

RELIGION DEPARTMENT
2023 – 2024 Fall
COURSE OFFERINGS

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES:

REL 100: Religion and the Public Conversation

(CD or SA) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: 48

Professor(s): Jenny Wiley Legath

1:30 pm-2:50 TTh Class

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Does NOT satisfy sub-field requirement; does count as departmental.

This course introduces students to the interdisciplinary study of religion and its engagement with society and culture. We will identify where and how religion operates in the public conversation, especially in, but not limited to, the United States. Classes will be focused around topics that intersect with religion in the public conversation such as place, media, race, body, art, and ethics. Students will develop recognition of the different ways people use religion to construct meaning, boundaries, and identity and will demonstrate the ability to engage in informed dialogue around issues of religion.

REL 230 /JDS 230: Who Wrote the Bible

(HA) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: No Limit

Professor(s): Liane Feldman

10:00 am-10:50 TTh Lecture/Precept

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Greek and Roman Religions

This course introduces the Hebrew Bible (Christian "Old Testament"), a complex anthology written by many people over nearly a thousand years. In this class, we will ask questions about the Hebrew Bible's historical context and ancient meaning, as well as its literary profile and early reception. Who wrote the Bible? When and how was it written? What sources did its authors draw on to write these stories? And to what circumstances were they responding? Students will develop the skills to critically analyze written sources, and to understand, contextualize, and critique the assumptions inherent in modern treatments of the Bible.

REL 246/JDS 246: Ancient Judaism

(HA) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: No Limit

Professor(s): Yedidah Koren

11:00 am-11:50 TTh Lecture/Precept

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Greek and Roman Religions

In this course we will learn about the diverse world of ancient Jews and discover not one, but many ancient "Judaisms." The course will cover a broad timespan, from the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple under Persian rule in the sixth century BCE, to the compilation of the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds sometime in the fifth and sixth centuries CE. This eventful millennium witnessed imperial conquests, revolts, and much inner-Jewish strife. We will examine literary and material sources, produced by Jews in Egypt, Palestine, and Babylonia, including stories, philosophical writings, amulets, and burial inscriptions.

REL 256 /AAS 256: African American Religious History

(HA) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: No Limit

Professor(s): Nicole M. Turner

12:30 pm-1:20 TTh Lecture/Precept

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Religion in the Americas

This course explores the history of Black religions from the colonial times to the present. We study African American religions within and in relation to the African Diaspora and how various forces of modernity have shaped Black religions and the resilience and ingenuity of Black people across the centuries. Students will come away with an enhanced sense of the complexities of Black religious life through explorations of race and religion, religion and resistance, and the emergence of New Religious Movements like the Black Hebrews, Buddhists and Hip Hop.

REL 261 /CHV 261: Christian Ethics and Modern Society

(CD or EM) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: No Limit

Professor(s): Eric S. Gregory

11:00 am-11:50 TTh Lecture/Precept

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Philosophical and Ethical Approaches to Religion

Satisfies Critical Approaches (CA) Requirement for Majors

With a focus on contemporary controversies in public life, this course surveys philosophical and theological perspectives on the ethos of liberal democracy oriented toward rights, equality, and freedom. For example, what do Christian beliefs and practices imply about issues related to feminism, racism, nationalism, and pluralism? What is the relationship between religious conviction, morality and law? Special emphasis on selected political and economic problems, bioethics, criminal justice, sexuality, the environment, war, immigration, and the role of religion in American culture.

REL 263: Religion and its Modern Critics

(EC) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: No Limit

Professor(s): Gabriel Citron

3:30pm – 4:20pm TTH Lecture/Precept

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Philosophical and Ethical Approaches to Religion

The most penetrating critiques of Christianity have the power to unsettle our sense of self and disrupt our most natural ways of being - for Christians and non-Christians alike. For these critiques don't focus on attacking religious beliefs alone; rather, they target many of the deepest values, attitudes, and tendencies at the core of Christianity and Christian-molded cultures, and perhaps even at the core of our humanity. This course explores some of the key 19th and 20th century critiques of Christianity. It will involve opening ourselves up to the self-reckoning demanded by the likes of Kierkegaard, Emerson, Nietzsche, Baldwin, and Butler.

REL 308/HUM 308: Christianity and the Holocaust

(EM) Graded no p/d/f

Total Course Enrollment: 22

Professor(s): Timothy Jackson

1:30 pm-2:50 TTh Class

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Does NOT satisfy sub-field requirement; does count as departmental.

This class will wrestle with an enormous evil that deeply implicates Christianity, both theoretically and practically - from its scriptures and creeds to its ecclesiology and history. We will examine how Christians, male and female, both contributed to and resisted the Nazi genocide that came to be known as the Holocaust, as well as the theological and moral dimensions of anti-Semitism more generally. The approach is inter-disciplinary and pluralistic, with readings including historical, sociological, and ethical analyses by Jews, Christians, and non-religious authors. Specific issues addressed include the nature of sin, especially hatred.

REL 313 /SAS 313: The Making of Hinduism

(HA) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Guy T. St. Amant

1:30pm – 2:50pm TTH Class

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Religions of Asia

Hinduism is often regarded as one of the world's most ancient living religions, and its oldest scriptures were composed more than 3000 years ago. It may therefore come as a surprise that people did not start calling themselves Hindus until the 15th century. How should we understand the late appearance of this term as a self-referential category, and what does it tell us about religion in South Asia? In this course, we will trace Hinduism's roots from the earliest period up to the 15th century, examining not only continuity in religious thought and practice but also diversity in the traditions that came to form a single Hindu community.

REL 337 /NES 357 /GSS 448: Slavery, Sex and Empire in Muslim Societies

(HA) Graded no audit

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Shaun E. Marmon

11:00 am-12:20 TTh Class

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Islam

This course explores the theory and practice of slavery in specific Muslim societies from the 8th century up through the 20th. Our goal is to recover the lives of the enslaved and to explore intersections of sex, gender and slavery. Students will read primary sources in translation: papyri, letters, chronicles, coins. Why did some former slaves become rulers? What role did the sexual/reproductive labor of female slaves play in the family? Why did European colonial authorities perpetuate slavery in the modern period? What is the legacy of slavery in Muslim societies?

REL 359 /LAS 388: Indigenous Expressions: Scriptures and Ethnohistory

(HA) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: 30

Professor(s): Garry Sparks

11:00am – 12:20pm MW Class

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Religion in the Americas

This class will concentrate on some of the earliest and most extensive religious and historical texts authored by Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, specifically by the Maya, Mexica (Aztec), Hopi, and Diné (Navajo). This set will allow for a critical and comparative study of Native rhetoric, mythic motifs, notions of space and time, morals, and engagements with non-Native peoples and Christianity.

REL 361 /GHP 370: Eliminating Suffering: Netflix, Drugs, and Spiritual Practice

(EM) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: 12

Professor(s): Gabriel M. Citron

1:30 pm-4:20 W Seminar

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Philosophical and Ethical Approaches to Religion

We suffer. Sometimes more, sometimes less - but we all suffer, and often profoundly. What is it about the human condition that seems to make suffering inevitable? What can we do to deal with it? One approach is to try to change the external conditions causing the trouble. A very different approach sees the most important change as being within ourselves. Can we eliminate - or at least assuage - our suffering by changing the way we direct our attention (Netflix...), by changing the way we experience (drugs...), or by changing our manner of desiring (spiritual practices...)? We will approach these questions practically and theoretically.

REL 377 /AAS 376 /AMS 378: Race and Religion in America

(CD or SA) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Judith Weisenfeld

1:30 pm-4:20 W Seminar

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Religion in the Americas

In this seminar we examine how the modern constructed categories of "race" and "religion" have interacted in American history and culture. We explore how religious beliefs and practices have shaped ideas about race and how American racialization has shaped religious experience. We consider the impact of religion and race on notions of what it means to be American and how these have changed over time. Topics include race and biblical interpretation; religion and racial slavery; religion, race, and science; popular culture representations; race, religion, and politics; and religious resistance to racial hierarchy.

REL 399: Junior Colloquium

Graded No P/D/F, Audit Total Course Enrollment 15

Professor(s): Seth Perry

11:00am – 12:20pm WF Class

Required Colloquium for Junior Majors

First semester junior majors participate in a colloquium with a member or members of the faculty. In addition to assignments throughout the term that prepare majors to research and write a junior paper (JP), students are expected to produce a five to seven-page JP proposal.

REL 402 /PHI 402 /CHV 407: Kant: Ethics, Religion, Politics

(EM) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Andrew Chignell

1:30pm – 1:20pm F Seminar

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Philosophical and Ethical Approaches to Religion

A seminar on Kant's ethics, metaphysics, and social/political philosophy insofar as they relate to his thinking about religion. Kant famously criticizes traditional theistic proofs as illegitimate speculation, but his own positive project involves God in important ways, even in the Critical period. In this course, we look at the pre-Critical theology, the Critical arguments against dogmatic and ecclesiastical religion, the positive arguments for "practico-theoretical" and "moral" faith, and the roles played by the concepts of evil, grace, hope, and progress in an enlightened, moral religion.

GRADUATE COURSES:

REL 501: Religion and the Tradition of Social Theory

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 20

Professor(s): Stephen F. Teiser

10:00 am-12:50 F Seminar

A critical introduction to developments in social theory that have influenced the academic study of religion, including the classic contributions of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber as well as more recent debates in anthropology and cultural theory. Required of, and designed for, first- and second-year graduate students in religion; others must receive the instructor's permission to enroll.

REL 504 /HLS 504/CLA 519: Studies in Greco-Roman Religions: How Christianity Began: Group Formation, Ritual, and Politics

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 10

Professor(s): Elaine H. Pagels

1:30 pm-4:20 T Seminar

This seminar offers comprehensive survey of primary sources essential for research, general exams, future teaching. Some topics: strategies of group formation; how various Jewish and "pagan" critics characterize and interact with Jesus' followers; exploring NT sources and "secret gospels" to clarify issues that ignite creation of "orthodoxy"/"heresy"; controversies on authority/social/sexual practices; the politics of persecution; how Christians defied Roman authority in trial/martyr accounts. Finally, how did this unlikely movement morph into "the catholic church" in the 4th century, legitimized and transformed by Roman imperial authority?

REL 505: Studies in Religion in America: Religion in America to 1865

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 10

Professor(s): Seth A. Perry

1:30 pm-4:20 T Seminar

In this course we engage questions of approach, method, periodization, and scope in the study of religion in America through the Civil War. Texts consist of secondary literature with both classic and contemporary importance to the field, along with brief primary sources selected and presented by students

REL 507: Studies in Religion and Philosophy: Augustine and Augustinianisms

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Eric S. Gregory

1:30 pm-4:20 W Seminar

Few thinkers have influenced Western thought and culture as much as Augustine. This interdisciplinary seminar examines this influence through close reading of primary texts, including Confessions and City of God, but also some very revealing sermons and letters. Attention is also given to a variety of interpreters and critics who wrestle with Augustine's legacy for their constructive purposes. Topics include the self, virtue, politics, violence, wealth, sexuality, secularity, eschatology, empire, and the nature of tradition.

REL 517: Culture, Society and Religion Workshop

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 20

Professor(s): Jonathan C. Gold, Jenny Wiley Legath

12:00pm – 1:20pm MT Class

Presentation and critical discussion of research in progress by participants, dealing with the study of religion in any field within the humanities and social sciences. Note: REL 517 (fall) and REL 517 (spring) constitute this year-long workshop. In order to receive credit, students must take the course both semesters

REL 518: Religion and Critical Thought Workshop

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Andrew Chignell

10:00 am-11:30 Th Seminar

A weekly, year-long workshop focused on current student and faculty research in religion and critical thought, designed primarily for graduate students working on dissertations and general examination essays on the philosophy of religion, religious ethics, and the role of religion in politics.

Note: REL 518 (fall) and REL 519 (spring) constitute this year-long workshop. In order to receive credit and/or a grade, students must take the course both semesters.

REL 523: Religion in America Workshop

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 10

Professor(s): Nicole M. Turner

3:00 pm-4:20 Th Seminar

A weekly, year-long workshop focused on the current research of visiting presenters, current students, and faculty in American religious history. The workshop is designed primarily for Ph.D. students in the field, but is open as well to undergraduate concentrators with a strong background in the study of American religion and culture. Note: REL 523 (fall) and REL 524 (spring) constitute this year-long workshop. In order to receive credit and/or a grade, students must take the course both semesters.

REL 525: Religions of Late Antiquity Workshop

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 10

Professor(s): Yedidah Koren

12:00pm – 1:30pm T Seminar

A weekly, year-long workshop providing students in the Religions of Late Antiquity with the opportunity to present their current research for discussion. Note: REL 525 (fall) and REL 526 (spring) constitute this year-long workshop. In order to receive credit and/or a grade, students must take the course both semesters.

REL 529: Workshop in Islamic Studies

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 10

Professor(s): Tehseen Thaver

12:00pm – 1:30pm F Seminar

A weekly year-long Religion workshop focusing on the research and writing of graduate students, faculty, and visitors in Islamic Studies. This workshop provides a forum for presentation of works in progress: drafts of dissertation chapters, dissertation proposals, seminar papers, conference papers, articles and book chapters. All Islamic Studies graduate students are encouraged to participate as presenters and as commentators. The workshop fosters collegiality and professional development. Note: REL 529 (fall) and REL 530 (spring) constitute this year-long workshop.

REL 531: Readings in Chinese Religions: Chinese Buddhist Texts on Cosmology

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 12

Professor(s): Stephen F. Teiser

1:30 pm-4:20 W Seminar

Introduction to basic Buddhist cosmology through close reading of early foundational texts in Chinese. Focus on genre, style, grammar, and vocabulary. Research tools, methods, secondary sources also introduced. Goals of the course are to expand knowledge of Buddhist cosmology, to develop the ability to read early Chinese Buddhist translations, and to increase command of reference tools. Reading knowledge of classical Chinese and at least one language of secondary scholarship (Japanese, Chinese, French) required. Students from all departments welcome.

CROSS-LISTED:

NES 240/REL 240: Muslims and the Qur'an

(EM) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit Total Course Enrollment 50

Professor(s): Muhammad Q. Zaman

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Islam

10:00am – 10:50am MW Lecture/Precept

A broad-ranging introduction to pre-modern, modern, and contemporary Islam in light of how Muslims have approached their foundational religious text, the Qur'an. Topics include: Muhammad and the emergence of Islam; theology, law and ethics; war and peace; mysticism; women and gender; and modern debates on Islamic reform. We shall examine the varied contexts in which Muslims have interpreted their sacred text, their agreements and disagreements on what it means and, more broadly, their often competing understandings of Islam and of what it is to be a Muslim.

CLA 319 / REL 301: Ancient Greek Religion

(HA) Graded na, npdf Total Course Enrollment 16

Professor(s): Michael A. Flower

3:00pm – 4:20pm MW Seminar

Living as we do in a culture that is primarily either secular or monotheistic and in which the sacred and profane are largely kept separate, how can we possibly understand the world of ancient polytheism? The ancient Greeks did not have a word for "religion", nor did they conceive of "religion" as a distinct domain of human experience. Rather, the practices, beliefs, and rituals that we would term "religious" were embedded in every aspect, public and private, of life. We will explore how people interacted with their gods in their everyday lives, both individually and collectively, and how this interaction shaped and structured Greek society.

NES 339/REL 339: Introduction to Islamic Theology

(HA) Graded No Audit Total Course Enrollment 30

Professor(s): Hossein Modarressi

1:30pm – 4:20pm M Seminar

This course is a general survey of the main principles of Islamic doctrine. It focuses on the Muslim theological discourse on the concepts of God and His attributes, man and nature, the world to come, revelation and prophethood, diversity of religions, and the possibility and actuality of miracles.

SAS 345 / REL 345: Islam in South Asia through Literature and Film
(LA) Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit Total Course Enrollment 20

Professors(s): Sadaf Jaffer

11:00am – 12:20pm WF Class

This course is a survey of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. We begin with the earliest Muslim descriptions of India and the rise of Persian poetry to understand how Muslims negotiated life at the frontiers of the Islamic world. Next we trace patterns of patronage and production at the Mughal court and the development of Urdu as a vehicle of literary composition including a discussion of the Progressive Writer's Movement and the "Muslim Social" genre of Hindi cinema. The course concludes with an examination of contemporary novels from Bangladesh and Pakistan. Students will gain an informed perspective on Islam beyond the headlines.

NES 507/REL 585: Muslim South Asia

Graded A-F, P/D/F, Audit Total Enrollment 12

Professor(s): Muhammad Zaman

1:30pm – 4:20pm M Seminar

This graduate course seeks to provide the participants with a broad introduction to major intellectual trends in the history of Islam in South Asia from the early nineteenth century to the present. We focus on the work of select individuals and discuss their writings in the context of their intellectual, social, cultural, and political milieu. Translations and exegeses of the Qur'an, Islamic law, politics, and social thought are among the themes on which we focus.

For more detailed information on each course, please visit:

<http://registrar.princeton.edu/course-offerings/>