

# Religious Studies Courses - Fall 2026

## RE 103P Understanding Religions

4 Cr.

An in-depth introduction to the academic study of religion from a variety of perspectives, that attends to religion as a global, cross-cultural human phenomenon. Students will examine multiple traditions, geographical locations, and historical periods. Through close reading of texts, lecture, and discussion, students explore the religious lives of individuals and communities empathetically while also critically examining them within larger political, social, and cultural contexts. In this semester we will pay particular attention to films that illuminate themes in the study of religion.

*Fulfills Global Cultural Perspective and Humanistic Inquiry requirements.*

M/W 12:20 - 1:40 & everyother T 6:00-8:30

R. Overbey

## RE 105W Studying Religion in America

4 Cr.

An exploration of the dimensions of American religious experience and identity through a focus on the definitions, debates, and power structures that have informed historical understandings of the term “religion” and the attendant implications for religious freedoms. While covering the range of religious experiences in America is surely too vast a topic for any one semester, this course nonetheless offers an introduction to a number of religious traditions to serve as jumping-off points for students’ future study and research. Traditions could include Indigenous and Black religious traditions, as well as New Religious Movements (NRMs). Students will examine how Western colonial and Euro/Christocentric interpretations of religion have functioned to circumscribe and deny the rights of minority religious groups, and the need to employ a multicultural and decolonial lens when studying religions. In the process, students will gain familiarity with multiple interpretive and methodological frameworks, questions, and debates within the academic study of American religions including race, gender, sexuality, ritual, music, politics, religious freedom/oppression, appropriation, and cult vs. religion.

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

*Fulfills Global Cultural Perspectives, Cultural Diversity and Humanistic Inquiry requirements.*

Section 001: W/F 8:40 – 10:00

TBD

Section 002: W/F 10:10 – 11:30

TBD

## RE 218R Hindu Myth

4 Cr.

This course is an exploration of the Hindu gods and goddesses of India through their myths. For centuries Indians have been telling stories about the gods through sacred scripture, folklore and pilgrimage traditions, and more recently in comic books, television series and films. Through close readings of India’s mythic and epic texts communicated through diverse media, we gain an introduction to Hinduism as a dynamic, living religious tradition. Anyone attempting to understand the complexities of Indian culture, politics and society will soon encounter the gods and goddesses of the Hindu tradition. Besides introducing students to these fascinating figures and their stories, the course seeks to explore broader topics in the study of religion including theories of myth, the politics of gendered visions of the divine and the effects of the medium on the transmission of religious messages.

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

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

T/TH 9:40- 11:00 & M 9:05-10:00

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 2:10 – 3:30

R. Overbey

**RE 230 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 & Method requirement in the major. Counts toward Gender Studies.*

M/W 2:30 – 3:50

G. Spinner

**RE 230 Allies in Learning & Teaching****2 Cr.**

This student designed, led, and facilitated course is part of an initiative to imagine collaborative teaching/learning relationships at Skidmore College, and to build shared literacies and structures to support those relationships. The course is an exploration of the theory and practice of critical pedagogy. Participants in this course will understand and analyze foundational works in the areas of democratic, abolitionist, feminist, queer, and critical teaching and learning methods. We will continually apply the insights and interventions of these works to concrete contexts, including but not limited to college classrooms, community groups, and organizing campaigns. Working with key texts and bringing them to bear on our lived environment, we will become more active and critical learners in settings at and beyond Skidmore. Course participants will practice mediation and facilitation skills in classroom settings.

*Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement. Counts toward Education Studies.*

W/TH 3:00 – 5:00

TBD

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

A comparative examination of the role of animals in religions, past and present, which may include Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Judaism, and Native American traditions. Animals are everywhere in religious discourse and practice – in biblical prophecy where lions lie down with lambs, in Hindu creation myths, where Lord Vishnu sleeps on a massive serpent in the interval between cosmic cycles, and in the tribal knowledge associated with Haudenosaunee wolf, eagle and turtle clans. Are animals religious persons? What rules govern the killing of animals, whether in sacrifice or for ordinary consumption? How have the differences between humans and non-human animals been understood across culture and history? Might (some) nonhuman animals be religious themselves? This course will take up these and other questions in a sustained, intensive investigation into the connections between humans and animals, and how those have been understood in religious contexts across time and space.

Prerequisites: 1 course in Religious Studies or permission of the instructor.

*Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Global Cultural Perspective requirements.* Counts toward ESS as a 300-level cluster A course for ESS majors.

T/TH 12:40-2:00 & M 12:20-1:15

E. Kent

**RE 375 Worldmaking: A Workshop on Process and Craft (Research Seminar)****4 Cr.**

An intensive research and writing workshop for students engaged in advanced projects in the study of religion and/or the interdisciplinary humanities and qualitative social sciences. We will read works of interdisciplinary scholarship distinguished for their writing craft, while honing our own independent writing and research projects. We will approach the study of religion as a platform for asking questions about how communities come to critique the present conditions of their lives, imagine new ways of organizing their social worlds, and then try to make their aspirations into concrete realities—always with complex results. This course is required of senior Religion majors. It also welcomes junior and seniors student with interest in these broad themes; with current or near-future ambitions to complete advanced research in the interdisciplinary humanities; and/or who would benefit from a structured workshop space for designing and carrying out their projects.

W/F 12:20 - 2:10

TBD

**Also counting toward Religious Studies:****AS 251 How to See a Buddha****4 Cr.**

Explores the historic role of images, the philosophical understanding of vision, and the practice of visualization in Buddhist traditions. Along with examining classical Buddhist texts related to perception, students will evaluate and interpret Buddhist images, cultivate practices of visual object contemplation inspired by Buddhist meditation techniques, and curate a “pop-up exhibition” of contemporary art from the Collection of the Tang Teaching Museum.

*Fulfills the Global Cultural Perspectives and Humanistic Inquiry Requirements.*

T/TH 9:10 – 11:00

B. Bogin

An exploration of poetry within Buddhist contemplative and literary traditions. Students will learn about the poetry traditions of different Buddhist cultures and consider the power of poetic language to express topics such as emptiness, compassion, and awakening. Along with reading Buddhist poetry translated from Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Tibetan, we will read contemporary Buddhist poetry composed in English. Students will also write and revise original poems engaged with Buddhist traditions.

Fulfills the Global Cultural Perspectives and Humanistic Inquiry Requirements.

Prerequisites: RE-221 (Buddhism: An Introduction), or EN-213 (Poetry), or permission of the instructor

W/F 10:10 – 11:30

B. Bogin and M. Greaves

## 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](#).