

**Course Descriptions Fall 2016**

**REL 101: RELIGIONS IN WORLD CULTURES**

This course introduces the academic study of religion and religious phenomena through a critical survey of the beliefs, worldviews, practices, and institutions of the major world religions. We examine different forms of religious experience, together with the myths, symbols, rituals, and institutions through which they are expressed. The course employs a variety of methodologies and source materials. [H, V]

1. **Hendrickson MWF 9:00-9:50**

 **02 Blunt MW 11:00-12:15**

**REL 103: RELIGION, MYTH, AND FANTASY**

This course examines the nature of myth, fantasy, the fantastic, and their relation to religion and religious expression. We consider a variety of texts, tales, and films representing a wide range of historical times, artistic forms, and religious cultures around the world. The focus is upon the modes through which these works convey different kinds of religious experience and religious meaning. The themes concentrated upon include but are not limited to: the conflict between good and evil, the fate of the soul after death, and the boundaries between what are perceived as the real and the unreal. [GM1, H]

**Ziolkowski TR 9:30-10:45 am**

**REL 201: BIBLICAL IMAGINATION: TORAH, PROPHETS, WRITINGS**

This course surveys the literature of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh to Jews; Old Testament to Christians) to probe the religious imagination of ancient Israel and its impact upon our own world. How did biblical writers conceive of their national origin, history, and destiny? How, where, and when did they encounter the divine? What were their religious values, practices, and institutions? How did they deal with the great human questions about God, love, evil, and death? From ancient interpreters to American slavery, philosophy, and Hollywood film, we will examine the Bible in historical context and various possibilities for interpretation by Jews, Christians, and feminists. We will also consider how scholars have applied different interpretive methods and goals to biblical text. [H, V]

 **Carr TR 2:45-4:00 pm**

**REL 204: INDIA’S RELIGIOUS TEXTS**

This course introduces the oral and written traditions of South Asian religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Islam with selections from a range of texts including the Vedas; biographies of the Buddha; Hindu, Sikh, and Islamic mystical and devotional poetry. Though chiefly approached through the lens of religiosity, these works will also be considered in light of broader issues of culture and context. [GM1,H ,V]

 **Tull TR 1:15-2:30 pm**

**REL 212: BUDDHISM**

This course provides a comprehensive overview of Buddhism, from early to modern times. Our approach will be multi-faceted, employing a wide range of scholarly approaches (literary, historical, philosophical, etc.). Major topics to be explored will be: the nature of the Buddha, the development of the Buddhist schools, the chief doctrines of Buddhism, the spread of Buddhism, and the nature of Buddhist practice.

 [GM1, GM2, H, V ]

 **Tull TR 8:00-9:15 am**

**REL 216: RELIGIONS IN AFRICA: CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORICAL EXPRESSIONS**

This course is an introduction to the study of traditional African religious systems, thought, and experience. The course explores the way African religions are related to different forms of social organization and conflict, notions of authority, and power. It also explores the ways African religious thought and practice have been affected by and transformed through colonization, missionary activity, and the continent’s integration into the global economy. [GM2, H, SS, V]

**Blunt MW 12:45-2:00 pm**

**REL 223: RELIGIOUS HEALTH AND HEALING**

Religion and healing have been closely linked for millennia. Since the advent of biomedical healthcare, the relationship between religion and healing has become less clear and sometimes even controversial. This course examines how various religious traditions have understood sickness and health and how they have tried to restore wholeness to sick individuals and groups. We look at the efficacy of religious healing, the interface between modern medicine and folk healing, and the importance of cultural narratives in restoring the sick to health. Throughout the course, we read and discuss both academic analyses of religious healing and firsthand accounts and cases of religious and folk healthcare. [H,SS]

 **Hendrickson MWF 10:00-10:50 am**

**REL 231: RELIGIONS IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE**

A historical survey of religious communities, beliefs, and practices in North America, particularly the United States, from the colonial period to the present. The religious histories of Native Americans as well as the religions of Europeans, Africans, and Asians in the United States are all considered. Emphasis is placed on the relationship of religions to group, regional, and national identity and culture. [H]

 **Hendrickson MWF 2:10-3:00 pm**

**REL 240: THEORIES OF RELIGION**

What is religion? What is the nature of religious belief? What roles does religion play in society? How can we study and understand religion? There have been many efforts to answer these questions from within fields such as the history of religions, comparative religion, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, and feminist studies. This course examines representative theories of the nature and study of religion, paying close attention to the contexts in which these theories arose, and their effectiveness for understanding religious beliefs and practices. [H, SS, W]

**Satisfies the requirements of a Writing [W] Course.**

 **Ziolkowski TR 11:00-12:15 pm**

**REL 308: VISUAL CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY**

This course introduces the concept of visual culture as a window into the study of religion. Secondary texts are juxtaposed with primary sources. These sources suggest that the construction of religious communities and identities has taken place in the on text of cultural exchange. We look at how various traditions have used images to construct community boundaries and ideologies. What and when have communities shared, disputed, and diverged? How has the presentation of "others" been an aspect of religious identity? [GM1,H, W]

 **Carr M 7:00-9:50 pm**

**REL 309: JEWS IN THE AMERICAS**

This course analyzes Jewish life, religious practice, and identification throughout the Americas. Rather than taking a single national framework, we compare Jewish life in multiple local and national contexts, evaluating how particular contexts have influenced Jews; how Jews have influenced various societies, cultures, and religious practices; and the construction of transnational Jewish networks, practices, and identities. We evaluate contexts individually as well as in exchange with each other. We also consider the roles of various languages in Jewish life, including Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, English, Spanish, and Portuguese (though all readings are in English translation).
[GM1, H, W]

 **Carr TR 1:15-2:30 pm**

**REL 310: SACRIFICE: VIOLENCE AND RITUAL**

What do the Eucharist, the ritual slaughter of oxen, and military service have in common? They all share sacrificial elements: the giving up of something, often the life of some being (broadly understood), in order to constitute the sacredness or boundary of a community. This course examines the role of sacrifice in religion, ritual, and even secular social formations such as nationalism. The course thus explores both theories of sacrifice and the significance of sacrifice in different social and historical contexts. [GM1, GM2]

**Blunt T 7:00-9:50 pm**

**REL 390 Independent Study**

**REL 490: Capstone**

**REL 495: Thesis**