

LAFAYETTE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Course Offerings Spring 2017

REL 101: RELIGIONS IN WORLD CULTURES

This course introduces religion by surveying the worldviews, practices, and institutions of global religious traditions. It considers both common and distinctive spiritual preoccupations of religious practitioners and the astounding variety of religious expression across the human family. It examines the historical development of religions, their sacred writings, their myths, rituals, and symbols, and their contemporary forms. The course is also concerned with methods of studying religion. [GM2, H,V]

01 Carr MW 11:00-12:15 pm
02 Tull TR 11:00-12:15 pm

REL 102: CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS ISSUES

An exploration of how religious people and ideas shape contemporary life. The course examines religiously-influenced issues such as the separation of church and state, the role of religion in violence and terrorism, and debates between religion and science. The course also looks at positive roles of religion and spirituality in modern culture. [SS, V]

Hendrickson MWF 8:00-8:50 am

REL 211: HINDUISM: UNITIES AND DIVERSITY

This course is an introduction to the vast, complex religious tradition of India known as Hinduism. The course begins with a survey of the historical development of key Hindu concepts, texts, and practices, with special focus on Hinduism's extensive mythological tradition. The issues of colonialism, caste, gender, and Hinduism outside India will inform our understanding of modern Hinduism. Course materials will range widely, from texts, to iconography, to modern novels, and to film. No prerequisite. The course will consist of mixed lecture and discussion. Counts toward Asia Culture Cluster, Asian Studies major/minor. [GM2,H,V]

Tull TR 8:00 – 9:15 am

REL 213: JUDAISM

This course introduces Judaism as a major global religion practiced in diverse forms for more than 2000 years. Starting with ancient Israelite religion and its legacy in the Hebrew Bible, we examine versions of Judaism that developed in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, arriving at the rabbinic form, which eventually predominates within both Muslim and Christian civilizations. Along the way we sample classic sacred texts to understand Jewish beliefs and values. After next charting the dramatic confrontation of Jews and Judaism with modernity, we explore the contours of contemporary Jewish life and practice in America and Israel. Counts toward Jewish Studies minor. [H,V,GM1]

Carr MW 12:45-2:00 pm

REL 214: CHRISTIANITY: FROM JESUS TO THE THIRD MILLENIUM

A study of the main branches of Christianity—Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant—with reference to their common biblical inheritance, historical developments, characteristic doctrines, institutional expressions, and global spread. Readings are assigned in authors representing the viewpoints studied. In surveying representative historical figures as well as the “global” spread of multiple “Christianities,” we also consider views on such matters as human life, social justice, and the relation of the Christian faith to the state and to other religious traditions, particularly Judaism and Islam. [GM2,H, V]

Ziolkowski TR 9:30-10:45 am

REL 224: RELIGIOUS ETHICS

This course surveys how religious traditions, both contemporary and historic, understand the valuation of human behavior (i.e., “right” and “wrong”). In so doing, we will consider how religions establish shared moral codes, and how these shared codes affect (and are affected by) the religious view of the human person. Among issues to be considered will be religious responses to the environment, to end-of-life choices, to violence, and to other topics of interest. No prerequisite. The course will consist of mixed lecture and discussion; readings will be focused but diverse. Class discussion is a critical component of this course. [GM1,H,V]

Tull W 7:00-9:50 pm

REL 228: RELIGION AND POLITICS IN AFRICA

This course is a critical introduction to the study of politics and the way religious forces and discourses have shaped and continue to shape general notions of the good in African societies and nations. The course will begin with classic studies of institutions of social and moral order in Africa and will move through the way African religious and political systems came into articulation with the colonial and postcolonial state. The second half of the course will examine moral quandaries like political corruption, and moral reform movements like Pentecostalism, against the backdrop of economic structural adjustment and the decreased sovereignty of African nations. [H, SS, GM1, GM2]

Blunt TR 1:15-2:30 pm

REL 250: ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION

The discipline of anthropology has had something of a unique relationship to the scientific study of religion. From an early moment in the discipline's development, it self-consciously separated itself from the more philological and theological approaches to the study of religion that characterized scholarly investigations of world religions, namely Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. As the United States and European colonial powers expanded into places like Africa, Native North America, Melanesia, and Australia (to name a few), different national traditions of anthropology developed an ever evolving "toolbox" of approaches and techniques for understanding the religious lives of Euro-American Others. This course is an introduction to this “toolbox” of anthropological theories and methods for studying religion from the Victorian era to the present. The course will also attend to voices in the discipline critical of the way anthropology constructs religion as an object of analysis. [SS]

Blunt TR 2:45-4:00 pm

REL 301: PHILOSOPHIES OF RELIGION

An examination of central problems and current issues in the philosophy of religion as treated in classic texts of the field: definitions of religion; 'proofs' of God's existence; the nature of religious experience, faith, revelation, and miracle; the problem of evil; human destiny; religious naturalism; religious language; atheism and unbelief; religious pluralism; religion and gender. We discuss these subjects from a rational, critical, objective perspective, taking account of the authors' historical-cultural contexts. [H,V,W]

Ziolkowski TR 11:00 am - 12:15 pm

REL 3XX: RELIGIONS ON THE MOVE: DYNAMIC APPROACHES TO THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE AMERICAS

Typical narratives of religious history in the Americas start with the arrival of Christian Europeans on the eastern seaboard who then inevitably move westward across the hemisphere, converting or displacing all in their path. This seminar-style course presents alternatives to this colonial story by examining various histories and ethnographies of religious people that move, instead, on north/south axes, from west to east, or in multi-directional ways. Emphasis is placed on transnational flows and cultural contact. [W,GM2]

Hendrickson MW 11:00 am - 12:15 pm

REL 390: INDEPENDENT STUDY

REL 495: THESIS