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 about the world’s religion, and of developing skills of analysis, interpretation, and communication. An individually designed combined major which integrates the study of religion with work in another department can be arranged.

Learning Goals:

1) Students who major in Religion will gain an understanding of the breadth and diversity of religious traditions throughout the world, building the capacity to understand the roles religion has played in varied cultural and historical contexts.

2) Students who major in Religion will gain substantive, in-depth knowledge of at least two different religious traditions in their multiple dimensions through the study of such things as primary texts, theological content, socio-historical development, and that tradition’s manifestations in different cultural locations.

3) Students who major in Religion will acquire sophistication in the historiographical, methodological, and theoretical challenges of studying particular traditions, and the category of “religion” in general.

4) Students who major in Religion will be able to carry out independent research. Specifically, they will be able to:

- formulate a sophisticated question
- conduct the appropriate research in order to answer that question
- present their answers to that question in writing that meets the highest standards of conceptual clarity and readable prose.
- discuss orally the subject matter of their research in a substantive and precise manner
- locate their own methodological approach to their research question within the broader field and articulate the contributions and limitations of their chosen method.

Distribution: Courses completed in religion apply to the humanities and cultural pluralism (selected courses) distribution areas.

Total credit requirement for a Religion major: 36

The Religion major:

- 36 Credits
- Required Courses
  - Religion 203, 448, 490 or 498
  - Six elective courses
    - At least one course in comparative religion (see course list below)
    - At least two at 300-level
    - At least three courses, including one at the 300 level, must form a concentration
    - Concentration must be formed prior to fall preregistration junior year
- Other notes
  - Only one 100 level course may apply toward the major
  - Study of appropriate language is highly recommended
  - No courses may be taken PDF
• Senior Requirements
  ○ Religion 448, 490 or 498
    ■ Thesis written in concentration area
    ■ 25-30 pages
  ○ Oral examination
    ■ Thesis defense
    ■ May include comprehensive questions regarding the major
• Honors
  ○ Students do not apply for admission to candidacy for honors
  ○ Students must submit a proposal for their thesis or project
    • Must be submitted within the first six weeks of the two-semester period in which student is eligible
  ○ Accumulated at least 87 credits
  ○ Completed two semesters of residency at Whitman.
  ○ Cumulative GPA of at least 3.300 on all credits earned at Whitman College
  ○ Major GPA of at least 3.500
  ○ Complete a written thesis or research project prepared exclusively for the satisfaction of this program
  ○ Earn a grade of at least A- on the honors thesis or project and the honors thesis course
  ○ Pass the senior assessment with distinction
  ○ Chair of the department will notify the Registrar of students attaining Honors no later than the beginning of week 12 of the semester.
  ○ An acceptable digital copy of the Honors Thesis must be submitted to Penrose Library no later than Reading Day

The Religion minor:
  • 20 Credits
  • Required Courses
    ○ Religion 203
    ○ At least one 300-level course
    ○ At least one course in comparative religion (see course list below)
  • Other notes
    ○ Only one 100-level course may be applied toward the minor
    ○ No courses taken PDF

Courses designated Comparative:
Religion 100 Introduction to Religion
Religion 103 Death and Afterlife
Religion 109 Conceptions of Ultimate Reality
Religion 110 Religion and the Senses
Religion 116, 117 Comparative Studies in Religion
Religion 150 Evil and Suffering
Religion 152 Saintly Lives
Religion 153 Religion and Native America
Religion 160 Asian Religions and the Environment
Religion 170 The End Times: Representations of the Apocalypse
Religion 204 African American Religious Traditions
Religion 221 Brahmans, Buddhists and Jains
Religion 222 Hindu India
Religion 236 Comparative Scriptures
Religion 301 Reason and Madness: Religion and Ethics form Kant to Nietzsche
Religion/Film Media Studies 307 Mediating Religions
Religion 314 Approaches to Religion, Violence and War
Religion 330 Multireligious South Asia
Religion 358 Feminist and Liberation Theologies
100 Introduction to Religion
Not offered 2020-21  4 credits
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
Fall  Walters  4 credits
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. 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.

110 Religion and the Senses
Not offered 2020-21  4 credits
Looking across a range of religious traditions, this course examines the modes of the human senses in relation to religious experience, drawing on both primary and secondary literature. We will ask such questions as: are the senses acting as a means allowing for perception of the divine, or some kind of experience or contact? Are they a medium for self-discipline, in either a positive sense through the cultivation of a pious self, or negatively, through denial? Are the senses serving as a metaphor, and, if so, to what end? We will also interrogate the boundaries and relationships between senses. Open only to first- and second-year students.

115 Consuming Divinity: Religion and Food
Not offered 2020-21  4 credits
This course takes food as a central node around which to explore different religious traditions. We explore why food plays such a big role in the constitution of religious identities, social bodies, and ethical systems throughout the world. Topics will include food prohibitions and taboos; rituals of fasting and feasting; the ethics of eating and provisioning; food's role in healing, sacrifice, and myth; and diverse foodways that span a variety of sites, religious practices, and historical time periods. Open only to first- and second-year students.

116, 117 Comparative Studies in Religion
4 credits
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. Any current offerings follow.

117 ST: James Baldwin’s America
Spring  Schultz  4 credits
In his Notes of a Native Son, James Baldwin recounts a crucial moment in his life when he “was forced to recognize that [he] was a kind of bastard of the West,” adding that he “would have to appropriate these
white centuries,” take possession of them, if he was “to have a place in any scheme.” Drawing from both his literary and non-fiction work, this course examines the ways in which Baldwin excavates, confronts, and rewrites his own story and the story of America through the lens and painful history of race. The course will pay particular attention to the religious dimensions of Baldwin’s writing. Some of the questions this course will take up include: How does religious rhetoric structure Baldwin’s literary style? In what ways does religion inform his ethical vision and political commitments? How do religious themes persist and give shape to his work even after he abandoned the Pentecostal Church of his youth? Open only to first- and second-year students. May be taken for credit toward the Race and Ethnic Studies major. Distribution area: cultural pluralism or humanities.

150 Evil and Suffering
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
One of the most difficult questions in religious thought is the question of evil and suffering. If there is a good God, why does evil exist? If God is all-powerful, why doesn't God put an end to human suffering? Does God cause the terrible events we see nightly on the news? Do these events prove there is no God? What is evil and where does it come from? In this course we will study responses to these questions in a variety of forms, including philosophical, theological, and literary texts as well as film. Open to first and second year students only.

152 Saintly Lives
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
This course explores and compares saints’ life-stories, and traditions of saint worship, from a variety of religious traditions. What makes particular saints saintly? To what extent are saintly qualities and forms of saint worship universal, and to what extent do they depend upon particular cultural and religious matrices? How and why have religious people celebrated their saints, in literature and in ritual? Open only to first and second year students.

153 Religion and Native America
Spring Thayne 4 credits
When Europeans first arrived in the Americas, they did not typically recognize Indigenous rituals, beliefs, and practices as “religion.” Over time, however, European Enlightenment categories such as “natural religion” were applied to Indigenous practices, with significant implications. This course will be both an excavation of the category of religion and a history of religion in Native America, including its contemporary setting. We will consider how religious, anthropological, and other Euroamerican categories have influenced and been involved in the production of “Indigenous religion” and Indigeneity in North America, as well as ways these categories have been co-constituted with/as/against race. The course will also focus on Native American engagement with Christianity, missionary work to Indigenous peoples, Native “conversion,” and U.S. reform efforts, such as federal boarding schools. We will consider how religion has functioned within the U.S. legal system, particularly in cases where Indigenous peoples have sought to protect their lands and practices under the rubric of religion. Particular attention will be given to religion in this region, with sections on Washat, or the Seven Drums religion of the Plateau peoples, First Salmon ceremonies of Pacific NW peoples, the missionary work of Myron Eells (son of Whitman Seminary founder Cushing Eells), and the missionary efforts of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman—namesakes of Whitman College—among the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla people, and the complicated issue of memorializing and remembering the so-called “Whitman Massacre” and legacy. May be taken for credit toward the Race and Ethnic Studies major or minor. May be elected as Anthropology 153. Open only to first and second year students.

154 Yoga, Meditation and Mindfulness
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
Over the past few decades, practices of yoga and mindfulness have become increasingly commonplace in medical treatment, stress management, and sports performance. Practices that had once been passed down from teacher to student as techniques leading to liberation from suffering and illusion are now available on one’s smart phone. This course will introduce students to the history of yoga and meditation through texts and ethnography. We will study a
variety of approaches to contemplative practice, including the Stoics, Buddhists, Christians and Hindus in addition to contemporary formulations of yoga and meditation in relation to medicine and psychology. Open only to first and second year students.

160 Asian Religions and the Environment
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
A comparative exploration of historical and contemporary ideas and practices related to the natural environment in select Asian religious traditions. May be taken for credit toward the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major. Open only to first and second year students.

170 The End Times: Representations of the Apocalypse
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
How has the apocalypse been imagined in various religious traditions? How have those apocalyptic visions been inscribed into the popular imagination? This course considers how the end of the world has been understood in the context of different traditions, taking a comparative approach in studying apocalypse as a genre, a means of persuasion, a worldview, a motif, and more. Course materials will include texts as well as film and television media. Possible sources and topics may include: the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation, selections from the Qur’an, apocalyptically-oriented new religious movements, the phenomenon of doomsday preppers, the Left Behind series of Christian thrillers and accompanying films, and The Leftovers book and television series. Open only to first- and second-year students.

203 What is Religion?
Fall Osborne 4 credits
What is religion, and why is its study important in the twenty-first century? This course engages students with classic and contemporary theories about religion, and considers a variety of methods in the transdisciplinary field of religious studies.

207 Islamic Traditions
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
This course provides an overview of the religious tradition of Islam in a global context. We will encounter a lived tradition: one that is constantly defined, redefined, and contested through the beliefs and practices of Muslims in interpretation of scripture, ritual life, literature, art, and other modes of expression. Themes that may receive attention include foundational sources and literatures such as the Qur’an, hadith, and shari‘a, as well as the role of the Prophet Muhammad, Sunni and Shi‘i traditions, political Islam, and Islam in America. The sources for the course include both readings and films. May be taken for credit toward the South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major.

208 Buddhist Ethics
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
What does it mean to be a Buddhist? How should a Buddhist act in a world that Buddhist doctrine defines as “dukkha,” or “suffering?” What can Buddhist thought contribute to discussions of contemporary ethical issues, such as environmentalism, gender, poverty and violence? This course will introduce students to the study of Buddhist Ethics from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Our sources will include Buddhist philosophical and narrative literature alongside ethnographic and historical studies of Buddhist attempts to map out and embody ethical ideals and practices in a changing world. Following these sources, we will engage with fundamental Buddhist concepts of action, selfhood, and cosmology while considering the effects of globalization and the formation of “Buddhist Modernism” as Buddhists respond to the challenges of colonialism and adapt to the concerns and presuppositions of Western Buddhists. May be taken for credit toward the South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major. May be elected as Philosophy 211.
209 Jewish Texts and Traditions  
Not offered 2020-21  
4 credits  
This course studies Jewish texts and traditions from antiquity to the present-day. The course emphasizes the diversity in Judaism, focusing on moments of innovation and change in the lived tradition. Using a combination of primary texts, secondary literature, and film, students will explore the major areas in the study of Judaism, including biblical literature, the rabbinic period, mysticism, folklore, philosophy, and Holocaust literature. Recommended but not required for further courses in Judaism.

213 Buddhist Monasticisms  
Not offered 2020-21  
4 credits  
What does it mean to renounce the world and become a Buddhist monk or Buddhist nun? This course will explore the complexity and diversity of Buddhist monasticism as it is constituted in different countries and different times. The course begins with textual and archeological evidence detailing the emergence of Buddhist monasticism over two thousand years ago in India and concludes with contemporary ethnographic accounts of male and female monastics in a number of countries struggling to adapt to a swiftly changing world while simultaneously protecting the continuity and distinctiveness of their particular lineages. Through a sustained study of different forms of Buddhist monasticism, this course will engage in a broader discussion of Buddhist constructions of gender, identity, family, asceticism, law and modernity. May be taken for credit toward the South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major.

214 American Jewish Thought  
Not offered 2020-21  
4 credits  
When the first Jews arrived in America in 1654, they sought, like many others, religious freedom. Today America is home to one of the largest Jewish populations in the world, and has produced its own unique forms of Judaism. Students will explore this complex tradition and the construction of American Jewish identity through Jewish philosophy, literature, and films from the mid-20th century to present day.

217 The Qur’an  
Not offered 2020-21  
4 credits  
This course offers an exploration of the Qur’an, the scripture of Islam. In introducing the text, we will examine the historical and literary context in which it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in seventh century Arabia. Through close reading we will survey the many messages, themes, and literary and poetic styles found in the text itself. Special attention will also be given to the range of methods and approaches that Muslims have used in interpreting the Qur’an, and to the role played by the text in ritual life.

219 Modern Jewish Thought  
Not offered 2020-21  
4 credits  
The onset of modernity brought about dramatic upheaval and change for Jewish communities, from the optimism of the Enlightenment to the horrors of the Holocaust. This course covers the history and thought of Modern Judaism from the 17th century to the 20th century in Europe. Students will read philosophical texts to gain an overview of the major themes, events, and thinkers of this important period in religious thought and Judaism.

221 Brahmins, Buddhists and Jains  
Not offered 2020-21  
4 credits  
This course introduces three South Asian religions -- Brahmanism (proto-Hinduism), Buddhism and Jainism -- through comparative study of the philosophies and practices each advocated in ancient India. Students will read foundational scriptures of each religion in translation, with discussion and lecture guided to understanding them as in dialogue with each other. Two class meetings per week. Open to all students. Offered in alternate years.
222 Hindu India
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
This course explores Hindu theology, literature, mythology, art, religious practice and politics in premodern India, and their legacies for religious pluralism in modern India. Students will read classical Hindu texts in translation, with lecture and discussion focused on understanding both concord and conflict within them, followed by select Muslim, Christian and secular reflections on Hinduism composed in premodern and modern India. Two class meetings per week. Open to all students. Offered in alternate years.

223 Religion and the Spirit of Capitalism
Spring 4 credits
Yuan
As global capitalism reaches into every corner of human life, what role does religion play in the reproduction of social inequalities, labor practices, and exploitative economies? Did religion sow the seeds of capitalism? How might religious traditions and practices be used to critique capitalism and reimagine the culture it created? In this course, we delve into the entanglements between religion and the dominant economic form of the modern world: capitalism. Areas covered include classical social theories of religion and capitalism (Marx, Weber, Tocqueville, Durkheim); contemporary examples of interactions between religious practice and capitalist processes; and the mobilization of religious traditions in critiquing and resisting capitalism. Topics may include the “Confucian ethic” and economic growth in East Asia; Islamic financial institutions; the effect of Pentecostalism’s explosive growth on the economic experiences of African and Latin American communities; the marketization and commodification of religion; and more. May be elected as Anthropology 223.

225 Global Christianity
Fall 4 credits
Yuan
This course examines Christianity in its multiplicity and diversity, from its origins in a pluralistic ancient Mediterranean world to the spread of Christian practices and cultural forms throughout the globe. Through engagement with anthropology, history, theology, and literary texts, we will explore how various Christian texts, concepts, institutions, practices, and narratives have circulated among different populations in distinct socio-historical contexts. The course centers around two key questions: How has Christianity been formed and reformed through its global encounters? And how have these encounters in turn shaped the world as we know it? May be elected as Anthropology 225.

227 Christian Ethics
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
This course is an introduction to Christian Ethics, both theoretical and applied. Unlike traditional courses in ethics, which follow a historical trajectory, this course simultaneously engages classical texts in Christian ethics alongside contemporary critiques and reinterpretations of these texts. These critiques challenge the formulation dominant Christian ethical concepts by raising questions of gender, race, privilege, and globalization. Students will also engage in applied ethics by analyzing contemporary ethical issues through the lens of classic thinkers.

236 Comparative Scriptures
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
This course takes a comparative thematic approach to reading across the three scriptures of the Abrahamic traditions—the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an. Although they originate at different moments in history, in the context of different religious traditions, a common vocabulary of themes, narratives, genres, and poetics appears across all three. We will take a thematic approach by reading the scriptures as literature, in conversation with one another, and in so doing, raising the issue of the possibilities and limitations of a comparative perspective.
245 Jewish Ethics
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
What is Jewish Ethics? This course confronts this question through an overview of the history of Jewish ethics and close reading of representative Jewish thinkers of the 20th century. The course is structured so that students can engage one of the most important works of contemporary Jewish ethics – Judith Butler’s challenging and controversial work *Parting Ways*. In this book, Butler draws upon the thinkers we will read in this course – Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas, Walter Benjamin and Primo Levi – to construct a new Jewish ethical theory, one that raises questions about Jewish identity, the role of ethics in religion, and the place of religion in the public sphere.

250 Theravāda Buddhism
Fall Walters 4 credits
This course explores Theravāda or “Earlier Vehicle” Buddhism, which flourishes today in South and Southeast Asia. Students will read selections of the foundational “early Buddhist” canon from India and later literature that tracks the religion’s spread in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, with discussion and lecture focused on understanding the religion’s rich cultural and historical diversity across this region. Two class meetings per week. Open to all students. Offered in alternate years.

251 Mahāyāna Buddhism
Spring Walters 4 credits
This course explores Mahāyāna or “Great Vehicle” Buddhism, which flourishes today in East Asia. Students will read selections of the foundational “Great Vehicle” sūtras and later literature that tracks the religion’s spread in China and Japan, and the rise of Tantrayāna or “Esoteric Vehicle” Buddhism there and in the Himalayas, with discussion and lecture focused on understanding the religion’s rich cultural and historical diversity across this region. Two class meetings per week. Open to all students. Offered in alternate years.

290-292 Special Topics in the Academic Study of Religion
2-4 credits
One-time offerings of studies of selected authors, themes, or religious traditions at the intermediate level. Any current offerings follow.

290 ST: Religion in America
Fall Schultz 4 credits
This introductory course uses two themes—experience and authority—to orient and guide students through an historical survey of religion in the United States. We will ask how people have made appeals to religious experience to establish, reinforce, and challenge political and religious authority. In addition to dominant forms of Protestant Christianity, we will learn about the rise of new religions like Spiritualism and Mormonism, Catholic and Jewish immigration in the late nineteenth century, and the entanglements of religion with the practices of slavery and settler colonialism. Throughout the course, we will pay special attention to race and ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, asking how religion has alternately served as a vehicle for liberation and site of oppression, and how religious debates dovetailed with the pressing social issues of the day. Distribution area: cultural pluralism or humanities.

291 ST: Religion and Gender in Global Context
Spring Schultz 4 credits
This course examines issues of gender and religion as they intersect with global political discourses about women’s rights and competing definitions of agency. The study of global religions has been transformed in important ways by encounters with postcolonial and feminist scholarship; similarly, the persistent interest in religious forms of life have shaped how scholars think about gender, sexuality, and feminism in transnational contexts. In this course, we will explore how these dialogues between feminism, postcolonial studies, and religious studies may inform and transform our understandings of categories like “women” and “religion.” Questions explored will include: why have women’s bodies and forms of religious dress become
charged sites of these negotiations? What assumptions concerning moral agency, freedom, and public/private space invest these sites with meaning in the first place? Why does the sensibility of being modern and politically progressive depend so heavily on particular representations of the appropriate roles and behaviors of women and religion? May be taken for credit toward the Gender Studies major elective. Distribution area: cultural pluralism or humanities.

292 ST: Race and Religion in the Black Atlantic
Spring Schultz 4 credits
This course examines the Black Atlantic as a socio-cultural and political formation that emerges in the wake of the slave trade, the plantation system, and their embeddedness in the circuitry of global trade. The course is especially concerned with the way religion is enfolded in this hybrid and diasporic cultural formation. How, for instance, do European forms of Christianity underwrite ideas of personhood that furnish rationales for racial hierarchies, practices of enslavement, and settler colonialism? How is it the case that European political doctrines of freedom, rights, and self-determination were contemporaneous with the massive expansion of the slave trade? In addition to exploring the role of religion in these processes, we will examine a range of African-inspired religions in the Americas, including Haitian Vodou, Black Islam and Christianity, Santería in the US, Rastafarianism in the Caribbean, and Brazilian Candomblé. What counter-narratives of modernity do we find in these religious practices and worldviews? May be taken for credit toward the Race and Ethnic Studies major. Distribution area: cultural pluralism or humanities.

301 Reason and Madness: Religion and Ethics from Kant to Nietzsche
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
The modern period is often heralded as a time of the triumph of reason over religion. However, many of the most prominent philosophers of the 18th and 19th centuries promoted Christianity as a “rational religion” and embodying a “universal ethic.” These thinkers, by contrast, disparaged Judaism as “irrational” and “unethical.” This course is an intensive study of philosophical texts grappling with the interconnections between religion, ethics, and rationality, specifically focusing on representations of Judaism. The course concludes with Nietzsche’s critique of this trend in modern religious thought. Students will read significant portions of philosophical texts, including Kant, Hegel, Cohen, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. May be taken for credit toward the German Studies major or minor.
Prerequisite: at least one course in Religion, Philosophy, or German Studies or consent of instructor.

304 Muslim Bodies
Not offered 2020-21 4 credits
This course considers the roles of bodies and embodiment as related to the religious tradition of Islam. What is the role of the body in Islamic thought and practice? How are different bodies understood and treated in Islamic contexts? In what ways might the category of Islam as a religion intersect with race? Themes that may receive attention include ritual performance via the body, fashion and clothing, gender, sexuality, disability, race, and theoretical discourse of embodiment. The basics of Islam will not be covered in the course; while there are no prerequisites, it is highly recommended that students have prior course experience relating to Islam, or in Religion, Gender Studies, or Race and Ethnic Studies. May be taken for credit toward the Middle East area for the South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major, Gender Studies major or minor, or Race and Ethnic Studies major or minor.
305 Gender and Identity in Judaism  
Not offered 2020-21  
4 credits  
The question of Jewish identity has been central to Jewish thought since the modern period. This course studies how Modern Orthodox Judaism defines Jewish identity in the secular world, and how questions of gender identity complicate this task of definition. The course focuses on a close reading of texts from American and Israeli scholars that represent a number of religious studies methodologies. Through this course, students will learn about these various methods and how gender analysis is incorporated into and perhaps changes these methods. Not open to first year students.

307 Mediating Religions  
Not offered 2020-21  
4 credits  
This course will engage with philosophy, religious studies, phenomenological theory, post-colonial and cultural studies scholarship in order to critically analyze mediated religion and other parts of social life on a global scale. We will consider the many meanings of mediation, from the larger social level of mass communication to the individual level of the body, in which larger beliefs are individually mediated through ritual and performance. Themes that may receive attention include: the use of electronic fatwas in modern Muslim societies; the rise of American televsional evangelism; the global and local markets for religious cultural products; the representation of religious identities—particularly the rise of Islamophobia—in media; and the prominence of fundamentalist and nationalist religious politics across the globe. Lectures, discussions, and tests. May be elected as Film and Media Studies 307. When Film and Media Studies 307 is not offered, Religion 307 may be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major or minor. May be taken for credit toward the South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major.

310 Hearing Islam  
Not offered 2020-21  
4 credits  
This course explores the ways in which Islam has been conceived, represented, and contested through sound. How does hearing or saying affect the practice of religion? What makes a particular sound religious, with regard to either its production or its experience? Topics will include the call to prayer, recitation of the Qur'an, the “problem” of music in Islam, and genres of Islamic music from a wide range of historical and cultural contexts (such as ghazals--love poems set as songs --and Islamic rap, for example), sermons, and other audio artifacts. The course will draw on both reading and listening assignments.

314 Approaches to Religion, Violence and War  
Not offered 2020-21  
4 credits  
What is the relationship between religion, violence and war? Is there something about a religious worldview that leads to violence against outsiders or is it simply that humans have an inherent potential for violence that religions cannot fully control? How have different religious traditions sought to legitimate or condemn violence and war? As contemporary media continues to make explicit links between religion (or particular religions) and violence, it is important for citizens of the world to have a clear awareness of the reductionism inherent in such claims. By critically examining primary religious texts, ethnographic case studies and key thinkers that have informed our understanding of religion and violence this course is geared towards a conceptual clarification that moves beyond rigid definitions. This course will culminate in a significant research project on a topic of your choice. As this is an advanced course, it is strongly recommended that students have taken classes in religion.

321 Islamic Mysticism  
Fall  
Osborne  
4 credits  
This course examines the concepts, literatures, and practices associated with mysticism in Islam (Sufism), and the lives of related figures. We will draw on both close reading of mystical literatures, as well as studying the integration of the practices and individuals into Sufi orders into society in a variety of geographical and historical contexts.
325 Christianity and Politics in East Asia
Spring  Yuan  4 credits
This course examines the complicated histories and lived experiences of Christianity in modern China, Japan, and Korea. Drawing on materials from history, theology, ethnography, film, and literature, we will explore how the modern concept of “religion” was constituted and circulated in East Asia as a product of colonial encounters, and examine how it continues to inform the sociopolitical organization of East Asian societies today. We’ll look closely at how nationalist and anti-imperialist movements in China, Japan, and Korea both revolted against and mobilized Western Christianity. Finally, we’ll analyze the contemporary politics of Christianity in the region today, as well as the emergence of East Asia as a new focal point for global Christian thought and practice.

330 Multireligious South Asia
Not offered 2020-21  4 credits
South Asia is home to well-established and highly diverse Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Zoroastrian, Christian and tribal religious communities, whose, members have been interacting with each other in both constructive and contentious ways for three millennia. This course examines historical and contemporary examples of South Asian multireligious encounter in order to raise and address more general questions relevant to the study of “multireligion” in any context: just how have religious people engaged their religious “others” through the ages? What strategies exist within the different religious traditions for making sense of and responding to the universal fact of religious diversity? How do these strategies relate to social, political, economic and other cultural concerns of the people who employ them? What factors cause them to fluctuate over time or in different circumstances? How does the academic study of religions—its own an attempt at making sense of religious diversity—relate to the multireligious strategies of the lived traditions it analyses? Open to all students, but at least one prior course in religion is strongly recommended.

347 The Buddha
Not offered 2020-21  4 credits
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. Prerequisite: Religion 221, 250, 251, or 257, or consent of instructor.

387-390 Special Topics in Religious History, Literature, and Thought
2-4 credits
Intensive studies of particular authors, literatures, issues, or eras. The topics will vary year to year. Any current offerings follow.

387 ST: Religion and (Dis)enchantment in 20th-century Literature
Fall  Schultz  4 credits
How is religion imagined in modern literature? In what ways has literature itself become a species of religious thought? This course explores how 20th-century literature reflects a crisis of meaning in modern religious thought, on the one hand, and how it sustains the religious through attachment to form, to loss, and to belief without meaning, on the other. The course will examine the relationship between words and things, knowledge and power, truth and illusion, and consider the ways literary representation expresses, transposes, and otherwise complicates these terms. We will read writers with both direct and oblique relationships to religious discourses and institutions, writers who bring religious forms of thinking to crisis, who invert its logics, who explore its hauntings, its silences, its ambiguities, and its enduring capacity to make meaning. We will take up these conceptual questions in conversation with the historical (social, political) dynamics out of which they emerge and to which they are posed. We will read Kafka, Bataille,
Morrison, Djebar, Coetzee, Endo, O'Connor, and Ngugi wa’ Thiong’o (amongst others). Distribution area: humanities.

401, 402 Independent Study
Fall, Spring  Staff  1-4 credits
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
Fall  Osborne  4 credits
A senior capstone experiences that prepares majors for senior thesis writing through an exploration of contemporary issues in the field. Required of, and open only to senior religion majors.

490 Thesis in Religion
Spring  Staff  4 credits
Research and writing of the senior thesis. Open only to and required of senior religion majors. *Prerequisite:* Religion 448.

498 Honors Thesis in Religion
Spring  Staff  4 credits
Research and writing of the senior honors thesis. Students register for Religion 490, not for Religion 498. The registration will be changed from Religion 490 to 498 for those students who attain honors in Religion. Open only to senior religion majors.