

**Course Descriptions Fall 2017**

**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. [GM2, H, V]

**01 Carr MW 11:00-12:15 pm**

**02 Carr MW 12:45-2:00 pm**

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

**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. 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, V]

**Ziolkowski MWF 8:00-8:50 am**

**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. Among the sources considered will be those focusing on myths, rituals, sacred biography, and devotional poetry, among others. The course examines the use of oral and written traditions in religious practice drawn from diverse sources, both ancient and modern. [GM1, H, V]

**Tull W 7:00-9:50 pm**

**REL 214: CHRISTIANITY**

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. [H,V]

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

**REL 215: ISLAM**

This course is an introduction to Islam, a religion that flowered into a world civilization.  It covers the vast and dynamic range of Muslim religious life from the time of Muhammad to the present. The broad survey spans the foundational texts of the Quran and prophetic traditions as well as later Islamic thought, including jurisprudence, theology, and mysticism.  The course highlights modern debates within and about Islam. Topics include political Islam, religious pluralism, the limits of jihad, and the possibilities of Islamic feminism. [H, V]

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

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

**REL 217: LATINA/O RELIGIONS**

A study of the religious traditions of Latinas and Latinos in the United States. The course looks at various forms of Catholicism, the growth of Protestantism in Hispanic communities, and a variety of Afro-Caribbean religions. Emphases are placed on the lived devotions of Latinas/os, on the differences among Mexican, Caribbean, Central and South American groups, and on the role of religion in ethnic identity formation and maintenance. [H,V,GM1]

**Hendrickson TR 9:30-10:45 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, GM1]

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

**REL 250/ A&S 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 MWF 2:10-3:00 pm**

**REL 304: SPRIITUALITY AND TRANSFORMATION**

This course explores different conceptualizations of spirituality and transformation primarily through the lens of Islamic mysticism (Sufism), but also through Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah), and the contemporary (primarily American) Self-Help industry. Sources include both primary and secondary texts, including translations when appropriate. [H]

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

**REL 307: JEWS IN POLAND, CULTURE, AND MEMORY**

The course traces the development of Jewish civilization in Poland, a spiritual and demographic heart of Judaism, examining distinctive Jewish movements and institutions, such as Hasidism, Yiddish culture and literature, and secular Jewish culture. The course also considers the controversial issue of Jewish-Polish relations before, during, and after World War II. Finally, it confronts the rebirth of a Jewish community in Poland since 1989, the place of Jews and Judaism in Polish collective memory, and tensions between the two. [GM1, GM2, H, W]

**Carr T 7:00-9:50 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. [H, SS, GM1, GM2]

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

**REL 390 Independent Study**

**REL 490: Capstone**

**REL 495: Thesis**