

Religious Studies

Course Offerings – Spring 2024

RE 103R Understanding Religions			4 Cr.
<p>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.</p> <p>Note: This course is offered as an Explorations in Religious Studies through Research. <i>Fulfills Global Cultural Perspective and Humanistic Inquiry requirements.</i></p> <p>W/F 12:20 - 1:40 M 12:20 - 1:15</p>			G. Spinner
RE 105W American Gods: Religious Diversity in the U.S.			4 Cr.
<p>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.</p> <p>Note: This course is offered as an Explorations in Religious Studies through Writing. <i>Fulfills Global Cultural Perspectives, Cultural Diversity and Humanistic Inquiry requirements; counts towards American Studies.</i></p> <p>Sec. 001 T/TH 11:10 – 12:30 & M 11:15-12:10 Sec. 002 T/TH 2:10– 3:00 & M 1:25-2:20</p>			C. Taylor
RE 209 Indigenous Religious Freedom			3 Cr.
<p>An exploration of the ongoing cultural and legal contests over Indigenous sacred lands, mountains, waters, plant medicines, ceremonies and graves in the United States with a focus on the 20th century. We will employ decolonial historical methods to examine Native peoples' ongoing struggles for religious freedom. Topics include the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), the Native American Church and the sacrament of peyote, Native access to sacred sites on public and federal lands, the contest over Mauna Kea, the Dakota Access Pipeline Protests, and NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection Act). We will also examine contemporary Native cultural revitalization and reclamation of ancestral Native lands. As part of the course, students will engage with transcription work to support the Kanatsiohareke Archives project with MDOCS.</p> <p><i>Fulfills Bridge Experience and Humanistic Inquiry requirement. Counts toward American Studies and Environmental Studies.</i></p> <p>T/TH 2:10 – 3:30</p>			A. Prince

RE 219 Religion and Society in Modern India**3 Cr.**

An examination of the dynamics of religious pluralism in modern India. Students examine the vibrant and irrepressible role of religion in Indian society from the early modern Mughal and British periods to the contemporary moment, exploring how religion has both fostered social unity and exacerbated conflict. Students will study the wide-ranging social effects of colonial rule on Indian religious traditions, especially Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism and Christianity, and the creative responses of Indians to the challenges and opportunities of modernity. Emphasizing the political and social dimensions of religion, students will engage with topics such as religious change and social mobility, the changing role of women in religion, the religious roots of the Indian Independence movement, religious violence and Gandhian nonviolence, the rise of Hindu nationalism, inter-religious cooperation and conflict, and the development of Hinduism in diaspora.

Fulfills Cultural Diversity and Humanities requirements; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Global Cultural Perspectives requirements. Counts toward Asian Studies.

T/TH 3:40 – 5:00

E. Kent

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.

T/TH 12:40 – 2:00

B. Bogin

RE 222 Mindfully White: Race & Power in American Buddhism**4 Cr.**

Is American Buddhism all about whiteness and capitalism? In this course we survey the history of American Buddhism from the nineteenth century to the present, focusing on the mindfulness movement and on questions of race and power. First, we will study how the mindfulness movement has reinforced neoliberal, capitalist models of self and society. Next, we will explore exciting new research on the overlooked histories of Asian-American and Black Buddhists. As American Buddhist communities wrestle with questions of whiteness and the appropriations of mindfulness by corporations like Google, students in this Bridge Experience course will contribute to public conversations on these pressing issues.

Prerequisite: SSP 100

Fulfills Bridge Experience, Cultural Diversity and Humanistic Inquiry requirements. Counts toward Asian Studies

W/F 10:10 – 12:00

R. Overbey

RE 230 The Christian Right	4 Cr.
<p>A cultural and historical study of conservative Christianity in the United States. The Christian Right has played a defining role in American and global politics since at least the 1940s. What is the history of this movement? Who are conservative Christians, and how are they distinct from other kinds of religious actors? What, exactly, do they believe--about feminist and LGBT rights, healthcare, education, civil rights, religious liberty, and capitalism? This course explores these questions and more, with an emphasis on intersectional feminist analysis of the themes and histories at hand..</p>	
<p><i>Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement. Counts toward Gender Studies.</i></p>	
W/F 8:40 – 10:00 am & TH 6:00-8:00pm	L. Hulsether

RE 241 Theorizing the Sacred	4 Cr.
<p>Can sports be a religion, how about celebrity fandom? Does religion poison everything, or can it be a force for liberation? In <i>Theorizing the Sacred</i> we'll wrestle with these questions, and more. The course examines both foundational theories and contemporary approaches that draw from disciplines including anthropology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and feminist and critical race studies. After examining the emergence of the scholarly category of “religion” in the context of the European enlightenment and colonial anthropology, we explore how contemporary Religious Studies scholarship can foster both radical empathy and radical social critique. In addition, students will conduct their own original research and learn how to interview and/or conduct archival research, using the critical tools of Religious Studies to illuminate the complexities of people’s lived religion.</p>	
<p><i>Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement; fulfills the theory/method requirement in the Religious Studies major.</i></p>	
T/TH 9:40 – 11:00 am & M 9:05-10:00	E. Kent

RE 290 Religion and Society	4 Cr.
<p>What is the intersection between religion and social life, and what ought it to be? What conceptual and descriptive tools do we need in order to find out? People tend to make assumptions about religion, religion and society, religion and politics, religion and freedom, religion and science, etc. In this class, we think through these topics, in order to interrogate our own preconceptions and how they may facilitate or block our capacity to understand how social worlds emerge, unravel, and remake themselves. The work for the course is a series of exercises in which students consider the major research strategies employed by scholars of religion. Points of emphasis in Spring 2023 include: the politics of classification, histories of empire and colonialism, religion and capitalism, and feminist/queer approaches to the study of religion.</p>	
<p><i>Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.</i></p>	
W/F 12:20 - 2:10pm	L. Hulsether

RE 305 From Apocalypse to Conspiracy	4 Cr.
<p>Is QAnon a new American religion, with Trump in the role of Messiah? Or is it better described as some secularized version of apocalyptic thinking? Why do End-time prophecies and doomsday scenarios continue to attract so many followers? And why don't groups that are convinced the world will soon end soon acknowledge when they are mistaken? Examining case studies of millennialism (UFO religionists, Jehovah's Witnesses, so-called cargo cultists, Odinists, etc.) alongside of academic theories, we explore the historical continuities between apocalyptic literatures and conspiracy theories, thereby untangling some of the deep roots of the paranoid style found in contemporary politics.</p> <p>Prerequisite: One prior Religious Studies course or instructor permission. <i>Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and theory/method requirement in the Religious Studies major.</i></p> <p>W/F 2:30 – 3:50</p>	
G. Spinner	

RE 320 Yoga: History, Theory, Practice	4 Cr.
<p>An exploration of yoga from its roots in ancient Indic religious philosophy to its current status as a globally popular form of physical culture. Understood as a set of physical and meditative practices, yoga has been employed by Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists to attain magical powers, heightened states of consciousness, and spiritual liberation. But it has also been used more recently as a form of exercise consisting of stretches and breathing techniques. This seminar examines the social, religious, political and historical issues raised by the practice of yoga, as we investigate its development in various contexts.</p> <p>Prerequisite: One prior Religious Studies course or instructor permission. <i>Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement; fulfills non-Western and Global Cultural Perspectives requirement. Counts toward Asian Studies.</i></p> <p>T/TH 12:40 - 2:00 & M 12:20 - 1:15</p>	
E. Kent	

RE 330 Staging the Bible	3 Cr.
<p>Can religious make-believe actually make belief? Can theatre evangelize or even critique religious doctrine? To answer these questions, Staging the Bible delves into the world of popular entertainment that strives to breathe life into Bible stories through the powerful medium of theatre. Throughout the semester, we will closely examine a wide array of theatrical productions, including Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ Superstar, Godspell, and more! We will also explore immersive Christian tourist destinations that use theatrical means to stage the Bible for guests, like the Creation Museum, Ark Encounter, the Holy Land Experience, and the Museum of the Bible!</p> <p>Prerequisite: One prior Religious Studies OR Theater course or instructor permission. <i>Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.</i></p> <p>M/W 2:30 - 3:50</p>	
C. Taylor	

RE 330 Junior Colloquium in Religion

2 Cr.

A colloquium for junior Religious Studies majors preparing for senior capstone projects. We focus on topic development, bibliography creation, and research methods. Students will complete the semester prepared to dive into capstone and/or thesis research in Fall 2024. Rising seniors in Religion are very strongly encouraged to enroll in this course. The course is also open to juniors in other humanities and social science majors who are seeking a structured opportunity to prepare for senior research projects. Sophomores and seniors may also be admitted on a case-by-case basis, with the instructor's permission.

Note: *Sophomores and seniors may be admitted on a case-by-case basis with instructor permission.*

W 4:30 - 6:20

L. Hulsether

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](#).