RELIGION - Fall 2021 Course Offerings

**Department of Philosophy & Religion**

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**REL 101. Religions of the World (major requirement)**

In this global journey, students investigate the foundational beliefs, practices, and ways of life experienced in several of the world's major religious traditions. Within each religious community they study, students analyze the diversity of interpretations that lead people to embody their traditions in radically different ways. Students will gain skills in intercultural competency and the ability to contextualize some of humanity's most powerful ideas within their historical, social, and political contexts. May be used for general education credit.

**\*NEW COURSE\***

**REL 102. Religion, Spirituality and the Meaning of Life**

Where do we come from, and what is our place in the universe? What gives life happiness, purpose, and meaning? How can we make sense of religious diversity, and how can we live well together in the midst of our differences? This course is a cross-cultural introduction to some of the ways people across the world have asked, answered, and lived out these questions.

**REL 200. Exploring Religion (major requirement)**

We live in an increasingly complex and globalized world, such that understanding religions is now part of cultural literacy. But how should we go about studying religion? This course will provide an introduction to some of the most influential thinkers, common methodologies, important debates and key concepts in the academic study of religion. The course will also consider recent challenges to this field of study. Emphasis will be on applying insights to real-world examples.

**\*NEW COURSE\***

**REL 300. Special Topic: Religion and Race**

Both race and religion are interwoven into who we are and how we inhabit our various worlds, even if we don’t think of these as important or relevant parts of our lives. This class will explore the complicated and long-standing intersection of these two concepts, wondering: What do they each mean? How have these terms functioned, throughout history? How do race and religion interact? How has one informed or shaped our understanding of the other? When differing racial and religious identities converge for individuals and communities, what happens? With the foundation provided by the course and our time together, you will also have the opportunity to explore your own various identities as well as case study of your choosing that involves an intersection of race and religion.

**\*NEW COURSE\***

**REL 300. Special Topic: Knowledge and Identity in Islam**

Philosophers and poets, esotericists and encyclopedists, artists and artisans, reformers and renunciants: Muslims from Detroit to Damascus have wielded a vast array of discourses and practices to fashion themselves and the world(s) around them. This course will investigate material across a variety of historical and geographic contexts to explore how a careful attention to questions of knowledge and identity can illuminate the complexity of Muslim perspectives and societies.

**REL 314. Gandhi and the Other 9/11**

Mahatma Gandhi is unique as a social theorist, a moral and spiritual philosopher, and a social and political activist. He serves as a bridge from post-modern to modern and pre-modern thought. His experience transcends boundaries of culture, geography, religion and politics. In this course students explore the ideas and the story of Gandhi to reflect upon the issues facing the modern world, with an emphasis on the modern nonviolent movement that he launched on 9/11.

**REL 317. Introduction to Daoism**

Beginning with the earliest classics and continuing to the present, the course examines Daoism from historical, literary, philosophical and religious perspectives. It explores the difficulties categorizing Daoism as a “philosophy” or “religion,” and how it still informs political, philosophical and religious thought in China. First-person exercises in and out of class will yield a holistic and lived understanding of the Daoist tradition.

**REL 332. Born Again Religion**

Evangelical Protestantism has played a vital role in shaping American religious history. The religious and social allegiances of evangelicalism are quite diverse, however. Evangelicals also maintain a paradoxical relationship with American society, functioning both as powerful insiders and vocal outsiders. This course is designed to introduce students to the history of evangelicalism, its religious patterns and its negotiations with contemporary American culture.

**REL 341. Early Christian Gospels: Origins, History, and Conflict**

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the familiar “canonical” gospels. In the early centuries of Christianity other gospels circulated: the Gospel of Peter, “Q”, Infancy Gospels and the so-called Gnostic gospels. This course examines the origins of the canonical and non-canonical gospels, the historical and theological factors at work in the emergence of the canonical gospels to a position of primacy, and the struggles within early Christianity to define its authoritative tradition.

**REL/ENVT 366. Religion, Animals, and the Environment.**This course analyzes the ways in which various religions, especially Judaism and Christianity, understand the relationship of human beings to the environment and non-human animals. We will explore how religious worldviews translate into human impact on the non-human biosphere. Given the global reach of American environmental policies and lifestyles, and the prominent role that biblical interpretation has played in shaping American attitudes and policy, special emphasis will be placed on historical interpretations of the Bible, ranging from human dominionism to human responsibility in caring for the earth, its creatures and its ecosystems. The course explores the complexities involved in using religious positions, interpretations of biblical texts and apocalyptic arguments to inform both environmentalism and policy debates related to the environment. Students will gain a basic introduction to methods of biblical scholarship and familiarity with the general state of scientific consensus on environmental challenges.

**\*NEW COURSE\***

**REL 450. Religion and Society: The Global Civil Rights Movement (capstone course)**

The modern Civil Rights Movement was a landmark event in U.S. history. It continues to garner widespread attention and acclaim, occupying a prominent place in the memory of modern American society. Yet its broader reception often overlooks essential themes, figures, and events that shaped the history of Christianity in the United States. This course will attempt to push beyond popular narratives of the Civil Rights Movement by focusing on the importance of religion and its relationship to global movements; race and ethnicity; labor and class; theologies of liberation; and political philosophies and strategies. In addition, the course will challenge students to think about the religious and transnational significance of the movement, alongside overlooked fractures and fissures. In the end, our attention to the *global*Civil Rights Movement will allow us to illuminate complex social and political phenomena during a fascinating moment in world Christianity.