Religious Studies

Department Website: https://divinity.uchicago.edu/academics/undergraduate-program-religious-studies

Program of Study

The program in Religious Studies introduces students to the academic study of religion. Students in Religious Studies learn how to think, talk, and write about religion in a way that is well-informed, rigorously critical, and responsibly engaged. The study of religion investigates the way human societies construct practices, seek meanings, and pose questions about their world. These investigations may be constructive, cultural, and/or historical. Since it touches all facets of human experience, the study of religion is a crucial conversation partner with other fields of study and draws on the entire range of humanistic and social scientific disciplines. Students in the program are able to explore numerous religious traditions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, and are exposed to the sources, problems, methods, and methodologies of our diverse areas of study, including Biblical and Historical Studies; Ethics, Theology, and the Philosophy of Religions; as well as History of Religions, Anthropology, Sociology, and Religion and Literature. The interests of our students may be descriptive, explanatory, and/or normative.

Program Requirements

Religious Studies majors have the option of pursuing one of two tracks: the Regular Track or the Research Track. Students in the Regular Track must take eleven courses for the major, including at least one introductory-level (“Gateway”) course as well as a third-year Theories/Methods seminar. Students in the Research Track will also complete these requirements; in addition, they will complete a BA thesis during two BA seminars: RLST 29800 BA Paper Seminar I and RLST 29900 BA Paper II. Students who wish to pursue the Research Track must officially declare their intention to do so with the Director of Undergraduate Studies by the end of Spring Quarter during their third year. Only students in the Research Track are eligible for departmental honors.

Students with permission to enroll in graduate Divinity courses may count these toward the major. Students who wish to receive credit in the major for non-departmental courses must submit a petition to the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Such requests are decided on a case-by-case basis. NOTE: The Office of the Dean of Students in the College must also approve the transfer of all courses taken at institutions other than those in which students are enrolled as part of a study abroad program that is sponsored by the University of Chicago. For more information, visit Transfer Credit (http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/transfercredit/).

Introductory Course Requirement

Students in Religious Studies are required to take an introductory-level (“Gateway”) course. It need not precede other course work in the major, but students are advised to have completed it by the end of their second year. Gateway courses include RLST 10100 Introduction to Religious Studies, RLST 10101 Religion, Reason, and Critique, RLST 10102 Religion, Reason, and the State, RLST 11004 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, and RLST 12000 Introduction to the New Testament: Texts and Contexts.

Course Distribution

Religion is expressed in many forms throughout the world’s cultures, and the academic study of religion therefore requires multiple perspectives on its subject. Students of religion should have some knowledge of the historical development of specific religious traditions, understand and critically engage the ethical and intellectual teachings of various religions, and begin to make some comparative appraisals of the roles that religions play in different cultures and historical periods. To introduce students to these multiple perspectives on religion and to provide a sense of the field as a whole, students are required to take at least one course in two of the following areas. To identify the areas, refer to the RLST number range (see below).

A. Historical Studies in Religious Traditions: courses that explore the development of particular religious traditions, including their social practices, rituals, scriptures, and beliefs in historical context (RLST 11000 through 15000, 20000 through 22900).

B. Constructive Studies in Religion: courses that investigate constructive or normative questions about the nature and conduct of human life that are raised by religious traditions, including work in philosophy of religion, ethics, and theology (RLST 23000 through 25900).

C. Cultural Studies in Religion: courses that introduce issues in the social and cultural contingencies of religious thought and practice by emphasizing sociological, anthropological, and literary-critical perspectives on religion, and by raising comparative questions about differing religious and cultural traditions (RLST 26000 through 28900).

Senior Seminar and BA Paper

The two-quarter senior sequence (RLST 29800 BA Paper Seminar I and RLST 29900 BA Paper II) 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. This seminar will allow students to prepare their bibliographies, hone their writing, and present their research. Students will register for RLST 29800 BA Paper Seminar I in the Autumn Quarter and for RLST 29900 BA Paper II in the Winter Quarter. The BA paper will be due the second week of Spring Quarter. The length is typically between thirty and forty pages, with the upward limit being firm.

This program may accept a BA paper or project used to satisfy the same requirement in another major if certain conditions are met and with the consent of the other program. Approval from both departments is required. Students should consult with the departments by the earliest BA proposal deadline (or by the end of their third year, if neither program publishes a deadline). A consent form, to be signed by both departments, is available from the College adviser. It must be completed and returned to the College adviser by the end of Autumn Quarter of the student’s year of graduation.

**GRADING**

Religious Studies majors must receive quality grades in all courses in the major. With consent of instructor, nonmajors may take Religious Studies courses for P/F grading. Faculty will determine the criteria that constitute a Pass.

**HONORS**

Honors are awarded by the Divinity School’s Committee on Undergraduate Studies. Students who write senior papers deemed exceptional by their faculty advisers will be eligible for consideration for graduation with honors. Only students in the Research Track are eligible for honors. To be considered for honors, students in the Research Track must also have a 3.5 GPA or higher in the major and a 3.25 GPA or higher overall.

**SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS**

**Regular Track**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Introductory-level (“Gateway”) course</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least two courses in three major areas (Historical, Constructive, Cultural Studies)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-year Theories/Methods seminar</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven additional courses in Religious Studies</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Units</strong></td>
<td><strong>1100</strong></td>
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</table>

**Research Track**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Introductory-level (“Gateway”) course</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least two courses in three major areas (Historical, Constructive, Cultural Studies)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-year Theories/Methods seminar</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven additional courses in Religious Studies</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 29800 BA Paper Seminar I</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 29900 BA Paper II</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Units</strong></td>
<td><strong>1300</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MINOR PROGRAM IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

The minor in Religious Studies requires a total of six courses. One introductory-level (“Gateway”) course is required of all minors.

The remaining five courses should be chosen to reflect a broad understanding of the academic study of religion. Of these six, students must take at least one course in two of our three areas of study [Historical Studies (A), Constructive Studies (B), and Cultural Studies (C)]. Courses in the minor may not be double-counted with the student’s major(s) or with other minors, and may not be counted toward general education requirements. Courses in the minor must be taken for quality grades, and more than half of the requirements for the minor must be met by registering for courses bearing University of Chicago course numbers.

The student must complete a substantial (at least 10–15 pages) paper or project. This work should engage critically with primary source materials and exemplify methodological sophistication in the study of religion, and should earn a grade no lower than B-. It is expected that this paper will normally be written as part of the student’s course work for the minor. The Director of Undergraduate Studies will approve the paper for fulfillment of this requirement.

Students who elect the minor program in Religious Studies must meet with the Director of Undergraduate Studies before the end of Spring Quarter of their third year to declare their intention to complete the minor. Consent to Complete a Minor Program forms are available from the student’s College adviser or online (https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/college-prod/s3fs-public/documents/Consent_Minor_Program.pdf).
Sample Program
The following group of courses would satisfy a minor in Religious Studies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RLST 10100</td>
<td>Introduction to Religious Studies</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 11004</td>
<td>Introduction to the Hebrew Bible</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 21801</td>
<td>Religion and Society in the Middle Ages</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 23900</td>
<td>Buddhist Thought in India and Tibet</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 22505</td>
<td>Histories of Japanese Religion</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 26800</td>
<td>The Mahabharata in English Translation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Units</td>
<td></td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**RELIGIOUS STUDIES COURSES**

**RLST 10100. Introduction to Religious Studies. 100 Units.**
What is religion? Is it truth or an illusion? Is it an opiate or an effervescent? Is it the origin of civilization or the end of it? Is it some of these things, or none, or all? The task of defining religion has bedeviled scholars for centuries and remains a perennial concern in the academic field of Religious Studies. In this course we will explore some of the definitions of religion offered by scholars like Marx, Freud, Durkheim, James, Hurston, Long, de Beauvoir, DuBois, and Mahmood, as well as the methods, motivations, and historical contexts that made those definitions possible. Along the way we will survey some fundamental themes and issues in the field of Religious Studies. We will then apply what we learn to data outside the field, analyzing how religion is defined and deployed in films, novels, music, TikToks, Instagram reels, and our own brains. Ultimately the tools we acquire in the course will enable us to think through how we as humans organize and make sense of our world and our place in it.
Instructor(s): Emily Crews Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.
Equivalent Course(s): SOCI 20541

**RLST 11004. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible. 100 Units.**
Critical introduction to the genres, ideas, styles, and formation of the Hebrew Bible (the ancient Jewish treasury of literature from Israel, Judea, and Babylonia), framed by ancient comparative material and modern literary theory.
Instructor(s): Simeon Chavel Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course meets the HS or LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students. This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 20120, HIJD 31004, BIBL 31000, NEHC 20504, NEHC 30504

**RLST 12000. Introduction to the New Testament: Texts and Contexts. 100 Units.**
An immersion in the texts of the New Testament with the following goals: 1. through careful reading to come to know well some representative pieces of this literature; 2. to gain useful knowledge of the historical, geographical, social, religious, cultural and political contexts of these texts and the events they relate; 3. to learn the major literary genres represented in the canon (“gospels,” “acts,” “letters,” and “apocalypses”) and strategies for reading them; 4. to comprehend the various theological visions and cultural worldviews to which these texts give expression; 5. to situate oneself and one’s prevailing questions about this material in the history of research, and to reflect on the goals and methods of interpretation; 6. to become intelligent and critical “consumers” of biblical scholarship as it appears in academic and popular media.; 7. to raise questions for further study.
Instructor(s): Margaret Mitchell Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Interest in this literature, and willingness to enter into conversation with like-minded and non-like-minded others on the texts and the issues involved in their interpretation.
Note(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 32500, MDVL 12500, FNDL 28202

**RLST 15100-15200-15300. Introductory Qur’anic Arabic I-II-III.**
Introductory Qur’anic Arabic I-II-III

**RLST 15100. Introductory Qur’anic Arabic I. 100 Units.**
This course is the first in a 3-quarter sequence “Introduction to Qur’anic Arabic” (IQA), which aims to provide students with foundational philological and reading skills by covering the essentials of Qur’anic/Classical Arabic grammar. The 3 quarters of IQA are sequential, and students are strongly encouraged to join in the first quarter. Exceptions can be made on a case by case basis.
Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Graduate and undergraduate students from any department are welcome to register. The absolute minimum prerequisite for IQA I is knowledge of the Arabic script. Training equivalent to at least a quarter of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is highly desirable. The IQA sequence is also open to students who may have had more exposure to Arabic (modern or classical) but wish to acquire a solid foundation in Arabic grammar, and/or students who feel they are not yet ready for third-year Arabic courses.
Equivalent Course(s): NELC 30100, ISLM 30100
RLST 15200. Introductory Qur’anic Arabic II. 100 Units.
This course is the second in a 3-quarter sequence "Introduction to Qur’anic Arabic" (IQA), which aims to provide students with foundational philological and reading skills by covering the essentials of Qur’anic/Classical Arabic grammar. This course also features readings of select passages from the Qur’an, hadith and Tafsir. The 3 quarters of IQA are sequential, and students are strongly encouraged to join in the first quarter. Exceptions can be made on a case by case basis.
Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Successful completion of Introductory Qur’anic Arabic I.
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 30200, NELC 30200

RLST 15300. Introductory Qur’anic Arabic III. 100 Units.
This course is the third in a 3-quarter sequence "Introduction to Qur’anic Arabic" (IQA), which aims to provide students with foundational philological and reading skills by covering the essentials of Qur’anic/Classical Arabic grammar. This course also features readings of select passages from the Qur’an, hadith and Tafsir. The 3 quarters of IQA are sequential, and students are strongly encouraged to join in the first quarter. Exceptions can be made on a case by case basis.
Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): Graduate and undergraduate students from any department are welcome to register. The minimum prerequisite for IQA III is the successful completion of IQA II or equivalent training. The IQA sequence is also open to students who may have had more exposure to Arabic (modern or classical) but wish to acquire a solid foundation in Arabic grammar, and/or students who feel they are not yet ready for third-year Arabic courses.
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 30300, NEHC 30300

RLST 20111. History of Death. 100 Units.
From the treatment of mortal remains to the built environment of cemeteries, tombs, and memorials, the dead have always played a role in the lives of the living. This course examines how beliefs and practices surrounding death have been a source of meaning making for individuals, institutions, religious communities, and modern nations. It will ask students to consider how examining death makes it possible to better understand the values and concerns of societies across time and space. This course will consider case studies from Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, North America, Europe, and Asia, from the Middle Ages to the Vietnam War. It introduces students to the methods and debates that animate the historical study of death—coming from histories of the body, social history, and the study of slavery—and ends by asking the question: "Is it possible to have a global history of death?"
Instructor(s): K. Hickerson Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): CRES 20111, HIST 20111, GNSE 20111

RLST 20201-20202-20203. Islamicate Civilization I-II-III.

RLST 20201. Islamicate Civilization I: 600-950. 100 Units.
This course covers the rise and spread of Islam, the Islamic empire under the Umayyad and early Abbasid caliphs, and the emergence of regional Islamic states from Afghanistan and eastern Iran to North Africa and Spain. The main focus will be on political, economic and social history.
Instructor(s): Ahmed El Shamsy Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): The Islamicate Civilization sequence does not fulfill the General Ed requirements
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 15611, ISLM 30201, HIST 35621, NEHC 30201, NEHC 30201, NEHC 30202, MDVL 20201

RLST 20202. Islamicate Civilization II: 950-1750. 100 Units.
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, Turkish and Persian expression; the evolution of religious and legal scholarship and devotional life; transformations in the intellectual and philosophical traditions; the emergence of Shi’a 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.
Instructor(s): Franklin Lewis Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Islamicate Civilization I (NEHC 20201) or Islamic Thought & Literature-1 (NEHC 20601), or the equivalent
Note(s): The Islamicate Civilization sequence does not fulfill the General Ed requirements
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 20202, ISLM 30202, HIST 15612, NEHC 30202, HIST 35622, MDVL 20202

RLST 20203. Islamicate Civilization III: 1750-Present. 100 Units.
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.

Instructor(s): Holly Shissler

Prerequisite(s): Islamicate Civilization II (NEHC 20202) or Islamic Thought & Literature-2 (NEHC 20602), or the equivalent

Note(s): The Islamicate Civilization sequence does not fulfill the General Ed requirements

Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 30203, HIST 35623, HIST 15613, NEHC 30203, NEHC 20203

RLST 20401-20402-20403. Islamic Thought and Literature I-II-III.

This sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies. Taking these courses in sequence is recommended but not required.

RLST 20401. Islamic Thought and Literature I. 100 Units.

This course explores the thought and literature of the Islamic world from the coming of Islam in the seventh century C.E. through the development and spread of its civilization in the medieval period and into the modern world. Including historical framework to establish chronology and geography, the course focuses on key aspects of Islamic intellectual history: scripture, law, theology, philosophy, literature, mysticism, political thought, historical writing, and archaeology. In addition to lectures and secondary background readings, students read and discuss samples of key primary texts, with a view to exploring Islamic civilization in the direct voices of the people who participated in creating it. All readings are in English translation. No prior background in the subject is required. This course sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies.

Instructor(s): Ahmed El Shamsy

Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 20601, MDVL 20601, SOSC 22000, HIST 25610

RLST 20402. Islamic Thought and Literature II. 100 Units.

This course covers the period from ca. 950 to 1700, surveying works of literature, theology, philosophy, sufism, politics, history, etc., written in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, as well as the art, architecture and music of the Islamicate traditions. Through primary texts, secondary sources and lectures, we will trace the cultural, social, religious, political and institutional evolution through the period of the Fatimids, the Crusades, the Mongol invasions, and the "gunpowder empires" (Ottomans, Safavids, Mughals).

Instructor(s): Franklin Lewis

Terms Offered: Winter

Note(s): Taking these courses in sequence is recommended but not required. This sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies.

Equivalent Course(s): SOSC 22100, NEHC 20602, HIST 25615, MDVL 20602

RLST 20403. Islamic Thought and Literature III. 100 Units.

This course covers the period from ca. 1700 to the present. It explores Muslim intellectuals' engagement with tradition and modernity in the realms of religion, politics, literature, and law. We discuss debates concerning the role of religion in a modern society, perceptions of Europe and European influence, the challenges of maintain religious and cultural authenticity, and Muslim views of nation-states and nationalism in the Middle East. We also give consideration to the modern developments of transnational jihadism and the Arab Spring. This course sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies.

Instructor(s): A. Holly Shissler

Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): SOSC 22200, NEHC 20603, HIST 25616

RLST 20441. Theravada Buddhism: History and Philosophy. 100 Units.

This course studies the history and philosophy of Theravada Buddhism in India and other Southeast Asia countries. We first introduce the life of the Buddha and his major teachings within the context of the social and cultural environments in which Buddhism emerged about 2500 years ago. Having thus grasped some fundamental knowledge on Buddhism based on Pali texts, we then embark on examining its philosophical and historical developments from primitive Buddhism to sectarian Buddhism, and to the ramification of Theravada Buddhism in various countries such as Sri Lanka and Thai Land throughout its long history. Towards the end of the quarter, the class briefly discusses the revival of Theravada Buddhism in India in connection with the arising of Protestant Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the early 20th century. It is hoped that students having completed this course will be equipped with sufficient knowledge on general history, major philosophy and outstanding cultural tradition of Theravada Buddhism.

Instructor(s): Yu Xue

Terms Offered: Autumn

Note(s): This course meets the HS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.

Equivalent Course(s): SALC 34441, HREL 34441, SALC 24441

RLST 20811. Ritual, Cult and Magic in the Hebrew Bible. 100 Units.

This course will explore the variety and nature of religious practice in ancient Israel and the wider ancient Near East. We will consider topics such as sacrifice, purity and holiness, temple cult, priesthood, analogical ritual, and popular and enigmatic rites. We will reflect on all of these subjects in light of modern theories of religion and ritual.

Instructor(s): Jeffrey Stackert

Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): Students should have taken a critical Introduction to the Hebrew Bible.

Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 43801
RLST 20903. The Historical Jesus. 100 Units.
Is it possible to get behind the textual remains of early memories about Jesus of Nazareth to recover objective facts about his life? If so, how do scholars navigate and assess the various ancient stories about Jesus of Nazareth to reconstruct “what actually happened”? What assumptions and methods guide their analysis? Do the Gospels contain eyewitness testimony? This course introduces students to the study of the historical Jesus, a branch of biblical scholarship that seeks to reconstruct what can be known about Jesus’ birth, life, and death using the tools of modern historical research. Students will learn how to apply the methods of historical Jesus research and gain familiarity with the various portrayals of Jesus in ancient Jewish, Christian, Greek, and Roman sources. At the end of the course, we will consider both the benefits and limitations of this line of inquiry for contemporary concerns.
Instructor(s): Christine Trotter Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): While no prerequisites are required, this course is designed for students who have already taken RLST 12000 - Introduction to the New Testament: Texts and Contexts.
Equivalent Course(s): CLCV 23121, JWSC 20903, HIST 25620

RLST 21410. American Religion Since 1865. 100 Units.
Why is religion more vital in the United States than in almost any other industrialized nation? This course will address that question by tracing the religious history of America from Reconstruction to the present. We will examine how religion has influenced every aspect of American society, from everyday life to presidential politics. We will look at religion’s role in major events like World War I, the Great Depression, and the Civil Rights Movement. And we will explore how in recent decades the United States has become a nation of incredible religious diversity. This course is grounded in secondary literature; its goal is to introduce students to both the history and historiography of religion in the modern United States.
Instructor(s): Will Schultz Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course meets the HS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 27717, HCHR 31410, RAME 31410, AMER 21410, AMER 31410, HIST 37717

RLST 21430. Religion and American Capitalism. 100 Units.
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. The first part of the course will provide a historical introduction to the interplay of religion and American capitalism; the latter part will deal with the role of religion in contemporary debates over work, sustenance, and inequality.
Instructor(s): Will Schultz Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 37716, AMER 40200, HIST 27717, AMER 21430, HCHR 31410, RAME 40200

RLST 21505. The Apostolic Fathers. 100 Units.
This course focuses on the general body of works whose authors are collectively known as the Apostolic Fathers, a remarkable group of theologians who lived and wrote during the late first and second centuries AD, immediately after the New Testament. Among the works and writers whom we will consider are the Didache, Clement of Rome (1 Clement), Ignatius of Antioch, and, as time permits, Diognetus or 2 Clement. We will carefully read the Greek text, with careful attention to the style of the Greek, how it compares to that of the New Testament, and its relationship to other important materials such as the Septuagint and the Greco-Egyptian papyri. This was a period of amazing ferment and intellectual diversity. Since no rigid standard of orthodoxy had yet been set, a wide array of ideas were put forth and examined on the theological market place. We will focus on the exegetical methods of Biblical interpretation used by the Fathers, their reflections on the person and work of Jesus, and their ideas on the structure and mission of the emerging Church as the body of Christ.
Instructor(s): David Martinez Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Two years of Greek required.
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 47500, GREK 35700, GREK 25700

RLST 22010-22011-22012. Jewish Civilization I-II-III.
Jewish Civilization is a three-quarter sequence that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient beginnings through its rabbinic and medieval transformations to its modern manifestations. Through investigation of primary texts—biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, mystical, historical, documentary, and literary—students will acquire a broad overview of Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness while reflecting in greater depth on major themes, ideas, and events in Jewish history. The Autumn course will deal with antiquity to the medieval period; the Winter course will begin with the early modern period and continue to the present. The Spring course will vary as to special topic; for the Spring course to count towards the general education requirement in civilization studies, the student must also take the Autumn and Winter courses. Note: Jewish Studies revised its civilization studies courses in academic year 2018–19. Students who began the requirement prior to Autumn Quarter 2018 under the previous course options, may complete it with those courses that remain available, or (with prior approval from the JWSC director of undergraduate studies) they may combine them with the new course options, provided that they fulfill the requirement to take one JWSC course in the ancient or medieval period and one in the modern period. Only students who have taken JWSC courses prior to academic year 2018–19 are eligible to complete the program under the prior system.
RLST 22010. Jewish Civilization I: Ancient Beginnings to Medieval Period. 100 Units.
Jewish Civilization is a three-quarter sequence that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient beginnings through its rabbinic and medieval transformations to its modern manifestations. Through investigation of primary texts-biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, mystical, historical, documentary, and literary-students will acquire a broad overview of Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness while reflecting in greater depth on major themes, ideas, and events in Jewish history. The Autumn course will deal with antiquity through the Middle Ages. Its readings will include material from the Bible and writings from the second temple, Hellenistic, rabbinic, and medieval periods. All sections of this course will share a common core of readings; individual instructors will supplement with other materials. It is recommended, though not required, that students take the three Jewish Civilization courses in sequence. Students who register for the Autumn Quarter course will automatically be pre-registered for the winter segment. In the Spring Quarter students have the option of taking a third unit of Jewish Civilization, a course whose topics will vary (JWSC 1200X).
Instructor(s): James Robinson David Barak-Gorodetsky Bevin Blaber Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 12000, MDVL 12000, NEHC 22010

RLST 22011. Jewish Civilization II: Early Modern Period to 21st Century. 100 Units.
Jewish Civilization is a three-quarter sequence that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient beginnings through its rabbinic and medieval transformations to its modern manifestations. Through investigation of primary texts-biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, mystical, historical, documentary, and literary-students will acquire a broad overview of Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness while reflecting in greater depth on major themes, ideas, and events in Jewish history. The Winter course will begin with the early modern period and continue to the present. It will include discussions of mysticism, the works of Spinoza and Mendelssohn, the nineteenth-century reform, the Holocaust and its reflection in writers such as Primo Levi and Paul Celan, and literary pieces from postwar American Jewish and Israeli authors. All sections of this course will share a common core of readings; individual instructors will supplement with other materials. It is recommended, though not required, that students take the three Jewish Civilization courses in sequence. Students who register for the Autumn Quarter course will automatically be pre-registered for the winter segment. In the Spring Quarter students have the option of taking a third unit of Jewish Civilization, a course whose topics will vary (JWSC 1200X).
Instructor(s): Kenneth Moss Jessica Kirzane Bevin Blaber Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 12001, NEHC 22011

RLST 22012. Jewish Civilization III: Language, Creation, and Translation in Jewish Thought and Literature. 100 Units.
Jewish Civilization is a three-quarter sequence that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient beginnings through its rabbinic and medieval transformations to its modern manifestations. Through investigation of primary texts-biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, mystical, historical, documentary, and literary-students will acquire a broad overview of Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness while reflecting in greater depth on major themes, ideas, and events in Jewish history. The Spring course in 2021 will start with two stories from Genesis-the creation story and the story of the Tower of Babel in chapter 11-and consider the intertwined dynamics of language, creation, and translation in Jewish thought and literature. In addition to commentaries on both of these key texts, we will read philosophical and literary texts that illuminate the workings of language as a creative force and the dynamics of multilingualism and translation in the creation of Jewish culture. Through this lens, we will consider topics such as gender and sexuality, Jewish national identity, Zionism, the revival of the Hebrew language, Jewish responses to the Holocaust, and contemporary American Jewish culture.
Instructor(s): Na'ama Rokem Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): Students who wish to take this course for Civilization Studies credit, must also take Jewish Civilization I and II. The course may also be taken as an independent elective.
Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 12003, JWSC 12003, NEHC 12003

RLST 22250. Jesus the Divine Physician: Disability, Healing, and Medical Knowledge in the Ancient World. 100 Units.
Christianity arose in a world with competing conceptions of the body, health, and the sources of disease. How did the categories of magic, miracles, and medicine intersect in the ancient world? What attitudes toward the body and disability do we find in ancient texts? In this class, students will examine Greek and Roman attitudes through material evidence such as amulets and healing shrines and the textual record of practitioners such as Hippocrates, Galen, and Soranus of Ephesus. The class will discuss the difficulties of mapping modern categories and terminology onto ancient paradigms. Alongside this material, students will gain familiarity with theories of disease and the sociology of health and illness in the Hebrew Bible. Against this historical background, we will approach select accounts of healings within New Testament and early Christian literature. What orientations toward the body and healing do we find? Working at the intersection of biblical and disability studies, students will read these narratives closely with an eye to the history of their interpretation and their implications for understanding early conceptions of Jesus and his ministry. While knowledge of Greek is not required, students with facility in the language will be provided ample opportunities to strengthen their skills.
Instructor(s): Erin Galgay Walsh Terms Offered: Spring
Religious Studies

Prerequisite(s): BIBL 32500 (Introduction to the New Testament) recommended; those with skills in Greek will have the opportunity to apply them.
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 22251, HCHR 42250, GNSE 42251, CLCV 24221, CLAS 44221, BIBL 42250

RLST 22302. The Book of Judges. 100 Units.
A text-course (text in biblical Hebrew only). It will cover the book’s concept of a “judge,” its themes, plot, and values, its sources and formation, the real beginning and end of the book, and its historical referents. Framed by theory of history and of narrative.
Instructor(s): Simeon Chavel Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): One year Biblical Hebrew.
Note(s): This course meets the HS or LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students. JWSC majors/minors can petition to count this course toward their degree requirement.
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 48402, NEHC 28402, NEHC 48402, HIJD 48402

RLST 22304. Words of the Wise: Proverbs and Qohelet. 100 Units.
Text-course (text in biblical Hebrew only) covering the literary genres, discursive styles, and philosophical ideas of Proverbs and Qohelet (Ecclesiastes), with attention to voicing, double-voicing, and intertextuality.
Instructor(s): Simeon Chavel Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): One year of Biblical Hebrew.
Note(s): JWSC majors/minors can petition to count this course toward their degree requirement.
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 44800, NEHC 24801, NEHC 44801, HIJD 44800

RLST 22418. The Scopes Trial in Historical Context. 100 Units.
This course will explore in depth the 1925 Scopes Trial in Dayton, Tennessee. We will examine the transcript of the trial, newspaper editorials, cartoons, scholarly analyses, and various contemporary observations on the meaning and significance of the trial. Among the topics covered are the fundamentalist/modernist controversy of the 1920s and its consequences, interpretations of the origins and tenacity of the anti-evolution campaign, and broader debates about science and religion and the contested authority of experts in American society. Though much of the historical analysis will focus on the 1920s, some attention will be paid to the implications of this highly publicized trial and what it came to signify about larger cultural debates in the United States.
Instructor(s): Curtis Evans Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): Undergraduates may enroll themselves only after getting approval from the instructor (cjevans@uchicago.edu).
Equivalent Course(s): AMER 22418, AMER 32418, HCHR 32418, RAME 32418

RLST 22605. Europe’s Intellectual Transformations, Renaissance through Enlightenment. 100 Units.
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.
Instructor(s): A. Palmer Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Students taking FREN 29322/39322 must read French texts in French.
Note(s): First-year students and non-History majors welcome.
Equivalent Course(s): FREN 29322, HCHR 39522, HIST 29522, FREN 29322, KNOW 39522, HIST 39522, KNOW 39522

RLST 22667. The Christian Right. 100 Units.
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?
Instructor(s): Will Schultz Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): HCHR 35700, AMER 35700, RAME 35700, AMER 22667

RLST 22780. Readings: Sufism in Morocco. 100 Units.
A close reading of primary and secondary literature on the Moroccan Sufi tradition, including key texts from the Shadhiliya order.
Instructor(s): Yousef Casewit Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Arabic reading proficiency required.
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 42780, NEHC 42780

RLST 22812. Introduction to Classical Hinduism. 100 Units.
What is Hinduism? Variously described as a world religion, a way of life, the basis of a national culture, and more, this course will critically consider and interrogate the historical multiplicity of traditions that comprise what we might today call “Classical Hinduism.” Beginning with the Vedic period in the first-millennium B.C.E and moving to the early modern, we will track the development of classical religious tenants, literatures, and practices. In so doing, students will become familiar with central beliefs (including dharma, artha, kaśma, and
mokṣa), sectarian traditions such as Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism, and Saktism, and religious literatures ranging from epic to devotional poetry. As we will see, while Hinduism is a flexible and elastic term that brings together shifting religious identities and communities, the concept of the classical names the solidification of both a real and imagined religious past.

Instructor(s): Sarah Pierce Taylor Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 22812

RLST 23100. Introduction to Christian Thought. 100 Units.
This course is designed to give an introduction to Christian thought by means of a historical overview. It will focus on what it is that establishes thinkers as Christian thinkers, what that does to the profile of their thought, and how we can best assess their overall contribution in evaluative terms (academic, ecclesial, social, foundational). The course will deliberately reach across confessional and cultural divides. The thinkers on whom we focus are Augustine, Maximus the Confessor, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Kierkegaard, John Henry Newman, William James, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
Instructor(s): Willemien Otten Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 23100

RLST 23111. Black Theology: Hopkins Versus Cone. 100 Units.
Black Theology of Liberation, an indigenous USA discipline and movement, began on July 31, 1966 and spread nationally and internationally when James H. Cone published his first book in March 1969. Since that time, a second generation has emerged. In this course, we will create a debate between the second generation (represented by Dwight N. Hopkins) and the first generation (represented by James H. Cone). We will look at the political, economic, cultural, gender, and sexual orientation parts of this debate.
Instructor(s): Dwight Hopkins Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): CRES 23111, FNDL 25308, GLST 23111, AMER 23111

RLST 23112. Deconstruction and Religion. 100 Units.
In this seminar 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 divergent modes of discourse. We will then examine the roles of messianism, belief, and confession in his later work.
Instructor(s): Ryan Coyne Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): FNDL 25306, DVPR 50112, THEO 50112

RLST 23750. New Cartesian Questions. 100 Units.
The course shall be divided, in each class, in two moments. First moment: a close reading of Descartes’ Meditations on first Philosophy to allow students to reach a direct knowledge of cartesian thought, by presenting text explanations. Second, in each class will be addressed one of the most debated issues in the past or today among the allegedly well-known cartesian doctrines. For instance: Was Descartes more a skeptic than a dogmatic philosopher? (b) How far Descartes has followed Montaigne more than he opposed him? (c) Is the ego in the cogito argument really a “subject” or a “substance”? (c) Why a finite mind can enjoy an infinite will, and why the successors (even the self-proclaimed followers) of Descartes have given up this claim? (d) Is phenomenology (from Husserl to Levinas) qualified to understand itself as “cartesian”? (e) Is there or not a cartesian metaphysics, and why the answer remains difficult today? (f) Which role, if any, play sensation and non-conceptual knowledge in Descartes doctrine of morals.
Instructor(s): Jean-Luc Marion Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 33750

RLST 23823. Melancholy: Readings in Medieval Christian Literature. 100 Units.
The idea of melancholy, a persistent affective orientation toward sadness and/or despair, is ubiquitous in Christian writings from the Middle Ages. This course considers the nature and function of melancholy and possible remedies in Christian discourses, and in so doing it provides a survey of medieval Christian literature. Readings may be drawn from authors such as Boethius, Alan of Lille, Jean de Meun, Marguerite Porete, Dante, and Christine de Pizan. Special attention will be given to the role of literary form in Christian writing, competing accounts of despair and hope, and the relationship of Christianity to non-Christian discourses. There are no language prerequisites, though reading groups may be formed if sufficient students posses relevant language skills.
Instructor(s): M. Vanderpoel Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 23823, CMLT 23823

RLST 23905. Is Buddhism a Religion? 100 Units.
One often hears it said that Buddhism is not a _religion_, it is (e.g.) a “mind science,” or perhaps a therapy, or a philosophical way of life, etc. What would it mean, though, to say either that Buddhism is or is not a “religion”? Why does the answer matter, and (more significantly) to whom does it matter? And why is the question familiarly asked only of Buddhism? The latter question turns out to involve a great many historical developments 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. Engaging something
of this history, this course will explore the origins and function of the "Buddhism isn't a religion" meme, in light of the more general questions of what "religion" is anyway, and of the difference it makes who says so.

Instructor(s): Daniel Arnold Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 23905

**RLST 24103. Bioethics. 100 Units.**

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

Instructor(s): Laurie Zoloth Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): This course counts as the 3rd year Theories and Methods course for the undergraduate Religious Studies major/minor.
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 30600, BIOS 29216, SIGN 26069, HLTH 24103, HIPS 24103

**RLST 24114. Justice in History. 100 Units.**

This course explore various theories of justice, especially in the modern West, with an eye to the challenge of achieving justice in history.

Instructor(s): William Schweiker Terms Offered: Autumn

**RLST 24402. Religion, Writing, Revolution. 100 Units.**

In this course, we will attend to the role of religion in founding texts of self-government in early modern and Enlightenment philosophy. Starting with Hobbes and Locke, we will examine the relationship between the picture of religion and the grounding of government from philosophical, historical, and literary perspectives, following the logic of their relation, the historical context in which it takes shape, and the formal and rhetorical strategies of each text. In the middle of the course, we will pursue these questions as we read texts by Rousseau and his exchange with Christophe de Beaumont, the Archbishop of Paris. We will consider the mode of exchange that takes shape and its relation to the negotiations of religion and government, with attention to themes of the public, authority, and genre. In the final turn, we will read texts by Hume, Jefferson, and Kant to examine the legacies of these texts for notions of revolution, the new ways we can trace the role of religion in public discourse, and the political stakes of these questions today.

Instructor(s): Maureen Kelly Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 22314

**RLST 24592. Jewish and Islamic Ethics in al-Andalus. 100 Units.**

This course will include readings in Jewish and Islamic ethics from al-Andalus and the Maghrib with a focus on the writings of Maimonides (d. 1204) -- especially his "Eight Chapters" and Commentary on Avot (completed in the 1160s) and Ibn al-Mar’a of Malaga (d. 1214) -- especially his commentary on Ibn al-‘Arif.

Instructor(s): Jim Robinson and Yousef Casewit Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course meets the HS or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 34592, MDVL 24592, JWSC 24592, RETH 34592, HIJD 34592, NEHC 34592, NEHC 24592

**RLST 24802. Foucault and the Christians: On Ethics, Desire, and The History of Sexuality. 100 Units.**

In this course, we will examine the importance of early Christianity in Foucault’s History of Sexuality project, with attention to the grounds on which he contrasts sexual ethics in Greco-Roman Antiquity and early Christianity. The course will proceed through close readings of passages of Foucault’s late work, in conversation with his interlocutors, and key texts by Plato, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Tertullian, Cassian, and Augustine. Over the course of the readings, we will understand the question Foucault poses on sexual ethics in Antiquity, the nature of the shift in early Christianity, and the stakes of these distinctions for the genealogy of the modern subject. In our philosophical and historical investigation, we will address themes of body, sexuality, and desire; history, tradition, and religion; and the relationship between politics, ethics, and truth.

Instructor(s): Maureen Kelly Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 24802, CLCV 24821, HIST 21011

**RLST 25004. Theological, Phenomenological, and Ethical Aspects of Prayer. 100 Units.**

Through the centuries, human beings have addressed divine powers and entrusted themselves to a ‘beyond’ - in the hope that joy and sorrow may find an attentive ‘ear,’ that evil be transformed into good, and that the heavens will help in adversity. Yet, if the ‘voice’ or ‘word’ of God cannot be perceived acoustically, how can we then know whether our prayer has been ‘heard’? In discussing great thinkers who also were great listeners to the divine
'voice' that may 'resound' in silence or 'speak' to us through biblical texts or fellow human beings, this course will explore (1) theological, (2) phenomenological, and (3) ethical aspects of prayer: (1) Our speech about God changes and deepens when it is grounded in the speech to God. That is why prayer has been regarded as the key to divine knowledge, which can be seen in Augustine's Confessions, Anselm of Canterbury's Proslogion and Barth's interpretation of the latter in Fides quarens intellectum. (2) Does prayer require or effect a special state of consciousness, and what is the difference between prayer and meditation? By reading French phenomenologists (Levinas, Derrida, Christen), we will investigate the intentionality, temporality, and language of prayer. (3) How can prayer help us (re-)orient ourselves in life crises? In dialogue with critics and defenders of petitionary prayer (Kierkegaard, Rosenzweig, Heschel, D.Z. Phillips, Brümmer), we will search for criteria defining prayer that is deemed 'appropriate.'

Instructor(s): Claudia Welz
Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 35004, JWSC 25004, THEO 35004

RLST 25005. Elective Affinities: Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure on the Return to God. 100 Units.
The return to God (or reditus) is one of the central themes in medieval mysticism and in mysticism more generally. But return signals much more than a state of mystical contemplation. It involves finding a path back to God, not as an escape for human beings who find themselves in turmoil in the world but as a way for them to articulate where they find their true, spiritual home. Return is in many ways more about carving out one's intellectual trajectory than about the ecstasy of achieving actual union with God. Deferral and suspense are as important as consumption. Finally, return is the mirror image of procession, the path that creation follows once it is set in the world. To understand return then, one has to begin at creation. This course will interrogate Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, contemporary scholastic thinkers with respectively a more Aristotelian and a more Platonic profile, on the theme of return, seeing it both as a theoretical construct or object and as the lens through which they approach theology.
Instructor(s): Willemien Otten and Michael I. Allen
Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 45005, HIST 32109, HCHR 45005, HIST 22109

RLST 25301. History, Religion, and Politics in Augustine's City of God. 100 Units.
Augustine's City of God is a major work of history, politics, and religion. Written after Rome was sacked by the Visigoths in 410, the work begins an apology (justification) of the Empire's turn to Christianity and expands to offer a sweeping and deeply theological account of human history and society in terms of earth-bound versus heaven-centered community. Augustine's citizenship and politics entails living out membership in either fellowship while commingled on earth with the other. Augustine analyzes Roman history and politics as well as the new religion first encouraged and eventually imposed in the wake of Constantine's conversion. We shall read the entire work in translation, attending to historical observations, political stances, and religious views. Augustine made arguments of his own but saved huge swaths of Varro and other otherwise lost sources to fashion his historical critique of Rome, social analysis, and many ultimately fresh views on matters like human sexuality in paradise and in heaven. The class will meet once a week. A supplementary Latin reading group will also convene once a week for close reading of important and demanding selections in the original. There will be some invited international guest speakers.
Instructor(s): Willemien Otten and Michael I. Allen
Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): There will be a weekly Latin reading group (F. afternoon, 90 minutes) for classics and other students who want to tackle Augustine's Latin. This course meets the HS or SCSR Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): LATN 36421, LATN 26421, CLAS 36421, HCHR 35301, CLCV 26421, THEO 35301, HIST 22116, HIST 32116, FNDL 25304, BIBL 35301, RETH 35301

RLST 25501. Saints and Other Exemplars. 100 Units.
This course will consider recent work on the nature and significance of spiritual & moral exemplars, and will then use this work as a framework with which to analyze the lives of exemplars such as Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Oscar Romero.
Instructor(s): Kevin Hector
Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 35501, THEO 35501

Can we be faithful to our religious values and hold progressive political commitments? What kinds of tensions emerge in the process? How do people attempt to resolve them? In order to address these issues, we will first examine the importance of critical thinking on the topic of religion, showing the decisive role religious values play in our world. Next, we will turn to the study of the Christian tradition and some of the seminal debates in which religious and political commitments collide. With that context in mind, we will then move to the examination of different contemporary authors and texts that apply their moral reasoning to specific issues in which the apparent tension between religious and progressive values arise: democracy, poverty and injustice, migration, race, gender, and sexual orientation. Questions like the following will take center stage: Shall we pray for the poor or advocate for systemic economic change? Does religion oppress women or liberate them? Are Christians supposed to reject same-sex relations or can they support them?
Instructor(s): Raul Zegarra
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): LACS 25555, AMER 25555, CRES 25555
RLST 25563. Does American Democracy Need Religion? 100 Units.
In the United States, we find ourselves living as part of a democracy. But that simple fact doesn’t necessarily make us fans of democracy. In fact, it leaves many questions unanswered: Is democracy a good thing? If so, why and on what grounds? Why should you or I esteem or believe in democracy and its ideals (e.g. equality, liberty, fraternity)? If we do, what grounds our devotion to this shared political tradition, if anything? Does, can, or should religion have a role to play? In this course, we will explore American democracy as a normative tradition and its relationship to various religious traditions in American society. Specifically, we will explore three influential trends in conceptualizing the relationship between religion and democracy by examining the statements of key interpreters of American democracy, with an emphasis on the 20th century. First, we’ll investigate the relative independence of democracy and religion, focusing on philosophers who emphasize American democracy as tradition in its own right. Second, we’ll consider “Civil Religion in America,” focusing on sociologists and historians who suggest the dependence of the democratic on the quasi-religious. Third, we’ll examine the relative interdependence of American democracy and religious traditions by turning to statements made by influential religious and political leaders and activists who provide interpretations of American democracy’s ideals during periods of major political and social change.
Instructor(s): Derek Buyan Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): AMER 25563, PBPL 25563, CRES 25563

RLST 25704. Environmental Justice in Chicago. 100 Units.
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.
Instructor(s): Sarah Fredericks Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): AMER 25704, KNOW 25704, ENST 25704, PBPL 25704, CHST 25704

RLST 25705. The Bible and Ecology. 100 Units.
In 2010, HarperCollins published The Green Bible, which claims to help readers “understand the Bible’s powerful message for the earth.” What precisely is the Bible’s “message for the earth”? Does the Bible even contain one unified message about the relationship between God, human beings, and the natural world? For many, the question of “what the Bible says” about the environment has become urgent in the midst of the intersecting environmental crises of our day, from global warming to the sixth mass extinction. Nevertheless, contemporary discourse yields no easy answer to this question. The Bible has been used both to support ethics of conservation and to justify exploitation of the earth’s resources. In this course, we will analyze key passages employed in contemporary discourse about the Bible and the environment (e.g., Gen 1-3; Ps 148; Rom 8; 5 Pet 3) from a historical-critical perspective, while also investigating how these texts are being invoked today in support of various agendas. Along the way, we will discover and interrogate the profound influence of biblical cosmologies, anthropologies, and eschatologies in shaping attitudes towards the environment.
Instructor(s): Christine Trotter Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): ENST 25715

RLST 25800. Black Ownership of Wealth: A Theological Consideration. 100 Units.
Since Africans were brought to the Virginia Colony (August 1619), throughout slavery and segregation until today, black Americans (men and women) have always owned wealth. They have always had human agency. These black families accumulated wealth and offered a concurrent narrative and framing from the mainstream understanding of black Americans as victims. Who are these black families who remain mainly invisible from the dominant black story? What is material, financial wealth? Who has it? And how did they get it?
Instructor(s): Dwight Hopkins Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): AMER 25800, THEO 45800, CRES 23211

RLST 25806. The Political Theologies of Zionism. 100 Units.
The relationship between nationalism and religion has throughout history been a stormy one, often characterized by antagonisms and antipathy. In this course we will examine from various aspects the complex nexus of these two sources of repeated ideological and political dispute within Judaism, and more specifically within Zionism as its political manifestation. Zionism has mostly been considered a secular project, yet recently, Zionist theory is scrutinized to identify and unearth its supposedly hidden theological origins. In nowadays Israel, a rise in religious identification alongside an increasing religionization of the political discourse calls for the consideration of new theo-political models of Zionism applicable in a post-secular environment. The aim of this course is to explore this complex intertwining of politics and religion in Israel from both historical and contemporary perspectives. The first part of the course will outline the theoretical foundation of post-secular and political-theological discourses. The second part will address the explicit and implicit political theologies of Zionism. The third part will outline contemporary aspects of political-theological thought in Israel, and their actual appearance in the political sphere.
Instructor(s): David Barak-Gorodetsky Terms Offered: Winter
In this course we will study the history of political philosophy in the medieval Islamic world. We begin by discussing the transmission of Greek philosophy into Arabic-Islamic culture, the debates that ensued over the value of philosophy versus prophecy, and the issue of esoteric writing. These preliminary topics provide necessary background and context for studying the tradition of political philosophy that developed under Islam and Judaism during the Middle Ages. Then, for the rest of the semester, students analyze key works by Muslim and Jewish thinkers who navigated the relationships between religion, politics, and philosophy. Along the way we discuss a number of major themes and topics, including (but not limited to) approaches to divine law, the figure of the philosopher-prophet, logic and language, scriptural interpretation, the place of the philosopher in society, and the nature of human perfection.

Instructor(s): Yonatan Shemesh
Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 28809, MDVL 25809

RLST 25809. Islamic and Jewish Political Philosophy. 100 Units.

This course will survey central features of the Buddhist traditions in South, Central, and East Asia, over its roughly 2500-year history. Attention will be paid to the variety of disciplinary orientations (historical, philological, anthropological, sociological, economic, archaeological, philosophical) that may be taken to illuminate various aspects of the traditions. Consideration will also be given to the globalization of Buddhism since the late nineteenth century, and the concurrent rise of distinctive Buddhist responses to modernity and the modern/academic study of Buddhism.

Instructor(s): Christian Wedemeyer
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 26101, SALC 26102

RLST 25915. Messianism in Modern Jewish Thought. 100 Units.

The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has described modernity as the period of the world’s disenchantment, when God absconded and religion was either rationalized or reduced to the category of superstition. Ironically, this very disenchantment might help to explain the persistence of the concept of the messianic in even the most secular branches of modern European thought. One of Judaism’s most powerful and elastic concepts, the notion of the messiah saw a variety of radically different interpretations between the 17th and 20th centuries. This course will consider the range of modern interpretations of the messiah, taking as its concrete starting point the Sabbatian Heresy of the 17th century and concluding with Derrida’s philosophical development of the concept of the messianic as pure interruption. It will also include consideration of messianic theology and religious Zionism in the 20th Century. The course’s aim is to use messianism as a focal point around which to consider the dynamic relationship between philosophy and Judaism in modernity. This course will expose the mutual influences of these two forces, illustrating both how Enlightenment conceptions of progress helped to create the notion of “messianism” understood as an abstract idea, and how the modern/post-modern philosophical conception of the “messianic” as a force that interrupts time is dependent upon historical studies of the messianic dimension of traditional Judaism.

Instructor(s): Sarah Hammerschlag
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): HIJD 35915, DVPR 35915

RLST 26010. Buddhism. 100 Units.

This course will consider the transmission of Greek philosophy into Arabic-Islamic culture, the debates that ensued over the value of philosophy versus prophecy, and the issue of esoteric writing. These preliminary topics provide necessary background and context for studying the tradition of political philosophy that developed under Islam and Judaism during the Middle Ages. Then, for the rest of the semester, students analyze key works by Muslim and Jewish thinkers who navigated the relationships between religion, politics, and philosophy. Along the way we discuss a number of major themes and topics, including (but not limited to) approaches to divine law, the figure of the philosopher-prophet, logic and language, scriptural interpretation, the place of the philosopher in society, and the nature of human perfection.

Instructor(s): Matthew Kapstein
Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 25806, HIJD 35806, THEO 35806, JWSC 27940

RLST 26101. Buddhism. 100 Units.

In this course we will study the history of political philosophy in the medieval Islamic world. We begin by discussing the transmission of Greek philosophy into Arabic-Islamic culture, the debates that ensued over the value of philosophy versus prophecy, and the issue of esoteric writing. These preliminary topics provide necessary background and context for studying the tradition of political philosophy that developed under Islam and Judaism during the Middle Ages. Then, for the rest of the semester, students analyze key works by Muslim and Jewish thinkers who navigated the relationships between religion, politics, and philosophy. Along the way we discuss a number of major themes and topics, including (but not limited to) approaches to divine law, the figure of the philosopher-prophet, logic and language, scriptural interpretation, the place of the philosopher in society, and the nature of human perfection.

Instructor(s): Yonatan Shemesh
Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 28809, MDVL 25809

RLST 26106. Art and Religion in South Asia. 100 Units.

This course is an introduction to religion and art in South Asia (comprised of the modern nation states of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka). The course material covers Buddhist, Jain, Hindu, and Islamic architecture, sculpture, painting, and performing arts. The course examines the ways in which art is related to myth and symbol, religious values and goals, ritual, religious experience, and social and political realities.

Instructor(s): Sarah Pierce Taylor
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 26160

RLST 26250. Buddhist Poetry in India. 100 Units.

The substantial Buddhist contribution to Indian poetry is of interest for what it teaches us of both Buddhism and the broad development of Indian literature. The present course will focus upon three phases in this history, with attention to what changes of language and literary genre tell us of the transformations of Indian religious culture from the last centuries B.C.E. to about the year 1000. Readings (all in translation) will include the Therīgāthā, a collection of verses written in Pali and the most ancient Indian example of women's literature, selections from the Vedānta Sūtras, the philosophical formulation of many of the themes of the Upaniṣads, and selections from the Mahābhārata, a narrative of the great Sanskrit epics. The course will consider the evolution of different poetic forms and the place of the poet in contemporary life. By the end of the course students should be able to appreciate the distinctive contribution of Buddhist poetry to the development of Indian literature.

Instructor(s): Richard Holloway
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 26101, SALC 26102

RLST 26265. Comparative Study of Humanistic Buddhism and Engaged Buddhism. 100 Units.

This course is designed for students who would like to explore further social philosophy and implication of Humanistic Buddhism and Engaged Buddhism, the two mainstreams of Buddhist development in modern world. We first examine historical background for the arising of Humanistic Buddhism from Mahayana tradition in China and Buddhist revivalism or Protestant Buddhism, the forerunner of Engaged Buddhism in Sri Lanka.
almost simultaneously at the beginning of 20th century, and their subsequent developments respectively. Having then briefly reviewed some prominent figures such as Taixu (1898-1947), Dhammapala (1864-1933), and their major advocates, we undertake thorough comparative studies of the two Buddhisms by exploring several topics, including modern education and science, environment and ecology, human rights and feminism, politics and violence, suffering and happiness, and others. While discussing these topics, we also examine how Buddhism has transformed itself from the religion of other world to that of this world, how Buddhists have reinterpreted Buddhism in order to fit the idea and practice of modernity, an how new cultures have thus been recreated to cater for the needs of contemporary life both in the East and West. Toward the end of the quarter, discussion may be extended to compare other new religious movements so that students may have a broader vision on religions and their social advocates in contemporary world.  
Instructor(s): Yu Xue  Terms Offered: Autumn  
Prerequisite(s): Some knowledge on the general history and basic philosophy of Buddhism.  
Note(s): This course meets the HS or SCSR Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.  
Equivalent Course(s): HREL 36265, SALC 26265, SALC 36265  
RLST 26311. Islam and Biomedicine. 100 Units.  
This course deals with the transformations and conundrums that biomedical practice has brought about in Muslim-majority societies, with particular attention to Islamic law, policy, gender, and everyday life. We will read texts from anthropology, history and Islamic bioethics on a variety of biomedical topics.  
Instructor(s): Elham Mireshghi  Terms Offered: Spring  
Prerequisite(s): Consent to enroll. Applicants should submit one or two paragraphs explaining their interest in the course and any prior preparation.  
Equivalent Course(s): AASR 33900, ISLM 33900  
RLST 26316. Medical Innovation and Religious Reform in Early Modernity. 100 Units.  
Through a survey of innovative medical authorities and religious reformers, students will investigate the co-constitution of two bodies of knowledge at a historical moment (the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) when questions of authority and epistemology are in considerable flux. Often construed as a period haunted by recurrent outbreaks of plague and the oppression of religious superstition, early modernity has long been implicated in the "conflict thesis"-a hugely influential argument that portrays the centuries-long relationship between religion and science/medicine as an inherently adversarial one. This course shall scrutinize that argument through a discussion of seemingly contradictory examples where reformers that touted the all-encompassing reach of divine providence also promoted intricate public health infrastructures; where the Vatican increasingly relied on university-trained physicians to validate saints and their miracles; where theologians were viewed as authorities on Galen and responsible for medical breakthroughs; and where medicine and metaphysics were considered complementary pursuits. Ultimately, students will unveil a portrait of the not of conflict, but of a symbiotic relationship between religion and medicine.  
Instructor(s): Mark Lambert  Terms Offered: Spring  
Equivalent Course(s): CCTS 21013, HLTH 26316, HIST 24924  
RLST 26333. Comparative Trinitarianisms. 100 Units.  
This course will be an experiment in juxtaposition. The concept is no more and no less than trying to read in tandem a number of religious and philosophical writings from various corners of world culture which focus on some form of triplcity, triads, triinities, including the Three Hypostases of Neoplatonism, the Christian Trinity, the Hindu Trimurti, the Daoist triad of vitality/energy/spirit, the inter-nested triadic structures of Yang Xiong’s Taixuanjing and those of the Hegelian system, the Tiantai Three Truths and its reconfiguration of the Buddhist trikaya, triple gem and other triads, and perhaps others. We will enter into this experiment without any preconceived thesis about what we will find when these things are looked at all together, working together to develop ad hoc hypotheses about how these triads function, why they are so prevalent, what each one can teach us about all the others and vice versa. It is a genuine experiment in that we do not know what will happen when these elements are combined, and we adopt an attitude of reverent expectation and a willingness to follow it wherever it may lead.  
Instructor(s): Brook Ziporyn  Terms Offered: Spring  
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 26333, GLST 26333, DVPR 46333, HREL 46333, EALC 46333  
RLST 26401. Milton and Blake: Conceptions of the Christian Epic. 100 Units.  
Milton wrote Paradise Lost to capture in epic form the essence of Christianity; Blake wrote Jerusalem to correct Milton’s mistakes. We’ll read them together to get in on the debate.  
Instructor(s): Richard Rosengarten  Terms Offered: Winter  
Equivalent Course(s): FNDL 25307, ENGL 26411, RLVC 36401, ENGL 36401  
RLST 26670. Religious Autobiographies. 100 Units.  
The decision of a person to present in written form the story of her or his life - and through that, what they take to be their selfhood - has spawned a literary tradition with an abiding and distinctive presence in religion. This course explores the phenomena of specifically religious autobiography as variations on the form of "confession," tracing its roots in early Christianity (Paul and Augustine), and juxtaposing these expressions with readings in a range of authors who adapt the classic articulations of "confession" to their specific selves and contexts: examples will include Teresa of Avila’s “mystical” confession, the “confession” of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Frederick Douglass’ “(anti) slave religion,” Mahatma Gandhi’s “non-violent resistance,” and Maggie Nelson’s
"transition". The course will conclude by studying the adoption of the confessional mode in the graphic novel, which introduces explicitly visual representations of selfhood and carries forward the genre's general spirit of exceptionalism and overt non-conformity.

Instructor(s): Richard Rosengarten
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): SIGN 26067, CMLT 26670

RLST 27001. History of Criticism: Plato to Hume. 100 Units.

The first part of a sequence on the history of literary theory, aesthetics, and hermeneutics, this course surveys major statements by ancient Greek, Christian, and selected Jewish writers on topics such as: the figure of the poet and the role of poetics as a form of knowledge; literal and allegorical reading, especially in relation to the designation and elucidation of sacred texts; the roles of rhetoric and philosophy within interpretation; and, theories of language and the (eventual) emergence of the category of the vernacular.

Instructor(s): Richard Rosengarten
Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course meets the LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students. Required for all PhD students taking the RLVC 1 qualifying examination.
Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 47101, RLVC 47100

RLST 27075. The Latinx Religious Experience in the US. 100 Units.

This course examines the diverse nature of Latinx religion, from its roots to present day forms, within the social and political context of the United States. The main goal of this class is to understand the distinctiveness of Latinx culture, its challenges, and possibilities; and to discern the role religion has in the Latinx experience. In order to do so, this course is structured around three central themes: 1) What Is the Latinx Experience? 2) Latinx Religion as Lived Experience, and 3) Latinx Theology, Ethics, and Politics. The first section gives us the lay of the land, relying on biographical narratives and historical sources to understand what the Latinx experience is all about. The second section turns to sociological and ethnographic material to study the diversity of Latinx religion and the multiple functions of faith and devotion in the Latinx community. The third section turns to the constructive work of scholars who study the distinct contributions of the Latinx experience to theological reflection, ethical discernment, and political action.

Instructor(s): Raul Zegarra
Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): Students with Spanish reading proficiency will have the opportunity to apply their skills.
Equivalent Course(s): AMER 27075, LACS 27075, SOCI 20539, CRES 27075, ANTH 23326

RLST 27213. Between Polemics and Encounter: "Jews" and "Christians" in Rome and Sasanian Persia. 100 Units.

In recent decades, scholars of biblical and early Christian literature have examined the various ways literary sources constructed the relationship between "Jews" and "Christians" in Late Antiquity. These resources prove challenging for reconstructing the situation on the ground. This course will introduce students to the various models scholars have advanced for making sense of the evidence and debated categories such as "Jewish-Christianity." Against this backdrop, students will undertake a close reading of a select, representative examples to examine the development of adversus Iudaeos ("against the Jews") literature. The readings will focus our attention on evidence from Greek- and Syriac-speaking Christians living within the multilingual and religiously diverse regions at the boundary of the Roman and Sasanian Persian Empires. Familiar sources such as the Pauline epistles, Apostolic Fathers, and John Chrysostom will be accompanied by readings from the pseudo-Clementine literature, the Didascalia Apostolorum, poetry, and Persian Martyr Acts. We will explore new discoveries within Syriac studies are currently reshaping our approaches to traditional questions.

Instructor(s): Erin Galgay Walsh
Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): PQ: None; those with skills in Greek and Syriac will have the opportunity to apply them.
Equivalent Course(s): HIJD 37213, HCHR 37213, NEHC 27213, CLCV 34021, BIBL 37213, CLAS 34021, NEHC 37213, JWSC 27213

RLST 27305. Haj to Utopia: Race, Religion, and Revolution in South Asian America. 100 Units.

With the election of Kamala Harris to the office of Vice President in the 2020 election, it would appear that Americans of South Asian descent find themselves nearer than ever to the center of U.S. political power. But what if one narrated the history of South Asian Americans not according to their inevitable embrace of imperialist politics, economic and cultural capital, but as fraught subjects of a settler colonial regime? What are the alternative futures, of life, love, and liberation, imagined by transnational revolutionaries? How does the politics of immigrant identity operate at the nexus of race and caste? How does religion index race in the eyes of the surveillance state? How do South Asian histories of migration prefigure the mass displacements, border enforcements, and unequal labor conditions that have defined the politics of globalization in the 21st century?

Instructor(s): Anand Venkatkrishnan
Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): GLST 27305, AMER 27305, CRES 27305, SALC 27305

RLST 27391. Pirates, Saints, and Rebels: Religions of the Indian Ocean. 100 Units.

In this course we will set sail with pirates, saints, slaves, merchants, rebels, missionaries, and deities of the wind and water to explore the transnational religious networks of the Indian Ocean. Orienting ourselves around moments of encounter, translation, circulation, and exchange between Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and indigenous traditions will allow us to reassess how traveling religious texts, objects, ideas, and the people who carried them interact between geographical areas typically considered in isolation. Beginning with late antiquity and the medieval period, we will investigate how religious networks were formed and
mobilized between the coastal regions of South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern and Southern Africa, continuing through the age of exploration and imperial expansion to the present day. We will analyze the relationship between religion and colonial power, and examine how colonial technologies of travel and communication both enabled the expansion of empire and provided the tools for grassroots resistance.

Instructor(s): Francesca Chubb-Confer Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): GLST 27391, SALC 27391

RLST 27490. Art as Buddhism in Ancient India: Explorations in the Stupa of Amaravati and Other Monuments. 100 Units.

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 (mahāchaitya) 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). If the course is taught in person, depending on the Covid situation in Spring 2022, then it is likely to be on a speeded up twice per week basis over the first half of the quarter.

Instructor(s): Jaś Elsner Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): HREL 37490, ARTH 27490, RLVC 37490, ARTH 37490, SALC 37490, SALC 27490

RLST 27713. Israel and American Jewry: Peoplehood, Religion, and Politics. 100 Units.

Israel and North America currently constitute the two leading centers of Jewish demography, identity and existence. Broadly speaking, they represent the two major Jewish responses to modernity - Zionism as a form of modern nationalism on the one hand, and integration into a liberal western society and body politic on the other. Their relations respond to this initial divide, while at the same time trying to coalesce a collective notion of Jewish peoplehood, based on culture, identity and a sense of a shared history and fate. The aim of this course is to learn more about the emergence of these two centers, and then explore the past, present and future of their relations. In recent years, the issue of religion has emerged as a crucial factor in Israel-Diaspora relations, especially in relation to the Jewish center in North America. The historical development of progressive Jewish strands in the United States, together with the fundamental changes in the religious makeup of Jewish society and the perception of the political role of religion in the state of Israel, have led to tension and strife regarding such issues as religious praxis, social identity and the public sphere. Religion with therefore be the main theme through which the relations will be explored, both historically and in relation to current affairs and issues.

Instructor(s): David Barak-Gorodetsky Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 26713, AMER 27713, GLST 27713

RLST 27721. Relating Race and Religion: Critical Concepts of Blackness and Jewishness. 100 Units.

This course examines Blackness and Jewishness in order to untangle the intersections of race and religion as they are represented in political polemic, fiction, memoir and philosophy in France and the United States from the 1960s to the present. Founded on ideals of universalism, pluralism and secularism, France and the United States are fraught with contradictions when it comes to race and religion. You will critique these founding ideals in order to expose their contradictions, and in the process seek new ways to articulate how religion and race, along with intersecting categories such as gender and sexuality, can become tools of political resistance. Readings include works by thinkers such as Césaire, Fanon, Memmi, Levinas and Foucault, along with literary classics by Nella Larsen and Sarah Kofman, and contemporary critical essays by Judith Butler, Christina Sharpe and Talal Asad. Throughout this course, you will examine how the concepts of race and religion are key components of the political, philosophical and ethical projects of these authors, and develop historical and conceptual perspective on the origins and current forms of debates that trouble the boundaries between personal and political.

Instructor(s): Kirsten Collins Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 27721, GNSE 27721, CRES 27721, FREN 27721, JWS27721, ANTH 23916, GLST 27721

RLST 28219. Understanding Buddhism Through Meditation. 100 Units.

This course studies succinct theories and systematic practices of Buddhist meditation based on both Theravada and Mahayana texts and traditions; it is divided into 4 parts: 1. Theories and practices of meditation in Pali texts and Theravada tradition - we examine idea and practice of Samadha and Vipassana mainly based on the Satipathana Sutta and Visuddhimagga; 2. Chinese Texts and Zen Buddhism -The Great Concentration and Contemplation, and the Platform Sutra, two of the most important texts in Chinese Buddhism will be read and discussed; 3. Scientific studies and understanding of Buddhist meditation, and dialogue between Buddhist meditation and science - we read and discuss research papers and experimental reports on meditation practice by modern scholars through neuroscience and psychotherapy in the West. A special attention is paid to the discussion on the Western derivatives of Buddhist meditation for different purposes other than the final enlightenment of Buddhism, and on arising of variety of meditation practices such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, Loving-Kindness Meditation, Cognitively-Based Compassion Training, Compassion Cultivation Training; and 4. Meditation session - the course instructor or meditation masters will provide instructions for students to practice meditation based on theories and methods discussed in the class and through readings.
RLST 28308. Introduction to Byzantine Art. 100 Units.
In this course we will explore works of art and architecture as primary sources on the civilization of Byzantium. Through the close investigation of artifacts of different media and techniques, students will gain insight into the artistic production of the Byzantine Empire from its beginnings in the fourth century C.E. to the Ottoman conquest in 1453. We will employ different methodological approaches and scholarly resources that are relevant for the fruitful investigation of artifacts in their respective cultural setting. In order to fully assess the pivotal importance of the visual arts in Byzantine culture, we will address a wide array of topics, including art and ritual, patronage, the interrelation of art and text, the classical heritage, art and theology, Iconoclasm, etc.
Instructor(s): K. Krause Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): For nonmajors, this course meets the arts, music, drama general education requirements.
Equivalent Course(s): ARTH 14006, MDVL 14006

RLST 28350. Chan and Zen Buddhism. 100 Units.
An overview of the development of Chan and Zen Buddhism in China and Japan, focusing on the philosophical and doctrinal underpinnings of distinctive Chan and Zen practices and rhetorics (including basic Buddhist premises concerning impermanence and non-self and specifically Mahāyāna ideas such as Emptiness, Two Truths and Buddha-nature) as they morph through the stages of early proto-Chan, East Mountain Chan, the Northern School/Southern School split, the development of "Recorded Sayings" and gong-an (kōan) literatures, and the Linji (Rinzai) and Caodong (Sōtō) schools.
Instructor(s): Brook Ziporyn Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 28350, DVPR 38350, HREL 38350

RLST 28447. It's the End of the World as We Know It: Apocalyptic Literature and Millenarian Movements. 100 Units.
This course takes a cross-cultural approach to the study of texts and movements traditionally deemed "apocalyptic" or "Millenarian." We will focus in particular on the historical and cultural circumstances in which these texts and movements were produced. We will cover a wide range of cultural and political contexts, including Roman-occupied Judea during the first century CE, the Xhosaland of southern Africa in the mid 19th century, and the rise of QAnon in the 21st century United States. Our goals will be to think through various theories on why and how these texts and movements arose, to examine their internal logic and organization (especially focusing on their theology), and analyze the aftermath of failed expectations.
Instructor(s): Marshall Cunningham Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 25219, GLST 28447, CMLT 28447, JWSC 28447

RLST 28604. Tragedy: Event and Genre. 100 Units.
A study of the idea tragedy as event that, in its historical and its literary uses, attempts to index and to understand something gone awry in the relation of the human with the divine. We'll look at tragic texts and their roles in civic life in ancient Greece, Renaissance England, and modern Europe, as well as at events that have been described as tragic, such as the 1755 Lisbon earthquake. As its coda, the course will consider formulations of the powers and limits of tragedy and the tragic per Nietzsche, Weil, and Adorno.
Instructor(s): Richard Rosengarten Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): RLVC 38604

RLST 28704. The Veneration of Icons in Byzantium: History, Theory, and Practice. 100 Units.
In order to appreciate the pivotal religious significance icons had in Byzantium for private devotion, in the liturgy, in civic ritual, and in military campaigns, we will survey the visual evidence along with a vast array of written sources. We will explore the origins of the Christian cult of icons in the Early Byzantine period and its roots in the Greco-Roman world of paganism. Through the close analysis of icons executed over the centuries in different artistic techniques, we will examine matters of iconography, style and aesthetics. We will also have a close look at image theory, as developed by Byzantine theologians and codified in the era of Iconoclasm.
Instructor(s): Karin Krause Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): This is a graduate course but advanced undergraduate students may enroll in exceptional cases (instructor's consent required).
Note(s): Typically, meetings will consist of both lecture and interactive discussion sections. Students are expected to prepare the mandatory readings for each week, which serve as a basis for an informed, and thus productive, classroom discussion.
Equivalent Course(s): RLVC 44004, MDVL 28704, ARTH 44014, ARTH 24014, HCHR 44004

RLST 28990. Gaming Religion. 100 Units.
Video games commonly feature religious ideas, imagery, emotions, and practices. In this course, we will take a hands-on, experimental approach to the study of religion in video games. We will play various games individually and in groups, and reflect on the design and gameplay in conversation with readings in theory.
Instructor(s): Alireza Doostdar Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 23920
RLST 28991. The Prophet Q. 100 Units.
In the wake of the January 6th 2021 storming of the United States Capitol, the QAnon phenomenon has received sustained global attention as news and government agencies scramble to understand this online movement’s role in the attack, the threat it continues to pose, and why it is that one out of every six Americans believes that former President Trump is secretly battling an elite group of politicians, media moguls, and academics who are deeply involved in child sex trafficking and satanic sacrifice. This course will investigate the phenomenon of QAnon through the lens of New Religious Movements (NRMs)-seeking to understand the complex interplay of factors that incites people to become immersed in these groups. Using examples from American New Religious Movements of the 20th century such as Scientology, the Rajneesh movement, and Jonestown, we will delve into the history of these groups in order to examine the motivations that drive individuals into these “fringe” religious movements. In the process, we will interrogate the usefulness of such labels as “religion” and “cult” and ultimately hope to better understand how power, race, gender, and practices of dissimulation play active roles in both these new religious movements and within QAnon.
Instructor(s): Marielle Harrison Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 24711, SOCI 20540, AMER 28991

RLST 29000. The American Culture Wars. 100 Units.
Should we rename institutions named for people who advocated—or accepted—white supremacy? Should the religious views of judges be subject to public scrutiny? Should religious institutions be exempt from certain public health regulations? These questions are only the latest battlefields in the “culture wars,” the long-running conversation—or, more often, shouting match—about what the United States ought to stand for and how Americans ought to live. This course will explore how Americans have wrestled with questions of morality and national identity since the country’s founding. It will put contemporary struggles in context by examining past cultural conflicts. Potential topics include: the establishment and disestablishment of religion in the early United States; debates over how many and what kind of immigrants to allow into the country; and campaigns to control or prohibit dangerous substances, especially alcohol.
Instructor(s): Will Schultz Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 29000, HIST 27715, AMER 29000, CRES 27000

RLST 29050. Religion, Race, and Gender in the (Un)Making of American Mass Incarceration. 100 Units.
The United States has the largest population of incarcerated people in the world; it imprisons a greater percentage of its citizens than any other country. Scholars have offered a number of explanations for the phenomenon of mass incarceration, from theories about the war on drugs, the prison industrial complex, and “the new Jim Crow.” In this course we will interrogate these prevailing theories with an eye to three crucial themes: race, gender, and religion. We will trace the ways these factors are intertwined with the billion-dollar correctional industry in the United States, beginning with the racist, Christian origins of the American legal system and the underlying assumptions about our central categories in criminology and policing protocols.
We will then proceed through sentencing, the experience of incarceration, and post-release rehabilitation and parole. Along the way we will consider, inter alia, the criminalization of blackness; the school to prison pipeline; discourses on mercy and penitence in judge and jury decisions; how prison policies on acceptable religious officiants and types of “scripture” produce local definitions of religion; the gendered divisions of prison labor; the gendering and sexualizing of inmates’ bodies; the role of faith-based prisons and prison ministries in rehabilitation programs and narratives; and the religious nature of radical Black feminist abolition activism.
Instructor(s): Emily Crews Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 29050, SSAD 29050, SOCI 20543, HIST 28005, ANTH 25219, HMRT 29051, CRES 29050, AMER 29050

RLST 29109. Race and the Bible. 100 Units.
The course will cover race in the Bible, race in the ancient world of the Bible, American use of the Bible on race, and the critique of race as a formative and constructed concept.
Instructor(s): Erin Galgay Walsh and Simeon Chavel Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): BIBL 31000 (Introduction to the Hebrew Bible), BIBL 32500 (Introduction to the New Testament)
Note(s): JWSC majors/minors can petition to count this course toward their degree requirement.
Equivalent Course(s): HIJD 49999, HCHR 49999, BIBL 49999, NEHC 29989, CRES 27000, NEHC 49989

RLST 29700. Reading/Research: Rlst. 100 Units.
Terms Offered: TBD
Prerequisite(s): Consent of faculty supervisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies.
Note(s): Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form.

RLST 29800. BA Paper Seminar I. 100 Units.
This class meets weekly to provide guidance for planning, researching, and writing the BA paper. Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Consent of faculty supervisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies.
Note(s): RLST 29800 and 29900 form a two-quarter sequence that is required of fourth-year students who are majoring in Religious Studies. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form.
RLST 29900. BA Paper II. 100 Units.
This class meets weekly to assist students in the preparation of drafts of their BA paper, which are formally presented and critiqued.
Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): RLST 29800 and 29900 form a two-quarter sequence that is required of fourth-year students who are majoring in Religious Studies. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form.