

DIVINITY COURSE CATALOG 2026-2027

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 ids 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 2026

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. PQ: 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. *Daniel A. Arnold*

DVSC 55001 – Writing Religion I

This is a year-long course about the craft of scholarly writing and writing for a broader audience. It will consider the conventions and conflicts of writing in a field as interdisciplinary as the study of religion and will explore the opportunities for creativity, voice and style within its various forms through reading and writing. We will work on everything from the sentence to the structuring of

book-length manuscripts. We will treat the scholarly article, the book review and the personal essay. The course will meet three times per quarter over the academic year. PQ: Course admission is by consent only. Applications should be sent to the instructor via email. *Sarah Hammerschlag*

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 36300 – Religion and Medicine

This colloquium course introduces students to the anthropological study of religion and medicine, focusing on how cultural, moral, and spiritual frameworks shape understandings of illness, healing, suffering, and death. We will explore how communities interpret disease as having both physical and spiritual causes, and how healing practices—ranging from ritual and prayer to biomedical interventions—are embedded within social, ethical, and cosmological systems. Dying, brain death, and organ transplantation are examined as ethically and culturally contested domains, alongside experiences at the threshold of life, such as near-death events and terminal lucidity. We will also consider suffering and disability as socially and spiritually meaningful experiences that inform caregiving, moral responsibility, and community obligations. The course is structured to support students across disciplines, including those in medicine, clinical research, and pastoral care, who seek to understand the intersections of religion, culture, and medical practice. *Elham Miresghhi*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 26300

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 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. *Marshall Cunningham*
Equivalent Div Course(s): JTAC 31000, RLST 11004

BIBL 33800 – Introductory Biblical Hebrew I

This course is the first of a three-quarter sequence designed to introduce students to the language of biblical Hebrew, with special emphasis on the fundamentals of its morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. This course follows a standard textbook supplemented by lectures, exercises, and oral drills aimed at refining the students' grasp of grammatical sound translation/interpretation. At the conclusion of the sequence students will be prepared to take biblical Hebrew reading and exegesis courses. *Tommaso Bacci*
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 13800

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. *Bradley Hansen*
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 14100

BIBL 36020 – The Gospel of John

Despite (and at times because of) the simplicity of its prose, the Gospel of John remains one of the most puzzling texts in the New Testament, posing numerous questions for careful interpreters. How does the author's depiction of Jesus as a divine figure intersect with other Greco-Roman and Jewish conceptions of deity and divinized figures? How does the Fourth Gospel relate to the Synoptic Gospels, and why is its portrayal of Jesus' ministry and speech profile so distinct? What (if anything) can this Gospel add to investigations of the historical Jesus? What is the relationship of this author—a Jewish Christ-follower—to Judaism, and why does he depict his fellow Jews collectively in such negative terms? In this course, we will explore these and other questions as we work together through the Fourth Gospel. While this course will be focused on this text and others in translation, students familiar with Greek will have ample opportunity to use their skills. Course Note: Greek not required; Intro to New Testament encouraged but not required. *Doug Hoffer*
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 22020

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

Tertullian was the first to attribute the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews to Barnabas, and that ascription found favor with no less an ancient figure as Jerome, and even with notable scholars of the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries, such as Albrecht Ritschl and Friedrich Blass.

Although no one can know who wrote it, there are fruitful literary and thematic parallels between the Epistle that bears the name Barnabas and the canonical Hebrews, including their critique of Judaism and their interpretatio Christiana of the Hebrew Bible, with particular regard to Levitical institutions and the temple. We will read thoroughly the Greek text of each treatise with focus on the language and style of the two texts, their relation to Hellenistic and Alexandrian Judaism, and their respective treatments of Hebrew Bible/Septuagintal themes. PQ: At least two years of Greek.

David Martinez

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 22034

BIBL 48002 – Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

This is a reading and exegesis course on the prophetic texts of Haggai, Zechariah (chs. 1–8), and Malachi. All texts will be read in Hebrew. PQ: At least one year of biblical Hebrew. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Jeffrey Stackert*

Philosophy of Religion

DVPR 45000 – Classic Texts of Confucianism: The Four Books

This class will consist of readings, in classical Chinese, from the “Daxue” (“Great Learning”) the “Zhongyong” (“Doctrine of the Mean”), the Lunyu (Analects) and the Mengzi (Mencius)--

collectively known as the “Four Books” 四書 since being selected out from ancient sources by Zhu Xi (1130-1200) as representing the core teachings of Confucianism. Our focus will be on discussion of the close reading of these texts, making reference to classical commentarial traditions as needed, with an eye to their possible philosophical and ethical implications. PQ: Proficiency in reading Classical Chinese is required. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Brook Ziporyn*
Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 45000

DVPR 33112 – Deconstruction and Religion

In this course we will carefully consider selected works by French philosopher Jacques Derrida. We will address the emergence of religious themes in his early work and reconsider the relation between deconstruction and theology as potentially divergent modes of discourse. We will then examine the roles of messianism, belief, and confession in his later work. We will also discuss the so-called closure of metaphysics: How does Derrida articulate this closure in his early work, and how does this inform his efforts to distinguish deconstruction from theology or so-called negative theology? Does the Derridean notion of closure change over time? If so, how? And what role do the writings on religion and the gift play in interrogating the meaning of closure? *Ryan Coyne*
Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 33112, RLST 23112

History of Christianity

HCHR 30500 – History of Christian Thought V: Modern Religious Thought

This course surveys the development of modern Christian thought, moving from the late 1700s to the present. Beginning with foundational figures such as Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, and

Feuerbach, we will examine how Christian thinkers responded to the philosophical, cultural, and social challenges of modernity. The course then turns to influential twentieth-century theologians, including Ernst Troeltsch and Karl Barth, before concluding with the emergence of contextual and liberation theologies, especially in the work of Valerie Saiving, Dolores Williams, Rosemary Radford Ruether, James Cone, and Gustavo Gutierrez. Throughout, we will explore how modern thinkers reinterpreted Christianity in response to two big questions: what would it mean to believe in a religion *for oneself*, rather than because that is what one has been taught? And is there any place for freedom in a mechanistic world? *Kevin Hector*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 30500, RLST 11500

HCHR 32604 – The Reformation in Britain, 1450-1660

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

HCHR 39522 – Europe's Intellectual Transformations, Renaissance through Enlightenment

This course will consider the foundational transformations of Western thought from the end of the Middle Ages to the threshold of modernity. It will provide an overview of the three self-conscious and interlinked intellectual revolutions which reshaped early modern Europe: the Renaissance revival of antiquity, the "new philosophy" of the seventeenth century, and the light and dark faces of the Enlightenment. It will treat scholasticism, humanism, the scientific revolution, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Voltaire, Diderot, and Sade. *Ada Palmer*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 22605

History of Religions

HREL 30101 – Ancient Mediterranean Religions I: Israel, Judah, and Judaism

This course surveys the history of religion in ancient Israel and Judah in the first millennium BCE. The main topics considered include the major religious ideas and practices attested, their representation in literary sources (especially the Hebrew Bible) and material culture, the role of social, political, and economic conditions in the development of Israelite religion, and the emergence of monotheistic ideas from within a polytheistic culture. A consistent aspect of the course will be comparison between Israel and Judah and other ancient Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cultures. Course Notes: Students are encouraged to take all three quarters of this sequence (fall-winter-spring) but it is not required. This class is a Gateway course for the Religious Studies (RLST) program. *Jeffrey Stackert*

Equivalent Div Course(s): BIBL 30101, JTAC 30101, RLST 20101

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 40000 – Brauer Seminar: Settler, Scholar, Soldier, Scribe: Knowledge and Power in the Early Modern World

The spread of global empires in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provided the material and political conditions for the intellectual developments of the early modern world. These developments included: a sense of novelty and experimentation, the rise of vernacular and lay learning, new forms of historicity, critical questioning of received traditions and sources of authorities, and creative re-imaginings of social norms and customs. Many of these developments are today viewed as critical to the formation of modernity. Nearly all of them were underwritten by imperial conquest and the concomitant world-systems of race, caste, and religion. This seminar explores the entanglements of knowledge and power across the early modern world. Readings focus on taxonomic traditions, histories of science, missionary and military systems of knowledge, mobility and migration, and ethical self-formation. 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/academics/brauer-seminar>. *Anand*

Venkatkrishnan and Kirsten Macfarlane

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 40000

Islamic Studies

ISLM 30040 – Encountering the Qur'an: Scripture, History, and Reception

This course introduces students to the Qur'an, Islam's holy book, by exploring both the text itself and the theological and historical contexts in which it emerged. We will examine the Qur'an's major themes, literary features, and theological ideas, paying close attention to how its revelations address the concerns of their time. The course also considers shared biblical figures and foundational narratives, and surveys how Muslim scholars have interpreted certain passages of the Qur'an from its conception to the modern era. Course Note: This class is a Gateway course for the Religious Studies (RLST) program. *Mehmetcan Akpınar*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 11040

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

Jewish Thought and Culture

JTAC 34109 – Trauma, Testimony, and Cinema: 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 350 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. An "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

JTAC 46677 – American Jewish Experience: Texts and Contexts

What texts and contexts constitute American Jewish experience? In this class, we will consider the birth of a unique Jewish ethnicity in America, with a deep dive into the literature, the theology, and the politics of American Judaism from the turn of the 20th century to the post-October 7th moment we now inhabit. Beginning with reflections on the protestantization of American Judaism, special attention will be paid to the intersection of ethnic and religious experience in contemporary American Jewish life. With a foray into the boom in American Jewish Passover Haggadahs, we will explore the unique shape of the seemingly oxymoronic American Jewish religious secularism. We will consider Jews, Civil Rights, neo-Hassidism, and the counterculture and read ethnographies of American Jewish immigrant communities and aging urban synagogues. Debates on the silence of the American Jewish community after the Holocaust will be set against the backdrop of the quest to reconstruct East European Jewish life during that same period. Finally, we will explore the powerful growth of Diasporism in American Jewish culture today. *Sheila Jelen*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 46677, RLST 26677

Religions in the Americas

RAME 35700 – The Christian Right

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

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 35700

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. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *William Schultz*
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 40200

Religious Leadership and Practice (MDiv Courses)

REL 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

REL 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*

REL 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 REL 30500. *Erika Dornfeld*

REL 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 30901 – Moral Theory: Modernity

Significant developments occurred in European moral theory in the modern period as scholars wrestled with the degree to which religion mattered to ethics and the ways in which the modern search for laws governing the universe was or was not applicable to morality. This course will examine the work of thinkers including but not limited to Kant, Hume, Mill, Spinoza, and Schleiermacher. This course is part of series in Religious Ethics on moral theory and philosophical ethics. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Sarah Fredericks*

RETH 32800 – Religious Ethics and the Sciences

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

RETH 33300 – Reading Your Neighbor's Scripture: Scriptural Reasoning

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

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 33300, ISLM 33300, RLST 26606

RETH 34305 – Forbidden Knowledge: Theology, Ethics, and Research of Impermissible Risk

We live in time of extraordinary scientific research, in which our capacities for technological advances far outstrip our established legal, ethical, and social norms for control. LLMs and embryo manipulation raise questions about the acceptable relationships between humans and technology: Artificial General Intelligence, advanced Mirror Biology both, if created, may destroy human life entirely. Is there some research that ought never to be done? It was here at the University of Chicago where this question was most vividly raised, as researchers of the Manhattan Project objected to using new technologies of atomic fission as weapons in World War II. These researchers consistently challenged the assumption that scientists must be completely free to do any research that they wish, noting that scientists themselves might not be the best ones to evaluate the risks and benefits of their own projects, and they called for a deeper involvement in such questions in an informed, public, and democratic process. This seminar will look in detail at the technology of AGI

and of mirror biology, both of which carry deadly portents and totalizing implications and explore both how we discern whether and how to control scientific inquiry. We will ask: what role does moral philosophy or theological ethics have to play in this inquiry and we will consider what sort of governing norms or methods should have oversight over modern research science. Course Note: This course is an elective for the MS Biomedical Sciences program's ethics concentration. *Laurie Zoloth*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 24305

Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

RLVC 38345 – Interpreting and Exhibiting Textiles from North Africa and Southwest Asia

This seminar explores visual culture and historical arts of Africa primarily from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with a focus on traditional textiles and adornment in North Africa and Southwest Asia. We will cover that broad geographical range with case studies that center on production, practices, and uses for textiles and related objects of devotion in everyday life.

Investigations will highlight textiles' tangible and intangible elements to examine their spiritual and protective dimensions through various lenses: organized religions, including the three Abrahamic faiths, local belief systems and ritual practices, social or political organizations, and other cultural distinctions. Such contextualization will contribute to students' recognition of the diversity and historical depth of the continent's arts and cultures. We will visit objects in storage and spend time in the galleries for the exhibition, Embroidered Traditions from Morocco to Afghanistan, for in-person, close looking and to fuel discussions surrounding the role of museums, museum display, and interpretation. At least two class sessions will take place at the Art Institute of Chicago. PQ: Consent only. This course fulfills the following requirements in the ARTH major and minor: African Art.

Janet Purdy

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 28345

RLVC 47100 – History of Criticism I: Plato to Maimonides

A historical survey of emergent ideas of poetics and aesthetics focused on initiating thinkers: Plato, Aristotle, Origen of Alexandria, Augustine, Plotinus, Cassian, Maimonides, and Aquinas. (Students planning to take RLVC Qualifying Exam 1 with the instructor must complete this course.) Course

Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Richard Rosengarten*

Theology

THEO 33609 – Kierkegaard: *Works of Love*

What is the nature of love? Who, if anyone, are we obligated to love? How can we be good at loving others, and what role might religion play? This course will be devoted to a close reading of Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, one of the central texts of his later authorship. We will examine Kierkegaard's account of Christian love, its ethical demands, and its contrast with more familiar forms of preferential love such as friendship and romantic attachment. A small selection of companion readings will help situate the work within its historical context and illuminate its philosophical and theological stakes. *Kevin Hector*

Equivalent Div Course(s): DVPR 33609, RLST 23609

THEO 41101 – Being Human

What does it mean to be a human being – a person who fulfills individual capabilities and contributes to a community's well being? Furthermore, what connects the individual and community to an ultimate vision, spirituality, or God? These questions and investigations can be described as an examination of and argument for constructing a theological anthropology. When one thinks intentionally about the being of a human and his or her ties to some concern or force greater than the limited self, then transcendence and materiality involve themselves in a complex dynamic. How does one construct an individual and a community of individuals grounded in a higher purpose or ultimate vision? *Dwight Hopkins*

Religious Studies (Undergraduate Designation)

RLST 20114 – Sickness, Death, and Dying in the Ancient World

As Ben Franklin once famously said, “in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” This was no more true in early America than it was in the ancient world, in which humans invested significant amounts of time and energy responding to the seeming inevitability of death. In this course we will investigate how ancient peoples understood, mediated, mitigated, observed, mourned, sought to escape, accepted, and continued on after death. To do this, we will examine literary, inscriptional, and material evidence from the eastern Mediterranean (Greece, Egypt, the Levant) and Mesopotamia (Assyria, Babylonia, Persia) that reflects how the ancients thought about death and the processes that ultimately led to it. No prior knowledge of religion, the ancient world, or death is required for this course. *Marshall Cunningham*

HCHR 30232 – The History of Christianity in the Middle East

This course will introduce students to the history of Christian communities in the Middle East from Late Antiquity to the present day. We will begin with the spread of Christianity throughout the eastern Roman and Iranian Empires before turning to the rise of Islam in the seventh century and subsequent powers, including the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. Over the centuries, how did Christian communities co-exist and interact with Zoroastrians, Jews, and Muslims? What contributions did Christian thinkers and monasteries make to philosophical inquiry, the sciences, and broader culture in the Islamic world? By the end of the quarter, we will discuss how a confluence of factors, such as the end of the Ottoman Empire, European colonialism, the emergence of nationalism and Islamism, Western Christian missions, and US foreign policy, has shaped the lives of Middle Eastern Christians in the modern period and led to worldwide diaspora. At the heart of the course will be the rich literary, cultural, and theological traditions of indigenous communities, including Copts, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Assyrians, Maronites, and Syriac Orthodox. The course will feature opportunities to visit local cultural and religious centers of Middle Eastern Christians in the Chicago area. No prior knowledge of biblical literature, Christian thought, or the history of Christianity is expected. *Erin Walsh*

Equivalent Div Course(s): BIBL 30232, RLST 20232

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 21503 – Twentieth-Century Jewish History

Jewish history, politics, and culture across a century of enormous transformations and transformative enormities in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East. Topics include the impacts on Jewish life of World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the postimperial reordering of Eastern Europe and the Middle East; new forms of Jewish politics from Jewish nationalism to socialism to religious political mobilization; secular-religious struggles within Jewish life and the interactions and tensions of Jewish cultural renaissance, acculturation, and assimilation; the remaking of American Jewry in the age of mass migration and global capitalism; Zionism, Jewish settlement and nation-building in Palestine, and the emergence of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict; antisemitism, Nazism and the Holocaust in Europe; the creation of the State of Israel, Palestinian dispossession, and the trajectories and tensions of Jewish nationhood and Israeli society-building; the postwar reordering of Jewish life amid crosscurrents of the Cold War, Israeli statehood, conflict in the Middle East, and unprecedented communal integration in the United States; trajectories of Jewish culture and religion in a century of tremendous creativity but also centrifugality, fracture, and bitter Jewish disagreements. The course will pay substantial attention to recent and contemporary history including the dramatic changes and conflicts within Israeli society, polity, and culture over the past several decades, the ongoing conflict and crisis in Israel and Palestine, and the entangled lives of Jews and Palestinians amidst violence and crisis. Course will center around lectures but with ample space for discussion. Prior study of Jewish history not required. Students at all levels and in all fields welcome. *Kenneth Moss*

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 22401 – Zen Before Zen: Chan Buddhism in China

This course is part of a two-sequence series, to be followed by a course on Japanese Zen Buddhism taught by Professor Stephan Licha in Winter 2027. This course will consist of the close reading (in English translation) and discussion of both the Indian Buddhist scriptures and indigenous Chinese sources that form the core of the tradition spanning Chan and Zen, with a few secondary descriptions of Chan institutions and cultural influences. Our focus will be on the development of ideas concerning the nature of sentience and the implications this has for understanding the existential predicament of sentient beings, touching on central themes of dependent co-arising, non-self, Emptiness, consciousness-only, Buddha-nature and original enlightenment, and the methods of realization (doctrinal, non-doctrinal, and indeed anti-doctrinal) proposed to redress this existential predicament at each stage of Chan history. This will be done both with an eye to the historical continuity of these sometimes seemingly contradictory forms thought and practice, and also to extract from them whatever transhistorical philosophical and spiritual valences we care to derive from the texts. *Brook Ziporyn*

Equivalent Div Course(s): DVPR 32402, HREL 32400

RLST 23203 – Hindu Philosophy

This course is an introduction to the major ideas, texts, and traditions of Hindu philosophy. We will explore fundamental questions about reality, the self, knowledge, language, and liberation through close readings from classical Hindu philosophical works. We will examine how different schools developed, debated one another, and offered distinct approaches to enduring philosophical questions. The course also considers the relationship between philosophy and religion in the South Asian context and the continuing relevance of these traditions and ideas today. *Phillip Sergio*

RLST 23404 – Romanticism and Religion

“Romanticism” refers to a broad movement in European thought and culture from the late-18th to the mid-19th century, a period of intense political, intellectual, and religious upheaval. Romantic writers are often portrayed as responding to the emerging “rationalization” of society by celebrating intuition, imagination, and nature. This image obscures a more interesting reality: Romantic writers drew from Enlightenment ideas, saw poetry and natural science as closely related, and held diverse views on issues of religion, reason, and art. They approached these topics rationally, as well as through dream visions, opium-eating, self-mythologizing, fragmentary texts, and pastoral lyrics. In this survey course, we will read English and German Romantic writers to see how they grappled with these issues, and to pose our own questions. What is “nature,” and how should we relate to it? What roles do intuition, feeling, and imagination play in our understanding of ourselves, and the divine? Are secularization and rationalization forces to contend with, or preconditions for a new spiritual freedom? How do atheists, pantheists, Christian radicals, and orthodox believers fall under the same label, and to what extent did they really share artistic and spiritual aims? How did Romantics engage with non-European religious ideas? We will read, among others, Goethe, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Schleiermacher, de Quincey, and Novalis. No prior knowledge is required. All texts will be read in English. *Pieter Hoekstra*

RLST 24601 – Malcolm and Martin: Life and Thought

This course examines the religious, social, cultural, political, and personal factors that went into the making of the two most prominent public leaders and public intellectuals emerging from the black American community in the 1950s and 1960s: Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. We will review their autobiographies, domestic and international forces operating during their times. Their life stories provide the sharp differences and surprising commonalities in their political thought and religious beliefs. At the end of their lives, were they still radical contrasts, sharing the same views, or had their beliefs sifted — did Malcolm become Martin and Martin become Malcolm? *Dwight Hopkins*

RLST 26112 – The Body in Chinese Daoism and Buddhism: A Comparative Approach

What can the body tell us about religion? How do people use their bodies in ritual? Can the body escape death? What happens to the body after death? In this course, we explore how medieval Chinese Daoists and Buddhists imagined, disciplined, and transcended the body. Through close readings of primary and secondary sources, we will look at practices such as food and sexual abstinence, visualization, body sacrifice, mummification, and the gendered quest for immortality or enlightenment. Along the way, we will notice both similarities and differences between these traditions, helping us better understand the rich diversity of Chinese religious experience. *Ronghu Zhu*

RLST 26325 – Witnessing the Afterlife: Anthropological and Islamic Approaches to Near Death Experiences (NDE)

Advances in resuscitation technologies over recent decades have increased post–cardiac arrest survival, rendering Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) both more frequent and more accessible to clinical observation. Since the 1970s, a transdisciplinary movement has emerged that mobilizes NDE testimonies to interrogate fundamental questions concerning the nature of consciousness, personhood, and the purpose of human life. Notably, many NDE narratives exhibit structural and thematic parallels to mystical and spiritual experiences documented across diverse religious traditions, including within Islam.

This interdisciplinary course, co-taught by an anthropologist and a scholar of Qur’anic Studies, approaches NDEs as culturally and historically situated experiences that bear significant ethical and interpretive implications. We will examine NDE accounts from a range of religious and geographic contexts while also engaging Islamic textual traditions and contemporary Muslim narratives concerning the soul (*nafs/rūḥ*), the processes of dying, the intermediate realm of the *barzakh*, and encounters with non-human or otherworldly beings. In doing so, the course explores how scientific, cultural, and religious epistemologies differently conceptualize and evaluate experiences occurring at the threshold of life and death. *Elham Mireshghi and Yousef Casewit*
Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 36325, ISLM 36325

RLST 26905 – Gender, Sexuality, and Christianity

Throughout the centuries, how have appeals to biblical literature and Christian teaching served to challenge, preserve, or subvert normative expectations for gender expression and sexuality? This course exposes students to the foundational texts and pivotal debates that continue to shape our politics and society. We will begin with how the writers of New Testament literature set trajectories for subsequent struggles over biblical interpretation and the organization of Christian communities. Students will learn how ancient medical views of the gendered body shaped this literature. We will examine how discourses around martyrs, ascetics, and saints provided avenues for late antique and medieval Christians to imagine the transgression of social norms. Moving to the pre-modern and modern periods, the class will explore the ever-changing relationship between political power and ecclesial authorities, with an eye to debates regarding marriage and procreation. We will approach texts through a historical lens while paying attention to the philosophical, theological, and ethical issues involved. Readings will be drawn from all over the globe, reflecting the multilingual, multicultural, and multivocal nature of Christianity from its origins to the present day. We will engage modern theorists to place contemporary approaches in conversation with the historical archive to better understand discourses around virginity, sexuality, and identity. No prior knowledge required. *Erin Walsh*

Equivalent Div Course(s): BIBL 36905, HCHR 36905

RLST 26994 – Anticolonial Worlding: Literature, Film, Thought

This course explores anticolonial worldbuilding through literature, film, art, and philosophy. It focuses on the aesthetic and political dimensions of anticolonial projects during the twentieth century as well as their impact on our current political moment. The mid-century was marked by imperial violence and political crises that fueled coalitional solidarity across Vietnam, Palestine, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and much of the Global South, that included anticolonial festivals, cultural exchanges, and transnational congresses.

We will consider how Pan-Arab, Pan-African, Non-Aligned/Global South, Marxist-Leninist, indigenous land rights, and racial justice movements mobilized class, race, gender, and language politics to critique colonial powers and envision a more just world. Engaging anticolonial literature, film, and art across a multilingual and transnational archive we will ask how socialist and speculative

realisms, engaged literature, third cinema, agitprop, and other aesthetic movements generated powerful internationalist imaginations and networks of resistance. *Hoda El Shakry*

RLST 27305 – Race, Religion, and Revolution in South Asian America

The 2025 New York City mayoral campaign of Zohran Mamdani mobilized South Asian Americans as a political constituency in unprecedented fashion. While focused more generally on the struggles of working-class New Yorkers, canvassers aimed to speak and listen to the needs and aspirations of people from the subcontinent across ethnic, regional, religious, caste, and class divides. Beyond electoral politics, however, the longer history of South Asians in America has always been political. From transnational revolutionaries to imperial cheerleaders, from model minorities to undesirable immigrants, South Asians in America continue to occupy an ambivalent place in the American imaginary as objects of fear, wonder, anxiety, and admiration. This course explores various constructions of South Asian American identity in the twentieth century and beyond in history, sociology, literature, and art. Through readings, music, and film, students will be encouraged to pursue the following questions: How does the politics of identity operate at the nexus of race, caste, and indigeneity? How does religion index race in the eyes of the surveillance state? How have Black and brown people been drawn together in conflict and cooperation? How do South Asian histories of migration prefigure the mass displacements, border enforcements, and labor regimes that have defined the politics of globalization in the 21st century? *Anand Venkatkrishnan*

RLST 27526 – Diaspora, State, and Nation in Jewish History

Diaspora, nationhood, statehood – the dangers, possibilities, and ethical problems within each of these seemingly bloodless terms have sometimes generated intense debate and inquiry within Jewish life. This class investigates the intellectual and political history of three such moments. We ask how traditional Judaism negotiated the relationship between cultivating a fulfilling religious existence in dispersion and potent theological traditions of seeing diaspora as Exile from the Holy Land. We investigate new forms of Jewish thought and politics of the late 19th century, when - against the backdrop of wider currents of secularization, nationalism, colonialism, and antisemitism - growing numbers of Jews looked to overcome diaspora through Zionism and other territorial and statist visions while others sought to remake diaspora itself through liberal integrationism, revolutionary socialism, or federalist autonomism. We will examine Jewish political thinking in our own fraught moment, as the ethnonationalist trajectories in Israeli Jewish political culture and society, the renewed enormities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rising tensions between liberal and Orthodox forms of Judaism in both Israel and the US, and the crisis of the liberal order around the globe provoke debate about the value, morality, potentials, and dangers of Jewish sovereignty and diaspora alike while inciting urgent thinking about the unfolding situation in Israel and Palestine. *Kenneth Moss*

RLST 27626 – Listening in Place: Making Music Documentaries on the South Side

This course engages students in a quarter-long music ethnography project documenting the music and sound practices of sacred communities on Chicago's South Side. Students will gain practical experience in ethnomusicological methods such as participant observation, interviewing, oral history, archival and digital research, fieldnote writing, sound recording, and collaborative representation. Working in teams, students will create micro-documentaries highlighting the sound practices of sacred communities. The course will culminate in a digital map showcasing the sound practices of South Side communities. This map will serve as a visual representation and digital archive of local musicking and cultural diversity, in support of local music communities. *Anna Schultz and Jessica Baker*

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 28132 – Science/Fiction/Theory

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

RLST 28405 – Religion in Anime and Japanese Pop Culture

How does *Spirited Away* reflect teachings of Japanese Buddhism and Shinto? Or what about *Neon Genesis Evangelion*? What can pop culture tell us about religion? In this course, we will consider the complex relations between religion and pop culture through Japanese anime and manga. Examples are drawn from a wide range of popular shows and series in these media and others to explore how they represent, borrow, invent, draw inspiration from, and participate in religious life in Japan. The course covers foundational aspects of Japanese religious life through non-traditional sources like *Princess Mononoke*, *Attack on Titan*, and *Your Name*. At the end of the course, students will be able to critically analyze intersections of anime and religion, drawing on their acquired knowledge of the great diversity of religious practices and viewpoints in Japan. Meanwhile, we will consider broader questions about religion, popular culture, and what it means to think of these two things together. *Stephan Licha*

RLST 28590 – Sandworms, Spice, and Spirituality: Religion in Frank Herbert's *Dune*

Dune is widely considered a masterpiece of science fiction, and the success of its recent film adaptation attests to its continuing appeal. Yet in addition to its characters and worldbuilding, *Dune* also offers insightful portrayals of religion and explores religion's roles in society and culture. How do a community's ecological, economic, and political contexts shape their religious beliefs? In what ways do beliefs change or develop over time? Why are rituals such important parts of religious systems? How do stories about “salvation” and the “end times” shape communal identity, purpose, and behavior? In this course, we will ponder these and other questions by placing *Dune* in

conversation with the Qur'an, the Bible, and other religious texts to see how the same dynamics are at play. No prior reading or knowledge of the novel required. *Doug Hoffer*

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. *Johanna Holbrook*

WINTER 2027

Special Courses in Divinity

DVSC 30600 – Text and Context in the Study of Religion

The first part of the introductory sequence examined how scholars have defined “religion” and undertaken its study. Building on this foundation, this course will focus on the story of Abraham in its Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, the history of its reception in these traditions, and its appropriation in the literature and in visual cultures from the ancient world to modernity; from the Targum to Erich Auerbach, from Rashi to Kierkegaard, the course will consider the story of Abraham from theological, literary, and philosophical perspectives. Some attention will also be given to such themes as patrimony and sacrifice in religions that do not proceed from a monotheistic perspective. The course will include a significant writing component via bi-weekly reflection papers based on the reading assignments, to be revised toward a final presentation in the course’s discussion sections and a final essay. PQ: 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. *Richard Rosengarten and Sheila Jelen*

DVSC 51000 – Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion

This seminar is meant to engage first-year doctoral students in Divinity in reflection on and discussion of the study of religion—its conception(s)/constitution, values, aims, communities, methods, rituals, disciplines, etc. Unlike many (even most) such courses, this one does not have any outside assigned reading. This is meant to prevent discussion from being side-tracked into questions of intellectual history or references to external authorities. Readings will be the students' own writing on foundational issues, which papers will be circulated and read in advance, and a formal response will be presented in class. The seminar seeks to develop an ethos of collaborative learning wherein the framework of the course may facilitate cultivation of self-awareness of one's own practice (and its correlative assumptions), pursuit of knowledge of the field beyond one's own work and interests (through engaging colleagues in other areas of study), and aid to one's fellow

journeyman scholars in developing their own knowledge of self and other through sharing of knowledge, perspectives and insights. PQ: 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*

DVSC 55002 – Writing Religion II

This is a year-long course about the craft of scholarly writing and writing for a broader audience. It will consider the conventions and conflicts of writing in a field as interdisciplinary as the study of religion and will explore the opportunities for creativity, voice and style within its various forms through reading and writing. We will work on everything from the sentence to the structuring of book-length manuscripts. We will treat the scholarly article, the book review and the personal essay.

PQ: DVSC 55001 "Writing Religion I." *Sarah Hammerschlag*

Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

AASR 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 Adelokun*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 40100, RAME 40100, RLST 26661

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 33900 – Introductory Biblical Hebrew II

This course is the second of a three-quarter sequence designed to introduce students to the language of biblical Hebrew, with special emphasis on the fundamentals of its morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. This course follows a standard textbook supplemented by lectures, exercises, and oral drills aimed at refining the students' grasp of grammatical sound translation/interpretation. At the conclusion of the sequence students will be prepared to take biblical Hebrew reading and exegesis courses. PQ: BIBL 33800 in Autumn Quarter. *Tommaso Bacci*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 13900

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: BIBL 35100/RLST 14100 in Autumn Quarter. *Bradley Hansen*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 14200

BIBL 42500 – The Task of the Translator: Challenges and Opportunities

This seminar is designed for students engaged in the translation of texts for scholarly audiences and academic study. Through course readings and discussions, we will consider the art of translation and explore various views on the purpose and goal of translation. Representative case studies from the translation of biblical literature will allow us to understand the history of translation while comparing various translations. We will consider how translators grapple with issues of ambiguity and a multiplicity of meanings. To what extent can (or should) translators preserve literary and aesthetic features of source texts? What are the political stakes for translating authoritative religious texts? What are the key differences between translations crafted for academic study versus popular audiences? While shared readings and case studies will focus our seminar discussions, students will have the opportunity to apply the course to their own materials. *Erin Walsh and Jeffrey Stackert*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 42500, RLVC 42500

BIBL 43803 – Biblical Notions of Covenant

This is a reading course in biblical texts that engage the notion of covenant (bē'rit). Covenant is a central religious idea in many biblical texts, even as different authors conceptualize it in very different ways. In this course, we will examine the ways that covenant (or, perhaps better, “covenant”) is understood in a selection of texts from the Hebrew Bible. All biblical texts will be read in Hebrew. PQ: At least one year of biblical Hebrew. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Jeffrey Stackert*

BIBL 52500 – Reading the Psalms in Antioch and Alexandria

In this course we shall do comparative readings of interpretations of the Psalms by Greek-speaking Christian authors in the 3rd and 4th centuries CE who were associated with these two cities and read the Psalter in Greek translation. Our goal is to analyze their interpretive work in specific cases and from that detailed study to question and test longstanding claims (extending back to antiquity) about the rivalry between “Antiochene literalism” and “Alexandrine allegory.” We shall begin with a comparison between the hermeneutical positions outlined in Athanasius’s *Epistula ad Marcellinum* and Diodore of Tarsus’s *Commentarii in Psalmos* (written within 15 years of one another, ca. 360-372) and then turn to the homilies of Origen of Alexandria (from his later, Caesarean period, ca. 250) and the commentary (originally homilies?) of John Chrysostom at Antioch (ca. 386-397). PQ: Strong Greek skills (normally two years of formal study, or equivalent); anyone with a question about their preparation is invited to contact the instructor (mmm17@uchicago.edu). Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Margaret Mitchell*
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 52500

Philosophy of Religion

DVPR 30201 – Indian Philosophy I: Origins and Orientations

This course introduces some of the early themes and textual traditions that set much of the agenda for the later development of Indian philosophy. Although texts such as the early Upaniṣads are rather too often taken to typify “Indian philosophy,” much of what we read might be better characterized as “quasi-philosophical”—as pregnant with philosophically significant insights and reflections, but not yet systematic in the ways that will characterize the Indian philosophical tradition from about the fifth century CE, onward. Nevertheless, most of the views developed with increasing sophistication later in the tradition can be recognized as stemming from divergent intuitions first laid down in the earliest, quasi-philosophical texts. Tracing the early development of some of these, we will take some soundings in a few of the divergent “schools” or (more literally) “perspectives” (*darśanas*) that provide the principal rubrics for later philosophical discourse—in particular, in influential works from a few Brahmanical traditions of thought (*Sāṃkhya*, *Nyāya*, and *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*), as well as from the Buddhist and other non-Brahmanical traditions that were so influential for the history of Indian philosophy. The aim will be to study these developments philosophically—that is, just as scholars in Philosophy departments read (say) Aristotle or Kant not just as historically significant but also for their philosophical insight. *Daniel A. Arnold*
Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 30200, RLST 24201

DVPR 33817 – On Suspicion

Suspicion – from the Latin *suspectio* /*suspicere*. To look at secretly, to look askance; to regard with mistrust, often without proof. Etymologically, suspicion is a question of the gaze, a way of looking or seeing, thus a mode of interpretation. But if in the past suspicion was held to be one way of seeing among others, today it threatens to overwhelm us, to supplant all other modes of interpretation. What happens when mistrust and the secret glance become the rule? When the gaze never rests without squinting? When everything we encounter is subject to the most extreme doubt and uncertainty? In this course, we will approach suspicion as we find it today – boundless, without limits. We will think through the history of its concept, particularly as it bears upon the formation of the philosophy of religion as a modern subdiscipline of philosophical inquiry. We will do so by putting the so-called “masters of suspicion” – Marx, Nietzsche, Freud – in conversation with a wide range of contemporary figures in the continental tradition. *Ryan Coyne*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 33817, RLST 23817

History of Christianity

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

This second class in the History of Christian Thought-sequence deals with the period from late antiquity through the late Middle Ages; it stretches roughly from 450 through 1350. The following authors and themes will be analyzed and discussed: (1) the transition from Roman antiquity to the medieval period: Augustine, Boethius (and Cassiodorus); (2) the rise of asceticism in the West: the Benedictine Rule and Gregory the Great; (3) intellectual luminaries in East and West: Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus Confessor and John Scottus Eriugena; (4) monastic and scholastic paragons: Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard, and Richard of St. Victor; (5) monastic diversity: Benedictines and Cistercians (Hildegard von Bingen, Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St. Thierry) and regular canons (Hugh of St. Victor); (6) the scholastic synthesis and Franciscan discontent: Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure; (7) medieval women's voices: Heloise and Hadewijch of Brabant; (8) late medieval mysticism: Meister Eckhart. Course Notes: Some knowledge of Latin may come in handy but it is not required. Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Willemien Otten*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 30200

HCHR 30300 – History of Christian Thought III

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

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 30300

HCHR 31905 – The Making of the Christian West

The course surveys the late antique and early medieval formation of the Christian West, extending from Ireland through Scandinavia and all the way to the eastern Mediterranean. We will cover themes such as the construction of Roman and barbarian identities; relations between Christians and pagans; the changing social roles of women and men; the rise of the papacy and the Catholic Church; the history of the Vikings; the legacies of the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties; and the emergence of a plurality of nations and states whose names can still be found on present-day maps. We will conclude by considering how the diverse societies and cultures of medieval Europe came together and envisioned themselves as belonging to a distinct Western culture. *Omri Matarasso*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 21905

HCHR 33327 – Medieval Latin

We shall focus on prose and poetry from the Carolingian Renaissance that reflects the age's revived emphasis on a classical forms and grammar. *Michael Allen*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 13327

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 Adelokun*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RAME 35330, RLST 25330

HCHR 40402 – The Contours of Twentieth Century Thought II: Classical Theology Under Siege

This is the second course in a sequence I began in the fall of 2023: Contours of Twentieth Century Thought I: Between Dialectical Thought and Analogical Imagination (HCHR/THEO 40401, HIST 66701). This is the second of what I intended as a two-sequence course on twentieth-century theology. After the focus on a number of Catholic and Protestant pre- and post-war theologians, who struggle with the legacy of the Enlightenment and the need to reconceptualize theological thought in a fast secularizing and globalizing world, the second course of the sequence aims to delve deeper into liberation theology, the impact of feminism and civil rights, the effect of postmodernism and postsecularism, and the rise and fall of Radical Orthodoxy. Course Note: Some German and/or French and/or Spanish would be good but is not required. *Willemien Otten*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 40402

History of Religions

HREL 30102 – Ancient Mediterranean Religions II: Greece and Italy

This course surveys Greek religion as well as the religions documented in early Italy, drawing on archaeological, iconographic, and textual sources, with a special focus on cultural exchange. Besides surveying different lines of interpretation of Greek religion, main topics include: the interplay between myth and ritual; religion and socio-political structures; the formation of local and pan-Hellenic identities; what we know of private practices and lived religions, including magic and afterlife rituals; mystery cults; and the adaptation and (re)interpreted gods across cultures. In the last weeks we will look at the religion and mythology of early Rome in dialogue with the religions of other groups present in early Italy, such as Greeks, Etruscans, and Phoenicians. Course Notes: Students are encouraged to take all three quarters of this sequence (fall-winter-spring) but it is not required. This class is a Gateway course for the Religious Studies (RLST) program. *Carolina Lopez-Ruiz*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20102

HREL 42907 – Contemporary Theories of Religion

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

Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 42907

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, RLVC, 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 34567 – Islamic Psychology

An exploration of the growing body of literature on Islamic psychology. Relevant premodern approaches to mental well-being, rooted in scriptural, theological, philosophical, scientific, and mystical sources will be examined alongside contemporary literature that integrates insights from modern psychology with Islamic teachings. No Arabic required. *Yousef Casewit*
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 24567

ISLM 34600 – Religion, Peace, and Conflict

This course critically explores the religious dimensions of war, peace, and justice. It emphasizes the untapped potential of religion and spirituality to inform the theory, analysis, and practice of peace and the nonviolent resolution of conflicts. *Maliha Chishty*

ISLM 40010 – Research Methods and the Academic Study of Islam

This course equips students with the core tools, sources, and research practices essential for work in Arabic and Islamic Studies. Students will learn how to work efficiently with established research methods by engaging with key primary and secondary sources, reference works, journals, major subfields, and digital resources that form the backbone of scholarly inquiry in the field. Through sustained hands-on practice, the course aims to strengthen students' fundamental research skills. It introduces flexible research approaches, including the responsible use of AI-assisted tools to support discovery, analysis, and organization. The course also explores recent debates and methodological questions central to the study of Arabic and Islam across diverse historical, cultural, political, and religious contexts. PQ: Basic ability to work with Classical Arabic is required. *Mehmetcan Akpınar*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20410

Jewish Thought and Culture

JTAC 45400 – Readings in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*

The Guide of the Perplexed by Moses Maimonides (1138-1204, Islamic Spain and Egypt), in the original Arabic and its many translations, is—few would argue—the most important and influential book in the history of Jewish thought. Since its completion by 1191, it has been and continues to be the foundational work in the Jewish philosophical, and philosophical-exegetical, tradition. It has also been at the center of controversy, subjected by Jewish and non-Jewish opponents of philosophy to critique, bans, censorship, even public burning.

From the time of its first publication until today, *the Guide* has remained the standard framework for any Jewish rationalism. Its organization of philosophical-theological subjects, from divine attributes and the nature of God to the origin of the world, prophecy, providence, the problem of evil, the

nature of law and ethics, and the purpose of humanity, continues to define the scope of Jewish philosophy and theology, while its method of reading the Bible allegorically frames any attempt to spiritualize scripture and tradition. It has been influential also in medieval and early modern Muslim and Christian thought, and has been at the center even of modern debates about esotericism, skepticism, the relation between philosophy and religion, and the role of commentary and literary genre in philosophy. There is the possibility of an extra reading session for advanced students with background in Arabic and/or Hebrew. *James T. Robinson*
Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 45401, ISLM 45400, RLVC 45400, RLST 23107

Religions in the Americas

RAME 36340 – 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. *Matthew Harris*
Equivalent Div Course(s): AASR 36340, RLST 26340

RAME 42419 – From Scopes to Intelligent Design: Creationism and Evolution
This course begins with the Scopes Trial in 1925, a pivotal moment in the emergence of Protestant fundamentalism and anti-evolution in the United States. It follows protracted and prolonged debates about the meaning of evolution, science, and expertise in the US. Some attention is devoted to foundational questions about meaning of science in modern society and the religious and cultural bases of anti-evolution in the US. We also look at the internal divisions within conservative Protestant Christianity on how to reconcile faith and science. *Curtis Evans*
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 42419, RLST 22419

RAME 45900 – Healing Traditions in America
In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James identified the fundamental religious impulse as: “Help! Help!” This seminar will examine 1) How humans have addressed that question to nonhuman powers 2) How they have interpreted the answers they received. Our particular concern will be traditions of divine healing in the lands which became the United States, ranging from root work to the anointing of the sick to attempts at resurrecting the dead. We will consider “healing” in the broadest possible terms, to include liberation from mental as well as physical pain. Through the careful reading of historical and ethnographic work, we will explore how practices of divine healing cut across theological and denominational lines and reveal unexpected continuities between very different faith traditions. *Matthew Harris and William Schultz*
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 45900

Religious Leadership and Practice (MDiv 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, practitioners, and social movements—as well as visiting several sacred spaces throughout the city—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 Sherman “Dilla” Thomas, Lisa Lee (National Public Housing Museum), Rev. Janette Wilson (Rainbow PUSH Coalition), and others. *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 30702 – Introduction to Environmental Ethics
This course will examine answers to four questions that have been foundational to environmental ethics: Are religious traditions responsible for environmental crises? To what degree can religions address environmental crises? Does the natural world have intrinsic value in addition to instrumental value to humans, and does the type of value the world has imply anything about human responsibility? What point of view (anthropocentrism, biocentrism, theocentrism) should ground an environmental ethic?

Since all four of the above questions are highly contested questions, we will examine a constellation of responses to each question. During the quarter we will read texts from a wide variety of religious and philosophical perspectives, though I note that the questions we are studying arose out of the western response to environmental crises and so often use that language. Some emphasis will be given to particularly influential texts, thinkers, and points of view in the scholarship of environmental ethics. As the questions above indicate, the course prioritizes theoretical issues in environmental ethics that can relate to many different applied subjects (e.g. energy, water, animals, climate change) rather than emphasizing these applied issues themselves. Taking this focus will give you the background necessary to work on such issues later. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Sarah Fredericks*

RETH 41600 – The Nature of the Good: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas
What is the good act and what makes it so? What do we owe the Other? How does one construct a moral life?
Emmanuel Levinas is one of the most important Jewish philosophers of the late 20th century. He

produced a large body of dense, intricate moral theory that has come to define post-modern Jewish thought. In this course, we will read two of his most important works closely. In this way, we will consider the development of his thought on such key concepts as “the Other,” “substitution,” and “Infinity.” This course will reflect on a moral puzzle: why do humans chose to be good or evil? This seminar considers his arguments about human relationality, duty, judgment and moral action—the phenomenology of the encounter with the Other, for which he is best known. *Laurie Zoloth*
Equivalent Div Course(s): JTAC 41600, RLST 23760

Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

RLVC 32400 – Theory of Literature

This course will cover the major developments in Twentieth Century Criticism from New Criticism to Psychoanalytic theory, Structuralism and Post-Structuralism. It will consider how the growth of “theory” in the post-WWII era changed the way we think about the very stakes of reading and it will consider the impact of these movements on Gender Theory, Post-Colonial Theory and Black Studies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. We will be asking as well, how does a literary text stimulate commentary, as opposed to a religious text? What kinds of affective states does reading invoke? How do texts motivate us? How has the concept of textuality altered how we think about possibility, identity, and the concept of “human nature”? Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Sarah Hammerschlag*

RLVC 47200 – History of Criticism II: Dante to Kant

A historical survey of theories of interpretation through major, initiating thinkers (Dante, Luther, Spinoza, Vasari, Johnson, Pope, Mendelssohn, Kant) to study three formative developments: the turn to the vernacular (in both literature and criticism); the figure of “the critic” (and, with this, the idea of judgment); and the development of aesthetics as a distinctive philosophical enterprise. (This course is required for students planning to take the RLVC 1 qualifying examination with the instructor.) Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Richard Rosengarten*

Theology

THEO 40900 – Black Theology: Pros and Cons

On academic grounds, is there a basis for the existence of black liberation theology today? This course creates a conversation between black theology of liberation and those thinkers who critique black theology. And we examine if black theology has withstood, denied, or corrected its intellectual arguments vis-à-vis its critics and despisers. We are doing a self-assessment and a critical, challenging review of the scholarly claims of black theology. One way is to allow its critics to have a full say and put both sides into dialogue. *Dwight Hopkins*

THEO 43501 – Contemporary Models of Theology

This course compares and contrasts various systems and methods in contemporary theologies. By contemporary, we mean theological developments in the USA from the late 1960s to the present. Specifically, we reflect critically on the following models: progressive liberal, post liberal, black theology, feminist theology, and womanist theology. In the process, we lay out the political, economic, and cultural factors that gave rise to these models. *Dwight Hopkins*

THEO 45300 – Mid-Century Modernist Theology

Borrowing the term “modernist” from art critics and historians, this seminar aims to explore the interpretive, dialogical, and constructive “art” of classic theological works from the mid-twentieth century. Like modern abstract paintings and sculpture, theological works such as Howard Thurman’s *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Paul Tillich’s *The Courage to Be*, and H. Richard Niebuhr’s *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* may be accessible to a first reading and yet generative of complex interactions and multiple readings. Might such texts even be considered as “avant-garde” works? This course asks how certain mid-twentieth century texts invite theological apprehension of and critical engagement with social structures, technology, history. Informed by some analogues in visual art and some essays in art criticism, the course experiments with close readings of certain theological texts. How do they move their readers through the work, pull in and push back their publics? How do they critically engage myth and symbol? Affect and emotion? Can they be said to create open-ended, transformative dialogues between theology and concrete life and between the works and their readers? If so, how? What are the limits of how these texts work? What do they suggest for critical and constructive theological work today? *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. *Elizabeth Brocious*

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 21st 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 22402 – Japanese Zen Buddhism

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

RLST 22655 – Themes in the European Reformation(s)

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

RLST 23616 – Gods in the Machine: Artificial Intelligence and the Ethics of Love

Artificial Intelligence (AI) increasingly shapes how humans understand themselves, relate to one another, and imagine the future. This course examines how AI transforms love, care, intimacy, recognition, and personhood under contemporary technological conditions. From mythic automatons to the algorithmic visions of Silicon Valley, religious longings have always fused with fantasies of artificial creation. We thus begin by tracing the genealogy of artificial beings. We ask what acts of artificial creation reveal about the human and why artificial beings are imagined as lovers, companions, servants, rivals, or threats. Throughout the course, we investigate how algorithmic systems mediate recognition and exclusion, reproduce racial and gendered hierarchies, and reorganize intimacy and dependency. We ask whether algorithms can love, if humans can love machines, and what intimacy requires when one party lacks embodiment, reciprocity, or mortality. Finally, we explore AI's symbolic and spiritual dimensions. We consider narratives of technological salvation, representations of compassionate machines, and alternative visions of relationality. No technical expertise or prior background in religious studies or ethics is required. This course will meet in a seminar format. *Kat Myers*

RLST 24260 – Introduction to Modern Chinese Thought: Religion, Philosophy, Politics

This course explores some of the most fertile moments in modern Chinese thought from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. We engage with primary works produced in these periods of

profound sociopolitical transformations, intercultural and interreligious encounters, and translations and reorganizations of knowledge. These debates reveal Chinese thinkers as not merely responding to modernity but redrawing the limits and relations of religion, philosophy, and political thought in ways that unsettle our own. Readings range from Ming-dynasty Buddhist-Confucian responses to Jesuit missionaries to Qing-dynasty challenges to Neo-Confucian views of desire, from revolutionary reinventions of Buddhist philosophy to the May Fourth “Chinese enlightenment” and its Marxist and anti-Marxist afterlives. Thinkers we read include Huang Zongxi, Dai Zhen, Kang Youwei, Zhang Taiyan, Mou Zongsan, and Mao Zedong. The course is grounded in close reading and argumentative interpretation of primary texts in English translation. No knowledge of Chinese or previous familiarity with Chinese thought is required. *Danica Cao*

RLST 25704 – Environmental Justice in Chicago

This course will examine the development of environmental justice theory and practice through social scientific and ethical literature about the subject as well as primary source accounts of environmental injustices. We will focus on environmental justice issues in Chicago including, but not limited to waste disposal, toxic air and water, the Chicago heat wave, and climate change. Particular attention will be paid to environmental racism and the often understudied role of religion in environmental justice theory and practice. Throughout the course we will explore how normative commitments are expressed in different types of literature as well as the basis for normative judgments and the types of authorities authors utilize and claim as they consider environmental justice. Course Note: Graduate students may petition to enroll and will be given extra assignments. *Sarah Fredericks*

RLST 27510 – The Poetry of Wallace Stevens

"After one has abandoned a belief in God," Wallace Stevens famously writes, "poetry is that essence which takes its place as life's redemption." This course will be devoted to reading Stevens closely. We will trace the development of his poetic vision focusing on his post-war collections. We will draw heavily upon his letters, lectures, and essays to make sense of the poetic works. We will also situate him alongside a wide array of English-language poets. PQ: Winter 2027 Fundamentals Gateway. Instructor consent to enroll, with priority to FNDL students. *Ryan Coyne*

RLST 28308 – Introduction to Byzantine Art

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

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. 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 modernity. Readings will include, but are not limited to, texts from the Hebrew Bible, Christian exegesis, the Qur'an, Byzantine Iconoclasm, and the Protestant Reformation. Material evidence of iconophobia and iconoclasm from different religious contexts will also be discussed. *Karin Krause*
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 38319, HCHR 38319

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. *Johanna Holbrook*

SPRING 2027

Special Courses in Divinity

DVSC 55003 – Writing Religion III

This is a year-long course about the craft of scholarly writing and writing for a broader audience. It will consider the conventions and conflicts of writing in a field as interdisciplinary as the study of religion and will explore the opportunities for creativity, voice and style within its various forms through reading and writing. We will work on everything from the sentence to the structuring of book-length manuscripts. We will treat the scholarly article, the book review and the personal essay. PQ: DVSC 55002 "Writing Religion II." *Sarah Hammerschlag*

Anthropology and Sociology of Religion

AASR 30655 – Religion and 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 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. *Tessa Huttenlocher*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 27233

AASR 33100 – Problems in the Anthropology of Religion II

This is the second half of a two-quarter sequence examining some of the key problems in the anthropology of religion. The general theme of this course is the intersection of anthropology with political theology and political economy. Engaging a range of ethnographic studies and field-defining essays, we will explore how anthropologists of religion have analyzed issues of power, alterity, value, obligation, and life/death. By the end of the course, students should be able to critically engage the major theoretical debates linking religion, power, and economy in anthropological thought; read ethnographic and theoretical texts with attention to their methodological and conceptual assumptions; and analyze how religious life intersects with political authority, moral obligation, and structures of value across diverse social contexts. PQ: AASR 33000 “Problems in the Anthropology of Religion I” is recommended but not required. Open to advanced undergraduates. *Angie Heo*

Biblical Studies

BIBL 34000 – Introductory Biblical Hebrew III

This course is the third of a three-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 third quarter concludes the grammatical presentation of Hebrew and turns to guided readings of Hebrew Bible texts. At the conclusion of the sequence students will be prepared to take biblical Hebrew reading and exegesis courses. PQ: BIBL 33800 and 33900. *Tommaso Bacci*
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 14000

BIBL 40500 – The Fall of Judah: A Microhistorical Approach

The Babylonian conquest of Judah and the fall of the Jerusalem temple in the early 6th century bce are topics of significant reflection within the literature in the Hebrew Bible. Prophets, historians, and poets all sought to explain and come to terms with the dissolution of the Southern Kingdom. This period is also rich in contemporary sources from political actors relevant to the reconstruction of events, including Saite stelae from Lower Egypt, royal records from Babylon, and letters from Judean soldiers at Lachish. In this course we will apply a microhistorical approach to these materials to better understand the political circumstance that led to Jerusalem’s fall as well as the potential cultural influences that may have informed the world views present in the biblical literature. PQ: At least an intermediate knowledge of Biblical Hebrew is required. *Marshall Cunningham*

BIBL 41700 – Paul and Judaism

The twentieth century witnessed significant debates over Paul’s relationship to his ancestral religion, Judaism. Paul has been variously regarded as a quintessential Jew, a marginal Jew, and a Christian convert. In this course, we will explore some of the major positions in this debate, the biographies of Paul constructed, and the key Pauline texts used to support them. At the same time, we will engage fundamental questions in the historical study of antiquity. What does it mean to develop a biography of an ancient figure? What kinds of evidence merit attention, and what methods and criteria do we employ in assessing them? How do the interpreter’s ideological commitments and position in the history of interpretation intersect with and shape their historical judgments? PQ: Students must have completed two quarters of Koine Greek or equivalent to enroll. Course Notes:

Prior completion of the course BIBL 32500 "Introduction to the New Testament" is valuable but not required. Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Doug Hoffer*

BIBL 42000 – The Gospel According to Mark

This course, through close reading of the Greek text (with attention to characteristic vocabulary, grammar, syntax and style), will investigate the composition, genre, plot structure, theology, purpose and impact of the first Christian narrative text. Particular emphases include the depiction of the disciples, the so-called "Messianic Secret," the role of irony, and the relationship between Mark and Paul. This course serves as the third quarter exegesis course in the Introduction to Koine Greek sequence, even as various levels of Greek skills are welcome. PQ: At least two quarters of formal study of Greek (Koine or Attic) or equivalent; anyone with a question about their preparation is invited to contact the instructor (mmm17@uchicago.edu). *Margaret Mitchell*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 22022

BIBL 46000 – Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible

This workshop course introduces students to the theory and practice of textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. The primary focus will be on analyzing and evaluating manuscript evidence in Hebrew and Greek, with Aramaic and Latin sources also consulted when relevant. We will concentrate on passages from the biblical book of Samuel, which offers rich opportunities for text-critical inquiry. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- find and navigate primary sources
- identify text-critical variants
- evaluate those variants, taking into account 1) the characteristics of the textual witnesses and 2) scribal and translational practices
- articulate the limits of what we can know about the history of the biblical text

PQ: Two years of biblical Hebrew and one year of Greek (Attic or Koine), or the equivalent. *Sarah Yardney*

Philosophy of Religion

DVPR 35700 – Spinoza: From Infinity to Beatitude

This course will mainly consist of a close reading of the entirety of Spinoza's *Ethics* (in translation), along with selections from Spinoza's letters, his *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* and the unfinished "Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect." A selection of relevant secondary material, including works of Don Garrett, Martial Gueroult, Pierre Macherey and Brook Ziporyn, will also be among the readings. Discussion will focus on the following themes in Spinoza's philosophy: infinite Substance, its infinite attributes, each with infinite modes; dual-aspect (or infinite aspect) monism; necessity and freedom; the relations between three kinds of cognition (Imagination, Reason and Intuition); adequate and inadequate ideas and the nature of truth; mind-body identity; power of activity and *conatus*; pleasure, pain and desire and their ramification in human emotions; the imitation of affect (EIIIp27) and its implications; self-cultivation and beatitude; the eternity and omnipresence of the formal essence of finite modes; and the intellectual love of God. *Brook Ziporyn*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 25700

DVPR 35830 – *Zhuangzi*: The Butterfly in the Mirror

The course will mainly consist of close readings of large portions of the *Zhuangzi* (in translation), along with a selection of relevant commentaries and secondary material. Close readings of the first

seven (“Inner”) chapters will explore themes of transformation, dependence, perspectivism, identity-formation, the mutual positing of opposites, walking two roads at once, the relation between knowledge and spontaneity, purposelessness as enabler of skillful purposivity, political engagement through the fasting of the mind, empty mirroring and its subjective and intersubjective effects, the social powers of disability, and the reassessment of death and chaos. The further elaboration of these themes in the “Outer” and “Miscellaneous” chapters comprising the rest of the book will then be explored with an eye to their interminglings with other streams of thought—for example, from Confucianism and the *Daodejing*—and the various new implications drawn out by these new alloys.

Brook Ziporyn

Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 35830, RLST 25830

DVPR 44302 – Pragmatism and Religion

C.I. Lewis famously described pragmatism as “the doctrine that all problems are at bottom problems of conduct, that all judgments are, implicitly, judgments of value, and that, as there can be no ultimately valid distinction of theoretical and practical, so there can be no final separation of questions of truth of any kind from questions of the justifiable ends of action.” This course will examine key figures of post-WWII American pragmatism—including Richard Rorty, Cheryl Misak, Cornel West, and Eddie Glaude—in order to assess their implications for religion, politics and the possibility of objectivity. *Kevin Hector*

Equivalent Div Course(s): THEO 44302, RLST 24302

History of Christianity

(none)

History of Religions

HREL 30103 – Ancient Mediterranean Religions III: Christianity and the Roman Empire

This course surveys the religious developments around the Mediterranean during the period of Late Antiquity. We will begin with the emergence of the early Christian movement within its first-century Jewish and Roman contexts. In addition to the different ways of being Christian in Late Antiquity, students will learn about other contemporary religious movements, such as early rabbinic Judaism, Manichaeism, and paganism which continued alongside Christianity. We will then review political, social, and economic trends in the Roman Empire on which Christianity had transformative effects, such as gender, care for the poor, and relations between religion and state. In the final weeks, we will delve into foundational theological debates of late antique Christianity and explore their legacies in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds following the decline of Roman hegemony. Course Notes: Students are encouraged to take all three quarters of this sequence (fall-winter-spring) but it is not required. This class is a Gateway course for the Religious Studies (RLST) program. *Omri*

Matarasso

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 30103, JTAC 30103, RLST 20103

HREL 40010 – Contemporary Topics in the Study of South Asian Religion

This course is a research-oriented graduate seminar dealing with topics in the scholarly study of South Asian religion. It focuses on contemporary themes and methodologies in the field. Readings come from prominent books in the field published in the last five years. Themes explored include

the politics of philology, the gender of music, the modernity of religion, and the labor of caste.

Anand Venkatkrishnan

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 40010

Islamic Studies

ISLM 30025 – Introduction to Islamic Law

"Is Islam a religion or a political ideology? What is shari'a and what is shari'a law? What do Muslims mean when they use terms like shari'a, fiqh and Islamic law? Does Islamic law represent a challenge to the authority of the nation-state?" In this course, we will examine all of these issues and more.

In this course, we will approach Islamic law from three main angles, jurisprudence, substantive law, and the judiciary. The substantive areas of Islamic law to be covered include the following: ritual worship, family and personal status law, criminal law, contract law, constitutional & international law. We will also be dealing with the challenges posed by the advent of modernity and colonialism to Muslims' understanding and practice of Islamic law.

The course will combine readings in primary and secondary literature with case studies to illustrate the workings of Islamic law. The main textbooks will be Wael Hallaq's *Introduction to Islamic Law* and Knut Vikor's *Between God and the Sultan: A History of Islamic Law*. Supplemental readings will be provided from other works. Students will be required to write three 3-4 page response papers, take a midterm and a final exam. The final exam will comprise take home essay questions. *Ahmed El Shamsy*
Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20801

ISLM 30203 – Islamicate Civilization III: Empire and Everyday Life in The Modern Middle East

This course covers the period from ca. 1750 to the present, focusing on Western military, economic, and ideological encroachment; the impact of such ideas as nationalism and liberalism; efforts at reform in the Islamic states; the emergence of the "modern" Middle East after World War I; the struggle for liberation from Western colonial and imperial control; the Middle Eastern states in the cold war era; and local and regional conflicts.. PQ: Islamicate Civilization II (NEHC 20202) or Islamic Thought & Literature-2 (NEHC 20602), or the equivalent. Course Note: The Islamicate Civilization sequence does not fulfill the General Ed requirements. *Carl Shook*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLST 20203

Jewish Thought and Culture

(none)

Religions in the Americas

RAME 41705 – The American Jeremiad: Religious Critiques of the American Nation

The Jeremiad has its roots in Puritan critiques of perceived social disorder and the community falling away from its covenant with God. This course examines prominent examples of this sermonic and rhetorical form from the 19th century to the present. While much of the course will look at the commonalities of this religious critique of the US (the call to repentance, the reiteration of a litany of

sins, and its pronouncement of a conditional divine judgment), we will also examine the various visions of the good society contained in such critiques. *Curtis Evans*
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 41705, RLST 21705

RAME 42315 – Christian Nonviolence in the US in the 20th Century

This course examines the writings and social thought of Christians who opposed war and critiqued various other forms of organized violence. We will look at pacifism as a part of but not the totality of Christian nonviolence. Some attention will be paid to the role of key organizations such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation played in disseminating techniques and teachings to form nonviolence practices and protests. We will linger on the theological and Scriptural underpinnings of Christian nonviolence. At times, we pause to understand how Christian nonviolent advocates tried to address recurring critiques of their proposals as utopian, naïve, or unrealizable in a fallen and violent world. *Curtis Evans*
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 42315, RLST 22315

Religious Leadership and Practice (M.Div. Courses)

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

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

RELP 40800 – Field Work Practicum III

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

RELP 50408 – The Ethics of Care: Who is “Called” To Care?

This course explores the ethics of care as a response to a world shaped by moral uncertainty, ecological crisis, and deepening human vulnerability. Moving beyond frameworks that prioritize autonomy and abstraction, it centers "care" as a relational and embodied practice of the human spirit grounded in interdependence, responsibility, and attentiveness to suffering. Students will examine the contemporary crisis of ethics, where existing systems struggle to address systemic vulnerabilities, ecological degradation, and the rapid reconfiguration of communal life, and will consider how spiritual care can offer a responsive and contextually grounded approach.

Particular attention will be given to ecological grief and political vulnerability as critical sites of reflection. The course invites students to engage the emotional and moral dimensions of environmental loss while expanding the scope of care beyond the human to include land, species, and future generations. At the same time, political vulnerability is explored as a shared yet uneven condition that shapes ethical responsibility and exposes disparities in whose suffering is recognized. Through interdisciplinary study and reflective practice, students will cultivate a moral imagination rooted in mutuality, presence, and accountability in the face of complex and collective suffering. PQ: RELP 35200 or permission of instructor. *Sunil Yadav*

Religious Ethics

RETH Graduate Class TBD

Raissa de Rande

Religion, Literature, and Visual Culture

RLVC 30612 – Early Christian and Late Ancient Jewish Art

This course will examine the origins, development and historiography of Christian art in the Roman world and into the first centuries of Christian Europe. It will explore this in parallel with the development and historiography of Jewish art in the same period, also known as 'late antiquity', examining issues of the construction of religious identity through images in hegemonic and non-hegemonic contexts, whether as markers of triumphalism or resistance, and investigating also question of the penetration of these religions and their iconographies into the larger Afro-Eurasian context. Course Note: This course will be taught virtually during the last two weeks of the quarter.

Jaś Elsner

Equivalent Div Course(s): JTAC 30612, BIBL 30612, RLST 26612

RLVC 37490 – Art as Buddhism in Ancient India

This course will examine the visual construction of early Buddhism in India, focusing in particular on stūpas and especially on the art of the great stūpa (mahachaitya) at Amarāvati in Andhra Pradesh. We will examine questions of Buddhology, of the diversity and range of conversations within early Buddhism, leading to the rise of the Mahāyāna, in relation to the visualization of Buddhist theory and narrative in the extensive and extraordinary decorations of the major sites. The course will introduce those taking it to the rich visual, material and epigraphic culture of the Buddhist stūpas as well as the vibrant textual world of Indian Buddhist writing – from stories to suttas to commentaries. Students will have the opportunity to develop their own final papers in relation to this material or comparatively with other material in which they also retain an interest (not necessarily only Buddhist). Course Note: This course will be taught virtually during the last two weeks of the quarter. *Jaś Elsner*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 37490, RLST 27490

RLVC 41604 – The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond

The cult of relics played a vital role in Byzantine culture and, consequently, left a strong imprint on the artistic production. Not only did the veneration of relics find expression in personal devotion, but the image of the Byzantine court was largely modeled on the claim that the emperors possessed the most precious of all sacred remains, first and foremost those associated with the Passion of

Christ and the Virgin Mary. The outstanding treasure of relics housed in the imperial palace significantly contributed to the understanding in the medieval Christian world of Constantinople as the “New Jerusalem.”

We will begin our investigation in the ancient Near East, where major centers of pilgrimage developed from the fourth century on. These sites considerably fueled the early Byzantine cult of relics and the associated artistic production. The chief focus of the seminar will be on the major urban centers of the Byzantine Empire, especially the capital city of Constantinople.

We will closely study different types of reliquaries manufactured in the Byzantine Empire over the centuries and investigate how their design responded to devotional needs, ritual practice and political claims. Historical developments and primary texts (in English translation) will be addressed throughout to better understand the circumstances of the acquisition of relics and the motivations guiding their veneration. *Karin Krause*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 41604, RLST 26004

RLVC 48800 – Lives, Selves, Life-Writing: Buddhist and Christian Texts

This course investigates conceptions of “self,” of “lives,” and of “life writing” as central concerns of the world’s religions, considered through the literary practice of autobiography. Scholarship on autobiography has tended to be “tradition-based” and, to a striking extent in research and teaching, oriented toward texts and contexts located within or directly adjacent to the Christian tradition. This course will by contrast foreground an explicitly comparative approach that juxtaposes Buddhist and Christian autobiographical practices.

Class sessions will focus primarily on close textual readings, leavened as appropriate by contextual considerations. Students will also be assigned a modest range of secondary literature that takes its bearings from these traditions (Olney, Gyatso, etc.), as well as some foundational writing on the powers and limits of comparison. In addition to a research paper due at the conclusion of the course, students will over the quarter write three short (2-3 pp) reflection papers on conceptions of “self” and “life writing” that juxtapose the thesis of one of the secondary readings with a particular episode or quality of one of the assigned autobiographies. Course Note: Undergraduates may petition to enroll. *Richard Rosengarten and Christian Wedemeyer*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 48800

Theology

THEO 44806 – Creation and Human Creatures: Theological Explorations

This seminar explores the intersection between theological symbols of creation and human creatures. How have human and other living creatures and nature served as reference points, exemplars, even counter examples for interpreting God, creation, and the enhancement (or diminishment) of life? We will examine relations among theomorphism, anthropomorphism, and biomorphism, and ask how macrocosm and microcosm are drawn into theological reflection. Explorations will include traditional theological themes of human creatures as *imago Dei* and of nature as a mirror of God’s providence and majesty, as well as contemporary texts by Ivone Gebara, Michael Fishbane, Erazim Kohak, Virginia Burrus, and Amitav Ghosh on human and animal nature, the moral sense of nature, and cultivation and devastation. PQ: A prior course in theology or history of Christianity or theological ethics. *Kristine Culp*

Religious Studies (Undergraduate Designation)

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 22000 – Saints and Hagiographies of the Medieval World

The cult of saints became a popular religious phenomenon in Late Antiquity, with wide-ranging cultural and social ramifications. From a scholarly perspective, one of the more notable consequences of the cult of saints was the emergence of a robust literary genre that offers rich evidence for medieval society: the hagiography. The tension between the medieval cult of saints as a religious phenomenon and the literary evidence documenting it will stand at the heart of the course. Throughout the term, we will read translated hagiographies from different traditions and geographical contexts, ranging from the Mediterranean world to deep within Central Asia. We will discuss the social, cultural, and religious significance of the cults of living and dead saints and examine analytical approaches to different models of sainthood in Christianity and other medieval religions. In addition to outlining some of the main scholarly resources for studying different corpora of hagiographies in a variety of medieval languages, we will explore significant milestones in

scholarship and consider the challenges of researching late ancient and medieval societies on the basis of hagiographical evidence. *Omri Matarasso*
Equivalent Div Course(s): HCHR 32000

RLST 22803 – Ancestors, Angels, and Missionaries: African Religions and the Making of the Modern World

What is “African religion,” and who gets to decide? Before European missionaries arrived with holy texts and colonial agendas, diverse African communities had sophisticated ways of understanding and engaging the world. Spirits and ancestors, healings and rituals, powers and cosmologies are just some of the modes through which African communities oriented themselves to the world and continue to do so. This course introduces students to this history from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We will ask how these communities, practices, and belief systems have been misrepresented, suppressed, and transformed throughout centuries of colonial encounters. Through close readings of authors such as Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, and Samuel Nujoma as well as secondary literature, we will explore how communities in southern Africa did not simply receive Christianity, but rather remade it entirely, creating independent movements that continue to shape global Christianity today. We will track religious ideas and practices as they traverse oceans, surviving the horrors of the slave trade and reemerging in new forms. Students will read works that invite us to rethink categories such as “religion,” “magic,” and “tradition.” By the end of the course, students will gain a foundation in African religious histories and will possess a sharper set of tools for dissecting the entanglements between religion, race, and power—entanglements which remain deeply relevant today. *Tony Beall*

RLST 23619 – Love

Is love, really, all we need? In this course, we will consider the significance of love to the good life. We will begin by considering religious texts that place love at the center of ethics, including some from Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, as well as key works by leaders in social movements in the United States (Martin Luther King Jr.) in India (Mahatma Gandhi), and in the feminist movement (bell hooks). Next, we will consider how a love-based approach to ethics relates to other canonical approaches to ethics, including those emphasizing duty, consequences, and virtue. With a more substantial sense of ethics in hand, we turn to deepen our understanding of love by overviewing key accounts in philosophical ethics, including love as union, valuing, emotion, and robust concern. We conclude by considering some implications of a love ethic, especially how this relates to loving those who we might not expect to love (i.e., the colleague, the stranger, and the enemy) and to the topics of artificial intelligence and the social and political realm. After taking this course, students will not only be familiar with key ideas and debates in the philosophy of love, but also how these relate to the ethical, the social, and the religious. Classes will involve a combination of lecture, discussion, and group work. Assignments include reading reflections, a presentation, and a final project. No prerequisites. *Mahala Rethlake*

RLST 23905 – Is Buddhism a Religion?

One often hears it said that “Buddhism is not a religion, but rather a [...]” with the ellipsis filled in with expressions including “philosophy,” “mind science,” “spiritual path,” and “therapeutic practice” (among others). What does it mean, though, to say that Buddhism is or is not a “religion”? Why does it matter whether or not it is, and for whom are the stakes significant? And why in the first place does this question tend to arise only with regard to Buddhism? It turns out there is a complex and interesting history behind familiar ideas of Buddhism as somehow exceptional among the world’s religions (if it is one...) – a history involving colonialism and empire, power and

representation, science and religion, tradition and conversion, and the life of a 2,500-year-old tradition in the modern and postmodern worlds. This course will variously explore the origins and function of the “Buddhism isn’t a religion” meme, entertaining, along the way, questions like: What is a “religion” anyway, and who gets to say so? Does it make sense to characterize Buddhist practice as itself “scientific,” or to claim that Buddhist thought is basically more compatible with a scientific world view than that of any (other) religion? What might any of the various parties to a discussion of these issues have at stake in the answer’s coming out one way or the other? *Daniel A. Arnold*

RLST 24805 – Foucault, Genealogy, Religion

Toward the end of his life, Michel Foucault turned to religion—not for solace, but for the sources of modern subjectivity and selfhood. Religion itself, however, is not his subject, nor is the religious subject his concern. What use, then, is his work on religion, and what use has religious studies made of it? Beginning with some of Foucault’s most influential works on the genealogy of the subject and Christianity’s role within it, this course examines his methods and the concepts they have generated. Engaging some of Foucault’s own scholarly sources, as well as critical work on his use of them, his treatment of primary texts, and the scope and limit of his discussion of Christianity, this course will then move to examine how his theories of power, biopolitics, and governmentality have influenced the study of religion across traditions and geographic contexts. Reading religious studies scholarship in history, intellectual history, anthropology, and cultural theory, we will examine Foucault’s uneven but pervasive influence across the field, questioning religion’s role in forming some of his key concepts, and tracing the use of those concepts as tools in the continuing study of religion. *Kirsten Collins*

RLST 27703 – Left-Hand Practice: Religion and Politics in South Asia

The decades from 1917-1947 marked the rise of left-wing politics across South Asia and its diaspora. Whether officially linked to the Soviet Comintern, like the Communist Party of India, or in broad support of revolutionary anti-imperialism, like the Ghadar Party, leftist ideas, organizations, and agitations flourished in the subcontinent and continue to inform the politics of several states in the region. This course explores how thinkers, writers, activists, and everyday people in twentieth-century South Asia have understood the power of religion to engender, justify, interpret, challenge, and reimagine this tradition of emancipatory politics. Students will encounter a range of unorthodox ideas and practices including Muslim socialism, Hindu communism, mystical Marxism, Dalit Buddhism, and revolutionary renunciation. Particular attention will be given to questions of caste, gender, and sexual futures. Decades of right-wing mobilization have associated religion invariably with reactionary politics. This course reveals different possible configurations of religion and politics in modern South Asia. *Anand Venkatkrishnan*

Equivalent Div Course(s): HREL 37703

RLST 28133 – Magicians, Mystics, and Mentalists: From Religion to Science

Has psychology replaced religion? Is there something inherently “religious” about psychotherapy? What are the similarities and differences between priests and psychiatrists, between sorcerers and psychoanalysts? In recent decades in the Global North, the discipline of psychology has been on the rise, but so have esotericism, astrology, and spiritualism. This raises interesting questions about how these discourses intersect and which accounts of the human psyche best capture the complexity of our lives. In this course we will attempt to examine this problem through an historical and comparative analysis of the religious traditions of the premodern West and the psychological and psychotherapeutic discourses which arose in Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We shall do so in order to explore how the stories we tell about the past and the present affect the

ways we understand the relationship between religion and science, as well as how we describe the relationship between the internal and external world or the forces that influence human behavior. Topics covered will include asceticism and demonic possession, the practice of confession and the discernment of spirits, divine revelation and mystical experience, alchemical healing and astral magic, as well as mesmerism, hypnotherapy, psychoanalysis, and existentialism. *Sam Baudinette*

RLST 28140 – 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. *Russell Johnson*

Equivalent Div Course(s): JTAC 38140, HREL 38140, ISLM 38140

RLST 28511 – Star Wars and Religion

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

RLST 28700 – Judith Butler: Gender and Sexuality in Philosophy, Society, and Ethics

Judith Butler is among the most influential theorists and cultural critics of our time. Primarily recognized for their field-defining work in gender studies and queer theory, Butler's philosophy and criticism ranges widely. Beginning with their early analysis of desire and recognition in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Butler's work draws widely from psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, literature, and critical theory, to illumine the gendered foundations of philosophical thought while critically assessing contemporary political, religious, and social crises. In this course, we will read three texts from Butler's corpus: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, and *The Force of Non-Violence: An Ethico-Political Bind*. We do so not merely to encounter Butler's theories of gender, sexuality, and performativity, grievability and precarity, ethics and non-violence, but to learn from Butler's philosophical method and their productive strategies for interrogating culture, politics, and the self. Our goal will be to hone each participant's critical and theoretical skills with an eye toward sharpening our social-critical and ethical capacities. The course will proceed as a seminar. No prior familiarity with Butler's work or gender and sexuality studies required. *Virginia White*

RLST 28811 – Emptiness: The History of _____ in Art, Religion, and Philosophy

This experimental course explores emptiness not simply as absence, but as a powerful cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic force. Moving across philosophy, religious thought, science, and the arts, the

course asks how emptiness has been theorized, experienced, feared, imposed, and cultivated—from Buddhist and apophatic traditions to colonial concepts such as terra nullius, from modern physics and philosophy to contemporary art and digital practices like doomscrolling.

Students will engage texts by figures such as Georges Perec, Meister Eckhart, Simone Weil, Martin Heidegger, John Cage, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Byung-Chul Han, alongside close study of artistic practices ranging from Zen ink painting to Yves Klein, Agnes Martin, and the Dansaekhwa movement. The course also addresses emptiness as a social condition, examining themes of hyper-connectivity, consumerism, colonial “empty spaces,” silence, and withdrawal.

Through seminars, lectures, site-specific discussions, and collaborative exercises, students are encouraged to think across traditions and disciplines. Rather than offering a single definition, the course treats emptiness as a shifting field—at once unsettling and generative—where art, spirituality, and modern life intersect. *Donato Loia*

Equivalent Div Course(s): RLVC 38811