Religious Studies Courses  
Spring 2016

**REL 101: Introduction to Religion**  
Dr. Dexter Callender  
T/R 12:30 - 1:45PM

This course is designed to introduce students to the major religions of the world from a non-sectarian, academic perspective. By the end of the course students will have increased their awareness of the important elements of the major religions—their myth, symbols, ritual, doctrine, moral codes, and artistic expression. The course will also help students a.) recognize the differences among the religious traditions as well as the similarities; b.) better understand the religious issues and conflicts in the modern world; and c.) gain a deepened appreciation of the student’s own religious background and that of the community in which the student lives.

Counts towards the following cognates:
- Christianity
- Islam
- Religion and Contemporary Identity

**REL 103: One God**  
Dr. Callender, H. Green. W. Green, Newell, Pals, Ritzinger, Stampino, Walsh

Monotheism is one of the most important ideas in human history. This course examines how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have lived it, understood it, and interpreted it. We will study the basic structures of all three religions and explore their similarities, differences, and interactions on a set of critical issues, both contemporary and classical. The course will encourage students' conversation and active participation.

Counts towards the following cognates:
- Judaism
- Christianity
- Islam
- Philosophy of Religion
REL 109 / APY 109: Anthropology of Religion
Dr. Arthi Devarajan
MWF 10:10AM - 11:00AM

Would you like to study religion in living, contemporary communities, rather than through the avenues of ancient text or historical overviews? This course offers an introduction to select contemporary religious and cultural communities in North America, Asia, and Africa through the perspectives of anthropology. Students will explore themes in world religions such as gender, pilgrimage, embodiment and ritual through anthropological research and field methods. The course will entail lectures, as well as small-group exercises, discussion, and the viewing and analysis of anthropological film each week, so that students gain practical experience in conducting anthropological observation and analysis. No prior knowledge of Religious Studies or Anthropology is required – students will gain an introduction to both disciplines in this interactive course.

Counts towards the following cognates:
• Religion and Contemporary Identity

REL 121: Introduction to the New Testament
Dr. Robyn Walsh
MWF 11:15AM - 12:05PM

What do we know about the beginnings of Christianity and how do we know it? This course is designed to introduce you to the historical circumstances that gave rise to the religious movement we now call Christianity. Through the close and careful reading of both New Testament literature and a variety of relevant ancient sources from outside of the Christian canon, we will work together to understand the world of the first through third centuries CE. Beyond literary evidence, we will also use tools from other disciplines such as archaeology, art history, anthropology, the social sciences, gender studies and cognitive science to help us understand how the Jesus movement took root and flourished in the Roman world.

Counts towards the following cognates:
• The Bible
• World of Early Christianity

REL 151: Religion and Moral Choices
Instructor: TBA
W 5:00PM – 7:30PM

What difference does religion make to ethics in our world today? What’s right and wrong according to the major religions of the world? What do they have in
common? In a seminar format, come explore stories and major figures from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, and how they influence our values. Students will be encouraged to discuss and actively participate as we learn together the power of narratives, living examples, and different perspectives.

Counts towards the following cognates:
- Ethics in the Humanities: Religion, Philosophy, Politics
- God and Science
- Politics and Religion
- Religion, Law, and Civic Engagement
- Religious Issues in the Modern World
- The Philosophy of Religion

REL 161: Religion and Medicine: Health Care as Spiritual Practice
Dr. Catherine Newell
T/R 3:30PM - 4:45PM

While “providing health care” as an occupation can mean many things because the work of physicians and health care providers has changed substantially over time, what has not changed in the history of medicine is the question, “What does it mean to be a good doctor?” Although the science of medicine has matured substantially over the centuries, what hasn’t changed is that many doctors express the sense that—not unlike feeling called to a religious vocation—they have been called to be a medical practitioner. Thus, we will not only explore the history of medical care, we will also explore the history of medicine as calling—a particular vocation with roots in both religion and science—as well as the changing professionalism of health care; the role of virtue ethics in the practice of medicine; the tensions between religion and medicine; the place of personal religious beliefs in health care; and the changing landscape of health, holism, healing, faith, and the science of medicine."

Counts towards the following cognate:
- God and Science

REL 232: A Global History of Christianity
Dr. David Kling
T/R 11:00AM - 12:15PM

How did Christianity grow from a tiny sect in the first century to become the world’s largest religion today, existing in every continent and nearly every major city? How did the leader of a small community in Rome become the pope, the worldwide leader of the Catholic Church? Why are there so many different Christian groups? This course provides an introduction to the history, themes,
controversies, and global expansion of Christianity from its beginnings to the present. Attention is given to the theological (the formulation of beliefs), the biblical (the Bible’s influence throughout history), the social (the formation of Christian communities), the political (the interaction between political structures and the Christian church), and the biographical (the personal dimension of faith).

Counts towards the following cognate:
- Christianity
- Western Civilization: Historical Approaches

**REL 236: Cults and New Religious Movements in America**
Dr. David Kling
January 2-9 M-F 5:30PM – 10:30PM Sa 9:00AM – 3:30PM

This course focuses on modern religious groups in America, so-called “cults” or new religious movements (NRMs), located on the periphery of “mainstream” religion. We will examine the origins, beliefs, attraction, and interactions of the NRMs from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (historical, sociological, and psychological) as well as from a variety of thematic perspectives (potential for violence, “brainwashing,” involvement of women, and charismatic leadership). Our goal is to increase our understanding of certain aspects of contemporary religious activity and the general societal response to them, and hence, of religion in general. Our task is not to commend or condemn particular religious groups, but rather to attempt to reach some understanding of them, first on their terms, then on ours in the appropriate disciplinary contexts.

Counts towards the following cognates:
- Religion in the Americas
- Religious Issues in the Modern World

**REL 291: Introduction to Hinduism**
Dr. Arthi Devarajan
MWF 12:20PM - 1:10PM

In mainstream American society today, we speak of political pundits, refer to sensitive discussion topics as “sacred cows,” and see yoga studios popping up on every corner. The influence and legacy of Hinduism on the world stage manifests itself in a number of ways in our daily language, and it constitutes a vibrant religious tradition still practiced worldwide. Sources of Hindu belief and practice date back as early as 1500 BCE, but the mythologies of India harken to time immemorial. The tradition that is today known as Hinduism developed through the rise and fall of empires, the evolution of social hierarchies, and through colorful stories about heroes and divinities. Today, Hindu practices are part of the landscape not only in India, but in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and the Americas, too. Through
readings, art and images, and numerous films and audiovisual materials, this course will offer students an introduction to the methods and theories of Religious Studies as it reveals the diversity of Hinduism.

**REL 312: Torah and Ancient Law**  
Dr. Dexter Callender  
Th 5:00PM - 7:30PM

This course examines the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) in relation to their ancient Near Eastern historical, cultural, and religious context. Through a close reading of the biblical texts and comparative analysis with various forms of legal expression from the ancient world, students will think critically about questions of authority, responsibility, self, and society. In addition, by examining modern and traditional approaches to these texts, the course will consider the category “religion” and its place in today’s world.

Counts toward the following cognates:
- Judaism
- The Bible

**REL 330: Caribbean Religion**  
Dr. Michelle Maldonado  
T/R 9:30AM - 10:45AM

This course will provide an understanding of the historical foundation of Caribbean religions. You will learn to think critically about popular representations of these religions and understand the role of these religions in the development of your individual selves, your community and/or your society. This course will allow you to critically engage the intersection of race, politics, identity, and religion within the Caribbean and in Diaspora communities in the United States.

Counts toward the following cognate:
- Africa and the African Diaspora  
- Exploring the Caribbean through the Social Sciences  
- Latin American Art and Culture  
- Religion in the Americas  
- The Caribbean through Literature, History, & the Arts
**REL 334: The American Jewish Experience: Hollywood and Popular Culture**  
Dr. Henry Green  
T 6:25PM - 9:05PM

Hollywood and Popular Culture is a course that uses the lens of films to interpret the American Jewish experience. Cinema began at the same time that the waves of Jews from Eastern Europe migrated to the USA (c. 1900). What has the Jewish presence brought to Hollywood and American popular culture and how has Hollywood shaped the Jewish American experience? A selection of genres (dramas, comedies, epics, and biographies) will be examined. Emphasis will be placed on how the experiences and attitudes of Americans, in general, and American Jewry, in particular, have been reflected on the screen from the early 20th century until the present. The course will situate the films within the context of Hollywood culture----a complex industry in which ownership, production, distribution, exhibition, marketing and sales are closely intertwined. The tensions between maintaining an ethnic identity and assimilating, affirming cultural pluralism and “melting”, and continuing religious traditions in the face of modernity are core features of the course.

Counts toward the following cognates:
- American Studies: Politics and Religion
- Popular Culture
- The Evolution of the Jewish People in their Homeland and the Diaspora

**REL 345: Religion and Gender**  
Dr. Robyn Walsh  
MWF 1:25PM - 2:15PM

This course examines what we know about the lives of woman (and men) from the classical period through modernity, with an emphasis on sexuality and gender in ancient Greece and Rome. Using cross-cultural analysis and a variety of ancient literature, scholarship and material culture, together we will reconstruct and (re)examine the socio-cultural environments and practices that have fostered Western discourses on sexual difference and gender identity over time, paying particular attention to how religion and religious practices are integral to understandings of the natural world, natural law and the self. Some of the questions we will ask include: What does it mean to be male or female? What can we discover about ourselves from the way(s) we have sex? How are all these things related to life, love, power?

Counts toward the following cognates:
- A Cross-Cultural and Historic Examination of Sexuality
- Religion and Contemporary Identity
REL 360: Religion and Bioethics
Dr. Catherine Newell
W 3:35PM - 6:05PM

How do we determine what is ethical in the practice of healthcare? To try to answer, you are invited to an interdisciplinary exploration of medical, philosophical, religious, and public policy issues. Through discussion, film, and lecture the class will discover what is happening in medicine, and what are the moral implications. Topics range from reproductive technologies, genetics, organ transplantation, euthanasia, and assisted suicide.

Counts toward the following cognates:
- Ethics in the Humanities: Religion, Philosophy, Politics
- God and Science
- Health & Medicine in the Social Sciences
- Religion and the Body: Embodiment in Religious Beliefs and Practices

REL 361: Religion and Youth in Contemporary America
Dr. David Kling
T/R 2:00PM - 3:15PM

Contrary to popular images, religion plays an important role in the lives of many teenagers and young adults in America. This course will draw from the traditional academic disciplines that have devoted attention to youth, such as education and child psychology, but will also include new scholarship on youth in the fields of sociology and history. In addition, the category of “youth” is expanded to include young adults (the traditional college age population). The general goal of the course is to examine critically the role that religion plays in the lives of youth in contemporary America.

Counts toward the following cognates:
- Religion and Contemporary Identity
- Religion in the Americas

REL 362: The Sanctity of Life: Selected Themes From the Ancient World to Present
Dr. Callender, H. Green, W. Green, Newell, Pals, Ritzinger, Stampino, Walsh
URome

This course examines the religious foundation of the idea that human life is “sacred” and considers a wide range of historical and ethical issues associated with this central concept of Western thought. We will explore the meaning of
the multi-faceted phrase “sanctity of life,” including its implications for such ethical and legal concerns as conception, birth, and termination of life; human dignity and human rights; the quality of life; and social justice. Some of the issues considered will include bigotry and prejudice; economic and social injustice; euthanasia, infanticide, and suicide; genocide, holy war, jihad, terrorism, and violence; health care and health costs; human trafficking and slavery; martyrdom and self-martyrdom; social-stratification; aging, death, disposal of the body; and the afterlife, especially in Dante’s Inferno. We will consider how “life” is defined and described in different cultures at different times in history, and how religions have influenced these matters.

Counts toward the following cognates:
- Religion and the Body: Embodiment in Religious Beliefs and Practices

REL 370: Islam in Modern Times
Dr. Mahsa Rouhi
MW 3:35PM - 4:50PM

In the current international political climate, the mass media is full of images, narratives and metaphors relating to Islam. The world at large is intrigued and interested to know more about a religion that offers conflicting views, either as terrorists or peace-loving builders of Mosques. This course will examine how film, music and the wider media present us with an accurate or inaccurate image of Islam. In what way have film, media and music been utilized by progressive/liberal/conservative/traditional elements in the Muslim and non-Muslim world to support their agenda? In what way do these agendas root back to Islamic theology? Conversely, we will use images, metaphors, and teachings found in religion to discuss the layers and elements visually and audibly portrayed on screen. Through the three critical approaches of theology, mythology, and ideology, this course will examine how religion, as variously defined, pervades the modern cinema and how one may engage in dialogue with this phenomenon in exploring modern images of Islam and Muslims.

Counts toward the following cognates:
- Islam
- Religious Issues in the Modern World

REL 384: Karma
Dr. Justin Ritzinger
T/R 2:00PM - 3:15PM

Karma is one of the most central doctrines of Buddhism and by far the most viral. Through tip jars, pop songs, and TV shows, the concept has become familiar to many. But what is karma? How does it work? What does it mean to
live in a karmic universe? This course will examine these questions through a
consideration of Buddhist doctrine, ritual, ethics, and narrative.

Counts toward the following cognates:
  • Ethics and the Humanities

**REL 403: Supervised Reading in Religious Issues or Problems**
Dr. William Green
TBA

Independent study to enable students to read extensively in an area of personal
interest in religious issues or problems.

**REL 409: Special Projects in Religious Issues or Problems** Human Rights:
Holocaust, the Middle East and Today’s Refugees
Dr. Henry Green
M 3:00PM - 5:30PM

This course addresses refugees and displaced people from North Africa and the
Middle East in the post-World War Two era and their transnational identity.
Focusing on ethnic and religious minorities – Jews (Arab world), Coptic
Egyptians, Maronite Christians (Lebanon), Mandaeans (Iraq), Kurds (Iraq/Iran),
Yazidis (Iraq), Bahai (Iran) and Zoroastrians (Iran)---within the context of
human rights and exile, students will choose one exiled group by country and
explore the reasons for their exile. Once familiar with their selected minority
group, interviews will be arranged for the students from members of this
population. The course requires a commitment to conduct interviews and be
trained in field interview techniques. The interview “data” will be housed in the
Sephardi Voices archive and be recognized with your name.

“Sephardi Voices”, an audio-visual history project to record, collect and preserve
the testimonies of Jews displaced from North Africa and the Middle East as a
vehicle to preserve their history and legacy. (see [www.sephardivoices.org.uk](http://www.sephardivoices.org.uk)) In
the wake of the Arab spring (winter), the migration of other minorities has
accelerated. This course is one effort among many to encourage students to
record and preserve the testimonies of those whose human rights have been
violated.

Counts toward the following cognates:
  • Community Engagement and Social Change
  • Religion, Law, and Civic Engagement
  • Study of Aspects of the Holocaust