

RELIGIOUS STUDIES COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

REL 109: INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS I (4)

An introduction to the western religious traditions including Native American, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This course examines religious elements of the holy, myth/sacred story, sacred texts, ritual, symbol systems, organizational patterns, ethics, and sacred communities for each religious tradition. No prerequisite. Open to first-year students.

REL 110: INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS II (4)

An introduction to the eastern religious traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism. This course examines religious elements of the holy, myth/sacred story, sacred texts, ritual, symbol systems, organizational patterns, ethics, and sacred communities for each religious tradition. No prerequisite. Open to first-year students.

REL 117: INTRODUCTION TO THE HEBREW BIBLE (4)

Biblical study of the identity, faith, and history of Israel through a survey of drama, story and event. This course broadly samples the law, prophets and writings, in view of histories of interpretation, ritual, practices, and symbol systems. In addition, the course will provide an introduction to methods of exegesis, and to historical and literary criticism. No prerequisite.

REL 118: INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT (4)

A survey of the early Christian writings and their interpretation. This course explores selected gospels, epistles, and writings in their historical context. Attention is be paid to the development of historical Christian identity and community, liturgical practices and symbols, major themes, as well as to the history of interpretation of New Testament texts. The course also provides an introduction to exegesis, and to historical and literary criticism. No prerequisite. Open to first-year students.

REL 126: INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT (4)

Does religion matter? A brief scan of world events tells us that it does. This course introduces students to the study of religion in its cultural and historical contexts. It aims to familiarize students with the multi-faceted role of religion in the world including examination of social, economic, historical, political, and ethical factors. Open to first-year students. No prerequisite.

REL 130: JESUS AND MARY MAGDALENE IN LITERATURE AND FILM (4)

The figures of Jesus of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene have captured the imagination of artists, writers, and (since the 20th century) filmmakers. Because the gospel accounts differ from one another and leave many questions unanswered regarding the lives of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, the subsequent portrayals of these two figures have varied widely. This course will explore some of these portrayals in modern literature and film, sampling such artists as Paul Park, Denys Arcand, and Pier Paolo Passolini. No prior knowledge of the New Testament is expected, so we will also spend time investigating the portrayal of Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the gospels, and their historical context. Movies about Jesus and Mary Magdalene, the gospels themselves, and study of the historical setting of the gospels will serve as the basis for investigating the ways in which Jesus and Mary Magdalene have been understood and interpreted. Open to first-year students.

REL 140: DISABILITY, RELIGION AND ETHICS (4)

Religious teachings and practices help to establish cultural standards for what is deemed “normal” human physical and mental behavior and to establish a moral order for the healthy body and mind. Religion also plays an important role in determining how persons with disabilities are treated or mistreated in a given historical

cultural context. Thus, this class will critically examine how religions represent, theologize, theorize, and respond to disability. Open to first-year students.

REL 150: SPECIAL TOPIC – DISABILITY, RELIGION, AND ETHICS (4)

Religious teachings and practices help to establish cultural standards for what is deemed “normal” human physical and mental behavior and to establish a moral order for the healthy body and mind. Religion also plays an important role in determining how persons with disabilities are treated or mistreated in a given historical-cultural context. Thus, this class will critically examine how religions represent, theologize, theorize, and respond to disability.

REL 150: SPECIAL TOPIC - PASTORAL STUDIES I (2)

This course is a basic introduction to the practices and skills of religious/ pastoral leaders. Students who register for this class will be peer chaplains and should have applied for and been accepted into the student chaplaincy program in the chapel office. Open to first-year students. No prerequisites.

REL 155: CHAPLAINCY STUDIES I (2)

This course addresses student spiritual development and the role of campus spiritual leaders and caregivers. Training skills include conversation initiation, active listening, asking questions, sharing faith, and referring students in need. Required for students who have been accepted in the student chaplaincy positions. Open to first-year students.

REL 160: NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS (4)

Also listed and described and described as HIST 160. Open to first-year students.

REL 197F: FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR – GOD AND THE BALLOT BOX: POLITICS, RELIGION, AND ETHICS IN AN ELECTION YEAR (4)

This course will examine the role that religion and faith play in politics both in the United States and throughout the world. The 2012 elections will serve as the main case study for the course, but we will also examine issues such as the rise of a politically energized Evangelical Christian movement in the USA, the role of religion within the Arab Spring protest movements, and clashes over faith and politics in India, Israel, Palestine, France, East Africa, and Australia. Also listed as INTL 197F. Placement to be determined over the summer.

REL 197F: FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR - M3: MYSTICS AND MAVERICKS MEDIEVAL (4)

Who were they, these medieval women writing about their spiritual experience and wisdom, stirring up the church with their ideas? What motivated them? How did they manage in the church, in those male religious hierarchies? How did their early lives, especially their troubles, mold them for spiritual leadership? What can we learn from them, their writings, their historical contexts, and their lives? What might a Hollins woman have in common with these early spiritual leaders? We will consider Hildegard of Bingen, Clare of Assisi, Hadewijch of Antwerp, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, and a few more modern spiritual mavericks and leaders. Placement to be determined during the summer.

REL 197F: FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR – WAR AND PEACE: EXPLORING RELIGION AND ETHICS WITHIN GLOBAL CONFLICTS AND DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS (4)

This course examines the role that religion plays in historical and contemporary political and cultural struggles throughout the world. Our discussions examine how various groups use religion as both a justification for conflict and, in other cases, as the basis for peace and reconciliation. Case studies include: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, South Asian politics (India/Pakistan), the Arab Spring, Liberation Theology, European Islamic movements, and the North/South division in The Sudan. Also listed as INTL 197F and POLS 197F. Placement to be determined during the summer.

REL 212: CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS (4)

The many sects of Christianity have repeatedly attempted to reinterpret the origins of the tradition in ways which provide a new or “reformed” framework for a community. The course examines not only the history of early Christianity, but also a selection of such reinterpretations and of Christians’ responses to other cultures with whom they coexist. REL 109, REL 117, or REL 118 recommended.

REL 215: WOMEN IN JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM (4)

This course involves a critical analysis of women, sex, and gender issues in the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We examine the androcentric history of each monotheistic tradition. Although the principal focus of this course is not comparative in design, we discuss similarities and differences between the experiences of women in these religions in the antiquated and modern contexts. No prerequisite.

REL 217: ISLAMIC TRADITIONS (4)

The early community of Muslims at Medina is explicitly understood to be a model for the ideal Islamic polity. Struggles to define the relationship between religious and political leadership and community in these early years established problems and precedents that remain issues in Islam even today. The course examines the early community and follows some of these issues of Islamic self-identity into the present. REL 109 recommended.

REL 218: BUDDHIST TRADITIONS (4)

This course examines the origins and modern manifestations of the Buddhist tradition. We trace the global development and transmission of Buddhism from its roots in ancient India to China, Japan, Southeast Asia, Tibet, and the United States. Close attention is given to philosophical and religious texts, ritual practices, meditational techniques, religious and cultural art forms, and ethical implications. Written work as well as oral presentations are required.

REL 219: JEWISH TRADITIONS (4)

Through the lens of the foundational communities in Palestine and the diaspora, we will view some of the basic issues in the definition of Jewish self-identity: exile and return, sacrifice and study, cultural assimilation, and the physical and spiritual “lands” of Israel. Prerequisite: REL 109 or REL 117 recommended.

REL 221: WOMEN’S SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY (4)

Traditional academic study can be seen as male and public, especially so in the study of religious traditions. This course seeks to reaffirm the value of female and private examples through focus on exclusively individual female models of religious confessional writing. The material selected for the course recognizes the individual and private experiences and expressions on which religious ideology is formed, rituals are established, and around which community is nourished. REL 109, REL 117, or REL 118 recommended.

REL 223: WOMEN IN BUDDHISM (4)

This course critically examines the role, status, and contributions of women throughout Buddhist history. Students examine the role women played in the formation of Buddhism and how significant texts, important teachings, and influential figures portray women. Students explore how modern female practitioners understand their contributions to the tradition and how the role of women differs within various branches of Buddhism. Prerequisite: REL 110 or REL 218.

REL 224: WOMEN IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY (4)

This course will focus on the process of identity formation or differentiation in early Christianity, including Jewish, Hellenist and Roman heritages and institutions, as well as biblical texts and interpretations, institutions. We will also examine the continuum of such extremes as: Jew/Gentile, male/female, slave/free, private/public,

authority/suffering, power/service, and clergy/laity. Also listed as GWS 224. Prerequisite: REL 117, 118, or 109 recommended. Open to first-year students with permission.

REL 241: SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION (4)

This course analyzes religion as it relates to a range of social identities. We begin with a discussion of sociological theories of religion through which we will consider trends within religious practice, the purposes and effects of religion, and the intersection of religion and other social structures. The class will then consider these theories in empirical contexts. Also listed at SOC 241.

REL 248: DEATH AND DYING (4)

Examines beliefs and attitudes toward death, the process of dying, and bereavement and conceptualizations of the afterlife. We will discuss religious, ethical, political, sociological, and cultural dimensions of euthanasia, life after death, suicide, death education, terminal illness, and other related issues. Special attention will be paid to teachings, concepts, rituals, and behaviors derived from major world religious traditions. Prerequisite: REL 109 or REL 110 recommended.

REL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC – ASIAN RELIGIONS (4)

This course is an introduction to the religions of India, China and Japan. Religions studied include Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Shinto as well as emerging religious traditions of Asia. The course examines religious elements of the holy, myth/sacred story, sacred texts, ritual, symbol systems, organizational patterns, ethics, and sacred communities for each religious tradition. Open to first-year students. No prerequisite.

REL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC – INDIGENOUS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE (4)

This course explores spiritual tenets and practices of indigenous peoples through both historical and contemporary lenses looking at indigenous peoples from across the globe and examining the role of spiritual practice in the 191 continuity, culture and resistance of indigenous peoples. The course will utilize theories and processes from the sociology of religion. Also listed as SOC 250. No prerequisite.

REL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC - NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS (4)

It is impossible to categorize the rich variety of Native American sacred ways into a single construct such as "Native American Religions." Furthermore, the dominant Euro-American concept of religion reveals some of our own predilections toward what constitutes religion and the sacred. This course will proceed from these understandings and serve as an introduction to the study of Native American sacred ways by exploring historical, literary, and cultural artifacts, and examining some of the contemporary issues concerning Native American studies. This class will include speakers and visitors. No prerequisite. Open to first-year students.

REL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC - PASTORAL STUDIES II (2)

This course is a continuation of REL 150. It involves more depth and continued training in leading religious groups and activities. Students who register for this class will be peer chaplains and should have applied for and been accepted into the student chaplaincy program in the chapel office. Prerequisite: REL 150.

REL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC – RELIGION, IDENTITY AND SOCIAL LIFE (4)

This course analyzes religion as it relates to a range of social identities. After reviewing sociological theories of religion, the class considers how trends in religious practice intersect with systems of inequality around the globe. Potential topics include: cis-women's empowerment in conservative Jewish and Islamic traditions; religious adaptations and antiracism in the African Diaspora; queer participation in Eastern traditions; and transnational Christian evangelicalism. Also listed as REL 250. Open to first year students. No prerequisite.

REL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC - SACRED STORIES AND SCRIPTURES (4)

Every religion has sacred stories (and in most cases, texts) that are essential components of the faith. These stories and scriptures situate the individual within a larger cosmos while simultaneously grounding the cosmos within the individual. Appreciating these texts and the stories they tell about divine and human communities is not limited to insiders within each of these traditions nor does it necessarily require a full mastery of the traditions from which these stories come. This course explores the nature of the sacred, focusing on a variety of sacred literature from both oral and written traditions including Eastern texts (e.g., from Buddhism and Hinduism), Western scriptures (selected from the *Koran*, *Hebrew Bible*, and *New Testament*), and stories from indigenous traditions. Through close textual examination of these works, we'll explore the sacred in various contexts, and in so doing, probe the enduring questions confronting humankind such as: the nature of creation and of the divine, the relationship between good and evil and order and chaos and humankind and the gods, and the role of the human community (and the individual) within a larger cosmos. No prerequisite. Open to first-year students.

REL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC - SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION (4)

Also listed and described as SOC 250.

REL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC - TELLING OTHERS: ENCOUNTERS WITH GODS, MONSTERS, AND STRANGERS (4)

At its most basic level, religion is about otherness, whether we experience the other as gods, monsters, strangers, or even as aspects of ourselves. These encounters happen both within and without, from individual experience of the sacred and divine to engagements with sociological, ethnic, and cultural others. Nonetheless, these others tell us something important about ourselves. From Leviathan to Kali, to the Diné (Navajo) Talking God and the Babylonian goddess, Tiamat, and to Jews, women, and "primitives," we will explore constructions of and confrontations with otherness. We begin with an examination of gods and monsters in various religious texts from the ancient Near East, India, Southeast Asia, and indigenous North America. Our focus will invariably turn then to otherness in terms of social and cultural identity in which we will read philosophical and theoretical materials by postmodern thinkers concerned with otherness. This course also includes a film component. No prerequisite. Open to first-year students.

REL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC – WEALTH AND POVERTY IN THE BIBLE (4)

Grounded in the biblical theme of Justice, this course will consider the Importance of the biblical texts as they relate to wealth and poverty. We will examine a broad range of economic issues and how they are addressed in scripture. Based upon readings of primary texts from the Bible, the course explores the potential contributions and limitations of scripture to contemporary socio-ethical dialogue. No prerequisite; Open to first-year students.

REL 255: CHAPLAINCY STUDIES II (2)

This course continues training for student chaplains and student spiritual leaders. Specific training skills include the various role of chaplains, diversity of campus faith traditions, listening skills, working with those in authority, and managing difficult conversations. Required for students who have been accepted in the student chaplaincy positions.

REL 267: AMERICAN RELIGION TO 1860 (4)

Also listed and described as HIST 267S.

REL 268: AMERICAN RELIGION 1860–2000 (4)

Also listed and described as HIST 268S.

REL 272: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION (4)

Also listed and described as PHIL 272.

REL 290: INDEPENDENT STUDY (2 or 4)

Independent study conducted below the advanced level. Application must be made with faculty prior to registration.

REL 318: SEXUAL ETHICS (4)

In this course we explore the intersections between sexuality, gender, religion, and ethics. We examine how religious communities articulate moral and ethical responses to a variety of issues pertaining to sexual ethics such as abortion, homosexuality, sex work, transgenderism, sexual assault, abuse, violence, etc. Discussions explore how questions of power, race, gender, and privilege affect the discourse around sexual ethics. A critical component of the course is to allow students to apply the theoretical material they learn in class in a concrete and practical way. Each student is required to participate in a service-learning project with a community-based organization that actively addresses issues that relate to sexual ethics. Also listed as GWS 318. Prerequisite: junior standing.

REL 320: SEXUALITIES AND THEOLOGIES (4)

Course examines human sexualities and sexual behaviors, changing attitudes toward sex, and diverse theologies of sexuality. Topics include theologies of the human body, homosexuality and bisexuality, femininity and masculinity, gender roles, ethical behaviors, sexual mystery cults, abusive sexualities, and personal power. The course recognizes that religious ideologies reflect political influence and have political implications. Prerequisite: REL 109, REL 117 or REL 118, or REL 224, or two religion courses.

REL 327: EARLY CHRISTIANITY (4)

Also listed and described as HIST 327. Prerequisite: sophomore standing or permission of the instructor.

REL 340: THEORIES AND METHODS OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES (4)**REL 340: THEORIES OF RELIGION (4)**

This course examines the historical development and modern understanding of the academic study of religion. The focus of our inquiry will be the problems of methodology implicit in the study of religion. The course draws upon a variety of disciplines whose methods have built the secular study of religion, including anthropology, sociology, literary criticism, feminist theory, and ritual theory. We examine traditional as well as alternative methodological approaches, including perspectives that attend to issues of race, gender, and class. We'll read and discuss concrete examples of how these various theories and methods are applied when studying the world's major religious traditions. Prerequisite: two religion courses, one at the 200 level.

REL 350: SPECIAL TOPIC – INTEGRATIVE RELIGIOUS STUDIES SEMINAR (2)

This seminar is designed for religious studies majors and minors. The course will consist of interdisciplinary topics for discussion in order to facilitate the integration of the cross-disciplinary work being done in other departments. Special attention will be given to the connections in subject and methodology between religious studies and studies in other departments. Required for all senior major and minors. Prerequisite: Two religion courses, including one 200-level course.

REL 350: SPECIAL TOPIC – SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM (4)

Also listed and described as GWS 350.

REL 350: SPECIAL TOPIC – WISDOM, REASON, REVELATION, AND DOUBT (4)

Wisdom, Reason, Revelation, and Doubt (WRRD) is an investigation into how people come to "know" what they know. The course examines the strengths and weaknesses of various ways of knowing, including ancestor wisdom, religious revelation, scientific reasoning, and skepticism. WRRD closes by questioning divisions between sanity and insanity, accredited and discredited knowledge. Also listed as SOC 350.

REL 355: CHAPLAINCY STUDIES III (2)

This class is a continuation of the theoretical and practical training for student chaplaincy and pastoral ministry begun in REL 155 and REL 255. In this level of study we focus on personal gift assessments, planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects and spiritual leadership. Required for students who have been accepted in student chaplaincy positions. May be taken with or without an internship credit. Prerequisites: REL 155 and REL 255.

REL 362: SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM (4)

Also listed and described as GWS 362.

REL 390: INDEPENDENT STUDY (2 or 4)

Independent study conducted at the advanced level. Application must be made with faculty prior to registration.

REL 399: INTERNSHIP (4)

Application must be made with faculty prior to registration.

REL 455: CHAPLAINCY STUDIES IV (2)

For students who are exceptionally committed to campus pastoral ministry and who have completed the previous three levels of theoretical and practical chaplaincy studies, this course offers training in teaching styles, management issues, motivating people, and vocational directions, in addition to refining listening skills, faith sharing, planning, and managing conflict. In this course the student will also help mentor less experienced student chaplains. Prerequisites: senior standing; REL 155, REL 255, and REL 355.

REL 470: SENIOR SEMINAR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES (4)

This seminar, designed for religious studies majors and minors, consists of interdisciplinary topics for discussion in order to facilitate the integration of the cross-disciplinary work being done in other departments. Each student is required to do a major research project that incorporates theory and method, their area of concentration, and their religion major. The course includes a senior evaluative review of work done within the major.

REL 490: SENIOR HONORS THESIS (4, 4)

Senior religious studies majors with strong academic records may apply to work for honors recognition by presenting a thesis proposal to the faculty of the department. This project is completed over Fall, Short, and Spring Terms. Prerequisite: senior religious studies majors. Application with faculty must be made prior to registration.