

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (RELS)

RELS 101 – Intro to the Comparative Study of Religion Course count: 1
Introduction to the nature and place of religion in the human experience as critically understood through the modern disciplines of comparative history, text criticism, and social science. Viewpoints covered include the psychoanalytic, philosophical, biological, artistic, and anthropological. Sources range broadly from the Bible to modern fiction, Lao Tzu to Celtic myths. The course also examines the effects of modern change on religion in global perspective.

GPA units: 1
Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion
Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 102 – Mary in Christian Theology Course count: 1
Mary, the mother of Jesus, has held great significance for Christians over the centuries. This class will examine the following topics: Mary in the Scriptures, the development of Marian doctrines (the Virgin Birth, the Immaculate Conception, etc.), depictions of Mary in art and film, popular devotions to Mary (the rosary, the scapular, novenas, etc.) and Marian apparitions (especially Lourdes, Fatima, and Guadalupe). Authors and works for the course include the Scriptures, John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, Ineffabilis Deus, Munificentissimus Deus, Adrienne von Speyr, John Paul II, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Benedict XVI. This study of Mary's significance will help students to understand better the importance of Christian theology and culture throughout history.

GPA units: 1
Common Area: Studies in Religion
Typically Offered: Alternate Years, Spring

RELS 103 – Race and Religion Course count: 1
This course explores the intersection of race and religion. Given the ambiguity in their constructions and articulations throughout history, it is a challenging yet ultimately worthwhile endeavor to trace their historical and contemporary contours in cultural, social, political, and economic spheres. Though they are often thought of as separate, this course assumes that race and religion are intimately and intricately intertwined. Thus, we will ask such questions as: What is religion? What is race? How have and do religious traditions coöpt race and racism as effective tools for their structure, organization, and propagation, and vice versa? This interdisciplinary course will ask students to form critical theoretical perspectives on race and religion, and to take up the above questions as they arise in the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and American indigenous religious traditions. Spanning 15th c. Europe to modern North America, the course will also explore questions related to gender/sexuality, indigeneity, sovereignty, capitalism, nationalism, and identity.

GPA units: 1
Common Area: Studies in Religion
Typically Offered: Fall, Spring

RELS 106 – Buddhism Course count: 1
Survey of the Buddhist tradition, from its origins in ancient India through its evolution as a pan-Asian faith. Topics include the legends of the Buddha, the early monastic community, the emergence of Theravada and Mahayana teachings, Buddhist ethics and social philosophy, meditation traditions, and the later development of distinctive Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese schools. Utilizes textual and anthropological sources.

GPA units: 1
Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion
Typically Offered: Fall, Spring

RELS 107 – Islam Course count: 1
Examination of Islamic religious beliefs and practices from the origins of Islam to the present. Particular stress is placed on Islamic religious ideals, institutions and personalities. Central topics include: Islamic scripture and traditions, prophecy, law, rituals, theology and philosophy, sectarianism, mysticism, aesthetic ideals, art and architecture, pedagogy, and modern reinterpretations of the tradition. Also explores wider issues of religious identity by looking at the diversity of the Islamic tradition, tensions between elite and popular culture, and issues of gender and ethnicity.

GPA units: 1
Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion
Typically Offered: Fall, Spring

RELS 108 – Hinduism Course count: 1
An examination of Hinduism and the Hindu tradition from the Vedas to the present day. Among the subject considered: the Upanishads; the Ramayana and Mahabharata; village Hinduism; Gandhi; and contemporary Hindu political thought. Evaluation will include both examinations and essays.

GPA units: 1
Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion
Typically Offered: Annually

RELS 112 – Christian Martyrdom Course count: 1

The blood of martyrs is the seed [of the Church]. By these words the second century theologian Tertullian meant that the Christian martyrs, in giving their lives for their faith during times of persecution, inspired new converts to Christianity and gave testimony to the power of the Gospel message. This course examines the phenomenon of Christian martyrdom from the ancient Church to the modern era. During the semester, students will ask such important questions regarding martyrdom as: Why does martyrdom have such power to move minds and hearts? Is martyrdom a positive force or is it simply a form of fanaticism? Why were Christians persecuted during different periods of history? How did Christians understand martyrdom theologically and spiritually? Students will read such primary sources as: the Scriptures; early accounts of the martyrs, along with early theological defenses and critiques of martyrdom; and writings from such well-known and, for some, controversial Christian martyrs as Thomas More, Theresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Secondary sources will help students to enter into the historical and cultural contexts of the martyrs. In studying this phenomenon, students will come to a better understanding of the influence of martyrdom, the sources of ancient and modern persecutions, and the continuing controversies surrounding martyrdom in the contemporary world.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 114 – Introduction To Theology Course count: 1

Introduction to major claims in Christian theology through a close examination of historical and contemporary Catholic and Protestant theologies. Topics include: methods in doing theology and in biblical interpretation; images of God and of Jesus; the human condition; different marks and models of the church; and religious diversity. Readings address the interplay in theological reflection between religious tradition and social location, and analyze the implications and challenges of Christian claims in light of gender, race and poverty. One unit.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 115 – Angels and Demons Course count: 1

An introduction to the Christian tradition regarding angels and demons, focusing upon how Christians relate angelic beings to their own experience of God. Topics include the place of angels in the Scriptures, the nature of angelic beings, the role of angels and demons in creation, the question of demonic temptation and possession, and the distinctions between angels and humans. Readings will include works by Origen and Athanasius of Alexandria, Evagrius Ponticus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Thomas Aquinas, Mortimer Adler, and C.S. Lewis. Students will also have the opportunity to discuss the theology and practice of the contemporary rite of exorcism in the Church. One unit.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 116 – Catholicism Course count: 1

Introduction to the academic study of the beliefs and practices of Roman Catholic Christianity, and of the situation of the church in the contemporary United States. Topics include: approaches to the study of Catholicism; creeds and doctrinal foundations of the Church; structure, authority, and community; spirituality, worship, and the sacramental tradition; Catholic moral and social teaching; current issues and controversies in Catholicism.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 117 – History Of Christianity 1 Course count: 1

A survey of the origins and development of Christianity, both its theology and its structures, from the apostolic period to the eve of the Reformation. Special attention is paid to the evolution of Christian doctrine and worship during the early and medieval periods of the Christian history. The interplay between orthodoxy and heterodoxy will be stressed in a close examination of heretical movements and their impact on the formation of the tradition. The interaction between Church and society will also be addressed.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Historical Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall

RELS 118 – New Testament Course count: 1

Introduction to early Christian literature and thought in light of the historical, literary, and religious milieu of the Greco-Roman world, including Judaism. Topics discussed include the diverse of representations of Jesus, the emergence of the category "Christian," and the genres of New Testament and other early Christian books. Contemporary approaches are addressed, but the primary focus is the ancient texts themselves. One unit

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Historical Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Annually

RELS 119 – History Of Christianity 2 Course count: 1

A survey of the development of Christianity, both its theology and its structures, from the Reformation period to today. Special attention is paid to the development of the various Protestant traditions, and their doctrine and worship. The interplay between Roman Catholicism and the Protestant churches is discussed. The impact of these Christian traditions on American society is also addressed.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Historical Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 120 – Comparative Religions/World View Course count: 1

Systematic exploration of similarities and differences within and among several traditions (Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam) and an examination of several key issues within the academic study of religion.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 124 – Theology of Protest Course count: 1

This class will consider the theological dimensions of protest. We will draw on a number of historical sources to explore what options are available to Christians in times of crisis, and we will examine the religious nature of some contemporary protest movements.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 126 – Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Course count: 1

Introduction to the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament, the course explores the social and cultural worlds that produced the texts, examines the biblical texts themselves, and investigates the assumptions and methods employed by premodern, modern (post-Enlightenment), and postmodern interpreters of the Bible.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Historical Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring

RELS 133 – Contemp Catholic Spirituality Course count: 1

An introduction to contemporary Catholic spirituality. Examines the lived experience and theological writings of influential 20th and 21st century Catholics with a focus on both contemplative and active spiritualities. Authors will likely include: Thomas Merton, Mother Theresa, John Paul II, and Oscar Romero.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 139 – Understanding Jesus Course count: 1

An examination of the figure of Jesus as presented in the gospels with attention devoted to historical questions about Jesus' life and teaching, the theological claims about Jesus being made by the gospel writers, and the direct challenge which the gospel story presents to the church and the world today.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring

RELS 141 – Contemporary Christian Morality Course count: 1

This course addresses the implications of Christian belief and identity for personal and social morality. Readings examine fundamental ethics of moral agency, human freedom, conscience, sin, suffering and virtue, as well as the method and themes of Catholic social teaching. The final part of the course explores several areas of contemporary ethical concern including the use of violence, human sexuality, healthcare, and the environment.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall

RELS 143 – Social Ethics Course count: 1

An introduction to moral reasoning and various modes of Christian ethical reflection on contemporary social issues.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall

RELS 147 – Judaism Course count: 1

Introduction to the history, theology, and practices of the Jews which uses the evidence of Judaism to exemplify the interrelationship between a religious civilization and the historical and cultural framework within which it exists. How does what happens to the Jews affect their formulation of their religion, Judaism? By answering this question and by learning the details of Jewish belief and practice, students will come to comprehend both Judaism and the social construction of religion in general.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Annually

RELS 149 – Judaism in the Time of Jesus Course count: 1

Judaism as we know it took shape in the first six centuries C.E., in the same period that saw the emergence of Christianity. This course describes and interprets early Judaism against its historical backdrop, evaluating the theological beliefs and ritual practices Jews developed and espoused. The main focus is Judaism's central theological conceptions, concerning, e.g., life-after-death, the messiah, divine providence, revelation. The larger goal is to comprehend how religious ideologies respond to and make sense of the world in which the adherents of the religion live.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 165 – Ancient and Medieval Hinduism Course count: 1

Introduction to key themes in ancient and medieval Hinduism. Considers the sacrificial worldview of the Vedas and Brahmanas and then moves to discuss the significance of the Upanishads and yoga. Special attention will be given to the two chief Hindu epics: the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Also examines key elements in Hindu law through a reading of The Laws of Manu. Concludes with a consideration of Hindu devotional theism in the worship Shiva, Krishna, and the goddess Kali.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 170 – The Worlds of C. S. Lewis Course count: 1

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 184 – Theology & Art Course count: 1

This course is an introduction to Christian theology by way of Christology, the theology of the person and mission of Jesus Christ, and by way of visual art. With regard to this latter point, the course will also serve as a brief introduction to contemporary art and art theory. Jesus of Nazareth is called in the Letter to the Colossians the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). This idea is foundational for Christian ideas of and relations to images. The first part of the course will introduce students to biblical and doctrinal accounts of Jesus Christ, culminating with the eighth-to-ninth-century controversy over images called the Iconoclast Controversy. The second part focuses more proximately on visual art, using the Christological insights gained in the first part to read the works of selected contemporary artists theologically, and to extend Christology into today's world by incorporating hints, challenges, and provocations from contemporary art. Core Christological themes of the Cross, Incarnation, the Sacred Heart, and the Least of These will guide our inquiry. The course entails a significant amount of reading, art viewing, reflecting, and writing outside of class, and in class it will consist of lectures, discussions, and collaborative work. Students are expected to be fully and actively engaged in all aspects of the course. Along the way we will strive to build intellectual community by cultivating personal connections and mutual respect.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 190 – History of the Early Church Course count: 1

This course will focus on the first four centuries of the Christian Church, beginning with the earliest followers of Christ described in the New Testament and continuing through the conversion of Constantine in the 4th century. We will examine how the structure of the church develops, as well as its theologies, doctrines and liturgies. We will pay attention to the variety of Christian viewpoints in these early centuries and how Christians debated with each other and with outsiders on their most basic beliefs. We will track various themes throughout this period, such as prophesy, heresy vs. orthodoxy, gender dynamics, martyrdom, asceticism, interaction with non-Christians, the importance of ritual.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Historical Studies, Studies in Religion

RELS 199-F01 – Religion in Modern Africa Course count: 1

Whereas religion in the West is privatized to a considerable extent, in Africa, it is part of the public domain and central to understanding many aspects of contemporary social, political and cultural life. The course explores a variety of religious traditions in sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on religious innovation and creativity in indigenous religions, Christianity, and Islam. The larger goal of the course is to introduce students to some key topics at the intersection of religion and public life in contemporary Africa, such as witchcraft, sickness and health, gender and sexuality, politics, development and the environment.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 199-F04 – Religion and Film Course count: 1

Is Star Wars a "religious" movie? How can we tell? This course will consider some of the complicated ways that film and religion relate to each other and, along the way, raise questions about perspective and power in storytelling. Whose account of religion or a particular religion is authoritative? How do some films marginalize certain individuals or groups? How do other films challenge the dominant narrative of a religious tradition? In the first half of the course, we will view and analyze films which refer to several diverse religions, and in the second half of the course we will discuss films which touch on concepts, themes, or practices often deemed religious. We will practice watching the films with an open mind and attentive eyes and ears, so that we can get under the stories, images, and sounds more effectively, to offer a thicker account of how the films work and what reasons they have for taking up a religious tradition or religious themes. Possible films include *The Matrix*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Schindler's List*, *Apocalypse Now*, and *The Big Lebowski*.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 199-F05 – Saints and Sinners Around the World Course count: 1

Discover the diversity of global Catholicism in the modern world through the lives of saints, many who are not canonized, and the spaces, objects, and communities that celebrate them. Learn about Catholic culture and the theologies that undergird various religious practices a foundation for probing the ways in which popular Catholicism is entwined with the daily struggles for justice in the modern world. Various historical, socio-political, and theological perspectives will be considered.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 199-F06 – Introduction to Global Catholicism Course count: 1

This course introduces students to the culturally diverse worlds of Catholicism. Focusing on Catholicisms of the Global South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America), the course examines the rich variety of ways in which communal practices and ways of knowing can inform the reception (and even the transformation) of Catholic traditions. Special attention is given to how local, indigenous values and spiritualities interact with the particularities of Catholicism, often resulting in a unique appropriation of the latter. The course offers students the opportunity to explore expressions of Catholic life and thought which illustrate the continuing change and plurality at the heart of a truly global Catholicism.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 199-S02 – Asian Religions Course count: 1

A Survey of the major world religions of South and East Asia: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Shinto. The course will be a historical survey, with readings in the distinctive texts and ritual practices that define each faith. Attention will also be paid to the ways these religions interacted and influenced each other over the past twenty millennia as well as the rise of new religions and the profound influences of Western imperialism and missionary Christianity.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 199-S04 – Humanity in Uncertain Times Course count: 1

This course is an invitation to think deeper about human dignity, its origins, and aims. In the midst of a world in crisis and a global pandemic, we will explore theological concepts including creation, sin, grace, redemption, justification, and salvation. How might a global Christian understanding of human dignity restore hope that humanity can be better when we accept responsibility to love and care for one another and the common good?

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 199-S05 – The Mystery of God Course count: 1

What is the meaning of life? What shall I believe in? Who is God? What is the role of a community in faith? Can I believe in the Catholic Church, given the scandals that have afflicted it? To be able to give a thoughtful answer to these and similar questions in a pluralistic and secular society, it is helpful to know some details about the theological and philosophical traditions of the Catholic Church. In this course we revisit some classical topics of Christian thought (prayer and spirituality, Bible and revelation, the problem of evil and salvation, afterlife and resurrection, etc.) and contemporary issues (religious pluralism, the role of sciences, just war, etc.).

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 203 – Death & Afterlife Course count: 1

In this course we will examine two core concepts of human existence: religious experiences of 1) death, the core human experience of finitude; and 2) afterlife, the core human experience of transcendence. All human beings die, and there are a number of individual, communal and cultural expressions surrounding the inevitable event of death (food offerings, processions, wakes, cremation, burial rites). All human beings die, and there are a number of individual, communal, and cultural explanations of what happens after death (heavens, hells, divinization, reincarnation, annihilation). To understand the shared patterns and distinctive variety of these responses, readings will include selections from primary religious/theological sources as well as reflections in fiction, images, and contemporary real-life experiences. We will focus on the Christian/Catholic tradition, but other religious traditions will be addressed.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 204 – Early Christian Monasticism Course count: 1

A seminar examining the origins of Christian monasticism through close readings of primary sources. Topics include the motives for the Christian flight into the desert, monastic practices and daily life, the nature of monastic prayer, early monastic rules, the influence of monasticism upon theology and culture, and the continuing presence of ancient monastic ideals in modern monasticism. Authors and works include Athanasius of Alexandria, Evagrius Ponticus, the Apophthegmata Patrum, Palladius, John Cassian, and early monastic rules (e.g., Pachomius, Augustine, and Benedict). Students will also examine how ancient monastic traditions continue in modern Christianity by staying overnight in a monastery and meeting with several monastic communities.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years, Spring

RELS 205 – God: A Love Story Course count: 1

This course is an inquiry into Christian belief in God, and how it is shaped and conveyed in the stories that Christians have received, adapted, or told about themselves and God over the centuries. Following a method known as Narrative Theology, we will use stories from the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and other traditional sources. We will also consider contemporary narratives of belief, doubt, and rejection or recovery of belief, as well as narratives that challenge, contradict, or reject the overarching Christian narrative. Throughout the course, we will discuss how these stories originated, what relationships they have to each other, what convictions and values they convey, and how they might function as sources for theological reflection. Such discussions will lead into an examination of what Christians mean by the term "God," and in particular, the significance of thinking of God as Divine Persons (the Trinity) in relationship with each other, with the cosmos, and with humanity. This will lead in turn to reflection on what Christians might mean by loving God and being loved by God.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 215 – Defense Against the Dark Arts Course count: 1

With the 1998 publication of *The Sorcerer's Stone* J. K. Rowling began creating a universe that continues to house the imagination of millions of readers around the globe. Although not a religious work, the series is a portal into a world that is. Both the world of faith and the world of fiction depend on imagination, and the Harry Potter series provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on what makes these worlds alike and what makes them different. The faith-world brings us to questions about ultimate meaning and value; so does the HP series. The faith-world has to do with self-discovery, personal growth and transformation; so does the series. The faith-world works from a sense of enchantment and divine providence; the HP series is predicated on the possibility of magic, although the ultimate source of that magic (and the possibility of dark magic) is left unexplained. The faith-world has to do with moral choices and their consequences, and so does the series. Why does imagination give permission to miracles but dismiss magic as fantasy? How and why are faith and fantasy different? How does the mind distinguish what is "real" from what is not? And how does the mind defend itself against demerit, chaos, and spiritual darkness? Religious imagination is one such defense.

GPA units: 1

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 216 – Readings: Asian Sacred Texts Course count: 1

Focuses on critical and analytical readings of sacred writings in translation from the Asian religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism. The genres sampled include law codes, works of ascetic mysticism, religious biography, popular narrative, and scholastic treatises. Also examines the cross-cultural definition of "text," the idea of a "scriptural canon," and the construction of tradition in the western historical imagination.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 217 – Eucharist/History & Theology Course count: 1

Provides a detailed study of the historical development and theological significance of the Eucharist in Christian tradition. Treats underlying concepts in sacramental theology in terms of Eucharistic ritual. Special attention is paid to the Roman Catholic experience, but other Christian traditions will be discussed.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 218 – Christian Sacraments Course count: 1

Provides a general study of the historical development and theological significance of Christian sacraments. Begins with discussion of key underlying concepts in sacramental theology: the experience of the sacred; sign, symbol, ritual; and Christ/Church as sacrament. Special attention is paid to the Roman Catholic experience, but other Christian traditions are discussed.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 219 – Christian Prayer in Theory and Practice Course count: 1

Considers Christian prayer as both a topic for theological study and a body of disciplines and practices. Topics include basic theological perspectives; historical origins and important figures in the development of Christian spirituality; personal and liturgical prayer; prayer and psychology; prayer and global awareness. Diverse traditions, methods, and practical approaches to Christian prayer will be considered, including Pentecostal prayer, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, Christian meditation and Centering Prayer. Readings draw from both classic sources and contemporary interpretations. Weekly practicum sessions focus on observing and/or participating in various forms of Christian prayer.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 221 – Women In Early Christianity Course count: 1

Exploration of the activity of women in the early church as witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus, missionaries, teachers, ascetics, martyrs, and deacons. Considers the historical and social context of women's lives in the Greco-Roman world in an environment of religious pluralism, women's self-understanding, and the controversy over women's leadership in the developing church. Texts studied include the canonical gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, the non-canonical Gospel of Mary, as well as Christian texts from the 2nd - 4th centuries.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Every Third Year

RELS 225 – Love, Friendship and Catholicism Course count: 1

This seminar explores the Catholic Christian understanding of love and friendship, from the ancient world to the present. It will consider the relationship between these concepts, the ethical and social consequences of various understandings, and their significance in Christian theology. Authors and works include Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, the Scriptures, Aelred of Rievaulx, Thomas Aquinas, C.S. Lewis, Graham Green, Raissa Maritain, Josef Pieper, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Benedict XVI, and John Paul II and Prudence Allen. In addition, students will participate in a dinner colloquy with married Holy Cross couples. By studying these great thinkers of the past, students will better understand present debates and struggles surrounding love and friendship.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Every Third Year

RELS 229 – Walking with Paul Course count: 1

Study of the writings, thought, and historical context(s) of the apostle Paul and the Christians who claimed his authority. Particular attention is paid to Paul's self-representation, to the positions he took on issues of vital concern to the first Christians, and to the diverse representations of both Paul and his teachings by second- and third-generation Christians.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Every Third Year, Fall

RELS 230 – Theological Perspectives on Medical Ethics Course count: 1

This course examines important developments in contemporary medical ethics considered in the context of the wider cultural assumptions of western philosophical traditions, the rise of the technological imperative, market capitalism, and globalization. These are brought into conversation with theological commitments to human dignity, the pursuit of virtue, the common good and the option for the poor. Topics to be considered will include healthcare relationships, treatment decisions, beginning and end of life issues, research using human subjects, the just distribution of healthcare resources, reproductive technologies, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and health and human rights.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 233 – Households& Early Christianity Course count: 1

This course focuses on how the household influenced early Christianity, both as a primary meeting place and as a conceptual tool for constructing Christian discourses on marriage and kinship, poverty and wealth-getting, work and leisure. We begin with a broad study of the ways that ancient Greek, Roman and Jewish writers conceived of the household: its economic production, religious practices, and role in larger society. We will also examine the physical structures of houses in the Roman empire in order to learn more about the occupants and their lives. Students will thus learn to draw upon both literary and archaeological evidence. We will then investigate how households, both as physical spaces and ideological focal points, influenced the development of Christian worship and theology. A major goal of the course is to understand how Christian values and theologies, as articulated in the New Testament and other early Christian literature, are shaped by the social structures in the environment, such as households. A second, related goal is to identify connections between religion, power and gender, especially in the production of Christianity's foundational texts.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 234 – Conflicts in the Church Course count: 1

Examines selected issues which have generated considerable controversy in the contemporary Catholic church (e.g., liturgical change, the Church and politics, women's leadership, contraception, clergy sexual abuse, homosexuality, etc.). Topics are considered in relation to differing views on the origin, structure, and purpose of the church itself, and include discussion of structures of authority in the church; differing rhetorical styles and traditions of thought in church history; change and the development of doctrine; church moral and social teaching. Readings draw from official Catholic Church teaching as well as writings of so-called "progressive" and "neoconservative" theologians.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall

RELS 238 – Christian Ethics and Mental Illness Course count: 1

This reading and writing intensive seminar studies the ways in which the discipline of Christian ethics challenges, is challenged by, enriches, and is enriched by contemporary conversations about mental illness.

Prerequisite: One previous Religious Studies course.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Annually Fall

RELS 241 – Scripture and Script: The Bible and Contemporary Art, Media and Literature Course count: 1

The Bible is a foundational text for contemporary culture and political discourse, as well as a sacred text for several religious traditions. This course explores narratives from the Hebrew Bible and how these narratives have been used in literary, poetic, artistic and cinematic creations to reflect and grapple with personal, familial, societal and political concerns. We will focus on the role of biblical texts in American political discourse, social criticism, and cultural productions, while also including works from Middle Eastern writers and artists. Students will read biblical texts closely and then analyze interpretations of those texts in modern and contemporary literature, film, poetry, and the arts. By looking at old texts and new interpretations, the course aims to give students the opportunity to see their own cultural contexts anew, and to determine how the Bible might or might not be considered relevant to our time.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 242 – Sex, Gender & the Hebrew Bible Course count: 1

What does the Bible have to say about gender and human sexuality? Using a variety of historical-critical and contemporary interpretive approaches, and through close analyses of key biblical texts, this course critically examines the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament with respect to a broad range of topics pertaining to gender and human sexuality.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 243 – Theology Of The New Testament Course count: 1

Drawing on contemporary biblical exegesis, this course explores both the major theological questions that the New Testament writers were addressing in their own time and place, and the theological questions those writings force the church of today to raise in light of its present historical and cultural circumstances. What is faith? What is salvation? How does revelation happen? What does the New Testament tell us about the mystery of God? In what way is Christian religious experience the platform for thinking about church? How does the New Testament help us to face major concerns of today, such as Christianity's relationship to the other world religions, environmental justice, a shifting moral landscape, and the perennial thirst for the transcendent?

GPA units: 1

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 255 – Ecology & Religion Course count: 1

Explores various perspectives on nature articulated in the history of the world's religions beginning with hunter-gatherer and tribal peoples. Distinctive doctrines derived from sacred texts and by philosophers/theologians, as well as the impact of ritual practices, are reviewed to understand the impact of religion on human ecology. After considering the perspective of Enlightenment thought on the natural world, the course surveys early North American exponents of ecological spirituality (Thoreau; Emerson; Muir), the writings of Eco-theologians (Fox; Berry; Schweitzer; McFague), and how cosmologies articulated by modern ecologists (Leopold; Lovelock) and activists (Earth First! And Greenpeace) have sought to define as sacred the human connection with the natural world.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 260 – Comparative Mysticism & Human Ecology Course count: 1

A phenomenological analysis of mystical experience, both theory and practice, and an investigation of the epistemological and ontological status of this experience. Approach is pluralistic considering mysticism from the following perspectives: psychological, religious, anthropological, philosophical and scientific. Examines various conceptions of ultimate reality and a variety of practices constituting the mystic path or way. Mystical experience is broadly conceived as a state of consciousness whose dominant symbols and structures of thought, behavior and expression relate to the ultimate transformation of self and world.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall

RELS 270 – The Quran Course count: 1

This seminar will give students a window into the religious and spiritual world shaped and filled by the Quran. The topics covered will relate to Islam in general and the Quran in particular, such as language, law, mysticism, theology, art, and comparative religion. This will involve a study of the exegesis of the text, which records the ways in which Muslims have interpreted and taught the Quran through the ages up to our present day.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 276 – Comparative Catholicisms Course count: 1

Comparative examination of Catholicism in four broad culture areas: the United States, Europe, Africa and Asia. Topics include: inculturation, interreligious conflict, popular devotion and the cult of Mary, sanctity, Catholic charismatic and healing movements, as well as Catholic social and political resistance. Special attention is given to whether we can understand world Catholicism as a unified system of religious beliefs and practices.

Prerequisite: One previous Religious Studies course.

GPA units: 1

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 277 – Modern Religious Movements Course count: 1

This course examines religious movements in contemporary America. Some of these movements are popularly known as cults, and one of the courses most important objectives will be to examine critically this term along with other categories such as brainwashing. The course will be divided into two overall sections. The first section will examine cult controversies surrounding Peoples Temple, The Branch Davidians, UFO religious groups, Scientology, and the Children of God. The second section will be focused on an extended study of the traditions, practices, and culture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Special and respectful attention will be given to both LDS history and LDS literary fiction. The fundamental purpose of the course is to provide students with the analytic tools to consider not only modern religious movements themselves but also the discourse surrounding them.

Prerequisite: One previous Religious Studies course.

GPA units: 1

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 279 – Religion and Violence Course count: 1

Religion and Violence considers religious justifications of violence. The course begins with an examination of sacrifice through a survey of Aztec culture in relation to the theory of generative scapegoating articulated by Rene Girard. The course then moves to discuss religious justifications of warfare as crusade and jihad. The class also reads the Hindu epic The Mahabharata and examines its theory of ethical obligation in extreme circumstances. The course then considers terrorism through a comparative discussion of the Provisional Irish Republican Army and Palestinian organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. A crucial part of this discussion is engaging ethical theories regarding the classification of non-combatants as well as considering both critiques and defenses of asymmetrical forms of violence. Substantial attention will be given to analyzing the category terrorism and to what extent it has value as a classification for certain kinds of violence. The class concludes with a consideration of violence to the body as reflected in asceticism, torture, and ordeal.

Prerequisite: One previous Religious Studies course or consent of the instructor

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 280 – Liberation Theology Course count: 1

Based on the principle of God's special identification with history's oppressed, liberation theology explores the problems of biblical interpretation, church teaching and Christian commitment in the contemporary world. This course examines the relationship between the socio-political consciousness of marginalized peoples and their Christian faith. Among the topics to be covered will be racism, global poverty, sexism, and environmental degradation. This course has three primary sections: (1) Black Theology; (2) Latin American Liberation Theology; (3) Feminist Theology.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Annually

RELS 284 — Sex, Money, Power & the Bible Course count: 1

This course explores the assumptions and portrayals that various biblical texts make about sex, money, and power, as well as the implications of those assumptions and portrayals. Although we will locate these biblical texts in their historical and social contexts, we will also use them to consider broader theoretical questions about reading, gender and sexuality, the economy, and the practice of power.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall

RELS 285 — Jesuit Spirituality Course count: 1

Examines the distinctive characteristics of Jesuit Spirituality as reflected in the four weeks of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, his autobiography, and other early Jesuit writings. Examines the religious experience that gave birth to the Society of Jesus, the Society's keen interest in education, and contemporary expressions of the Ignatian vision.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring

RELS 287 — Early Christian Preaching Course count: 1

Every preacher should give forth a sound more by his deeds than by his words (St. Gregory the Great). The great Christian preachers of the first five centuries of Christianity sought to combine the power of well-crafted oratory, prayerful theological reflection, and exemplary living in order to convey the gospel message in tumultuous times. In this seminar we will study the style, historical contexts, and theology of some of the greatest early Christian theologian-preachers: Augustine of Hippo, Gregory of Nazianzus, Leo the Great, John Chrysostom, and Peter Chrysologus. In addition, each student, as a final project, will compose and preach a sermon based on a selected biblical text. Students will learn how to analyze sermons from various perspectives style, theology, history, etc. while developing composition and speaking skills.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Every Third Year, Spring

RELS 290 — Teología Andina Course count: 1

A study of religion, culture, and theology in the Andean region of Bolivia. The course examines the way in which Christian faith has been appropriated by the Aymara and Quechua people, and it introduces students to a worldview that is both distinctive and challenging in its focus on the earth (the Pachamama) and community life. The course also studies the history of cultural and social oppression that paved the way for contemporary efforts in the region at religious and political self-expression. Taught in Spanish; requires the ability to read, speak, and write in Spanish.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years, Fall

RELS 291 — God, Race, and Imagination Course count: 1

What can science fiction, fantasy, and horror novels, TV shows, and films teach us about Christianity, race/racism, power, and the U.S. American popular imagination? Is there a God at work in fantastic imaginaries of speculative and science fictions that represent our society? If so, then does God have anything to say about the monstrosity not only of the monsters, themselves, but of their human counterparts, or about the plight of those struggling against these horrors? In this course we will approach these questions using both critical theoretical works on race/racism, religion, and Christian theology, while also allowing the literary and visual worlds of science fiction, fantasy, and horror to inform and elucidate our understanding of how popular social imaginaries capture, distort, or artfully utilize the themes of race/racism, power, and the religious.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 292 — Medieval Christianity Course count: 1

This seminar provides an in-depth study of the origins and development of medieval Christianity in Western Europe. It covers theology and structural evolution from the fall of the Roman Empire to the eve of the Reformation. Special attention is paid to the evolution of Christian doctrine, spirituality, architecture and worship during the "high" and "late" Middle Ages, the interplay between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, their impact on the formation of the tradition, and the interaction between church and society.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 294 — Sexual Justice: Social Ethics Course count: 1

This course explores the ethical significance of human sexuality within the context of Christian theology and in relation to larger issues of social, political, and economic well-being. One unit.

Prerequisite: One previous Religious Studies course.

GPA units: 1

RELS 295 — Un tal Jesus Course count: 1

This seminar is a biblical and theological study of the four gospels focused on the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth. The course follows a theological line called theology of liberation. This theological line draws attention to the humanness of Jesus and the dimension of justice in his preaching about the reign of God. The main work we study is *Un tal Jesus: La Buena Noticia contada al pueblo de America Latina*. The seminar introduces students to a theology that arises from daily experience, the connection between faith and culture, and the enduring legacy of Latin American liberation theology. In Spanish.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 299-F01 – Contemplative Ethics Course count: 1

This course will interrogate the presumed opposition between contemplation and action (or mysticism and politics) and explore how contemplative practice might reorient and transform how we approach significant ethical and political questions. We will examine the relationship between contemplation/spiritual exercises and the social challenges of environmental degradation, innocent suffering, racism, and gender/sexuality.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 299-F02 – Religion, Prisons, & Racial Justice Course count: 1

In the aftermath of the murder of 18-year-old Michael Brown Jr., in Ferguson, Missouri by Police Officer Darren Wilson in 2014, a cacophony of voices and movements arose to challenge the on-going undervaluing of Black Life in the United States and throughout the world. Many of these drew on longer movements from the long Black Freedom Struggle, as well as other Third World solidarity efforts from over the past century. Lawmakers in the Obama years responded to Ferguson with calls for police and prison reform, including issuing body cameras, community control boards, and anti-racist training for law enforcement and prison guards. And still, in the summer of 2020, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others faced premature death at the hands of police. A growing conversation has begun to press beyond additional reforms toward the prospect of police and prison abolition. In this course, students will become well-versed in these critical conversations around prisons and racial justice including: the arguments for prison reform vs. prison abolition; the Black feminist & third world feminist groundings of abolition; the entanglements between prisons, immigrant detention & border imperialism; the historical background of prisons and Christian reformism; grassroots visions of "reproductive justice" and "transformative justice"; and the intersection between racial justice, and environmentalism. Finally, the course will explore the impact of religious traditions—Christian and non-Christian alike—on racial justice movements today. Students will conduct final research projects including conducting interviews with local organizations already working across a range of struggles toward Black, Brown, and Indigenous liberation.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall

RELS 299-F03 – Black Theology, Black Lives Matter Course count: 1

The degradation of Black life remains a persistent feature in the U.S. So too, however, is Black Christianity. Anti-Blackness and Black faith are bound up together in the historical fabric of this nation. Black Christianity has persisted despite centuries of white supremacy, wrestling with the profound contradiction between Black suffering and a gospel of love, grace, and liberation. How could the God of Israel, the God of the poor and oppressed, the God of Jesus, allow chattel slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and mass incarceration? In this course we will explore the foundations of Black Christian theologies in the U.S. as they developed in chattel slavery, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, the post-racial, and the contemporary era of Black Lives Matter. Students will read theological, social-critical, and historical works from Jarena Lee, David Walker, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Richard Allen, Pauli Murray, Cyprian Davis, James Hal Cone, M. Shawn Copeland, Vincent Lloyd, and others. The aim of the course will be to assess the meaning of Black creativity, resistance, rage, and joy as expressions of faith in face of ongoing anti-Black oppression, state violence, and death.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 299-S01 – Christian Autobiography Course count: 1

The genre of autobiography appears unsuitable for Christian writers. After all, composing a work about the self opposes the essential Christian virtue of humility. Yet, many Christians over the centuries have written autobiographical works with the intention of glorifying God. How, then, can a Christian praise God while also putting the self on display? Why is this genre so popular with Christian readers? (And can we even call these works autobiographies?) What do these works say about the human encounter with God? In this seminar we will explore the genre of autobiography and its relationship to Christianity. We will read some of the great contributors to this tradition: Augustine of Hippo, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, Thérèse of Lisieux, and others. These authors share personal stories that have moved hearts and challenged the way Christians and non-Christians understand the journey of the self in the world.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 299-S02 – Race, Theology, and Power Course count: 1

Theology is deeply implicated in the social, political, and economic spheres of contemporary culture. The theologies of the Christian tradition, broadly construed, are evident in popular notions of faith, sovereignty, and the nearly unfathomable power of global markets. In this seminar, we will explore the interbraiding of the theological and the political, with particular attention to the production and reproduction of race and racism. Assuming some basic knowledge of the Christian tradition on the part of students, we will consider some of the earliest theorizations of theology's relationship to the state (Augustine), the concurrent development of racial and theological discourses for the purposes of dominative power in the colonial period, and more recent entries into the relation of God to history and society in Jürgen Moltmann, Achille Mbembe, Johann Baptist Metz, and M. Shawn Copeland. The class will address questions such as: Is Christianity complicit in racism's cultural longevity? Do theologies of the human being, Jesus, salvation, or hope have anything to say to the scourge of anti-Black racism and white supremacy?

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 299-S03 – Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets Course count: 1

This course examines the tradition of the Hebrew prophets and the prophetic movement in ancient Israel. Students will study the various literary forms that are found in the prophetic books (including Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, and Joel), and consider these in the context of the turbulent political background of Israel and Judah and of the ancient Near East. We will also cover the reinterpretation of the prophetic oracles by later redactors who compiled the book from the perspective of post-exilic times. Throughout the course, we will trace themes related to justice, suffering, worship, reconciliation, and hope.

Prerequisite: Enrollment is limited to 2nd,3rd,4th Year Students.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 299-S04 – War, Prisons, & Theology Course count: 1

This course examines how contemporary forms of Christian theology engage four challenges in the United States: 1) capitalism; 2) war and political violence; 3) the criminal justice system; 4) democracy and liberalism. These challenges will be examined from diverse perspectives, from conservative to reformist to radical critics.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 299-S05 – (De)Colonial Catholicisms in Latin America Course count: 1

This course will survey varieties of Catholic life and thought in Latin America and the Caribbean with a focus on colonial and decolonial orientations. We will first examine the contexts and perspectives of early figures such as Christopher Columbus, Ramón Pané, Bartolomé de Las Casas, Bernardino de Sahagún, Gerónimo de Mendieta, and Guaman Poma. The course will then address the transformation of the Latin American church after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), including the forms of Catholic practice reflected in the base ecclesial communities, the emergence of liberation theology, and the new emphasis on the church of the poor. The final part of the course will explore decolonial directions of the Latin American church today. We will consider models of spirituality and the theological imagination in connection with recent theoretical perspectives on the challenges of decoloniality.

GPA units: 1

RELS 299-S06 – Who is my neighbor? Catholicism, Genocide & Rwanda Course count: 1

On April 7, 2024, the United Nations and Rwanda will commemorate the 30th anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda which took the lives of over 800,000 people in 90 days. This was not simply a political event borne out of ethnic strife as a majority Catholic country during the time of the genocide, it is also necessary to consider why such intra-ecclesial violence could occur. This course examines the history of Catholicism in Rwanda in light of the genocide, its on-going impact on the Rwandan church, theologies and practices of reconciliation that have emerged from experiences of the genocide, and most importantly, lessons for the global church.

GPA units: 1

RELS 299-S07 – Loneliness and Eco-anxiety Course count: 1

Explore the complex interplay between loneliness and eco-anxiety in the context of the post Covid-19 pandemic and current climate change. Discover how the absence of belonging intensifies loneliness and learn how finding a sense of belonging can alleviate climate-related anxiety. This seminar delves into the factors influencing loneliness and eco-anxiety, vital for mental well-being in individuals, communities, and university students. Drawing from disciplines like religious studies, loneliness science, and ecological theology, gain insights to foster adaptability and resilience for your university and life journey. The seminar explores the human-environment connection and equips students for an ever-changing world.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring

RELS 300 – Ethics of Work & Family Course count: 1

Explores work and family as ethical themes in the Christian tradition. The course will consider the meanings and goals of work and family each in its own right and will also cover contemporary dilemmas at the intersection of work and family. Theological frameworks of virtue, vocation, feminist ethics, and social ethics will figure prominently in the course. Readings will draw on material from the documentary heritage of Catholic social teaching as well as contributions from theologians representing different Christian denominations, other religious traditions, and secular thinkers.

Prerequisite: One previous Religion Studies course.

GPA units: 1

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 302 – Challenge of Happiness Course count: 1

A survey of major Western scientific, sociological, philosophical, theological, and historical interpretations of human happiness.

Prerequisite: One previous Religion Studies course.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 303 – Theology & Science Fiction Course count: 1

This seminar will examine Christian theological themes through the literary genre of science fiction/speculative fiction. Readings from the genre of fantasy may also be studied. Theological themes addressed may include: the nature of religion; the concept of God/the divine; the quality of humanity in other species; the problem of evil and suffering; the question of sin and salvation; the nature of faith and belief; the role of myth and symbol; doctrine as redemptive or demonic; heaven, hell and the afterlife; the believer as scientist/explorer.

Prerequisite: One previous courses in RELS or permission of the instructor

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years, Spring

RELS 304 – Land and Creation Course count: 1

This course explores environmental issues from the religious side, grounded in the Bible and especially the Hebrew Bible. In the Bible, discussions of the environment cannot be disentangled from broader issues of justice, so throughout the semester students will explore the Bible's varied perspectives on the environment within the broader framework of justice. They will also learn to read in light of an "ecological hermeneutics," which means recognizing that the Bible contains neither easy maxims about environmental justice nor explicit strategies, and that bridging the gap between the Bible and present-day concerns involves more than just identifying biblical texts that deal with nature, the environment, or justice more broadly. Rather, what is needed are reading strategies and interpretive perspectives that are attentive to how a wide range of biblical issues and themes intersect with and inform questions of justice. Such an ecological hermeneutic entails not only the creative and nuanced exegesis of specific texts from the perspective of land care, environmental conservation and human rights, but also the cultivation of biblical perspectives and principles that can transform our theological convictions, daily practices, and community leadership.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years, Spring

RELS 311 – Zen Buddhism Course count: 1

Examination of Zen Buddhism and its influences on East Asian civilizations. Surveys the texts and monastic practices that define Zen spiritual cultivation and the history of the Soto and Rinzai schools' evolution. Special attention is also devoted to the distinctive poetic (haiku), fine arts (painting, gardening, tea ceremony) and martial arts (swordsmanship) disciplines that this tradition has inspired in China and Japan. Recommended but not required: previous course on Asian arts, religion, philosophy or history.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Spring

RELS 312 – Theravada Buddhism Course count: 1

Seminar examining the prominent texts, doctrines and practices of the Theravada Buddhist tradition. Surveys the historical development of the tradition in India, with attention to major schools of interpretation and practice. Theravada social philosophy and ethics are studied, as are the patterns of accommodation with non-Buddhist religions. The second half of the course focuses upon the distinctive practices of Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand as well as reformist modern movements.

Prerequisite: RELS 206 or permission of instructor.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 313 – HIV/AIDS and Ethics Course count: 1

Explores the many ethical questions brought into relief by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, arguably one of the most pressing global public health issues of our time. Focusing primarily on issues of social justice, the course mines the traditions of Christian ethics and Catholic social teaching for resources with which to address topics including HIV prevention, treatment, research, access, and global public health. We will become familiar with key ethical methods and concepts, including casuistry, the common good, solidarity, and the option for the poor.

Prerequisite: One previous course in Religious Studies

GPA units: 1

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 315 – Islamic Philosophy & Theology Course count: 1

Introduction to the major issues, figures, and texts of Islamic philosophy and theology. Attempts to answer the question of what Islamic philosophy and theology are and how they figure in Islamic tradition. While dealing with such towering figures as Kindi, Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ghazali, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Bajjah, Suhrawardi, the school of Ibn al-Arabi, Nasir al-Din Tusi, and Mulla Sadra, also discusses central issues and concepts of Islamic philosophy, including existence and essence, God's existence and knowledge of the world, knowledge and its foundations, cosmology, causality and its role in sciences of nature and political thought. Kalam or Islamic theology is the focus of the second part of the course. Examines classical debates around such issues as God's names and qualities, free will and determinism, reason and revelation, ethics, and political philosophy.

Prerequisite: One previous Religious Studies or Philosophy course.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 327 – Holocaust: Confronting Evil Course count: 1

Seeks to interpret an event that defies representation and lacks discernible logic or meaning. By evaluating how others have depicted, attempted to create meaningful narratives about, and drawn conclusions from the Holocaust, we hope ourselves to reach some understanding of this event, of its significance for modern society, and of its potential for helping us to recognize our own responsibilities in a world in which ultimate evil is possible.

Prerequisite: One previous Religious Studies course.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Annually

RELS 333 – Comparative Theology Course count: 1

An exploration of the meaning and significance of Christianity's encounter with the Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and other religious traditions, both new and old. Investigates major theological questions emerging from the dialogue between Christianity and other world religions.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 340 – Gardens & World Religions Course count: 1

A survey of the historical and cultural backgrounds of the major garden traditions of the world associated with religions. This course moves from considerations of human aesthetic and spiritual experience in the natural world to a survey of the major garden traditions associated with the western Mediterranean and Europe: in classical Greece and Rome, Christianity, and Islam. The course then moves to East Asia and classical traditions of China and Japan. Special focus will be given to elements of the campus Japanese Garden Initiative: teahouse gardens and monastic viewing gardens. Field trips to regional gardens will be made. For the final project, students design small virtual contemplative gardens for possible construction at specific campus sites.

Prerequisite: One previous course in Religion, Asian Studies or Middle East Studies

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Cross-Cultural Studies, Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 355 – Purity and Filth Course count: 1

The concepts of purity and pollution influence the ways in which human beings interact in the world, from the micro level (germs/viruses) to the macro level (God/the divine). This seminar will examine the notion of purity from the perspective of ritual studies, and will explore the ways this notion affects human behavior and culture. Case studies, primary sources, and short stories will all be included in the readings assigned. Among the possible topics: the body and its 'margins'; food and meals; cleanliness and sanitation; the sacred and the profane; holiness and sin; sex and gender; birth and death; illness and health; obsession and compulsion; environment and ecology.

Prerequisite: One previous Religious Studies course.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years, Spring

RELS 357 – Modern Catholic Theology Course count: 1

Examines selected theological questions addressed by modern Catholic theologians such as Rahner, Schillebeeckx, Dulles, Tracy, Gutierrez, and Ruether. Several major works are read and discussed in detail.

Prerequisite: One previous Religious Studies course.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Alternate Years

RELS 360 – Theology of Thomas Aquinas Course count: 1

Christian theology, the discipline in which the Christian church does its thinking, has a particularly urgent responsibility in our so-called post-truth context to speak on truths behalf, to convince people Christian believers, but nonbelievers and people of other religions, too that truth still abides, it remains accessible to us (with undeniable difficulties), and we are responsible before it. To aid its efforts in this vein, Christian theology would do well to look to wise guides from the past. This seminar does exactly that. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is acclaimed as the common doctor of the Catholic Church, that is, the teacher who has something trustworthy and truthful to say about virtually every aspect of the Christian faith. We shall explore somewhat this common breadth in Aquinas, but for the most part we shall focus, laser-like, on his preferred theme: truth itself, *ipsa veritas*. The main text we shall consider is Thomass great, yet unfinished work: *Summa theologiae* (left unfinished in 1274). We shall, in conjunction with it, consult secondary sources from the twentieth and twenty-first century to discover Thomass continued pertinence in our time. By examining both the common sweep of Thomass works and his specific attention to truth, students should gain insight into not only this one author and selected latter-day followers of his, but into the vital stakes of the Catholic religion more generally.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

RELS 395 – Nature and Animals in the Bible Course count: 1

In light of current questions about climate change and species extinction, this course considers if and how the Bible relates to questions we may have about nature and animals. To do so, we will pay attention not only to biblical studies and religious ethics but also to ecological and animal studies that have been developed across various disciplines in recent years. In addition to reading and thinking about the Bible with the help of biblical scholars, we will spend time learning and discussing influential ideas about the natural and animal world from a diversity of scholars in other fields, including Carol J. Adams, John Maxwell Coetzee, Jacques Derrida, Pope Francis, Donna Haraway, Emmanuel Levinas, Bill McKibben, and Anna Tsing.

Prerequisite: One previous RELS course.

GPA units: 1

Common Area: Studies in Religion

Typically Offered: Every Third Year

RELS 411 – Tutorial Course count: 1

GPA units: 1

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring