Featuring museum visits and visiting artists and poets, this seminar will explore human creativity and invites students to mobilize their own capacity to make new beginnings. *Na'ama Rokem*

### RLST 22010 – Jewish Civilization I: Ancient Beginnings to Medieval Period

Jewish Civilization I deals 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 share a common core of readings; individual instructors will supplement with other materials. *Larisa Reznik*

### RLST 22606 – Religion, Resistance, and Rebellion in Early Modern Britain

Early modern Britain was a society in the grip of profound flux. From 1500 through to 1660, Henry VIII changed his country's religion with almost as little care as he changed wives; Mary I established a reputation as 'Bloody Mary' for her burning of hundreds of English Protestants at the stake; entire swathes of the country regularly erupted in rebellion and armed resistance culminating in civil war and regicide; Oliver Cromwell presided over an astonishing period of religious freedom in which radical sects sprang up in their dozens; and, amid the chaos and cacophony, thousands of puritans left Old England for New England during the Great Migration. Historians still debate the significance and causes of these events today, and they have continued resonance in contemporary British life, as illustrated by the frequent comparisons between Brexit and the Henrician Reformation made by English media outlets in 2016. This course offers an overview of early modern Britain in the period from 1500 to 1660, with an especial focus on religion, resistance, and rebellion. *Kirsten Macfarlane*

### RLST 23104 – Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*

Contemporary ideas about Human Rights, the relation of moral norms and the good life, the character of human freedom, conceptions of human evil, the very definition of morality and ethics,

and the relation of ethics and religion have been decisively shaped by the work of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). This course is the examination of one of Immanuel Kant's magisterial works in moral philosophy, *The Critique of Practical Reason*. The course is a careful reading of Kant's text in order to grasp the argument and to assess its significance for current work in ethics. The course ends with one of Kant's famous political essays, "On Perpetual Peace." Engaging Kant's work will enable student to engage a wide range of thinkers from the 19th to the 21st centuries who accept, modify, and reject his work. In this way, the course is crucial for further work in philosophical and religious ethics. Course Note: Graduate students must petition to enroll. *William Schweiker*

#### RLST 23312 – Mormonism, Feminism, and Agency

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or "Mormon") teaches that every person is equipped with agency, the ability to act for oneself rather than to be merely acted upon by others. However, some have been puzzled by Mormon women's simultaneous commitment to a doctrine of agency and to a faith tradition that embraces the concept of patriarchy and is thus structured by gendered hierarchies. One method of analysis might interrogate Mormon women's choices according to the typical feminist view of agency as resistance. But does resistance adequately account for the operations of agency? How do non-resisting religious women reflect on their own capacities for agency? This course will first look at a set of theorists, including (among others) Saba Mahmood, Judith Butler, and Michel Foucault, who will help us to examine agency by describing how the self is disciplined to desire certain types of action. Using these theorists as a framework, we will then explore, as a case study, how Mormon women have narrated their own desires, power, and actions. We will read primary documents from three episodes in Mormon history: (1) nineteenth-century Mormon women's involvement in both polygamy and the national suffrage movement; (2) Mormon women's grappling with the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement and the Equal Rights Amendment; and (3) the sharp divide among Mormon women regarding the 2013 Ordain Women movement. *Elizabeth Brocious*

#### RLST 24109 – Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* Project

Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) is a 9 ½ hour film comprised of Holocaust testimonies – by survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders. It represents the streamlining of 150 hours of film footage collected over the course of nearly a decade all over the world. In this class, we will explore the film and the discourses that have grown up around it, such as the nature of Holocaust representation, the ontology of Holocaust testimonies, and the limits of translation in understanding the history of the Holocaust. We will work with the outtakes from the film at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to better understand the narrative Lanzmann constructed not only through what he chose to include in the final cut, but also what he chose to exclude. As we analyze Lanzmann's magnum opus, we will also explore associated films – by Lanzmann and by others – that grew out of *Shoah* and that shed further light on it. A final "Outtakes" project will give students the opportunity to suggest their own version of the film, with materials from the archive. *Sheila Jelen*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 34109, HIJD 34109

#### RLST 24200 – Philosophy and Literature in India

The philosopher and writer Iris Murdoch once argued that there was a difference between philosophy, which is "clarification," and literature, which is "mystification." 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 putative West? This course explores these questions by introducing some of the literary cultures, philosophical questions, and aesthetic theories of the South Asian subcontinent. Students will encounter a variety of genres including narrative ethics, scriptural commentary, courtly poetry, political philosophy, and the autobiography. Readings are all in translation. *Anand Venkatkrishnan*

#### RLST 24400 – The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) is widely admired for his part in the movement to resist Hitler and National Socialism. This course will investigate the biographical and especially the theological underpinnings of his resistance. In addition to key texts such as *Discipleship*, *Ethics*, and *Letters and Papers from Prison*, therefore, we will also consider Bonhoeffer's connection to larger movements as well as the importance of his time in Harlem. *Kevin Hector*

#### RLST 24801 – *Being and Time*

It has been almost one hundred years since Martin Heidegger published his magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1927). One of the greatest philosophical works of the twentieth century, it continues to inspire and disturb. To inspire: few books have had such a powerful influence or have been so generative in so many fields of inquiry. To disturb: few have been so forcefully denounced, in no small part because of Heidegger's notorious involvement in National Socialism. In this class, we will revisit this unsettling classic and gauge its impact. What does it mean to read *Being and Time* today? What difference does today make in our reading? What future, if any, awaits this book? In asking these questions, our primary focus will be Heidegger's analysis of futurity (Zukünftigkeit) and its link with anxiety, death, conscience, tradition, and history. Course Note: This class counts as a Gateway course for the Fundamentals program. *Ryan Coyne*

Equivalent Div Course(s): DVPR 31801, THEO 31801

#### RLST 25602 – Eccentrics, Visionaries, Deviants? Queer Religion, Ethics, and Politics

Challenging the assumption that religion and queerness are inherently at odds, this course introduces the dynamic field of queer religious studies. We will ask: what do religions teach about sex and gender? How have religious communities defined and resisted sexual and gendered norms? How do religious LGBTQ+ people navigate, negotiate, and sometimes contest these ideas? Readings will allow us to trace the contemporary rise of homophobia and transphobia in politics, law, and religion as historical phenomena, while uncovering the hidden religious histories and lives that defy religious heteronormativity and transphobia. To lay the groundwork for investigating the complex relationships between religion, sexuality, and politics, we will read foundational texts in queer theory (Judith Butler and Michel Foucault). While selected case studies of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities will demonstrate the complexities of today's landscape, and engagement with queer religious thinkers will illustrate some political and social trajectories for queer religion and spirituality. Ultimately, seminar conversations and student site-visits will provide opportunities to learn how religion and sexuality interact and to consider how queer religiosities can enliven eccentric ways of being and transformative visions of community. No prior experience with religious studies or queer theory required. *Virginia White*

#### RLST 25709 – The Tempest and the Tide: Ethics in the Climate Age

This course explores how we can remain faithful to our deepest commitments on a warming planet. To examine the moral and religious dilemmas caused by human involvement in the environment, we begin by surveying how humanity's views of nature have changed over time. We trace the path from mythic reverence to the Enlightenment's push for dominion, where the desire for control met a faith in endless growth. This historical shift laid the groundwork for the politics and economics we see

today. We then explore how powerful actors outsource the burdens of environmental care, breaking faith with Indigenous communities and women in less developed nations. We confront the emotional labor of holding climate anxiety and ask what fidelity requires of us when the other party, such as a river or a forest, lacks a human voice. We also consider how corporations and other actors perform a counterfeit faithfulness by commodifying nature or “greenwashing” their actions. We conclude by exploring the climate crisis’s symbolic and spiritual dimensions, considering narratives of technological salvation, representations of a vengeful Mother Nature, and alternative visions of fidelity rooted in ecological and Indigenous wisdom. No prior background in religious studies or environmental studies is necessary for this discussion-based seminar. *Kat Myers*

#### RLST 26555 – Asian American Mental Health

Asian Americans are one of the fastest-growing and most diverse racial groups in the US, yet they face significant disparities in mental health care access, stigma, and representation. This introductory course will explore the unique challenges and strengths of Asian Americans across the diaspora, including the historical, sociopolitical and cultural forces that shape identity, family process, mental health and trauma, resilience and resistance at the individual and community level. Throughout the course, we will explore how intersecting identities, including ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and generational position, impact mental health experiences and access to care for Asian Americans. The goals of this introductory course are (1) to provide a scope of the knowledge of Asian American identity and mental health that are shaped by cultural societal influences, (2) to examine and engage in a critical analysis of current research and practice with Asian Americans, and (3) to consider approaches in promoting positive mental health, well-being and resilience among Asian Americans. The course will combine theoretical frameworks, case studies, and practical applications to prepare students to provide culturally competent, trauma-informed, and compassionate care. *Miwa Yasui*

#### RLST 27140 – Truth, Half-Truth, and Post-Truth

This course examines the philosophical and ethical issues surrounding lying, truth-telling, and everything in between. Students will put classics of the Indian and Western philosophical traditions into conversation with contemporary analyses of “alternative facts” and postmodern criticisms of absolute truth. Questions to be considered include: Are half-truths just another kind of lie, or stepping-stones to a more complex understanding? Is it even possible to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”? Is it morally permissible to mislead someone for their own good, or for a leader to deceive their citizens? How can we act responsibly when there are two sides to every story? *Russell Johnson*

#### RLST 27232 – Sociology of Religion: Religious Inequality in America

How does religion reflect, reproduce, and occasionally disrupt structures of inequality? Since the earliest days of American social science, researchers have understood that religion is highly stratified by race, class, gender, ethnicity, and other factors. We will examine the causes and consequences of these inequalities, both historically and in the contemporary world, by reading key texts and by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data on American religious groups. Students will leave with an appreciation for how the study of religion can enrich the study of social inequalities, and vice versa. Course Note: Counts toward the “Introduction to Sociology” requirement for the sociology major. *Tessa Huttenlocher*

#### RLST 27306 – Tibetan Literature in Translation

This course provides a comprehensive introduction to Tibetan literature in English translation, spanning a wide array of genres such as religious biographies, visionary writings, epic poetry, oral folklore, drama, and contemporary fiction. Students will engage critically with translated texts while examining the historical, religious, and cultural contexts in which they emerged. Special attention will be given to the dynamics of translation, including the interpretive choices and challenges of rendering Tibetan literary voices into English. Key themes include narrative and memory in Tibetan Buddhist traditions, gender and power, the transmission of oral and literary forms, and the emergence of modern Tibetan literary expressions. No prior knowledge of Tibetan is required. The course is ideal for students interested in Himalayan cultures, Buddhist studies, comparative literature, or translation studies. *Karma Ngodup*

#### RLST 27810 – Modern Social Work Practice: Foundations and Futures

This course emphasizes the history, ethics, design and practice of social work and social justice interventions at the individual, family, and group levels. Students are introduced to the values, theories, concepts, skills, and empirical evidence that form the base for direct social work practice past, present, and future. Students will develop skills in identifying and defining problems, implementing and refining intervention strategies, and weighing the ethical considerations of various choices, through class discussion and case examples. This course will define and invite inquiry into how social work as a profession must center human rights and social justice in order to respond to the demands of our modern world. *Shipra Parikh*

#### RLST 28008 – African Magic

This course borrows the term “African magic” from a digital satellite service devoted to showing films that preponderantly project African beliefs in the supernatural. Throughout the semester, we will examine the African belief in the supernatural, its representation in films, and consequent engagement with the enfolded magic of mystical reality and the technology that visualizes, enhances, and even disrupts it. We will be studying the ideas of Gods, mythology, deities, witchcraft and the occult, as expressed in indigenous religions, Christianity, and Islam. By also exploring different visual materials that illustrate how Africans use their religious performances to formulate and navigate their conceptions of the sacred and supernatural power, we will analyze the social practices of their religious beliefs and determine the dimensions of the inventiveness that underline African religious practices. *Abimbola Adelokun*

#### RLST 28145 – Greetings from Tralfamadore: Scientific and Religious Satire in the Fiction of Kurt Vonnegut

This course will consist of the reading and discussion of the novels of Kurt Vonnegut, with special attention to the role of the unconstrained imaginary powers of science fiction in the rethinking the nature of science and of religion, or more broadly of knowledge and meaning, and of the possible relations between them. Works to be read will include some or all of the following: *The Sirens of Titan*, *Cat's Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Breakfast of Champions*, *Slapstick*, *Galapagos*, *Timequake*. *Brook Ziporyn*

#### RLST 28335 – Art as Biblical Interpretation

Long before the Christian Bible was established as we know it, biblical figures and stories were being visually depicted and developed for Christian purposes. The Christian biblical imagination encompasses a rich tradition—spanning time periods (ancient and medieval, Renaissance, and beyond), regions, denominations, and artistic media—important not only for the field of art history, but also for the fields of biblical interpretation and the history of Western civilization and culture. In

this course we will be studying art as a unique mode of biblical interpretation, with its own purposes, challenges, and strengths. How are texts “translated” into images? With what strategies do images represent abstract concepts, inner thoughts or experiences, or narrative time? What does God look like, and why? What are the possible functions of biblical images? We will cover topics including incarnation, iconoclasm, beauty, evangelization and education, the depiction of violence, book and material culture, liturgy and devotion, and typology, all while familiarizing ourselves with some of the most commonly depicted biblical figures and stories. No prior knowledge is required. *Lauren Beversluis*

#### RLST 29110 – Media Islam

How does religion reflect, reproduce, and occasional disrupt structures of inequality? Since the earliest days of American social science, researchers have understood that religious groups are highly stratified by race, class, gender, ethnicity, and other factors. We will examine the causes and consequences of these inequalities, both historically and in the contemporary world, by reading key texts and by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data on American religious groups. *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. *Lucas Depierre*

## **WINTER 2026**

### Special Courses in Divinity

#### DVSC 30600 – Themes in the Academic Study of Religion

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 Note: 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. *Christian Wedemeyer*

#### Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

##### AASR 37805 – Materiality, Religion, and Technology

This course examines the role of material objects, bodily practices, and technological advancements in our understanding and experience of religions. The course is premised upon the assumption that the spiritual components of religions have material bases—they are sensed, experienced, and expressed with and through material objects and practices. The advent of artificial intelligent and the expansion of digital environments provide a novel context for examining the already complex and intertwined concept of “material religion” in ways that are both challenging and intriguing. The course draws on readings and discussions from religious studies, anthropology, and science and technology studies to provide students with conceptual tools and to introduce recent discussions on the course topics. This course is suitable for students who plan to develop an original research project on the intersection of materiality, religion, and technology in any religious tradition. Students are required to complete a thorough literature review on the topic(s) of their choice as their final project and present their work in class. *Yasmin Cho*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 27805

##### AASR 37885 – Arabfuturism: Other Worlds and Worlding Otherwise

Interrogating the possibilities and limits of futurity amidst territorial, existential, ecological, and ideological states of crisis, Arabfuturism—like its sister projects of Afrofuturism/s, Sinofuturism, and Indigenous Futurism—speaks to how speculative cultures turn to sites of historical or present rupture to envision alternate, possible, or impossible worlds. These projects function as a critical mode of reading assemblages of colonialism, capitalism, and biopolitics that theorize other ways of being, knowing, and imagining. These counter-futures disrupt the logics of the past, present, and assumed future to not only “write alternative histories but also articulate counterfuturisms as imaginaries of times-to-come” (Parikka, 55).

Beyond the toll of US-backed “forever wars,” recent years have cast the MENA region into unprecedented turmoil. We have also witnessed the promise of revolutions sweeping the region following the 2010 Tunisian Jasmine Revolution that catapulted the Arab Spring across Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, and Lebanon. While moments of catastrophe, crisis, and collapse may seem antithetical to imaginaries of the future, the capacity to dream or speculate is essential to undoing to sites of epistemic and ontological violence, while also charting possible paths forwards.

Moreover, speculative acts of world-building can realize the critical potential of impossible acts of imagination that empower us to envision entirely new archaeologies of the future. Course Note: Graduates students by consent only. *Hoda El Shakry*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): ISLM 37885, RLST 27885

#### AASR 40012 – Ethnographic Methods

This course explores the epistemological and practical questions raised by ethnography as a method -- focusing on the relationships between theory and data, and between researcher and researched. Discussions are based on close readings of ethnographic texts, supplemented by occasional theoretical essays on ethnographic practices. Students also conduct original field research., share and critique each other's field notes on a weekly basis, and produce analytical papers based on their ethnographies. Course Note: Graduate students only. *Omar McRoberts*

#### AASR 41203 – Back to Life: Reading Reich After Foucault

When Michel Foucault delivered his scathing critique of the ‘repressive hypothesis’ in *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1, he had Wilhelm Reich in mind. After Foucault, Reich’s vitalist critique of sexual repression and its relation to authoritarian politics has often been dismissed as naïvely ‘liberationist,’ and based on an untenable positive vital ontology. Cultural theorists, especially in the United States, have often rejected Reich’s vitalism in favour of various kinds of negative ontologies: bodies staged in discourse, Lacanian lack, Derridean deferral. But does this need to be an either/or? Is it possible that the rejection of the repressive hypothesis is itself a kind of repression? In this seminar, we reconsider the work of Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), reading it alongside some of his inspirations, fellow travelers, critics, and successors. Reich was a pioneering sexologist, a member of Freud’s inner circle in the 1920s and of the German Communist Party in the early 1930s (before being ejected from both), an unrelenting critic of the libidinal grounds of the patriarchal family and fascism, and, finally, a bio-scientist and therapist in the field of cosmic ‘orgone energy.’ It is commonplace nowadays to credit Reich’s early work in psychoanalysis and to dismiss his later orgonomic pursuits as – to put it gently – speculative. The aim of this class is to hold open a space for a generously critical engagement with this most idiosyncratic, creative, and exasperating 20th century thinker. In the midst of our climate crisis, our neo-authoritarian politics, and our raging gender backlash, what might we learn from letting Reich take us, at least for a while, back to life?  
*William Mazzarella*

#### 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*

#### 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. *Jaeseok Heo*

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 32906 – Book of Ezekiel

This course introduces the historical world around the Book of Ezekiel, the literary world portrayed within Ezekiel, the book's literary characteristics, and its meaning. The course is geared both to readers of the Bible in English and to readers of the Bible in Hebrew. *Simeon Chavel*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 32906, RLST 22906

#### BIBL 44600 – Zion and Zaphon: Biblical Texts and Memory Studies

This course explores when, why, and how some Judeans came to consider Zion the new Mt. Zaphon (Ps 48) or Mt. Hermon (Ps 133), seats and sites of the gods, while others were less impressed. The course engages memory studies and analyzes how ancient authors responded to the series of campaigns by Assyria against Israel and against Judah/Judea in the 8th-7th cents BCE, especially Sennacherib's attack on Judah/Judea in 701 BCE. It affords a unique opportunity to read closely selections from different works representing different genres across the Biblical treasury. PQ:

1 year of biblical Hebrew and 1 text course. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll.  
*Simeon Chavel*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 44600

BIBL 42060 – 1 Corinthians

An exegesis course on what was likely Paul's second letter to Corinth (the first, mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9, is lost), that will focus upon the literary composition and purpose of this lengthy epistolary text, and the range of issues over which the Corinthians were divided (sex and marriage, gender roles, legal battles, food, hair, forms of worship, the resurrection of the dead) and the ways Paul seeks to address them and call them to unity. We shall also explore some of what can be known of the social history of the "house churches" in Roman Corinth to whom Paul was writing, as well as the history of Paul's relationship with them and the degree to which when he writes this letter Paul can assume a position of authority ("become imitators of me, as I am of Christ" [11:1]) or must face significant doubt about his legitimacy as a self-proclaimed "apostle." PQ: Greek skills are not required for this course, but ample opportunity will be provided for their exercise. *Margaret Mitchell*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 42060, RLST 22060

BIBL 47500 – The Apostolic Fathers

This course focuses on the general body of works whose authors are collectively known as the Apostolic Fathers, a remarkable group of theologians who lived and wrote during the late first and second centuries AD, immediately after the New Testament. Among the works and writers whom we will consider are the Didache, Clement of Rome (1 Clement), Ignatius of Antioch, and, as time permits, Diognetus or 2 Clement. We will carefully read the Greek text, with careful attention to the style of the Greek, how it compares to that of the New Testament, and its relationship to other important materials such as the Septuagint and the Greco-Egyptian papyri.

This was a period of amazing ferment and intellectual diversity. Since no rigid standard of orthodoxy had yet been set, a wide array of ideas were put forth and examined on the theological market place. We will focus on the exegetical methods of Biblical interpretation used by the Fathers, their reflections on the person and work of Jesus, and their ideas on the structure and mission of the emerging Church as the body of Christ. PQ: Two years of Greek. *David Martinez*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 21505

### Philosophy of Religion

DVPR 33595 – Nietzsche: The Will to Truth

The will to truth – Nietzsche first uses the phrase in a notebook entry written in late 1882: "“Will to truth!” Let us stop speaking so simplistically and bombastically!" From then on, the critique of this will would preoccupy him for the rest of his career. In this seminar we will study this critique as it develops in Nietzsche's middle and later writings. We will read closely his published works as well as recently translated notebook entries. What exactly is the will to truth? Why critique it? Can philosophy and/or thinking resist it or somehow do without it? What is the status of the discourse that contests it? In asking these questions, we will examine a still underappreciated aspect of Nietzsche's post-Zarathustra writings: the gap separating his polemic against metaphysics qua Platonism from his polemic against the so-called Judeo-Christian, i.e. the inheritance of the Biblical tradition. *Ryan Coyne*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 33595, RLST 22595

## History of Christianity

### HCHR 30100 – History of Christian Thought I

The first course in the HCT sequence deals with the post New Testament period until Augustine, stretching roughly from 150 through 450 CE. The aim of the course is to follow the integral development of Christian thought by relating its structural features to the historical background against which they arose. A subordinate goal is to do so without leaning too much on schematic models such as East vs. West, orthodoxy vs. heresy, Alexandrian vs. Antiochene exegesis.

The course will feature the following authors and themes:

1. Apology and the Contours of Early-Christian Thought and Worship: Irenaeus, Diognetus, Athenagoras
2. Martyrdom and the Authority of Christian Witness: Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr
3. Platonism and Exegesis: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa
4. Incarnation in East and West: Tertullian and Athanasius
5. Ecclesial Unity and Episcopal Authority: Cyprian, Ambrose, Chrysostom
6. Normative Belief and Gnostic/Arian Dissent: Gnosticism; All About the Creeds; Basil of Caesarea
7. Projecting Historical Authority: Eusebius and Jerome
8. Ancient Thought Baptized and Transformed: Augustine of Hippo

Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Willemien Otten*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 30100

### HCHR 30120 – Eastern Christianity: The First Thousand Years

This course introduces students to Eastern Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. We will start with contextualizing Eastern Christianity's diverse, global, and multilingual trajectories. We will then turn to review select themes of Eastern Christian history. We will cover the shaping of orthodoxy in the Byzantine world in the contexts of both inter-religious debates and intra-Christian concerns over heresy. We will explore the Christological Controversies of Late Antiquity, which continue to fracture Eastern Christianity until this very day. We will review the rise of Islam, its divergent Eastern Christian responses, and its broader theological, social, and cultural implications on medieval Middle Eastern religions. The translation movements under the 'Abbasids will occupy us next and will further reveal the contributions of Eastern Christians to the intellectual and religious landscapes of the medieval Middle East. We will conclude with Eastern Christianity's position in the Middle Eastern world between the Crusades and the Mongol conquests, historical developments whose reverberations can still be felt in the present-day world where many Eastern Christian communities are spread across an increasingly global diaspora. *Omri Matarasso*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20120

### HCHR 41728 – America's 'Enlightenment Puritan'? Readings in Cotton Mather (1663-1728)

Cotton Mather (1663-1728) is one of colonial New England's most fascinating and yet elusive thinkers. Historians have long struggled to categorize him: he is simultaneously one of the top candidates for the (fraught) title of America's 'last puritan', and one of several candidates for the (equally fraught) title of America's 'first evangelical.' He was a man whose profound belief in the reality and societal danger of witchcraft implicated him in the now-famous Salem Witchcraft Trials, while also being an accomplished scholar of medicine who made enormous efforts to advocate for smallpox inoculations (an idea he first learnt about from his slave Onesimus). He was at once a

vocal proponent of Enlightenment science and philosophy, while also cleaving hard – even by contemporary standards – to belief in conservative scriptural doctrines and the imminence of the Apocalypse. This seminar introduces students to the life and thought of Cotton Mather through a carefully curated selection of his prodigious output, intended to cover some of the most complex – and contested – aspects of his intellectual world. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Kirsten Macfarlane*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RAME 41728

#### 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 realised 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.

*Kirsten Macfarlane*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HIJD 42800

#### History of Judaism

##### HIJD 36706 – Humor and Judaism in the Middle Ages

We shall examine medieval Jewish humoristic writings of 12-14<sup>th</sup> Spain and Southern France against the backdrop of the curious fact that the authors of these writings were also some of the most important medieval Jewish philosophers of the period. Is it coincidence that Aristotelian philosophers also wrote lasting works of humor? Did they see their humoristic writings as diversions from their philosophical and scientific activities or part of a larger project? If the latter, what kind of philosophical content could be in these writings? Is such humor a skeptical approach to serious science? Does it reflect deeper ethical questions? Does humor provide a place to question religious tenets? To approach these questions we will read the central writings of these thinkers, beginning with Joseph Ibn Zabara’s *Book of Delights*, then turning to Immanuel of Rome’s *Canto’s*, then Qalonimos ben Qalonimos’ *Eben Bohan* and Purim parody, and finally turning to Gersonides’s Purim parodies. We shall take into consideration questions of genre such as the influence of the Arabic *maqamat*, Italian parodies, and French farces. *Yehuda Halper*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 26706

##### HIJD 37660 – Animals and Jewish Literature

This course explores the representation of animality in Jewish literature and visual art. We will explore questions of animal ethics and ecological entanglement across a range of secular and religious genres, from folklore and poetry to Hasidic tales and rabbinic narrative. Writers will include

Kafka, Sholem Aleichem, Celan; artists will include Soutine, Chagall, Sarah Shor, and more. No prerequisites. Open to undergrad and grad students. *Anna Elena Torres*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 37660, RLST 27660

#### HIJD 50400 – Modern European Philosophy and the Jewish Textual Tradition

In collaboration with the newly formed Network for European Philosophy and the Jewish Tradition of the Institute for Jewish Studies (UAntwerp), the Center for European Philosophy (UAntwerp) and the Institute of Philosophy (KU Leuven), this seminar examines the influence of the Jewish textual tradition on modern philosophy, probing an array of thinkers from the modern tradition, including FWJ Schelling, Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Vladimir Jankélévitch, Jacob Taubes, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida, whose philosophical projects incorporate concepts and forms from the Jewish textual tradition. Funded by a provostial grant, the course will culminate in a conference in Paris with the Network for European Philosophy and the Jewish Tradition. Participation will be limited. Students will need to apply to participate in the course. PQ: Enrollment by instructor consent only. *Sarah Hammerschlag*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): DVPR 50400, RLVC 50400

#### History of Religions

##### 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, RLVC 52200

#### Islamic Studies

##### 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. *Mustafa Kaya*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20202

### ISLM 32708 – Introduction to Islam in South Asia

This survey course introduces students to the rich, complex, and interdependent history of Islam in South Asia. Progressing chronologically, we will begin with the prehistory of Islam in the subcontinent, then proceed from the early Islamic period through the rise of Muslim empires and states to the British-colonial period, and end with the postcolonial twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Along the way, we will encounter and discuss important historical moments, major ideas, key figures and movements, and literary and artistic works to gain insight into the continuities, changes, and many forms of diversity that have characterized the history of Islam in South Asia through the centuries. Among our many goals will be to develop tools to think critically about the ways in which Islam in South Asia is represented in our time. Course readings include secondary scholarship and primary sources in translation. No prior knowledge of Islam or the history of South Asia is required. Students are welcome and encouraged to contact the instructor, Gregory Maxwell Bruce (gmbruce@uchicago.edu), with questions. *Gregory Max Bruce*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 22708

### ISLM 40430 – Hadith Literature: Authenticity, Authority, Reception

This advanced graduate seminar explores various genres within hadith literature, a vast corpus encompassing traditions about the speeches, and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. Beyond examining different types of hadith collections, the course will trace the development of classical hadith scholarship and the critical methodologies employed by classical and medieval scholars in evaluating hadiths.

In addition, the seminar will analyze key texts that discuss the role of hadith in law, theology, and Sufism, as well as its significance in the daily religious life of Muslims. The course will also introduce the intertextualities between Twelver Shi'ite and Zaydi hadith traditions and the Sunni hadith corpus, offering a comparative perspective on hadith transmission and interpretation across different Islamic traditions. PQ: Minimum two years of proficiency in Arabic required. *Mehmetcan Akpınar*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20430

### Religions in the Americas

#### RAME 31316 – Readings in Modern American Religious History

Why is religion so powerful in the United States? This course will answer that question by tracing the religious history of America from the late nineteenth century to the present. Our readings will be new and classic texts on religion in the United States, and our goals will be twofold: to get a grasp of American religious historiography, and to explore the major trends which have shaped religion in the United States over the past century and a half. *Will Schultz*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 31316, RLST 21316

#### RAME 31968 – Religious and Social Thought of Martin Luther King Jr.

This seminar is an intensive study of the religious life and social/religious thought of Martin Luther King, Jr. We will be reading a wide range of King's writings and speeches from his Crozer seminary years to his major speeches up to his assassination in 1968. We will also explore some of the classic and more recent scholarship that examines the influences on and sources of King's thought. Prominent themes in the course will include but will not be limited to King's ethical and social critique of American society, especially its racism, his social and moral evaluation of economic

inequality, his commitment to nonviolence, his conception of the beloved community, and his evolving roles as preacher, social activist, and public intellectual. *Curtis Evans*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 31968, RLST 21968

RAME 35050 – Social Christianity in the United States: Origins and Legacies

This course is an intensive analysis of the origins, development, and historical significance of the Social Gospel (as it was called during its emergence) as a religious and social reform movement in America. We begin the course with one of the major works of Walter Rauschenbusch in the early 20th century. But we look at the development and influence of Social Christianity later and in the Civil Rights movement (and beyond) to grasp its enduring influence. Some attention will be devoted to the relationship between theological innovation, historical criticism of the Bible, and social reform. One of the aims of the course is to explore the impetus for social and political reform in light of a more expansive and this-worldly conception of Christian teaching on the Kingdom of God. *Curtis Evans*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 35050, RLST 21995

RAME 40200 – Religion and American Capitalism

This course will introduce students to the intersection of religion and capitalism in the United States. Through a variety of primary and secondary readings, we will explore how religious people and institutions have interacted with, affirmed, and challenged American capitalism. We will pay particularly close attention to the alternative moral economics envisioned by religious communities in the United States. *Will Schultz*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 40200, RLST 21430

### Religious Leadership and Practice (M.Div. Courses)

RELP 32600 – Public Theology in Chicago

What is Public Theology? And why might Chicago be central to its understanding? This course grapples with the meaning and framing of public theology in the context of Chicago. By engaging past and present texts and practitioners—as well as visiting several sacred spaces—students understand Chicago as a dynamic site for theologizing across communities, cultural contexts, and faith traditions. Students will also wrestle with the moral dilemmas of our time, exploring how they might imagine theological engagement in this city and publics of their choosing. Interlocutors include Rami Nashashibi, Sherman “Dilla” Thomas, Jacob Ali, Rev. Janette Wilson, Rabbi Max Weiss, and Richard Khong. *Marshall Hatch*

RELP 35200 – 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 31201 – History of Religious and Theological Ethics II

The religions are powerful moral forces in our age of global dynamics and interactions. In this context, understanding the history of these moral forces is crucial for contemporary life and thought. This course is the second part of a two-part history of religious and theological ethics. It is conducted through lectures and the study of basic, classic texts. The course moves from the forms of ethics or moral philosophy in the Christian Reformations in the West as well as the Renaissance through to the 20th century and the emergence of global moral realities and problems. The golden thread of the history is the origin and differentiation of forms of Christian theological thinking as well philosophical reflection on the relation, if any, between religion and morality. Yet Christian theological ethics and Western moral philosophy will be set within and compared to other traditions (Jewish, Islamic) that intersect and often collide throughout these centuries that are formative of contemporary thought. The purpose of the course is threefold: (1) to enable one a grasp of part of the history of religious and theological ethics; (2) to explore the thought of specific thinkers; and (3) to engage in reflection on the task and topics of the discipline in a global and comparative context.

*William Schweiker*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 31201

#### RETH 47750 – Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics, one of the major types of normative ethics, involves a study of virtues, character, and the formation of such character. This course will examine some of the major contributions to the tradition of virtue ethics (e.g. Aristotle, Aquinas), the late twentieth-century revival of virtue ethics (e.g. MacIntyre, comparative studies of virtue across religious and philosophical traditions), and its flourishing in environmental ethics. Course Note: Undergraduates may enroll with permission of the instructor. *Sarah Fredericks*

### Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

#### RLVC 30301 – Wisdom Literature in Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Beyond

Fundamental questions about the human condition are as old as time. First attested in ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts conventionally labeled ‘wisdom literature’ dating from the third to the first millennia BCE, we can still relate to ancient musings about life, death, power, justice, and the relation between mortals and the divine. While they are often rooted in folk traditions, these contemplations find expression in diverse modes of literary expression, ranging from proverbs and instructions to fables and philosophical dialogues—all of which provide readers with some guidance on how to grapple with the challenges and uncertainty of the human experience. However, given the heterogeneity of the corpus, ‘wisdom literature’ is one of the most contested generic labels.

This interdisciplinary graduate seminar approaches wisdom texts from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia from a comparative perspective. We will explore how ‘wisdom literature’ traditions developed in these two interconnected regions, how the texts relate to their respective social and political contexts, in what material contexts they were written and read, and how they compare with ancient Greek and Hebrew, as well as later Arabic and Persian texts. In contrast with text-reading

classes in Egyptology, Assyriology, and Sumerology, the seminar will focus on broader methodological and interpretive questions about this body of literature. *Jana Matuszak, Maggie Geoga*

#### RLVC 30908 – Media Revolutions Then and Now

“Media Revolutions Then and Now” explores how the Protestant Reformation and innovations in printing technology coincided to catalyze a sweeping revolution that paved the way for media culture as we know it today. The seminar aims to interrogate traditional narratives that center on printing technology as the driving force of the Reformation, and instead shows how essential religious thought and practice were for the emergence and success of modern media. We will highlight how Reformers like Martin Luther not only provided content but also a theological legitimacy that sustained the print industry, thereby transforming print from a nascent technology into a powerful tool for religious and cultural change. Central to this historical and critical interrogation is the notion of the Reformation as the first modern media event, showcasing how this interplay of theology and technology laid the foundation for our modern media landscape. Accompanying an exhibition at Regenstein’s Special Collections which is running through the winter quarter, the seminar draws not only on the displayed items but also the library rich holdings in early prints. Students will be encouraged to put their own understanding and experience of contemporary media ecologies in dialogue with media ecosystem of the early Gutenberg Galaxy. Course Note: Fulfills the following categories in the ARTH major and minor: European and America, pre-modern (pre-1800).

*Christopher Wild, Tamara Golan*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 28708

#### RLVC 33415 – Israel/Palestine

In this proseminar we shall look at specific moments when the musics of Israel/Palestine converged, responding to and shaping historical change and conflict. Weekly sessions will take specific moments as ways of exploring how music was critical to the processes of change, identity, and accommodation. We begin with moments in Antiquity, among them the moments in which the temples in Jerusalem were destroyed (e.g., 70 ce). and the Mi‘rāj, when the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven (ca. 621 ce). Moments marking the patterns of settlement (Yishuv) and political transformation and unrest will mark the chronology of modernity and modernism (e.g., 1917, 1933, 1938). The moments of Israeli statehood and Palestinian Nakba will be of growing significance as the course moves toward the twenty-first century (e.g., 1948, 1967, and 1987). *Philip Bolhman*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 27711

### Theology

#### THEO 33706 – Calvin: Piety, Politics, and the Theater of God’s Glory

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

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 23706

THEO 44400 – Three Late Medieval Mystics: Bonaventure, Aquinas, Eckhart

This course will bring three medieval authors together by seeing them as mystics: the Franciscan Bonaventure, the Dominican Thomas Aquinas and the Dominican Eckhart. All of them taught in Paris, and were at the university there. We'll try to find out what qualifies them as mystics: is there a gender component, is there a distance to academic life, is there a holism to the thought expressed and what, if any, are the connections between them? In sum, what is there to gain in the understanding of their work by calling them mystics? PQ: Knowledge of Latin and German would be helpful but it not required. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Willemien Otten*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 44400

### Religious Studies (Undergraduate Designation)

RLST 10100 – Introduction to Religious Studies

This course will serve as general introduction to the academic field of Religious Studies. In it we will focus on understanding how scholars have historically studied a thing we might call “religion.” We will familiarize ourselves with various classical and contemporary theories and theorists of religion, as well other thinkers whose work considers the idea of religion in interesting or compelling ways. When studying each of these thinkers will we pay close attention to the definitions of religion they offer and the methods they used to arrive at those definitions. We will then apply what we learn to issues outside the field, where our tools may help us to understand the dynamics at work in the wider world. In doing so we will use the study of religion as a way to think more generally about how, why, and to what result people of different times, geographies, and cultures make sense of their existence. All students are welcome and no prior knowledge is required. Course Note: This is the required introductory course for RLST majors. *Marshall Cunningham*

RLST 20121 – Ancient Israel in the Bible and in Archaeology

This course compares the picture of ancient Israel and its history that is presented in the Bible to the results obtained from archaeological excavations and surveys, seen in the light of modern historical-critical analysis of the Hebrew Bible and the study of ancient non-biblical inscriptions. The focus will be on the biblical narratives from the books of Genesis through Kings concerning the Creation and Flood, the ancestors of the Israelites (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), Moses and the Exodus, the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, the “pre-monarchical” period of the Judges, and the actions of the rulers and prophets of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah until the destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. Subsequent developments until the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE will be covered more briefly. No prior background in archaeology or biblical studies is required, although it will be useful for students to have previously taken BIBL 31000, “Introduction to the Hebrew Bible.” *David Schloen*

RLST 20315 – Ancient Empires V: The Umayyad

The Umayyads ruled over the last “great empire” of late antiquity: the early Islamic empire, spanning from the Atlas to the Hindu Kush, from the Atlantic to the Amu Darya, and embracing regions with different cultural and political traditions. This course introduces to the history of the Umayyad caliphate, focusing on some of the visible legacies its inhabitants left behind: texts, objects, and monumental buildings that are still standing in cities of the Middle East and Europe. But we will also reflect upon less material legacies: for example, cities with a long-lasting urban culture, infrastructures for communicating across a vast empire, the consolidation of religious traditions, and exchanges and cohabitation of different religious groups. Course Note: Taking these courses in

sequence is not required. This sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies. *Cecelia Palombo*

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

In the second quarter of Islamic Thought and Literature, students will explore the Islamic world in its various political, social, and intellectual aspects. Chronologically, the course begins with the consolidation of the “gunpowder empires” in the 16th Century and continues into the modern era. 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 debates such as state reform efforts, Islamic modernism, and nationalism; new genres (e.g., the novel); and new modes of communication, such as journals and newspapers. No prior background in the subject is required. Course Note: Taking these courses in sequence is recommended but not required. This sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies. *Ada Holly Shissler*

#### RLST 22011 – Jewish Civilization II: Early Modern Period to 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Jewish Civilization II begins with the early modern period and continues to the present. It includes 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 share a common core of readings; individual instructors will supplement with other materials. *Larisa Reznik, Orit Bashkin*

#### RLST 23207 – Phenomenology and Existentialism

This course introduces students to key concepts, texts, and figures from the phenomenological tradition as it emerged and developed in Germany and France over the late-19th and 20th centuries. Students will engage with questions of intentionality, temporality, embodiment, finitude, and meaning-making. The course will pay particular attention to continuities and discontinuities between key figures. Major figures covered include Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hannah Arendt, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone de Beauvoir, Frantz Fanon, and Jean-Paul Sartre. *Magnus Ferguson*

#### RLST 23404 – Romanticism and the Problem of Enchantment

Romanticism is often represented, both popularly and in grand intellectual histories, as a movement of retrieval or re-enchantment. In such narratives, some cosmic or spiritual unity has been lost, hidden, or fractured by the rationality of the Enlightenment, and Romanticism is seen as one of western Europe’s first attempts to grapple with the consequences of this loss. In this course we will closely read the poetry and prose of six key German and English Romantic writers, with a focus on how they variously characterize the philosophical and spiritual significance of their work. Alongside these writers we will look at several influential accounts of the place they hold within religious, philosophical, and literary history, and ask how the primary texts support or resist these framings. Is poetry, as the above narrative would have it, a way of picking up the broken pieces of religion? What sorts of ‘pasts’ do Romantic writers take up, and how do such pasts figure into the present? Is re-enchantment a necessary step, or is disenchantment a myth from the start? Is the imagination a means of countering the pernicious effects of scientific rationalism, or ‘reason in her most exalted mood’ We will read works by Novalis, Schlegel, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Blake, and Keats to ask how each figure articulates a spiritual charge for poetry, and what poetry’s spiritual task means for the relationships between literature, religion, and philosophy. *Pieter Hoekstra*

#### RLST 23605 – Thomas Aquinas on God, Being, Human Nature, and Evil

This course considers sections from Saint Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*. Among the topics considered are God's existence; the relationship between God and Being; and human nature. *Stephen Meredith*

#### RLST 23880 – Villains: Evil in Philosophy, Religion, and Film

“You don't really understand an antagonist,” screenwriter John Rogers writes, “until you understand why he's a protagonist in his own version of the world.” This principle holds true of movie villains, but also raises important questions about disagreement, dehumanization, and the diabolical in the real world. Are our enemies truly malicious, or just misunderstood? How does a person become a monster, and how does a person avoid it? Why are some villains so compelling, and what does this say about the good life? Do Hollywood movies enrich or distort how we imagine and respond to real-world evil? Did Thanos do anything wrong? This course combines readings from philosophical classics and religious traditions with comparative analyses of villains in films from *101 Dalmatians* (1956) and *Jaws* (1975) to *The Dark Knight* (2008) and *Black Panther* (2018). Students will discuss antagonists' motivations, evaluate the visions of morality filmmakers are presupposing, and develop more nuanced understandings of ethics and moral psychology. No prior experience in religious studies or film criticism is required. *Russell Johnson*

#### 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 24103 – Bioethics

This is a lecture and discussion class that will explore how a variety of philosophic and religious thinkers approach the issues and problems of modern dilemmas in medicine and science in a field called bioethics. We will consider a general argument for your consideration: that the arguments and the practices from faith traditions and from philosophy offer significant contributions that underlie policies and practices in bioethics.

We will use a case-based method to study how different traditions describe and defend differences in moral choices in contemporary bioethics. This class is based on the understanding that case narratives serve as another core text for the discipline of bioethics and that complex ethical issues are best considered by a careful examination of the competing theories as work themselves out in specific cases. We will examine both classic cases that have shaped our understanding of the field of bioethics and cases that are newly emerging, including the case of research done at our University. Through these cases, we will ask how religious traditions both collide and cohere over such topics as embryo research, health care reform, terminal illness, issues in epidemics and public health, and our central research question, synthetic biology research.

This class will also explore how the discipline of bioethics has emerged to reflect upon such

dilemmas, with particular attention to the role that theology and philosophy have played in such reflection. *Kat Myers*

RLST 24804 – Saints, Sinners, and Subjects: Foucault's Writings on Religion and Sexuality  
What does it mean to be a subject? Throughout his career, Michel Foucault posed this question, examining the psychiatric, penitential, and religious institutions to understand how we moderns arrived at our current understanding of ourselves. But when did we begin to think of the self as something we have, and have to account for? Following the development of Foucault's idea of confession as central to the creation of modern subjectivity, this course examines how Foucault turns from twentieth-century discourses on sexuality to early Christian monastic texts in his genealogy of modern subjectivity. Reading *The History of Sexuality Volume 1, The History of Sexuality Volume 4: Confessions of the Flesh*, Foucault's lectures on the relationship between religion, subjectivity, and political power alongside key sources and critical scholarship, this course asks: What is Foucault's concept of religion? How does it relate to sexuality? What is the relationship between religion and modernity? How does religion determine our concepts of self, society, and state? This course provides an overview of Foucault's major writings on religion, sexuality and politics. It is open to all undergraduates without pre-requisites. Course Note: Those taking the course for French credit are required to read and cite Foucault readings in French and write the course papers in French. *Kirsten Collins*

RLST 26003 – Introduction to Art, Religion, and Spirituality  
Throughout the course of human history, the pervasive belief in spirits, gods, natural and supernatural forces has significantly shaped and influenced various cultures, leaving an essential mark on their artistic expressions. This course takes a broad approach, utilizing artifacts and artworks from the Smart Museum of Art, Field Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago collections, art history, and visual studies to explore the intersections of art, religion, and spirituality. The course primarily focuses on art from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, with occasional excursions into ancient art for contextual understanding. Moreover, the geographical exploration aims to be as inclusive as possible. After a theoretical exploration of the concepts of "spirit," "spirituality," "religion," and their connections to the arts, the course will focus on the Arts of Africa, Arts of the Americas, Arts of Asia, and Arts of the Middle East. Following this, we will examine the evolving concept of spirituality in art, with particular attention to late 19th-century and early 20th-century European and American art, and a detailed study of religious and spiritual art from the 1950s to the present. The structure of the course is neither strictly chronological nor entirely thematic. We will navigate across historical periods and geographical regions, maintaining an awareness of historical contexts while allowing for a flexible and dynamic approach to the material. *Donato Loia*

RLST 26180 – Caring for the Earth: Nature and Ecology Before Modernity  
What do we mean by nature, and how do humans relate to it? A recent French translation of Virgil's *Georgics* was titled anew: "Le souci de la terre" ("care for the earth"). What does it mean to care? Is care disinterested, or does it serve a purpose? What logics of dominion or obligation shape it? This course traces ideas of nature and care from Antiquity to early modernity. How did humans conceive of their place in the world? How did they understand its resources and their impact? From the commons to enclosures, from caretaking to exploitation, from interpreting nature to organizing it (aménagement), we will question linear narratives of progress (humans caring more) and degradation (humans caring less). Focusing on France and French texts while engaging classical and theological sources, we will also consider exploration and exploitation beyond France. We will examine how

religious ideas, canonical texts, and philosophical concepts have shaped discourses on nature, as well as the relevance of contemporary ecological terms. Attending closely to the multiple ways in which human beings variously have articulated their relationship to nature or the environment permits us to ask, instead of assume, what might be the conditions and practices of care incumbent upon human beings today. *Daisy Delogu and Pauline Goul*

#### 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. *Timothy Harrison*

#### 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 27393 – Pirates, Renegades, and Refugees in the Early Modern Mediterranean

An enslaved Italian woman becomes the de facto ruler of the Ottoman Empire. A Muslim diplomat expelled from Spain exchanges letters with a renowned Dutch Orientalist. A Spanish soldier held captive for five years in Algeria returns home to write the first modern novel. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the encounter between Christians, Muslims, and Jews in the Mediterranean made thousands of lives like these possible, men and women who traversed the borders between countries, languages, and religions. This course will examine cross-cultural encounters in the early modern Mediterranean world by focusing on three closely related dynamics: piracy, captivity, and religious conversion. We will explore questions such as: How did an upsurge of piracy contribute to the enslavement of millions of people on both shores of the Mediterranean? How did captives advocate for themselves and write about their experiences? What motivated early modern people to adopt a new faith? By reading firsthand accounts from captives, travelers, and migrants, we will look closely at the processes that made early modernity a time of unprecedented mobility for people around the globe. This course is open to all students in the College, and no prior knowledge of early modern history is required. *Katherine Randoz*

#### RLST 27724 – The Salem Witch Trials: Magic, Religion, and Hysteria in Colonial New England

By the time the Salem Witch Trials ended in May 1693, 200 people had been accused of witchcraft, 30 had been convicted, and 19 executed—most of them women. The Trials are one of the best-known outbursts of violence in American history, often seen as a brief but intense slip into witchcraft hysteria almost a century after European witch hunts had faded out. But the Salem Witch Trials did not occur in a vacuum. This course will place the trials in their religious and cultural context, considering how orthodox theology, popular religion, magic, the supernatural, witchcraft, and gender were understood by Puritan New Englanders in the seventeenth century. It will then

examine the trials themselves—both Salem and witchcraft trials more broadly—to tease out the anxieties they expressed (all of which are still relevant today): fear of women, fear of God, fear of change, and fear of the other. *Peggy Heffington*

#### RLST 27804 – Living our Bodies with Technology

We live with and in our bodies, and we cannot experience the world without them. Yet, most of the time, we remain unaware of our bodies and how they are shaped by the technological infrastructures we inhabit. This course explores the complex ways in which technologies—broadly understood—mediate and shape our experience of the body. We will engage with philosophical and anthropological perspectives on the various conditions of the human body and examine how these conditions are influenced by technology and the modern configurations of our lived environments. We will explore questions such as: How do brain scans and real-time ultrasounds shape our experience of our inner selves? Is ADHD a timeless condition, or is it a product of new ways of being and knowing the world? How are organ transplants reshaping our understanding of what makes a person whole? How do artists use virtual reality to tell stories of living with such conditions? How do fitness trackers alter our understanding of well-being? Through critical reflection on different modes of knowing our bodies and communicating lived experiences, we will examine how technologies both reinforce and challenge traditional conceptions of the body, as well as create entirely new ways of living within them. Readings will be drawn from medical anthropology, phenomenology, media theory, and the philosophy of science. *Desiree Foerster and Elham Miresghbi*

#### RLST 28319 – Iconophobia: The Prohibition and Destruction of Religious Images

This course examines concepts of art that reflect iconophobia, “fear of images,” in the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Since antiquity, iconophobia has led to theological debates that resulted in the prohibition of images in sacred spaces, rituals, and other forms of religious practice. In extreme cases, iconophobia has caused acts of iconoclasm, the violent destruction of art. In all three religions, fear of idolatry (“idol worship”) has been the main cause of iconophobia. We will examine what exactly constitutes an idol and how the definitions of idols differ from iconophile (“image-loving”) assessments of religious art. Both iconophobic and iconophile arguments shed light on the various functions and effects of religious images and illustrate their power. Furthermore, they reveal attitudes towards artistic creation, materiality, aesthetics, sensory perception, and truth in art. In order to understand the causes and manifestations of iconophobia, we will examine a range of primary sources, both textual and visual, and engage with the relevant scholarship. We will take a comparative approach, but also pay attention to phenomena and developments that are unique to each religion. Most of the topics and readings will focus on the premodern period from antiquity to the 16th century. However, we will also look at some of the effects of iconophobia in our own time. *Karin Krause*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 38319, RLVC 38319

#### RLST 28901 – Religion, Science, Naturalism: Is There a Problem?

The idea that “religion” and “science” are basically at odds with one another — that they involve, indeed, essentially different kinds of rationality — is surely foremost among the ideas that arguably distinguish modernity. This class will consider some of the various ways in which that conclusion has been resisted by some twentieth- and twenty-first-century thinkers, drawing on a range of philosophical and religious perspectives — those, for example, of the Anglo-Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (who would complicate our understanding of what it means to “believe” anything); the German theologian Rudolf Bultmann (whose method precisely distinguished

existential questions from scientific ones); and the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet (who thinks it imperative that the limits of scientific understanding be acknowledged in light of a Buddhist critique). Particular attention will be given to early writings from American pragmatist philosopher-scientists (William James, C. S. Peirce, and John Dewey), who argued that it is a mistake in the first place to think religion necessarily concerns anything “supernatural”; religion, for these thinkers, can therefore be understood as wholly consistent with naturalism. *Dan Arnold*

#### 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 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. PQ: RLST 29800. *Lucas Depierre*

## **SPRING 2026**

### Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

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

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. *Angie Heo*

#### AASR 45211 – Being and Space: Peter Sloterdijk’s ‘Bubbles’ and Beyond

In this seminar, we will devote ourselves to the first volume of Sloterdijk’s three-volume study of existential spatiality, a study he himself considered to be the missing part of Heidegger’s conception

of “being-in-the-world.” For Sloterdijk, our disposition to create and inhabit various kinds of spheres begins in the womb and develops historically and culturally in seemingly infinite variations. Sloterdijk’s idiosyncratic phenomenology of “micro-spheres,” the project of the first volume and one that reveals the traces of an intimate alterity, generates a matrix for further thinking about enclosures, boundaries, community, immunity, intimacy, and ecstasy. Along the way, we will draw in material from other thinkers and artists to complement and challenge Sloterdijk’s work. *William Mazzarella and Eric Santner*

#### AASR 46300 – Coalitions, Conversions, and Conservative Christianities

In the face of post-liberal realignments, particular varieties of Christian conservatism have ascended as a consequential political force worldwide. This seminar interrogates contemporary Christian political realignments by examining the problems of coalition and conversion. We will focus on inter-denominational and intra-Christian dynamics in the Americas, Europe and Asia to ask questions about the contradictions, costs, and potentials of new conservative Christian movements. Our interdisciplinary readings draw from political theory, public theology, and sociological and historical studies of religion. In the spirit of collaboration, our in-person course will include virtual engagements with students and guest speakers from other campuses. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Angie Heo*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 46300, RAME 46300, HREL 46301

#### AASR 51100 – Situations

Precision in ethnographic method has grown elusive as the methods for contextualizing the objects of analysis have metamorphosed in 21st century. At least since Edmund Leach’s *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, ethnographers have begun to dispute the premise organizing classic twentieth-century ethnography: that societies come parceled in identifiable units. Ethnographic method has changed just as profoundly before. Study of places originally was a replacement for study of cases. Twentieth century ethnography broke with nineteenth century evolutionary stage theories and a comparative method founded on case studies, by turning from study of cases (of primitivity, of barbarism, of peasantry, etc.) to the delineation of places, in which separate and whole cultures and societies thrived. After Leach and others, this place-based study of systems of social and cultural order has been challenged by a congeries of increasingly radical reconsiderations of sites and their situations. Culture, society and meaning are delineated now not in whole isolates but in obviously heterogeneous fields, networks, scapes (etc.). The new approach enables more productive political and historical studies of domination, asymmetry, exploitation, struggle and change. While Sahlins and Tambiah constituted a post-Sartrean “structural, historical anthropology” by the 1980s, Dirks announced a “new, critical historical anthropology” and Wolf, an “historically-oriented political economy.” *John Kelly*

#### Biblical Studies

##### BIBL 42245 – New Testament Readings: Disability, Healing, and Ancient Medicine

Within New Testament literature, one encounters numerous narratives of healing and embodied difference. How do these narratives inform our understanding of ancient discourses around the body? What interpretative insights do we gain from reading these texts alongside Greco-Roman discourses of medicine and healing? How have the insights of Disability Studies enriched our understanding of these texts? This Greek exegesis course will introduce students to modern historical, textual, and rhetorical-critical approaches in conversation with the history of

interpretation. Students will engage in close readings of the Greek text of representative examples drawn from the canonical gospels. We will examine each passage's composition, structure, and theology. Through lectures and assignments, students will gain familiarity with the major interpretative trajectories of these narratives within the history of Christian thought. At the beginning of the quarter every student will choose an interpreter or interpretative approach – ancient, medieval, modern, or post-modern – to represent in class discussions. PQ: Undergraduate and Graduate students who have completed classes I and II of the Koine Greek sequence or equivalent. Various levels can be accommodated; please feel free to consult with instructor. *Erin Walsh*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 42245, RLST 22245

BIBL 44100 – Reading the Psalms

In this course, we will read closely a selection of psalms, paying special attention to their genre and poetry. We will also consider the import of these psalms for understanding ancient Israelite religious thought. This course will serve as the third quarter of the Divinity School's first-year Hebrew sequence. All biblical texts will be read in Hebrew. PQ: At least one year of biblical Hebrew or equivalent (BIBL 33900 and BIBL 34000 Introductory Biblical Hebrew). Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Simeon Chavel*

### Philosophy of Religion

DVPR 35750 – Heidegger and the Gods (I): Philosophy and Theology

This seminar marks the beginning of a triad – (II) Philosophy and Poetry, (III) Philosophy and Politics – which confronts Heidegger's thinking with particular attention to the question of what significance it attaches to the gods and to the divine after the “death of God” – from the early encounter with Christian theology; to the expectation of the “last God as beginning”; to the conception of the “fourfold” of heaven and earth, mortals and divinities; to the saying “Only a God can save us.” At the center will be Heidegger's appeal to Hölderlin's poetry; the consequences for philosophy and politics will form the vanishing point. *Heinrich Meier*

DVPR 41700 – Readings in Madhyamaka

Engaging a range of texts representing major developments in the history of India's Madhyamaka tradition of Buddhist philosophy, from Nāgārjuna (ca. 150 CE) to Prajñākaramati (ca. 1000 CE), this seminar will involve close readings from the instructor's forthcoming *Madhyamaka Reader*. PQ: Some Tibetan or Sanskrit is expected. Exceptions with consent of the instructor. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Dan Arnold*

DVPR 43910 – Classical Chinese Philosophies of Mind

This course will investigate the various understandings of the nature of consciousness—its extent and function, its grounding or groundlessness, its relation to body and will, its distinction from or identity with experienced physical entities and envisioned ethical ideals—in pre-modern Chinese philosophies. Readings will include early Confucian, Daoist and syncretic speculations (Mengzi, Xunzi, Zhuangzi, Huainanzi), medieval Buddhist idealisms and omniscientisms (Tiantai, Huayan, Chan), and the representative thinkers of the various branches of Neo-Confucian thought (Zhang Zai, Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming). All readings will be done in English, with optional supplemental reading sessions of the original texts for students proficient in classical Chinese. *Brook Ziporyn*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 42910, RLST 23910

DVPR 53003 – Philosophical Commentaries on the *Book of Changes (Yijing)*

This course will consist of close readings, in Classical Chinese, of commentarial expansions on the Yijing (Zhouyi) developing its ontological, metaphysical, cosmological, epistemological and ethical implications. Readings will include some or all of the following: the “Ten Wings” (including the “Xicizhuan”), the works of Wang Bi, Han Kangbo, Wei Boyang, Dongshan Liangjie, Shao Yong, Zhang Boduan, Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai, Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi, Wang Fuzhi, Ouyi Zhixu, and Liu Yiming. PQ: Proficiency in Classical Chinese required. *Brook Ziporyn*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 53003, RLST 23003

### History of Christianity

HCHR 35330 – The Gospel of Jesus and Money

“Tell me what you think about money, and I will tell you what you think about God, for these two are closely related. A man’s heart is closer to his wallet than anything else” – Billy Graham  
For many Christians in the contemporary world globalized through capitalism, the Pentecostal gospel of prosperity’s promise of a socially fulfilling and abundant life in this-worldly realm has been quite appealing. In contrast to the earlier movements of Christianity where the good life was promised as a reward in the hereafter, the prosperity message (also called the “health and wealth gospel”), combines salvation with material comfort. This “Jesus plus money” approach indicates a pragmatic understanding of secular power as inextricable from salvation if Christianity would truly expand the sphere of social possibilities for believers. In this course, we will examine the contexts and contingencies that gave rise to this conflation of Jesus with wealth and power in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, critically exploring how this this-worldly gospel has transformed Christianity in various locales where its growth has exploded. Students will study several socio-cultural and socio-political contexts where the prosperity gospel has thrived. By the end of the semester, they would have developed a coherent understanding of the allure of the prosperity gospel, adaptations of the Cross to capitalism, and what the trend portends for the Christian faith as a global practice. *Abimbola Adedokun*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RAME 35330, RLST 25330

HCHR 40100 – Global Pentecostalism

One of the most remarkable developments of the past six decades is the global ascendance of Pentecostalism, a Christian charismatic movement that has redefined Christianity in crucial ways. This course will account for the global explosion through a study of the internal qualities and the external systemic factors that have propelled Pentecostal charismatic movements to become the vanguard of Christianity worldwide. We will also learn how the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements are acquiring cultural and political power while transforming themselves to be a major force for social justice in various countries. Students will engage religious resources (such as performances, rituals, texts, and materials) that have supported the global mobility and motility of Pentecostalism in multiple continents. Through an interdisciplinary approach that will draw readings from sociology, media studies, performance studies, religious studies, theology/social ethics, political theory, economics, history, and anthropology, we will explore the cultural and political factors, the missiological initiatives, demographical changes, and technological developments that have resulted in the move of the Holy Spirit beyond human-made borders. *Abimbola Adedokun*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 40100, RAME 40100, RLST 26661

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

This course will explore the central themes of Power, Philosophy, and Priesthood. From the Pastoral Epistles, with their division between episkopos and paratheke, through the “upstarts” (a term invented by Robert Bellah) that characterizes the power and community-building skills of third and fourth-century bishops like Tertullian, Cyprian and Gregory of Nazianzen, through some medieval figures and on to a German philosopher like Kant, 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 sources about the priesthood and later writings about it by Weber, Kant, and Foucault. We will try as much as possible to read these sources “side by side,” joining the historical and the theoretical/theological sides. The theme of gender will be added in, as it compounds any simple narrative that could be constructed. *Willemien Otten*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 48901

### History of Judaism

(none)

### History of Religions

#### HREL 31981 – History of the Field, Part 1

This graduate seminar explores recent work in the critical history of various academic disciplines and departments in the United States. Apart from the large-scale conditions that inform the politics of knowledge in areas of the humanities and social sciences (viz., Western imperial expansion, Cold War geopolitics, etc.), the course gives particular attention to problems of race and gender in the constitution and reproduction of institutional and disciplinary norms. Fields interrogated include Anthropology, Asian/Middle East Studies, Classics, Intellectual History, Philosophy, Religion, Sociology, South Asian Studies, and Critical University Studies. *Anand Venkatkrishnan*

Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 31981

#### HREL 33907 – Gandhi and His Critics

The moral and political writings of M.K. Gandhi constitute one of the most influential archives of ethics in the twentieth century. For a man so devoted to periodic vows of silence and withdrawal, he nevertheless left over ninety volumes of public speeches, personal correspondence, and published essays. A modernist arrayed against the brutalities of modernity, Gandhi’s thought encompassed concepts of sovereignty, the state, self and society, religion, civilization, and force. His insistence on cultivating technologies of the self as a response to both colonial and intimate violence was inspired by an eclectic range of source material. Generations of critical thinkers from around the world, including Black, feminist, Communist, and Dalit political activists, engaged with his ideas. This course explores several themes in Gandhi’s ethical thought and the responses they have generated.

*Anand Venkatkrishnan*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RETH 38907, RLST 23907

#### HREL 44701 – Ritual in South Asian Buddhism

This course will explore some ritual practices and theories of South Asian Buddhists in light of contemporary theorization of ritual. What is it that Buddhists “actually” (physically and verbally) do? And, what do they say about what they do? Does what they do “mean” anything? If so, how? And,

what significance might this have for anyone else? What happens when we consider these possibly meaningful forms of expression as “ritual?” Exemplaria will be drawn from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma and Tibet, with some comparative perspectives considered along the way. In addition to informed participation in course meetings/discussions, students are expected to complete a 20–25pp. research paper on a topic agreed upon with the instructor. PQ: Basic knowledge of Southern Asian religions assumed. Course Note: Undergraduates can petition to enroll. *Christian Wedemeyer*

### Islamic Studies

#### ISLM 30203 – Islamic 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: Islamic Civilization II (NEHC 20202) or Islamic Thought & Literature-2 (NEHC 20602), or the equivalent. Course Note: The Islamic 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 provides an overview of the major themes, figures, and debates in medieval Islamic philosophy. We will explore the works of key philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), examining their contributions to metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, politics, and the relationship between reason and revelation. Through close readings of primary texts and critical discussions, students will gain an understanding of how Islamic philosophical thought interacted with Greek philosophical tradition. No prior knowledge of Arabic is required—just an open and inquisitive mind. *Abdallah Soufan*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20630

#### ISLM 30643 – The Formative Period in Shi‘ite Islam: Readings in the Primary Sources

This course explores the formative period of Imami Shi‘ism through close readings of primary Arabic sources, especially al-Kāfi of al-Kulaynī. Intended for advanced undergraduate and graduate students with prior training in Arabic, the course treats al-Kāfi as a layered compilation rather than a monolithic text. Students analyze parallel traditions, doctrinal tensions, and processes of redaction to understand how diverse strands of early Shi‘ite thought were brought together in the fourth/tenth century and how this process shaped the emergence of classical Imami Shi‘ism. Students with limited prior training in Arabic are encouraged to consult the instructor before enrolling. *Abdallah Soufan*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20643

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

An examination of Islamic mysticism, commonly known as Sufism, through English translations of premodern and contemporary Sufi literature originally composed in Arabic and Persian. The aim of this course is to gain firsthand exposure to a wide range of literary expressions of Islamic spirituality within their historical contexts, and to understand exactly what, how, and why Sufis say what they

say. Each unit consists of lectures and close readings of selected excerpts in both the original Arabic/Persian and English translation. *Yousef Casewit*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 24550

#### ISLM 36103 – Dreams, Visions, and Mystical Experience

An exploration of primary texts and secondary scholarship on dreams, visions, and mystical experiences. Through a focus on (1) phenomenology, (2) epistemology, and (3) hermeneutics, the course examines the subjective qualities of paranormal experiences, their meanings within specific religious and philosophical traditions, and their interpretations across diverse explanatory models. How are such encounters described and classified? What theological or spiritual frameworks do traditions like Islam and Christianity offer for understanding them? How might the visionary unveilings of figures like Ibn ‘Arabi be interpreted differently by a historian, a psychologist, or a shaman? Drawing on thinkers such as William James, Carl Jung, and Rudolph Otto, the course explores how religious and secular perspectives illuminate—or challenge—the meaning of mystical phenomena. Students will critically engage with a wide range of extraordinary accounts, developing skills to assess their significance within and beyond traditional frameworks. *Yousef Casewit*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 36103, RLST 26103

#### ISLM 38101 – Iblis: Muslim Perspectives on the Devil

This course examines a range of Muslim perspectives on the Devil. Is Iblis a personification of evil, an archetype of arrogant rebellion against divine command, a perfect monotheist and tragic lover of God, or an ally of humankind and teacher of freedom and creativity? Our readings will include selections from the Qur'an and hadith, Sufi poetry, modern political and theological writing, and others. *Alireza Doostdar*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 38101, RLST 28101

### Religions in the Americas

#### RAME 41440 – Fundamentalism

Is fundamentalism a useful term that allows us to compare anti-modern movements across a range of religious traditions? Or is it a hopelessly problematic term that lumps together vastly different phenomena? This course will use the troubled career of “fundamentalism” as a window onto the modern history of religion—and the people who study it. We will begin by focusing on the origins of fundamentalism: as a description of the political mobilization of conservative Protestants in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. From there, we will broaden our perspective, considering how the term “fundamentalist” has been applied to non-Christian (and sometimes even non-religious) movements. At each step of the way we will consider not only “fundamentalism” itself but also the people who study it and those who mobilize against it. Ultimately, we will ask: is fundamentalism an idea whose time has come again, or one whose time has come and gone? *Will Schultz*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 41440, AASR 41440, RLST 21440

### Religious Leadership and Practice (MDiv Courses)

REL 35300 – Arts of Religious Leadership and Practice: Community, Leadership, and Change

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

#### RELP 40800 – Field Work Practicum III

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

RELP 50407 – Sacred Silence: Attending to the Suffering of Children and Those Without Voices Drawing on spiritual care practice, medicine, and developmental psychology, this course explores the spiritual lives of children and those without a voice due to age, disability, illness, or trauma. Through reflective practice, case studies, and embodied exercises, learners will develop skills to recognize and respond to spiritual expression in movement, play, and relational cues. Emphasizing dignity, agency, and presence, the course prepares caregivers to offer compassionate, attuned care. Conversations will be facilitated by engaging experts in the field of Pediatric Medicine (Palliative Care Physician), Social Work, and Child Life Specialists. Prerequisite: RELP 35200 or permission of instructor. Course Note: This course satisfies a requirement for the chaplaincy concentration. Students from all disciplines are welcome. *Sunil Yadav*

#### Religious Ethics

RETH 35406 – Revolution, Freedom, and Equality: Religion, Ethics, and Politics in Modernity This course traces the terms ‘religion,’ ‘ethics,’ and ‘politics,’ as well as their complex interactions, through the latter parts of what used to be considered elite Western curricula. We will be paying particular attention to the ways previously excluded voices have joined and challenged these ‘elite’ discussions in recent centuries. Our journey begins in revolutionary England and will lead us all the way to the present. The following questions will be at the forefront of our inquiry: What is the role of religion in articulations of revolt and struggles for freedom and equality? What kinds of freedom from/or for dominate the religious and political imaginations? And what is the nature of equality, before God, the law, or in society? *Raissa de Rande*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): ISLM 35406, RLST 25406

RETH 51102 – Opera as Idea and As Performance

Co-Taught with Anthony Freud, former General Director and CEO, Lyric Opera of Chicago; Freud will appear by Zoom, but will make two trips to Chicago to meet with students and attend a class. Is opera an archaic and exotic pageant for fanciers of overweight canaries, or a relevant art form of great subtlety and complexity that has the power to be revelatory? In this course of eight sessions, jointly taught by Professor Martha Nussbaum and Anthony Freud, General Director of Lyric Opera of Chicago, we explore the multi-disciplinary nature of this elusive and much-maligned art form, with its four hundred-year-old European roots, discussing both historic and philosophical contexts and the practicalities of interpretation and production in a very un-European, twenty-first century city. Anchoring each session around a different opera, we will be joined by a variety of guest experts, one each week, including a director, a conductor, a designer and two singers, to enable us to explore different perspectives. The list of operas to be discussed include Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, Verdi's *Don Carlos*, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, Britten's *Billy Budd*, and Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. Remark: students do not need to be able to read music, but some antecedent familiarity with opera in performance or through recordings would be extremely helpful. But enthusiasm is the main thing! PQ: PhD students in the Philosophy Department and the Music Department and all law students (both J. D. and LL.M.) may enroll without permission. All other students will be selected by lottery up to the number feasible given CA arrangements. *Martha Nussbaum*

#### RETH 51802 – Climate Ethics

Anthropogenic climate change is the largest challenge facing human civilization. Its physical and temporal scale and unprecedented complexity at minimum require extensions of existing ethical systems, if not new ethical tools. This course includes studies of natural and social-scientific studies of climate change and its current and predicted effects. Most of the course will examine how religious and philosophical ethical systems respond to the vast temporal and spatial scales of climate change. For instance, common principles of environmental ethics such as justice and responsibility are often reimagined in climate ethics even as they are central to the ethical analysis of its effects. In the course, we will take a comparative approach to environmental ethics, examining perspectives from secular Western philosophy, Christianity (Catholic and Protestant), Buddhist, and Indigenous thought. We will also look at a variety of ethical methods. Throughout the course we will focus on communication about climate change as well as articulating rigorous ethical arguments about its causes and implications. Course Note: Undergraduates may enroll with permission of instructor. *Sarah Fredericks*

#### Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

##### RLVC 36855 – Queer Theory

This course offers a foundation in queer theory. In order to understand the contested definitions of the term “queer” and explore the contours of the field’s major debates, we will work to historicize queer theory’s emergence in the 1980s and 1990s amidst the AIDS crisis. Reading texts by key figures like Foucault, Sedgwick, Butler, Lorde, Bersani, Crimp, Warner, Halperin, Dinshaw, Edelman, Anzaldúa, Ferguson, and Muñoz in addition to prominent issues of journals like GLQ, differences, and Signs, we will approach these pieces as historical artifacts and place these theorists within the communities of intellectuals, activists, and artists out of which their work emerged. We will, thus, imagine queer theory as a literary practice of mournful and militant devotion, trace queer theory’s relationship to feminism and critical race theory, critique the hagiographic tendency of the academic star system, and interrogate the assumptions of queer theory’s secularity. *Kris Trujillo*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 26885

RLVC 38830 – Psychoanalysis: Freud and Beyond

This course offers an introduction to psychoanalytic theory by surveying significant writings by Freud and by Freud's readers. We will explore Freud's various models of the psyche, his interventions into the theory of sexuality, and his writings on religion by tracking the development of key concepts like transference, the Oedipus complex, narcissism, melancholia, the unconscious, and the death drive, among others. How have these concepts evolved over the course of their deployment in 20th- and 21st-century critical and political projects like feminism and queer theory? How have major developments in psychoanalysis read Freud anew? And in what ways do these psychoanalytic projects respond to their historical conditions? Readers of Freud whom we will encounter may include Lacan, Kristeva, Irigaray, Derrida, Butler, Spillers, Edelman, Dean, and Musser. *Kris Trujillo*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 28830

RLVC 40400 – Ekphrasis: Art, Description and Religion

This course explores the rich traditions of description – ekphrasis – from Greco-Roman antiquity into the middle ages. It tackles texts (both prose and verse) in order to establish the ramifications of a genre in the European tradition, and its applications in particular to visual culture and religion. There will be opportunity in the final paper to range beyond these into questions of comparative literature, art (history) writing, religious imagination and ekphrasis in all periods or contexts, as well as into the use of images or films as themselves forms of descriptive response. The course is intended for graduates but interested undergraduates are very welcome. It will be examined on the basis of a paper, due on a subject to be agreed and on a date to be agreed at the end of the Spring quarter. Course Note: This course will be taught virtually for the last two weeks of the quarter. *Jas Elsner*

Equivalent Div Course(s): BIBL 40400, RLST 29004

RLVC 41205 – From Vienna to Hamburg: Theories of Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century—Historiography, Religion, and Crisis

This course lays out the background to the historiographic complexities of studying visual culture and art history now in relation to the ways the dominant theories and methods of the discipline involved in the context of 20th-century history and ideologies. It is impossible in 9 sessions to cover the entire historiography of an ancient discipline. The course will therefore take a selective approach by focusing on the foundations of the art historical approaches in Germany in the Twentieth century that have proved most formative for the development of the discipline in Anglo-American contexts after the Second World War. This may be seen as a narrowing of focus, but it has the benefit of offering a coherent if highly complex and conflictive story to uncover: effectively the most philosophically intense moment in art history from 1900 to the 1950's, the relation of the discipline and its exiles to the rise, triumph and demise of the Third Reich, and the beginnings of its development in the post-War period. Course Note: This course will be taught virtually for the last two weeks of the quarter. *Jas Elsner*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 29005

RLVC 48000 – Brauer Seminar: Testimony in our Time: Exploring Cultures of Testimony

How can testimony and witness be defined in a way that encapsulates its multiple meanings? How does bringing the different forms and discourses of testimony and witness together open new possibilities for research and practice? In this team-taught course, we create a dialogue between

Holocaust studies, religious leadership, and the psychodynamic psychologies to interrogate the theories, institutions, and practice of testimony and witness in a variety of contexts and media. The materials for the course will include works such as Felman and Laub's *Testimony*, Ricoeur's work on memory and narrative, audiovisual testimonies from the Fortunoff Archive at Yale, and fictionalized testimonies such as those of Tim O'Brien. We will consider personal narratives of death and dying, such as those by Nina Riggs, Paul Kalanithi, Joan Didion, and C.S. Lewis. We will look at scriptural testimonies such as the Book of Ezekiel, and we will explore testimonies in courtrooms, and in places of worship. Students will create and present a research project at the end of the quarter. 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>. *Sheila Jelen and Cynthia Lindner*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RELP 48000, HIJD 48000

## Theology

### THEO 35501 – Saints and Other Exemplars

This course will consider recent work on the nature and significance of spiritual & moral exemplars, and will then use this work as a framework with which to analyze the lives of exemplars such as Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Oscar Romero. *Kevin Hector*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): DVPR 35501, RLST 25501

### THEO 40801 – Theology and Cultural Studies

A study of theoretical models of cultural studies in dialogue with models of theology. All theologies arise out of human culture and the attempt of the human being to make ultimate meaning out of all that a person has created. Students will develop their own approach to constructing theologies interacting with cultural studies. *Dwight Hopkins*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 25008

### THEO 41500 – Beloved Community: Theologies of Sociality and Community

Josiah Royce's 1913 book, *The Problem of Christianity*, rejected strains of heroic individualism in US culture and Protestant Christianity. He forwarded instead an interpretation of Christianity that focused on processes of interpretation and the notion of loyalty, recentered the Spirit and the Church, engaged with pragmatic idealism and Buddhism, and offered the idea of "beloved community." That term was taken up by Martin Luther King, Jr., but both thinkers' work can be placed within a broader stream of attention to a social anthropology and theologies of community in the US. Themes of "being at home in the universe," social sin and social amelioration, and the communal power of interpretation, trust, loyalty, and love recur from the transcendentalists, pragmatists, social gospelers, hermeneutical realists, to prophetic theologians. This seminar will engage the work of Royce and King alongside other nineteenth to twenty-first century thinkers including possibly William James, Jane Addams, Walter Rauschenbusch, H. Richard Niebuhr, Howard Thurman, John Courtney Murray, Beverly W. Harrison, and bell hooks. Course Note: Undergraduates must petition to enroll. *Kristine Culp*

## Religious Studies (Undergraduate Designation)

### RLST 10100 – Introduction to Religious Studies

This course will serve as general introduction to the academic field of Religious Studies. In it we will focus on understanding how scholars have historically studied a thing we might call “religion.” We will familiarize ourselves with various classical and contemporary theories and theorists of religion, as well other thinkers whose work considers the idea of religion in interesting or compelling ways. When studying each of these thinkers we will pay close attention to the definitions of religion they offer and the methods they used to arrive at those definitions. We will then apply what we learn to issues outside the field, where our tools may help us to understand the dynamics at work in the wider world. In doing so we will use the study of religion as a way to think more generally about how, why, and to what result people of different times, geographies, and cultures make sense of their existence. All students are welcome and no prior knowledge is required. Course Note: This is the required introductory course for RLST majors. *Jesse Berger*

#### RLST 20140 – Qualitative Field Methods

This course introduces techniques of, and approaches to, ethnographic field research. We emphasize quality of attention and awareness of perspective as foundational aspects of the craft. Students conduct research at a site, compose and share field notes, and produce a final paper distilling sociological insight from the fieldwork. *Omar McRoberts*

#### RLST 20350 – The Beginnings of Islam

This course will cover the first 150 years of Islamic history, beginning with the Prophet Muhammad’s (d. 632) prophetic mission until the demise of the Umayyad dynasty in 749. Initially the focus will be on the Prophet’s life as portrayed in the work of the 8th century compiler Ibn Ishaq (d. 767) as well as in modern biographies. In the second part, the focus will move to the Islamic conquests and the age of the Rashidun caliphs, who ruled for three decades (632-661) after the Prophet’s death. The third and final part of the course will introduce the first Muslim dynasty, the Umayyads, under whose rule (661-750) the early Islamic community was transformed into a fully-fledged state. We will discuss several different topics, such as state formation in early Islam, ideas about religious vs. political leadership, the development of new religious identities, the emergence of a new ruling elite, formation of Muslim scholarly circles, the first examples of Islamic art and architecture, as well as inner-Muslim conflicts and rebellions. Course Note: No background in Islamic studies or in Arabic language is required. *Mehmetcan Akpınar*  
Equivalent Div Course(s): ISLM 30350

#### RLST 20403 – Islamic Thought and Literature III

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. *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. The course will consist of both lectures and discussion. There will be a series of lectures (with discussion) on various facets of ancient Greek religion, with four classes interspersed through the quarter devoted to discussion on aspects of ancient Christian/Biblical thought compared to Greek religious and theological ideas. *David Martinez*

#### RLST 20904 – Introduction to Jainism

Jainism has long been on the margins of Religious Studies, little known beyond its otherworldly emphasis on extreme forms of asceticism, nonviolence, and vegetarianism. This course seeks to expand this popular understanding of Jainism by posing a question: What does it mean to be a Jain in the world when the Jain religion is fundamentally otherworldly in its orientation? By reading ethnographies and historical studies alongside primary sources, this course will introduce students to Jainism as an enduring lived religion whose meaning and practices have changed over time, across regions, between sectarian communities, and in conversation with Buddhism and Hinduism. By the end of the quarter, students can expect to understand Jainism as a minor religion with a major impact. Course Note: This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. *Marielle Harrison*

#### RLST 21960 – Age of Aquarius: The Spiritual Revolutions of the 1960s

Religion underwent significant changes in the 1960s, both in the United States and around the world. These changes could be seen and heard not only in houses of worship but also in street protests, political rallies, and even rock concerts. This course will introduce students to the momentous shifts that made "the Sixties" a watershed era in American religion. By focusing on primary sources—including films, music, and books—we will examine the major cultural, intellectual, and social trends that reshaped religion during this time. Topics will include the role of religion in the civil rights movement, the growing popularity of Buddhism, Hinduism, and other Asian religions, the transformation of the Catholic Church as a result of Vatican II, the re-emergence of a "New Age" movement and attendant fears about "cults," and the surging power of evangelical Christianity. *Will Schultz and Sarah Pierce Taylor*

#### RLST 22016 – Jewish Civilization III: The Holocaust: Victim's Voices

This course approaches the history of the Holocaust through the literature of witness produced by its victims. Through an examination of a range of sources, primarily literary art (fiction, memoir,

poetry) as well as video testimony and visual art, students will consider major concerns in the study of the Holocaust such as representation, authority, memory, testimony, translation and language. Students are advised that these readings will bear witness to human suffering and human cruelty, and they should be prepared to encounter emotionally taxing material. This course is part of the Jewish Civilization sequence, though the earlier two sections of the sequence are not prerequisites for this course. *Jessica Kirzane*

#### RLST 22017 – Jewish Civilization III: Philosophical Responses to the Holocaust

This course examines a range of philosophical responses to the problem of living and acting in the wake of the Holocaust, which called into question every philosophical, theological, and cultural piety of Western civilization: the existence and goodness of God; the actuality of historical progress; the ability of the modern nation-state and its laws to secure freedom and equality for individuals among religious and cultural differences; the capacity of art, culture, and education to make people good and ethical; the power of human reason to decipher good from evil and to guide human action accordingly. We will explore these questions together with a set of methodological concerns around how to study, represent, and memorialize the Holocaust and other historical atrocities, asking: is the Holocaust best approached as a unique historical event or should it be studied together with the histories of enslavement, imperialism, and colonialism? Is there something about the very nature of modernity that generates fascism? What stories can be told, how should they be told, and who has the right to tell them? What forms of knowledge, institution-building, and culture-making might be called upon to honor the victims of past atrocities and generate resources for resisting present and future ones? Course materials may include film, photography, and texts by Adorno, Levinas, Arendt, Levi, Césaire, Fanon, Kofman and others. *Larisa Reznik*

#### RLST 22500 – Death

"We die. That may be the meaning of life." - Toni Morrison

This course is an exploration of death as understood by various religious traditions as depicted in popular culture. Through an exploration of primary and secondary materials, we will explore and discuss topics such as heaven, hell, ghosts, personifications of death and death rituals--comparing contemporary American rituals and narratives about dying with those from ancient China, the Indian subcontinent, Latin America, South Africa, Viking-era Northern Europe, and ancient Egypt. Along the way, we will consider questions like whether it would be preferable to live forever and what role death plays in giving life meaning. *Marielle Harrison*

#### RLST 23013 – Conversion and Redemption

When we think of religious conversion, we often only consider changing religious belief as an individual experience. Sometimes this transformation is facilitated through a divine revelation, an ethical epiphany, or an existential crisis. But there is also a social and cultural aspect to conversion, as when an individual converts due to integrating into a family or as a form of assimilation when facing political and religious oppression. Exploring the relationship between the personal and communal elements in religious conversion brings us to the question of what conversion is, what religion itself is, and what roles it plays in our social existence. Investigating conversion as the site where individual belief confronts social reality raises several questions: Does religion provide criticism of the social status-quo? Or does religion facilitate integration and assimilation? Is conversion 'proven' to a community by adhering to doctrine? Or confirmed by experiential testimony? Is religious belief a matter of epistemological commitment or of social conformity? Our readings will consist of world literature on religious conversion, particularly of personal narratives and memoirs attributing social and ethical redemption to the conversion experience. From

Saint Paul's Damascus to Malcolm X's Harlem, from an ancient Indian empire to feudal Japan, we will explore the phenomenon of conversion as it manifests between the believer's identity and social experience. Course Note: This course meets the requirement for the "Race, Gender, and Religion" track in the Global Studies (GLST) major. *Michaela Podolny*

#### RLST 25706 – Climate Justice

Climate injustice includes the disproportionate effects of climate change on people who benefit little from the activities that cause it, generally the poor, people of color, and people marginalized in other ways. Given the complex economic, physical, social, and political realities of climate change, what might climate justice entail? This course explores this complex question through an examination of various theories of justice; the gendered, colonial, and racial dimensions of climate change; and climate justice movements. Course Note: Graduates may enroll with permission of the instructor and will have extra readings and longer assignments. *Sarah Fredericks*

#### RLST 26139 – Praise, Power, and Patronage in the Middle East

When we encounter praise for the powerful, our first instinct is often to dismiss the entreaty as superficial or sycophantic. Yet, in the Islamic Middle East, certain modes of praise have long had resonances that go beyond the binary of sincerity and flattery. This course asks instead what praise does by tracing its many textual and material lives across the literary and historical record of the Middle East. We will read in translation the poetic boasts of pre-Islamic Arabia and religious paeans of the prophet, explore the scientific and architectural achievements of empires from the Abbasids to the Ottomans, and reflect on global sporting events and arts infrastructure in today's Gulf economies. Whether we look out from the palaces of medieval Baghdad (vividly recreated in *Assassin's Creed*) or the spectator stands of Qatar's many World Cup stadiums, we will engage critically with moments of praise and connect them to the expectations and conventions of patronage. By interrogating the relations that motivate the economy of praise, we will examine the power of praise to shape local and global realities while observing where these ambitions come up against their limits. *Jeson Ng*

#### RLST 26173 – Animals and Animism in Modern European Thought

Once one of the most hackneyed notions in the history of ideas, the concept of animism has made a striking return in a variety of contemporary debates. This course, a discussion-based seminar and a thematic study in intellectual history, examines this once reviled and now revived philosophy of nature. Animist perceptions of a living earth, which have been around since time immemorial, raise pivotal questions about the nature of the natural world, the nature of nonhuman animals, and the place of humans in nature. We will read the key animistic ideas of major European intellectuals such as James Frazer, Sigmund Freud, D. H. Lawrence, Georges Bataille, and Claude Lévi-Strauss. This course offers a historical approach to the ideas of those who wrote about animals and animism from anthropological, psychological, philosophical, and literary perspectives. More specifically the course asks whether animistic philosophies of nature can help us to develop a healthier and more ethical relationship to the other animals and the environment—or, at the very least, help us to stop devouring and destroying them at such a cataclysmic rate. *Ryan Allen*

#### RLST 26340 – Race and the Making of American Spirituality

Why do efforts to enchant the world seem to so often depend on naturalizing racial categories? Is being “spiritual but not religious” a white thing? This introductory course examines these questions through a religious history of spirituality in America and its role in making, maintaining, and negotiating racial difference. We will examine and contextualize a variety of sites and sources of

American spirituality, including spirit channeling, positive thinking, tarot, astrology, yoga, and the vibratory energy of music. We will do so from a variety of perspectives, exploring how turns away from established forms of religion in America have been both a mechanism for exclusion and surprising solidarities. No prerequisite knowledge is required. *Matthew Harris*

#### 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 44635

#### RLST 26902 – Sex, Drugs, and Mantras: Tantra and Subversive Religious Practices

When someone chants mantras in cremation grounds to gain supernatural powers; or practices erotic yoga to achieve mystical union; or ingests illicit substances to channel cosmic deities; are these merely the irrational behaviors of a superstitious mind? Or, rather, are they expressions of profound systems of embodied spirituality with sensible motivations? To make sense of practices such as these, this course places Hindu and Buddhist Tantra in the social and historical context of medieval South Asia. Moving beyond simplistic stereotypes and fetishizations of tantra as esoteric ritualism and/or spiritual hedonism, we'll explore how tantric practices enact sophisticated worldviews centered on the creative power of the divine feminine. As we come to appreciate the peculiar tantric fusion of cosmology and ritual, the tantra becomes a case study for subversive approaches to religious experience more generally. Key questions include: What specific rituals and doctrines constitute 'tantra'? What social and political shifts influenced the development of tantra? What philosophical frameworks justify tantric practice? And how does the concept of feminine creative power (śakti) function? Through close readings of primary texts, secondary scholarship, and artistic media, we will touch upon not only its ancient roots, but also the relevance of tantric principles in contemporary social and religious movements. No prior familiarity with religious studies or South Asian history is required. *Jesse Berger*

#### RLST 26904 – Judaism, Gender, and Sexuality

This course will look at how Jewish conceptions of masculinity, femininity, and gender beyond the binary are constructed and challenged in different historical contexts, attending to both Judaism on its own terms and in the way Jewish gender and sexuality norms have been shaped by interactions with neighboring communities. We will put "traditional" Jewish sources (from biblical, rabbinic, medieval, and modern periods) in conversation with theoretical work in gender, sexuality, queer, and trans studies in order to think about both how using gender and sexuality as focusing lenses may help us learn something new about Judaism but also how analyzing Judaism, as a case study, might contribute to the wider theoretical conversations in gender and sexuality studies. Topics addressed may include gender and sexuality in the Tanakh and rabbinic culture, sex-segregated ritual and educational spaces, the politics of reproduction (including contraception, abortion, and debates

about Jewish “continuity”), the gender politics of Zionism, and differences across different denominations and styles of religious observance (Orthodox, Reform, etc.). We will also look at how Jewish texts, liturgy, rituals, culture, and community are reimagined in light of insights from queer and trans scholarship and activism. *Larisa Reznik*

#### RLST 27721 – Jewish Civilization III: The Jewish Question and the Color Line

This class opens with a simple question: why are Jewishness and Blackness represented as both comparable and conflicting in the twentieth century? The answer sometimes appears just as simple: because they are divided by what W.E.B. DuBois called *the* problem of the twentieth century: the color-line. But such an answer not only glosses over the varied racial and religious identities of Jewish and Black people throughout history; it also begs another question: what is the relationship between race and religion, and how is it overdetermined by Christianity and political construct known as “the West”? Examining the relationship between Jews, religion, and race on an international scale, this course begins with the Dreyfus Affair in France, and crosses the Atlantic to discuss how that relationship changed through two world wars, the Civil Rights Movement, the politics of Black Power, and the global rise of discourses on colonialism and feminism. Drawing on historical and philosophical work by Jean-Paul Sartre, Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and James Baldwin, as well as literary classics by Nella Larson and Sarah Kofman, this course traces out how Jewishness and Blackness have been reconstructed over and over in relation to each other, and in reference to the concepts of gender, race, religion, and colonization that continue to circulate in political discourse today. Course Note: Students who wish to take this course for Civilization Studies credit, must also take Jewish Civilization I and II. The course may also be taken as an independent elective. *Kirsten Collins*

#### RLST 27900 – Gaming the Gods: Video Games and Religion

What can Freud’s theory of religion tell us about the appeal of Grand Theft Auto? How might critical religious studies help explain who the good guys and bad guys can be in a game? Is it kosher that there’s a game where we can play as Jesus Christ (and punch Satan in the face)? In this course we will investigate the relationship between religion and video games. We will look at how religious narratives, symbolism, and ritual practice have influenced the worlds created by designers and developers. We will explore the communities and artistic expressions produced through the shared experience of gaming, including how the study of religion can help us understand the rules and boundaries that define them. Finally, we will think about how traditional religious communities have responded to video games, embracing their potential for new forms of imagination or rejecting them as dangerous or heretical.

Though this course requires no previous knowledge of video games and gaming, interested students will have the option to design a video game as part of the final project. *Marshall Cunningham*

#### RLST 28017 – Black Americans and MAGA

In November 2024, over 77 million American citizens voted for Donald J. Trump, Make America Great Again, and Put America First policies. Millions of black American citizens voted this way. This class will look at some of the political and theoretical books written by black conservatives. Conversations throughout the term will be purely academic research to understand and highlight the intellectual contributions of Black MAGA thought. *Dwight Hopkins*