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, soci-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
  - A maximum of two courses can be approved from outside the major including transfer credit, study abroad, and Whitman courses offered outside of the Religion Department that substantively engage religion. If a student is double majoring, these courses may also be counted from another major program. These courses will count as elective courses and may not be used to fulfill the requirement of at least two 300-level courses.
  - 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 110 Religion and the Senses |
| Religion 115 Consuming Divinity: Religion and Food | Religion 116, 117 Comparative Studies in Religion | Religion 118/Classics 118 ST: Religion and Disability in the Ancient Mediterranean |
| 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 211 Brahmins, Buddhists and Jains | Religion 222 Hindu India |
| Religion 223 Religion and the Spirit of Capitalism | Religion 224 Anthropology of Religion | Religion 236 Comparative Scriptures |
| Religion 270 Race and Religion | 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/Anthropology 350 Missionaries and other Anthropologists |
| Religion 358 Feminist and Liberation Theologies | Religion 370 Religion and Disenchantment in 20th-century Literature |
| Religion 387/Classics 300 ST: Empire and Religion: From Colonial Diaspora to Cultural Appropriation |
• All the required 36 Credits for a Religion major
• A total of 24 credits, comprised as follows:
  • At least 16 credits taught in French at the 200 level or above, or equivalent.
  • Up to 12 credits comprised of any combination of the following:
    o Up to 4 AP /IB credits (see note)
    o Up to 8 credits from approved courses taught in English
    o Up to 4 credits “double-dipped” with approved courses counted toward another major or minor program
    o Up to 8 credits transferred from off-campus studies or another institution
• Attainment of B2 or Advanced Low level on a recognized language proficiency assessment (DELF, ACTFL, etc.).
• Two or more of the following integrative components with the primary major:
  o A thesis topic that explicitly incorporates a significant portion of French/ Francophone content, broadly understood (textual, geographic, theoretical, historical, etc.)
  o A grade of B or higher in a course in Religion taught in French (normally only an option through off-campus studies)
  o A course in Religion that has been approved as a “double dip” (see note)
  o An internship related to Religion major, conducted in a French setting
  o An oral presentation of the senior project (or equivalent) in French, for a general public
  o Portfolio + reflective essay in French
• Complete the senior self evaluation survey about their combined major experience.

• Honors in a Religion+French major will be determined according to the criteria of the Religion major.

• Notes:
  o Certain majors may allow for a “double dip”, such as:
    • An approved course taught in English that counts towards both the major requirements and the French requirements.
    • A course completed in French off campus that counts towards both the major requirements and the French requirements.
  • Within the 12-credit transfer limitation, any university-level courses taught entirely in French may count toward the French requirements, regardless of topic.
  • Religion+French candidates have a major advisor in Religion, and a second advisor from the French department who works with them to define and assess the integrative component. Students should approach a French advisor as soon after declaring their primary major as possible.
100 Introduction to Religion
Not offered 2022-23 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
Not offered 2022-23 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 2022-23 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 2022-23 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.

116 ST: Modern Mysticisms: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam
Fall
Chubb-Confer 4 credits
Yoga classes, meditation retreats, inspirational Rumi quotes - many of the markers of contemporary spirituality are drawn from the traditions of “Eastern” religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, yet also present themselves as options for those who reject the notion of organized religion. In this course, we will investigate the relationship between “New Age” movements, “spiritual-but-not-religious”
identities, and the religious traditions they interpret and contest. From Sufi societies to the Beatles to Burning Man, we will examine the tension between tradition and modernity, and delve into issues of religion and race, gender, cultural appropriation, capitalism, digital/online culture, and community. Open only to first- and second-year students. Distribution areas: cultural pluralism or humanities.

117 ST: Pirates, Saints, and Rebels: Religion in the Indian Ocean
Spring Chubb-Confer 4 credits
In this course we will set sail with pirates, saints, slaves, merchants, rebels, missionaries, and deities of the wind and water to explore the transnational religious networks of the Indian Ocean. Orienting ourselves around moments of encounter, translation, circulation, and exchange between Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and indigenous traditions will allow us to reassess how traveling religious texts, objects, ideas, and the people who carried them interact between geographical areas typically considered in isolation. Beginning with late antiquity and the medieval period, we will investigate how religious networks were formed and mobilized between the coastal regions of South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern and Southern Africa, continuing through the age of exploration and imperial expansion to the present day. We will analyze the relationship between religion and colonial power, and examine how colonial technologies of travel and communication both enabled the expansion of empire and provided the tools for grassroots resistance. Open only to first- and second-year students. Distribution areas: cultural pluralism or humanities.

118 ST: Religion and Disability in the Ancient Mediterranean
Fall Smith 4 credits
This course explores disability within the context of religion in the Ancient Mediterranean world. We will investigate the ways ancients constructed, navigated, and responded to physical differences through a variety of religious means. From Ancient Jewish and Christian texts to Greek and Roman temples, the Ancient Mediterranean provides a wealth of evidence for the diverse ways disability and healing could be understood and deployed. The course will introduce a wide range of sources for thinking about the complicated history of disability and religion, and we will reflect on how these histories have contributed to our perceptions of ability and disability today. May be elected as Classics 116. Distribution areas: cultural pluralism or humanities.

150 Evil and Suffering
Not offered 2022-23 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 2022-23 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
Not offered 2022-23 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 2022-23 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 2022-23 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 2022-23 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  Schultz 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.

205 American Islam
Not offered 2022-23 4 credits
Who are American Muslims? Can Islam be an American religion? This course interrogates the history of American Islam and Muslims. Examining the religion of Islam within the American context offers a key opportunity to consider its intersections with the categories of race, gender, immigration and nationhood, and multiculturalism. Topics covered may include Islam of African peoples enslaved in the Americas, immigrant and diaspora communities, Black Islams such as the Nation of Islam and the Moorish Science Temple, and Islamophobia and the racialization of Muslims. No prior background in the study of Islam required. Course materials include readings and films. Assignments include papers and presentations. May be taken for credit toward the Race & Ethnic Studies major or minor.

207 Islamic Traditions  
Fall  
Chubb-Confer  
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.

209 Jewish Texts and Traditions  
Not offered 2022-23  
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 2022-23  
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 2022-23  
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  
Spring  
Osborne  
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
Spring Schultz 4 credits
This course surveys the ways Jews and Jewish thought have navigated the intellectual, political, and spiritual challenges of modernity. From the Alhambra Decree of 1492 which expelled Jews from Christian Spain, to Jewish emancipation in the 19th-century Europe, to the Holocaust in the 20th-century, and finally to the 1948 formation of the state of Israel, modern Jewish experiences constitute an alternative modernity, one that draws from and profoundly challenges European enlightenment universalism. This story of clash and confluence will begin with the excommunication of Baruch Spinoza, the so-called “first modern Jew,” and our investigations will move through pathways of Jewish enlightenment (Moses Mendelssohn) and existentialism, Zionism and the Jewish Question, theological feminisms, and ending with Levinas and Derrida. This course will survey the diverse landscapes of Jewish modernity, with special attention to dynamics between secularism and traditionalism, individualism and nationalism, exile and homeland, and Judaism and Christianity. Course taught in English. Students electing to take the German Studies section will complete some reading in the original German and may complete some writing, and discussion assignments in German. May be elected as German Studies 219.

221 Brahmins, Buddhists and Jains
Not offered 2022-23 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 2022-23 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 Yuan 4 credits
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.

224 Anthropology of Religion
Not offered 2022-23 4 credits
This course explores lived religions through an anthropological lens. Through a wide range of ethnographic readings both classical and contemporary, we will delve into topics like myth, ritual, magic, witchcraft, ghosts, healing, religious experience and social movements, while examining how religion intersects with politics, race,
gender/sexuality, and economics in diverse socio-cultural contexts. Through the course, we will also take stock of how theories of religion have been integral to the development of anthropological thought, contributing to comparative methodologies and cross-cultural ethnography. In addition to learning about global religious cultures, students will design a locally-focused research project to better understand our own region's religious landscape. May be elected as Anthropology 224.

225 Global Christianity
Spring 04
Yuan 4 credits
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 2022-23 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 2022-23 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 2022-23 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
Not offered 2022-23 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
Not offered 2022-23
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.

260 The Secularization of Whitman College
Not offered 2022-23
4 credits
Whitman College was originally founded as a seminary named after two missionaries who were sent to this region to convert the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla peoples to Christianity. Though the college now has no official ties to Christianity, we continue to bear the names of the Whitmans, house artifacts collected by our missionary founders, repent of our mascots, mark and wash our monuments, and have a mission statement outlining our goals and aspirations. Is Whitman haunted? Are all secularisms haunted? In this class we will consider the present politics of Whitman College in light of our archives, collections, and relationships, as well as broader scholarship on religion and secularism. May be elected as Politics 260.

270 Race and Religion
Fall
Schultz
4 credits
How are race and religion related? If we reject the idea of race as a fixed biological essence and think of it instead as a product of human history, how do we understand religion’s role in the historical production of race? This course explores the ways religions reinforce and resist practices of racialization, and further asks how religious identity itself comes to be understood in racial, ethnic, and/or nationalist terms. The course will examine pre-modern and modern forms of anti-Semitism, Orientalism and Islamophobia; it will ask whether the caste system in Hindu South Asia can or should be understood in terms of race; and it will take up religion’s complex entanglements in the slave trade, the plantation system, and European settler colonialism in the Americas. We will read from the primary source historical texts (Valladolid Debate), a selection of foundational theorists (such as Sylvia Wynter, B.R. Ambedkar, Hannah Arendt, Edward Said and Frantz Fanon), and a range of contemporary voices and perspectives. May be elected a Race and Ethnic Studies 270.

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.

291 ST: Gods at the Movies: Religion in Bollywood Film
Spring
Chubb-Confer
4 credits
In this course we will approach the study of religion through the song, dance, and spectacle of Bollywood cinema, which has shaped popular visual cultures in South Asia and the international South Asian diaspora for several decades and counting. We will consider the relationship of Bollywood film as popular entertainment to visual worship practices, gender politics, nationalism, class and caste, political ideology, social movements, and celebrity. By examining Hinduism, Islam, and other religions of South Asia through their visual representation on the big screen, we will analyze how Bollywood films and the film industry have shaped the aspirations, fears, desires, aesthetics, and violence of inter-religious encounters in modern South Asia. Required weekly film screenings. Distribution areas: cultural pluralism or humanities.

292 ST: Drinking with God: An Introduction to Sufism
Spring
Chubb-Confer
4 credits
Who is the 13th-century Muslim mystic Jalaluddin Rumi - and why is he so popular on Instagram? Can inebriation lead to divine revelation? Who are the friends of God, and how did they develop fantastic
superpowers? How have mystical practices sought to both abandon the world and radically transform it? In this class, we will explore these questions through the study of Sufism - a diverse set of Islamic mystical traditions - from its formative period in the early decades of Islam to the present day. Through poetry, philosophy, music, esoteric sciences, politics, and devotional practices, we will analyze Sufism as a global phenomenon that, while demonstrating remarkable adaptation to local cultural contexts, firmly locates itself within the Islamic tradition. Distribution areas: cultural pluralism or humanities.

301 Reason and Madness: Religion and Ethics from Kant to Nietzsche
Not offered 2022-23  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
Fall Osborne  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 2022-23  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 2022-23  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 televisial 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 2022-23 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. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major or minor or the South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major. May be elected as Music 310.

314 Approaches to Religion, Violence and War
Not offered 2022-23 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
Not offered 2022-23 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 Religion and Politics in East Asia
Fall Yuan 4 credits
How has the modern development of religion in East Asia shaped the region’s historical experiences and contemporary life-worlds? In this course, we examine how an imported concept — “religion” (宗教) — has transformed the sociopolitical landscapes of greater China, Japan, and Korea. With readings from anthropology, religious studies, and other related fields, the class will explore thematic topics set in contemporary East Asian contexts through a multi-religious lens. In addition to looking at 20th-21st-century restructurings of East Asian traditions like Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Shintoism, we also focus on Christianity’s impacts in the region as well as emerging, hybridized religious movements in the region. Topics include: religious communities’ role in modernizing and nationalizing projects; religion and violent conflict; relationships between religious organizations and the state, under democratic, socialist, and capitalist orders; and East Asian religions’ contemporary influences in globalized mass media and pop culture.

330 Multireligious South Asia
Not offered 2023-24 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— itself 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 2022-23  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.

350 Missionaries and other Anthropologists
Not offered 2022-23  4 credits
Missionaries have often been understood or depicted as proto-anthropologists, as early ethnographers, or as a foil against which the field of anthropology has defined itself. Some critics have situated missionaries as anthropology’s repressed other. In this class we will explore the long encounter between Europe and the so-called New World through writings describing that encounter— writings by explorers, missionaries, naturalist-ethnologists, “Natives,” and, eventually, by professional anthropologists. We will consider material resemblances, collaborations and antagonisms, and the ways in which anthropology is both heir to and a departure from missionary practice. Special attention will be given to the anthropological missionary work of Myron Eells, son of the founder of Whitman Seminary. The course will be interdisciplinary, drawing on scholarship and methods from Anthropology and Religious Studies and works on secularism. May be elected as Anthropology 350.

370 Religion and Disenchantment in 20th-century Literature
Spring  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. Readings will be drawn from authors such as Kafka, Borges, Morrison, Djebar, Coetzee, Endo, O’Connor, and Ngugi wa’ Thiong’o.

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: Empire and Religion: From Colonial Diaspora to Cultural Appropriation
Spring  Smith  4 credits
This course employs a comparative approach to the study of religion to investigate the various ways that religions deemed “foreign” within particular social contexts engage with their cultural world. The course considers the roles of colonized cultures in the Euro-American invention of “religion,” the religious practices of diasporic groups from the Ancient Mediterranean to the Modern Caribbean, and Ancient as well as modern appropriations of religious practices seen as exotic. Students will engage with primary and secondary sources from a diverse set of cultural encounters and will be challenged to consider these phenomena in both analytical and ethical terms. May be elected as Classics 300. Distribution areas: cultural pluralism and 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.