

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Department Website: <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/academics/undergraduate-program-religious-studies> (<https://divinity.uchicago.edu/academics/undergraduate-program-religious-studies/>)

PROGRAM OF STUDY

The program in Religious Studies introduces students to the academic study of religion. Students in Religious Studies learn how to think, talk, and write about religion in a way that is well-informed, rigorously critical, and responsibly engaged. The study of religion investigates how human societies construct practices, seek meanings, and pose questions about their world. These investigations may be constructive, cultural, and/or historical. Since it touches all facets of human experience, the study of religion is a crucial conversation partner with other fields of study and draws on the entire range of humanistic and social scientific disciplines. Students in the program can explore numerous religious traditions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, and Shinto. Students are exposed to the sources, problems, methods, and methodologies of our diverse areas of study. The interests of our students may be descriptive, explanatory, and/or normative.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Religious Studies majors have the option of pursuing one of two tracks: the Regular Track or the Research Track. Students in the Regular Track must take eleven courses for the major, including RLST 10100 Introduction to Religious Studies and at least one introductory-level ("Gateway") course. There is no order in which these courses need to be taken. Students in the Research Track will also complete these requirements; in addition, they will complete a BA thesis while attending two BA seminars: RLST 29800 BA Research Seminar I and RLST 29900 BA Research Seminar II. This BA thesis is typically completed in a student's fourth year. Students who wish to pursue the Research Track must officially declare their intention to do so with the Director or Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies by the end of Spring Quarter during their third year. Only students in the Research Track are eligible for departmental honors. Students who are double majoring may submit one research paper for both majors by submitting the proper form to the Director of Undergraduates Studies (see below). If a student is double majoring and is completing comparable BA thesis seminars in another department, they may not need to take the RLST BA Paper Seminars, at the discretion of the Director of Undergraduate Studies (see below, "Senior Seminar and BA Thesis").

Students with permission to enroll in graduate Divinity School courses may count them toward the major. The course codes for graduate Divinity School courses are as follows: AASR, BIBL, DVPR, HCHR, HREL, ISLM, JTAC, RAME, RELP, RETH, RLVC, and THEO. Students who wish to receive credit in the major for non-departmental courses must submit a petition to the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Such requests are decided on a case-by-case basis. For courses taken at an institution other than the University of Chicago (or an institution at which a student is enrolled as part of a study abroad program that is sponsored by the University of Chicago), students must also receive approval for transfer credit from the Office of the Dean of Students. For more information, see Transfer Credit (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/transfercredit/>).

Gateway Course Requirement

Religious Studies majors are required to take an introductory-level Gateway course. It need not precede other course work in the major, but students are advised to have completed it by the end of their second year. Gateway courses include (but are not limited to) RLST 11004 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, RLST 12000 Introduction to the New Testament: Texts and Contexts of Interpretation, and RLST 11040 Encountering the Qur'an: Scripture, History, and Reception. An updated list of the Gateway courses offered each year may be found on the program's website (<https://divinity.uchicago.edu/academics/undergraduate-program-religious-studies/spotlighted-undergraduate-courses/>). Students who completed all three quarters of the general education sequence SOSOC 17100-17200-17300 Religion: Cosmos, Conscience, and Community I-II-III do not need to complete the Gateway requirement and can instead take an RLST course of their choice.

Course Distribution

Religion is expressed in many forms throughout the world's cultures, and the academic study of religion therefore requires multiple perspectives on its subject. Students of religion should have some knowledge of the historical development of specific religious traditions, understand and critically engage the ethical and intellectual teachings of various religions, and begin to make some comparative appraisals of the roles that religions play in different cultures and historical periods. To introduce students to these multiple perspectives on religion and to provide a sense of the field as a whole, students are required to take at least one course in two of the following areas. To identify the areas, refer to the RLST number range (see below).

A. Historical Studies in Religious Traditions: courses that explore the development of particular religious traditions, including their social practices, rituals, scriptures, and beliefs in historical context (RLST 11000 through 15000, 20000 through 22900).

B. Constructive Studies in Religion: courses that investigate constructive or normative questions about the nature and conduct of human life that are raised by religious traditions, including work in philosophy of religion, ethics, and theology (RLST 23000 through 25900).

C. Cultural Studies in Religion: courses that introduce issues in the social and cultural contingencies of religious thought and practice by emphasizing sociological, anthropological, and literary-critical perspectives on religion, and by raising comparative questions about differing religious and cultural traditions (RLST 26000 through 29500).

BA Thesis and BA Thesis Seminars

The two-quarter senior sequence (RLST 29800 BA Research Seminar I and RLST 29900 BA Research Seminar II) will assist students in the Research Track with the preparation of the required BA thesis. During May of their third year, students will work with the Director or Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies to choose a faculty adviser and a topic for research, and to plan a course of study for the following year. To begin the BA thesis, a student must complete the BA Project Proposal Form (http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/religiousstudies/RLST_BA_Proposal_Form_2026.docx) and have it signed by the Director of Undergraduate Studies, typically by the end of the Spring Quarter of their third year.

In their fourth year, students in the Research Track will take part in the BA thesis seminar convened by a preceptor during the Autumn and Winter Quarters. This seminar will allow students to prepare their bibliographies, hone their writing, and present their research. Students will register for RLST 29800 BA Research Seminar I in the Autumn Quarter and for RLST 29900 BA Research Seminar II in the Winter Quarter. The BA thesis will be due the second week of Spring Quarter. The length is typically between thirty and forty pages, with the upward limit being firm.

This program may accept a BA thesis or project used to satisfy the same requirement in another major if certain conditions are met and with the consent of the other program. The student will only have to take the BA thesis seminars for one of the two majors. Approval from both departments is required. Students should consult with the departments by the earliest BA thesis proposal deadline (or by the end of their third year if neither program publishes a deadline). A consent form (<https://college.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/College%20Dean%20of%20Students/Single%20Bachelors%20Paper%20for%20Two%20Majors.pdf>), to be signed by both departments, is available from the College Academic Advising Office. It must be completed and returned to the College adviser by the end of Autumn Quarter of the student's year of graduation.

GRADING

Religious Studies majors must receive quality grades in all courses in the major. With consent of instructor, nonmajors may take Religious Studies courses for Pass/Fail grading. Faculty will determine the criteria that constitute a Pass.

HONORS

Students who write BA theses deemed exceptional by their faculty advisers will be eligible for consideration for graduation with honors. Only students in the Research Track are eligible for honors. To be considered for honors, students in the Research Track must also have a 3.5 GPA or higher in the major and a 3.25 GPA or higher overall. Please see the program's website for a full list of honors and awards.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

Regular Track

RLST 10100	Introduction to Religious Studies	100
One introductory-level ("Gateway") course		100
At least two courses in three major areas (Historical, Constructive, Cultural Studies)		200
Seven additional courses in Religious Studies		700
Total Units		1100

Research Track

RLST 10100	Introduction to Religious Studies	100
One introductory-level ("Gateway") course		100
At least two courses in three major areas (Historical, Constructive, Cultural Studies)		200
Seven additional courses in Religious Studies		700
RLST 29800	BA Research Seminar I	100
RLST 29900	BA Research Seminar II	100
Total Units		1300

RLST MAJORS ENROLLED IN FOUR-YEAR JOINT DEGREE PROGRAMS (BA/MA)

Students enrolled in a joint degree program may double-count up to three (3) graduate courses toward their RLST major, provided that these courses are graduate courses offered by the Divinity School (or cross-listed with our graduate programs). This decision is also contingent upon the graduate program allowing students to double-count 300 units towards the 4200 units required for graduation from the College. The course codes for

graduate Divinity School courses are as follows: AASR, BIBL, DVPR, HCHR, HREL, ISLM, JTAC, RAME, RELP, RETH, RLVC, and THEO.

If certain conditions are met, the RLST program may accept an MA thesis or project to satisfy the BA senior thesis requirement in the research track. Students should consult with the departments or programs by the earliest thesis proposal deadline (or by the end of their third year if neither program publishes a deadline). A consent form, to be signed by both departments or programs, is available from the College Academic Advising Office. It must be completed and returned to the College adviser by the end of Autumn Quarter of the student's year of graduation.

The student may only have to take the BA/MA thesis seminar(s) for one of the two programs. Approval from both departments or programs is required. Students should consult with the departments by the earliest BA or MA thesis proposal deadline (or by the end of their third year if neither program publishes a deadline).

JOINT BACHELORS-MASTERS PROGRAMS (BA/AMRS AND BA/MA)

For information about the 3+1 BA/AMRS program offered by the Divinity School, in which an undergraduate student completes a Master of Arts in Religious Studies degree while simultaneously completing their fourth year in the College, consult this webpage: <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/jointBAAMRS> (<https://divinity.uchicago.edu/jointBAAMRS/>). For information about the 3+2 BA/MA program offered by the Divinity School, in which an undergraduate student completes their Bachelor's degree and a Master of Arts in Divinity degree in a total of five years, consult this webpage: <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/jointBAMA> (<https://divinity.uchicago.edu/jointBAMA/>).

MINOR PROGRAM IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The minor in Religious Studies requires a total of six courses. RLST 10100 Introduction to Religious Studies is not required of minors, but it is strongly recommended that minors complete this foundational course.

Courses should be chosen to reflect a broad understanding of the academic study of religion. Students must take at least one course in two of our three areas of study [Historical Studies (A), Constructive Studies (B), and Cultural Studies (C)]. Courses in the minor may not be double counted with the student's major(s) or with other minors, and may not be counted toward general education requirements. Courses in the minor must be taken for quality grades, and more than half of the requirements for the minor must be met by registering for courses bearing University of Chicago course numbers. As with the major, students with permission to enroll in graduate Divinity School courses may count these toward the minor.

Students who elect the minor program in Religious Studies must contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies to declare their intention to complete the minor. Consent to Complete a Minor Program (https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/college-prod/s3fs-public/documents/Consent_Minor_Program.pdf) forms are available online or from the student's College adviser.

Sample Program

The following group of courses would satisfy a minor in Religious Studies:

RLST 10100	Introduction to Religious Studies	100
RLST 11004	Introduction to the Hebrew Bible	100
RLST 23880	Villains: Evil in Philosophy, Religion, and Film	100
RLST 24240	Buddhism and Science: A Critical Introduction	100
RLST 28705	Christian Iconography	100
RLST 29030	Islam, Race and Decoloniality	100
Total Units		600

An up-to-date list of Religious Studies courses can be found on the Divinity School website here: <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/courses> (<https://divinity.uchicago.edu/courses/>).

RELIGIOUS STUDIES COURSES

RLST 10100. Introduction to Religious Studies. 100 Units.

This course will serve as general introduction to the academic field of Religious Studies. In it we will focus on understanding how scholars have historically studied a thing we might call "religion." We will familiarize ourselves with various classical and contemporary theories and theorists of religion, as well other thinkers whose work considers the idea of religion in interesting or compelling ways. When studying each of these thinkers we will pay close attention to the definitions of religion they offer and the methods they used to arrive at those definitions. We will then apply what we learn to issues outside the field, where our tools may help us to understand the dynamics at work in the wider world. In doing so we will use the study of religion as a way to think more generally about how, why, and to what result people of different times, geographies, and cultures make sense of their existence. All students are welcome and no prior knowledge is required.

Instructor(s): various Terms Offered: Autumn Spring Summer Winter
Equivalent Course(s): SOCI 20541

RLST 11004. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible. 100 Units.

The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) is a complex anthology of disparate texts and reflects a diversity of religious, political, and historical perspectives from ancient Israel and Judah. Because this collection of texts continues to play an important role in modern religions, new meanings are often imposed upon this ancient literature. In this course, we will attempt to read biblical texts on their own terms and will also contextualize their ideas and goals with texts and material culture from ancient Mesopotamia, Syro-Palestine, and Egypt. In this way, we will discover that the Hebrew Bible is fully part of the cultural milieu of the ancient Near East. To these ends, we will read a significant portion of the Hebrew Bible in English, along with selections from other ancient Near Eastern texts as well as secondary literature.

Instructor(s): Marshall Cunningham Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): This course counts as a Gateway course for RLST majors/minors.

Equivalent Course(s): JTAC 31000, NEHC 20504, BIBL 31000, JWSC 20120, FNDL 11004, NEHC 30504

RLST 11040. Encountering the Qur'an: Scripture, History, and Reception. 100 Units.

This course introduces students to the Qur'an, Islam's holy book, by exploring both the text itself and the theological and historical contexts in which it emerged. We will examine the Qur'an's major themes, literary features, and theological ideas, paying close attention to how its revelations address the concerns of their time. The course also considers shared biblical figures and foundational narratives, and surveys how Muslim scholars have interpreted certain passages of the Qur'an from its conception to the modern era.

Instructor(s): Mehmetcan Akpinar Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): This class is a Gateway course for the Religious Studies (RLST) program.

Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 30040, MDVL 11040, ISLM 30040, NEHC 11040, FNDL 11040

RLST 11500. History of Christian Thought V: Modern Religious Thought. 100 Units.

This course will consider key figures in 'modern' religious thought, including Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Troeltsch, and Barth, paying particular attention to two issues: the possibility of freedom in the face of law-like necessities, and the possibility of thinking for oneself.

Instructor(s): Kevin Hector Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): THEO 30500, HCHR 30500

RLST 12000. Introduction to the New Testament: Texts and Contexts of Interpretation. 100 Units.

This class introduces students to the texts that make up the New Testament through close readings of representative examples. Through course lectures and readings, students will gain familiarity with the historical, geographical, social, religious, cultural, and political contexts of New Testament literature and the events they narrate. We will also learn about the central literary genres found within the collection of texts that came to form the canonical New Testament, including "gospels," "acts," "letters," and "apocalypses", and we will examine how awareness of genre conventions enhances our reading of these works. Students will also learn about the distinctive theological and cultural viewpoints contained within various New Testament texts. As we learn about the history of biblical scholarship, especially the goals and methods of biblical interpretation, we will practice refining our questions. Assignments and discussion will allow students to develop their skills as attuned readers of both ancient texts as well as modern biblical scholarship.

Instructor(s): Erin Walsh Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): No prior knowledge of biblical literature, the ancient world, or Christianity is expected. The only expectation is commitment to engaged discussion about the challenges of interpretation with classmates holding various viewpoints.

Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 20122, CLCV 22524, CLAS 32524, FNDL 28202, BIBL 32500, MDVL 12500

RLST 13800. Introductory Biblical Hebrew I. 100 Units.

TBD

Instructor(s): TBD Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 33800

RLST 13900. Introductory Biblical Hebrew II. 100 Units.

TBD

Instructor(s): TBD Terms Offered: Winter. i'll update this sequence soon with descriptions and instructors

Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 33900

RLST 14000. Introductory Biblical Hebrew III. 100 Units.

TBD

Instructor(s): TBD Terms Offered: Spring

Prerequisite(s): BIBL 33800 and 33900.

Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 34000

RLST 14100. Introductory Koine Greek I. 100 Units.

In this two-course sequence, students will learn the basic mechanics of Koine Greek and begin reading texts from the Greek New Testament and Septuagint. The autumn course and the first three-fourths or so of the winter course will introduce the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and style of the Greek New Testament, and to a limited degree those of the Septuagint, after which point we will focus on reading and interpreting a New Testament document in Greek at length. Upon the conclusion of the sequence, students will be able to read and comprehend

entire passages of Koine Greek text with the aid of a dictionary. This sequence aims to prepare students to successfully participate in a Greek exegesis course.

Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 35100

RLST 14200. Introductory Koine Greek II. 100 Units.

In this two-course sequence, students will learn the basic mechanics of Koine Greek and begin reading texts from the Greek New Testament and Septuagint. The autumn course and the first three-fourths or so of the winter course will introduce the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and style of the Greek New Testament, and to a limited degree those of the Septuagint, after which point we will focus on reading and interpreting a New Testament document in Greek at length. Upon the conclusion of the sequence, students will be able to read and comprehend entire passages of Koine Greek text with the aid of a dictionary. This sequence aims to prepare students to successfully participate in a Greek exegesis course in Spring quarter or thereafter.

Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): Must have taken BIBL 35100 in Autumn quarter.

Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 35300

RLST 20101. Ancient Mediterranean Religions I: Israel, Judah, and Judaism. 100 Units.

This course surveys the history of religion in ancient Israel and Judah in the first millennium BCE. The main topics considered include the major religious ideas and practices attested, their representation in literary sources (especially the Hebrew Bible) and material culture, the role of social, political, and economic conditions in the development of Israelite religion, and the emergence of monotheistic ideas from within a polytheistic culture. A consistent aspect of the course will be comparison between Israel and Judah and other ancient Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cultures.

Instructor(s): Jeffrey Stackert Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): Students are encouraged to take all three quarters of this sequence (fall-winter-spring) but it is not required. This class is a Gateway course for the Religious Studies (RLST) program.

Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 30101, JTAC 30101, HREL 30101

RLST 20102. Ancient Mediterranean Religions II: Greece and Early Italy. 100 Units.

This course surveys Greek religion as well as the religions documented in early Italy, drawing on archaeological, iconographic, and textual sources, with a special focus on cultural exchange. Besides surveying different lines of interpretation of Greek religion, main topics include: the interplay between myth and ritual; religion and socio-political structures; the formation of local and pan-Hellenic identities; what we know of private practices and lived religions, including magic and afterlife rituals; mystery cults; and the adaptation and (re)interpreted gods across cultures. In the last weeks we will look at the religion and mythology of early Rome in dialogue with the religions of other groups present in early Italy, such as Greeks, Etruscans, and Phoenicians.

Instructor(s): Carolina Lopez-Ruiz Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): Students are encouraged to take all three quarters of this sequence (fall-winter-spring) but it is not required. This class is a Gateway course for the Religious Studies (RLST) program.

Equivalent Course(s): CLCV 20102, CLAS 30102, HREL 30102

RLST 20103. Ancient Mediterranean Religions III: Christianity and the Roman Empire. 100 Units.

This course surveys the religious developments around the Mediterranean during the period of Late Antiquity. We will begin with the emergence of the early Christian movement within its first-century Jewish and Roman contexts. In addition to the different ways of being Christian in Late Antiquity, students will learn about other contemporary religious movements, such as early rabbinic Judaism, Manichaeism, and paganism which continued alongside Christianity. We will then review political, social, and economic trends in the Roman Empire on which Christianity had transformative effects, such gender, care for the poor, and relations between religion and state. In the final weeks, we will delve into foundational theological debates of late antique Christianity and explore their legacies in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds following the decline of Roman hegemony.

Instructor(s): Omri Matarasso Terms Offered: Spring

Prerequisite(s): Students are encouraged to take all three quarters of this sequence (fall-winter-spring) but it is not required. This class is a Gateway course for the Religious Studies (RLST) program.

Equivalent Course(s): HREL 30103, CLAS 30103, CLCV 20103, HCHR 30103

RLST 20114. Sickness, Death, and Dying in the Ancient World. 100 Units.

As Ben Franklin once famously said, "in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

This was no more true in early America than it was in the ancient world, in which humans invested significant amounts of time and energy responding to the seeming inevitability of death. In this course we will investigate how ancient peoples understood, mediated, mitigated, observed, mourned, sought to escape, accepted, and continued on after death. To do this, we will examine literary, inscriptional, and material evidence from the eastern Mediterranean (Greece, Egypt, the Levant) and Mesopotamia (Assyria, Babylonia, Persia) that reflects how the ancients thought about death and the processes that ultimately led to it. No prior knowledge of religion, the ancient world, or death is required for this course.

Instructor(s): Marshall Cunningham Terms Offered: Autumn

RLST 20120. Eastern Christianity: The First Thousand Years. 100 Units.

This course introduces students to Eastern Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. We will start with contextualizing Eastern Christianity's diverse, global, and multilingual trajectories. We will then turn to review select themes of Eastern Christian history. We will cover the shaping of orthodoxy in the Byzantine world in the contexts of both inter-religious debates and intra-Christian concerns over heresy. We will explore the Christological Controversies of Late Antiquity, which continue to fracture Eastern Christianity until this very day. We will review the rise of Islam, its divergent Eastern Christian responses, and its broader theological, social, and cultural implications on medieval Middle Eastern religions. The translation movements under the #Abbasids will occupy us next and will further reveal the contributions of Eastern Christians to the intellectual and religious landscapes of the medieval Middle East. We will conclude with Eastern Christianity's position in the Middle Eastern world between the Crusades and the Mongol conquests, historical developments whose reverberations can still be felt in the present-day world where many Eastern Christian communities are spread across an increasingly global diaspora.

Instructor(s): Omri Matarasso Terms Offered: Winter

Note(s): This course meets the HS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.

Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 30122, HIST 31601, CLAS 30120, HCHR 30120, HIST 21601, CLCV 20120, MDVL 20120, NEHC 20122

RLST 20135. The Archaeology of Phoenician Religion. 100 Units.

The Phoenicians were crucial players in the history of the ancient Mediterranean, yet whole aspects of their culture are poorly understood due to the scarce literary sources that are not external, written by Greeks and Romans. In this class we approach Phoenician-Punic religion through archaeological materials as well as art and inscriptions, and discuss the challenges and possibilities of a "bottom-up" reconstruction. Discussion-based sessions will be organized by types of materials, ritual contexts and practices, and debated questions, such as: votive and funerary cultures (including magic, amulets), the question of infant sacrifice, religious symbols and iconography (including aniconism), temple architecture and domestic cultic spaces, the religion of seafarers, interaction between Phoenician and local religions (e.g., in the Aegean, Italy, Iberia), and religion of the senses.

Instructor(s): Carolina Lopez-Ruiz Terms Offered: Spring

Prerequisite(s): Previous knowledge of the Classical cultures (Greek and Roman) or of Near Eastern and/or Biblical worlds is ideal, but not required. No language requisites.

Equivalent Course(s): HREL 30135

RLST 20201-20202-20203. Islamicate Civilization I-II-III.

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RLST 20201. Islamicate Civilization I: 600-950. 100 Units.

This course is an introduction to the history and the study of early Islamicate societies, from the rise of Islam in late antiquity to the early Abbasid period (ca. 600-950 CE), considering various religious and social groups. We will look at the same historical arc from multiple perspectives: political events, such as the Muslim conquests and the rise of ruling dynasties, but also other factors that impacted people's lives in the early centuries of Islamic rule-the environment they inhabited and transformed, documents they created, social institutions, and economic activities. What broad developments characterized the early Islamic period? Who brought those changes about? And how are they studied today?

Instructor(s): Klasova, Pamela Terms Offered: Autumn. This course will not be offered for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Note(s): The Islamicate Civilization sequence does not fulfill the General Ed requirements

Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 30201, NEHC 30201, NEHC 20201, HIST 35621, MDVL 20201, HIST 15611

RLST 20202. Islamicate Civilization II: 950-1750. 100 Units.

This course, a continuation of Islamicate Civilization I, surveys intellectual, cultural, religious and political developments in the Islamic world from Andalusia to the South Asian sub-continent during the periods from ca. 950 to 1750. We trace the arrival and incorporation of the Steppe Peoples (Turks and Mongols) into the central Islamic lands; the splintering of the Abbasid Caliphate and the impact on political theory; the flowering of literature of Arabic, Turkic and Persian expression; the evolution of religious and legal scholarship and devotional life; transformations in the intellectual and philosophical traditions; the emergence of Shi'i states (Buyids and Fatimids); the Crusades and Mongol conquests; the Mamluks and Timurids, and the "gunpowder empires" of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Moghuls; the dynamics of gender and class relations; etc. This class partially fulfills the requirement for MA students in CMES, as well as for NELC majors and PhD students.

Instructor(s): Mustafa Kaya Terms Offered: Winter. This course will not be offered for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Prerequisite(s): Islamicate Civilization I (NEHC 20201) or Islamic Thought & Literature-1 (NEHC 20601), or the equivalent

Note(s): The Islamicate Civilization sequence does not fulfill the General Ed requirements

Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 30202, HIST 35622, HIST 15612, MDVL 20202, NEHC 30202, NEHC 20202

RLST 20203. Islamicate Civilization III: Empire & Everyday Life in the Modern Middle East. 100 Units.

This course covers the period from ca. 1750 to the present, focusing on Western military, economic, and ideological encroachment; the impact of such ideas as nationalism and liberalism; efforts at reform in the

Islamic states; the emergence of the "modern" Middle East after World War I; the struggle for liberation from Western colonial and imperial control; the Middle Eastern states in the cold war era; and local and regional conflicts.

Instructor(s): Carl Shook Terms Offered: Spring. This course will not be offered for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Prerequisite(s): Islamicate Civilization II (NEHC 20202) or Islamic Thought & Literature-2 (NEHC 20602), or the equivalent

Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 20203, ISLM 30203, HIST 35623, NEHC 30203, HIST 15613

RLST 20232. Christianity in the Middle East. 100 Units.

TBD

Instructor(s): Erin Walsh Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 30232, HCHR 30232

RLST 24041-20402-20403. Islamic Thought and Literature I-II-III.

This sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies. Taking these courses in sequence is recommended but not required.

RLST 24041. Islamic Thought and Literature I. 100 Units.

In the first quarter of Islamic Thought and Literature, students will explore the intellectual and cultural history of the Islamic world in its various political and social contexts. Chronologically, the course begins with emergence of Islam in the 7th century CE and continues through the Mongol conquests until the rise of the "gunpowder empires" circa 1500. Students will leave the course with a historical and geographical framework for understanding the history of the Middle East and a familiarity with the major forms of premodern Islamic cultural production (e.g., history-writing, scriptural exegesis, poetry, philosophy, jurisprudence, etc.). Students will also develop the skills and contextual knowledge necessary for analyzing these sources in English translation; they will thus come to appreciate premodern Islamic cultural products on their own terms while engaging in the collective work of historical interpretation. No prior background in the subject is required. This sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies.

Instructor(s): O'Malley, Austin, Jack Buredn Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): SOSOC 22000, HIST 25610, NEHC 20601, MDVL 20601

RLST 24042. Islamic Thought and Literature II. 100 Units.

In the second quarter of Islamic Thought and Literature, students will explore the Islamic world in its various political, social, and intellectual aspects. Chronologically, the course begins with the consolidation of the "gunpowder empires" in the 16th Century and continues into the modern era. Students will leave the course with a historical and geographical framework for understanding the history of the Middle East and a familiarity with the major debates such as state reform efforts, Islamic modernism, and nationalism; new genres (e.g., the novel); and new modes of communication, such as journals and newspapers. No prior background in the subject is required. Participation in the first quarter of the sequence is assumed. This sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies.

Instructor(s): Holly Shissler, Murat Bozluolcay Terms Offered: Winter

Note(s): Taking these courses in sequence is recommended but not required. This sequence meets the general education requirement in civilization studies.

Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 20602, SOSOC 22100, HIST 25615, NEHC 20602

RLST 24043. Islamic Thought & Lit III - Education, Students and Protests in the modern MENA. 100 Units.

In the modern MENA, universities, schools and campuses were important arenas of intellectual life, political formations, and democratic, anticolonial and feminist struggles. In these educational venues, professors and teachers encouraged debates about Islam as a faith, a civilization, and a culture. This class will thus follow the history of MENA educational institutions, like the Syrian Protestant College (later the American University of Beirut), and the ways in which they shaped ideas about Enlightenment, science and modernity. We will likewise explore the careers and writings of teachers, pedagogues and theoreticians of education, like Butrus al-Bustani, Khalil al-Sakakini, Mary Ajami, Sati al-Husri, Taha Hussein, and Ghassan Kanafani. In tandem, we will look at students' activism in the Middle East. Some of the case studies we will examine include: students in the Levant who defended a professor persecuted for his support of Darwinism in 1882; anticolonial student activism in Egypt in 1919; students' demonstrations against the British and French mandates and the spread of Zionism, which took place in Baghdad, Jerusalem, and Damascus during the interwar period; campus activism of nationalists, communists, and Muslim Brothers in the 1940s and 1950s and the radicalization of universities and schools following the Nakba and global processes of decolonization; and education in Palestinian refugee camps and Israeli transit camps.

Instructor(s): Orit Bashkin Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 20603, SOSOC 22200, NEHC 20603, HIST 25616

RLST 20505. Pagans and Christians: Greek Background to Early Christianity. 100 Units.

This course will examine some of the ancient Greek roots of early Christianity. We will focus on affinities between Christianity and the classical tradition as well as ways in which the Christian faith may be considered radically different from it. Some of the more important issues that we will analyze are: "The spell of Homer." How the Homeric poems exerted immeasurable influence on the religious attitudes and practices of the Greeks. The theme

of creation in Greek and Roman authors such as Hesiod and Ovid. The Orphic account of human origins. The early Christian theme of Christ as Creator/Savior. Greek, specifically Homeric conceptions of the afterlife. The response to the Homeric orientation in the form of the great mystery cults of Demeter, Dionysus, and Orpheus. The views of the philosophers (esp. Plato) of the immortality of the soul compared with the New Testament conception of resurrection of the body. Ancient Greek conceptions of sacrifice and the crucifixion of Christ as archetypal sacrifice. The attempted synthesis of Jewish and Greek philosophic thought by Philo of Alexandria and its importance for early Christianity.

Instructor(s): David Martinez Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): CLCV 26216, MDVL 20505

RLST 20643. The Formative Period in Shi'ite Islam: Readings in the Primary Sources. 100 Units.

This course explores the formative period of Imami Shi'ism through close readings of primary Arabic sources, especially al-Kāfi of al-Kulaynī. Intended for advanced undergraduate and graduate students with prior training in Arabic, the course treats al-Kāfi as a layered compilation rather than a monolithic text. Students analyze parallel traditions, doctrinal tensions, and processes of redaction to understand how diverse strands of early Shi'ite thought were brought together in the fourth/tenth century and how this process shaped the emergence of classical Imami Shi'ism. Students with limited prior training in Arabic are encouraged to consult the instructor before enrolling.

Instructor(s): Abdallah Soufan (asoufan) Terms Offered: Spring. First offering Spring 2026

Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 30643, NEHC 20043, NEHC 30043

RLST 21303. Christianity and Slavery in America, 1619-1865. 100 Units.

We will be examining the relationship between Christian thought/practice and the institutions of slavery as they evolved historically, especially in the context of European enslavement of peoples of African descent in the colonies of British North America and in the antebellum South. The following questions will be addressed in some form through our readings and class discussions: How and why did slavery become a moral problem for abolitionists? How and why did white evangelical Christians, especially in the South, become the most prominent defenders of slavery? What role did race play in the historical development of slavery and how did Christianity sustain and perpetuate racial divisions and sanction for human bondage? How did people of African descent shape and practice Christianity in British North America and in the Southern states?

Instructor(s): Curtis Evans Terms Offered: Autumn

Note(s): This course meets the HS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.

Equivalent Course(s): KNOW 21303, HIST 47102, HCHR 42901, KNOW 42901, HIST 27111, RDIN 42901, AMER 21303, RAME 42901, AMER 42901, RDIN 21303

RLST 21316. Readings in Modern American Religious History. 100 Units.

Why is religion so powerful in the United States? This course will answer that question by tracing the religious history of America from the late nineteenth century to the present. Our readings will be new and classic texts on religion in the United States, and our goals will be twofold: to get a grasp of American religious historiography, and to explore the major trends which have shaped religion in the United States over the past century and a half.

Instructor(s): Will Schultz Terms Offered: Winter

Note(s): This course meets the HS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.

Equivalent Course(s): AMER 31316, AMER 21316, HCHR 31316, RAME 31316

RLST 21503. Jewish History 1860 to the Present. 100 Units.

Jewish history, politics, and culture across a century of profound and violent transformations in Europe, the United States, the Middle East. Topics include the impacts on Jewish life of World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the last stages of European empire; nationalism, socialism, and religious politics in Jewish life; birth of Jewish secular culture and secular-religious struggles within Jewish life; the remaking of American Jewry; Zionism, Jewish settlement and nation-building in Palestine, and the emergence of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict; antisemitism, Nazism and the Holocaust in Europe; the creation of the State of Israel, Palestinian dispossession, and the trajectories and tensions of Jewish nationhood and Israeli society-building; the postwar reordering of Jewish life amid Cold War, Israeli statehood, conflict in the Middle East, and unprecedented communal integration in the United States; trajectories of Jewish identity and religion in a century of tremendous creativity and bitter Jewish disagreements. Much attention to contemporary history including the dramatic changes and conflicts within Israel and trajectories of conflict and crisis in Israel and Palestine under Israeli domination. Lectures with ample space for discussion. No prior study of Jewish history expected.

Instructor(s): K. Moss Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): HIST 17203, JWSC 17203, NEHC 17203

RLST 21705. The American Jeremiad: Religious Critiques of the American Nation. 100 Units.

The Jeremiad has its roots in Puritan critiques of perceived social disorder and the community falling away from its covenant with God. This course examines prominent examples of this sermonic and rhetorical form from the 19th century to the present. While much of the course will look at the commonalities of this religious critique of the US (the call to repentance, the reiteration of a litany of sins, and its pronouncement of a conditional divine judgment), we will also examine the various visions of the good society contained in such critiques.

Instructor(s): Curtis Evans Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): RAME 41705, HCHR 41705

RLST 21905. The Making of the Christian West. 100 Units.

The course surveys the late antique and early medieval formation of the Christian West, extending from Ireland through Scandinavia and all the way to the eastern Mediterranean. We will cover themes such as the construction of Roman and barbarian identities; relations between Christians and pagans; the changing social roles of women and men; the rise of the papacy and the Catholic Church; the history of the Vikings; the legacies of the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties; and the emergence of a plurality of nations and states whose names can still be found on present-day maps. We will conclude by considering how the diverse societies and cultures of medieval Europe came together and envisioned themselves as belonging to a distinct Western culture.

Instructor(s): Erin Walsh Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): HCHR 31905

RLST 22000. Saints and Hagiographies of the Medieval World. 100 Units.

The cult of saints became a popular religious phenomenon in Late Antiquity, with wide-ranging cultural and social ramifications. From a scholarly perspective, one of the more notable consequences of the cult of saints was the emergence of a robust literary genre that offers rich evidence for medieval society: the hagiography. The tension between the medieval cult of saints as a religious phenomenon and the literary evidence documenting it will stand at the heart of the course. Throughout the term, we will read translated hagiographies from different traditions and geographical contexts, ranging from the Mediterranean world to deep within Central Asia. We will discuss the social, cultural, and religious significance of the cults of living and dead saints and examine analytical approaches to different models of sainthood in Christianity and other medieval religions. In addition to outlining some of the main scholarly resources for studying different corpora of hagiographies in a variety of medieval languages, we will explore significant milestones in scholarship and consider the challenges of researching late ancient and medieval societies on the basis of hagiographical evidence.

Instructor(s): Omri Matarasso Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): HCHR 32000, HIST 11700

RLST 22010-22011-22012. Jewish Civilization I-II-III.

Jewish Civilization is a three-quarter sequence that explores the development of Jewish culture and tradition from its ancient beginnings through its rabbinic and medieval transformations to its modern manifestations. Through investigation of primary texts—biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, mystical, historical, documentary, and literary—students will acquire a broad overview of Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness while reflecting in greater depth on major themes, ideas, and events in Jewish history. The Autumn course will deal with antiquity to the medieval period; the Winter course will begin with the early modern period and continue to the present. The Spring course will vary as to special topic; for the Spring course to count towards the general education requirement in civilization studies, the student must also take the Autumn and Winter courses. Note: Jewish Studies revised its civilization studies courses in academic year 2018–19. Students who began the requirement prior to Autumn Quarter 2018 under the previous course options, may complete it with those courses that remain available, or (with prior approval from the JWSC director of undergraduate studies) they may combine them with the new course options, provided that they fulfill the requirement to take one JWSC course in the ancient or medieval period and one in the modern period. Only students who have taken JWSC courses prior to academic year 2018–19 are eligible to complete the program under the prior system.

RLST 22010. Jewish Civilization I: Ancient Beginnings to Medieval Period. 100 Units.

This course provides an interdisciplinary introduction to some transformations (textual, geo-political, social, economic, religious, cultural, and historical) between the first millennium BCE and the middle of the second millennium CE that Jewish communities, and the scholars who study them, draw upon, interpret, investigate, and disagree about, when talking about "Jewish Civilization." Working both chronologically and thematically, it covers a range of primary textual sources—biblical, Talmudic, philosophical, literary, mystical, epistolary, and others—to better understand the histories of Jewish communities as constituted through mutually influencing exchanges with, and attempts at differentiation from, neighboring, dominant populations, as well as contestation about the possible trajectories of Jewish life internal to Jewish communities. It will also address questions of method and genre in the study of Judaism—namely, what sorts of artifacts can be or should be called upon to study a "civilization," how such artifacts should be approached, and whose authority shapes (and ought to shape) such decisions.

Instructor(s): Larisa Reznik, James Adam Redfield Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): HIST 11701, MDVL 12000, NEHC 22010, JWSC 12000

RLST 22011. Jewish Civilization II: Early Modern Period to 21st Century. 100 Units.

Introduction to Jewish thought, experience, creativity, conflict, and relations with others from the 17th century to the present in Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas. Ranging across Sephardi and Ashkenazi life, religious and secular culture, philosophy and the arts, politics and the everyday, we focus on three key questions. First, how have Jews faced the theological, intellectual, and normative challenges that modernity has posed to Judaism, and what forms of Jewishness have they created in response? Second, how have Jews confronted the challenges, opportunities, and grave dangers presented to them by the modern political ideologies of liberalism, nationalism, socialism and antisemitism, and how have Jewish political efforts changed or failed to change Jews' condition? Third, what defines the Jewish present after a century marked by extremes of assimilation and extrusion, possibility and violence? We study the unprecedented integration Jews have enjoyed in the US and the radically new forms of Jewish life taking shape in Israel, where a state devoted to cultivating Jewish nationhood and the formation of a majority-Jewish Hebrew-

speaking national society have profoundly impacted the lives of both Jews and Palestinians. Our study of the Jewish present engages both conflict and creativity: the violent Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jewish confrontations with spiraling global tensions, the divides that wrack Jewish life within, and new forms of Jewish art and thought.

Instructor(s): Orit Bashkin Larisa Reznik Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): JWSC 12001, HIST 11702, NEHC 22011

RLST 22012. Jewish Civilization III: Language, Creation, and Translation in Jewish Thought and Literature. 100 Units.

This Jewish Civilization III course will start with two stories from Genesis—the creation story and the story of the Tower of Babel in chapter 11—and consider the intertwined dynamics of language, creation, and translation in Jewish thought and literature. In addition to commentaries on both of these key texts, we will read philosophical and literary texts that illuminate the workings of language as a creative force and the dynamics of multilingualism and translation in the creation of Jewish culture. Through this lens, we will consider topics such as gender and sexuality, Jewish national identity, Zionism, the revival of the Hebrew language, Jewish responses to the Holocaust, and contemporary American Jewish culture.

Instructor(s): Na'ama Rokem Terms Offered: TBD. Not offered in 2026–27
Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 12003, JWSC 12003, CMLT 12003

RLST 22022. The Gospel According To Mark. 100 Units.

This course, through close reading of the Greek text (with attention to characteristic vocabulary, grammar, syntax and style), will investigate the composition, genre, plot structure, theology, purpose and impact of the first Christian narrative text. Particular emphases include the depiction of the disciples, the so-called "Messianic Secret," the role of irony, and the relationship between Mark and Paul. This course serves as the third quarter exegesis course in the Introduction to Koine Greek sequence, even as various levels of Greek skills are welcome.

Instructor(s): Margaret Mitchell Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 42000

RLST 22034. The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of Barnabas. 100 Units.

Tertullian was the first to attribute the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews to Barnabas, and that ascription found favor with no less an ancient figure as Jerome, and even with notable scholars of the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries, such as Albrecht Ritschl and Friedrich Blass. Although no one can know who wrote it, there are fruitful literary and thematic parallels between the Epistle that bears the name Barnabas and the canonical Hebrews, including their critique of Judaism and their interpretatio Christiana of the Hebrew Bible, with particular regard to Levitical institutions and the temple. We will read thoroughly the Greek text of each treatise with focus on the language and style of the two texts, their relation to Hellenistic and Alexandrian Judaism, and their respective treatments of Hebrew Bible/Septuagintal themes. PQ: at least two years of Greek.

Instructor(s): David Martinez Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): GREK 23815, BIBL 46804, GREK 33815

RLST 22315. Christian Nonviolence in the US in the 20th Century. 100 Units.

This course examines the writings and social thought of Christians who opposed war and critiqued various other forms of organized violence. We will look at pacifism as a part of but not the totality of Christian nonviolence. Some attention will be paid to the role of key organizations such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation played in disseminating techniques and teachings to form nonviolence practices and protests. We will linger on the theological and Scriptural underpinnings of Christian nonviolence. At times, we pause to understand how Christian nonviolent advocates tried to address recurring critiques of their proposals as utopian, naïve, or unrealizable in a fallen and violent world.

Instructor(s): Curtis Evans Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): RAME 42315

RLST 22401. Zen Before Zen: Chan Buddhism in China. 100 Units.

This course is part of a two-sequence series, to be followed by a course on Japanese Zen Buddhism taught by Professor Stephan Licha in Winter 2027. This course will consist of the close reading (in English translation) and discussion of both the Indian Buddhist scriptures and indigenous Chinese sources that form the core of the tradition spanning Chan and Zen, with a few secondary descriptions of Chan institutions and cultural influences. Our focus will be on the development of ideas concerning the nature of sentience and the implications this has for understanding the existential predicament of sentient beings, touching on central themes of dependent co-arising, non-self, Emptiness, consciousness-only, Buddha-nature and original enlightenment, and the methods of realization (doctrinal, non-doctrinal, and indeed anti-doctrinal) proposed to redress this existential predicament at each stage of Chan history. This will be done both with an eye to the historical continuity of these sometimes seemingly contradictory forms thought and practice, and also to extract from them whatever transhistorical philosophical and spiritual valences we care to derive from the texts.

Instructor(s): Brook Ziporyn Terms Offered: Autumn
Equivalent Course(s): EALC 22401, EALC 32401, HREL 32400, DVPR 32402

RLST 22402. Japanese Zen Buddhism. 100 Units.

What is Zen? Impossibly, seemingly, everything to everybody. In this course, we will explore Zen's protean transformations through a close reading of primary sources in translation. Rather than asking what Zen is, we will focus on how in these materials the Zen traditions are continually de/re-constructed as contingent religious

identities from medieval Japan to the contemporary United States and Europe. The focus of the course will be the premodern Japanese Zen tradition, its background in Chinese Chan, and its reception in the West. The course will include field trips to Zen communities in the Chicago area.

Instructor(s): Stephan Licha Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): EALC 32402, HREL 32402, EALC 22402

RLST 22419. From Scopes to Intelligent Design: Creationism and Evolution. 100 Units.

This course begins with the Scopes Trial in 1925, a pivotal moment in the emergence of Protestant fundamentalism and anti-evolution in the United States. It follows protracted and prolonged debates about the meaning of evolution, science, and expertise in the US. Some attention is devoted to foundational questions about meaning of science in modern society and the religious and cultural bases of anti-evolution in the US. We also look at the internal divisions within conservative Protestant Christianity on how to reconcile faith and science.

Instructor(s): Curtis Evans Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): HCHR 42419, RAME 42419

RLST 22605. Europe's Intellectual Transformations, Renaissance through Enlightenment. 100 Units.

This course will consider the foundational transformations of Western thought from the end of the Middle Ages to the threshold of modernity. It will provide an overview of the three self-conscious and interlinked intellectual revolutions which reshaped early modern Europe: the Renaissance revival of antiquity, the "new philosophy" of the seventeenth century, and the light and dark faces of the Enlightenment. It will treat scholasticism, humanism, the scientific revolution, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Voltaire, Diderot, and Sade.

Instructor(s): A. Palmer Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): Students taking FREN 29322/39322 must read French texts in French.

Equivalent Course(s): KNOW 39522, HIST 39522, FREN 29322, KNOW 29522, HCHR 39522, FREN 39322, SIGN 26036, HIST 29522

RLST 22655. Themes in the European Reformation(s) 100 Units.

This course provides an introduction to the study of the Reformation(s) in early modern Europe. As well as covering the key theological ideas of famous Protestant reformers (Luther; Zwingli; Calvin), it will give ample space to the impact that these religious revolutions had on contemporary society, including attitudes to gender, politics, economics, and visual/material culture. It will cover the reformations and renewals undergone by Catholicism in the same period, and discuss the key arguments, questions, and concerns which have preoccupied historians of the Reformation since the nineteenth century. Students will have the opportunity to read and engage with famous texts from the period (for instance Erasmus's *On Free Will*; Luther's 95 Theses; Calvin's *Institutes*) as well as lesser-known but still influential works (e.g. the poetry of the female Italian humanist Olympia Fulvia Morata and the writings of early Jesuit missionaries to China and Japan), in addition to historically significant documents (such as contemporary witchcraft confessions and extracts from Reformation demonologies). Finally, there will be time devoted to unpacking the complex legacies of the Reformation and the 'unintended consequences' attributed to it, focusing especially on the afterlives of Max Weber's analyses.

Instructor(s): Kirsten Macfarlane Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): HIST 23010

RLST 23107. Readings in Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed. 100 Units.

A careful study of select passages in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, focusing on the method of the work and its major philosophical-theological themes, including: divine attributes, creation vs. eternity, prophecy, the problem of evil and divine providence, law and ethics, the final aim of human existence.

Instructor(s): James T. Robinson Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): RLVC 45400, NEHC 20471, JWSC 21107, JTAC 45400, FNDL 24106, MDVL 25400, NEHC 40470, ISLM 45400, HREL 45401

RLST 23112. Deconstruction and Religion. 100 Units.

In this course we will carefully consider selected works by French philosopher Jacques Derrida. We will address the emergence of religious themes in his early work and reconsider the relation between deconstruction and theology as potentially divergent modes of discourse. We will then examine the roles of messianism, belief, and confession in his later work. We will also discuss the so-called closure of metaphysics: How does Derrida articulate this closure in his early work, and how does this inform his efforts to distinguish deconstruction from theology or so-called negative theology? Does the Derridean notion of closure change over time? If so, how? And what role do the writings on religion and the gift play in interrogating the meaning of closure?

Instructor(s): Ryan Coyne Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): FNDL 25306, DVPR 50112, THEO 50112

RLST 23404. Romanticism and Religion. 100 Units.

Romanticism" refers to a broad movement in European thought and culture from the late-18th to the mid-19th century, a period of intense political, intellectual, and religious upheaval. Romantic writers are often portrayed as responding to the emerging "rationalization" of society by celebrating intuition, imagination, and nature. This image obscures a more interesting reality: Romantic writers drew from Enlightenment ideas, saw poetry and natural science as closely related, and held diverse views on issues of religion, reason, and art. They approached these topics rationally, as well as through dream visions, opium-eating, self-mythologizing, fragmentary texts, and pastoral lyrics. In this survey course, we will read English and German Romantic writers to see how they grappled with these issues, and to pose our own questions. What is "nature," and how should we relate to it?

What roles do intuition, feeling, and imagination play in our understanding of ourselves, and the divine? Are secularization and rationalization forces to contend with, or preconditions for a new spiritual freedom? How do atheists, pantheists, Christian radicals, and orthodox believers fall under the same label, and to what extent did they really share artistic and spiritual aims? How did Romantics engage with non-European religious ideas? We will read, among others, Goethe, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Schleiermacher, de Quincey, and Novalis. No prior knowledge is required. All texts will be read in English.

Instructor(s): Pieter Hoekstra Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 23404

RLST 23609. Kierkegaard: Works of Love. 100 Units.

This course will be devoted to a close reading of Kierkegaard's Works of Love, along with a handful of companion texts that will help us situate it, both historically and conceptually.

Instructor(s): Kevin Hector Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): THEO 33609

RLST 23616. Gods in the Machine: Artificial Intelligence and the Ethics of Love. 100 Units.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) increasingly governs knowledge, control, and connection. It reshapes the foundations of human life, including meaning, authority, and sociality. This course investigates the new gods of our technological age and asks what it means to live justly and love wisely in their presence. We begin by tracing the genealogy of artificial beings, from mythic automatons to the algorithmic visions of Silicon Valley. Theological longings have always fused with fantasies of artificial creation. We then examine the politics of AI today, including global surveillance, algorithmic governance, and automation. We assess how people grant trust to algorithms and how "black box" systems render seemingly divine judgments while reproducing human bias. Moving from public authority to private intimacy, we explore how AI feminizes digital assistants, outsources emotional labor, and shapes gender and sexual norms. We ask whether algorithms can love, if humans can love machines, and what defines consent when one party lacks embodiment or vulnerability. Finally, we explore AI's symbolic, spiritual, and speculative dimensions. We consider narratives of technological salvation, representations of compassionate machines, and alternative visions of relationality. No technical expertise or prior background in religious studies or ethics is required. This course will meet in a seminar format.

Instructor(s): Katrina Myers Terms Offered: Autumn

RLST 23760. The Nature of the Good: The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. 100 Units.

What is the good act and what makes it so? What do we owe the Other? How does one construct a moral life? Emmanuel Levinas is one of the most important Jewish philosophers of the late 20th century. He produced a large body of dense, intricate moral theory that has come to define post-modern Jewish thought. In this course, we will read two of his most important works closely. In this way, we will consider the development of his thought on such key concepts as "the Other," "substitution," and "Infinity." This course will reflect on a moral puzzle: why do humans choose to be good or evil? This seminar considers his arguments about human relationality, duty, judgment and moral action—the phenomenology of the encounter with the Other, for which he is best known.

Instructor(s): Laurie Zoloth Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): JTAC 41600, RETH 41600

RLST 23905. Is Buddhism a Religion? 100 Units.

One often hears it said that "Buddhism is not a religion, but rather a [...]" with the ellipsis filled in with expressions including "philosophy," "mind science," "spiritual path," and "therapeutic practice" (among others). What does it mean, though, to say that Buddhism is or is not a "religion"? Why does it matter whether or not it is, and for whom are the stakes significant? And why in the first place does this question tend to arise only with regard to Buddhism? It turns out there is a complex and interesting history behind familiar ideas of Buddhism as somehow exceptional among the world's religions (if it is one...) - a history involving colonialism and empire, power and representation, science and religion, tradition and conversion, and the life of a 2,500-year-old tradition in the modern and postmodern worlds. This course will variously explore the origins and function of the "Buddhism isn't a religion" meme, entertaining, along the way, questions like: What is a "religion" anyway, and who gets to say so? Does it make sense to characterize Buddhist practice as itself "scientific," or to claim that Buddhist thought is basically more compatible with a scientific world view than that of any (other) religion? What might any of the various parties to a discussion of these issues have at stake in the answer's coming out one way or the other?

Instructor(s): Daniel A. Arnold Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): SALC 23905, DVPR 33905

RLST 24109. Claude Lanzmann's Shoah Project. 100 Units.

Claude Lanzmann's Shoah (1985) is a 9 ½ hour film comprised of Holocaust testimonies - by survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders. It represents the streamlining of 150 hours of film footage collected over the course of nearly a decade all over the world. In this class, we will explore the film and the discourses that have grown up around it, such as the nature of Holocaust representation, the ontology of Holocaust testimonies, and the limits of translation in understanding the history of the Holocaust. We will work with the outtakes from the film at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to better understand the narrative Lanzmann constructed not only through what he chose to include in the final cut, but also what he chose to exclude. As we analyze Lanzmann's magnum opus, we will also explore associated films - by Lanzmann and by others - that grew out of

Shoah and that shed further light on it. A final "Outtakes" project will give students the opportunity to suggest their own version of the film, with materials from the archive.

Instructor(s): Sheila Jelen Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): JTAC 34109, RLVC 34109, GRMN 24109, FNDL 24109, CMST 24119, JWSC 24109

RLST 24117. Third Millennium Ethics: New Trends in Living the Good Life. 100 Units.

This seminar focuses on contemporary developments in the study of Religious Ethics with an aim to foster professional development in the classroom and beyond. Our primary goal is to labor towards a better sense of the development of Religious Ethics as an inter- and multi-disciplinary endeavor of capturing a life lived well. We will hence consider recent books dealing with intersecting issues ranging from democratic theory, racism, and the comparative study of ethics to virtue, gender, and the environment. Along the way, we will develop critical professional skills. To that end the semester includes student-led seminar discussions, assessments of problems in the field, and culminates in the writing of a publishable book review that is attentive to the most recent developments in the study of Religious Ethics.

Instructor(s): Raissa de Rande Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): RETH 38400

RLST 24302. Pragmatism and Religion. 100 Units.

C.I. Lewis famously described pragmatism as "the doctrine that all problems are at bottom problems of conduct, that all judgments are, implicitly, judgments of value, and that, as there can be no ultimately valid distinction of theoretical and practical, so there can be no final separation of questions of truth of any kind from questions of the justifiable ends of action." This course will examine key figures of post-WWII American pragmatism—including Richard Rorty, Cheryl Misak, Cornel West, and Eddie Glaude—in order to assess their implications for religion, politics and the possibility of objectivity.

Instructor(s): Kevin Hector Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): THEO 44302, DVPR 44302, FNDL 25211

RLST 24305. Forbidden Knowledge: Theology, Ethics, and Research of Impermissible Risk. 100 Units.

We live in time of extraordinary scientific research, in which our capacities for technological advances far outstrip our established legal, ethical, and social norms for control. LLMs and embryo manipulation raise questions about the acceptable relationships between humans and technology: Artificial General Intelligence, advanced Mirror Biology both, if created, may destroy human life entirely. Is there some research that ought never to be done? It was here at the University of Chicago where this question was most vividly raised, as researchers of the Manhattan Project objected to using new technologies of atomic fission as weapons in World War II. These researchers consistently challenged the assumption that scientists must be completely free to do any research that they wish, noting that scientists themselves might not be the best ones to evaluate the risks and benefits of their own projects, and they called for a deeper involvement in such questions in an informed, public, and democratic process. This seminar will look in detail at the technology of AGI and of mirror biology, both of which carry deadly portents and totalizing implications and explore both how we discern whether and how to control scientific inquiry. We will ask: what role does moral philosophy or theological ethics have to play in this inquiry and we will consider what sort of governing norms or methods should have oversight over modern research science.

Instructor(s): Laurie Zoloth Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): RETH 34305

RLST 24567. Islamic Psychology. 100 Units.

An exploration of the growing body of literature on Islamic psychology. Relevant premodern approaches to mental well-being, rooted in scriptural, theological, philosophical, scientific, and mystical sources will be examined alongside contemporary literature that integrates insights from modern psychology with Islamic teachings. No Arabic required.

Instructor(s): Yousef Casewit Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): ISLM 34567, NEHC 34567, NEHC 24567

RLST 24601. Martin and Malcolm: Life and Thought. 100 Units.

This course examines the religious, social, cultural, political, and personal factors that went into the making of the two most prominent public leaders and public intellectuals emerging from the black American community in the 1950s and 1960s: Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. We will review their autobiographies, domestic and international forces operating during their times. Their life stories provide the sharp differences and surprising commonalities in their political thought and religious beliefs. At the end of their lives, were they still radical contrasts, sharing the same views, or had their beliefs sifted - did Malcolm become Martin and Martin become Malcolm?

Instructor(s): Dwight Hopkins Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): AMER 24601, RDIN 24601, HIST 27209, FNDL 24601

RLST 24805. Foucault, Genealogy, Religion. 100 Units.

Toward the end of his life, Michel Foucault turned to religion—not for solace, but for the sources of modern subjectivity and selfhood. Religion itself, however, is not his subject, nor is the religious subject his concern. What use, then, is his work on religion, and what use has religious studies made of it? Beginning with some of Foucault's most influential works on the genealogy of the subject and Christianity's role within it, this course examines his methods and the concepts they have generated. Engaging some of Foucault's own scholarly

sources, as well as critical work on his use of them, his treatment of primary texts, and the scope and limit of his discussion of Christianity, this course will then move to examine how his theories of power, biopolitics, and governmentality have influenced the study of religion across traditions and geographic contexts. Reading religious studies scholarship in history, intellectual history, anthropology, and cultural theory, we will examine Foucault's uneven but pervasive influence across the field, questioning religion's role in forming some of his key concepts, and tracing the use of those concepts as tools in the continuing study of religion.

Instructor(s): Kirsten Collins Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 25330. The Gospel of Jesus and Money. 100 Units.

Tell me what you think about money, and I will tell you what you think about God, for these two are closely related. A man's heart is closer to his wallet than anything else" - Billy Graham For many Christians in the contemporary world globalized through capitalism, the Pentecostal gospel of prosperity's promise of a socially fulfilling and abundant life in this-worldly realm has been quite appealing. In contrast to the earlier movements of Christianity where the good life was promised as a reward in the hereafter, the prosperity message (also called the "health and wealth gospel"), combines salvation with material comfort. This "Jesus plus money" approach indicates a pragmatic understanding of secular power as inextricable from salvation if Christianity would truly expand the sphere of social possibilities for believers. In this course, we will examine the contexts and contingencies that gave rise to this conflation of Jesus with wealth and power in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, critically exploring how this this-worldly gospel has transformed Christianity in various locales where its growth has exploded. Students will study several socio-cultural and socio-political contexts where the prosperity gospel has thrived. By the end of the semester, they would have developed a coherent understanding of the allure of the prosperity gospel, adaptations of the Cross to capitalism, and what the trend portends for the Christian faith as a global practice.

Instructor(s): Abimbola Adelakun Terms Offered: Spring

Note(s): This course meets the HS or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.

Equivalent Course(s): RAME 35330, HCHR 35330

RLST 25406. Revolution, Freedom, and Equality: Religion, Ethics, and Politics in Modernity. 100 Units.

This course traces the terms 'religion,' 'ethics,' and 'politics,' as well as their complex interactions, through the latter parts of what used to be considered elite Western curricula. We will be paying particular attention to the ways previously excluded voices have joined and challenged these 'elite' discussions in recent centuries. Our journey begins in revolutionary England and will lead us all the way to the present. The following questions will be at the forefront of our inquiry: What is the role of religion in articulations of revolt and struggles for freedom and equality? What kinds of freedom from/or for dominate the religious and political imaginations? And what is the nature of equality, before God, the law, or in society?

Instructor(s): Raissa de Rande Terms Offered: Spring

Note(s): This course meets the HS or CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students.

Equivalent Course(s): RETH 35406, ISLM 35406

RLST 25700. Spinoza: From Infinity to Beatitude. 100 Units.

This course will mainly consist of a close reading of the entirety of Spinoza's Ethics (in translation), along with a selection of relevant secondary material.

Instructor(s): Brook Ziporyn Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 35700

RLST 25704. Environmental Justice in Chicago. 100 Units.

This course will examine the development of environmental justice theory and practice through social scientific and ethical literature about the subject as well as primary source accounts of environmental injustices. We will focus on environmental justice issues in Chicago including, but not limited to waste disposal, toxic air and water, the Chicago heat wave, and climate change. Particular attention will be paid to environmental racism and the often understudied role of religion in environmental justice theory and practice. Throughout the course we will explore how normative commitments are expressed in different types of literature as well as the basis for normative judgments and the types of authorities authors utilize and claim as they consider environmental justice.

Instructor(s): Sarah Fredericks Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): CEGU 25704, CHST 25704, AMER 25704, HMRT 25704, KNOW 25704, RDIN 25704, PBPL 25704

RLST 25807. Discourse on Colonialism and Zionism. 100 Units.

Why is Zionism discussed so often in terms of colonialism? What is colonialism, what is Zionism, and what discourses bring them together? Examining early texts from the Zionist movement, spanning political, labor, and cultural Zionism, this course introduces students to how language, history, religion, archaeology, literature, and political theory have shaped the discourse around Israel, Palestine, and opened up debates about the meaning sovereignty, self-determination, and indigeneity. Offering a variety of critical perspectives on the formation of Israel and the discourse around it, this course asks students to think about the relationship between knowledge, power, identity, and the institutions that maintain them.

Instructor(s): Kirsten Collins Terms Offered: Winter

RLST 25830. Zhuangzi: The Butterfly in the Mirror. 100 Units.

The course will mainly consist of a close reading of large portions of the Zhuangzi (in translation), along with a selection of relevant commentaries and secondary material.

Instructor(s): Brook Ziporyn Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): DVPR 35830

RLST 25900. On the Perfect State. 100 Units.

Abu Nasr al-Farabi (d. 950) is considered the first (political) philosopher of the Islamic tradition, as well the 'second teacher' (after Aristotle) to medieval philosophy. His magnum opus, *On the Perfect State*, weaves together an original cosmology with his influential accounts of religion, ethics, and politics. In this class, we will consider these central threads of the text both in conversation with al-Farabi's larger corpus, and with an eye toward their enduring legacy in political thought beyond the Islamic tradition.

Instructor(s): Raissa de Rande Terms Offered: Autumn

RLST 26004. The Cult of Relics in Byzantium and Beyond. 100 Units.

The cult of relics played a vital role in Byzantine culture and, consequently, left a strong imprint on the artistic production. Not only did the veneration of relics find expression in personal devotion, but the image of the Byzantine court was largely modeled on the claim that the emperors possessed the most precious of all sacred remains, first and foremost those associated with the Passion of Christ and the Virgin Mary. The outstanding treasure of relics housed in the imperial palace significantly contributed to the understanding in the medieval Christian world of Constantinople as the "New Jerusalem." We will begin our investigation in the ancient Near East, where major centers of pilgrimage developed from the fourth century on. These sites considerably fueled the early Byzantine cult of relics and the associated artistic production. The chief focus of the seminar will be on the major urban centers of the Byzantine Empire, especially the capital city of Constantinople. We will closely study different types of reliquaries manufactured in the Byzantine Empire over the centuries and investigate how their design responded to devotional needs, ritual practice and political claims. Historical developments and primary texts (in English translation) will be addressed throughout to better understand the circumstances of the acquisition of relics and the motivations guiding their veneration.

Instructor(s): Karin Krause Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): ARTH 41602, RLCV 41604, HCHR 41604

RLST 26112. The Body in Chinese Daoism and Buddhism: A Comparative Approach. 100 Units.

What can the body tell us about religion? How do people use their bodies in ritual? Can the body escape death? What happens to the body after death? In this course, we explore how medieval Chinese Daoists and Buddhists imagined, disciplined, and transcended the body. Through close readings of primary and secondary sources, we will look at practices such as food and sexual abstinence, visualization, body sacrifice, mummification, and the gendered quest for immortality or enlightenment. Along the way, we will notice both similarities and differences between these traditions, helping us better understand the rich diversity of Chinese religious experience.

Instructor(s): R. Zhu Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): GNSE 20002, EALC 20002

RLST 26171. Religion and Animals. 100 Units.

This course examines how religious traditions have understood, shaped, and governed human relationships with animals. Drawing on texts, ritual practices, and ethical debates from diverse historical and cultural contexts, it explores themes such as sacrifice, dietary practices, compassion, animal ethics, and the boundaries between human and animal life.

Instructor(s): Marielle Harrison Terms Offered: Winter

RLST 26300. Religion and Medicine. 100 Units.

This colloquium course introduces students to the anthropological study of religion and medicine, focusing on how cultural, moral, and spiritual frameworks shape understandings of illness, healing, suffering, and death. We will explore how communities interpret disease as having both physical and spiritual causes, and how healing practices ranging from ritual and prayer to biomedical interventions are embedded within social, ethical, and cosmological systems. Dying, brain death, and organ transplantation are examined as ethically and culturally contested domains, alongside experiences at the threshold of life, such as near-death events and terminal lucidity. We will also consider suffering and disability as socially and spiritually meaningful experiences that inform caregiving, moral responsibility, and community obligations. The course is structured to support students across disciplines, including those in medicine, clinical research, and pastoral care, who seek to understand the intersections of religion, culture, and medical practice.

Instructor(s): Elham Miresghhi Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): AASR 36300, CHSS 36301

RLST 26325. Witnessing the Afterlife: Anthropological and Islamic Approaches to Near Death Experiences (NDE) 100 Units.

Advances in resuscitation technologies over recent decades have increased post-cardiac arrest survival, rendering Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) both more frequent and more accessible to clinical observation. Since the 1970s, a transdisciplinary movement has emerged that mobilizes NDE testimonies to interrogate fundamental questions concerning the nature of consciousness, personhood, and the purpose of human life. Notably, many NDE narratives exhibit structural and thematic parallels to mystical and spiritual experiences documented across diverse religious traditions, including within Islam. This interdisciplinary course, co-taught by an anthropologist

and a scholar of Qur'anic Studies, approaches NDEs as culturally and historically situated experiences that bear significant ethical and interpretive implications. We will examine NDE accounts from a range of religious and geographic contexts while also engaging Islamic textual traditions and contemporary Muslim narratives concerning the soul (nafs/rû#), the processes of dying, the intermediate realm of the barzakh, and encounters with non-human or otherworldly beings. In doing so, the course explores how scientific, cultural, and religious epistemologies differently conceptualize and evaluate experiences occurring at the threshold of life and death.

Instructor(s): Elham Mireshghi and Yousef Casewit Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): AASR 36325, ISLM 36325

RLST 26606. Reading Your Neighbor's Scripture: Scriptural Reasoning. 100 Units.

Scriptural Reasoning is a method of approaching the scholarly study of texts of the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and the Qur'an, by reading them as if they are to be understood as in conversation with one another, and as in reception communities that have historically understood them as such. This seminar will explore the practices and methods of a distinctive academic methodology of study, as well as the theoretical and philosophical scaffolding that has emerged from these practices. We will consider both the scholarly work that extends and recommends the practice, and the critiques of the practice. Reading from the perspectives of theology and philosophy, we will consider how the academic reading of Scriptures frames the narrative and the ethical perspectives within the text and how that framing might be disrupted/repaid/interrogated by new exegetical interpretations. Scriptural Reasoning is both a method and a feature of the academy (in journals, in a section at the AAR, and in scholarly books and articles); and it is also a way of making Scriptural reception and interpretation publicly legible. The seminar will allow graduate students an entrance into understanding the Scriptures of their own tradition or research interest, and those of others, with which they may not be conversant, and thus create the possibility for new avenues of comparative scholarship.

Instructor(s): Laurie Zoloth Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): RETH 33300, THEO 33300, ISLM 33300

RLST 26612. Early Christian and Late Ancient Jewish Art. 100 Units.

This course will examine the origins, development and historiography of Christian art in the Roman world and into the first centuries of Christian Europe. It will explore this in parallel with the development and historiography of Jewish art in the same period, also known as 'late antiquity', examining issues of the construction of religious identity through images in hegemonic and non-hegemonic contexts, whether as markers of triumphalism or resistance, and investigating also question of the penetration of these religions and their iconographies into the larger Afro-Eurasian context.

Instructor(s): Jas' Elsner Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): MDVL 20612, ARTH 20612, JTAC 30612, BIBL 30612, RLVC 30612, ARTH 30612

RLST 26661. Global Pentecostalism. 100 Units.

One of the most remarkable developments of the past six decades is the global ascendance of Pentecostalism, a Christian charismatic movement that has redefined Christianity in crucial ways. This course will account for the global explosion through a study of the internal qualities and the external systemic factors that have propelled Pentecostal charismatic movements to become the vanguard of Christianity worldwide. We will also learn how the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements are acquiring cultural and political power while transforming themselves to be a major force for social justice in various countries. Students will engage religious resources (such as performances, rituals, texts, and materials) that have supported the global mobility and motility of Pentecostalism in multiple continents. Through an interdisciplinary approach that will draw readings from sociology, media studies, performance studies, religious studies, theology/social ethics, political theory, economics, history, and anthropology, we will explore the cultural and political factors, the missiological initiatives, demographical changes, and technological developments that have resulted in the move of the Holy Spirit beyond human-made borders.

Instructor(s): Abimbola Adelakun Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): GLST 26661, AASR 40100, RAME 40100, HCHR 40100

RLST 26905. Gender, Sexuality, and Christianity. 100 Units.

Throughout the centuries, how have appeals to biblical literature and Christian teaching served to challenge, preserve, or subvert normative expectations for gender expression and sexuality? This course exposes students to the foundational texts and pivotal debates that continue to shape our politics and society. We will begin with how the writers of New Testament literature set trajectories for subsequent struggles over biblical interpretation and the organization of Christian communities. Students will learn how ancient medical views of the gendered body shaped this literature. We will examine how discourses around martyrs, ascetics, and saints provided avenues for late antique and medieval Christians to imagine the transgression of social norms. Moving to the pre-modern and modern periods, the class will explore the ever-changing relationship between political power and ecclesial authorities, with an eye to debates regarding marriage and procreation. We will approach texts through a historical lens while paying attention to the philosophical, theological, and ethical issues involved. Readings will be drawn from all over the globe, reflecting the multilingual, multicultural, and multivocal nature of Christianity from its origins to the present day. We will engage modern theorists to place contemporary approaches in conversation with the historical archive to better understand discourses around virginity, sexuality, and identity. No prior knowledge required.

Instructor(s): Erin Walsh Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): BIBL 36905, HCHR 36905

RLST 27214. Transnational Religious Movements. 100 Units.

This course examines the transnational reach of various religious movements drawing mainly from literature in anthropology and cultural studies. Topics that will be considered include inter-religious encounters, refugees and migrant communities, diasporic nationalism, cultural politics of globalization, and post-socialist capitalism.

Instructor(s): Angie Heo Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): HREL 42214, AASR 42214, RAME 42214

RLST 27233. Religion and Inequality in America. 100 Units.

How does religion reflect, reproduce, and occasional disrupt structures of inequality? Since the earliest days of American social science, researchers have understood that religious groups are highly stratified by race, class, gender, ethnicity, and other factors. We will examine the causes and consequences of these inequalities, both historically and in the contemporary world, by reading key texts and by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data on American religious groups.

Instructor(s): T. Huttenlocher Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): SOCI 30655, RDIN 30655, AASR 30655, RDIN 20655, SOCI 20655

RLST 27305. Race, Religion, and Revolution in South Asian America. 100 Units.

The 2025 New York City mayoral campaign of Zohran Mamdani mobilized South Asian Americans as a political constituency in unprecedented fashion. While focused more generally on the struggles of working-class New Yorkers, canvassers aimed to speak and listen to the needs and aspirations of people from the subcontinent across ethnic, regional, religious, caste, and class divides. Beyond electoral politics, however, the longer history of South Asians in America has always been political. From transnational revolutionaries to imperial cheerleaders, from model minorities to undesirable immigrants, South Asians in America continue to occupy an ambivalent place in the American imaginary as objects of fear, wonder, anxiety, and admiration. This course explores various constructions of South Asian American identity in the twentieth century and beyond in history, sociology, literature, and art. Through readings, music, and film, students will be encouraged to pursue the following questions: How does the politics of identity operate at the nexus of race, caste, and indigeneity? How does religion index race in the eyes of the surveillance state? How have Black and brown people been drawn together in conflict and cooperation? How do South Asian histories of migration prefigure the mass displacements, border enforcements, and labor regimes that have defined the politics of globalization in the 21st century?

Instructor(s): Anand Venkatkrishnan Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): SALC 27305, GLST 27305, HIST 26813, AMER 27305

RLST 27490. Art as Buddhism in Ancient India. 100 Units.

This course will examine the visual construction of early Buddhism in India, focusing in particular on stūpas and especially on the art of the great stūpa (mahachaitya) at Amarāvati in Andhra Pradesh. We will examine questions of Buddhology, of the diversity and range of conversations within early Buddhism, leading to the rise of the Mahāyāna, in relation to the visualization of Buddhist theory and narrative in the extensive and extraordinary decorations of the major sites. The course will introduce those taking it to the rich visual, material and epigraphic culture of the Buddhist stūpas as well as the vibrant textual world of Indian Buddhist writing - from stories to suttas to commentaries. Students will have the opportunity to develop their own final papers in relation to this material or comparatively with other material in which they also retain an interest (not necessarily only Buddhist).

Instructor(s): Jaś Elsner Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): ARTH 27490, RLVC 37490, SALC 27490, HREL 37490, SALC 37490, ARTH 37490

RLST 27510. The Poetry of Wallace Stevens. 100 Units.

After one has abandoned a belief in God," Wallace Stevens famously writes, "poetry is that essence which takes its place as life's redemption." This course will be devoted to reading Stevens closely. We will trace the development of his poetic vision focusing on his post-war collections. We will draw heavily upon his letters, lectures, and essays to make sense of the poetic works. We will also situate him alongside a wide array of English-language poets.

Instructor(s): Coyne, Ryan Terms Offered: Winter

Prerequisite(s): Winter 2027 Fundamentals Gateway. Instructor consent to enroll, with priority to FNDL students.

Equivalent Course(s): FNDL 20401

RLST 27526. Diaspora, State, and Nation in Jewish History. 100 Units.

Diaspora, nationhood, statehood - the dangers, possibilities, and ethical problems within each of these seemingly bloodless terms have sometimes generated intense debate and inquiry within Jewish life. This class investigates the intellectual and political history of three such moments. We ask how traditional Judaism negotiated the relationship between cultivating a fulfilling religious existence in dispersion and potent theological traditions of seeing diaspora as Exile from the Holy Land. We investigate new forms of Jewish thought and politics of the late 19th century, when - against the backdrop of wider currents of secularization, nationalism, colonialism, and antisemitism - growing numbers of Jews looked to overcome diaspora through Zionism and other territorial and statist visions while others sought to remake diaspora itself through liberal integrationism, revolutionary socialism, or federalist autonomism. We will examine Jewish political thinking in our own fraught moment, as the ethnonationalist trajectories in Israeli Jewish political culture and society, the renewed enormities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rising tensions between liberal and Orthodox forms of Judaism in both Israel and the

US, and the crisis of the liberal order around the globe provoke debate about the value, morality, potentials, and dangers of Jewish sovereignty and diaspora alike while inciting urgent thinking about the unfolding situation in Israel and Palestine.

Instructor(s): K. Moss Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 23526, JWSC 23526, HIST 23526

RLST 27626. Listening in Place: Making Music Documentaries on the South Side. 100 Units.

This course engages students in a quarter-long music ethnography project documenting the music and sound practices of sacred communities on Chicago's South Side. Students will gain practical experience in ethnomusicological methods such as participant observation, interviewing, oral history, archival and digital research, fieldnote writing, sound recording, and collaborative representation. Working in teams, students will create micro-documentaries highlighting the sound practices of sacred communities. The course will culminate in a digital map showcasing the sound practices of South Side communities. This map will serve as a visual representation and digital archive of local musicking and cultural diversity, in support of local music communities.

Instructor(s): Anna Schultz and Jessica Baker Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): CHST 24026, SIGN 24026, MUSI 24026, MUSI 34026

RLST 27658. Travel and Exploration in the Global Middle Ages. 100 Units.

This course explores travel and exploration in the medieval Middle East, presenting the region as a central crossroads of the Global Middle Ages. Through the accounts of pilgrims, merchants, diplomats, scholars, and adventurers, students will follow routes that connected the Islamic world with Africa, Asia, and Europe. Reading travel narratives, maps, and material evidence, the course asks how movement shaped knowledge, identity, power, and cultural exchange-questions that resonate in today's world of migration, globalization, and unequal mobility. By foregrounding the Middle East as a hub rather than a periphery, the course offers a historically grounded way to think about connection, difference, and belonging in a global age. This course is open to both undergraduate and graduate students. This course participates in the Languages Across the Curriculum (LxC) program for Arabic. The course is conducted fully in English, and students with no prior knowledge of Arabic are very welcome. Students with some Arabic may choose, through the LAC program, to read short texts in Arabic.

Instructor(s): Pamela Klasova (pamelaklas) Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): NEHC 20036, CMLT 30036, CMLT 20036, NEHC 30036

RLST 27703. Left-Handed Practice: Religion and Politics in South Asia. 100 Units.

The decades from 1917-1947 marked the rise of left-wing politics across South Asia and its diaspora. Whether officially linked to the Soviet Comintern, like the Communist Party of India, or in broad support of revolutionary anti-imperialism, like the Ghadar Party, leftist ideas, organizations, and agitations flourished in the subcontinent and continue to inform the politics of several states in the region. This course explores how thinkers, writers, activists, and everyday people in twentieth-century South Asia have understood the power of religion to engender, justify, interpret, challenge, and reimagine this tradition of emancipatory politics. Students will encounter a range of unorthodox ideas and practices including Muslim socialism, Hindu communism, mystical Marxism, Dalit Buddhism, and revolutionary renunciation. Particular attention will be given to questions of caste, gender, and sexual futures. Decades of right-wing mobilization have associated religion invariably with reactionary politics. This course reveals different possible configurations of religion and politics in modern South Asia.

Instructor(s): Anand Venkatkrishnan Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): HREL 37703

RLST 27726. Sounding Israel/Palestine. 100 Units.

In "Sounding Israel/Palestine" we shall look at specific moments when the musics and sound worlds of Israel/Palestine converged, responding to and shaping historical change and conflict. Bi-weekly sessions will take specific historical moments as ways of exploring how music was critical to the processes of change, identity, and accommodation. We begin with moments in Antiquity, among them the moments in which the temples in Jerusalem were destroyed (e.g., 70 CE). and the Mi#raj, when the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven (ca. 621 CE). Moments marking the patterns of settlement (Yishuv) and political transformation and unrest will mark the chronology of modernity and modernism (e.g., 1917, 1933, 1938). The moments of Israeli statehood and Palestinian Nakba will be of growing significance as the course moves toward the twenty-first century (e.g., 1948, 1967, and 1987). The sounds of the present moment (2023 and beyond)-of the war in Gaza, of the struggle for survival in Palestine, of the mass mediation of dissonant political voices, of breakthrough genres of popular music-will become the texts and contexts for the closing weeks of the course.

Instructor(s): Phil Bohlman

Equivalent Course(s): MUSI 20026, SIGN 20026, NEHC 20028, JWSC 20026

RLST 27905. Rights Under Strain: A Practicum. 100 Units.

This practicum offers an applied exploration of how anti-rights actors shape discourse, law, and public policy across Africa, and how rights-affirming advocates can respond. Students analyse the growing sophistication of anti-gender, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-democracy, and anti-sexual and reproductive health movements, examining their links to religious institutions, political elites and shifting geopolitical forces. These actors influence legislation, coordinate disinformation, intervene in judicial processes, and promote cultural narratives that frame

restrictive agendas as the defense of "tradition" or "sovereignty. Students collaborate directly with a Kenyan NGO partner and with the Leitner International Human Rights Clinic at Fordham Law School to develop research and communications outputs for live advocacy needs. Work may include comparative analyses of regional human-rights systems, technical assessments of proposals such as the African Charter on Family, Values and Sovereignty, and the creation of narrative-response materials for immediate use. Through this process, students gain experience in strategic storytelling, counter-disinformation practices, cross-border research coordination, and rights-based analysis grounded in contemporary political realities. The practicum also serves as a pathway to a competitive year-long internship that may include supervised field engagement, partnership meetings, and contributions to ongoing monitoring and advocacy efforts.

Instructor(s): Emmah Wabuke Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): HMRT 31905, GNSE 21908, HMRT 21905

RLST 28008. African Magic. 100 Units.

This course borrows the term "African magic" from a digital satellite service devoted to showing films that preponderantly project African beliefs in the supernatural. Throughout the semester, we will examine the African belief in the supernatural, its representation in films, and consequent engagement with the enfolded magic of mystical reality and the technology that visualizes, enhances, and even disrupts it. We will be studying the ideas of Gods, mythology, deities, witchcraft and the occult, as expressed in indigenous religions, Christianity, and Islam. By also exploring different visual materials that illustrate how Africans use their religious performances to formulate and navigate their conceptions of the sacred and supernatural power, we will analyze the social practices of their religious beliefs and determine the dimensions of the inventiveness that underline African religious practices.

Instructor(s): Abimbola Adelokun Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 28008, RDIN 28008

RLST 28140. Golems, Angels, and AI. 100 Units.

What makes us human? Is it our bodies or our souls? Our propensity to reason or our capacity for love? Or is it our ability to select all squares containing bicycles? In this interdisciplinary course, we consider what it means to be human by contrasting the human with the non-human. We think with sci-fi authors about how humans are different from androids and aliens. We think with scientists about how humans are different from animals and algorithms. We think with religious traditions about how humans are different from angels and abominations. Topics to be discussed include what we owe to our creators and our creations, what dehumanization is and why we do it, how people throughout history have tried to transcend their physical forms, and what monsters have to tell us about the good life.

Instructor(s): Russell Johnson Terms Offered: Spring

Equivalent Course(s): ANTH 38140, HIPS 28140, ISLM 38140, JTAC 38140, NEHC 38140, NEHC 28140, HREL 38140, ANTH 28140

RLST 28308. Introduction to Byzantine Art. 100 Units.

In this course, we will explore works of art and architecture as primary sources on the civilization of Byzantium. Through the close investigation of artifacts of different media and techniques, students will gain insight into the artistic production of the Byzantine Empire from its beginnings in the fourth century C.E. to the Ottoman conquest in 1453. We will employ different methodological approaches and scholarly resources that are relevant for the fruitful investigation of artifacts in their respective cultural setting. In order to fully assess the pivotal importance of the visual arts in Byzantine culture, we will address a wide array of topics, including art and ritual, patronage, the interrelation of art and text, the classical heritage, art and theology, icons and Iconoclasm (etc.).

Instructor(s): Karin Krause Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): ARTH 14006, MDVL 14006

RLST 28522. Reading Walter Benjamin's 'Artwork' Essay. 100 Units.

Seldom has a canonical essay been at once so widely and so carelessly read as Walter Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility.' This seminar takes a deep dive into the text, reading it alongside writings by Benjamin's contemporaries as well as more recent analyses. We will discuss themes including the technological transformation of the conditions of experience amid the rise of fascism, the significance of Benjamin's highly complex conception of aura, the indexicality of the photographic image, the political potentialities of innervation, the psychoanalytic implications of the notion of the optical unconscious, the redemption of distraction and mimesis (including Benjamin's mimetic theory of language), and Benjamin's productively ambivalent relation to right-wing cultural theorists.

Instructor(s): William Mazzarella

Equivalent Course(s): CCCT 20522, ANTH 20522

RLST 28811. Emptiness: The History of _____ in Art, Religion, and Philosophy. 100 Units.

This experimental course explores emptiness not simply as absence, but as a powerful cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic force. Moving across philosophy, religious thought, science, and the arts, the course asks how emptiness has been theorized, experienced, feared, imposed, and cultivated-from Buddhist and apophatic traditions to colonial concepts such as *terra nullius*, from modern physics and philosophy to contemporary art and digital practices like doomscrolling. Students will engage texts by figures such as Georges Perec, Meister Eckhart, Simone Weil, Martin Heidegger, John Cage, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Byung-Chul Han, alongside close study of artistic practices ranging from Zen ink painting to Yves Klein, Agnes Martin, and the Dansaekhwa

movement. The course also addresses emptiness as a social condition, examining themes of hyper-connectivity, consumerism, colonial "empty spaces," silence, and withdrawal. Through seminars, lectures, site-specific discussions, and collaborative exercises, students are encouraged to think across traditions and disciplines. Rather than offering a single definition, the course treats emptiness as a shifting field-at once unsettling and generative-where art, spirituality, and modern life intersect."

Instructor(s): Donato Loia Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 28319. Iconophobia: The Prohibition and Destruction of Religious Images. 100 Units.

This course examines concepts of art that reflect iconophobia, "fear of images," in the Abrahamic religions-Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Since antiquity, iconophobia has led to theological debates that resulted in the prohibition of images in sacred spaces, rituals, and other forms of religious practice. In extreme cases, iconophobia has caused acts of iconoclasm, the violent destruction of art. In all three religions, fear of idolatry ("idol worship") has been the main cause of iconophobia. We will examine what exactly constitutes an idol and how the definitions of idols differ from iconophile ("image-loving") assessments of religious art. Both iconophobic and iconophile arguments shed light on the various functions and effects of religious images and illustrate their power. Furthermore, they reveal attitudes towards artistic creation, materiality, aesthetics, sensory perception, and truth in art. Most of the topics and readings will focus on the premodern period from antiquity to the 16th century. However, we will also look at some of the effects of iconophobia in modernity. Readings will include, but are not limited to, texts from the Hebrew Bible, Christian exegesis, the Qur'an, Byzantine Iconoclasm, and the Protestant Reformation. Material evidence of iconophobia and iconoclasm from different religious contexts will also be discussed.

Instructor(s): Karin Krause Terms Offered: Winter

Equivalent Course(s): CLCV 28325, RLVC 38319, HCHR 38319, ARTH 28319, MDVL 28319, CLAS 38325, ARTH 38319, GLST 28319

RLST 28345. Interpreting and Exhibiting Textiles from North Africa and Southwest Asia. 100 Units.

This seminar explores visual culture and historical arts of Africa primarily from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with a focus on traditional textiles and adornment in North Africa and Southwest Asia. We will cover that broad geographical range with case studies that center on production, practices, and uses for textiles and related objects of devotion in everyday life. Investigations will highlight textiles' tangible and intangible elements to examine their spiritual and protective dimensions through various lenses: organized religions, including the three Abrahamic faiths, local belief systems and ritual practices, social or political organizations, and other cultural distinctions. Such contextualization will contribute to students' recognition of the diversity and historical depth of the continent's arts and cultures. We will visit objects in storage and spend time in the galleries for the exhibition, Embroidered Traditions from Morocco to Afghanistan, for in-person, close looking and to fuel discussions surrounding the role of museums, museum display, and interpretation. At least two class sessions will take place at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Instructor(s): J. Purdy Terms Offered: Autumn

Prerequisite(s): Consent only. This course fulfills the following requirements in the ARTH major and minor:

African Art

Equivalent Course(s): ARTH 32305, RLVC 38345, ARTH 22305, CHST 22305

RLST 28405. Religion in Anime and Japanese Pop Culture. 100 Units.

How does Spirited Away reflect teachings of Japanese Buddhism and Shinto? Or what about Neon Genesis Evangelion? What can pop culture tell us about religion? In this course, we will consider the complex relations between religion and pop culture through Japanese anime and manga. Examples are drawn from a wide range of popular shows and series in these media and others to explore how they represent, borrow, invent, draw inspiration from, and participate in religious life in Japan. The course covers foundational aspects of Japanese religious life through non-traditional sources like Princess Mononoke, Attack on Titan, and Your Name. At the end of the course, students will be able to critically analyze intersections of anime and religion, drawing on their acquired knowledge of the great diversity of religious practices and viewpoints in Japan. Meanwhile, we will consider broader questions about religion, popular culture, and what it means to think of these two things together.

Instructor(s): Stephan Licha Terms Offered: Autumn

Equivalent Course(s): CMLT 28405, EALC 28405, MADD 14805

RLST 28700. Judith Butler: Gender and Sexuality in Philosophy, Society, and Ethics. 100 Units.

Judith Butler is among the most influential theorists and cultural critics of our time. Primarily recognized for their field-defining work in gender studies and queer theory, Butler's philosophy and criticism ranges widely. Beginning with their early analysis of desire and recognition in Hegel's Phenomenology, Butler's work draws widely from psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, literature, and critical theory, to illumine the gendered foundations of philosophical thought while critically assessing contemporary political, religious, and social crises. In this course, we will read three texts from Butler's corpus: Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?, and The Force of Non-Violence: An Ethico-Political Bind. We do so not merely to encounter Butler's theories of gender, sexuality, and performativity, grievability and precarity, ethics and non-violence, but to learn from Butler's philosophical method and their productive strategies for interrogating culture, politics, and the self. Our goal will be to hone each participant's critical and theoretical skills with an eye toward sharpening our social-critical and ethical capacities. The course will proceed as a seminar. No prior familiarity with Butler's work or gender and sexuality studies required.

Instructor(s): Virginia White Terms Offered: Spring

RLST 29700. Reading and Research Course. 100 Units.

This is the Reading and Research independent study that RLST majors/minors can petition to take, in conjunction with a faculty supervisor and the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Divinity School.

Terms Offered: Autumn Spring Winter

Prerequisite(s): Consent of faculty supervisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Note(s): Students are required to submit the College Reading and Research Course Form.

RLST 29800. BA Research Seminar I. 100 Units.

This class meets weekly to provide guidance for planning, researching, and writing the BA research paper. The two-quarter senior sequence will assist students in the Research Track with the preparation of the required BA paper. During May of their third year, students will work with the preceptor to choose a faculty adviser and a topic for research, and to plan a course of study for the following year. These must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students will take part in the BA Research Seminar convened by a preceptor during Autumn and Winter Quarters of their senior year. This seminar will allow students to prepare their bibliographies, hone their writing, and present their research.

Instructor(s): Lucas Depierre Terms Offered: Autumn. Lucas Depierre is the instructor of this course and BA Preceptor.

Prerequisite(s): Consent of faculty supervisor and Director of Undergraduate Studies.

RLST 29900. BA Research Seminar II. 100 Units.

This class meets weekly to assist students in the preparation of drafts of their BA paper, which are formally presented and critiqued. The two-quarter senior sequence will assist students in the Research Track with the preparation of the required BA paper. During May of their third year, students will work with the preceptor to choose a faculty adviser and a topic for research, and to plan a course of study for the following year. These must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Students will take part in the BA Paper Seminar convened by a preceptor during Autumn and Winter Quarters of their senior year. This seminar will allow students to prepare their bibliographies, hone their writing, and present their research.

Instructor(s): Lucas Depierre Terms Offered: Winter. Lucas Depierre is the instructor of this course and the BA Preceptor.

Prerequisite(s): RLST 29800.

