Religious Studies

Department Website: https://divinity.uchicago.edu/undergraduate-program-religious-studies-0

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

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

Introductory Course Requirement

Students in Religious Studies are required to take an introductory-level (“Gateway”) course, such as RLST 10100 Introduction to Religious Studies. 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.

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 religious, and begin to make some comparative appraisals of the roles that religions play in different cultures and historical periods. To introduce students to these multiple perspectives on religion and to provide a sense of the field as a whole, students are required to take at least one course in two of the following areas. To identify the areas, refer to the RLST number range (see below).

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

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

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

Senior Seminar and BA Paper

The two-quarter senior sequence (RLST 29800 BA Paper Seminar I and RLST 29900 BA Paper II) will assist students in the Research Track with the preparation of the required BA paper. During May of their third year, students will work with the preceptor to choose a faculty adviser and a topic for research, and to plan a course of study for the following year. These must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students will take part in the BA Paper Seminar convened by a preceptor during Autumn and Winter Quarters. This seminar will allow students to prepare their bibliographies, hone their writing, and present their research. Students will register for RLST 29800 BA Paper Seminar I in the Autumn Quarter and for RLST 29900 BA Paper II in the Winter Quarter. The BA paper will be due the second week of Spring Quarter. The length is typically between thirty and forty pages, with the upward limit being firm.
This program may accept a BA paper or project used to satisfy the same requirement in another major if certain conditions are met and with the consent of the other program. Approval from both departments is required. Students should consult with the departments by the earliest BA proposal deadline (or by the end of their third year, if neither program publishes a deadline). A consent form, to be signed by both departments, is available from the College adviser. It must be completed and returned to the College adviser by the end of Autumn Quarter of the student’s year of graduation.

Grading

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

Honors

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

Summary of Requirements

Regular Track

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Units</th>
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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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-year Theories/Methods seminar</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven additional courses in Religious Studies</td>
<td>700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Units</td>
<td>1100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Research Track

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Introductory-level (“Gateway”) course</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least two courses in three major areas (Historical, Constructive, Cultural Studies)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-year Theories/Methods seminar</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five additional courses in Religious Studies</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 29800 BA Paper Seminar I</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLST 29900 BA Paper II</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Units</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
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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 (e.g., RLST 10100 Introduction to Religious Studies). The remaining five courses should be chosen to reflect a broad understanding of the academic study of religion. Of these six, students must take at least one course in two of our three areas of study [Historical Studies (A), Constructive Studies (B), and Cultural Studies (C)]. Courses in the minor may not be double-counted with the student’s major(s) or with other minors, and may not be counted toward general education requirements. Courses in the minor must be taken for quality grades, and more than half of the requirements for the minor must be met by registering for courses bearing University of Chicago course numbers.

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

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

Sample Program

The following group of courses would satisfy a minor in Religious Studies:

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

RLST 10100. Introduction to Religious Studies. 100 Units.
What are we talking about when we talk about religion? There are a multitude of answers to that question, and this course provides students with an entry way into a longstanding conversation-involving insiders, outsiders, and those in-between-around the meanings of a word that indexes ideas of god and the gods, of origins and ends, and of the proper places of humans (and everything else, including animals) above, in, and below the globe. Talk about religion today is, in fact, cheap: this course will aim to promote a grammatical currency (morphology, vocabulary, syntax) to enhance the value of such talk.
Instructor(s): Sarah Hammerschlag Terms Offered: Winter

RLST 10300. Ancient Middle Eastern Religions. 100 Units.
This course is an introduction to the religions of the ancient Middle East-Egypt, the Levant, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia-with an emphasis on the variety to these religions and the ways regional religious expression and practice changed over time. We will read several famous myths, hymns, and other narrowly "religious" texts—including excerpts from the Akkadian creation myth Enûma elîš, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, and a Hittite myth of a disappearing god. But we will also explore visual art and other material culture sources and we will read letters, treaties, and other more mundane texts to define how these sources differently show how religion manifested "on the ground." The social and political resonances of religion will be stressed, with examples ranging from kings dubiously claiming the rediscovery of important religious texts to international theft of divine statues. We will discuss the influence of ancient Middle Eastern religions on that of neighboring regions, especially the Greco-Roman world. Students will pursue creative projects with the goal of more deeply understanding ancient Middle Eastern religions; these may include adapting a known religious phenomenon to a different medium or genre or even fabricating new texts, images, or practices while demonstrating their innovative benefits and historical connections to skeptical adherents.
Instructor(s): Madadh Richey Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 10300, NEHC 10300

RLST 11004. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible. 100 Units.
The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) is a complex anthology of disparate texts and reflects a diversity of religious, political, and historical perspectives from ancient Israel, Judah, and Yehud. Because this collection of texts continues to play an important role in modern religions, new meanings are often imposed upon it. In this course, we will attempt to read biblical texts apart from modern preconceptions about them. We will also contextualize their ideas and goals through comparison with texts from ancient Mesopotamia, Syro-Palestine, and Egypt. Such comparisons will demonstrate that the Hebrew Bible is fully part of the cultural milieu of the Ancient Near East. To accomplish these goals, we will read a significant portion of the Hebrew Bible in English, along with representative selections from secondary literature. We will also spend some time thinking about the nature of biblical interpretation.
Instructor(s): J. Stackert Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 31000, NEHC 20504, NEHC 30504, JWSC 20120

RLST 11030. Introduction to the Qur'an. 100 Units.
This course introduces the historical context, thematic and literary features, major biblical figures, and exegetical literature on the Qur'an, with a focus on the early (8th-10th century CE) and medieval periods (11th - 15th century CE). We will read select English translations from the Qur'an and its commentators, accompanied by academic secondary literature that emphasize the Qur'an's literary structure, theological underpinnings, historical, geographical, social, political and cultural contexts in early and medieval Islamic civilization, and the role of the Qur'an as both a fixed and a living and dynamic text in Muslim devotional life.
Instructor(s): Yousef Casewit Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Knowledge of Arabic is not a prerequisite, but general knowledge about Islam or an "Introduction to Islam" course is highly recommended.
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 30030, ISLM 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 raise questions for further study.
Instructor(s): M. Mitchell Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Interest in this literature, and willingness to enter into conversation with like- and non-like-minded others on the texts and the issues involved in their interpretation.
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 12500, BIBL 32500, FNDL 28202
RLST 14358. Hindu Goddesses and the Deification of Women. 100 Units.
This course has two focuses. The first is to examine how and why representations of goddesses in her iconic, aniconic and symbolic forms are embraced by various religious traditions (Buddhism, Saiva, Vaishnava and Jainism) of India. The second focus includes: 1) an examination of the manner in which the power of the feminine has been expressed socially, mythologically, and theologically in Hinduism; 2) how Hindu women have expressed their religiosity in social and psychological ways; 3) how and why women have been deified, a process that implicates the relationship between the goddess and women; and 4) how various categories of goddesses can be seen or not as the forms of the so-called "Great Goddess" (Mahadevi), and how these goddesses reflect varying relationships with human women.
Instructor(s): Sree Padma Holt Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course is open to undergraduates with permission of the instructor.
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 24358, GNSE 34358, HREL 34358

RLST 20100. The Fetish: Theories and Methods in Religious Studies. 100 Units.
The term fetish was coined in the 18th century by Portuguese sailors to describe the amulets or charms used by the indigenous people of Guinea. It was popularized soon after as a term used to describe the endowment of material objects with special powers among traditions deemed to be primitive. It has a long subsequent history within the Philosophy of Religions, Marxism, and Psychoanalysis, but in fact mostly disappeared from the taxonomic lexicon of scholarship within the field of Religious Studies once it was deemed a "category mistake" in the 20th century. It is thus, a term that tells the story both of the construction of Comparative Religions as a European endeavor, as well as the reverberations of that story across the social sciences. In this course we will track its history from the 18th Century to the present and consider its recent redeployments and resignifications in recent theoretical texts. Readings will include texts by David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Marcel Mauss, Bruno Latour, Jacques Derrida, Sarah Kofman and others.
Instructor(s): Sarah Hammerschlag Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): This course is required for 3rd year RLST majors

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
Equivalent Course(s): CRES 20111, GNSE 20111, HIST 20111

RLST 20175. Jewish Law from the Hebrew Bible to Jesus. 100 Units.
This course explores the key role of law in the development of Second Temple Judaism and the place of Jesus traditions within this charged sphere. Debates concerning the interpretation and purpose of biblical law, as well as the issues of tradition, revelation and authority shaped the image of Jewish society and marked the dividing lines between ideologial parties (e.g. Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes). The emergence of distinct legal ideologies nurtured the development of both rabbinic Judaism and the Jesus movement towards the end of the period. The course will consist of three sections: (1) Survey of the history of legal discourse during this period and acquaintance with the relevant works on law from Qumran (2) A thorough investigation of scholarly trends on Jesus and the law and close readings of major sources on law in the Gospels (3) Introduction to the study of early rabbinic literature and its relevance for the study of Second Temple traditions. Meetings will consist of introductory lectures, discussions of scholarship and readings of select ancient sources (in translation).
Instructor(s): Yair Furstenberg (staff) Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): HJID 30175

RLST 20214. Devils and Demons: Agents of Evil in the Bible and Ancient World. 100 Units.
While the words "devil," "demon," and "Satan" usually conjure the image of a horned and hoofed archfiend, this has not always been the case. Students in this course will discover both the origins of and complications to dominant popular images of "the Devil" by engaging ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean texts, including Mesopotamian literature, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and other early Christian and Jewish texts. We will discuss Satan's origins as the biblical god Yahweh's henchman, Mesopotamian and Greco-Roman conceptions of subordinate divine entities, Hellenistic and Roman-period tendencies towards cosmic dualism, and much more. Students will also have the opportunity to explore pop culture and political discourse to examine how Biblical and other ancient demons productively recur in such contexts. A guiding question will be why the category of "demon" has proven so productive and necessary to diverse religious worldviews and what the common features and actions of these figures reveal about persistent human anxieties.
Instructor(s): Madadh Richey Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 20214, NEHC 20214

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): Tabera Qutbuddin Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 30601, NEHC 20601, CMES 30601, MDVL 20601, SOSC 22000, ISLM 30601, HIST 25610, HIST 35610

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): HIST 35615, CMES 30602, ISLM 30602, NEHC 20602, HIST 25615, SOSC 22100, NEHC 30602, MDVL 20602

RLST 20403. Islamic Thought and Literature III. 100 Units.
This class explores works of Muslim intellectuals, who interpreted various aspects of Islamic philosophy, political theory and law in the modern age. We will look at diverse interpretations concerning the role of religion in a modern society, at secularized and historicized approaches to religion and at the critique of both religious establishments and nation states as articulated by Middle Eastern intellectuals. Consequently, we will contextualize concepts like "woman," "nation," "East" and "jihad" as we follow the meanings assigned to these conceptions by different intellectuals at different historical moments. The class likewise examines the ways in which Muslim reformers synthesized cultural trends to revitalize the Islamic faith in face of Western economic and political hegemony. Our debate will focus on the influence of the colonial settings on the formation of these new readings and on the ways in which Muslim thinkers both appropriated and critiqued Western notions of civilization and guidance. We will consider the impact of these new ideas on political theory, and in particular on the political systems which emerged in the modern Middle East. Finally, the class will scrutinize the ways in which Muslim writers manipulated new means of communication such as the print media in order to propagate their ideas regarding the nature of their state and society. Generally, we shall discuss secondary literature first and the primary sources later.
Instructor(s): Orit Bashkin Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 30603, HIST 35616, HIST 25616, SOSC 22200, NEHC 20603, NEHC 30603

RLST 20501. Islamic History and Society I: The Rise of Islam and the Caliphate. 100 Units.
This course covers the period from ca. 600 to 1100, including the rise and spread of Islam, the Islamic empire under the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs, and the emergence of regional Islamic states from Afghanistan and eastern Iran to North Africa and Spain.
Instructor(s): Fred Donner Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 20501, HIST 25704, NEHC 20501, HIST 35704, CMES 30501, ISLM 30500, NEHC 30501

RLST 20901. Interpreting Jesus. 100 Units.
An introduction to the critical study of this controversial figure and his far-reaching historical, political, and global impact. Our focus will be to analyze contemporary images of Jesus and the claims people make about him, his life, and his teachings in current religious, cultural, and political discourse, the literary imagination, plays, films, and art. We will ground our discussion in an informed reading of the major sources for his life, including the New Testament gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) as well as lesser known gospels (Thomas, Peter, Mary, Judas). We will also learn to interpret historically his parables and other teachings, healings and exorcisms, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and his erotic life and gender—all in the context of ancient Mediterranean society, Galilee and Palestine, and early Jewish and Roman imperial politics.
Instructor(s): Jeffrey Jay Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 21010. God and the Good Life. 100 Units.
Do we need God to know right from wrong? Or should morality shape and limit (or forbid) religious belief? Should we worry more about uncertainty and ignorance or overconfidence and fanaticism? This course focuses on the religious quest for certainty about how we should live. We will explore a variety of perspectives on the possibilities and problems involved in efforts to connect belief in God to moral knowledge and behavior. Readings include the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, the Quran, Plato, Kant, Kierkegaard, and Feuerbach, as well as more recent voices like Martin Luther King and contemporary critics of religion.
Instructor(s): David Barr Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 26010
RLST 21020. Is Humanity Doomed? 100 Units.
This class explores the possibilities and perils of continued human existence on Earth. Taking climate change as a launching point, the class investigates the features of collective human life that make its prolonged existence a perennial challenge. The texts include those on challenges unique to the environment, like Stephen Gardiner’s A Perfect Moral Storm and Jared Diamond’s Collapse, as well as philosophical and religious theories of progress and their skeptics, centering class discussions on sources of hope and reasons for doubt about the human future. A central question of the course is whether climate change is unique or whether there are characteristics of human beings and human society (freedom, sin, tragedy) that make threats like it inevitable.
Instructor(s): David Barr Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 21107. Readings in Maimonides’ Guide of the Perplexed. 100 Units.
A careful study of select passages in Maimonides’ Guide of the Perplexed, focusing on the method of the work and its major philosophical-theological themes, including: divine attributes, creation vs. eternity, prophecy, the problem of evil and divine providence, law and ethics, the final aim of human existence.
Instructor(s): James Robinson Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 40470, FNDL 24106, ISLM 45400, JWSC 21107, HIJD 45400, HREL 45401, MDVL 25400, RLVC 45400

RLST 21200. Greek Philosophy. 100 Units.
The Phaedrus is one of the most fascinating and compelling of Plato’s Dialogues. Beginning with a playful treatment of the theme of erotic passion, it continues with a consideration of the nature of inspiration, love, and knowledge. The centerpiece is one of the most famous of the Platonic myths, the moving description of the charioteer and its allegory of the vision, fall, and incarnation of the soul.
Instructor(s): E. Asmis Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 31200, FNDL 21005, GREK 21216, GREK 31216

RLST 21303. Christianity and Slavery in America, 1619-1865. 100 Units.
We will be examining the relationship between Christian thought and the practice of slavery as they evolved historically, especially in the context of European enslavement of peoples of African descent in the colonies of British North America and in the antebellum South. The following questions will be addressed in some form through our readings and class discussions: Why did some Christians oppose slavery at a specific time and in a particular historical context? In other words, why did slavery become a moral problem for an influential though minority segment of the United States by the early 19th century? How and why did white evangelical Christians, especially in the South, become the most prominent defenders of slavery? What were some of the consequences of debates about slavery in regard to efforts to engage broader social reform? What role did race play in the historical development of slavery? How did people of African descent shape and practice Christianity in British North America and in the Southern States of the United States?
Instructor(s): Curtis Evans Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): RAME 42901, HCHR 42901

RLST 21450. Coptic Bible. 100 Units.
The Coptic versions of the Bible present one of the earliest translations of Christian scripture as the new religion spread. Understanding how the Bible (canonical and non-canonical) was read and used in Egypt at this early stage implies studying the development of Christian communities in those agitated times, as well as paying attention to questions of literacy and linguistic environment, book production, Bible (both Greek and Coptic) on papyrus, and translation and interpretation in Antiquity. The course will draw on materials assembled from my work on the critical edition of the Gospel of Mark, but will also look into other materials like the Coptic Old Testament, and non-canonical scriptures such as Nag Hammadi and the Gnostic scriptures. No previous knowledge of Coptic is required. A brief introduction to the Coptic language will be part of the class, and parallel sessions of additional language instruction will be planned for those who are interested in learning more.
Instructor(s): S. Torallas Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 24118, NEHC 24118, BIBL 31418, NEHC 34118, CLAS 34118, CLCV 24118

RLST 21860. Literary Theory and the Hebrew Bible. 100 Units.
Readings in literary theory and in select works of the Hebrew Bible, with special attention to voice and genre. Seminar-style presentations and discussion.
Instructor(s): Simeon Chavel Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 21860, BIBL 37612, KNOW 37612

RLST 22010-22011. Jewish Civilization I-II.
Jewish Civilization is a two-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. Note: Jewish Studies revised its civilization studies courses starting 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 they may combine them with the new course options. However, students must have at least one course on the ancient/medieval period (JWSC 20120-20199 or JWSC 12000 Jewish Civilization I: Ancient Beginnings to Early Medieval Period) and at least one on the modern period (JWSC 20220-20299 or JWSC 12001 Jewish Civilization II: Late Medieval to Modern Period). Students who began the requirement in Autumn Quarter 2018 or later may only use the new sequence to meet the general studies requirement in civilization studies.
RLST 22010. Jewish Civilization I: Ancient Beginnings to Early Medieval Period. 100 Units.

Jewish Civilization is a two-semester course that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient origins 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 quarter will deal with antiquity to the early medieval period. Its readings will include works from the Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Josephus, the Rabbis, Yehudah Halevy, and Maimonides. All sections of each course will share a common core of readings; individual instructors will supplement with other materials. It is recommended, though not required, that students take these two courses in sequence. Students who register for the Autumn Quarter course will automatically be pre-registered for the winter segment.

Instructor(s): J. Robinson Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 22010, JWSC 12000, MDVL 12000

RLST 22011. Jewish Civilization II: Late Medieval to Modern Period. 100 Units.

Jewish Civilization is a two-semester course that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient origins 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 quarter will begin with the late medieval period and continue to the present. It will include discussions of mysticism, the works of Spinoza and Mendelssohn, the eighteenth-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 each course will share a common core of readings; individual instructors will supplement with other materials. It is recommended, though not required, that students take these two courses in sequence. Students who register for the Autumn Quarter course will automatically be pre-registered for the winter segment.

Instructor(s): S. Hammerschlag Cathleen Chopra-McGowan Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 12001, MDVL 12010, NEHC 22011

RLST 22100. Early Monasticism. 100 Units.

This course examines early monasticism from its origins among the desert fathers of the Greek and Syriac East to its development in the Latin West, especially in Italy and Spain, concluding with the Carolingian reformation of monasticism in the ninth century. We will examine such themes as monastic rules, monastic hagiography, women in monasticism, ideas of virginity, and the economics of monasticism. (A)

Instructor(s): L. Pick Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 21600, HIST 11900

RLST 22050. Murder, Adultery, and Thy Neighbor’s Ass: The Ten Commandments in the Hebrew Bible and America. 100 Units.

The Ten Commandments, presented in the Hebrew Bible millennia ago, inhabit a curious place in American society, one that is continually being redefined, contested, and entrenched. This course interrogates the nature of the commandments' history: the biblical text contains two competing presentations of the commandments, in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. We will examine these passages, situating them in their literary contexts, and in the broader context of Ancient Near Eastern law codes. Are the commandments moral guidelines or legal injunctions? What kind of status do they claim for themselves, and when are they to be enforced? By whom, and for whom? Do the commandments have the same function in both texts (Ex 20 and Deut 5)? Addressing these questions will have salience for understanding how the Decalogue has been used to reinforce and define particular kinds of communities and ideologies within the United States.

Instructor(s): Cathleen Chopra-McGowan Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 26050
RLST 22204. The Veda and its Interpreters. 100 Units.
What, according to the Veda, is required of us? What is our response to it? What is the Veda, why does it matter, and to whom? This course seeks to cultivate an understanding of how scriptural commentators have grappled with notions of authority, obligation, ritual action, and liberating knowledge. We are primarily interested in the reception of Vedic figures, themes, and ideas among its many interpreters, scholastic, literary, and political. Particular attention is given to the hermeneutical tradition of Vedic texts, in both its premodern and modern incarnations.
Instructor(s): Anand Venkatkrishnan Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): HREL 32204

RLST 22222. Lesser Known Gospels. 100 Units.
An introduction to the apocryphal gospels. Our primary task will be to read and discuss the primary texts in translation-gospel writings outside of the four canonical New Testament gospels in conjunction with recent scholarship. We will focus on (among others) the Gospels of Peter, Thomas, Mary, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, the Proto-Gospel of James, as well as other select Jewish-Christian and Nag Hammadi gospel texts.
Instructor(s): Jeffrey Jay Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 42222

RLST 22999. Buddhist/Muslim Conflicts in Southeast Asia. 100 Units.
The past 20 years have witnessed the rise of serious tensions and violence between Theravada Buddhists and Muslim communities in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand respectively. This course provides an analytical, diachronic and comparative overview of the various social, economic, political and religious dynamics that have contributed to the recent outbreak of these conflicts.
Instructor(s): John Holt Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): CLCV 25319, CLAS 35319, BIBL 42910, GNSE 42910, GNSE 22910

RLST 23026. Suffering, Tragedy, and the Human Condition. 100 Units.
This course examines the various ways in which various authors have understood the nature of suffering and its role in human wisdom and human tragedy. In so doing we will gather various understandings of how the Western past and present have conceived of the human condition, especially in its relation to fate, the gods, and the Christian God and salvation.
Instructor(s): Susan Schreiner Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 42222

RLST 22200. African American Religion: Themes and Issues. 100 Units.
This course explores themes and topics that have marked the study of African American religion including but not limited to enslavement and Christianization, resistance and adjustment to slavery and Jim Crow segregation, urbanization and diversification of religious communities, and the lived experience of religious believers and practitioners. This class is a broad survey of religious beliefs and practices from the 17th century to the late 20th century.
Instructor(s): Curtis Evans Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): CRES 22800, HIST 20003
RLST 23100. Introduction to Christian Thought. 100 Units.
This course is designed to give an introduction to Christian thought by means of a historical overview. It will focus on what it is that establishes thinkers as Christian thinkers, what that does to the profile of their thought, how we ought to situate them vis-a-vis established academic disciplines (theology, philosophy and beyond), and how we can best assess their overall contribution in evaluative terms (academic, ecclesial, social, foundational). The course will deliberately reach across confessional and cultural divides. The thinkers on whom we focus are Augustine, Maximus the Confessor, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Kierkegaard, John Henry Newman, William James, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
Instructor(s): W. Otten Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 23100

RLST 23497. Ethnographies of Buddhism in Southeast Asia. 100 Units.
A study of the ways in which contemporary Theravada Buddhist practice has been observed and analyzed in Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia by anthropologists and historians of religions. Among the topics considered in relation to Buddhist traditions: death rites, spirit cults, monastic ordination, social hierarchies, gender, and rites celebrating the efficacy of sacred texts. Lecture and discussion formats.
Instructor(s): John Holt Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): HREL 43497

RLST 23606. Good and Evil: Reading Levinas and Arendt. 100 Units.
Our goal is to reflect on a puzzle: why do humans choose to be good or evil? Note how the shape of the question is complex and self-reflective, assuming that moral action is a choice. But is it? How do we understand the human capacity for good and for evil? What is meant by these categories? This seminar will respond to the complexities of this question by reading the work of two master Jewish philosophers, Emmanuel Levinas and Hannah Arendt. They share a certain history and a fascination with the question: both were gifted students and favorites of Martin Heidegger, the German philosopher who joined the Nazi Party promptly and enthusiastically. Both narrowly escaped from the Holocaust (Shoah.) Both then turned their research toward the problem of human relatedness, duty, judgment and moral action. Both produced a large body of dense, intricate moral theory that has come to define post-modern Jewish thought. We will read their works slowly, using the manner of classic text study that characterizes the classic study of tradition texts in Jewish religious life. The first 5 sessions will focus on Levinas, reading Otherwise Than Being, considered by many to be his masterpiece, and a selection of his philosophic essays. The next 5 sessions will focus on Arendt's Responsibility and Judgment and The Origins of Totalitarianism Both texts respond to our puzzle of moral agency, responsibility and moral action.
Instructor(s): Laurie Zoloth Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Undergraduates may enroll with permission, and must have taken a course in modern philosophy.
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 52990

RLST 23606. The Problem of Evil. 100 Units.
This course will consider a handful of prominent responses to the so-called problem of evil--the problem, in its customary formulation, of how & whether the existence of evil can be reconciled with the existence of an omniscient, omnibenevolent, and omnipotent God.
Instructor(s): Kevin Hector Terms Offered: Autumn

RLST 23505. Environmental Ethics. 100 Units.
This course examines foundational issues of environmental ethics. What kind of values (economic, aesthetic, existence) are important? What kind of value do individual biota, humans, other species, ecosystems, humans, or inorganic entities have? What is the relationship of humans to the rest of the world? What should it be? Do religious and philosophical traditions contribute to or help address environmental degradation?
Instructor(s): S. Fredericks Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): ENST 23505

RLST 23670. Inquiry into the Possible Meanings of "The End of Metaphysics" 100 Units.
Having in a former class studied the different meanings of «metaphysics» (Aristotle, the medievals, Kant, Heidegger), this term will be devoted to explain the several conceptions of the «end of metaphysics». The discussion will first focus on its historical (diachrony) conception, positive (Hegel) or negative (Carnap), or both (Heidegger, either as the «destruction of ontology» or as the overcoming of Being). Then on the non-historical (synchrony) destitution of «metaphysics» (Pascal, Kierkegaard, a.s.o.), opening the question of givenness.
Instructor(s): Jean-Luc Marion Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 33700

RLST 23810. Guilt and Forgiveness. 100 Units.
This course will consider the nature of guilt, punishment, and forgiveness.
Instructor(s): Kevin Hector Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 23830. Simone Weil: Spirituality, Metaphysics, and Politics. 100 Units.
Simone Weil, one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century, developed her thought as an extension of her spirituality and her political commitments. In this course, then, we will read her principal works together in order to see how these three themes hang together: spirituality, metaphysics, and politics.
Instructor(s): Kevin Hector Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 43830
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: Spring

RLST 23905. Is Buddhism a Religion? 100 Units.
One often hears it said that "Buddhism is not a religion, it's […]" - with the ellipsis variously filled in as (e.g.) "a philosophy," "a kind of mind science," "a spiritual practice," etc. This course will explore the origins and function of this meme, as well as the question of what, if anything, distinguishes a tradition as "religious." It is hoped that we will, along the way, learn a bit about Buddhism, and/or about various Asian encounters with colonialism, empire, and modernity. And also maybe about being human in today's world.
Instructor(s): Daniel A. Arnold Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 23905

RLST 24103. Bioethics. 100 Units.
This lecture course will introduce you to the field of Bioethics. We will use a case-based method to study how different philosophical and theological traditions describe and defend differences in moral choices in contemporary bioethics. This class is based on the understanding that case narratives serve as the motivation for the discipline of bioethics and that complex ethical issues are best considered by a careful examination of the competing theories as they 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 Northwestern 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 philosophy, law, public health, and religious studies have played in such reflection. We will look at both how the practice of different disciplines has shaped the field of bioethics and in particular at how different theological and philosophical claims, methodology, and praxis have continued to shape and inflect bioethics.
Instructor(s): Laurie Zoloth Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 30600, SIGN 26069, HLTH 24103

RLST 24110. The Ethics of War: Reading Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations. 100 Units.
This course will involve a close reading of Michael Walzer's classic text on the ethics of war and his constructive account of the just-war tradition. Among the topics to be addressed are: moral relativism, human rights, and the ethics of various cases, e.g., terrorism, interventions, war crimes, blockades, assassinations, guerrilla warfare, reprisals, pre-emptive warfare, and nuclear deterrence. Relevant now no less than when it was first published in 1977, Walzer's work raises basic questions about the rights of nations and their moral obligations to their citizens and to others during times of war.
Instructor(s): Richard B. Miller Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): FNDL 24500

RLST 24120. The Ethics of War: Foundational Texts. 100 Units.
This course will focus on foundational texts in the just-war tradition and the ethics of using force, drawing on the works of Augustine, Aquinas, Vitoria, Grothus, Walzer, and Fanon, along with those who have critically engaged their works.
Instructor(s): Richard Miller Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Prior work in philosophy or political theory recommended but not required.
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 36002

RLST 24130. Pragmatism and Religious Ethics. 100 Units.
This class will examine classical theories of pragmatic ethics, the development of pragmatic ethics in the mid to late twentieth century among religious and philosophical ethicists, and recent developments in pragmatic ethics, especially in environmental ethics. Special attention will be paid to how theories of knowledge, habit and practice, and the relationship of society and ethics inform these theories of ethics.
Instructor(s): Sarah Fredericks
Note(s): Undergraduates may enroll with permission of the instructor
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 40600
RLST 24135. Collective Agency and Responsibility. 100 Units.
In the twentieth and twenty-first century, modern western notions of individual identity, agency, and responsibility have been challenged by collective experiences. Studies of collective atrocities such as the Holocaust, apartheid, racism and sexism have informed research on collective identity, agency, and responsibility. Research and legal developments on corporate agency and responsibility add to the discussion. Finally, global environmental challenges such as climate change raise questions about the types of agents responsible for these harms and for combating them. This class will explore a number of theories of collective agency and responsibility to interrogate the differences and relationships between individuals and collectives.
Instructor(s): Sarah Fredericks Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): Undergraduates may enroll with permission
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 50900

RLST 24201. Indian Philosophy I: Origins and Orientations. 100 Units.
A survey of the origins of Indian philosophical thought, emphasizing the Vedas, Upanisads, and early Buddhist literature. Topics include concepts of causality and freedom, the nature of the self and ultimate reality, and the relationship between philosophical thought and ritual or ascetic religious practice.
Instructor(s): D. Arnold Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): HREL 30200, SALC 30901, DVPR 30201, SALC 20901

RLST 24202. Indian Philosophy II: The Classical Traditions. 100 Units.
Following on the Indian Philosophy I course, this course will survey major developments in the mature period of scholastic philosophy in India - a period, beginning a little before the middle of the first millennium C.E., that is characterized by extensive and sophisticated debate (made possible by the emergence of shared philosophical vocabulary and methods) among Buddhist, Brahmaean, and Jain philosophers. Students are encouraged (but not required) to take Indian Philosophy I before taking this course.
Instructor(s): M. Kapstein Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 24202, SALC 30902, SALC 20902, DVPR 30302, HREL 30300

RLST 24251. The Bhagavad Gita: Differing Readings of a World Classic. 100 Units.
Few religious classics have been as variously interpreted as the Bhagavad Gita, which is surely among the most often-translated works in the world. A text of long-standing importance in Hindu traditions, the Bhagavad Gita has had an especially interesting career in modernity, having been of great significance not only for M. K. Gandhi, but also for the likes of Thoreau and Eliot, not to mention the many less widely appreciated interpreters for whom the text's martial setting has been of central significance. After taking some steps to situate this great Sanskrit text in the context of its early Indian history, this course will explore a representative range of its available interpretations. Along the way, it is hoped that we will learn something not only about the Bhagavad Gita, but also about the very ideas of interpretation and understanding.
Instructor(s): Dan Arnold Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 25601

RLST 24503. Dreams in the Ancient World. 100 Units.
Dreams belong to the universals of human existence as human beings have always dreamt and will continue to dream across time and cultures. The questions where do dreams come from and how to unravel a dream have always preoccupied the human mind. In this course we will focus on dreams in the Greco-Roman and Greco-Egyptian cultural environments. We will cover dreams from three complementary perspectives: dreams as experience, dream interpretation and dream theory. The reading materials will include: (a) a selection of dream narratives from different sources, literary texts as well as documentary accounts of dreams; (b) texts which document the forms and contexts of dream interpretation in the Greco-Roman and Greco-Egyptian cultures and (c) texts which represent attempts to approach dreams from a more general perspective by among others explaining their genesis and defining dream-types.
Instructor(s): S. Torallas. A. Maravela Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): CLCV 24519, NEHC 20613, CLAS 34519, ANCM 44519, NEHC 30613

RLST 24504. Dreams, Religion, Psychology. 100 Units.
This course examines the rise of psychological approaches to the nature and functions of dreaming, especially dreams with potentially religious significance. Psychologists have proposed several different models for understanding dreams, starting with the early 20th century work of Freud and Jung and continuing into the 21st century with sleep laboratory research and cognitive neuroscience. Each of these models takes a distinctive stance towards certain recurrent forms and types of dreaming that are frequently interpreted in religious, spiritual, or existential terms. This course will look closely at how well modern psychological theories are able to account for the occurrence of such dreams as reported in historical and contemporary settings.
Instructor(s): staff Terms Offered: Winter

RLST 24505. The Dream in Modern Thought. 100 Units.
This course will address the status accorded to the dream, its position or rank relative to other mental processes, by major thinkers situated in the modern continental tradition. Key themes will include the dream as a mode of expression, the dream as an object of analysis, and the privilege of vigilance in philosophical sources such as Descartes, Nietzsche, Foucault, and Levinas. Our discussion of philosophy, literature, and psychoanalysis will also consider what discourses on dreaming reveal about contemporary configurations of the religious.
Instructor(s): Ryan Coyne Terms Offered: Spring
RLST 24550. Major Trends in Islamic Mysticism. 100 Units.
This course examines Islamic mysticism, commonly known as Sufism, through an exploration of English translations of some of the greatest masterpieces of Sufi literature in Arabic and Persian. The goal is to gain first-hand knowledge of a broad spectrum of literary expressions of Islamic spirituality in their historical context, and to understand exactly what Sufis say, and how they say it. Each of the units will comprise of lectures and close readings of excerpts from the text in Arabic/Persian and English translation.
Instructor(s): Yousef Casewit Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 32419, SIGN 26068

RLST 24800. Foucault and The History of Sexuality. 100 Units.
This course centers on a close reading of the first volume of Michel Foucault’s "The History of Sexuality", with some attention to his writings on the history of ancient conceptualizations of sex. How should a history of sexuality take into account scientific theories, social relations of power, and different experiences of the self? We discuss the contrasting descriptions and conceptions of sexual behavior before and after the emergence of a science of sexuality. Other writers influenced by and critical of Foucault are also discussed.
Instructor(s): A. Davidson Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): One prior philosophy course is strongly recommended.
Equivalent Course(s): FREN 24801, GNSE 23100, CMLT 25001, FNDL 22001, KNOW 27002, HIPS 24300, PHIL 24800

RLST 25105. Readings in Ibn Tufayl's Hayy b. Yaqzan. 100 Units.
A study of Ibn Tufayl's twelfth-century philosophical/mystical romance about a boy spontaneously generated on a desert island who achieves knowledge of God through empirical study of nature. The many themes in Hayy ibn Yaqzan will be studied in relation to the philosophical literature that formed it and in light of modern scholarship about it.
Instructor(s): James T. Robinson Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 15004, NEHC 35004, ISLM 35004, FNDL 25105, HIJD 35004

RLST 25703. Climate Ethics. 100 Units.
Anthropogenic climate change is the largest challenge facing human civilization. Its physical and temporal scale and unprecedented complexity at minimum require extensions of existing ethical systems, if not new ethical tools. In this course we will examine how religious and philosophical ethical systems respond to the vast temporal and spatial scales of climate change. For instance, common principles of environmental ethics such as justice and responsibility are often reimagined in climate ethics even as they are central to the ethical analysis of its effects. In the course, we will take a comparative approach to environmental ethics, examining perspectives from secular Western philosophy, Christianity (Catholic and Protestant), Buddhist, and Indigenous thought. We will also look at a variety of ethical methods. Throughout the course we will focus on communication about climate change as well as articulating rigorous ethical arguments about its causes and implications.
Instructor(s): Sarah Fredericks Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): ENST 25705

RLST 25810. Mystical Theology of Hasidism: The Circle of the Maggid of Mezeritch. 100 Units.
This course is an introduction to the mystical and spiritual theology of early modern Hasidism (late eighteenth century), centering around the first major teacher of the movement and the significant figures who gathered around him (and later founded their own spiritual dynasties). We shall focus of the Scriptural teachings of the Maggid and his circle, emphasizing the hermeneutical insights and daring of these spiritual masters - particularly such issues as radical non-dualism, divine immanence, the contemplative self, service of God through corporeal life, and the unique role of language as the inner-structure of existence. The great masters of this circle include Rabbis Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Yehuda Aryeh Leib of Gur, and Menachem Mendel of Chernobyl.
Instructor(s): M. Fishbane Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): Texts will be studied in English with the Hebrew originals provided. The course is suitable for students in the College and for Divinity School Students in the areas of Jewish Studies, Religion and Literature, and Theology.
Equivalent Course(s): ENST 25705

RLST 25820. Contemporary Jewish Theology: Types of Theological Writing in America. 100 Units.
This course is intended to introduce students to four figures who wrote theology for American audiences - thoroughly engaged with the classic rabbinic tradition but simultaneously seeking a new voice of religious expression. The first two, Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Abraham Joshua Heschel, who came from Eastern European rabbinic dynasties and also trained at the University of Berlin, came to America and stimulated a renaissance after the Holocaust and its religious-cultural catastrophe. The second two, Arthur Green and Michael Fishbane, were born in America and influenced by these and other contemporary theologians, and were part of the renaissance of American Jewish religious life from the late 1960s on. We shall read essays and books by these theologians and assess their modes of composition, reinterpretation of the classical Jewish tradition, and visions for the renewal of Jewish life in contemporary times and circumstances.
Instructor(s): M. Fishbane Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): This course is suitable for student in the College and Divinity School students in the areas of Jewish Studies, Theology and Religion and Literature. There is no language requirement.
Equivalent Course(s): HIJD 44750
RLST 26002. Literature and Hunger. 100 Units.
This course pursues themes of hunger the consumption of food, the formation of community, and relation to the sacred, through a sequence of readings in the Western tradition. By reading classic works (The Odyssey, selections from the Hebrew Bible and Christian Scriptures, selections from The Divine Comedy, the Letters of St. Catherine of Siena, Paradise Lost), and modern works by Kafka, Simone Weil, and Louise Gluck, we will examine how different philosophies have imagined the acceptance or rejection of love, life, and the sacred in terms of the symbolism of food. Class work will involve close analysis of literary works, even those in translation; intensive critical writing; and secondary readings in literary criticism, anthropology, theology, and psychology.
Instructor(s): Rosanna Warren Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): Open to grads
Equivalent Course(s): SCTH 26002, ENGL 26002

RLST 26062. The Jewish Graphic Novel. 100 Units.
Over the past decade, there has been an explosion of "graphic novels" aimed at adult readers concerning Jewish society, history, and religion. This course explores the history of comics through the lens of its Jewish creators and Jewish themes, and the history of twentieth century Jewish culture through the lens of graphic storytelling. We learn to interpret this complex art form that combines words and hand-drawn images, translating temporal progression into a spatial form. Reading American, European, and Israeli narratives, our discussions will focus on autobiographical and journalistic accounts of uprooting, immigration, conflict, and loss. Authors whose work we will study include: Art Spiegelman, Rutu Modan, Leela Corman, Joann Sfar, Joe Sacco, R. Crumb.
Instructor(s): Na'ama Rokem Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): SIGN 26062, JWSC 20701, NEHC 26062, CMLT 20711

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 concurrent rise of distinctive Buddhist responses to modernity and the modern/academic study of Buddhism.
Instructor(s): Christian Wedemeyer Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 26101

RLST 26170. Why Do Animals Talk? Beastly Worlds in South Asian Literature. 100 Units.
Comprised of a diverse set of languages covering a disparate set of regions, South Asian literatures share a deep investment in the figure of the animal. Whether imagined through the genre of political advice, in narrative tellings of the past lives of the Buddha, or simply as characters in an expanded continuum of life, animals serve as important literary devices to reflect on human beings as well as autonomous subjects bound up with humans with their own distinct emotional and spiritual lives. Drawing particularly from the Sanskrit tradition among others, this course will introduce students to a broad survey of animal literature in South Asia alongside more recent scholarship in Animal Studies. By the end of the course, students can expect to have a myriad of answers to the question: why do animals talk?
Instructor(s): Sarah Pierce Taylor Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 26170

RLST 26220. Buddhism and Modernity: East and West. 100 Units.
In the height of nineteenth-century triumph of progress, rationalism, and disenchantment with religion, many European and American intellectuals found inspiration in Buddhism as a spirituality fit for modern times, and expressed it in philosophy, literature, and even opera. On the other side, in Asian societies struggling with colonization, many intellectuals condemned Buddhism as a remnant of premodern superstition, while others hailed it as an essential element for the construction of modern identity and of the superiority of the "spiritual East" against the "materialist West." These debates and images still determine the way in which Buddhism is globally represented today. In this course, we will discuss Buddhism and modernity using examples from various geographical and historical contexts, ranging from Nietzsche, to the American Beat generation, and to contemporary issues of nationalism and violence in South Asia. We will place the careful examination of these topics within the discussion of broader issues, such as the place of religion in modernity, cultural difference and appropriation, and the intersection of religion, gender, and race.
Instructor(s): Paride Stortini Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 26623. Narratives of Assimilation. 100 Units.
This course offers a survey into the manifold strategies of representing the Jewish community in East Central Europe beginning from the nineteenth century to the Holocaust. Engaging the concept of liminality-of a society at the threshold of radical transformation-it will analyze Jewry facing uncertainties and challenges of the modern era and its radical changes. Students will be acquainted with problems of cultural and linguistic isolation, hybrid identity, assimilation, and cultural transmission through a wide array of genres-novel, short story, epic poem, memoir, painting, illustration, film. The course draws on both Jewish and Polish-Jewish sources; all texts are read in English translation.
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): REES 27003, JWSC 20223, NEHC 20223, NEHC 30223, REES 37003
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 Theravāda, a collection of verses written in Pali and the most ancient Indian example of women’s literature, selections from the work of the great Sanskrit poets Aṅgūlośa, Kāpya, and Mātaka, and the mystical songs, in the Apabhraśa language, of the Buddhist tantric saints.
Instructor(s): Matthew Kapstein Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): RLVC 34300, DVPR 34300, HREL 34300, SALC 34300

RLST 26670. Religious Autobiography. 100 Units.
The decision of a person to present in written form the story of their life - and through that, what they take to be their selfhood - has spawned a literary tradition with an abiding and distinctive presence in religion. This course explores the phenomena of specifically religious autobiography as variations on the form of "confession," tracing its roots in early Christianity (Paul and Augustine), and juxtaposing these expressions with readings in a range of authors who adapt the classic articulations of "confession" to their specific selves and contexts: examples will include Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "enlightened" confession, Leo Tolstoy's "Catholicism," 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 general spirit of overt non-conformity.
Instructor(s): Richard Rosengarten Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): RLVC 40020, SIGN 26067

RLST 27250. Religious Trials. 100 Units.
The rhetoric and practice of "trial" -- as testing and as adjudication -- is central to religious thought and religious practice. This course will examine the idea and the act of "trial" comparatively, via the classics of the religious literatures of Judaism and of Christianity (Genesis 22, Job, the Gospel of Mark, "The Pilgrim's Progress," Kafka), and also cinema (Dreyer's "Joan of Arc," R. & S. Elkaebetz's "Gett").
Instructor(s): R. Rosengarten Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): LLSO 27250

RLST 27421. The Body Religious in East Asia. 100 Units.
The course will explore the multifaceted discourse on the body across East Asian religious traditions as well as investigate precedents from other religions in Asia. Students will discuss multiple analytical categories of the body (cosmic body, divine body, etc.) from the point of view of East Asian religions, and assess their usefulness in making sense of religious experiences and ritualized embodied practices.
Instructor(s): Or Porath Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 27421

RLST 27614. Problems in the Study of Gender and Sexuality: Gender and Religion. 100 Units.
In what ways are notions of ideas about religion and the sacred gendered and what are the consequences of this for how we live our lives? This class will be an introduction to the study of the relationships between religion and gender and the way these relationships play out in specific historical situations. Attention will also be paid to the relationships between religions and sexualities. Examples will be drawn from medieval to modern periods, and our attention will primarily be on Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
Instructor(s): Kelli Gardner Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 11008, GNSE 11008

RLST 27640. Problems in the Anthropology of Religion 1. 100 Units.
A two-quarter course sequence surveying of some of the key problems in the anthropology of religion. Topics include belief, meaning and interpretation, ideology, power, embodiment, rationality, alterity, and the politics of representation.
Instructor(s): Alireza Doostdar Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): AASR 33000

RLST 27645. Problems in the Anthropology of Religion 2. 100 Units.
The second course in a two-quarter course sequence surveying of some of the key problems in the anthropology of religion. Topics include belief, meaning and interpretation, ideology, power, embodiment, rationality, alterity, and the politics of representation.
Instructor(s): Alireza Doostdar Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): PQ: Problems in the Anthropology of Religion 1
Equivalent Course(s): AASR 33100
RLST 27650. Anthropology of Religion. 100 Units.
How do anthropologists study religion? This course is an introduction to classic concepts that have defined the social scientific study of religion such as ritual, taboo, transcendence, embodiment, and enchantment. To grasp how fieldwork is paired with theory, we will engage ethnographic writings on Orthodox Christianity in northern Ethiopia, Afro-Caribbean Santería in Chicago, and Islamic jinn veneration in Delhi India. We will further examine various themes in the socio-cultural inquiry of contemporary religion including asceticism, sexuality, sectarianism, and political theology.
Instructor(s): A. Heo Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): AASR 34411, ANTH 23911

RLST 28206. Dostoevsky's Brothers Karamazov. 100 Units.
We will read and interpret The Brothers Karamazov by Dostoevsky. Among major themes are the relation to God and religion to the larger society and state; the problem of evil; and the nature of sin and how it enters into religious beliefs; human "freedom," and what the word might have meant to Dostoevsky; and love.
Instructor(s): S. Meredith Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Required of new Fundamentals majors; open to others with consent of instructor.
Note(s): Fundamentals majors get first priority.
Equivalent Course(s): FNDL 20200, REES 20200

RLST 28211. Intro to Religion and Literature: Dramatic Encounters. 100 Units.
This course will explore some of the major statements from the Western intellectual tradition on religion and literature as categories of thought, forms of human expression and communication, and sources of personal and social meaning. We will pay close attention to the various ways that the relationship between these two concepts has been understood and constructed by artists, philosophers, and theologians alike. Students from all concentrations are welcome; no prior knowledge or foreign language competency is required for enrollment.
Instructor(s): Matthew Creighton Terms Offered: Winter

RLST 28350. Chan and Zen Buddhism. 100 Units.
Instructor(s): Brook Ziporyn Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 28350

RLST 28504. Interactions b/w Jewish Phil. and Lit.in Middle Ages. 100 Units.
Any study of Jewish philosophy that focuses on a small collection of systematic summas tells only half the story. In this seminar, the emphasis will be shifted from canonical theologies to lesser-known works of literature. Each class will examine the way a different genre was used to defend philosophy and teach it to the community at large. Emphasis will be on literary form and style, rhetoric, methods of teaching and argumentation, all in relation to questions about reception and dissemination, progress and creativity, science and religion.
Instructor(s): James T. Robinson Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): Open to undergraduates.
Equivalent Course(s): HIJD 42700, RLVC 42700, ISLM 42700

RLST 28511. Star Wars and Religion. 100 Units.
This course puts religious texts in conversation with George Lucas’s popular Star Wars film franchise with an eye toward understanding the power of myth in human life. In interviews, Lucas said he took bits and pieces from a variety of religious traditions to create the mythology of Star Wars. Through close readings of the films and primary texts, students will analyze these influences and evaluate how well the films hold these religious elements together. This course is not an in-depth study of any one religious tradition, but draws elements from different traditions to shed light on the portrayal of religion within Star Wars (i.e., the Force) and the metaphysical and moral themes found in the Star Wars films.
Instructor(s): R. Johnson Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 28705. Christian Iconography. 100 Units.
In Christian culture, visual images have for many centuries played a pivotal role in ritual, devotion, intellectual thought, and religious instruction. The most important aims of this course are that students understand images convey meaning in very unique ways and learn how to decode their visual messages. The study of iconography encompasses a variety of methods used to identify the subject matter of a pictorial image, describe its contents, and analyze its discursive strategies in view of its original cultural context. We will cover some of the most important themes visualized in the arts of Christianity by analyzing imagery spanning different periods, geographical regions, pictorial media, and artistic techniques. While special emphasis is placed on the intersections of art and literature, we will also examine pictorial themes that are independent of a specific textual basis. Alongside the study of Christian iconography, this course will address broader issues of visual inquiry, such as patronage, viewer response, emotions, and gender roles. In this course, students will acquire a 'visual literacy' that will enable them to explore all kinds of works of art fruitfully as primary sources in their own right.
Instructor(s): Karin Krause Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): P/Q: This course is open to all undergraduate students who are interested in the course topic. You certainly do not need to be an adherent of the Christian faith to take this course. However, a basic familiarity with some of the foundational texts of Christianity (esp. the Bible) and its main (Biblical) protagonists is not a disadvantage.
Equivalent Course(s): ARTH 38705, ARTH 28705, MDVL 28705
RLST 28881. Secrecy and Exemplarity: On Parables and Their Interpretation, from the Bible to Walter Benjamin. 100 Units.

A parable - usually defined as "a short narrative told for an ulterior purpose" - should be easy to understand, given its apparent simplicity and didacticism. So why does it turn out to be so difficult, in practice, to interpret parables? From Jesus's parables and Plato's famous parable of the cave onward, parables have led reader after reader to the disturbing realization that it might in fact be the parables which read their interpreters, and not the other way around! In this course, we'll ask how it is that this particular literary form so deftly articulates the relations between text and reader, narrative and interpretation, literature and religion, secrecy and power, sign and meaning, concealment and revelation, fiction and truth. The course serves as both an introduction to the history of the many ways interpreters have engaged the parabolic form in religious, literary, and philosophical contexts, on the one hand, and a chance to develop the intensity and rigor of our own close-reading practices, on the other. Besides biblical and rabbinic parables, we will read parables in works by Plato, Maimonides, La Fontaine, Pascal, G.E. Lessing, Kant, Andersen, Hawthorne, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Kafka, W. Benjamin, and O. Welles.

Instructor(s): Sam Catlin Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 28881, CMLT 28881, JWSC 28881, GRMN 28881

RLST 28900. Magic, Science, and Religion. 100 Units.

The relationship between the categories of magic, science, and religion has been a problem for modern social science since its inception in the nineteenth century. In the first half of this course, we will critically examine some of the classical and contemporary approaches to these concepts. In the second half, we will explore a number of detailed historical and ethnographic studies about modern phenomena that call some of the fundamental assumptions behind these categories into question.

Instructor(s): A. Doostdar Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): AASR 30501, KNOW 28900, ANTH 23906

RLST 28989. Virtual Realities and Religious Realities. 100 Units.

Virtual reality is at the cutting edge of modern technology and stands to impact many aspect of contemporary life. At the same time, religious and philosophical sources have been thinking the concept of virtuality for centuries. Responding to popular efforts to ask how religion should respond to advances in technology and mass media, we will ask how religious thought has laid the groundwork for and even anticipated these advances, and therefore how it can be used as a resource to address contemporary ethical and political challenges. This class will take us from ancient Jerusalem to cyberspace in order to interrogate the various contexts and guises in which the problem of virtual reality has appeared. Doing so will ask us to think about memory and the archive, temporality and history, faith and truth, immanence and transcendence, robots and even ghosts.

Instructor(s): Matthew Peterson Terms Offered: Winter

RLST 29015. Religion and Rationality after Modernity. 100 Units.

This course provides an introduction to the relationship between religion and rationality as it has been conceived in the post-Enlightenment West. It is intended to provide students with a basic historical and theoretical framework for thinking about how these categories relate, how they have evolved, and what the work they do in our contemporary society. Our readings will challenge easy definitions of either "religion" or "rationality" (as well as their respective cognates), problematizing any neat opposition between (or conflation of) them. While these notions will serve to structure our overarching conversation, they also implicate corresponding binaries, such as nature and culture, universal and particular, fact and value, history and myth, empiricism and ideology. Readings will include seminal works by Kant, Hölderlin, Hegel, Marx, Weber, Cassirer, Eliade, Foucault, Butler, Latour, Asad, and Mahmood.

Instructor(s): Lisa Hedrick Terms Offered: Winter

RLST 29016. Theology without God. 100 Units.

This course examines recent scholarship that in some sense identifies as doing theology "without God". To this end, we will read a number of theological works characterized by what they are "after" - including, but not limited to, theology after Auschwitz, after modernism, after secularism, and after atheism. Students will leave with an understanding of what it means to do theology when "God" in some sense ceases to be a viable notion.

Instructor(s): Lisa Hedrick Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 29040. Wars of Religion and Regimes of Toleration. 100 Units.

There is a standard narrative that the brutality and instability of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century wars of religion gave rise to regimes of religious toleration and, eventually, separation of church and state. This narrative continues, arguing that the civil peace enjoyed today in much of the developed world depends upon barring religious commitments from the political sphere. This course will seek to interrogate this narrative and its assumptions through readings and discussions of primary sources, classic and contemporary historiography, and works of political and social theory. In doing so, students will be exposed not only to alternative understandings of the wars of religions and the origins of regimes of toleration, but will also be asked to consider some possible limits to and blind spots of liberal democracy.

Instructor(s): David Lyons Terms Offered: Winter. Winter Quarter
Prerequisite(s): None
Equivalent Course(s): LLSO 29040
RLST 29103. Representations of Islam in Early Modern England. 100 Units.
This seminar explores the representation of Islam and Islamic cultures in early modern English literature, from the 1580s to the 1650s with a primary but not exclusive focus on drama. What enduring fantasies about the Islamic world does early modern English literature express? How do religion, race, gender, and sexuality intersect in the formation of those fantasies? How do specific English social, political, and cultural issues inform literary representations of Islam? Ultimately, what do texts about Islam tell us about early modern England?
Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Limited to 15 students, generally third- and fourth-year English majors but is open to all undergraduates; focuses on the analytical, research, and bibliographic skills necessary for producing a substantial seminar paper
Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 29103

RLST 29700. Reading/Research: Rlst. 100 Units.
No description available. 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.
Terms Offered: Autumn,Winter,Spring
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.
Prerequisite(s): Consent of faculty supervisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies.
Note(s): RLST 29800 and 29900 form a two-quarter sequence that is required of fourth-year students who are majoring in Religious Studies. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form.

RLST 29900. BA Paper II. 100 Units.
This class meets weekly to assist students in the preparation of drafts of their BA paper, which are formally presented and critiqued.
Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): RLST 29800 and 29900 form a two-quarter sequence that is required of fourth-year students who are majoring in Religious Studies. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form.
Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

- Times was used instead of Trajan.
- Times was used instead of Palatino.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.