

Religion

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The goal of the study of religion at a secular college is religious literacy. Religious literacy, an important dimension of cultural literacy, entails both a cognitive component (knowledge of religions and of the religious dimension of culture) and proficiencies (the acquiring of skills relevant to the analysis of religion). Courses in religion have the objective of conveying knowledge in five areas (Asian religions, modern western religious thought, Near Eastern religions, religion in America, and gender or the sociology of religion), and of developing skills of analysis, interpretation, and communication. Courses in the religion department apply to the humanities and alternative voices (selected courses) distribution areas.

An individually designed combined major which integrates the study of religion with work in another department can be arranged.

The Religion major: A minimum of 36 credits in religion, including the following: (1) at least one religion course in each of the following five areas: (a) gender or the sociology of religion, (b) Near Eastern religions, (c) Asian religions, (d) religion in America, (e) Western religious thought; (2) at least two 300-level religion courses, which may simultaneously fulfill the area requirements; (3) senior seminar and thesis (Religion 448 and 490 or 498). No more than one 100-level course may be counted for the major; the *Comparative Studies in Religion* courses (Religion 116 and 117) do not fulfill the area requirements. The senior assessment: All religion majors are required to write a senior thesis, and to pass an oral examination on the thesis, which may include questions of a more comprehensive nature. Departmental policy does not allow a P-D-F grade option for courses within the major.

The Religion minor: A minimum of 20 credits in religion. At least one religion course must be taken in three out of the following five areas: (a) gender or the sociology of religion, (b) Near Eastern religions, (c) Asian religions, (d) religion in America, (e) Western religious thought. No more than one 100-level

course may be given credit toward the minor; the *Comparative Studies in Religion* courses (Religion 116 and 117) do not fulfill the area requirements. At least one course in religion at the 300 level must be taken. Departmental policy does not allow a P-D-F grade option for courses within the minor.

100 Introduction to Religion 4; not offered 2008-09

An introduction both to religion as a reality of human history, culture, and experience, and to the study of religion as a field in the humanities and social sciences. Topics include the nature of religion, theological, and social scientific theories of religion; sacred scriptures, East and West; religious thought about the nature of ultimate reality, the human condition, and the path to salvation in several traditions. Not a survey of world religions, but an introduction to religion using cross-cultural materials and a variety of approaches. Three class meetings per week. Open only to first- and second-year students.

103 Death and Afterlife x, 4

Walters

Death and the afterlife have been central concerns of all religious people, whose answers to the questions "why do we die?" and "what happens next?" have shaped their ways of life in general and their funerary practices in particular. But however universal the reality of death, conceptualizations of and responses to it have varied widely among and even within various religions and civilizations. This seminar, based on reading and discussion of primary (scriptural) and secondary (scholarly) texts, explores a range of ideas and practices surrounding death and the afterlife in two of the world's great civilizations: The Abrahamic (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) and the Indic (Hindu, Buddhist and Jain). In addition to identifying the specific understandings and practices unique to each religion, we will raise and address comparative questions about similarities and differences found among them. Open only to first- and second-year students.

107 Religion and Society 4, x

Wilcox

Is same-sex marriage a religious issue or a political one? Are the *Matrix* movies Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, or secular? Do people really get sucked into cults, and can deprogrammers get them out again? Why do so many ethnic groups have their own temples, mosques, or churches? What is witchcraft, and what does it have to do with feminism? This class invites students to consider religion through the lenses of sociology and cultural studies. It will explore the influence of religion on social institutions, politics, social movements, and popular culture, as well as considering the effects of society and culture on religion. Topics include: civil religions; religion and the social order; religion, gender, and race; new religious movements and "spirituality"; seekerism and secularization; religion and social

change; religion in popular culture; and religion and violence. Open only to first- and second-year students. May be elected as Sociology 127.

116, 117 Comparative Studies in Religion **4**

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion. Topics for the sections vary from semester to semester and year to year, depending on the particular interests of the instructors, but every course will consider some aspect of the phenomenon of religion and study it in a comparative perspective. Open only to first- and second-year students. For the current offering, see the schedule of classes.

180 Church and State in American History **4, x** **Miles**

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution inaugurated a radical experiment to separate church and state in order to guarantee the religious liberty of every citizen. Why did the Founding Fathers undertake this experiment? How did they conceive of the separation, and how have others thereafter construed their intent in the face of America's increasing religious pluralism? Among the questions this seminar will examine: Can government legitimately support faith-based social initiatives? Do prayer in public schools, displays of religious symbols in public spaces, and school vouchers undermine the First Amendment? Can government remain strictly neutral toward religion without placing itself on the side of irreligion? To what degree should the state support religiously sanctioned cultural practices regarding marriage, contraception, and sexual behavior? Open only to first- and second-year students.

201 The Hebrew Bible **x, 4** **Staff**

As a source of legislation, history, and literature, the Hebrew Bible is a fundamental text of Judaism. However, the religious tradition which the Hebrew Bible chronicles differs markedly from Judaism. Through a study of translations of selected passages from the Hebrew Bible, we will follow the history and religion of ancient Israel from Abraham to the Hellenistic period. Although ancient Israelite history and religion will be presented in the context of ancient Near Eastern mythology, this course will nevertheless lay a foundation for further work in Judaism.

202 The New Testament and Early Christianity **4; not offered 2008-09**

An introduction to the beginnings of Christianity by a study of the New Testament and other early Christian writings. Attention will be given to both historical questions and religious ideas. The focal points of the course will be the Gospels, the problem of the historical Jesus (including the contemporary work on this problem by the "Jesus Seminar"), and the theology of Paul.

207 Introduction to Islam

x, 4 **Staff**

With an emphasis on primary sources, this course pursues major themes in Islamic civilization from the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad until the present. From philosophy to political Islam, and from mysticism to Muslims in America, we will explore the diversity of a rapidly growing religious tradition.

209 Introduction to Judaism **4; not offered 2008-09**

A survey of Jewish texts, traditions, and beliefs from the end of the Hellenistic period to the origins of the Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox movements in Europe and America. With an emphasis throughout on historical consciousness, special attention will be paid to the formation of Rabbinic Judaism, medieval Jewish literature and thought, and the responses of Jews to the Enlightenment. *Prerequisite:* General Studies 145 or consent of instructor.

217 Interpretations of the Qur'an **4, x** **Staff**

Muslims believe that their Holy Scripture, the Qur'an, is the unadulterated and inimitable word of God. This course will present a variety of approaches to and interpretations of the Qur'an. Special attention will be paid to the Qur'an's doctrines, to the Qur'an's role in Islamic law, to the Qur'an's relationship to the Bible, and to the Qur'an as literature. While the Qur'an will be read entirely in translation, we will explore the role of the Arabic Qur'an in the lives of Muslims worldwide.

221 South Asian Religions I: The Formative Period **4; not offered 2008-09**

This course introduces the foundations of South Asian (Indian) religiosity through close readings of formative religious texts from an historical perspective. After a discussion of the sacrificial culture embodied in the earliest document of Indo-European history, the *Rig Veda* (ca. 1500-1000, B.C.E.), we will trace the development of Theist (Upanishadic), Buddhist and Jaina speculative and liturgical traditions (after the eighth century, B.C.E.) and conclude with the emergence of the first classical Indian empire under Asoka Maurya, third century, B.C.E. Two class meetings per week. Open to all students. Offered in alternate years.

222 South Asian Religions II: The Classical Period **4; not offered 2008-09**

A continuation of *South Asian Religions I*, which examines the development of classical Theist India. We will begin with the emergence of Vaishnava and Shaiva identities, and the displacement of Buddhism and Jainism in Indian culture, during the first centuries, C.E. This will be followed by readings in the great works of Indian Theist literature, philosophy, mythology, devotion and politics. The course will conclude with the coming of Western (Muslim then Christian)

imperialists, their understandings of “Hinduism,” local responses in the Subcontinent, and an analysis of the legacy of this meeting of Indian and Western religions within contemporary Indian society. Open to all students. Religion 221 recommended but not required. Offered in alternate years.

227 Christian Ethics
4; not offered 2008-09

This is both a theoretical and an “issues” course. The theoretical part explores the nature of Christian ethical judgment: ethical norms, the nature of ethical reasoning and argument. The second part of the course explores a number of contemporary ethical issues, such as medical ethics (including abortion and genetic research), war and pacifism. Three class meetings per week. Not open to first-year students.

228 Modern Western Religious Thought I: Crisis and Renewal
4; not offered 2008-09

This is a course in Christian theology which begins with the Reformation of the 16th century. What were the religious ideas of the Protestant Reformers that lead to the break with Roman Catholicism? Next the course will turn to the rise of religious skepticism in the Enlightenment: How did modern science in the 17th century, and modern philosophy in the 18th, lead to a crisis in religious belief? The course will conclude with 19th century attempts to respond to atheism and skepticism, and to reconstruct theology on a modern basis: “What is it reasonable to believe in the modern world?” Not open to first-year students. Offered in alternate years.

229 Modern Western Religious Thought II: The Twentieth Century
4, x Wyman

This course is a continuation of Religion 228, focusing on how 20th century religious thinkers have answered the question, “What is it reasonable to believe in the modern world?” How have 20th century religious thinkers, both conservative and liberal, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish, responded to the challenges to the religious traditions of the West presented by the modern world? Topics vary, but may include: responses to skepticism and atheism; the pluralism of religions and the problem of religious truth; God and the problem of evil; liberation and feminist theologies; contemporary interpretations of Jesus of Nazareth; Jewish responses to the Holocaust. May be taken independently of Religion 228. Not open to first-year students. Offered in alternate years.

230 American Religious Thought
4; not offered 2008-09

A historical survey of the development of American religious thought from the Puritans to the present. Topics will include the thought of selected thinkers (e.g., Edwards, Emerson, James), movements (e.g., Transcendentalism, Liberalism, Neo-orthodoxy), and issues (e.g., free will and determinism, science and religion, historicism and skepticism) in American

religious thought.

250 Buddhist Civilizations in Asia I: South and Southeast Asia
4; not offered 2008-09

From the time of the Buddha (ca. fifth century, B.C.; first century, B.E.) to the present, his religion has been foundational to the historical, political, economic, artistic, medical and literary cultures of South and Southeast Asia. This course explores the rise and spread of Buddhist institutions in the Buddha’s homeland, India, and their further spread through southern India and Sri Lanka to the southeast edges of the Indic world, the kingdoms of Indonesia and mainland Southeast Asia. Careful reading of key primary texts from this so-called “Southern Tradition” (especially Theravada) will be supplemented with readings in secondary scholarship, lectures, and contemporary audio-visual materials. Offered every other year.

251 Buddhist Civilizations in Asia II: Central and East Asia
4; not offered 2008-09

Although in India proper the significance of specifically Buddhist cultures gradually gave way to other religious orientations, becoming virtually extinct there by the 15th century, A.D. (20th century, B.E.), from the fifth century, B.E. to the present ever-new interpretations of the Buddha’s life and significance have maintained an important presence in kingdoms and cultures located to the north and to the east of the Buddha’s Indian homeland. This course tracks philosophical, liturgical, political, artistic and soteriological developments in the so-called “Northern Tradition,” identified especially with the Mahayana and Vajrayana (Tantrayana) divisions of the Buddhist world. Beginning with the rise of the Mahayana sutras in India (ca. fifth century, B.E.), the course traces the development of the Northern Buddhist tradition from ancient times to the present in Tibet, China, Japan and, through them, in the modern United States. Careful reading of primary texts will be supplemented with readings in secondary scholarship, lectures, and audio-visual materials. Offered every other year.

259 Religion in America From Columbus to the Civil War
4; not offered 2008-09

An historical survey of the impact of religion upon American society and culture from the colonial period to the Civil War. Topics will include the religion of the first Americans before the arrival of Columbus, the adaptation of Old World religions to the realities of the New World, the Puritan experiment in New England and the religious mosaic of the Middle and Southern colonies, the First Great Awakening and the American Revolution, millennial Protestantism and utopianism in the early Republic, the roots of slave religion and the growth of black churches, and the fracturing of American religion on the eve of the Civil War.

260 Religion in America From the Civil War to the Present

x, 4

Miles

An historical survey of the impact of religion on American society and culture from the Civil War until the present. Topics will include the religious roots of westward expansion and the response of Native Americans to the threatened extinction of their culture, the persistence of ethnicity and the pull of assimilation in the religious experience of Asian and East European immigrants, urbanization and industrialization and the impulse toward social reform, the emergence of Fundamentalism and its rejection of biblical criticism and Darwinian evolution, the religious roots of the civil rights movement and the changing role of women in religious life and thought. Open to all students.

287 Queer Religiosities

x, 4

Wilcox

This course examines religion from queer perspectives, exploring the ways in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer people have created religious spaces for themselves in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Course readings include historical, autobiographical, sociological, and theological discussions of religion and spirituality in the lives of LGBTQ people. Students will consider the diversity of religious beliefs and practices in queer communities, the ways in which people grapple with religious challenges to their identities, the formation of “identity-focused” religious organizations, and the ways in which queer perspectives on religion challenge accepted understandings of the relationship between sexuality, gender, and religion.

337 Judaism under Islam

4; not offered 2008-09

Since the rise of Islam in the early seventh century C.E., Jews have lived in the Islamic world. The historical experience of Jews in the Islamic world has shaped their religious traditions in ways which have touched Jews throughout the world. This course will place certain developments in Jewish liturgy, thought, and identity within the context of Islamic history and society in order to answer the question of how Jews perceive themselves and Judaism with regard to Muslims and Islam. The course will conclude by analyzing the significance of the Jewish experience under Islam for current debates in Judaism and in Middle East politics.

343 Islam's Intellectual Encounter with the

West

4; not offered 2008-09

Non-Muslim cultures have always been an impetus for growth, change, and frank discussion within Islam. This course will begin by surveying Islam's encounter with ancient Greek civilization. We will then analyze how seminal Islamic thinkers such as al-Ghazali (d. 1111 C. E.) and Ibn Khaldun (d. 1407 C. E.) reacted to the presence of Greek thought within Islam. The second half of the course examines how the rapid development of Europe and the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries provoked some Islamic thinkers

to call for reforms of Islam and led others to criticize the West. An emphasis of the course will be using Islamic intellectual history to understand contemporary fundamentalist movements within Islam. Open to all students.

345 Judaism in the United States

4; not offered in 2008-09

Jews first arrived in the United States in the 17th century. The Jewish population in the United States grew rapidly during the 19th century and today Judaism is an important part of the American religious fabric. This course will begin with a survey of the early history of American Judaism and then proceed to a study of the various forms of American Judaism including the Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, and Hasidic movements. May involve field trips. *Prerequisite:* one prior course in religion, or consent of the instructor. Distribution area: humanities.

347 The Buddha

4, x

Walters

The life of the Buddha has captivated religious imaginations for 2,500 years, but the biography of the Buddha is not singular: in its traverse of millennia and continents Buddhism has generated many Buddhas, each appropriate to the time and place in which he was imagined. This course examines select biographies of the Buddha from Asia and Europe, modern as well as ancient, in order to investigate the impact of historical and intellectual circumstances upon the composition of each. It serves both as a case study in religious biography and as a broad overview of the origin and development of Buddhism. *Prerequisites:* Religion 221, or 250, or 251, or 257, or consent of instructor.

349 Field Studies in the Religions of the Pacific Northwest

x, 4

Miles

The Pacific Northwest is a microcosm of the diversity that characterizes religion in America today. In addition to mainline Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish denominations, there exists on either side of the Cascade Range a number of religious groups of particular interest: Bahais, Buddhist congregations of various ethnic stripes, Hindus, Hutterites, Indian Shakers, Islamic communities, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, members of the Native American Church, Russian Old Believers, Pentecostals, native practitioners of the Pom Pom Religion, Scientologists, Sikhs, and devotees of Wicca. After a brief historical survey of the regional religious landscape and the forces that produced it, this course will examine some of the techniques (theological, historical, phenomenological, sociological, psychological, and anthropological) used for interpreting religious movements. In the second half of the course, teams of students under the guidance of the instructor will initiate research projects for in-depth study of selected religious communities and traditions. *Prerequisite:* consent of instructor.

350 The Problem of God 4; not offered 2008-09

This course focuses on the existence and nature of God as an intellectual problem. The course will explore conceptions of God in the Western religious traditions and how God came to be a problem with the emergence of skepticism and atheism in the modern world. Historical and literary approaches, as well as philosophical and theological perspectives, will be included. Contemporary attempts to rethink the nature of God and to argue for the reality of God will be considered. Two class meetings per week. Not open to first-year students.

353 The Historical Jesus x, 4

Wyman

This seminar is an exploration of recent scholarship on the problem of the historical Jesus — the attempt to distinguish the historical figure of Jesus from the theological portraits of him in early Christian literature. Attention will be given to the conclusions of the Jesus Seminar regarding the authenticity of the reported sayings and deeds of Jesus, as well as to recent books on Jesus of Nazareth by scholars representing a variety of methodological perspectives. Each student will report to the class on a recent work on Jesus. Religion 202 is a useful prior course, but not a prerequisite.

355 Religious Intolerance in the Contemporary United States 4; not offered 2008-09

This course explores several important facets of religious tolerance and intolerance in the United States today. It begins with the development of religious pluralism and the separation of church and state, but then questions the limits of this separation through examining the evidence for “public Protestantism” in the United States. The rest of the course examines instances of religious intolerance in the United States — both intolerance of specific religions and religiously based intolerance of specific groups — in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Students will explore the contours of religious intolerance, from hate crimes and violent protest to more subtle events and attitudes in our own communities and our own lives, as well as ways to combat such intolerance.

358 Feminist and Liberation Theologies x, 4

Wyman

Since the 1960s Western religious thinkers have been giving explicit attention to the relevance of gender, race, and class for religious thought. This course is a comparative exploration of Latin American liberation theologies, African American theologies, and feminist theologies (Jewish, Christian, and Post-Christian). Format: readings in primary sources, class discussions, oral reports, and papers. Not open to first-year students.

359 Gender, Body, and Religion 4; not offered 2008-09

Gender and the human body are nearly ubiquitous

in religion. They are evident in one religion’s images of the divine and in another’s refusal to image the divine; in the control and maintenance of the body through asceticism, sexual regulations, dietary restrictions, and other practices; in debates over human nature and reality; in questions of clothing, leadership, and rites of passage; and in many other areas. Over the past 15 years, studies of gender and the body have multiplied within the field of religious studies, but much more remains to be done. This class has two goals: to explore some of the work that has been done to date, and to consider new ways in which theories on gender and the body can be applied to religion. This is a highly theoretical class and is recommended for juniors and seniors.

387-390 Special Topics in Religious History, Literature, and Thought 2-4

Intensive studies of particular authors, literatures, issues, or eras. The topics will vary year to year. For the current offering, see the schedule of classes.

387 ST: New Religious Movements x, 4

Wilcox

Often called “cults” by those unfamiliar with them, new religious movements (NRMs) are exactly what the name implies: newly formed religions that develop either within established world religions or as offshoots of more obscure social or religious movements. The Jehovah’s Witnesses were a new religious movement in the 19th century; contemporary NRMs range from the Unification Church (popularly known as the Moonies) to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (popularly known as the Hare Krishnas) to the Church of Satan. This class will cover theoretical work on new religious movements as well as sociological studies of specific groups, with the goal of increasing students’ familiarity with and theoretical understanding of NRMs as well as exploring the relationship of NRMs to their social contexts.

401, 402 Independent Study 1-4, 1-4

Staff

An opportunity for advanced students to pursue a specific interest after consultation with the instructor. *Prerequisite:* consent of instructor.

448 Seminar in the Academic Study of Religion

4, x

Wyman

What is religion, and how is it studied? The seminar will explore different methods employed in the academic study of religion. As the culmination of the semester’s work, students will formulate their thesis topic and articulate the method (or methods) to be used in their project. Required of, and open only to senior religion majors.

490 Thesis in Religion x, 4

Staff

Research and writing of the senior thesis. Open

only to and required of senior religion majors. *Prerequisite*: completion of Religion 448.

498 Honors Thesis in Religion

x, 4

Staff

Research and writing of the senior honors thesis. Open to and required of senior religion majors. *Prerequisite*: completion of Religion 448 and admission to honors candidacy.