

# Religious Studies

## Course Offerings – Spring 2021

### RE 103R Understanding Religions

4 Cr.

**Offered Hybrid: Mix of in-person and online**

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, an African diaspora 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.*

T/TH 2:50 - 4:10 M 2:15 - 3:10

G. Spinner

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

4 Cr.

**Offered Hybrid: Mix of in-person and online**

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.*

T/R 8:40 – 10:00

L. Hulsether

### RE 216 Asian Religions in America

4 Cr.

**Offered Hybrid: Mix of in-person and online**

An examination of Asian religions in the United States from the eighteenth century to the present day. To heighten awareness of the power and justice issues raised by course materials, students will begin by investigating the increasingly polarized, competing visions of the United States' national character. Our examination of religions with roots in Asia (which may include South Asian Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Taoism and/or Confucianism) allows us to explore patterns in the representation of Asian religions in America, and responses and counter-representations from both Asian and non-Asian adherents. How have these representations supported, or undermined, rights to religious freedom? We conclude by exploring how Asian-Americans have, the years since the passage of the landmark 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, adapted their religious traditions and communities to the United States.

*Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Bridge Experience requirements; counts toward Asian Studies.*

T/R 1:10 - 2:30 & M 1:00pm-1:55

E. Kent

**RE 225 Religion and Ecology****3 Cr.****Offered Hybrid: Mix of in-person and online**

An exploration of the critical connections between religion and the natural environment. How do religious beliefs, symbol systems, and ritual behaviors shape human perceptions of, and interactions with, animals and the nonhuman environment? How might the primary models provided by western, eastern and indigenous religions help us to address specific local and global environmental concerns? Using primary texts drawn from a variety of sacred traditions, and writings from a broad spectrum of historical and contemporary naturalists, poets and theologians, the course will cover such topics as deep ecology, ecofeminism, and religiously-engaged environmental activism. In addition, we will read in-depth case studies that feature how people of faith have drawn on the ethical and theological resources of their traditions to reimagine our relationship to non-human nature – from an ethnography of engaged Hindu ecotheology to Pope Francis' landmark encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*.

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

T/TH 11:30 – 12:50

E. Kent

**RE 230C-001 Religions of China****3 Cr.****Offered Online: Mix of Sync & Async**

In this course we examine the religious worlds of China from antiquity to the present. Not only will we read key works of Chinese religious thought from the Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions; we will also investigate how these traditions find expression in art and architecture, poetry and prose, and in the rituals, daily lives, and lived realities of Chinese history. In this exploration of Chinese religions we will pay special attention to the question of what "counts" as religion, to the role of the state in defining and establishing Chinese religions, and to the power of new religious movements to intervene dramatically in Chinese history.

*Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement; fulfills Non-Western and Global Cultural Perspective requirements. Counts toward Asian Studies.*

T/TH 8:10 – 9:30

R. Overbey

**RE 230C-002 Afterlives: Loss, Grief, Activism****3 Cr.****Offered Hybrid: Mix of in-person and online**

An exploration of the political, affective, and public workings of loss. What does it mean to lose something? How do we make losses visible? How do we mourn loss? The current moment is one of acute, intersecting losses: millions lost to the coronavirus pandemic, police assaults on Black life, ongoing climate emergency, and the ongoing intersection of these issues in public demonstrations seeking justice. Guided by interdisciplinary methods in religious studies and focused on the political uses of loss—from rituals of public grief, to gestures of solidarity with Black Lives Matter, to the uses and misuses of statistical representations of death, to the way death and memory enter into projects of nationalism—this course is built on the assumption that loss is anything but a one-off event. It is the climate and the context in which we pursue our reflections.

*Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.*

W/F 10:30 – 11:50

L. Hulsether

**RE 230C-003 Religion, Race, Nation****3 Cr.****Offered Online: Mix of Sync & Async**

What are the stories that bind religion, race, and nation together? How are those stories deployed by both the powerful and the marginalized in order to enact their visions for the American republic? Religion is raced. Nationalism is driving contemporary American politics. This course explores histories, events, and figures at the intersection of these three aspects of American democracy. It begins at the end of the 19th century with the emergence of two competing ideals: "The American Dream" and "America First". Using these two protagonists as our guiding thread, we will explore the emergence of the KKK in the first quarter of the 20th century, the rise of the Nation of Islam, the Civil Rights Movement, and the emergence of the Religious Right. Traversing these histories will lead us to the present moment, providing a multifaceted lens for understanding the swirling currents of contemporary America.

*Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.*

T/TH 2:50 – 4:10

B. Onishi

**RE 230D Ecstasy****4 Cr.****Offered Online: Mix of Sync & Async**

A cross-cultural examination of sacred trance and religious ecstasy. Throughout the world, people commune with spirits to gain knowledge and to heal; they experience visions that inspire prophecy, poetry, music, and art. By learning about shamans, seers, and mystics, we explore the nature of religious experience and probe the complex interactions between mind, body, and soul. Topics include: spirit possession, fire-walking, speaking in tongues, and the sacramental use of psychedelics.

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

*Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.*

W/F 1:00 – 2:20

G. Spinner

**RE 241 Theorizing the Sacred****4 Cr.****Offered Online: Mix of Sync & Async**

An introduction to the theory and methodology of the academic study of religion. The course examines both foundational theories and contemporary approaches, bringing together disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology. We not only interrogate the scholarly category of "religion," but we employ it as a critical lens through which diverse aspects of social life and material culture can be examined. In addition, students collaborate on special projects, interviewing practitioners or scholars of religion.

*Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.*

T/TH 4:30 - 6:20

B. Onishi

**RE 305 Cosmos, Crisis, Conspiracy****4 Cr.****Offered Online: Mix of Sync & Async**

Is QAnon a new American religion, with Trump as its Messiah? Or is it better described as a 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 (Millerites, Jehovah's Witnesses, UFO religionists, Odinists) 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.

*Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Global Cultural Perspectives requirements.*

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

T/TH 9:10 - 11:00

G. Spinner

**PR 324W Philosophy of Religion****4 Cr.****Offered Online: Mix of Sync & Async**

Philosophy and Religion are often linked conceptually and institutionally. They are supposed to be natural allies. But they are often antithetical, or thought to be anyway. What does faith have to do with reason? Religious fervor with critical thinking? Should philosophy dictate the parameters of religious belief? Or does religion signify the limits of the philosophical endeavor? We will explore answers to these questions through texts from Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Soren Kierkegaard, and contemporary voices in the field, including feminist and non-Western approaches.

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

**Prerequisites:** one prior course in philosophy or religion or permission of instructor.

M/W 3:30 - 5:20

B. Onishi

## 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](#).