

## **REL 101**

Instructor: Staff

### **Intro to Religious Studies**

**Course Description:** This course introduces students to the academic study of religion through a survey of the major beliefs, values, ritual practices, sacred writings and historical developments of the major western religions, namely, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. We approach these religions as things that humans do. In other words, we look at religion as an aspect of the societies, cultures and behavior of those human beings (past and present) who describe themselves as Jews, Christians and Muslims. Our main goal is to learn more about the different ways Jews, Christians and Muslims have thought, felt and acted over the course of their long histories. While we may have religious commitments and questions of our own, in this class we are not asked to “be religious.” Rather we are asked to be thorough investigators seeking to know, understand and appreciate our chosen subject matter. The course will consist mainly of regular lectures on relevant topics; regular assigned readings and periodic exams which require students to demonstrate detailed knowledge of the material presented in lectures and assigned readings.

## **REL 109**

Instructor: Professor Matt McKinnon

### **Religion and Contemporary Culture**

**Course Description:** This course is an attempt to address religious issues within our contemporary Western context. We will explore divergent voices and practices that have arisen between the religious and the secular, within certain “traditional” Western religions, as well as within “new age” religions. Specific issues in past semesters have included truth and relativity, language and reality, racism and religion, feminist religious thought, and the role of the Internet in contemporary religion. Classes are designed to include large-group lectures as well as small-group discussions and activities.

## **REL 111**

Instructor: Staff

### **NON-WESTERN RELIGION: BUDDHISM**

**Course Description:** This course provides a historical and thematic overview of three major religious traditions of Asia: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Through a careful examination of various primary and secondary sources, we will consider ways in which South Asian Hindus, Indo-Tibetan Buddhists, and Chinese Daoists have attempted to understand the nature of the world, human society, and the person's place within them. In examining religious traditions that in many ways seem wholly foreign or “other” in comparison to our own, our emphasis will be on the internal logic of each, on the resources that each provides for the construction of meaning, value, and moral vision.

## **REL 201**

Instructor: Staff

### **The Bible in Western Culture**

**Course Description:** Study of the significant themes and issues in the Bible and their expression in the religious literature and history of Europe and America.

## **REL 204**

Instructor: Professor Derek Krueger

### **New Testament and Origins of Christianity**

**Course Description:** This course examines the origins of Christianity through its earliest literature. We will read the writings collected in the New Testament, together with others that did not make it into the Bible, to reconstruct the history of the earliest Christian communities. As we chart the development of Christianity within first-century Judaism and its growth in the Greco-Roman world, we will address the beliefs, practices, and motivations of Jesus' followers in Palestine, the communities evangelized by Paul, and those communities for which the gospels were produced. Through analysis of primary sources we will attempt to situate Jesus and the New Testament in their historical context. By the end of the course, students will attain a general understanding of the types of literature produced by ancient Christian groups and a variety of issues and methods involved in the modern historical study of the New Testament.

## **REL 207**

Instructor: Professor Ben Ramsey

### **Modern Problems of Belief**

**Course Description:** A study of some of the new paradigms, worldviews and belief systems emerging in contemporary western culture with a focus on changing definitions of the human person, nature and supernatural, and the relationship between spirituality and science. The course is designed as a seminar with an emphasis on discussion and close reading of primary texts.

## **REL 209**

Instructor: Professor Eugene Rogers

### **Elements of Christian Thought**

**Course Description: Why you should take this course:** 1. You want to know why Christians think God is three, how they think Jesus saves, why they think God permits evil, what they think God does about it, what they think God does about death, what they think God wants with sex, or what they mean by "salvation." 2. It's a good first course in Christianity, designed to be

informative to those who know little. 3. It's a good advanced course in Christianity, designed to be interesting, even surprising to those who know a lot.4.The readings are great! We read some of the greatest hits in Christian thought.5. You want to read classic old stuff, like Augustine and Calvin.6. You want to read the latest new stuff, published recently. 7. You couldn't take courses like this in high school.8. Seniors need training for jobs that involve thinking, writing, or supplying reasons. Theologians think about theology much as lawyers think about law or doctors go about diagnosis. Students go on to law school, divinity school, architecture school, medical school, graduate school, consulting, business. 9. It's part of the citizens' education that Jefferson envisioned that they should know something about religion. 10. There is a good mix of lecture and discussion.11. The course needs a variety of backgrounds to work.

## **REL 215**

Instructor: Professor Marc Bregman

### **Judaism**

**Course Description:** This course provides an initial orientation to Judaism as a religion and as a culture. Students will be introduced to the development of basic Jewish practices, beliefs and institutions and to the major works of Jewish literature. The broad historical survey of Judaism from its beginnings until modern times will be concretized by focusing selectively on a number of specific texts, themes and topics.

## **REL 221**

Instructor: Professor Charlie Orzech

### **NON-WESTERN RELIGION: BUDDHISM**

Since my house  
burned down, I now own  
a better view of the  
rising moon.                      - Moshido

**Course Description:** This course is an introduction to the family of religions we call Buddhism, both in the past and in the present. This semester we will focus on classical Buddhism in South Asia. The last third of the semester will be devoted to Buddhism in the modern West, the emergence of "Socially Engaged Buddhism" and the application of Buddhist ethical principles to contemporary issues of war, terrorism, and ecological degradation. As we will see, our exploration of Buddhism will inevitably involve inquiry into our own culture and its religious traditions as reflected in our understanding (or misunderstanding) of Buddhism. The course makes extensive use of on-line resources and images. Grades will be based on three exams, online responses to readings, and weekly quizzes.

**REL 225**

Instructor: Professor Elizabeth Bucar

**An Introduction to Islam: Concepts, Practices, and Debates**

**Course Description:** Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, interest in Islam has grown tremendously, especially in the United States where it has been the subject of much media commentary and political debate. This course seeks to prepare students to read these public discussions with a critical eye by providing an introduction to the major concepts and practices of Islam and the meta-narratives built into particular intra-Muslim debates. We will think about Islam in terms of its diversity by focusing on a series of key debates in Islamic thought and practice from its early history to the present day.

**REL 229**

Instructor: Staff

**Introduction to African American Religions**

**Course Description:** Examination of the diverse beliefs and practices of African American religious traditions and their development in the Americas.

**REL 231**

Instructor: Staff

**Religion in America**

**Course Descriptions:** Diverse religious traditions and thinkers that have played a significant role in the history of the United States from Native American beginnings to the present. (Formerly REL 131)

**REL 298**

Instructor: Professors Elizabeth Bucar and Ben Ramsey

**Thinking About Religion**

**Course Description:** This course takes an imaginative and critical approach to introducing Religious Studies by focusing on case studies that illustrate how diverse religious ideas and practices may be interpreted as ways of “world construction.” Additionally, this course investigates how Religious Studies “maps” religious phenomena. Cases studies will be used to demonstrate how religious life in different times and places has been shaped by the dynamic interplay of social, political, economic, environmental, aesthetic, and personal factors, and by peoples’ efforts to represent or “map” this interplay in order to bring meaning, purpose, and order to their personal and collective lives. In considering these religious mappings, the course will also attend to the ways in which students of religion are themselves map-makers and users. The course introduces the methods and materials that scholars, as students of religion, use to

make sense of the religious worlds of their and other cultures. This course is, therefore, not a survey of religious traditions, but rather an extended reflection on how scholars of religion imagine “religion” as an object of study, and how we frame our studies in a self-conscious and responsible way. This course is not, in the first instance, about description, though this is an essential part of the enterprise. It is, rather, about responsible interpretation—about how to productively approach the raw data of religious phenomenon and how to locate our perspectives in the larger context of humanistic inquiry. In short, this course is designed to introduce the problem of interpretation through selected case studies that challenge our assumptions and illuminate our subjectivity. This course is designed as a seminar and writing workshop. Student participation is essential, and while the professor will lead discussion and occasionally lecture, student-led discussion will drive the course. Students will also engage in library research, as well as study the craft of writing academic research papers.

### **REL 303**

Instructor: Professor Derek Krueger

#### **Christianity in Byzantium**

**Course Description:** This course explores the practice of Christianity in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Middle Ages, focusing on the Byzantine Empire from the sixth to the twelfth century (500-1200). Our investigations will provide insight into the formation and history of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Considering Byzantine Christianity as a religious system, we will survey a variety of literary, visual, and material evidence in order to understand a wide range of devotional behaviors in their historical, geographical, and cultural contexts. Topics to be explored include liturgy, the veneration of images, the cults of the saints, the quest for healing, monasticism, the architecture and illustration of churches, and the shape of Byzantine religious thought about God, creation, and redemption. Distinctions between elite and popular piety will be intentionally challenged in order to understand how a variety of religious practices cohered for participants at various levels of society. This course is designed for undergraduate Religious Studies majors and others with a strong interest in Christianity in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Middle Ages. Class will be run as a seminar discussion with everyone expected to contribute to our common task of interpreting the primary evidence and evaluating the secondary literature. This course is writing intensive; it is also reading intensive.

### **REL 309**

Instructor: Eugene Rogers

#### **Spirituality and Culture in the West**

**Course Description:** Most weeks will have a primary (historical) source reading for Tuesday and a secondary (theoretical) source reading for Thursday. That is, the Thursday readings comment on the Tuesday readings. You get to figure out how they apply. We follow several questions the history of Christianity.

1) The question of human **growth**. What is it, how does it happen, where does it lead, how does it surprise?

- 2) The question of human **experience**. How do individual and communal experience relate? How do texts and practices shape experience?
- 3) The question of human **frailty, death, and failure**. How does Christianity seek to make sense of these things? Does the death of Jesus mean that God undergoes them, too? How do themes of vulnerability and failure implicate Christian accounts of how sexuality fits into spirituality?
- 4) How do students of religion read Christian texts, focused on questions of **social meaning**. How do Christian texts and practices render time, sexuality, suffering, misfortune, joy, anger, pathology, and other things socially useful?

We follow these questions using as a guide Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge*, reading many of the original texts that he reads, as well as some others.

**Why you should not take this course.** This course is not only writing intensive. This course is also reading-intensive and thinking-intensive. If you don't enjoy long, difficult, and regular reading, don't take this course. If you don't want to work on your writing, don't take this course. If you hope to sit back and be entertained in class, instead of verbalizing your thinking out loud, don't take this course.

### **REL 311**

Instructor: Professor Marc Bregman

#### **Topics in Biblical Studies: The Sacrifice of Isaac**

**Course Description:** This course will survey the broad spectrum of interpretation of one biblical narrative, "The Sacrifice of Isaac" (Genesis 22:1-19), that is foundational for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Students will learn how the biblical text can be approached both objectively and subjectively through classroom discussion and guided writing assignments.

### **REL 318**

Instructor: Professor William Hart

#### **Theories and Methods in the Study of Religions**

**Course Description:** This course is an examination of theories of religions advanced by anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and theologians. Consideration of case studies to understand religion as a system of beliefs and practices.

### **REL 333**

Instructor: Professor Ben Ramsey

#### **Religion and Psychology**

**Course Description:** This course presents classic Western and/or Asian psychological theories of religion and shows how various religious traditions understand the human psyche.

**REL 401, 402, 403, 404**

Instructor: Professor William Hart

**Tutorial**

**REL 695**

Instructor: Professor William Hart

Independent Study