

LAFAYETTE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Course Offerings Spring 2018

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 Hendrickson MWF 8:00-8:50 am

02 Patel MWF 10:00-10:50 am

REL 104: SAINTS, MYSTICS, ECSTATICS

An introduction to the comparative and historical study of religion through an examination of three often interrelated types of religious personality: saint, mystic, ecstatic. After considering classic and recent studies of these three types from both Western and Eastern perspectives, the course analyzes autobiographical, biographical, hagiographic, iconographic, and cinematic portrayals of representative figures, focusing upon the expression of the figures' defining experiences and followers' responses to the persons' lives and experiences. [H,GM1,V]

Ziolkowski TR 8:00-9:15 am

REL 207: THE QUR'AN

Over one billion Muslims believe that the Quran contains the literal words of God. This course attempts to orient students to the most sacred scripture of Islam. It will explore the Quran as an oral, visual, and fluid text. The Quran swiftly traverses concepts such as love and justice, estrangement and community, war and peace, heaven and hell, good and evil. Occasionally, comparisons will be drawn to other sacred scriptures as well. [H,V]

Patel MW 12:45-2:00 pm

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 2:45 -4:00 pm

REL 212: BUDDHISM: FROM INDIA TO ASIA AND BEYOND

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 its relationship to the larger cultural contexts in which it has existed, and the nature of Buddhist practice. The use of primary texts will be emphasized. [GM1, GM2, H, V]

Tull TR 11:00-12:15 pm

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]

SINGER MW 11:00-12:15 pm

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.

[GM1,GM2,H,SS]

Blunt TR 1:15-2:30 pm

REL 232: RELIGIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

This course focuses on how religious practices and beliefs have contributed to culture, ethnic identity, and public life over time in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. The role of the Catholic Church in colonization and nation formation, and its place in popular culture is considered. Other topics include the rise and spread of Protestant Christianity in the region as well as indigenous and African-origin religions. [GM2, H]

Hendrickson MWF 9:00-9:50 am

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 attempts to answer these questions from sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, comparative religion, and the feminist critique of religion. This course examines representative theories of the nature and study of religion, paying close attention to the contexts within which these theories arise, and how effective they are in leading to an understanding of religious beliefs and practices. [H, SS, W]

Ziolkowski TR 9:30-10:45 am

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 11:00-12:15 pm

REL 260: GLOBAL MUSLIM LITERATURE AND FILM

This course introduces students to global Muslim culture and civilization through literature and film. Geographic regions include the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, North America and Europe; historical periods span both pre-modern and modern. Topics covered include but are not limited to: constructions of race, religion, and gender; diaspora and immigration; political Islam and Islamophobia in cultural contexts. Course materials focus on fictional storytelling although characters and plots may be rooted in actual historical events. [H, GM2]

Patel W 7:00-9:50 pm

REL 390: INDEPENDENT STUDY [W]

REL 495: THESIS [W]