

FALL 2024 COURSE OFFERINGS

REL 101.01 Religions in World Cultures WF 1:15–2:30 pm Professor Ma

REL 101.02 Religions in World Cultures WF 2:45-4:00 pm Professor Ma

This course is an introduction to some of the world’s major religious traditions and the role they have played in human culture. We will examine the historical development of religions, their oral and textual traditions, and their contemporary manifestations, with particular focus on issues such as views regarding deities and creation, the meaning and purpose of human life, and the role of religion in the modern world. The course format combines lectures and discussion. [GM2, H, V]

REL 102 Contemporary Religious Issues MWF 10:35-11:25 am Professor Hendrickson

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]

REL 103 Religion, Myth, & Fantasy TR 8:00-9:15 am Professor Ziolkowski

A study of the nature of fantasy and the fantastic and their relation to religion and religious expression, in both West and East. Students examine various texts and tales, as well as films, from a wide range of historical times and traditions, focusing on the modes through which they convey different kinds of religious experience, beliefs, and meanings. Themes include fate of the soul after death, conflict of good and evil, and boundaries between the real and the unreal. [GM1, H]

REL 211 Hinduism: Unities and Diversity TR 2:45-4:00 pm Professor Rinehart

This course is an introduction to the variety of practices and beliefs known as “Hinduism.” We will study Hindu mythology and philosophy as expressed in sacred texts and oral traditions, and the many ways in which Hindus express and practice their traditions, with special attention to Hindu ideas about individual, social, and political life and the role of Hinduism in contemporary South Asia. We will also study the history of the idea of “Hinduism,” religion as a Western category, and the role of colonialism in defining and studying Hinduism. [GM2, H, V]

REL 215 Islam: History, Faith, and Practice TR 11:00am-12:15 pm Professor Patel

An introduction to Islam, a religion that flowered into a world civilization. It covers the vast and dynamic range of Muslim religious life from Muhammad's time 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]

REL 216 Religion in Africa: Historical & Contemporary Expressions MW 2:45-4:00 pm Professor Blunt

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]

REL 231 Religion in American History & Culture TR 11:00-12:15 pm Professor Hendrickson

From the religious traditions of Native Americans to the religions brought to this continent by Europeans, Africans, and Asians, there is a rich tapestry of religious belief, practice, and culture in the U.S. This course focuses on the history of religious life in North America, the cultural aspects of religions in this region, and the diversity of religious expression. The course also considers how relates to group, regional and national identity. [GM1, H]

REL 240 Theories of Religion TR 9:30-10:45 am Professor Ziolkowski

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, phenomenology, comparative religion, the feminist critique of religion, and environmental studies, among other areas.. 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] Prerequisite: 1 course in Religious Studies or Permission of Instructor.

REL 260 Global Muslim Literature & Film M 1:15-4:00 pm Professor Patel

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]

REL 301 Philosophies of Religion TR 1:15-2:30 pm Professor Ziolkowski

An examination of central problems and current issues in the philosophy of religion as treated in classic and contemporary texts of the field, both western and non-western: definitions of religion; 'proofs' of God's existence; the nature of religious experience, faith, revelation, and miracle; the problem of evil; human destiny after death: 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]

REL 304 Spirituality & Transformation:
From Sufism to Self-Help TR 9:30-10:45 am Professor Patel

What is spirituality? How and why do human beings seek to transform themselves? This course explores these and other questions primarily through the lens of Islamic mysticism (Sufism), but also through Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah) and the booming American Self-Help industry. Sources include both primary and secondary texts, including translations when appropriate. Active participation and lively discussion are encouraged. [GM1,H]

REL 308 Visual Culture & Religious Identity MW 1:15-2:30 pm Professor Carr

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 the construction of religious communities and identities has taken place in the context 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? [H, GM1, W]

REL 310 Sacrifice: Ritual & Violence MW 11:40am-12:55 pm Professor Blunt

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, gender relations 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, H, SS, W]