

Religious Studies

Course Offerings – Fall 2024

RE 103R Understanding Religions

4 Cr.

An in-depth investigation of religion as a global, cross-cultural phenomenon. Religions situate human actors in relation to nonhuman agents, and yet scholars of religion view religion as a profoundly human activity -- as something “made” not by gods and spirits but by people. In our effort to study religion both critically and empathetically, we examine traditions from different times and places, and we engage scholarly approaches that help us to consider religion from different perspectives. This semester, we focus on Santeria/Lucumi, an Afro-Caribbean tradition that emerged from the transatlantic slave trade, and on Sikhism, which originated in the Punjab and has since become the world’s fifth largest religion.

Note: This course is offered as an Explorations in Religious Studies through Research.

Fulfills Global Cultural Perspective and Humanistic Inquiry requirements.

W/F 12:20 - 1:40 M 12:20 - 1:15

G. Spinner

RE 105W American Gods: Religious Diversity in the U.S.

4 Cr.

What is an “American” religion? What do people mean when they refer to the United States as a site of “religious diversity” or “religious freedom”? This course explores these questions, with special attention to how issues of religion are shaped by dynamics of race, gender, sexuality, and nation. Students will encounter key players in the religious history of the Americas and build a toolbox for interpreting the interplay of religion, culture, and politics more broadly.

Note: This course is offered as an Explorations in Religious Studies through Writing.

Fulfills Global Cultural Perspectives, Cultural Diversity and Humanistic Inquiry requirements; counts towards American Studies.

Sec. 001 T/TH 11:10 – 12:30 & M 11:15-12:10

Sec. 002 T/TH 2:10– 3:30 & M 1:25-2:20

C. Taylor

RE 221 Buddhism: An Introduction

3 Cr.

An introductory survey of the Buddhist tradition, focusing on its history and development, key doctrines and practices, geographic spread, and cultural adaptations. Students will examine the intellectual and philosophical history of Buddhism in detail as well as explore how Buddhism functions as a living, practical tradition.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Global Cultural Perspective requirements. Counts toward Asian Studies.

W/F 10:10 – 11:30

B. Bogin

RE 230-001 Ecstasy**3 Cr.**

A cross-cultural examination of sacred trance and religious ecstasy. Throughout the world, people commune with spirits in order to heal, learn, and empower. By studying about shamans, spirit possession, and entheogens (the sacramental use of psychedelics), we consider significant aspects of religious experience and analyze their social dynamics. Students apply theoretical models in which ecstasy intersects with gender, race, and class; and students reflect on the methods being utilized, wherein we aim to decolonize the study of religion and interrogate how it might be conducted scientifically.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement and the Theory and Method requirement for Religious Studies.

M/W 10:10 – 11:30

G. Spinner

RE 230-002 Bible Wars**4 Cr.**

The Bible is often at the center of contentious issues within American culture. A Constitutional ideal separating church from state does not prevent people from grounding their values in interpretations of these sacred texts. This course then provides a critical examination of what the Bible says, or does not say, on a range of polarizing topics, including abortion, birth control, capital punishment, same sex relations, migrant workers, and economic exploitation. Our goal in doing so is not primarily to choose sides, but to better understand how the Bible continues to impact contemporary society.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry.

T/TH 3:40 – 5:00

G. Spinner

RE 330 Religion and Madness**4 Cr.**

What is the line between religion and madness? Who gets to decide and what are the consequences? How did psychiatric understandings of religious identities and rituals historically develop and how have they impacted American religious lives? Is madness a form of unreason or a variety of profound wisdom? This course critically engages these questions to examine the association of religious identities, rituals and beliefs with madness or mental illness during the 19th and 20th centuries. Students will uncover how gender, race, and colonialism in the United States have impacted assessments of madness, and the power dynamics inherent to labeling and categorizing certain traditions as religions while declaring others the product of deviance or mental illness. In the process of our study, students will explore the history of American institutionalization, the evolution of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), debates over brainwashing and cults, and the mad liberation movement. This course employs a mad studies theoretical perspective that challenges the historical and contemporary dominance of the psychiatric lens.

Fulfills TM requirement for Religious Studies majors and minors; counts toward Gender Studies.

Prerequisite: *One prior Religious Studies or Gender Studies course or permission of the instructor.*

T/TH 2:10 – 3:30

A. Prince

RE 375 Senior Seminar - Writing About Religion: Process and Craft**4 Cr.**

An intensive writing seminar for Religion majors engaged in advanced research. We will read works of scholarship distinguished for their writing craft, while workshopping on our own independent writing and research projects. Required for senior Religion majors. Other advanced students admitted with permission of the instructor.

Note: Open to RE majors and minors in their third or fourth years; others are encouraged to contact the instructor for permission.

M/W 4:30 – 6:20

R. Overbey

About Explorations in Religious Studies

Starting in Spring 2021, you will see that some of our courses are enhanced by a fourth hour of credit. Religious Studies courses that ordinarily carry 3 credit hours may carry 4 credit hours when they have a fourth contact hour of class or when they engage students in sustained explorations in Religious Studies outside of class. Such courses develop particular student skills and offer a distinctive approach to learning. Explorations in Religious Studies courses are so designated in the master schedule and follow one of the following models:

Exploration of Religious Studies through Research (designated RE XXX (R)): Students design and execute independent research projects, developing research questions and honing the research skills necessary to answer them by identifying and assessing primary and/or secondary sources (including scholarly literature) and preparing interim analyses (such as thesis statements, bibliographies, literature reviews, drafts). Students typically deliver their research findings through both written and oral presentations, but also as short videos, podcasts, or by updating Wikipedia pages.

Exploration of Religious Studies through Writing (designated RE XXX (W)): Students spend additional time drafting, critiquing and revising papers in order to foster their skills in analysis, interpretation and persuasion. In order to heighten attention to the craft of writing, students attend not only to content but also to style and voice in their papers.

Exploration of Religious Studies through Collaborative Learning (designated RE XXX (L)): Students spend three hours each week in addition to class time in small group activities, working collectively or independently to contribute to group projects. This time will be devoted to group meetings, independent work, and meetings with the instructor to advance group projects. Products of this work will be assessed by the instructor via group presentations or project papers written collaboratively (with group members individually contributing components of a multi-part paper, or independently writing separate papers based on the group project). Collaborative Learning in Religious Studies accommodates a wide range of cooperative group structures varying by length, membership, and size, as well as varying formats for assessment including individual and group grades.

Exploration of Religious Studies through Critical Perspectives (designated RE XXX (P)): Students study films, listen to public lectures, read novels, and/or make field trips to enrich their understanding of religion, and submit critical reports on what they have learned in written or oral presentations.

For more information about Religious Studies courses, the major or minor, click [here](#).