

RELIGION DEPARTMENT
2024 – 2025 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: 40

Professor(s): Jenny Wiley Legath

TTH 1:30 pm-2:50

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 such as scriptures, monuments, the body, law, place, and holidays. 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 210: Buddhist Cosmology and Rebirth

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

Total Course Enrollment 30

Professor(s): Kelly Carlton and Stephen Teiser

MW 1:30pm 2:50pm

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Religions of Asia

Concepts of reincarnation - rebirth as a god, human, animal, hungry ghost, or hell being -have been central to Buddhism. How have Buddhists imagined the afterlife? Are men and women treated differently? What does cosmology imply about vegetarianism and animal welfare? Is Buddhism possible without belief in the otherworld? This course surveys the Buddhist otherworld across history, from ancient to modern, Asia to the West. Sources include paintings of heaven and hell, philosophical tracts, meditation manuals, tales of the Buddha's past lives, ghost stories, anime, Buddhist theme parks, and modern ethical debates.

REL 239/NES 239: Sufism: The Mystical Tradition of Islam

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

Total Course Enrollment 15

Professor(s): Tehseen Thaver

TH 1:30pm – 4:20pm

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Islam

In Western media and popular discourse, Sufism, or the mystical tradition in Islam, is often portrayed as the 'soft-side' of Islam and contrasted with the harsh 'legalism' of the Shari`a or Islamic law. In this class, we will try to interrupt this portrayal through a rigorous exercise of textual and conceptual interrogation. We will explore the institutional and intellectual history, meditation and disciplinary practices, poetry and literature, as well as orientalist and neo-imperialist representations of Sufism. A major emphasis of this course will be on closely reading and analyzing Sufi texts from a range of genres in translation.

REL 244/NES 244/MED 246/JDS 245: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Their Emergence in Antiquity

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

Total Course Enrollment No Limit

Professor(s): Moulie Vidas

TTH 11:00am – 11:50am

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

This course traces the emergence of the traditions we now call Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: their first communities, texts, images, and values. Students will learn to examine their histories critically, identify patterns across traditions, uncover the way these traditions shaped one another, trace the developments of beliefs and practices from their earlier forms, and analyze the social and political factors that informed these developments.

REL 246/JDS 246/CLA 248/NES 246: The Lost World of Ancient Judaism

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

Total Course Enrollment No Limit

Professor(s): Yedidah Koren

MW 11:00am – 11:50am

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

The diverse world of ancient Judaism was "lost" for centuries. Major archaeological findings and the "discovery" of ancient Jewish works that were preserved by Christian scribes, reveal a rich mosaic of thriving Jewish communities in Egypt, Babylonia, Judea, the Galilee, and across the Mediterranean. They established temples and synagogues, created splinter groups, and fought foreign empires. They also wrote stories and philosophical works, legal contracts, and healing amulets. In this course we will examine sophisticated literary sources alongside artifacts of day-to-day life, to catch a glimpse of the lives and culture of ancient Jews.

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

TTH 11:00 am-11:50

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 264/CHV 264/PHI 264: Religion and Reason

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

Total Course Enrollment: No Limit

Professor(s): Austen McDougal

MW 2:30pm – 3:20pm

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

An examination of the most influential theoretical, pragmatic, and moral arguments regarding the existence and nature of God (or gods). Along the way, we consider debates about whether and how we can talk or think about such a being, and about whether mystical experience, miracles, and the afterlife are intelligible notions. Finally, we consider whether religious commitment might be rationally acceptable without any proof or evidence, and whether the real-world fact of religious diversity has philosophical implications. Course readings will be taken from both historical and contemporary sources.

REL 271/AMS 341: 'Cult' Controversies in America

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

Total Course Enrollment: 60

Professor(s): Judith Weisenfeld

MW 11:00am – 11:50am

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Religion in the Americas

In this course we examine a variety of new religious movements that tested the boundaries of acceptable religion at various moments in American history. We pay particular attention to government and media constructions of the religious mainstream and margin, to the politics of labels such as "cult" and "sect," to race, gender, and sexuality within new religions, and to the role of American law in constructing categories and shaping religious expressions. We also consider what draws people to new religions and examine the distinctive beliefs, practices, and social organizations of groups labeled by outsiders as "cults."

REL 314/JDS 314/HUM 322/COM 366: The Bible and Modernity: Literature, Philosophy, Politics

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

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Leora Batnitzky

W 1:30pm – 4:20pm

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

This course considers the diverse, and at times contradictory, ways in which modernity has both shaped and been shaped by the reception of the Hebrew Bible. Focusing on the books of Genesis, Exodus, Samuel, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and Job, the course explores how the Bible inspired an array of modern writers, philosophers, and political theorists, from Machiavelli to Shakespeare to Melville to Kierkegaard to Camus to Baldwin to Morrison, and beyond.

REL 324: Mind and Meditation

(EC) Graded No Audit

Total Course Enrollment: 20

Professor(s): Jonathan Gold

M 1:30pm – 4:20pm

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Religions of Asia

This course examines the philosophy, history, and methods of Buddhist meditation. Primary readings will be Buddhist works on the nature of the mind and the role of meditation on the path to liberation (nirvana). We will ask how traditional Buddhist views have been reshaped by modern teachers, and we will interrogate the significance of current research on meditation in the fields of neuroscience, psychology and the philosophy of mind. In addition to other coursework, students will be practicing meditation and keeping a log and journal.

REL 328/GSS 328/NES 331: Women, Gender, and the Body in Islamic Societies

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

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Shaun Marmon

M 1:30pm – 4:20pm

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Islam

This course explores the lives and representations of women in Muslims societies from early Islam through modern contexts. Using varied sources, from scripture, religious, legal and historical texts, letters, novels, poetry, and film we will consider topics including women's piety, slavery, marriage and sexuality, feminisms and LGBTQ identities, and the experiences of non-Muslim women in Muslim societies.

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

F 1:30pm - 4:20pm

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 365/ PHI 366/CHV 316: What Should We Eat? Ethics, Religion, Politics

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

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Andrew Chignell

TTH 3:00pm - 4:20pm

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

We are what we eat--morally as well as molecularly. So how should moral concerns about animals, workers, the environment, our health, and our communities inform our food choices? Can we develop an effective and just model for feeding growing populations while respecting religious, class, and cultural differences? The main goal of this course is not to prescribe answers to these questions, but to give students tools to reflect on them effectively. These tools include a working knowledge of the main ethical theories in philosophy, and a grasp of key empirical issues regarding the production, distribution, consumption, and politics of food.

REL 372: Religion, Race and Politics in the U.S.

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

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Nicole Turner

T 1:30pm - 4:20pm

Area of Study Stream Requirement: Religion in the Americas

In this presidential election season, the relationship between religion, race and the political project of the United States will be front and center. This course provides a foundation for thinking through these intersecting themes and placing them in historical perspective. The course asks: What is Race? Religion? Politics? How have Americans' ideas about religion and race informed the ways they think about, engage and articulate political engagement? How has religion informed political and social justice activism? What political ideas and motives came from religious bases?

REL 399: Junior Colloquium

Graded No P/D/F, Audit

Total Course Enrollment 15

Professor(s): Bryan Lowe

WF 1:30pm - 2:50pm

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 404: Advanced Reading in Tibetan

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

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Tenzin Bhuchung

M 1:30pm - 4:20pm

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

The purpose of this course is primarily to provide students the ability to read complex Buddhist materials in Tibetan language. We will do by delving into the Mahamudra writings of Gampopa, a 12th Century Tibetan figure who championed a contemplative approach to reality based on the unmediated experience of one's own nature of the mind. This will inform conversations around unmediated religious experience as sui generis to religious studies and further introduce students to the unique intellectual history of 12th century Tibet.

REL 411/JDS 412: The Bible and its Early Interpreters

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

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Liane Feldman and Moulie Vidas

T 1:30pm - 4:20pm

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

This course offers a close encounter with biblical passages and their reception in other ancient texts (including those collected in the Bible). By tracking how stories, norms, and ideas transformed as they were read in antiquity, we will develop analytical strategies sensitive to the multiple meanings, possibilities and problems that are inherent in these passages. We will also relate the different interpretive moves to their broader historical and literary contexts, examining the interaction between the development of different readings and social, political, and cultural changes.

GRADUATE COURSES:

REL 502: Philosophy and the Study of Religion

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 20

Professor(s): Leora Batnitzky and Jonathan Gold

F 10:00am – 12:50pm

The impact of modern philosophical ideas on the academic study of religion: naturalism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, genealogy, ideology, social construction, and epistemic injustice, among other philosophical movements, as well as the complex interplay between constructions of religion, race, and gender.

REL 505: Studies in Religion in America: African American Religious History

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Nicole Turner

TH 10:00am – 1:00pm

This course explores how histories of African American religions have produced enduring interpretive frames. Questions that animate this course include: What role have African American religions played in African American life? How have scholars studied the history of African American religions and shaped the discourse about African American religious life? The course considers African American religions and class, gender, racial identity formation, political engagement, cultural exchange and more. Through reading of foundational and newer texts, we will explore the sources and methodologies scholars use to study African American religion.

REL 511: Special Topics in the Study of Religion: Papyrology with case studies on Oxyrhynchus Papyri

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 12

Professor(s): AnneMarie Luijendijk

T 1:30pm – 4:20pm

This seminar introduces students to the field of papyrology, the study of ancient texts preserved on papyrus. Papyri have contributed greatly to our understanding of daily life, government, and textual transmission and many other aspects of antiquity. The course teaches students the skills to read and understand ancient documents and literature preserved on papyrus. The papyri found at the garbage heaps of the ancient Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchus will serve as case studies in this class. Special attention will be paid to the importance of papyri for religious and social history.

REL 513: Studies in Ancient Judaism: Introduction to Judaism in the Greco-Roman World

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 10

Professor(s): Yedidah Koren

M 1:30pm – 4:20pm

The goal of this course is to introduce a significant part of the literature of the Jews of Palestine and Egypt in the period from Alexander to the destruction of the Second Temple.

REL 516/ANT 516: Readings in Religion in the Americas: Religions of Indigenous America

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Garry Sparks

This course expands Religion graduate offerings in the subfield of Religion in the Americas beyond the existing course REL 505 "Studies in Religion in the Americas" -- in which courses are offered that cover major time periods (e.g., religion in colonial British America, pre-Civil War, religion in the modern U.S., etc.) -- to instead also provide graduate students with courses that focus on major topics and address texts, themes, and debates in the field (e.g., comparatively across the Americas).

REL 517: Culture, Society and Religion Workshop

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 20

Professor(s): Lauren K. McCormick, Jenny Wiley Legath

M 12:00pm – 1:20pm

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): Gabriel Citron

TH 2:30pm – 4:00pm

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): Garry Sparks

TH 3:00pm – 4:20pm

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): Liane Feldman

T 12:00pm – 1:30pm

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 527: Asian Religions Workshop

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Stephen Teiser

TBD

A weekly workshop focused on disciplinary questions, professional development, and presentation and discussion of work in progress. Required for all students, pre-generals and post-generals, in Asian Religions. Open to other students with permission of the instructor. REL 527 (fall) and REL 528 (spring) constitute this year-long workshop. Students must complete both semesters to receive credit.

REL 529: Workshop in Islamic Studies

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 10

Professor(s): Tehseen Thaver

W 1:30pm – 2:50pm

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 543/ NES 583: Islamic Law in South Asia

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Muhammad Zaman

T 1:30pm – 4:20pm

This seminar offers a broad-ranging survey of the history of Islamic law in South Asia, from the early sixteenth century to the present. It examines key developments relating to legal thought and practice under the Mughals, during colonial rule, and in postcolonial India and Pakistan. It seeks to put recent scholarship in Islamic Studies in conversation with law in the South Asian context and to look at Islamic law from multiple perspectives, including that of the state and its functionaries, the ulama and, where possible, the ordinary people. Topics include: slavery; marriage and divorce; violence; criminal law; and legal modernism.

REL 555: Introduction to Coptic Language and Literature

Graded */aud

Total Course Enrollment: 10

Professor(s): Staff

TBD

This course offers an introduction to Coptic language and literatures. The class provides the foundational grammatical and linguistic concepts to build elementary Coptic reading competency (with focus on the Sahidic dialect primarily but not exclusively). Through course examples and group reading, students gain exposure to a broad Coptic corpus including Nag Hammadi literature, martyr literature, monastic texts, magic or medical recipes, and other documentary texts. The course also introduces students to the tools and resources of Coptic studies - dictionaries, grammars, as well as digital humanities resources.

CROSS-LISTED:

AMS 257/JDS 257/REL 205: Jews Across the Americas

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

Total Course Enrollment 15

Professor(s): Staff

MW 11:00am – 12:20pm

This course examines the diversity of the American Jewish experiences in South America, North America, and the Caribbean. Moving from the early colonial era to the present, we will examine Jewish life using historical, literary, religious, and cultural evidence. This course offers an introduction to the methods of digital humanities and will culminate in each student creating an online digital exhibit using ArtSteps. Special attention will be paid to the experiences of women as well as multiracial Jews and Jews of color.

CLA 234/REL 248: Magic and Witchcraft in the Ancient World

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

Total Course Enrollment 75

Professor(s): Melissa Haynes

MW 10:00am – 10:50am

In this course we will investigate ancient ideas about magic, alternative divine powers, and the relationship between practitioners and clients in this system. Interest in magic and its promise to influence the world is shared across socio-economic classes, and appears in literary texts from Greek epic to Roman novels as well as in material finds including magical papyri, gold Orphic tablets, curses scratched on lead and other charmed objects. We will consider this material in light of modern theoretical approaches to magic, witches and the uncanny in order to see where these ancient practices fit into the current scholarship.

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

MW 10:00am – 10:50am

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.

NES 339/REL 339: Introduction to Islamic Theology

(HA) No Audit

Total Course Enrollment 12

Professor(s): Hossein Modarressi

M 1:30pm – 4:20pm

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.

For more detailed information on each course, please visit:

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