Religious Studies

Department Website: https://divinity.uchicago.edu/academics/undergraduate-program-religious-studies (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 Seminar 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/theschool/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 Seminar 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 Seminar 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>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>Third-year Theories/Methods seminar</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven additional courses in Religious Studies</td>
<td>700</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Units</strong></td>
<td><strong>1100</strong></td>
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**Research Track**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Units</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Introductory-level (“Gateway”) course</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 29800 BA Paper Seminar I</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 29900 BA Paper Seminar II</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Units</strong></td>
<td><strong>1300</strong></td>
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**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:

RLST 10100 Introduction to Religious Studies 100
RLST 11004 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible 100
RLST 21801 Religion and Society in the Middle Ages 100
RLST 23900 Buddhist Thought in India and Tibet 100
RLST 22505 Histories of Japanese Religion 100
RLST 26800 The Mahabharata in English Translation 100

Total Units 600

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, BIBL 31000, NEHC 20504, NEHC 30504, HIJD 31004

RLST 11030. Introduction to the Qur'an. 100 Units.
The Qur'an's historical setting, thematic and literary features, major biblical figures, and foundational narratives of the Quran. Explorations of medieval exegetical literature on the Quran and its reception in the early (8th-10th century CE) and medieval periods (11th - 15th century CE) will feature heavily in this course. Readings consist primarily of English translations of the Quran alongside a running commentary, as well as secondary articles.
Instructor(s): Yousef Casewit Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): This course meets the HS or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students. This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 30030, NEHC 30030, MDVL 10030

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 meets the HS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students. This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 32500, FNDL 28202, MDVL 12500

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): Izzet Coban

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): ISLM 30100, NELC 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): Izzet Coban

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): Izzet Coban

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): HIST 20111, CRES 20111, GNSE 20111

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

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): Paul Walker

Terms Offered: Autumn. This course will not be offered for the 2021-2022 academic year.

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

Equivalent Course(s): HIST 15611, MDVL 20201, HIST 35621, NEHC 30201, NEHC 20201, ISLM 30201

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, Turkic and Persian expression; the evolution of religious and legal scholarship and devotional life; transformations in the intellectual and philosophical traditions; the emergence of Shi’i states (Buyids and Fatimids); the Crusades and Mongol conquests; the Mamluks and Timurids, and the ‘gunpowder empires’ of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Moghuls; the dynamics of gender and class relations; etc. This class partially fulfills the requirement for MA students in CMES, as well as for NELC majors and PhD students.
Instructor(s): Franklin Lewis Terms Offered: Winter. This course will not be offered for the 2021-2022 academic year.
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): HIST 15612, ISLM 30202, HIST 35622, NEHC 30202, MDVL 20202, NEHC 20202

**RLST 20203. Islamic 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): Orit Bashkin Terms Offered: Spring. This course will not be offered for the 2021-2022 academic year.
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): HIST 35623, HIST 15613, NEHC 30203, NEHC 20203, ISLM 30203

**RLST 20230. Jerusalem: The "Holy" City. 100 Units.**

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

Instructor(s): Marshall Cunningham Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 20230, JWSC 21230, HIST 26007

**RLST 20400. The History of Sunnism. 100 Units.**

This course surveys primary and secondary scholarship to answer the deceptively simple questions of what Sunnism is, when it began, and how it developed. We will read primary sources from the fields of history, theology, and hadith studies, and compare these texts with influential narratives of Sunni history in secondary scholarship

Instructor(s): Ahmed El Shamsy Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): 3 years of Arabic
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 39400, NEHC 39400, NEHC 29400

**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 sequence 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): MDVL 20601, NEHC 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, HIST 25615, MDVL 20602, NEHC 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): HIST 25616, SOSC 22200, NEHC 20603

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 Thailand 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): HREL 34441, SALC 24441, SALC 34441

RLST 20505. Pagans and Christians: Greek Background to Early Christianity. 100 Units.
This course will examine some of the ancient Greek roots of early Christianity. We will focus on affinities between Christianity and the classical tradition as well as ways in which the Christian faith may be considered radically different from it. Some of the more important issues that we will analyze are: "The spell of Homer." How the Homeric poems exerted immeasurable influence on the religious attitudes and practices of the Greeks. The theme of creation in Greek and Roman authors such as Hesiod and Ovid. The Orphic account of human origins. The early Christian theme of Christ as Creator/Savior. Greek, specifically Homeric conceptions of the afterlife. The response to the Homeric orientation in the form of the great mystery cults of Demeter, Dionysus, and Orpheus. The views of the philosophers (esp. Plato) of the immortality of the soul compared with the New Testament conception of resurrection of the body. Ancient Greek conceptions of sacrifice and the crucifixion of Christ as archetypal sacrifice. The attempted synthesis of Jewish and Greek philosophical thought by Philo of Alexandria and its importance for early Christianity.
Instructor(s): David Martínez Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 20505, CLCV 26216

RLST 20506. Martin Buber's Conception of Religion and Judaism. 100 Units.
Martin Buber was a major philosopher of religion and Judaism. His contributions range from conceptual studies, poetic theology (I and Thou), studies on general and Jewish religiosity (especially Hasidism), and studies in the Bible. This course will focus on his book 'I and Thou', selected writings from 'Eclipse of God' and 'Moses'; and his correspondence with F. Rosenzweig on religious commandments. The course will include lectures and close readings of primary sources in translation. Students will be expected to write several short prompt papers and a final essay.
Instructor(s): Michael Fishbane Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course meets the H5 or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): HIJD 40506, DVPR 40506, HREL 40506

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.
Note(s): This course meets the H5 or LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 43801

RLST 20840. Radical Islamic Pieties: 1200 to 1600. 100 Units.
Some knowledge of primary languages (i.e., Arabic, French, German, Greek, Latin, Persian, Spanish, Turkish) helpful. This course examines responses to the Mongol destruction of the Abbasid caliphate in 1258 and the background to formation of regional Muslim empires. Topics include the opening of confessional boundaries; Ibn Arabi, Ibn Taymiyya, and Ibn Khaldun; the development of alternative spiritualities, mysticism, and messianism in the fifteenth century; and transconfessionalism, antinomianism, and the articulation of sacramal sovereignties in the sixteenth century. All work in English. This course is offered in alternate years.
Instructor(s): Cornell Fleischer Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): Consent of instructor  
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 20840, ISLM 30840, NEHC 20840, HIST 35901, NEHC 30840, HIST 25901

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): HCHR 31410, HIST 37717, AMER 31410, AMER 21410, HIST 27717, RAME 31410

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  
Note(s): This course meets the HS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.  
Equivalent Course(s): AMER 21430, HIST 27716, AMER 40200, HIST 37716, HCHR 40200, 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.  
Note(s): This course meets the HS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.  
Equivalent Course(s): GREK 25700, GREK 35700, BIBL 47500

RLST 22040. Religion in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Peacemaking. 100 Units.
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is arguably the most intractable political conflict at present. The conflict has been subjected to various historiographies and narrative explorations, offering often-competing explanations in an attempt to understand its origin and evolution, and also the failure of its resolution. This course explores the role of religion in the historical development of the conflict and in its contemporary manifestation, while at the same time probing the potential role of religion in the resolution of the conflict and outlining the history of attempts for religious peace-making in Israel/Palestine. Combining concrete historical analysis and intellectual history, the course will focus on the Jewish, Muslim and Christian views of the conflict and its potential resolution, relating to such themes as covenant, messianism, political theology, the sanctity of the land and the role of Jerusalem. These concepts and others will be explored against the backdrop of the concrete history of the conflict, focusing initially on the formative period of 1897-1948, pivoting to the 1967 war and its aftermath and concluding with the religionization of politics in recent decades and its far-reaching consequences.
Instructor(s): David Barak-Gorodetsky  
Terms Offered: Spring  
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 24040

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
Instructor(s): Brook Ziporyn Terms Offered: Autumn

Buddhism in general, and for whatever transhistorical philosophical and religious valences we care to derive an eye to the historical development of these schools of thought and practice within the context of East Asian the kōan (Ch: gong-an) literature of the Song dynasty, and the essays of Dōgen. This will be done both with contending interpretations and methodologies of later Chan and Zen, including the Platform Sutra of Huineng, syntheses of these ideas in the early Chan movement in medieval China and their various deployments in the passages, focusing on the ideas of Emptiness, Buddha-nature, and Mind-only. Then we will turn to the unique will be begin with an overview of basic Buddhist tenets, and then work through key Mahāyāna ideas and sūtra RLST 22100. Introduction to Zen Buddhism. 100 Units. This course will consist of the close reading and discussion of primary texts (in translation) of the Chan

Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 12003, NEHC 12003, CMLT 12003

Instructor(s): James Robinson David Barak-Gorodetsky Bevin Blaber Terms Offered: Autumn

Instructor(s): Na’ama Rokem Terms Offered: Spring

American Jewish culture.

Instructor(s): Kenneth Moss Jessica Kirzane Bevin Blaber Terms Offered: Winter

Instructor(s): James Robinson David Barak-Gorodetsky Bevin Blaber Terms Offered: Autumn

Note(s): Students who wish to take this course for Civilization Studies credit, must also take Jewish

Instructor(s): Brook Ziporyn Terms Offered: Autumn

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, NEHC 22010, MDVL 12000

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): JWSC 12003, NEHC 12003, CMLT 12003

RLST 22100. Introduction to Zen Buddhism. 100 Units.
This course will consist of the close reading and discussion of primary texts (in translation) of the Chan Buddhism of China and Zen Buddhism of Japan (#1—more commonly known in English by the Japanese name, Zen), supplemented by secondary readings on Zen institutions and cultural influences. As our foundation, we will be begin with an overview of basic Buddhist tenets, and then work through key Mahāyāna ideas and sūtra passages, focusing on the ideas of Emptiness, Buddha-nature, and Mind-only. Then we will turn to the unique syntheses of these ideas in the early Chan movement in medieval China and their various deployments in the containing interpretations and methodologies of later Chan and Zen, including the Platform Sutra of Huineng, the kōan (Ch: gong-an) literature of the Song dynasty, and the essays of Dōgen. This will be done both with an eye to the historical development of these schools of thought and practice within the context of East Asian Buddhism in general, and for whatever transhistorical philosophical and religious valences we care to derive from the texts. All readings will be in English.

Instructor(s): Brook Ziporyn Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. This course meets the HS or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 32100, HREL 32100, EALC 32100, EALC 22100

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): DVPR 32100, HREL 32100, EALC 32100, EALC 22100

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): 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): HIJD 44800, NEHC 44801, NEHC 24801, BIBL 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): This course meets the HS or SCSR Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Undergraduates may enroll themselves only after getting approval from the instructor (cjevans@uchicago.edu).
Equivalent Course(s): AMER 22418, AMER 32418, RAME 32418, HCHR 32418

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 Schulz Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): This course meets the HS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): AMER 35700, AMER 22667, RAME 35700, HCHR 35700

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.
Note(s): This course meets the CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 42780, ISLM 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, kaṃsa, and mokṣa), sectarian traditions such as Vaiṣṇavism, Sāivism, 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: Spring
Note(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 22812
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): AMER 23111, FNDL 25308, CRES 23111, GLST 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
Note(s): This course meets the CS or LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
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 Maupertuis 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
Note(s): This course meets the HS or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
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): CMLT 23823, MDVL 23823

RLST 23880. Villains: Evil in Philosophy, Religion, and Film. 100 Units.
You don’t really understand an antagonist,” screenwriter John Rogers writes, “until you understand why he’s a protagonist in his own version of the world.” This principle holds true of movie villains, but also raises important questions about disagreement, dehumanization, and the diabolical in the real world. Are our enemies truly malicious, or just misunderstood? How does a person become a monster, and how does a person avoid it? Why are some villains so compelling, and what does this say about the good life? Do Hollywood movies enrich or distort how we imagine and respond to real-world evil? Did Thanos do anything wrong? This course combines readings from philosophical classics and religious traditions with comparative analyses of villains in films from 101 Dalmatians (1956) and Jaws (1975) to The Dark Knight (2008) and Black Panther (2018). Students will discuss antagonists’ motivations, evaluate the visions of morality filmmakers are presupposing, and develop more nuanced understandings of ethics and moral psychology. No prior experience in religious studies or film criticism is required.
Instructor(s): Russell Johnson
Terms Offered: Winter

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
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. This course meets the CS or LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): HLTTH 24103, HIIPS 24103, RETH 30600, BIOS 29216, SIGN 26069

RLST 24110. The Ethics of War: Reading Michael Walzer's Just and Unjust Wars. 100 Units.
Questions about war, the taking of human life, the obligations of citizenship, the role of state power, and international justice are among the most pressing topics in ethics and political life. This class will examine these matters through a close reading of Michael Walzer’s Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations, first published in 1977 and now in its 5th edition. Widely considered a classic in the ethics of war, JUW develops a theory for evaluating whether to enter war as well as decisions within war—what are known as the jus ad bellum and the jus in bello. Walzer applies his theory to a number of actual cases, ranging from military interventions to reprisals to terrorism to insurgencies to nuclear policy, all informed by the history of warfare and arguments in the history of Western thought. We will critically examine Walzer’s theory, his use of cases, and the conclusions to which his arguments lead. Along the way, we'll examine core ideas in political morality, e.g., human rights; state sovereignty; morality, necessity, and extremity; liability and punishment, nonviolence, and killing and murder.
Instructor(s): John Sianghio Terms Offered: Winter. FNDL agreed to let RLST take over as parent of this course
Equivalent Course(s): FNDL 24500

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 philosohical, 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’aa 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 H5 or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 34592, HIJD 34592, NEHC 34592, ISLM 34592, JUW 24592, MDVL 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): HIST 21011, GNSE 24802, CLCV 24821

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, Chrétien), 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
Note(s): This course meets the CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 35004, JWSC 25004, THEO 35004

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 historic 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 26421, THEO 35301, LATN 36421, HIST 32116, CLCV 26421, BIBL 35301, FNDL 25304, CLAS 36421, HCHR 35301, RETH 35301, HIST 22116

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
Note(s): This course meets the CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 35501, DVPR 35501

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 by default. In fact, it leaves many questions unanswered: Is democracy a good thing? If so, why and on what grounds? Why should you or I value democracy and its ideals (e.g., equality, liberty, fraternity)? If we do, what (if anything) grounds our devotion to this shared political tradition? And 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.

Instructor(s): Kevin Hector
Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course meets the CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 35501, DVPR 35501

Equivalent Course(s): THEO 35301, LATN 36421, HIST 32116, CLCV 26421, BIBL 35301, FNDL 25304, CLAS 36421, HCHR 35301, RETH 35301, HIST 22116

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 by default. In fact, it leaves many questions unanswered: Is democracy a good thing? If so, why and on what grounds? Why should you or I value democracy and its ideals (e.g., equality, liberty, fraternity)? If we do, what (if anything) grounds our devotion to this shared political tradition? And 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. Through examining key interpreters of American democracy such as Danielle Allen, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., Cornel West, Joshua Abraham Heschel, and Amanda Gorman, we will approach the question of how religion and democracy relate to one another. We’ll investigate the relative independence of democracy and religion, focusing on philosophers and poets who emphasize American democracy as tradition in its own right. We will also consider “Civil Religion in America,” through the work of sociologists and historians who suggest the dependence of the democratic on religion or something like it. Finally, we’ll question the relative interdependence of American democracy and religious traditions by turning to claims of influential religious and political leaders and activists. No prerequisite knowledge required.
Instructor(s): Derek Buyan Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): PBPL 25563, CRES 25563, AMER 25563

RLST 25678. Narratives of the End of Faith. 100 Units.
There seems to be consensus around the notion that the loss of religious faith is one of the defining features of modern society. What does this mean for human life going forward, however? Is what Nietzsche called the “death of God” a catastrophe, or an opportunity? Or is it an event that only seems revolutionary, which in fact masks a deep social continuity? In this course, we will examine some of the various responses to these questions in the 19th and 20th century, from Karl Marx and Max Weber, through Nietzsche and Heidegger, to “death of God theology.” A guiding thread throughout the course will be the relationship of secularization to freedom. Along the way we will reflect on the meaning of “modernity” and “postmodernity.” Undergraduate Seminar.
Instructor(s): Mat Messerschmidt Terms Offered: Autumn. Course taught AUT 2021
Equivalent Course(s): GRMN 20678, SCTH 20678

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): KNOW 25704, PBPL 25704, ENST 25704, CHST 25704, AMER 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. And yet, there does not seem to be an 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 from a historical-critical perspective. At the same time, we will investigate 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 earth and its nonhuman inhabitants. No prior knowledge of biblical literature is expected.
Instructor(s): Christine Trotter Terms Offered: Spring
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
Note(s): This course meets the CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): CRES 23211, AMER 25800, THEO 45800

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 theopolitical models of Zionism applicable in a post-secular environment. The aim of this course is to explore this complex intertwining of politics and religion in Israel from both historical and contemporary perspectives. The first part of the course will outline the theoretical foundation of post-secular and political-theological discourses. The second part will address the explicit and implicit political theologies of Zionism. The third part will outline contemporary aspects of political-theological thought in Israel, and their actual appearance in the political sphere.
Instructor(s): David Barak-Gorodetsky Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): This course meets the HS or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 25806, THEO 35806, JWSC 27940, HIJD 35806
RLST 25809. Islamic and Jewish Political Philosophy. 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 25915, MDVL 25809

RLST 25821. Psychology of Conflict: Lessons from Jerusalem. 100 Units.
Conflict is an inescapable aspect of life. Psychological theories help us to understand the origin of conflict, its escalation and resolution. In this course students will learn about the psychology of power, perspective taking and competition. We will also explore the various barriers to mutually-beneficial solutions. We will study all this in the context of Jerusalem, an ancient city that is sacred to many religions. It is a kaleidoscope of diversity, with multitudes of holy places, traditions, languages, identities and nationalities. Jerusalem will provide the prism through which to look at the intersection of linguistic and cultural landscapes, tensions between and within religions and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this multi-disciplinary course, we will consider concepts from Psychology, History, Sociology, Religion and Political Science. Students will engage in role plays to simulate real-life events, learning from direct experience as well as from discussions of research findings. We will use a variety of media including short videos, art, a virtual tour, and lectures by visiting experts.
Instructor(s): B. Keysar Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): The course has no pre-requisites.
Equivalent Course(s): PSYC 25820, NEHC 25820

RLST 25915. The Jewish Question in the 21st Century. 100 Units.
In these early decades of the 21st century, how does the history of the “Jewish Question” continue to reverberate through current discussions of religion and race, religion and post-coloniality, liberal, neo-liberal and post-liberal constructions of political identity? This course will take the contemporary context as its initiation point, but will consider it along with the history of the Jewish Question going back to late 18th century debates surrounding emancipation, and its 20th century manifestations both in Europe and the American context. We will compare the rhetoric of contemporary sources on race and religion to earlier articulations, and will ask in what ways Jewishness can and cannot be understood as exemplary for other marginalized communities and traditions. Contemporary theorists such as Fred Moten, J. Lorand Matory, Houria Bouteldja and Christina Sharpe will be considered alongside sources such as Moses Mendelssohn, Hannah Arendt and Jean-Paul Sartre. Some examples from fiction will also be included.
Instructor(s): Sarah Hammerschlag Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): This course meets the HS or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 25915, DVPR 35915, HIJD 35915

RLST 26013. Drinking with God: An Introduction to Sufism. 100 Units.
Who is the 13th-century Muslim mystic Jalaluddin Rumi - and why is he so popular on Instagram? Can inebriation lead to divine revelation? Who are the friends of God, and how did they develop fantastic superpowers? How have mystical practices sought to both abandon the world and radically transform it? In this class, we will explore these questions through the study of Sufism - a diverse set of Islamic mystical traditions - from its formative period in the early decades of Islam to the present day. Through poetry, philosophy, music, esoteric sciences, politics, and devotional practices, we will analyze Sufism as a global phenomenon that, while demonstrating remarkable adaptation to local cultural contexts, firmly locates itself within the Islamic tradition. This course will also include a visit to a local Sufi circle in Chicago.
Instructor(s): Francesca Chubb-Confer Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 28809, MDVL 25809

RLST 26101. Buddhism. 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
Note(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 26102, EALC 26101

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 Pāli and the most ancient Indian example of women’s literature, selections from the work of the great Sanskrit poets Aśvaghosā, Aryaśūra, and Mātīceta, and the mystical songs, in the Apabhraśa language, of the Buddhist tantric saints.

Instructor(s): Matthew Kapstein Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): General knowledge of Buddhism is desirable.
Note(s): This course meets the HS or LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 34300, DVPR 34300, RLVC 34500, MDVL 26250, HREL 34300

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), Dhammadapala (1864-1933), and their major advocates, we undertake thorough comparative studies of the two Buddhas 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): SALC 26265, HREL 36265, SALC 36265

RLST 26302. Religion, Medicine, and the Experience of Illness. 100 Units.

This course introduces students to both the dynamic relationship between religion and medicine and the role of religion as it relates to the experience of illness. Through a survey of a broad selection of religious traditions, textual genres, and case studies, students will evaluate how religion offers a pliable explanatory system (through myths, symbols, rituals, etc.) to address questions of causation, coping, and curing vis-à-vis illness. The historical relationship between religions and medical systems has been fascinatingly complex. We will encounter examples where religion and medicine work in tandem as complementary explanatory systems, e.g., with devotion to holy figures such as Saint Jude. We will also discuss what happens when religion usurps the explanatory role of medicine, e.g., when the activity of spirits becomes the diagnostic explanation for a medical condition such as epilepsy. Drawing upon literature from art history, medical anthropology, sociology, history, and theology, this course surveys the impressive variety of responses to illness both across religious traditions and within those traditions. Prior knowledge of religious studies and/or medical history is not required for the course.

Instructor(s): Mark Lambert Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): CCTS 21012, HIPS 26312, HLTH 26302, HIST 24923, KNOW 26302, SOCI 20542

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 Miresghli 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.
Note(s): This course meets the SCSR Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 33900, AASR 33900

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 triplicity, triads, trinities, 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
Note(s): This course meets the HS or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 26333, HREL 46333, EALC 46333, DVPR 46333, GLST 26333

RLST 26521. Three Greek Philosophical Texts. 100 Units.
The three texts are: Epicurus' Letter to Menoeceus; Epictetus, Discourses; and Diogenes of Oenoanda, Inscription. What all have in common is an urgent desire to inspire the reader to do philosophy—not just any philosophy, but the sort that will make a person happy. The first text is designed to inspire young and old alike to learn the basic principles of Epicurean hedonism; it’s up to us—not the gods, or fate, or chance—to attain the goal of life, pleasure. The second is intended for young men, who have just finished their secondary education. They have been sent by their family to Epictetus' school on the edge of the Adriatic Sea to be steeped in Stoic morality prior to starting a career. The third text is an inscription by Diogenes of Oenoanda, a prominent local citizen, who confesses he was moved by the dire suffering of his fellow humans to erect a very long wall, inscribed with Epicurean teachings. It is intended for any passerby. We will look closely at the Greek text to investigate both the medium and the message. Open to advanced undergraduates and graduate students. Requirement: intermediate level Ancient Greek or higher.
Instructor(s): E. Asmis Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): This course meets the HS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 36521, CLAS 36521, ANCM 46521, CLCV 26521

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 phenomenon 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): CMLT 26670, SIGN 26067

RLST 27001. History of Criticism: Plato to Dante. 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): RLVC 47100, CMLT 47101

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

RLST 27213. Partings, Encounters, and Entangled Histories: The Formation of Judaism and Christianity. 100 Units.
When did the fault lines between Judaism and Christianity emerge? This course explores this question by examining the formation of Judaism and Christianity within the world of the Ancient Mediterranean. What religious views, texts, and practices did Jews and Christians hold in common? How did early writers construct communal boundaries and project “ideal” belief and practice? What role did the changing political tides of the Roman and Persian empires play? We will explore continuities and growing distinctions between Jews and Christians in the areas of scriptural interpretation, ritual practices, and structures of authority. Special attention will be paid to debates around gender and sexuality, healing, and views of government and economics. We will approach these issues through material evidence and close readings of early literature in light of contemporary
scholarship. Students interested in modern histories of Judaism and Christianity will gain a firm foundation in the pivotal debates, texts, and events that set the trajectories for later centuries.

Instructor(s): Erin Galgay Walsh Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): No prerequisite knowledge of the historical periods, literature, or religious traditions covered is expected.
Note(s): This course meets the HS or LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): CLAS 34021, CLCV 24021, NEHC 37213, BIBL 37213, NEHC 27213, HIJD 37213, JWSC 27213, HCHR 41290

RLST 27290. Blake's Theopoetics. 100 Units.
Study of William Blake's unique combination of poetry-making and print-making, with special attention to its service to his theology.
Instructor(s): Richard Rosengarten Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): This course meets the HS or LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): HCHR 41290, RLVC 41290

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 narrative fictions that shape the lives and politics of our immigrant communities? How have the politics of immigration intersected with the politics of race and state? How do the arts of immigrant resistance interact with the migration and the politics of racism?
Instructor(s): Anand Venkatkrishnan Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 26813, CRES 27305, AMER 27305, SALC 27305, GLST 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 stupas and especially on the art of the great stupa (mahāchāitya) 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 visualizations 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 stupas 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
Note(s): This course meets the HS or LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 27490, RLVC 37490, ARTH 27490, ARTH 37490, HREL 37490, SALC 37490

RLST 27517. Writing Christian Poetry. 100 Units.
Christianity begins with God’s creative Word: “In the beginning was the Word.” This course approaches the study of Christian poetry as an exercise in creativity, encouraging students to explore the history of Christianity as an expression of the poetic imagination. Readings will be taken from across the ancient, medieval, and modern Christian tradition, focusing particularly on works originally written in Old, Middle or modern English as models for writing our own poems, but drawing on a wide range of exegetical, liturgical, and visionary works to support appreciation of the symbolism and narrative embedded in these models. Is there such a thing as a distinctively Christian perspective on history, morality, beauty, and art? What role does irony play? Is Christian poetry fundamentally tragic or comic? What is the relationship between Christianity and culture?
Instructor(s): R. Fulton Brown Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): HIST 22122 meets the Historical Studies Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
RLST 27652. Ethnography Before Modernity. 100 Units.

Although the culture concept and the science of anthropology are a product of modernity, ethnographic inquiry and prose genres go back to Greek, Near Eastern, and Huaxia historians. These sophisticated styles of thinking and writing about one’s own people in light of others-styles which crossed a broad range of premodern disciplines like medicine, geography, and law-shaped the identities of ancient imperial/colonial powers and of minorities within their borders. As ethnography developed and spread throughout Roman, Persian, and Islamic civilizations, it continued to function as a crossroads for traffic between politics and the sciences, where both durable and long-forgotten ideas about the nature of humanity were drafted and sedimented. By tracing a wide arc of ethnographic inquiry and writing from Herodotus to the Renaissance, we will examine patterns in ethnographers’ self-representations across periods and genres, considering both the political and the scientific implications of ethnographic literature. We will conclude with a reflection on the afterlife of ancient ethnographic tropes (e.g. “barbarian”) and the reception of ancient ethnography in the invention of modern categories (e.g. “Aryan” and “Semite”) which continue to circulate at the intersection of race, religion, and culture.

Prerequisite(s): Graduate students may enroll themselves after obtaining instructor permission with one or two paragraphs explaining their interest in the course and any prior preparation.

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

Equivalent Course(s): HIST 32122, HCHR 32122, MDVL 22122, HIST 22122

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 strike 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

Equivalent Course(s): HIJD 37652, HREL 37652

RLST 27714. Israeli Society through Media: The Four Tribes of Israel. 100 Units.

From the outside, Israeli society might seem homogeneous and cohesive, bound together by the outside challenges and threats that have defined its eight decades of existence. However, in a recent public speech, President Reuben Rivlin warned Israelis of the tribal schisms tearing contemporary Israeli society and defined a ‘new Israeli order’ splitting the state into 4 groups: Arabs, ultra-Orthodox Jews, national religious Jews and secular Jews. Using the president’s description of the “four tribes of Israel” as our framework, this course focuses on representations of the different groups in Israeli media and popular culture. We will ask: • What distinguishes each of these tribes? • What is the narrative held by each tribe to describe itself and the ‘other’ tribes? • How do the different tribes interact? • Is modern Israel a successful immigration society or a failed experiment at creating a melting pot? Using Israeli society as a case study, we will also consider prevailing ideas about mediation and reconciliation in fragmented societies. If there is student interest, the course may include a section for advanced Hebrew learners.

Instructor(s): Ehud Har Even

Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 21202, NEHC 21202

RLST 27721. Race and Religion: Theorizing Blackness and Jewishness. 100 Units.

Founded on ideals of universalism, pluralism and secularism, France and the United States are fraught with contradictions when it comes to race and religion. Which religions are accepted? Which religions are suspect? Is it minority that defines the difference—or only particular kinds of minority, such as race? To untangle the intersections of race and religion, we will examine Blackness and Jewishness as they are represented in political polemic, fiction, memoir and philosophy from the 1960s to the present. This course introduces students to the foundational concepts for the critical study of race and religion through exploring the constructions of Black and Jewish identity. We will examine the contradictions of secular politics and culture in France and the United States, and discuss how religion, race, and intersecting categories such as gender and sexuality, can become tools of critique. Readings include works by thinkers such as Césaire, Fanon, Memmi, Levinas and Foucault, along with literary classics by Nella Larsen and Sarah Kofo, and contemporary critical essays by Judith Butler, Christina Sharpe and Talal Asad. Throughout this course, we will examine how the concepts of race and religion are key components of the political, philosophical and ethical projects of these authors. No prerequisite knowledge of critical theory, or this historical period, is expected.

Instructor(s): Kirsten Collins

Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 27271, CRES 27721, FREN 27721, GLST 27271, GNSE 27721, JWSC 27721, ANTH 23916

RLST 28005. Illicit Religion: Contesting Religious Freedom under the Law in Modern America. 100 Units. The “freedom of religion” is one of the United States’ most enduring and celebrated national ideals. And yet, rights of religious belief and practice have been contested consistently throughout the history of the nation, transforming both cultural practices and legal definitions of religion. Can American religion be radically free and fundamentally subject to the legal definitions and executive constraints of the state? Or is religious freedom under the law impossible, as some scholars have it? In this course, we will examine historical events, legal principles and academic debates over the meaning of religion’s “free exercise” in the United States. Three case studies will ground our investigations: the Pueblo Indian dance controversy of the 1920s, the organization of the Church of Scientology in the 1950s and, finally, conflict over property and political rights at Oregon’s Rajneeshpuram in the 1980s. Historical and cultural study will be augmented with theory and legal analysis by scholars of American religion and law. The term will end with student presentations on controversial developments in the exercise of religion since 1993’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), including its enforcement of religious boundaries around drug use, gay marriage and women’s reproductive health. No prerequisite knowledge of religious tradition, historical period or legal principle is necessary.
Instructor(s): Yu Xue Terms Offered: Winter

Instructor(s): Greg Chatterley Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 28013, CMLT 28013, MDVL 28013, GNSE 23135

RLST 28009. God-Given Whites: Christianity and White Supremacy in the United States from Colonization to Trump. 100 Units. In this course, we will survey the enduring history of Christianity and white supremacy in regions that became the United States after three centuries of transatlantic colonialism. Starting in the colonial era, we will review successive episodes of white racial formation under Christian social orders, including among others: Catholic and Protestant missions to indigenous tribes, the Christianization of Afro-American enslavement, the Protestant popularization of the Ku Klux Klan, the southern evangelical defense of segregation, urban Catholicism’s flee to the white suburbs and more recent cultural and political projects of conservative white evangelicalism. In each episode, we will identify historical and religious nuances of disparate racial regimes while aiming more generally to cultivate analytical frameworks for the study of religion and white supremacy in American culture over time. How do religions shape racial orders, and vice versa? No prerequisite knowledge of course subjects necessary.
Instructor(s): Greg Chatterley Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 27120, HMRT 28005, AMER 28005

RLST 28013. Love, Desire, and Sexuality in Islamic Texts and Contexts. 100 Units. What separates love from lust? How do our erotic desires and sexual practices intersect with our beliefs? This interdisciplinary class explores these questions in conversation with foundational thinkers from the Islamic tradition alongside insights from feminist and queer theory. We will delve into questions on the relationship between romantic, familial, and divine love; gender, sexuality, and the body; and Orientalism and the politics of reading desire cross-culturally. Exploring a diverse set of primary sources that range from the Qur’an to Rūmī’s Masnāvī to contemporary Bollywood, we will encounter different representations of love, desire, and sexuality in religious and philosophical discourses, literary representations, and visual media. We will examine not only how these representations reflect different historical norms, but also how and to what extent texts and images can inform or impact the norms of their contexts as well. No prerequisite knowledge of the topics or time periods discussed is needed, and students will have the opportunity over the course of the class to develop a project that relates our content to their own interests.
Instructor(s): Allison Kanner-Botan Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): This course counts as a Concepts course for GNSE majors.
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 28013, CMLT 28013, MDVL 28013, GNSE 23135

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 Satipatthana 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 mediation 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.
Instructor(s): Yu Xue Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Some basic knowledge of Buddhism recommended.
Note(s): This course meets the CS or SCSR Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.
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): SOCI 20540, AMER 28991, ANTH 24711  

RLST 28992. Arguing on the Internet: Persuasion and Polarization. 100 Units.  
Everyone knows it’s a bad idea to argue about religion and politics on the internet. But is this actually true, and if so, why? What is it about religion and politics that makes it so difficult to convince people to change their views? And what effects do social media platforms have upon these arguments? In this class, we will discuss philosophical and psychological theories to help make sense of the challenges facing anyone who seeks to challenge others’ deeply held convictions. We will compare classic texts about faith and reason with recent studies on political polarization, rhetoric, and new media. By analyzing actual disagreements from different corners of the internet, we will collaboratively develop our own guide to online argumentation which will be published online as a resource for people courageous enough to post in a comments section.  
Instructor(s): Russell Johnson  Terms Offered: Winter  

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): HIST 27715, GNSE 29000, 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): HIST 28005, HMRT 29051, CRES 29050, SSAD 29050, GNSE 29050, SOCI 20543, ANTH 25219, 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: Winter  
Prerequisite(s): BIBL 31000 (Introduction to the Hebrew Bible) or BIBL 32500 (Introduction to the New Testament). BIBL 32500 can be taken concurrently.  
Note(s): This course meets the HS or LMCS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students. JWSCI majors/minors can petition to count this course toward their degree requirement.  
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 49989, BIBL 49999, HCHR 49999, CRES 27699, HIJD 49999, NEHC 29989  

RLST 29700. Reading/Research: Rlst. 100 Units.  
TBD  
Terms Offered: Autumn Spring Winter  
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.  
Instructor(s): Alex C. Matthews  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 Seminar 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.
Instructor(s): Alex C. Matthews 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.