Religious Studies

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

Program of Study

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

Program Requirements

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

Students with permission to enroll in graduate Divinity courses may count these toward the major. Students who wish to receive credit in the major for non-departmental courses must submit a petition to the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Such requests are decided on a case-by-case basis. NOTE: The Office of the Dean of Students in the College must also approve the transfer of all courses taken at institutions other than those in which students are enrolled as part of a study abroad program that is sponsored by the University of Chicago. For more information, visit Transfer Credit (http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/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 10102 Religion, Reason, and the State, RLST 11004 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, and RLST 12000 Introduction to the New Testament: Texts and Contexts.

Course Distribution

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

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

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

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

Senior Seminar and BA Paper

The two-quarter senior sequence (RLST 29800 BA Paper Seminar I and RLST 29900 BA Paper II) will assist students in the Research Track with the preparation of the required BA paper. During May of their third year, students will work with the preceptor to choose a faculty adviser and a topic for research, and to plan a course of study for the following year. These must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students will
Religious Studies majors must take part in the BA Paper Seminar convened by a preceptor during Autumn and Winter Quarters. This seminar will allow students to prepare their bibliographies, hone their writing, and present their research. Students will register for RLST 29800 BA Paper Seminar I in the Autumn Quarter and for RLST 29900 BA Paper II in the Winter Quarter. The BA paper will be due the second week of Spring Quarter. The length is typically between thirty and forty pages, with the upward limit being firm.

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

**Grading**

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

**Honors**

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

**Summary of Requirements**

### Regular Track

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

### Research Track

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

### Minor Program in Religious Studies

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

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</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>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Units: 600

**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): Ryan Coyne Terms Offered: Winter

Note(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.

**RLST 10101. Religion, Reason, and Critique. 100 Units.**

This course is part of a two-quarter sequence in Religious Studies (along with ‘Religion, Reason, and the State’) exploring the work of key theorists and thinkers on the role of religion in the formation of modernity. Central questions in this course include: how do religious belief and practice influence and inform modern accounts of reason? What is critique, and how does religion emerge in modernity as the object of critique par excellence?

Instructor(s): Ryan Coyne Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): No prerequisites.

Note(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors. Students may enroll in either one of the courses in this sequence independently of the other course.

**RLST 10102. Religion, Reason, and the State. 100 Units.**

The second quarter of this sequence explores the work of key theorists on the role of religion in modern society, politics, and the state. Central questions include: How has state power transformed religious institutions, knowledge, and practice? How can we account for the persistence of religious commitments in the face of secularization? What role has religion played in revolutionary movements and in resistance against state power?

Instructor(s): Alireza Doostdar Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): No prerequisites.

Note(s): This is the second of a two-quarter sequence. Students may enroll in either one of the courses in this sequence independently of the other course. This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.

**RLST 11004. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible. 100 Units.**

The course will survey the contents of the Hebrew Bible, and introduce critical questions regarding its figures and ideas, its literary qualities and anomalies, the history of its composition and transmission, its relation to other artifacts from the biblical period, its place in the history and society of ancient Israel and Judea, and its relation to the larger culture of the ancient Near East.

Instructor(s): Simeon Chavel Terms Offered: Autumn

Note(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.

Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 20504, HIJD 31004, BIBL 31000, NEHC 30504, JWSC 20120

**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): Margaret Mitchell Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): Interest in this literature, and willingness to enter into conversation with like-minded and non-like-minded others on the texts and the issues involved in their interpretation.

Note(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.

Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 12500, FNDL 28202, BIBL 32500
RLST 13500. History of Christian Thought V: Modern Religious Thought. 100 Units.
This course will consider key figures in 'modern' religious thought, including Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Troeltsh, and Barth, paying particular attention to two issues: the possibility of freedom in the face of law-like necessities, and the possibility of thinking for oneself.
Instructor(s): Kevin Hector Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): HCHR 30900, THEO 30700

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): TBD Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Graduate and undergraduate students from any department are welcome to register. The absolute minimum prerequisite for IQA I is knowledge of the Arabic script. Training equivalent to at least a quarter of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is highly desirable. The IQA sequence is also open to students who may have had more exposure to Arabic (modern or classical) but wish to acquire a solid foundation in Arabic grammar, and/or students who feel they are not yet ready for third-year Arabic courses.
Equivalent Course(s): NELC 30100, ISLM 30100

RLST 15200. Introductory Qur'anic Arabic II. 100 Units.
This course is the second in a 3-quarter sequence 'Introduction to Qur'anic Arabic' (IQA), which aims to provide students with foundational philological and reading skills by covering the essentials of Qur'anic/Classical Arabic grammar. This course also features readings of select passages from the Qur'an, hadith and Tafsir. The 3 quarters of IQA are sequential, and students are strongly encouraged to join in the first quarter. Exceptions can be made on a case by case basis.
Instructor(s): TBD 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): TBD 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 16101. Reading Hebrew for Research Purposes. 100 Units.
This course is designed for students who already have a basic knowledge of modern of Biblical Hebrew (at least one first year course). The main objective is to teach students a broad range of skills necessary to read scholarly articles and primary materials in students' fields of study, written in Modern Hebrew. Due to the fact that the background of each student is different as far as his or hers past experience with Hebrew, a grammar survey is going to be the first step. The goal of this course is for the students to achieve high comprehension level. (Please note: This course does not intend to teach official rules and forms of translation). By the end of the course, students should feel confident in their ability to read any given Hebrew text, fiction and non-fiction.
Instructor(s): Staff
Prerequisite(s): Students should have at least two years of Modern Hebrew and/or one year of Biblical Hebrew. Students should be able to read Hebrew texts without vowels as well as cursive Hebrew.
Equivalent Course(s): HEBR 20201

RLST 16102. Reading Hebrew for Research Purposes. 100 Units.
The main objective is to teach students a broad range of skills necessary to read scholarly articles and primary materials in students' fields of study, written in Modern Hebrew. Due to the fact that the background of each student is different as far as his or hers past experience with Hebrew, a grammar survey is going to be the first step. The goal of this course is for the students to achieve high comprehension level. (Please note: This course does not intend to teach official rules and forms of translation). By the end of the course, students should feel confident in their ability to read any given Hebrew text, fiction and non-fiction.
Instructor(s): Staff Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Students should have at least two years of Modern Hebrew and/or one year of Biblical Hebrew. Students should be able to read Hebrew texts without vowels as well as cursive Hebrew.
Equivalent Course(s): HEBR 20202
RLST 16500. The Radiant Pearl: Introduction to Syriac Literature and its Historical Contexts. 100 Units.
After Greek and Latin, Syriac literature represents the third largest corpus of writings from the formative centuries of Christianity. This course offers students a comprehensive overview of the dominant genres and history of Syriac-speaking Christians from the early centuries through the modern day. Moving beyond traditional historiography that focuses exclusively on early Christianity within the Roman Empire, this class examines Christian traditions that took root in the Persian and later Islamic Empires as well. Through studying the history and literature of Syriac-speaking Christians, the global reach of early Christianity and its diversity comes to the fore. Syriac-speaking Christians preached the Gospel message from the Arabian Peninsula to early modern China and India. Syriac writers also raised female biblical figures and holy women to prominent roles within their works. Students will broaden their understanding of the development of Christian thought as they gain greater familiarity with understudied voices and visions for Christian living found within Syriac literature. Special attention will be paid to biblical translation, asceticism, poetry, differences between ecclesial communities as well as the changing political fortunes of Syriac-speaking populations. No previous knowledge or study expected.
Instructor(s): Erin Galgay Walsh Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): HCHR 36500, GNSE 36505, BIBL 36500, NEHC 36500, GNSE 26505, NEHC 26500

RLST 20201. Islamicate Civilization I: 600-950. 100 Units.
This course covers the rise and spread of Islam, the Islamic empire under the Umayyad and early Abbasid caliphs, and the emergence of regional Islamic states from Afghanistan and eastern Iran to North Africa and Spain. The main focus will be on political, economic and social history.
Instructor(s): Ahmed El Shamsy Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): The Islamicate Civilization sequence does not fulfill the General Ed requirements
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 20201, HIST 15611, MDVL 20201, HIST 35621, ISLM 30201, NEHC 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
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, MDVL 20202, HIST 35622, ISLM 30202, NEHC 20202, NEHC 30202

RLST 20203. Islamicate Civilization III: 1750-Present. 100 Units.
This course covers the period from ca. 1750 to the present, focusing on Western military, economic, and ideological encroachment; the impact of such ideas as nationalism and liberalism; efforts at reform in the Islamic states; the emergence of the ‘modern’ Middle East after World War I; the struggle for liberation from Western colonial and imperial control; the Middle Eastern states in the cold war era; and local and regional conflicts.
Instructor(s): Holly Shissler Terms Offered: Spring
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 20235. The Hebrew Bible and the Shoah. 100 Units.
This course explores the use of biblical literature in Holocaust and post-Holocaust works. The first part focuses on the work of religious thinkers from across the religious spectrum, from the Warsaw ghetto sermons of the orthodox rabbi Kalonymos Shapira to the unique interpretation of the ‘suffering servant’ by Reform rabbi Ignaz Maybaum. We will see that the question of God’s whereabouts during the massacre produced an explosion of biblically-inspired theologies, stemming from Buber, Heschel, and Berkovits’ different conceptions of a ‘divine eclipse’ (hester panim) to Melissa Raphael’s audacious affirmation of the presence of the female divine face in Auschwitz. The traditional approach to the Hebrew Bible itself was radically questioned: Fackenheim argued that biblical exegesis had to be thoroughly revised, and André Neher sketched a hermeneutics of biblical silence. In the second part of the course we turn to the influence the Hebrew Bible had on the works of literarily oriented writers and how they reflected on the Shoah. In genres as distinct as poetry and testimony, in authors as different as Chava Rosenfarb and Primo Levi, one sees biblical characters, stories, motifs, and literary forms given unprecedented ambivalence and poignancy. This is true whether the biblical reference is deployed in ironic denunciations of the divine (Shayevitsh, Modolowski), in appeals to a newfound hope (Wiesel, Agnon), or in psalmodic hymns to the senselessness of it all (Sachs, Celan).
Instructor(s): Aslan Mizrahi Cohen
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 20235

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): HIST 25610, MDVL 20601, SOCS 22000, NEHC 20601

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 is recommended but not required. This course meets the general education requirement in civilization studies.
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 20602, HIST 25615, SOCS 22100, 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): Orit Bashkin
Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): SOCS 22200, NEHC 20603, HIST 25616

RLST 20440. Pure Land Buddhism. 100 Units.
This course will explore the motif of the ‘Pure Land’ in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and its attendant applications to Buddhist practice, faith, devotional, and doctrine. We will examine the textual sources on the bodhisattva vows and specific entailments of various pure lands in Indic Mahāyāna scripture, and then the development of Pure Land thought and practice in China and Japan, including its expression in Tiantai and Jodo Shinshu traditions.
Instructor(s): Brook Ziporyn
Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 40440, HREL 40440
RLST 21004. The Bible and 21st Century American Politics. 100 Units.
Since the founding of the United States (and even before), the bible has served an unparalleled role as a source of wisdom and authority for American politicians and jurists at all levels of government. In this course, we will examine ways in which contemporary politicians have appealed to the literature of the Hebrew Bible and New Testaments in support of a variety of arguments concerning how the United States should operate. Beginning with a short introduction to the role of the bible as a foundational and authoritative document in America, we will spend subsequent weeks focusing on particular topics relevant to American politics (the environment, immigration, race, abortion, the Second Amendment) and the biblical materials that are frequently mustered in arguments over these issues. We will endeavor to make sense of the relevant passages in their original historical and cultural contexts as well as their use in contemporary political discourses.
Instructor(s): Marshall Cunningham Terms Offered: Autumn

RLST 21010. God and the Good. 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, Feuerbach, as well as more recent voices like Martin Luther King and contemporary critics of religion.
Instructor(s): David Barr Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Completion of the HUMA requirement
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
Equivalent Course(s): ENST 21020

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: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 40470, FNDL 24106, JWSC 21107, HREL 45401, ISLM 45400, RLVC 45400, HIJD 45400, MDVL 25400

RLST 21275. Theologies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. 100 Units.
What are the life factors and specific contexts that amazingly gave rise to religious thinking in the 1960s Third World theologies? And what are the relations among gender, culture, politics, and economics in these global theologies? This class compares and contrasts various systems and methods in contemporary theologies, male and female, in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. As we engage these systems of thought, we want to examine the logic of their theologies and the sources used to construct knowledge -- particularly the relation between the materiality of context and the imagination of theology.
Instructor(s): Dwight Hopkins Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): CES 21275, LACS 21275

RLST 21330. Despair and Consolation: Emotion and Affect in Late-Medieval and Reformation Christianity. 100 Units.
The course surveys major texts in Christian thought and culture from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries, and it focuses on how these authors understood despair—a central theme in the writings of many women and men, secular and religious—and how, if at all, despair may be remedied. We will think alongside these late-medieval and early-modern figures about the phenomenon of emotion, the relations between feeling and knowing, possible responses to (especially negative) affects, and how religious belief, practice, and experience shape and are shaped by emotional life. Major historical figures to be read include: Catherine of Siena, Gerard, Christine de Pisan, Julian of Norwich, Heinrich Kramer, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Teresa of Avila, and Michel de Montaigne. We will also read selected contemporary voices in affect theory and disability studies to hone our critical and analytical resources for interpreting the primary texts.
Instructor(s): M. Vanderpoel Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 22121, GNSE 21330, MDVL 21330
RLST 21406. Contemporary Religious Ethics I. 100 Units.
This is the first quarter of a three-quarter sequence of courses examining the rise and development of contemporary religious ethics. We will examine pioneering work that established a new style of scholarship and ethical argumentation during the ‘quiet revolution’ when the study of religion gained an institutional footing in many North American colleges and universities in the 1950s and 60s. This quarter’s readings developed in the wake of that revolution and address moral controversies that arose within the cultural and intellectual ferment of the 1970s and 80s. The course is reading intensive, and it will focus on attempts to craft a method for doing religious ethics in the 1970s that aimed to situate the study of ethics within the academic study of religion and the humanities more generally. These efforts were soon challenged by theories about the importance of history, interpretation, and power in the humanities and social sciences in the 1980s. Hence the title of this cycle: Method and History (1970-1990). Readings include works by Gene Outka, Sumner Twiss and David Little, John P. Reeder, Jr., Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Michel Foucault, Michael Walzer, and Stephen Toulmin and Albert Jonsen. The course aims to introduce students to styles, genres, and patterns of moral reasoning and to innovative work in religious ethics as a foundation for future scholarship in the field.
Instructor(s): Richard Miller Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): Enrollment in other courses in this sequence is not required to enroll in this course.
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 30802

RLST 21407. Contemporary Religious Ethics II: Identity and Difference. 100 Units.
This is the second of my three-quarter sequence of courses examining the rise and development of contemporary religious ethics. It will continue examining pioneering work that established a new style of scholarship and ethical argumentation during the ‘quiet revolution’ when the study of religion gained an institutional footing in North American colleges and universities. Readings will examine theories of subject formation; cultural norms and human agency; relationships between human and non-human animals; religion and global conflict; race, gender, and politics; and challenges and opportunities that encountering the Other poses for ethical responsibility and coexistence in political life. Hence the title of this cycle: Identity and Difference (1990-2010). Authors include William F. May, William LaFleur, Cornel West, Charles Taylor, Judith Butler, Avishai Margalit, Lisa Sideris, Saba Mahmood, Aaron Stalnaker, John Kelsay, and Jeffrey Stout. Over the arc of the quarter we will examine how normative inquiry moves across overlapping domains of religion, culture, politics, and science. This course will be followed by Contemporary Religious Ethics III: Peril and Responsibility (2010-2020), next year.
Instructor(s): Richard Miller Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): Enrollment in other courses in this sequence is not required to enroll in this course. Doctoral students in the RETH area are encouraged to enroll in both quarters.
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 30803

RLST 22010-22011-22012. Jewish Civilization I-II-III.
Jewish Civilization is a three-quarter sequence that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient beginnings through its rabbinic and medieval transformations to its modern manifestations. Through investigation of primary texts—biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, mystical, historical, documentary, and literary—students will acquire a broad overview of Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness while reflecting in greater depth on major themes, ideas, and events in Jewish history. The Autumn course will deal with antiquity to the medieval period; the Winter course will begin with the early modern period and continue to the present. The Spring course will vary as to special topic; for the Spring course to count towards the general education requirement in civilization studies, the student must also take the Autumn and Winter courses. Note: Jewish Studies revised its civilization studies courses in academic year 2018-19. Students who began the requirement prior to Autumn Quarter 2018 under the previous course options, may complete it with those courses that remain available, or (with prior approval from the JWSC director of undergraduate studies) they may combine them with the new course options, provided that they fulfill the requirement to take one JWSC course in the ancient or medieval period and one in the modern period. Only students who have taken JWSC courses prior to academic year 2018-19 are eligible to complete the program under the prior system.

RLST 22010. Jewish Civilization I: Ancient Beginnings to Medieval Period. 100 Units.
Jewish Civilization is a three-quarter sequence that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient beginnings through its rabbinic and medieval transformations to its modern manifestations. Through investigation of primary texts—biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, mystical, historical, documentary, and literary—students will acquire a broad overview of Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness while reflecting in greater depth on major themes, ideas, and events in Jewish history. The autumn quarter 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 Other TBA Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 22010, JWSC 12000, 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): S. Hammerschlag J. Kirzane 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’aama Rokem Terms Offered: Spring 
Note(s): Students who wish to take this course for Civilization Studies credit, must also take Jewish Civilization I and II. The course may also be taken as an independent elective. 
Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 12003, JWSC 12003, NEHC 12003

RLST 22132. Science/Fiction/Theory. 100 Units. 
Science fiction has enjoyed an extraordinary and still growing resurgence in popularity over the last two decades - through literature, film, video games, and even universities, where it is the subject of ever more courses being taught. Why has science fiction become so popular? Does it express the anxieties of a way of life that can’t be sustained, is in decline, and might soon end, in the face of intractable war, lurching financial crises, recurrent pandemics and unchecked climate change? Does it speak to the senses of radical hope and irreparable despair about the future that seem to characterize our time? If so, then science fiction today is grappling with traditionally theological themes: fate and finitude, immortality and the nature of divinity, the place of the human within a cosmic scale, and the possibilities for redemption and messianic rupture. This course will explore these themes by pairing sci-fi literature and film with readings in philosophy and social theory. Throughout, we will ask how science fiction’s propensity toward the theological allows it to grapple with the unique forms of hope and despair in our time, and in times past.  
Instructor(s): Alireza Doostdar and Hussein Ali Agrama Terms Offered: Spring 
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 22132

RLST 22313. The Lord’s Business: Evangelical Christianity and Corporate Capitalism in Modern America. 100 Units. 
Throughout United States history, Christianity and capitalism have been inseparable forces for the social and cultural development of the American nation, for better or worse. That is not to say, however, that the relationship between ‘faith’ and ‘finance’ has been stable over time. As economic and religious practices met in fluid social worlds, Christians often debated the boundaries of moral behavior under disparate capitalist regimes. At the end of the nineteenth century, mainline Protestants struggled to reconcile the patronage of industrialist benefactors with the social ravages of industrial capitalism. As some Protestants moved towards a critique of capitalism under the ‘Social Gospel,’ others came to embrace new forms of capital and their assumed spiritual effects. This course will investigate the resulting history of fundamentalist and evangelical Protestant support for and appropriation of ‘corporate capitalism’ across the twentieth century. We will engage a series of historical inquiries: On what grounds did certain early-century Protestants defend capitalist society? How did these groups engage capitalism, its ideals and its markets? Moreover, how did capitalism and capitalists, religious or otherwise, respond to this support? What influences, if any, has conservative Protestantism had on economic practice itself? Finally, how can the legacy of corporate, evangelical capitalism shape understandings of recent religious, economic and political issues? 
Instructor(s): Greg Chatterley Terms Offered: Winter
RLST 22406. A Medieval Menagerie: Animal Spirituality in the Middle Ages. 100 Units.
In contemporary philosophy, ethics, and literature, a subject attracting more and more attention is animals -
human animals, non-human animals, and the complex relation between these paradigmatic others. The aim
of this course is to consider many of the same problems and questions raised in modern discourse from the
perspective of ancient and medieval sources. Drawing from a diverse corpus of texts - Aristotelian, Neoplatonic,
Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Muslim - the course will explore the richness of the medieval traditions of animal
symbolism, and the complexity of medieval human beings’ understanding of themselves in relationship to their
familiar and immanently present confreres in the world of nature.
Instructor(s): James Robinson Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 41100, HREL 41101, RLVC 41100, MDVL 21100, JWSC 26252, HIJD 31100

RLST 22555. Narration and Law: Levinas’s Talmudic Readings and the Imperative of Ethics. 100 Units.
This is a seminar that will closely read the Jewish writings of Emmanuel Levinas, in particular, the talmudic
exegesis that he undertook for the French Jewish Community in the 1990s. Levinas explicates his ethical theories
via the recovery of a series of texts from the Babylonian Talmud, the classic text of Jewish law, literature, and
theo-philosophic interpretation.
Instructor(s): Laurie Zoloth Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): Course is in English translation
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 52555

RLST 22605. Europe’s Intellectual Transformations, Renaissance through Enlightenment. 100 Units.
This course will consider the foundational transformations of Western thought from the end of the Middle Ages
to the threshold of modernity. It will provide an overview of the three self-conscious and interlinked intellectual
revolutions which reshaped early modern Europe: the Renaissance revival of antiquity, the ‘new philosophy’ of
the seventeenth century, and the light and dark faces of the Enlightenment. It will treat scholasticism, humanism,
the scientific revolution, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Voltaire, Diderot, and Sade.
Instructor(s): A. Palmer Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Students taking FREN 29322/39322 must read French texts in French.
Note(s): First-year students and non-History majors welcome.
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 39522, HCHR 39522, FREN 29322, FREN 39322, HIST 29522, SIGN
26036, KNOW 39522

RLST 22700. Law in Biblical Literature. 100 Units.
The course will survey topics of biblical law, recover biblical legal reasoning, compare biblical law with
comparable ancient Near Eastern records and literature, reconsider the nature of biblical legal composition,
interpret biblical legal passages within their larger compositions as pieces of literature, analyze several non-legal
biblical texts for the legal interpretation embedded in them, and engage modern scholarship on all these aspects.
In addition to preparing to discuss assigned biblical texts, students will also work towards composing an original
piece of sustained analysis submitted at quarter’s end.
Instructor(s): Simeon Chavel Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): 1 year biblical Hebrew + 1 course in Hebrew Bible
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 22702, BIBL 32700, HIJD 32700, NEHC 32700

RLST 23112. Deconstruction and Religion. 100 Units.
A careful study of the development of deconstruction and the role that religion and religious text play in it.
We will pay particular attention to Derrida’s writings and lecture courses during the 1970s, from Margins of
Philosophy and Glas to The Post Card. We will then use this material to reexamine his later writings on religion.
Instructor(s): Ryan Coyne Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 50112, THEO 50112

RLST 23310. Feminism and Islamic Studies. 100 Units.
The goals of this course are three-fold: 1- To examine the (geo)politics of feminism as a Euro-American
emancipatory project as it pertains to Muslim-majority societies; 2- to probe the conceptual work made possible
by the categories of ‘woman’ and ‘gender’ as pioneered by feminist scholars specifically in relation to the history
and anthropology of Islam; and 3- to study and evaluate self-consciously reformist projects engaging with the
Islamic tradition in the modern period and the complexities of their relationship with Euro-American feminism.
Rather than treating these goals in a strictly chronological manner, we will keep them in tension throughout the
course.
Instructor(s): Alireza Doostdar Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): By permission only. Students should write a one-paragraph statement about why they would like
to take this course and what kind of prior preparation they have.
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 43310, GNSE 23010, AASR 43310, ANTH 42450, ISLM 43310
RLST 23599. Christian and Anti-Christian: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche on Religion and Morality. 100 Units.
This course explores two radically different assessments of religion and morality, one by the Protestant thinker Søren Kierkegaard, and the other by an arch-critic of religion and morality, Friedrich Nietzsche. The course will focus on their assessments of Christian faith and its relation to morality and the human good. Both thinkers wrote in complex and confusing styles: Kierkegaard used pseudonyms; Nietzsche wrote in aphorisms. In order to explore their styles of writing and their critiques of religion and morality we will read Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling as well as Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals. The general aim of the course, then, is to explore two seminal minds in the development of Western thought with the question in mind of their possible contribution to current theological and ethical thinking.
Instructor(s): William Schweiker Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 33599, THEO 33599, FNDL 23599

RLST 23706. Calvin: Piety, Politics, and the Theater of God’s Glory. 100 Units.
This seminar will engage a close reading of John Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion (1559) in English translation, examining how the masterwork moves and instructs its readers toward correlative knowledge of God and of self. We will attend to Calvin’s elaboration of true religion or ‘piety’—especially to his picture of the repair and reorientation of the sensing, feeling, willing, and knowing self before God—and to his depiction of rightly ordered individual, corporate, and civic life over against the bondage of the will and tyrannous powers. The course will further a reading of the work as a rhetorical and pedagogical whole.
Instructor(s): Kristine Culp Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): Open to graduate students by permission of instructor.
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 33706, FNDL 23706

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

RLST 23820. Shame. 100 Units.
This course will consider the nature of shame, its potential harms and benefits, and possible of redeeming/being redeemed from it.
Instructor(s): Kevin Hector Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 23906. Ethics, Nature, Dao. 100 Units.
Some worldviews assert that human beings exist somehow apart from the natural world. Humans are to have dominion over it, for example, or to transcend it entirely. In many works of traditional Chinese religion, philosophy, and art, however, we find something quite different, a picture in which the human being is seamlessly of the world. The cosmos is at play within her, Daoist traditions teach; Chinese landscape paintings were at times understood to depict a world in which rivers, trees, and humans alike follow cosmic patterns; the great Song Dynasty poet Su Shi, in a line beloved of later Chan and Zen Buddhist writers, wrote that ‘the sounds of valleys are [the Buddha’s] long broad tongue.’ These worldviews are not ecological, precisely-ecology is a modern science, not a traditional ethos—but works of Chinese philosophy and art that evince them offer profound resources for thinking in the mode known now as the environmental humanities. We will explore our works as resources for thinking in our age of climate crisis—at least in part. We will also read them, and stay true to them, as works of traditional Chinese art and thought.
Instructor(s): P. Copp Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 23903
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
Equivalent Course(s): HLTH 24103, SIGN 26069, RETH 30600, BIOS 29216

RLST 24106. Introduction to Environmental Ethics. 100 Units.
This course will examine answers to four questions that have been foundational to environmental ethics: Are religious traditions responsible for environmental crises? To what degree can religions address environmental crises? Does the natural world have intrinsic value in addition to instrumental value to humans, and does the type of value the world has imply anything about human responsibility? What point of view (anthropocentrism, biocentrism, theocentrism) should ground an environmental ethic? Since all four of the above questions are highly contested questions, we will examine a constellation of responses to each question. During the quarter we will read texts from a wide variety of religious and philosophical perspectives, though I note that the questions we are studying arose out of the western response to environmental crises and so often use that language. Some emphasis will be given to particularly influential texts, thinkers, and points of view in the scholarship of environmental ethics. As the questions above indicate, the course prioritizes theoretical issues in environmental ethics that can relate to many different applied subjects (e.g. energy, water, animals, climate change) rather than emphasizing these applied issues themselves. Taking this focus will give you the background necessary to work on such issues.
Instructor(s): Sarah Fredericks Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): PBPL 20702, RETH 30702, KNOW 30702, ENST 24106, KNOW 20702, LLSO 24106

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): Richard B. Miller Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): FNDSL 24500

RLST 24160. Whom am I to Judge? Relativism and Religious Difference. 100 Units.
How do we evaluate people who are different from us? What grounds our evaluation of human behaviors or beliefs? At the end of the 20th century, comparative analyses of religious beliefs and ethics were heavily criticized for their ethnocentric tendencies; researchers were blamed for importing their own values on the ‘other’. More recently, however, the pendulum seems to have swung in the other direction. Comparative religious ethicists often adopt a brand of liberal moral relativism. ‘To each their own’ is their preferred mantra. This dramatic swing within the field of comparative religious ethics opens up questions for future study: Under what conditions can we praise or blame those who are different than us? What virtues of scholarship are necessary for quality comparative work? In this course we will learn about the field of comparative religious ethics and the perils and possibilities that accompany its intellectual projects. In addition to several theoretical texts, we will read two ethnographies (Fernando 2014 and Pandian 2009) that weave in and out of comparative religious ethics. These texts focus on themes of nationalism, post-colonialism, immigration, the production and regulation of religious subjects, and the limits of our judgments on the other.
Instructor(s): Caroline Anglim Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 23914
RLST 24200. Philosophy and Literature in India. 100 Units.
Is philosophy literature? Is literature philosophy? What constitutes either of these seemingly disparate enterprises, formally and thematically, and what kinds of conjunctions can we imagine between them? Can one translate these terms across cultures? Are they the sole prerogative of leisurely elites, or can they harbor and cultivate voices of dissent? Above all, what does it mean to reflect on these categories outside the parochial context of the Western world? This course explores these questions by introducing some of the literary cultures, philosophical traditions, religious poetry, and aesthetic theories of the South Asian subcontinent. Students will encounter a variety of genres including scriptural commentary, drama and courtly poetry, and the autobiography. Readings, all in translation, will range from Sanskrit literature to Sufi romances and more.
Instructor(s): Anand Venkatkrishnan
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 24202, SIGN 26073, SALC 20903

RLST 24201. Indian Philosophy I: Origins and Orientations. 100 Units.
This course introduces some of the early themes and textual traditions that set much of the agenda for the later development of Indian philosophy. Particular attention will be paid to the rivalry that was perhaps most generative throughout the history of Indian philosophy: that between the Hindu schools of thought rooted in the Vedas, and the Buddhists who so powerfully challenged them.
Instructor(s): Dan Arnold
Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 30201, HREL 30200, SALC 30901, SALC 20901

RLST 24202. Indian Philosophy II: The Classical Traditions. 100 Units.
This course follows the first module on Indian philosophy by exploring the debates between several classical ‘schools’ or ‘viewpoints’ (darśanas) of Indian philosophy. In addition to expanding upon the methods of systematized reasoning inaugurated by the Nyāya and Buddhist epistemological traditions, particular attention will be given to systems of scriptural hermeneutics -- Mīmāṃsa and Vedānta -- and their consequences for the philosophy of language, theories of cognitive error, and even poetics.
Instructor(s): Anand Venkatkrishnan, Andrew Ollett
Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 24202, SALC 30902, SALC 20902, HREL 30300, DVPR 30302

GLST 24214. Cities in Modern China: History and Historiography. 100 Units.
China’s shift from a predominantly rural country to an urban majority is one of the greatest social and demographic transformations in world history. This course begins with the roots of this story in the early modern history of China’s cities and traces it through a series of momentous upheavals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We will learn about how global ideas and practices contributed to efforts to make Chinese cities ‘modern,’ but also how urban experiences have been integral to the meaning of modernity itself. We will discuss urban space, administration, public health, commerce and industry, transportation, foreign relations, and material culture. In addition to tackling these important topics in urban history and tracing the general development of Chinese cities over time, another primary concern of our course will be the place of urban history in English-language scholarship on Chinese history more broadly. We will track this development from Max Weber’s observations on Chinese cities through the rise of ‘China-centered’ scholarship in the 1970s to the ‘global turn’ of the 2000s. Students will develop the skills necessary for writing an effective historiography paper, i.e., doing background research, writing annotated bibliographies, and using citation-management software. Students will put these skills to work by writing a critical historiographical review of scholarship on a topic of their choice.
Instructor(s): D. Knorr
Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): Students taking ARCH 24214 should explain the relationship between their final projects and architectural studies.
Equivalent Course(s): ENST 24214, EALC 24214, ARCH 24214, HIST 24214

RLST 24321. Contagion: Plague, Power, and Epidemics. 100 Units.
Plagues always take place within social orders, and human communities, causing havoc and chaos and reordering ideas about power and fate, befallenness, and desert. Plagues play a special role in Biblical traditions and text and in contemporary literature. This seminar will explore how epidemic illness is presented and managed within theological and philosophical literature.
Instructor(s): Laurie Zoloth
Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 54321, BIOS 29330

RLST 24602. Song of Songs. 100 Units.
In this text-course we will read the entire poetic composition, drawing on theory of literature in general and poetry in particular, tracing its unique forms of continuity, and analyzing its biblically distinctive forms of gender characterization.
Instructor(s): Simeon Chavel
Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): prerequisite: 1 year biblical Hebrew/ BIBL 33900 and BIBL 34000
Note(s): This is the Biblical Hebrew exegesis course.
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 44603, NEHC 44602, GNSE 24603, HIJD 44602, BIBL 44602
RLST 24712. Society and the Supernatural in Late Imperial and Modern China. 100 Units.
Introductory studies of Chinese history and culture often ignore religion, treating Confucius's alleged agnosticism as representative of mainstream culture. But ideas about supernatural entities-souls separated from bodies, ancestral spirits, demons, immortals, the vital energies of mountains and rivers, and many more-and practices aimed at managing those spirits were important elements in pre-1949 life. Spirits testified in court cases, cured or caused illnesses, mediated disputes, changed the weather, and made the realm governable or ungovernable. After declining in the 1950s-1970s, various kinds of worship are immensely popular again today, though usually in altered forms. This course traces changes in the intersection of ideas about spirits and daily social practices from late imperial times forward, focusing on attempts to 'standardize the gods,' resistance to such efforts, and the consequences for cohesion, or lack of cohesion, across classes, territory, ethnicity, and other differences.
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 34713, HREL 34712, HIST 24712, EALC 24713, HIST 34712

RLST 24770. Moral Theory and Philosophical Ethics. 100 Units.
This is a lecture course in support of the Religious Ethics Area doctoral examinations. It cover major thinkers and moral theories in the history of Western moral philosophy.
Instructor(s): William Schweiker Terms Offered: Winter
Prerequisite(s): Undergraduates should contact professor about enrollment.
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 37000, THEO 37000

RLST 24788. Guilt, Atonement, and Forgiveness After WWII. 100 Units.
By what parameters should we assess guilt? What is required to atone for wrong done unto another? Under what circumstances should we forgive harm done to us? This course examines both foundational ethical models and arguments that emerged following the end of WWII concerning issues that arose in the war's wake. We begin the course by reading significant theological and philosophical accounts of ethics, including Genesis, Aristotle, Mill and Kant, and consider what constitutes 'guilt' in each. We then draw on these models as we examine significant questions of guilt and atonement that arose in the wake of the Second World War, and explore the particular concerns involved in wrestling with questions of national guilt, collaboration, and assignation of punishment post-war. We will conclude the course by reading arguments that wrestle with the ethics of forgiveness, exploring arguments by a range of theologians, philosophers and other thinkers both for and against forgiving those who have perpetrated harm.
Instructor(s): Bevin Blaber Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 24788

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): PHIL 24800, FNLD 22001, KNÖW 27002, CMLT 25001, GNSE 23100, HIPS 24300

RLST 25110. Maimonides and Hume on Religion. 100 Units.
This course will study in alternation chapters from Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed and David Hume's Dialogues concerning Natural Religion, two major philosophical works whose literary forms are at least as important as their contents. Topics will include human knowledge of the existence and nature of God, anthropomorphism and idolatry, religious language, and the problem of evil. Time permitting, we shall also read other short works by these two authors on related themes. (B) (III)
Instructor(s): J. Stern Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): HIJD 35200, JWSC 26100, PHIL 35110, FNLD 25110, MDVL 25110, PHIL 25110
RLST 25321. Time and its discontents: thinking and experiencing time in South Asia through the ages. 100 Units.
While we usually think of time and its relentless march as an immutable, universal and abstract category, this course will explore competing and contested notions of time and history and their periodization. This interdisciplinary seminar aims to introduce students to the sociocultural worlds of South Asia through the prism of Time. Instead of looking at the cultural, religious and scientific realms of ancient, medieval and colonial South Asia changing through time, we will explore the changes that time itself, as a concept but also as a lived reality has undergone throughout the convoluted history of South Asia. We will revisit key concepts and ideas pertaining to the cosmology of Ancient and Medieval South Asia, such as the eras of the world according to old scientific and religious treatises, and how these ideas shaped the understanding of the place of mankind in history and the world. We will also study the intellectual challenges that these notions of time posed to the first Europeans that encountered them, and how our modern notion of time and its periodization was forged in this encounter. Rather than thinking of Time and temporalities in South Asia as part of an outdated and disproved world-view, this course will strive to present South Asia and the non-European world not only as subjects to Western temporalities, but as important places where theoretical propositions were made about time-space and its divisions.
Instructor(s): E. Acosta Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): While the course relies heavily in South Asian world-views, a previous acquaintance with the histories and mythologies stemming from this part of the word is not necessary. This course will be of interest to students of different backgrounds. The approach is interdisciplinary, ranging from history, anthropology, religious studies, etc.
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 26615, SALC 25321

RLST 25323. Tolerance and Intolerance in South Asia. 100 Units.
Few places in the world are as embroiled in the problem of diversity as South Asia, where sectarian violence-fought mainly along religious lines, but also along caste, gender, and linguistic lines-is at the center of political maneuvering. South Asia offers important lessons in how people manage to live together despite histories of mutual strife and conflict about communities and castes. Focusing on the period of British colonial rule, this class explores different instances and ideologies of toleration and conflict. How were South Asian discourses of toleration by such leaders as Gandhi and Nehru different from their European counterparts (e.g., John Locke and John Rawls)? How did their ideologies differ from those articulated by their minority peers such as Ambedkar, Azad, and Madani? We will analyze constitutive precepts, namely secularism, syncretism, toleration. Our attention here will be on the universal connotations of these ideas and their South Asian expression. Fifth week onward, we will turn our attention to select thinkers: Gandhi, Ambedkar, Azad, Madani. Our focus here will be on the ways that each intellectual negotiated the thorny issues of toleration, difference, ethnicity, and belonging. All the thinkers covered in this class had an active presence in nationalist era politics. Finally, we will read historical accounts of some of the most frequent causes of intolerance, namely cow slaughter, music played before the mosque, and desecration of sacred objects.
Instructor(s): T. Reza Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): All reading materials will be available in English. No prior knowledge of South Asian history or South Asian languages is required.
Equivalent Course(s): KNOW 25323, CRES 25323, SALC 25323, HIST 26812

RLST 25505. Heidegger: Religion, Politics, Writing. 100 Units.
Religion, Politics, Writing: three concepts that are relatively marginal in Martin Heidegger’s philosophy, but which converge in strange and unexpected ways to play a central role during the most controversial period of his career, from the early 1930s until the late 1940s. In this course we will explore this convergence in key texts during this period, paying particular attention to the Black Notebooks. We will consider Heidegger’s interpretations of figures such as Plato, Nietzsche, and Hölderlin. And while exploring crucial themes during this period - e.g. Being as Event, the critique of technology, the flight of the gods - we will also consider the effect that various writing practices (e.g. notebook entries, esoteric treatises, seminar and lecture protocols, dialogues, published essays, poetry) have on their meaning.
Instructor(s): Ryan Coyne Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 45505, DVPR 45505

RLST 25590. Memory, Identity, and Religion. 100 Units.
This course will consider recent scientific and philosophical work on memory and its relation to personal identity, and then use this work to think about religious approaches to memory and identity-construction (and vice-versa).
Instructor(s): Kevin Hector Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): THEO 45590, DVPR 45590
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. 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.
Instructor(s): Sarah Fredericks Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): RETH 35704, PBPL 25704, KNOW 25704, ENST 25704

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 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
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 27940

RLST 26012. Introduction to Islam. 100 Units.
This course will introduce students to major themes and topics in Islam through encounters with textual, media, film, and digital sources from across the Islamic world. We will critically engage with the diverse ways in which Muslims have lived and defined themselves and the tradition from 7th-century Arabia to South Asia to Harlem.
We will explore Islamic belief and practice as a lived tradition, one that is constantly interpreted and contested in modes of expression ranging from scripture, song, and scholarship to poetry and politics to tweets and talismans. In so doing, we will examine the processes by which Islamic traditions have transformed in response to historical factors, influences, and cultural exchange, and how these traditions continue to adapt in dialogue with contemporary contexts.
Instructor(s): Francesca Chubb-Confer Terms Offered: Spring

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 center in Chicago.
Instructor(s): Francesca Chubb-Confer Terms Offered: Winter

RLST 26116. Meaning and the Body. 100 Units.
This course examines recent (20th- and 21st-century) retrievals of the body to understand ‘meaning.’ We will analyze varying construals of language, materiality, matter, emotion, and thought. Readings will therefore be multidisciplinary, including selections from philosophy, sociolinguistics, anthropology, and religious studies. More specifically, we will examine the relationship between meaning and embodiment by way of the following: modern philosophies of the subject; analytic philosophies of language; deconstruction and the historicization of the body; feminist theories of discourse; new materialist conceptions of matter; new animist conceptions of the subject.
Instructor(s): Lisa Landoe Hedrick Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 24314

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 Therigāthā, a collection of verses written in Pali and the most ancient example of womens' literature, selections from the work of the great Sanskrit poets Aśvaghōṣa, Āryaśūra, and Mātṛketa, and the mystical songs, in the Abhāṣa language, of the Buddhist tantric saints.
Instructor(s): Matthew Kaptein Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): General knowledge of Buddhism is desirable.
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 34300, MDVL 26250, HREL 34300, DVPR 34300, RLVC 34300
RLST 26630. Religious Violence. 100 Units.
Are there ‘proper’ or ‘improper’ practices of religion? Is it at best a matter of private belief, to be kept separate from or protected by the state? Or is it something that at times requires the state’s intervention? Does religion represent the last vestiges of the premodern world, or is it something that is integral to modern life? To answer these questions, we will call on anthropologists and other social scientists and theorists to understand, first, what is ‘religion,’ and then what is, can be, or should be its relationship to gender, the nation, and the modern state in various historical and geographical locations, with particular attention to the Middle East and South Asia.
Instructor(s): Callie Maidhof Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 24730, GLST 25630

RLST 26856. Queer Theory: Futures. 100 Units.
Instructor(s): Kris Trujillo Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): CRES 26856, GNSE 26856, GNSE 26856, CMLT 26856, ENGL 26856, ENGL 36856, CMLT 36856, RLVC 36856

RLST 27020. Christianity and Islam in the Western Mediterranean World during the Late Middle Ages. 100 Units.
El curso analizará los contactos mantenidos entre mundo cristiano y mundo islámico en el Mediterráneo bajomedieval, tomando la Corona de Aragón y sus ricas fuentes documentales como observatorio privilegiado. Las particularidades de la Corona de Aragón se compararán con las de otros estados cristianos del Occidente mediterráneo que mantuvieron relaciones sostenidas con los musulmanes. Tras la definición de la naturaleza y de las especificidades de los contactos político-diplomáticos, mercantiles y pirático-corsarios entre Cristiandad e Islám, las clases se focalizarán en la identificación y caracterización de colectivos y personas que actuaron como mediadores lingüísticos y culturales entre ambas realidades. Se determinarán las circunstancias y motivos que permitieron que agentes diplomáticos, mercaderes, mercenarios, piratas-corsarios o cautivos-esclavos vehicularan los contactos. Y se analizarán y compararán las distintas tipologías documentales que son plasmación de todos esos intercambios y contactos culturales y humanos.
Instructor(s): R. Salicrú i Lluch Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): Taught in Spanish.
Equivalent Course(s): CATA 37020, SPAN 37020, MDVL 27020, SPAN 27020, CATA 27020

RLST 27250. The Trials of Religion. 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. Elakabetz’s ‘Gett’).
Instructor(s): Richard Rosengarten Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): LLSO 27250

RLST 27440. Buddha Then and Now: Transformations from Amaravati to Anuradhapura. 100 Units.
The Buddhist sculptures in Amaravati are arguably the earliest to influence the early Buddhist art of the other parts of the sub-continent as well as south and southeast Asia. The course begins with the discussion of the context in which the Buddha images were made in Amaravati and the factors including Buddhist doctrinal developments that contributed to the spread of these images to various parts of Sri Lanka. Then it traces the course and function of Buddhist iconography in Sri Lanka until into the 21st century to assess the role of geopolitical factors. The positionality and portrayals of the images of Buddha are also considered and analyzed.
The course traces the trajectories that transformed the image of the Buddha from a symbol of peace to jingoist assertiveness. Through the study of the images of the Buddha, the aim is to comprehend the ways Buddhism has changed over centuries from an inclusive posture which helped it sustain and spread to different parts of the world only later to become exclusionary.
Instructor(s): Sree Padma Holt Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): SALC 37440, HREL 37440, ARTH 27440, HIST 36704, ARTH 37440, RLVC 37440, SALC 36856

RLST 27656. Pilgrimage, Voyage, Journey. 100 Units.
Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.' ‘Adventure is worthwhile in itself.’ ‘To travel is to live.’ In ‘Pilgrimage, Voyage, Journey,’ we interrogate and complicate these kinds of platitudes, examining claims about the nature and possibilities of travel in its many iterations. Throughout the quarter, we ask why people travel, what might be gained or lost by traveling, what is unique to the experience of travel, and, ultimately, whether or not we should travel. We draw from memoir, fiction, film, and contemporary journalism as we consider claims about the effects of travel on travelers, non-travelers, local communities, and the world at large. We think about links between conceptions of travel and broader historical and social structures, considering the histories of class-exclusive travel, ways that colonialism has shaped travel, and the ethics of travel with respect to its impact on both local communities and the environment. Central to our inquiry is an examination of claims about both the religious value or potential of travel - including those found in accounts of pilgrimages and monastic journeys - and the ways that travel can often become linked to ideas of the ‘spiritual.’
Instructor(s): Bevin Blaber Terms Offered: Spring
RLST 27712. Contemporary Religion in Israel. 100 Units.
The complex relationship between religion and state is at the core of current social, cultural and political tensions in Israel. In this course we will explore the manifestation of these relations by focusing on selected ethnographies of religious performance and phenomena in modern Israel, including amongst others a ‘Women of the Wall’ first day of the month prayer, a LGBTQ community’s reading of the book of Esther in Tel-Aviv, and a messianic group’s attempt to reestablish the Passover sacrifice at the Temple Mount. By exploring these detailed ethnographies against the backdrop of contemporary theory, including secularization and post-secularization, lived religion, fundamentalism and social orthodoxy, this course aims to portray the variety and complexity of religious experience in Israel today.
Instructor(s): David Barak-Gorodetsky Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 20907

RLST 27720. Race and Religion in Chicago. 100 Units.
This course is a chronological and thematic overview of a number of key themes and theoretical concerns in the study of race and religion in the U.S. from 1865 to the present. Taking Chicago as a case study, the course will introduce students to key topics in the study of race and religion in the U.S. Most of the course will focus on black-white racialization in Chicago during this period-interrogating the construction of and contestation over whiteness among Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and new religious movements from the late nineteenth century and through much of the twentieth century, as well as tracing the ‘spiritual afterlife of slavery’ in Chicago’s churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship, and also in the everyday lives of Chicago’s religious citizens. The readings and class discussions will also open out to consider other religio-racial issues and projects in Chicago (e.g., Latinx, Indian American, and Indigenous religious communities). Topics for class readings and discussions will be ordered by the week and will alternate between broader theoretical and historiographical issues pertaining to race and religion in the U.S. (first meeting of the week) and closer examinations of the same themes/questions in the context of the religious life of Chicago (second meeting of the week). In this way, Chicago provides a ‘laboratory’ for observing, testing, and refining historical and theoretical claims about race and religion in the United States.
Instructor(s): Joel Brown Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): CRES 27720, HIST 27311

RLST 27802. Technology and the Human. 100 Units.
Technology is ubiquitous in contemporary life. Yet technological developments continue to infatuate and inspire in us feelings of excitement, hope and fear. How are we to understand the uncanny relationship between the human and technology? What does this relationship disclose about human agency and creativity? If human life is unimaginable without tools, artifacts, memory supports, and machines, how might we gain the critical distance necessary to properly assess the human-technical relation? In this course we will open up an inquiry into the question of technology by considering the ways in which technical objects, processes, and systems interrupt, challenge, and constitute human subjectivity. Readings will include texts by Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Kittler, Bernard Stiegler, Gilbert Simondon, Katherine Hayles and others.
Instructor(s): Sara-Jo Swiatek Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 22415

RLST 27803. The Subject and the Social. 100 Units.
What is it to be a subject? What is the boundary between private and public experience? Are social constructions real? Are facts subjective? What does it mean to ‘have a belief’? What is an experience? Is all knowledge socially constituted? This course will address these questions with selected readings from contemporary analytic philosophy of language, religious studies, anthropology, and science studies.
Instructor(s): Lisa Landoe Hedrick Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 28204. Dostoevsky. 100 Units.
Dostoevsky was an inveterate risk-taker, not only at the baccarat tables of the Grand Casino in Baden-Baden, but in his personal life, his political activities, and his artistic endeavors. This course is intended to investigate his two greatest wagers: on the presence of the divine in the world and on the power of artistic form to convey and articulate this presence. Dostoevsky’s wager on form is evident even in his early, relatively conventional texts, like The Double. It intensifies after his decade-long sojourn in Siberia, exploding in works like The Notes from Underground, which one-and-a-half centuries later remains an aesthetic and philosophical provocation of immense power. The majority of the course will focus on Dostoevsky’s later novels. In Crime and Punishment Dostoevsky adapts suspense strategies to create a metaphysical thriller, while in The Demons he pairs a study of nihilism with the deformation of the novel as a genre. Through close readings of these works we will trace how Dostoevsky’s formal experimentation created new ways of exploring realms of existence that traditionally belonged to philosophy and theology. The results were never comfortable or comforting; we will focus on interpreting Dostoevsky’s metaphysical provocations.
Instructor(s): R. Bird Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): RLIT 39501, HUMA 24800, REES 20013, FNDL 24612, REES 30013
RLST 28307. Trans/Formations: Changing Bodies and Gender in Premodern Christianity. 100 Units.
The course surveys ancient and medieval Christian views on the body and gender with a particular interest in ideas of transformation, supplemented by contemporary readings in trans studies. The course focuses on a series of topics: the creation of human bodies, debates about matter, doctrines of the resurrection, eunuchs, possession, gender (non)conformity, and various modes of gender crossing. Thus, it provides both an introduction to major figures in the history of Christianity and a primer in religious-studies and historical methods in light of trans and queer studies. A central question for the course would be how to think about historical distance and anachronism in our use of theoretical lenses with the interpretation of sources. In addition to readings in contemporary feminist, queer, and trans thought, the course primarily treats Christian sources spanning a number of genres such as narrative, theological treatise, allegory, visionary literature, and forensic transcripts.
Instructor(s): M. Vanderpoel Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 28307

RLST 28308. Introduction to Byzantine Art. 100 Units.
In this course we will explore works of art and architecture as primary sources on the civilization of Byzantium. Through the close investigation of artifacts of different media and techniques, students will gain insight into the artistic production of the Byzantine Empire from its beginnings in the fourth century C.E. to the Ottoman conquest in 1453. We will employ different methodological approaches and scholarly resources that are relevant for the fruitful investigation of artifacts in their respective cultural setting. In order to fully assess the pivotal importance of the visual arts in Byzantine culture, we will address a wide array of topics, including art and ritual, patronage, the interrelation of art and text, the classical heritage, art and theology, Iconoclasm, etc.
Instructor(s): K. Krause Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): For nonmajors, this course meets the arts, music, drama general education requirements.
Equivalent Course(s): ARTH 14006

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

RLST 28446. Apocalypse Now: Scripts of Eschatological Imagination. 100 Units.
Apocalyptic fantasies are alive and well today - in beach reads and blue chip fiction; in comic books and YA novels; in streaming TV shows, Hollywood blockbusters, and ironic arthouse cinema. These apocalyptic fantasies follow well-established scripts that often date back millenia. Apocalypse scripts allow their users to make sense of the current crisis and prepare for an uncertain future. The course will be divided into two parts. The first half will be devoted to texts, art, and movies that dwell on the expectation of the end and narratively measure out the time that remains. We will begin with examining the biblical ur-scripts of an apocalyptic imaginary, the Book of Daniel in the Old and the Book of Revelation in the New Testament, as well as Saint Paul’s messianism in the Letter to the Romans; and then move on to medieval apocalyptic fantasies of the Joachim of Fiore and others; and end with the apocalypticism underlying the religious reforms of Girolamo Savonarola and Martin Luther. The second half will focus on life after the apocalypse - the new freedoms, and new forms of political life and sociality that the apocalyptic event affords its survivors. Readings will include the political theory of marronage, capabilities, and neoprimitivism; literary theory of speculative fiction; and post-apocalyptic narratives by Octavia Butler, Jean Hegland, Richard Jefferies, Cormac McCarthy, and Colson Whitehead. Readings and discussions in English.
Instructor(s): Chris Wild Mark Payne Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 28446, GRMN 28446, RLVC 38446, CMLT 38446, GRMN 38446
RLST 28508. Sacred Mushrooms & Spirit Molecules: Uses and Abuses of Religion Under the Influence of Psychedelics. 100 Units.
In 2006, a psychopharmacologist at Johns Hopkins' School of Medicine helped to revitalize the scientific study of psychedelic drugs not by appeal to studied therapeutic application, but rather by quantifying psychedelics' ability to produce 'mystical-type experiences' with 'spiritual significance' in 'healthy normals.' Since 2006, psychedelics have experienced a renaissance, reaching heights of licit and illicit experimentation not seen since the 1950s and -60s. As in earlier decades, public awareness of psychedelic use and research has been advanced in scientific journals and popular media, including Michael Pollan's 2018 work, How to Change Your Mind. As Pollan notes, in both historical moments—the present and half a century ago—the use of psychedelics has sparked significant reflection on the meaning of religion and the social or psychological uses of so-called 'religious experience.' In fact, psychedelics have long played a role in human culture, many practices of which we now identify as religion. With Pollan’s pop-intellectual reflection as a ‘trip’ guide, this course will investigate the long history of psychedelics and religion, the popular culture of psychedelic religiosity and the scientific appropriation of religious nomenclature to advance the study and social influence of psychedelics. Key theories of religion, alongside religious studies of mysticism and spiritual experience, will ground course analyses.
Instructor(s): Greg Chatterley Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 28510. Mythologies of America: 19th Century Novels. 100 Units.
Hawthorne, Melville, Stowe, Alcott, and Twain wrote fiction that, in individual novels and also read comparatively, offers a civic template of mythologies of America: its genesis, its composition, its deities, its ritual life. The course considers this writing as both distinctively American, and as engaging central themes of modern novels, e.g. time, history, and memory, the relation of private to civic life, and the shifting role of religious authority.
Instructor(s): Richard Rosengarten Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): RAME 38500, ENGL 28510, ENGL 38500, RLVC 38500

RLST 28511. Star Wars and Religion. 100 Units.
This course puts religious texts into 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): Russell 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): MDVL 28705, ARTH 28705
RLST 28775. Racial Melancholia. 100 Units.
This course provides students with an opportunity to think race both within a psychoanalytic framework and alongside rituals of loss, grief, and mourning. In particular, we will interrogate how psychoanalytic formulations of mourning and melancholia have shaped theories of racial melancholia that emerged at the turn of the twenty-first century. Turning to Asian American, African American, and Latinx theoretical and literary archives, we will interrogate the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality and ask: How do literatures of loss enable us to understand the relationship between histories of racial trauma, injury, and grief, on the one hand, and the formation of racial identity, on the other? What might it mean to imagine literary histories of race as grounded fundamentally in the experience of loss? What forms of reparations, redress, and resistance are called for by such literatures of racial grief, mourning, and melancholia? And, finally, how, if understood as themselves rituals of grief, might psychoanalysis and the writing of literature assume the role of religious devotion in the face of loss and trauma?
Instructor(s): Kris Trujillo Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 28775, CMLT 28775, CMLT 38775, GNSE 38775, ENGL 28775, CRES 22775, ENGL 38775, RLVC 38775

RLST 28901. Religion, Science, and Naturalism: Is there a Problem? 100 Units.
The idea that ‘religion’ and ‘science’ are often fundamentally at odds is familiar, indeed perhaps among the orienting ideas of modernity. Attending to some historically important approaches to the endlessly vexed question of how best to think about religion and science in light of one another, this class will consider such questions as whether the problems seem different if we ask not about religion and _science_, but rather about religion and _nature_.
Instructor(s): Dan Arnold Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): This course counts as the 3rd year Theories and Methods course for the undergraduate Religious Studies major/minor.
Equivalent Course(s): SIGN 26072

RLST 29001. Painting and Description in the Roman World: Philostratus’ Imagines - Religion, Education, Sexuality. 100 Units.
This course explores Roman art, especially painting, through the single most thoughtful, playful and creative text on naturalistic painting written in antiquity. Arguably, it is the most interesting examination of the brilliance and the problems of naturalism ever written in the Western tradition, creating a non-historicist, fictive and rhetorically-inflected model for thinking about art. Philostratus took the rhetorical trope of Ekphrasis to new heights, in an extraordinary intermedial investigation of textuality through the prism of visuality and of visual art through the descriptive prism of fictional prose. The course will involve close readings of Philostratus’ descriptions of paintings alongside exploration of the Greek and Roman art of the imperial period from Pompeian paintings via floor Mosaics to sarcophagi. A reading knowledge of Greek could not be described as a disadvantage (!) but is not a requirement. The course will be taught over 5 weeks in the Spring Quarter on an intensive schedule. =Before the course begins, read the Imagines of the Elder Philostratus in the Loeb Classical Library translation (by Arthur Fairbanks, 1931, Harvard U.P., much reprinted). This book is not exorbitantly expensive and is worth buying, as we will all need a copy throughout.
Instructor(s): Jaś Elsner Terms Offered: Spring
Prerequisite(s): Before the course begins, read the Imagines of the Elder Philostratus in the Loeb Classical Library translation (by Arthur Fairbanks, 1931, Harvard U.P., much reprinted).
Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 29001, GNSE 39001, ARTH 29001, ARTH 39001, RLVC 39001

RLST 29104. Antisemitism and Islamophobia, Historically and Today. 100 Units.
How are antisemitism and Islamophobia linked together? Are they two different modes of oppression and discrimination or are they part of a similar phenomenon? Moreover, are they religious, racial, or ethnic forms of discrimination? Throughout this course, we will complicate the media narrative that sees Jews and Arabs as perpetual enemies through a historical and philosophical exploration into the origins and development of Orientalism, Islamophobia, and antisemitism. Students will think historically about the construction of race, ethnicity, and religion, and the discriminatory modes by which these are employed; and they will use that knowledge to think critically about current depictions of anti-Jewish and anti-Islamic violence. In the first part of the course, we will consider the historical and conceptual underpinnings of antisemitism and Islamophobia. We will look to 14th and 15th century Spain in order to better understand how and where they originated; we will then track their development through modernity, paying close attention to how these discourses changed and evolved over time; finally, we will look at the impact of the Holocaust and the rise of the State of Israel and consider current iterations of Islamophobia and antisemitism in Europe and America today.
Instructor(s): Mendel Kranz Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 29104, MDVL 29104
RLST 29300. My Body, My Self: Asceticism and Subjectivity. 100 Units.
In recent decades scholars of the pre-modern period have turned to the body as a site of renewed historical inquiry. Within the study of religion, this shift has reanimated discussions around asceticism as a particularly potent technique for self-fashioning. Nevertheless, scholars have struggled to theorize asceticism across religious traditions. This course brings together two scholars of religion working in distinct geographical locations and cultures: Eastern Christianity and medieval Indian religious literature. Together we are interested in bringing critical gender theory to bear on asceticism as a discursive and embodied practice. We envision this course as an opportunity for students to engage asceticism as a series of techniques that envision the sexed and gendered human body as the horizon of corporeal expression and personal imagination. Asceticism serves as a neat conceptual device, allowing us to toggle between the mind and body while tackling questions that fall within the liminal space between them, including debates around gender, sexuality, sovereignty, and biopower. Students along with the instructors will contend with the challenges and opportunities of transnational and transhistorical feminist and queer inquiry as we traverse across the boundaries of tradition, language, and culture. While drawing on rich historical and religious archives, we will anchor our discussions around the interplay of two principal authors: Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault.
Instructor(s): Sarah Pierce Taylor and Erin Galgay Walsh Terms Offered: Winter Equivalent Course(s): RLVC 39300, HREL 39300, SIGN 26074, GNSE 29303, HCHR 39300, BIBL 39300, GNSE 39303

RLST 29416. Freud. 100 Units.
This course will involve reading Freud’s major texts, including, e.g., parts of The Interpretation of Dreams, ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle,’ and his later work on feminine sexuality. We will consider Freud’s views on bisexuality as well. We will also read case studies and consider theoretical responses to Freud’s work, by Derrida, Lacan, and other important theorists. Course requirements will be one in-class presentation, based on the reading(s) for that day, and one final paper.
Instructor(s): Françoise Meltzer Terms Offered: Autumn Equivalent Course(s): ENGL 29416, DVPR 39416, ENGL 39416, CMLT 39416, CMLT 29416

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.
Terms Offered: Autumn
Prerequisite(s): Consent of faculty supervisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies.
Note(s): RLST 29800 and 29900 form a two-quarter sequence that is required of fourth-year students who are majoring in Religious Studies. Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form.

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