Guidelines for all Religion Majors and Concentrators

Major in Religion

All majors are encouraged to pursue both depth and breadth by constructing a program of study in consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies. The program should include courses in a variety of religious traditions. Students who write a senior thesis may include a term of individually supervised research as one of the courses for their major.

Courses

For the major the following 9 courses are required:

- 1 gateway course (1000 level)
- 2 introductory courses (2000 level)
- 2 intermediate courses (3000 level)
- 2 seminars (4000 level)
- 1 additional course at any level
- RELI UN3199 Theory (formerly Juniors Colloquium)

Concentration in Religion

To be planned in consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies and with a member of the faculty in an area in which the student has a particular interest. The program should include some study in a breadth of religious traditions.

Courses

For the concentration the following 7 courses are required:

- 1 gateway course (1000 level)
- 2 introductory courses (2000 level)
- 2 intermediate courses (3000 level)
- 1 seminar (4000 level)
- RELI UN3199 Theory

Departmental Honors

Students who write a senior thesis and maintain a GPA of 3.66 or above in the major may be considered for departmental honors. Writing a senior thesis qualifies a student for consideration for departmental honors but does not assure it. Normally no more than 10% of graduating majors receive departmental honors in a given academic year.

Course Numbering

Courses are numbered by level and type:

- 1000-level: Gateway lecture course
- 2000-level: Introductory and “traditions” lectures
- 3000-level: Intermediate lecture
- 4000-level: Seminar

and Zone:

- x100-199: Theory (RELI UN3199)
- x200-299: Time (zone)
- x300-399: Transmission (zone)
Students who write a senior thesis may apply for up to 3 points of directed reading with their thesis adviser. The deadline for application for the honors thesis in religion is the last day of exams in the student’s junior spring term, and must be submitted for approval to the director of undergraduate studies. The application must include both a prospectus for the paper and a letter of support by the faculty member who has agreed to direct the thesis. The prospectus (5-7 pages) should detail a research program and the central question(s) to be pursued in the paper, preparation for the thesis, and a timeline. The primary adviser of the thesis must be a member of the Religion Department faculty.

Many students find that identifying a thesis project earlier in the junior year, in conjunction with the Juniors colloquium, presents an opportunity to develop a proposal in advance of deadlines for summer research funding from various sources, including the undergraduate schools and the Institute for Religion Culture and Public Life.

**Grading**

Courses in which a grade of D has been received do not count toward the major or concentration requirements.

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**Concentration in Religion**

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For the concentration the following 7 courses are required:

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- 2 introductory courses (2000 level)
- 2 intermediate courses (3000 level)
- 1 seminar (4000 level)
- RELI UN3199 Theory
Spring 2023

RELI UN2304 CHRISTIANITY. 3.00 points.
Survey of Christianity from its beginnings through the Reformation. Based on lectures and discussions of readings in primary source translations, this course will cover prominent developments in the history of Christianity. The structure will allow students to rethink commonly held notions about the evolution of modern Christianity with the texture of historical influence.

RELI UN2312 Religion and Nasty Women. 4.00 points.
Used in 2016 by then presidential candidate, Donald Trump, in reference to his female opponent, Hillary Clinton, the phrase “nasty woman” has become a badge of honor and a rallying cry for women’s empowerment. The origin of the word “nasty,” attested in the 14th century, indicates highly unpleasant qualities—nauseating or unclean, in a literal or figurative way. It also came to evoke indecency and obscenity and religious traditions have a long history of such depiction of women.

RELI UN2313 Religion and Nasty Women - Discussion. 0 points.
Used in 2016 by then presidential candidate, Donald Trump, in reference to his female opponent, Hillary Clinton, the phrase “nasty woman” has become a badge of honor and a rallying cry for women’s empowerment.

This course provides a chronological and thematic introduction to Chinese religions from their beginnings until modern times. It examines distinctive concepts, practices and institutions in the religions of China. Emphasis will be placed on the diversity and unity of religious expressions in China, with readings drawn from a wide-range of texts: religious scriptures, philosophical texts, popular literature and modern historical and ethnographic studies. Special attention will be given to those forms of religion common to both “elite” and “folk” culture: cosmology, family and communal rituals, afterlife, morality and mythology. The course also raises more general questions concerning gender, class, political patronage, and differing concepts of religion.

RELI UN2405 CHINESE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. 4.00 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
RELI UN2406 Chinese Religious Traditions - Discussion. 0.00 points.
This course provides a chronological and thematic introduction to Chinese religions from their beginnings until modern times. It examines distinctive concepts, practices and institutions in the religions of China. Emphasis will be placed on the diversity and unity of religious expressions in China, with readings drawn from a wide-range of texts: religious scriptures, philosophical texts, popular literature and modern historical and ethnographic studies. Special attention will be given to those forms of religion common to both “elite” and “folk” culture: cosmology, family and communal rituals, afterlife, morality and mythology. The course also raises more general questions concerning gender, class, political patronage, and differing concepts of religion.

RELI UN3625 Hippie Physics, Counterculture, Cyberculture. 3.00 points.
The world inside your smartphone may not be all that it seems. Everything from your e-banking app to your TikTok algorithm can be traced back to the Woodstock-going, acid-taking, love (not war)-making attitude that permeated the youth (in spite of the generations before) in counterculture America. Today's technosphere grew out of the convergence of the post-World War II and Cold War military-industrial complex and the 1960s counterculture. Resistance to the war in Vietnam, the Civil Rights movement, and the spread of Buddhist thought created social unrest and political disorder. (Almost) simultaneously, a counter counterculture emerged – conservative Christians joined forces with right wing and libertarian politicians to resist sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll, and promote a religiously, politically, and racially "purified" America. Sound familiar? In the midst of this turmoil, groups of physicists who had dropped out (but not necessarily tuned in) gathered in San Francisco and Palo Alto garages to create a technological revolution that continues to transform the world. This course will explore this seminal period through a consideration of music, films, and books of this era, as well as the technological and philosophical implications that quantum physics has on our society and culture today.

RELI UN3901 GUIDED READING AND RESEARCH. 1.00-4.00 points.
Prerequisites: the instructors permission.

RELI GU4216 Religion and Capitalism: Faith and the American Market. 4.00 points.
Is the market a religious system? Can we consider "capitalism" to be a key arena in which the relationship between the religious and the secular is both negotiated and performed? In this course, students will explore the complicated relationship between faith and the market, the religious and the secular, and the evolution of vice and virtue as they relate to economic thriving in the United States. While no hard and fast rules for thinking about the relationship between right conduct and material interests cut across all religious and philosophical traditions, human agents invest real faith into currency, into markets, and into the reigning economic order to bring about increased opportunities, wealth, and freedom to people across the globe. Throughout this semester, we will chart both the long shadows and the future trajectories of these beliefs from our American perspective.
RELI GU4255 Hegel, Information, “Artificial” Intelligence. 4.00 points.
The development of high-speed computers, artificial neural networks, miniaturized sensors, mobile phones, and Big Data has created the conditions for the transformation of artificial intelligence. These changes are not only transforming the world but are also recasting long-standing distinctions like nature/culture, natural/artificial, body/mind, complexity/simplicity, and organism/machine that have shaped human thought and life for centuries. This reframing of opposites as irreducibly interrelated was anticipated by Kant’s notion of self-organization and developed systematically by Hegel. This course will approach current forms of artificial intelligence through Kant’s interpretation of self-organization and Hegel’s dialectical logic and will reread Hegel’s system through “natural” and “artificial” neural networks, complex systems, and information theory. If nature and culture are inextricably interrelated, then is “artificial” intelligence really artificial, and is “nature” every merely natural? What are the implications of these developments for the understanding of human “nature” that has shaped the Anthropocene since the time of Galileo, Newton, and Descartes?

Spring 2023: RELI GU4255
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
RELI 4255  001/16567  T:10:10am - 12:00pm  201 80 Claremont  Mark Taylor  4.00  12/20

RELI GU4326 SUFISM IN SOUTH ASIA. 4.00 points.
Sufism or tassawuf has misleadingly been described as the mystical side of Islam, implying that it is somehow detached from the material world. Throughout the history of Islam, Sufi ideas, practices, and institutions have borne a complex, intimate, and sometimes fraught relationship with other aspects of Islamic tradition and practice, a relationship that has also been profoundly impacted by Orientalist scholarship in the colonial period and by global reformist currents in the postcolonial period. This seminar for advanced undergraduates and graduate students is an interdisciplinary investigation of how Sufism has been affected by the historical, sociocultural, political, and everyday environments in which it is experienced and practiced, with a particular focus on South Asia. Eclectic in approach, we will begin by considering how Sufism has been construed and even constructed by scholars, considering how modern notions of the self, religion, and the political have shaped scholarly understandings of what Sufism is. Focusing on bodily practices and well known individual Sufis who lived in South Asia during different historical periods, we will use them as a vehicle for understanding Sufi experience within the context of the evolving Sufi orders within specific local spaces. We will consider why Sufism has become such a target of controversy and ambivalence among Muslims in the modern world and trace some of the changing controversies and tensions that Sufis have struggled with over time, focusing on their understandings of self, society and reality.

Spring 2023: RELI GU4326
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
RELI 4326  001/13069  W:12:10pm - 2:00pm  477 Alfred Lerner Hall  Quinn Clark  4.00  6/15

RELI GU4513 BUDDHISM AND NEUROSCIENCE. 4.00 points.
With the Dalai Lamas marked interest in recent advances in neuroscience, the question of the compatibility between Buddhist psychology and neuroscience has been raised in a number of conferences and studies. This course will examine the state of the question, look at claims made on both sides, and discuss whether or not there is a convergence between Buddhist discourse about the mind and scientific discourse about the brain.

Spring 2023: RELI GU4513
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
RELI 4513  001/19465  T:2:10pm - 4:00pm  101 80 Claremont  Bernard Faure  4.00  15/25

RELI GU4565 Women and Islam. 4.00 points.
This course is a comprehensive engagement with Islamic perspectives on women with a specific focus on the debates about women's role and status in Muslim societies. Students will learn how historical, religious, socio-economic and political factors influence the lives and experiences of Muslim women. A variety of source materials (the foundational texts of Islam, historical and ethnographic accounts, women's and gender studies scholarship) will serve as the framework for lectures. Students will be introduced to women's religious lives and a variety of women's issues as they are reported and represented in the works written by women themselves and scholars chronicling women's religious experiences. We will begin with an overview of the history and context of the emergence of Islam from a gendered perspective. We will explore differing interpretations of the core Islamic texts concerning women, and the relationship between men and women: who speaks about and for women in Islam? In the second part of the course we will discuss women's religious experiences in different parts of the Muslim world. Students will examine the interrelationship between women and religion with special emphasis on the ways in which the practices of religion in women's daily lives impact contemporary societies. All readings will be in English. Prior course work in Islam or women's studies is recommended, but not required.

Spring 2023: RELI GU4565
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
RELI 4565  001/17214  M:2:10pm - 4:00pm  201 80 Claremont  Aziza Shanazarova  4.00  17/20

RELI GU4616 TECHNOLOGY, RELIGION, FUTURE. 4.00 points.
This seminar will examine the history of the impact of technology and media on religion and vice versa before bringing into focus the main event: religion today and in the future. We will read the classics as well as review current writing, video and other media, bringing thinkers such as Eliade, McLuhan, Mumford and Weber into dialogue with the current writing of Kurzweil, Lanier and Taylor, and look at, among other things: ethics in a Virtual World; the relationship between Burning Man, a potential new religion, and technology; the relevance of God and The Rapture in Kurzweils Singularity; and what will become of karma when carbon-based persons merge with silicon-based entities and other advanced technologies.

Spring 2023: RELI GU4616
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
RELI 4616  001/13075  Th:4:10pm - 6:40pm  201 80 Claremont  David Kittay  4.00  28/25
beyond religious communities. Ideally, students should experience this violent pasts, the precarity of the present, vanishing futures and how with issues related to loss, damaged life, community, complicated and come away from the course with an expanded sense of how we grapple think autonomously and to challenge facile solutions. Students should of open-ended collective inquiry in which students will be encouraged to trying to settle on definitive answers, this course will cultivate a process building communities and relating to others and the world. Rather than in a shared classroom and what new rituals of virtual learning mean for the (hopefully only temporary) loss of face-to-face communal learning the circumstances of our moment, we will also take time to reflect on losses of religion both personally (e.g., because one's hitherto conceptual tools for thinking about loss, community, and damaged life. We will examine how religious practices change in relation to losses and reflect on losses of religion both personally (e.g., because one's hitherto familiar value system breaks down) and collectively (e.g., the forced conversions and suppression of religious traditions by colonialism). We will track how loss and rituals surrounding loss can change how history, time, space, and meaning are experienced. We will ask what if anything comes after or alongside loss, especially given the perdurance of loss that is brought about by centuries of systemic violence. Given the circumstances of our moment, we will also take time to reflect on the (hopefully only temporary) loss of face-to-face communal learning in a shared classroom and what new rituals of virtual learning mean for building communities and relating to others and the world. Rather than trying to settle on definitive answers, this course will cultivate a process of open-ended collective inquiry in which students will be encouraged to think autonomously and to challenge facile solutions. Students should come away from the course with an expanded sense of how we grapple with issues related to loss, damaged life, community, complicated and violent pasts, the precarity of the present, vanishing futures and how religion and religious formations are entangled with these issues well beyond religious communities. Ideally, students should experience this course as enlarging the set of critical tools at their disposal for creative and rigorous thinking.
RELUN3199 THEORY. 4.00 points.
An exploration of alternative theoretical approaches to the study of religion as well as other areas of humanistic inquiry. The methods considered include: sociology, anthropology, philosophy, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, structuralism, genealogy, and deconstruction. (Previous title: Juniors Colloquium)

Spring 2023: RELI UN3199
Course Number Section/Call Number Times/Location Instructor Points Enrollment
RELI 3199 001/00190 Th 2:10pm - 4:00pm 407 Barnard Hall Timothy Vasko 4.00 14/15

RELUN3202 RELIGION IN AMERICA I. 3.00 points.
This course offers a survey of American religions from the 1500s through the mid-1800s. We examine the politics of conversion in different kinds of colonialisms; the different strands of Christianity in early America and their cultural contexts; the emergence of evangelical Protestantism; the effects of religious disestablishment in the early republic; and the relationship between religion and social movements

RELUN3318 Humor, Joy, and Happiness in Judaism. 4.00 points.
Jewish history is plagued with tragedies and suffering. It only makes sense, then, that scholars of Jewish Studies tend to focus on moments of hardship and pain. But do disasters and the despair tell the whole story? What gets missed when we prioritize despair and misery and cast aside allegedly “lighter” and more “positive” themes? Such questions are the engine that runs this seminar. Here, students are invited to rethink the cultural roles of joy in Judaism, take Jewish humor seriously, and ponder whether happiness in Judaism is distinct from what we find in other religious traditions. “Joy, Humor, and Happiness in Judaism” is not, however, a feel-good course. Throughout the semester, through careful readings of primary sources (in translation) and contemporary theories, we will explore how so-called positive emotions, moods, and affects are inextricable from the most “serious” aspects of religion, politics, and the human experience, such as identity formation, violence, gender norms, and power

RELUN3771 Early Modern Indigenous Thought. 4.00 points.
What is the scope of truth and authority? What is the origin of the world and how does that determine the social order? Who ought to rule, why, and how? What are the standards for measuring justice and injustice? What is our relationship to the environment around us and how should its resources be distributed among people? How do we relate to those who are different from us, and what does it mean to be a community in the first place? Historically, the answers to these questions have been described as “religious” and “political” have been the restricted to a specific tradition of Western European Christianity and its secular afterlives. However, these are questions that every society asks, in order to be a society in the first place. This course analyzes how indigenous peoples in the Americas asked and answered these questions through the first three centuries of Western European imperial rule. At the same time, this course pushes students to question what gets categorized as uniquely “indigenous” thought, how, and why

RELUN3881 The Doctrine of Discovery. Religion, Law, and Legacies of 1492. 4.00 points.
How did European-Christians justify the colonization of the Americas? Did these justifications vary between different European empires, and between the Protestant and Catholic faiths, and if so, how? Do these justifications remain in effect in modern jurisprudence and ministries? This class explores these questions by introducing students to the Doctrine of Discovery. The Doctrine of Discovery is the defining legal rationale for European Colonization in the Western Hemisphere. The Doctrine has its origins in a body of ecclesiastic, legal, and philosophical texts dating to the late-fifteenth century, and was summarized by Chief Justice John Marshall of the United States Supreme Court, in the final, unanimous decision the judiciary issued on the 1823 case Johnson v. McIntosh. Students will be introduced to the major, primary texts that make up the Doctrine, as well as contemporary critical studies of these texts and the Doctrine in general

RELGU4105 RELIGION LAB. 4.00 points.
In their research, scholars of religion employ a variety of methods to analyze texts ranging from historical documents to objects of visual culture. This course acquaints students with both the methods and the materials utilized in the field of religious studies. Through guided exercises, they acquire research skills for utilizing sources and become familiarized with dominant modes of scholarly discourse. The class is organized around a series of research scavenger hunts that are due at the start of each week’s class and assigned during the discussion section (to be scheduled on the first day of class). Additional class meeting on Thursdays

RELGU4120 GENDER IN ANC CHRISTIANITY. 4.00 points.
This seminar considers the difference gender makes in interpreting ancient Christian texts, ideas, and practices. Topics will include gender hierarchy and homoeroticism, prophecy and authority, outsiders’ views of Christianity, bodily pieties such as martyrdom and asceticism, and gender politics in the establishment of church offices. Emphasis will be placed on close readings of primary sources and selected scholarly framings of these sources

RELGU4207 Religion and the Afro-Native Experience. 4.00 points.
African Americans and Native Americans have a shared history of racial oppression in America. However, the prevailing lenses through which scholars understand settler colonialism, religion, and black and indigenous histories focus overwhelmingly on the dynamics between Europeans and these respective groups. How might our understanding of these subjects change when viewed from a different point of departure, if we center the history of entanglements between black and native lives? How does religion structure the overlapping experiences of Afro-Native peoples in North America? From political movements in Minneapolis, Oakland, and New York City to enslavement from the Cotton Belt to the Rio Grande, this class will explore how Africans, Native Americans, and their descendants adapted to shifting contexts of race and religion in America. The course will proceed thematically by examining experiences of war, dislocation, survival, and diaspora
RELI GU4223 Dreams. **4.00 points.**
This seminar for advanced undergraduates and graduate students is an interdisciplinary investigation of how dreams are viewed and understood across a range of the historical, sociocultural, political, and scholarly environments in which they are experienced and interpreted. Eclectic in approach, we will focus on close readings of a selection of dream texts, beginning with Freud’s “The Dream of Irma’s Injection.” We will aim to open up the text over several weeks. To facilitate this process, the syllabus will include an array of suggested readings linked to each week’s focus of inquiry. Students are expected to make a selection from these readings (or other readings that you find relevant) in order to prepare your own close reading of the dream text to discuss in class. We will then turn to other dreamers who draw on different aspects of the Islamic tradition to understand their own dreams, with supplementary readings drawn from form history, anthropology, and religious studies to provide contexts for interpreting these dreams.

RELI GU4305 SECULAR # SPIRITUAL AMERICA. **4.00 points.**
Prerequisites: Majors and concentrators receive first priority.
Are Americans becoming more secular or more spiritual (not religious), or both? What are the connections between secularism and what is typically called non-organized religion or the spiritual in the United States? We will address these questions by looking at some of the historical trajectories that shape contemporary debates and designations (differences) between spiritual, secular and religious.

RELI GU4517 After the Human. **4.00 points.**
The advent of high-speed computing, Big Data, new forms of Artificial Intelligence, and global networking is rapidly transforming all aspects of life. Implants, transplants, genetic engineering, cloning, nanotechnology, cyborgs, hybrids, prostheses, mobile phones, tracking devices and wearable devices. The Internet of Things and the Internet of Bodies are becoming interconnected to transform what once was known as human being. These developments raise fundamental questions about what comes after the human. This course considers the philosophical and theological implications of this question by addressing the following issues: Natural vs. Artificial, Treatment vs. Enhancement, the Artificial Intelligence Revolution, Ubiquitous Computing, the Internet of Things, the Singularity, Extended Mind and Superintelligence, Internet of Bodies and Superorganisms, Death and After Life. Students will have the option of writing a term paper or doing a project related to the course readings.

RELI GU4619 Islam in Popular Culture. **4.00 points.**
This course interrogates seminal issues in the academic study of Islam through its popular representation in various forms of media from movies and television to novels and comic books. The class is structured around key theoretical readings from a range of academic disciplines ranging from art history and anthropology to comparative literature and religion. The course begins by placing the controversies surrounding the visual depiction of Muhammad in historical perspective (Gruber). This is followed by an examination of modern portrayals of Muslims in film that highlights both the vilification of the “other” (Shaheen) and the persistence of colonial discourses centered on the “native informant” (Mamdani). Particular emphasis is given to recent pop cultural works that challenge these simplistic discourses of Islam. The second half of the course revisits Muhammad, employing an anthropological framework (Asad) to understand the controversies surrounding Salman Rushdie’s Satanic Verses. The obsession with a gendered depiction of Islam is then examined through an anthropological framework that sheds light on the problems of salvation narratives (Abu Lughod). The course ends with a look at the unique history of Islam in America, particularly the tension between immigrant and African-American communities.

**All Courses (including those not offered in the current academic year)**

RELI UN1310 GOD. **3.00 points.**
What is religion? And what does God have to do with it? This course will seek to engage a range of answers to these questions. The class is not a survey of all religious traditions. Rather, it will address religion as a comparative problem between traditions as well as between scholarly and methodological approaches. We will engage the issue of perspective in, for example, the construction of a conflict between religion and science, religion and modernity, as well as some of the distinctions now current in the media between religion, politics, economics and race. And we will wonder about God and gods.

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<th>Fall 2023: RELI UN1310</th>
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RELI UN1312 Religion in Black America: An Introduction. **4 points.**
Religion has been a complicated and contested, yet central, organizing force in the making of black life in the America. At the same time, African American religious life has been the subject of much scrutiny throughout the history of the United States, serving arguments that advocated abolition, emancipation and full enfranchisement, but also functioning as evidence to justify enslavement and second-class citizenship. To better understand such phenomena, this course provides a chronological survey that introduces students to a range of ideas and practices, individuals and institutions, as well as important themes and topics in African American (thus American) religious history. Primary attention is given to Afro-Protestantism in the United States; however, throughout the course attention is directed to religious diversity and varying religious traditions/practices in different diasporic locales. By the end of the semester students will be expected to possess a working knowledge of major themes/figures/traditions in African American religious life, as well as key questions that have shaped the study thereof.
RELI UN1320 Losing My Religion. 3.00 points.
The R.E.M. lead singer Michael Stipe explained that the phrase “losing my religion” in the song of the same title does not refer to what we might commonly understand by “religion.” Rather it cites the expression used in the Southern U.S. for losing one’s temper, feeling frustrated, exasperated, and desperate. The loss present in John Legend and Common’s song “Glory” from the movie Selma are the lives lost to the unattenuated history of racist violence and in the struggle against structural white supremacy. In this context, for Blacks “freedom is like religion.” Like religion. Even if the song does not shy away from Christian theological tropes, “religion” here too remains elusive. Living through a major global pandemic as we are (although arguably, racism and capitalism are also ongoing—albeit mostly unacknowledged—global pandemics), we are witnessing the losses attributable to Covid-19 precipitating changing practices and rituals of marking losses, mourning, and building community in the present. Apart from impacting practices that we generally term “religious,” loss and living with losses also reveal what may have been our individual and collective “religion” lost and what may emerge as the “religions” we hew to newly or nonetheless. In this course we will explore how various meanings of “religion” might offer us conceptual tools for thinking about loss, community, and damaged life. We will examine how religious practices change in relation to losses and reflect on losses of religion both personally (e.g., because one’s hitherto familiar value system breaks down) and collectively (e.g., the forced conversions and suppression of religious traditions by colonialism). We will track how loss and rituals surrounding loss can change how history, time, space, and meaning are experienced. We will ask what if anything comes after or alongside loss, especially given the perdurance of loss that is brought about by centuries of systemic violence. Given the circumstances of our moment, we will also take time to reflect on the (hopefully only temporary) loss of face-to-face communal learning in a shared classroom and what new rituals of virtual learning mean for building communities and relating to others and the world. Rather than trying to settle on definitive answers, this course will cultivate a process of open-ended collective inquiry in which students will be encouraged to think autonomously and to challenge facile solutions. Students should come away from the course with an expanded sense of how we grapple with issues related to loss, damaged life, community, complicated and violent pasts, the precarity of the present, vanishing futures and how religion and religious formations are entangled with these issues well beyond religious communities. Ideally, students should experience this course as enlarging the set of critical tools at their disposal for creative and rigorous thinking

RELI UN1612 Religion and the History of Hip Hop. 4.00 points.
This is an undergraduate lecture course introducing students to the study of religion through an engagement with the history of hip hop music. More specifically, this course is organized chronologically to narrate a history of religion in the United States (circa 1970 to the present day) by mapping the ways that a variety of religious ideas and practices have animated rap music's evolution and expansion during this time period. While there are no required prerequisites for the course, prior coursework in religious studies, African American studies, and/or popular music is helpful

RELI UN1615 Vampires. 3 points.
Do you believe in vampires? Like ghosts and zombies, vampires circulate in a secularized world and few are those who would speak of a “vampire religion.” This course will attempt to do that. It will ask about the ubiquitous figure of the vampire, insofar as it evokes the ancient and the archaic, the modern and the postmodern. With Bram Stoker’s Dracula as our guide, and with the help of film, we will explore the religious significance of vampires and what they mean for the salvation—or perdition—of the soul. We will wonder about vampires and sexuality, vampires and media, vampires and (geo-)politics, and even vampires and the economy.

RELI UN1620 Religion and the Movies. 3 points.
This class is an introduction to both film and religious studies and aims to explore their interaction. Ranging from auteurs to blockbusters, the course will analyze movies that make use of the sacred and of religious themes, figures or metaphors. The course will probe the definitions and boundaries of religion -as theology, myth, ideology- and will show students how religion remains a critical presence in the arts, even in a secular guise. We will look at the ways in which popular culture can serve religious functions in contemporary society and examine how faith is represented in popular culture.

RELI UN2105 CHRISTIANITY. 3.00 points.
RELI UN2201 BUDDHISM: INDO-TIBETAN-DISC. 0.00 points.
The course introduces the history of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism throughout India, South and Southeast Asia, Tibet, and Central Asia, its essential primary textual source materials translated from Pali, Sanskrit, and Tibetan, and the philosophical insights of some of the traditions’ outstanding individuals

RELI UN2205 BUDDHISM: INDO-TIBETAN. 4.00 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

The course introduces the history of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism throughout India, South and Southeast Asia, Tibet, and Central Asia, its essential primary textual source materials translated from Pali, Sanskrit, and Tibetan, and the philosophical insights of some of the traditions’ outstanding individuals

RELI UN2301 ISLAM-DISCUSSION. 0.00 points.
RELI UN2304 CHRISTIANITY. 3.00 points.
Survey of Christianity from its beginnings through the Reformation. Based on lectures and discussions of readings in primary source translations, this course will cover prominent developments in the history of Christianity. The structure will allow students to rethink commonly held notions about the evolution of modern Christianity with the texture of historical influence

Spring 2023: RELI UN2304

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RELI UN2305 ISLAM. 4.00 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

An introduction to the Islamic religion in its premodern and modern manifestations. The first half of the course concentrates on "classical" Islam, beginning with the life of the Prophet, and extending to ritual, jurisprudence, theology, and mysticism. The second half examines how Muslims have articulated Islam in light of colonization and the rise of a secular modernity. The course ends with a discussion of American and European Muslim attempts at carving out distinct spheres of identity in the larger global Muslim community

RELI UN2306 INTRO TO JUDAISM. 3.00 points.
A historical overview of Jewish belief and practice as these have crystalized and changed over the centuries. Special attention to ritual and worship, the forms of religious literature, central concepts, religious leadership and institutions, Israel among the nations

RELI UN2307 CHINESE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. 3.00 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

Historical survey highlighting major developments in Chinese religion: includes selections from the Warring States classics, developments in popular Daoism, and an overview of the golden age of Chinese Buddhism. Touches on Neo-Confucianism, popular literature of the late imperial period, and the impact of Western ideas

RELI UN2308 BUDDHISM: EAST ASIAN. 4.00 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

Lecture and discussion. An introductory survey that studies East Asian Buddhism as an integral, living religious tradition. Emphasis on the reading of original treatises and historiographies in translation, while historical events are discussed in terms of their relevance to contemporary problems confronted by Buddhism. There is a mandatory weekly discussion session

RELI UN2309 HINDUISM. 4.00 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

Considers efforts since 1900 to synthesize a coherent understanding of what Hinduism entails, sometimes under the heading of sanatana dharma. Using a rubric provided by the Bhagavad Gita, explores philosophical/theological (jnana), ritual (karma), and devotional (bhakti) aspects of Hindu life and thought

RELI UN2312 Religion and Nasty Women. 4.00 points.
Used in 2016 by then presidential candidate, Donald Trump, in reference to his female opponent, Hillary Clinton, the phrase "nasty woman" has become a badge of honor and a rallying cry for women’s empowerment. The origin of the word "nasty," attested in the 14th century, indicates highly unpleasant qualities- nauseating or unclean, in a literal or figurative way. It also came to evoke indecency and obscenity- and religious traditions have a long history of such depiction of women.

The origin of the word “nasty,” attested in the 14th century, indicates highly unpleasant qualities- nauseating or unclean, in a literal or figurative way. It also came to evoke indecency and obscenity- and religious traditions have a long history of such depiction of women.

After introducing some key texts on the otherness and objectification of women (including by Aristotle, Beauvoir, Kristeva, Nussbaum, and Butler), we will examine a number of female characters- goddesses, prostitutes, and virgins - in the Mesopotamian, Greek, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic corpus that fit the definition of nasty. We will also analyze some of the underlying tropes of impurity and danger that characterize nastiness involving bodily fluids, sexuality, and knowledge. Spanning theology, literature, movies, and popular culture the course aims to be a survey of religious-based misogyny as well as women's responses in their pursuit of agency

RELI UN2313 Religion and Nasty Women - Discussion. 0 points.
Used in 2016 by then presidential candidate, Donald Trump, in reference to his female opponent, Hillary Clinton, the phrase “nasty woman” has become a badge of honor and a rallying cry for women's empowerment.

The origin of the word “nasty,” attested in the 14th century, indicates highly unpleasant qualities- nauseating or unclean, in a literal or figurative way. It also came to evoke indecency and obscenity- and religious traditions have a long history of such depiction of women.

After introducing some key texts on the otherness and objectification of women (including by Aristotle, Beauvoir, Kristeva, Nussbaum, and Butler), we will examine a number of female characters- goddesses, prostitutes, and virgins - in the Mesopotamian, Greek, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic corpus that fit the definition of nasty. We will also analyze some of the underlying tropes of impurity and danger that characterize nastiness involving bodily fluids, sexuality, and knowledge. Spanning theology, literature, movies, and popular culture the course aims to be a survey of religious-based misogyny as well as women's responses in their pursuit of agency.

RELI UN2314 Japanese Religious Traditions. 3.00 points.
Study of the development of the Japanese religious tradition in the premodern period. Attention given to the thought and practices of Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism; the interaction among these religions in Japanese history; the first encounter with Christianity.
REL 2336 Religion in Black America: An Introduction - Discussion. 0.00 points.

Religion has been a complicated and contested, yet central, organizing force in the making of black life in the America. At the same time, African American religious life has been the subject of much scrutiny throughout the history of the United States, serving arguments that advocated abolition, emancipation and full enfranchisement, but also functioning as evidence to justify enslavement and second-class citizenship. To better understand such phenomena, this course provides a chronological survey that introduces students to a range of ideas and practices, individuals and institutions, as well as important themes and topics in African American (thus American) religious history. Primary attention is given to Afro-Protestantism in the United States; however, throughout the course attention is directed to religious diversity and varying religious traditions/practices in different diasporic locales. By the end of the semester students will be expected to possess a working knowledge of major themes/figures/traditions in African American religious life, as well as key questions that have shaped the study thereof.

REL 2322 Introduction to Islamic Law. 3.00 points.

The platform of every modern “Islamist” political party calls for the implementation of “the shari’a.” This term is invariably (and incorrectly) interpreted as an unchanging legal code dating back to 7th century Arabia. In reality, Islamic law is an organic and constantly evolving human project aimed at ascertaining God’s will in a given historical and cultural context. This course offers an introduction to the major concepts in Islamic law including its basic method and its interactions with modernity. The first part of the semester is dedicated to “classical” Islamic jurisprudence, concentrating on the manner in which jurists used the Qur’an, the Sunna (the model of the Prophet), and rationality to articulate a coherent legal system. The second part of the course focuses on those areas of the law that engender passionate debate and controversy in the contemporary world. Specifically, we examine the discourse surrounding gender (marriage, divorce, and personhood) and crime/punishment. The course ends by directly engaging issues associated with modernity with a particular focus on science (evolution) and medicine (medical ethics). This class is designed as a broad introduction to the Islamic law with case studies scattered throughout the semester. The format of individual class sessions will vary from topic to topic but students should anticipate *extensive* participation.

REL 2335 RELI IN BLACK AMERICA: AN INTRO. 4.00 points.

Religion has been a complicated and contested, yet central, organizing force in the making of black life in the America. At the same time, African American religious life has been the subject of much scrutiny throughout the history of the United States, serving arguments that advocated abolition, emancipation and full enfranchisement, but also functioning as evidence to justify enslavement and second-class citizenship. To better understand such phenomena, this course provides a chronological survey that introduces students to a range of ideas and practices, individuals and institutions, as well as important themes and topics in African American (thus American) religious history. Primary attention is given to Afro-Protestantism in the United States; however, throughout the course attention is directed to religious diversity and varying religious traditions/practices in different diasporic locales. By the end of the semester students will be expected to possess a working knowledge of major themes/figures/traditions in African American religious life, as well as key questions that have shaped the study thereof.
REL UN2415 Religions of Harlem. 3 points.
Not offered during 2023-2024 academic year.

Through a range of field exercises and classroom guests, this course will introduce students to the rich religious history of Harlem, while also challenging them to document and analyze the diversity of Harlem’s contemporary religious scene.

REL UN2506 From Exodus to the Coronavirus: Scriptures and Narratives of Religious Responses to Epidemics. 4.00 points.

The purpose of this course is to offer an overview of religious responses to epidemics and pandemics, mostly in a monotheistic tradition, and to engage with the questions of collective guilt, collective mourning, divine justice (or lack thereof), and the societal disruption that such illnesses create or expose as well as persecution and discrimination. The questions raised will help us find parallels with these times of pandemics and put our current times into perspective, but also contextualize and reflect on the nuances of past events and responses.

REL UN2507 From Exodus to the Coronavirus: Scriptures and Narratives of Religious Responses to Epidemics - Discussion. 0.00 points.

The purpose of this course is to offer an overview of religious responses to epidemics and pandemics, mostly in a monotheistic tradition, and to engage with the questions of collective guilt, collective mourning, divine justice (or lack thereof), and the societal disruption that such illnesses create or expose as well as persecution and discrimination. The questions raised will help us find parallels with these times of pandemics and put our current times into perspective, but also contextualize and reflect on the nuances of past events and responses.

REL UN2670 MAGIC AND MODERNITY. 3.00 points.

This course introduces students to the cultural history of magic: as an idea, as a practice, and as a tool with which wield power and induce wonder. Magic, as we will explore, is a modern concept, the contours of which have been shaped by its relations with religion and science, always against larger backdrops—of the Enlightenment, Romanticism, (post) colonialism, and (post) secularism. Readings are drawn from philosophy, anthropology, religious studies, sociology, drama, literature, history, history of science, and political theory. Cases and readings focus on everything from medieval England to post-socialist Mozambique. Throughout the term, a recurring theme will be whether, and to what extent, magic is incompatible with modernity—or, actually, integral to its constitution. By the end of this course, students should be familiar with a variety of ways in which magic has been understood since the early modern era, in a wide range of settings and cultural contexts. By tracing understandings of magic, students should also come away with an appreciation of how the authority of being "modern" is constructed (and contested) in relation to contemporary valuations of reason, science, enchantment, and the imagination.

REL UN2779 INTRODUCTION TO NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. 3.00 points.

There are over 800 distinct Native American nations currently within the borders of the United States. This course offers a broad introduction to the diversity of American Indian religious systems and their larger functions in communities and in history. We will explore general themes in the study of Native American religious traditions as well as look at some specific examples of practices, ideas, and beliefs. Of particular importance are the history and effects of colonialism and missionization on Native peoples, their continuing struggles for religious freedom and cultural and linguistic survival, and the ways in which American Indians engage with religion and spirituality, both past and present, to respond to social, cultural, political, and geographical change.

REL UN3199 THEORY. 4.00 points.

An exploration of alternative theoretical approaches to the study of religion as well as other areas of humanistic inquiry. The methods considered include: sociology, anthropology, philosophy, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, structuralism, genealogy, and deconstruction. (Previous title: Juniors Colloquium)

REL UN3202 RELIGION IN AMERICA I. 3.00 points.

This course offers a survey of American religions from the 1500s through the mid-1800s. We examine the politics of conversion in different kinds of colonialisms; the different strands of Christianity in early America and their cultural contexts; the emergence of evangelical Protestantism; the effects of religious disestablishment in the early republic; and the relationship between religion and social movements.

REL UN3203 RELIGION IN AMERICA II. 3.00 points.

Survey of American religion from the Civil War to the present, with an emphasis on the ways religion has shaped American history, culture, and identity.

REL UN3204 Religion, Sexuality, and Truth. 3 points.

The extent of Michel Foucault engagement with Christianity has only recently came to light with the publication of his lectures from the early 1980s. These lectures constitute, in many ways, the culmination of Foucault's work on power, sexuality, subjectivity and the discursive operations whereby knowledge is produced. In this course, we will appreciate the depth and originality of Foucault's critical account of Christianity and examine the major role it occupied in his thought on subjects such as sexuality, governmentality, truth telling, confession, and judicial forms. We will understand Foucault's work along with the crucial role he ascribed to Christianity in forming the history of the present.
RELI UN3206 RELIGION IN THE ARCHIVE. 4.00 points.
Students must sign up for a discussion section on Fridays, 10:10-11:25. Not offered during 2023-2024 academic year.

In Religion in the Archive, students will conduct archival research and create digital humanities projects that “remix” and decolonize a missionary archive: the Papers of Matilda Calder Thurston (1875-1958), an American missionary who helped establish the first four-year women’s college in China, Ginling College in Nanjing. Thurston’s papers belong to the Missionary Research Library housed at Burke Library. The class will meet twice a week for lectures addressing the history of American and Chinese religions and focused on theoretical questions of imperialism, gender, conversion, and modernization. Students will also engage with debates about the archive/archiving, the digital humanities, and what it means to present scholarly research to a public audience. During the Friday recitation, students will conduct archival research and scan archival documents, to embed metadata, to work with a database program, and to design a website and/or produce a podcast.

RELI UN3207 In the Margins of the Middle Ages: Religious Minorities in the Medieval Latin West. 4.00 points.
This course investigates marginal religious groups, including apostates, heretics, Jews, magicians, Muslims, etc. against the backdrop of Christianity in medieval Western Europe. Through examining various types of primary textual and pictorial sources including papal letters, penitential handbooks, lawyers’ commentaries, autobiographies, manuscript illuminations, paintings, etc., the class will facilitate students to rethink the socio-historical situation of religious minorities, the defining of religious boundaries in history, and the echoes of such defining in the contemporary world. (No prerequisites)

RELI UN3208 Aaahh Real Monsters: Critical Monster Studies. 3.00 points.
This course examines the major issues and themes of critical monster studies. It explores questions about how we conceive and understand monsters theoretically, historically, socially, and culturally. Is there a quintessential monster category? Or are monsters constructed? How do social, cultural, and religious factors affect our perception of monsters and the idea of monstrosity? What roles do monsters fill in determining how people construct and deconstruct their communities? Are monsters members of the community? What does the idea of monstrosity imply about the limits of what is possible in nature? Are monsters just supernatural or are there natural monsters? And what do modern depictions of monsters in popular media have to say about how our perception of monsters is changing? Together, we explore all of these questions and orient students into the burgeoning field of critical monster studies.

RELI UN3210 MILLENNIUM: APOCALYPSE AND UTOPIA. 3.00 points.
Study of apocalyptic thinking and practice in the western religious tradition, with a focus on American apocalyptic religious movements and their relation to contemporary cultural productions, as well as notions of history and politics.

RELI UN3216 Religious Histories of New York City. 4.00 points.
This class examines different religious histories of New York City from the early 1800s through the 1950s. We will explore how different religious traditions were shaped by the city and its diversity, and how those people and institutions left their imprints on the city we live in today. The first half of the semester focuses on intersecting themes of religion and capitalism, religion and gender and sexuality, and on the social dynamics of the city’s symbolic meanings as place of refuge and liberation (for domestic and foreign migrants) or as a locus of sin in need of moral reform. The second half of the semester turns to case studies of different neighborhoods including Harlem, the Lower East Side, Williamsburg, and Flushing. How did different religious communities conceptualize “the neighborhood” in relation to the larger city, and how did they grapple with diversity and change? Students will also be introduced to archival collections of the East Harlem Protestant Parish and several settlement houses located at the Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary and at Butler Library.

RELI UN3225 Religion and Capitalism: Faith and the American Market. 3 points.
Is the market a religious system? Can we consider “capitalism” to be a key arena in which the relationship between the religious and the secular is both negotiated and performed? In this course, students will explore the complicated relationship between faith and the market, the religious and the secular, and the evolution of vice and virtue as they relate to economic thriving in the United States. While no hard and fast rules for thinking about the relationship between right conduct and material interests cut across all religious and philosophical traditions, human agents invest real faith into currency, into markets, and into the reigning economic order to bring about increased opportunities, wealth, and freedom to people across the globe. Throughout this semester, we will chart both the long shadows and the future trajectories of these beliefs from our American perspective.

In this course, students will develop a strong foundational knowledge of the key theorists who have defined these relationships for generations before applying a critical lens to a number of global themes (the construction of race, the power of class, and the policing of gender) in an American context. To this end, our syllabus will be split into three units, each anchored by a particular theorist central to the academic study of religion (Max Weber, Karl Marx, and Michel Foucault) and followed by a number of case study texts that will bring their constructs and lenses into more lively debate and discussion.
RELUN3303 Judaism and Translation in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean. 3 points.

CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

The course explores both the practice of translation (the rendering of texts from one language to another) and the idea of translation (as a medium of cultural transmission) in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean.

RELUN3304 Memory and Violence in Shi'i Islam. 4 points.

Not offered during 2023-2024 academic year.

Why do humans insist on remembering and often memorializing violence? And how do they decide when violence is worth remembering or not? This course ponders these questions through a case study by examining the martyrdom of Husayn b. Ali (d. 680), grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and the third Imam in Shi'i Islam. We will explore the many ways in which this violent event has acquired meaning for people around the world from the seventh century until today using the lens of "collective memory" and its role in community formation. There are no prerequisites, but background knowledge of Middle Eastern history will be very helpful.

RELUN3309 Modern Islamic Thought. 4 points.

Who speaks for Islam and Muslims today? Is an "Islamic Reformation" necessary? Is there a Muslim "clergy"? What makes certain religious voices and institutions more authoritative than others? This course explores questions such as how can we conceptualize "authority" and the ways in which religious authorities are constructed in Islam in the modern and post-modern age. What sorts of shifts have occurred at centers of Islamic learning in the modern period? How may some of major influential orientations to Islamic thought today be characterized? How are American Muslims thinkers influenced by modern Islamic thought from Muslim majority countries and how are they developing their own body of thought? What are some of the major debates in contemporary American Muslim thought regarding violence, gender, race and economic justice?

RELUN3314 QURAN. 4.00 points.

This course conceives of the Qur'an as a living text in constant flux through interactions with other religious traditions. It focuses on developing an understanding of the Qur'an's form, style, and content through a close reading of comparable religious texts. Major topics covered include the Qur'anic theory of prophecy, its treatment of the Biblical tradition (both that of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament), and its perspective on pre-Islamic pagan religion. The central goals of the course include the ability to (a) analyze primary religious sources in a critical and objective manner and (b) construct coherent arguments based on concrete evidence. In a class of this nature, class members will naturally hold or develop a wide variety of opinions about the topics covered. The goal is not to adopt a single opinion concerning the interpretation of a particular text, but rather to support personal conclusions in a clear logical manner.

Fall 2023: RELI UN3314

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RELI UN3230 PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION. 3.00 points.

This course in the Philosophy of Religion will consider the relationship between faith and reason, religion and morality, religion and art, and religion and technology. Attention will be devoted to an exploration of comparative interpretations of God or the divine in the western philosophical and theological traditions and Zen Buddhism as well as the interrelation of interpretations of God, self, and world. The course will conclude with a consideration of the question of life after death in philosophy, literature, and information technology.

RELI UN3232 Museums and Sacred Things. 4 points.

This course invites students to consider how museums create, curate, collect, and engage with sacred things, including things that are recognizably religious, things that become "sacred" through the processes of museum collection and display, visitors to museums, and even museum spaces themselves. This course focuses on the American context, and American museums. We will first consider the particular social and political contexts in which museums and museum practices developed and responded to sacred things, and the contexts in which “religion” serves as a valuable if often implicit classification structure. We will then focus on the ways in which things deemed sacred are engaged by museums and encountered by museumgoers, with particular attention to the ways that museumgoers, museum architecture, and religious communities all interact in relation so object. In this class, students will learn to thoughtfully ask question and evaluate the role that museums as public institutions play in shaping public and private understandings and experiences of religion, the sacred, and spirituality.

RELI UN3233 Museums and Sacred Things - Discussion. 0 points.

This course invites students to consider how museums create, curate, collect, and engage with sacred things, including things that are recognizably religious, things that become "sacred" through the processes of museum collection and display, visitors to museums, and even museum spaces themselves. This course focuses on the American context, and American museums. We will first consider the particular social and political contexts in which museums and museum practices developed and responded to sacred things, and the contexts in which “religion” serves as a valuable if often implicit classification structure. We will then focus on the ways in which things deemed sacred are engaged by museums and encountered by museumgoers, with particular attention to the ways that museumgoers, museum architecture, and religious communities all interact in relation so object. In this class, students will learn to thoughtfully ask question and evaluate the role that museums as public institutions play in shaping public and private understandings and experiences of religion, the sacred, and spirituality.

RELI UN3260 Sociology of Religion. 3 points.

Prerequisites: prior coursework in religion or sociology is highly encouraged.

This course introduces classical and contemporary theoretical and empirical approaches to the sociological study of religion, including secularization and secularity, religious identity formation, and sociological approaches to religious practice and meaning. Special focus will be on contemporary American topics, including religion and transnationalism, the role of religious actors and discourses in American politics, law and economics, and everyday religious practice.

RELI UN3230 PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION. 3.00 points.

This course in the Philosophy of Religion will consider the relationship between faith and reason, religion and morality, religion and art, and religion and technology. Attention will be devoted to an exploration of comparative interpretations of God or the divine in the western philosophical and theological traditions and Zen Buddhism as well as the interrelation of interpretations of God, self, and world. The course will conclude with a consideration of the question of life after death in philosophy, literature, and information technology.

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RELI UN3233 Museums and Sacred Things - Discussion. 0 points.

This course invites students to consider how museums create, curate, collect, and engage with sacred things, including things that are recognizably religious, things that become "sacred" through the processes of museum collection and display, visitors to museums, and even museum spaces themselves. This course focuses on the American context, and American museums. We will first consider the particular social and political contexts in which museums and museum practices developed and responded to sacred things, and the contexts in which “religion” serves as a valuable if often implicit classification structure. We will then focus on the ways in which things deemed sacred are engaged by museums and encountered by museumgoers, with particular attention to the ways that museumgoers, museum architecture, and religious communities all interact in relation so object. In this class, students will learn to thoughtfully ask question and evaluate the role that museums as public institutions play in shaping public and private understandings and experiences of religion, the sacred, and spirituality.

RELI UN3260 Sociology of Religion. 3 points.

Prerequisites: prior coursework in religion or sociology is highly encouraged.

This course introduces classical and contemporary theoretical and empirical approaches to the sociological study of religion, including secularization and secularity, religious identity formation, and sociological approaches to religious practice and meaning. Special focus will be on contemporary American topics, including religion and transnationalism, the role of religious actors and discourses in American politics, law and economics, and everyday religious practice.
RELI UN3315 Readings in Kabbalah. 3 points.
This course will serve to provide a wide but detailed exploration of Jewish Mysticism, raising questions about its connection to other Jewish traditions, the kind of symbolism and hermeneutics at stake, and the conception of God, man and world we are dealing with, amongst other major ideas.

RELI UN3317 Deep Tantra: Sex, Violence, Ritual. 4.00 points.
This course is an introduction to the tantric traditions of premodern India (c. 300 - 1000 CE) with a particular emphasis on the history of Śaivism (pronounced “Shaivism”) – that is, religious currents associated with scriptures called tantras that were believed to have been revealed by the god Siva (pronounced “Shiva”). Śaivism is generally considered to be one of the many strands that make up Hinduism, but we will explore, both historically and thematically, the aspects that made tantric Śaivism unique, including its ritual use of sex and violence. Our exploration into the tantric world will seek to make sense of these and other types of practices within the broader religious context of traditional South Asia. We will also examine how aspects of tantric religion became an important religious context for a variety of communities and the ways in which tantric Śaivism transformed other religious groups.

RELI UN3318 Humor, Joy, and Happiness in Judaism. 4.00 points.
Jewish history is plagued with tragedies and suffering. It only makes sense, then, that scholars of Jewish Studies tend to focus on moments of hardship and pain. But do disasters and the despair tell the whole story? What gets missed when we prioritize despair and misery and cast aside allegedly “lighter” and more “positive” themes? Such questions are the engine that runs this seminar. Here, students are invited to rethink the cultural roles of joy in Judaism, take Jewish humor seriously, and ponder whether happiness in Judaism is distinct from what we find in other religious traditions. “Joy, Humor, and Happiness in Judaism” is not, however, a feel-good course. Throughout the semester, through careful readings of primary sources (in translation) and contemporary theories, we will explore how so-called positive emotions, moods, and affects are inextricable from the most “serious” aspects of religion, politics, and the human experience, such as identity formation, violence, gender norms, and power.

RELI UN3321 Religion and Climate Crisis: India. 4.00 points.
Connections between dramatic climate assaults and religious practices and perspectives, taking Hindu India as an example: glaciers and floods, extreme weather, overpopulation, air and water pollution, deforestation. Hindu contexts, causes, and responses.

RELI UN3322 Religion # Climate Crisis: India - Discussion. 0.00 points.
This is the discussion section for RELI UN3321. You must register for that course before registering for this course.

RELI UN3340 EARLY CHRISTIANITY. 3.00 points.
Examines the competing currents within early Christianity, with emphasis placed on the literary and social expressions of Christian belief and identity. Topics to be covered include persecution and martyrdom, debates over authority and religious experience, orthodoxy and heresy, and asceticism and monasticism, among others.

RELI UN3357 I and We in the Christian East: The Making of Identity. 3 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
This course will provide a survey of Christian history in the eastern Mediterranean and Near East from roughly the fourth to the eleventh centuries with particular attention to religion and identity. How would the various Christians in this era answer the questions: “Who am I?” “Who are we?” How did their understanding of the divine influence their understanding of themselves and how was this identity enacted through writing and ritual? Though our focus will be on this period, we will also consider the framing of the history of “Eastern” Christianity into the modern period. No prerequisites.

RELI UN3401 MUSLIMS IN DIASPORA-DISC. 0 points.
Corequisites: RELI UN3407 Discussion section associated with RELI UN3407-MUSLIMS IN DIASPORA.

RELI UN3406 Space, Narrative, and Religion in India. 3 points.
Not offered during 2023-2024 academic year.

Course Description: This course is fundamentally about sacred places and the stories that people tell about and within them. We will explore the role that narratives – mythological, historical, personal, and academic – have played in the creation, maintenance and conceptualization of sacred spaces in South Asia. Each class in the first section of the course is devoted to a particular site or category of sites, and examines the roles that religious texts and iconography play in the traditions with which the sites are associated. In the second section of the course, we will consider ethnographic perspectives on religious journeys. Finally, in the third section, we will focus on the idealization of region or nation as a sacred space, and examines the manner in which narratives are invoked to formulate identities and to negotiate conflicts and differentials of power.

As we navigate these topics, we will explore answers to the following questions: How are spaces made “sacred”? What are the multiple types of narratives that come to be associated with sacred spaces, and what roles do they play in their production? How are such narratives transmitted, and for whom? How do religious practitioners utilize these spaces and their narratives in order to negotiate various facets of daily life, and in order to situate themselves within the religious landscape of South Asia?
RELI UN3407 Muslims in Diaspora. 4 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

Consideration of controversies surrounding mosque-building, headscarves, honor killing, and other publicized issues that expose tensions surrounding citizenship and belonging for Muslims in North America and Europe. Exploration of film and other media representations of Muslims in the West. There will be additional meeting times for film screenings.

Re fauna 2023: RELI UN3407
Course Number  Section/Call Number  Times/Location  Instructor  Points  Enrollment
RELI 3407  001/13818  M W 4:10pm - 5:25pm  C01 80 Claremont  Ebadur Rahman  4  16/20

RELI UN3414 Changing Places. 4.00 points.
Globalization, climate, migration, surveillance, homelessness, and virtualization are changing the places where people live, work, love, pray, struggle, and die. This course explores the presuppositions and implications of intersecting vectors that are pushing society to the edge of collapse. The inquiry begins with a consideration of the contemporary status of the four ancient elements – earth, air, water, and fire, and proceeds to explore displacements in cities and the country and replacements in churches, temples, mosques, woods, gardens, and cemeteries. Have we passed the tipping point, or is recovery still possible?

RELI UN3425 Judaism and Courtly Literature in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia and Italy. 3 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

The course explores secular Jewish literature composed in the medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean in the context of its Arabic and Romance-language counterparts. After examining the literary, linguistic and philosophical backdrop of Jews in the Islamic Empire, we will focus on poetry and prose of al-Andalus, Christian Spain and Italy. We will look at examples of how Jews depicted themselves and how Christian and converso thinkers portrayed Jews. In addition, we will consider two crossover writers, one Jew in Spain and one in Italy, whose compositions in Castilian and Italian were accepted and integrated into Christian society. Historical materials will accompany textual examples, which span the eleventh through sixteenth centuries.

RELI UN3430 Indigenous Religious Histories. 4 points.
Nomads, natives, peasants, hill people, aboriginals, hunter-gatherers, First Nations—these are just a handful of the terms in use to define indigenous peoples globally. The names these groups use to describe themselves, as well as the varying religious practices, attitudes, and beliefs among these populations are far more numerous and complex. For much of recorded history however, colonial centers of power have defined indigenous peoples racially and often in terms of lacking religion; as pagan, barbarian, non-modern, and without history or civilization.

Despite this conundrum of identity and classification, indigenous religious traditions often have well-documented and observable pasts. This course considers the challenges associated with studying indigenous religious history, as well as the changing social, political, and legal dimensions of religious practice among native groups over time and in relationship to the state. Organized thematically and geographically, we will engage with classic works of ethnohistory, environmental history, indigenous studies, the history of anthropology, and religious studies as well as primary sources that include legal documentation, military records, personal testimony, and oral narrative.

RELI UN3500 BUDDHIST ETHICS. 3.00 points.
RELI UN3501 Introduction To the Hebrew Bible. 3 points.
An introduction, by critical methods, to the religious history of ancient Israel against the background of the ancient Near East.

RELI UN3511 Tantra in South Asia, East Asia & the West. 3 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

An introduction to the history, literature, and ideology of Tantra and Tantric texts, deities, rituals, and traditions, proceeding chronologically from the early centuries C.E. to current forms of Tantric practice, and primarily covering India, China, and Japan. Attention will also be given to contemporary iterations of Tantra in the West. Questions of definition, transmission, patronage, gender, and appropriation link the various sections of the course. Readings include primary texts, secondary sources, local case studies, and art historical material.
RELUN3517 Queer Theory, Religion, and Their Discontents. 3.00 points.
For the most part queer studies and religious studies have met each other with great suspicion and little interest in the conceptual resources of the respectively other field. Our guiding questions will be: What does religion have to do with queerness? What does queerness have to do with religion? Queer theory and activists, unless they already identify as religious, often have little or little good to say about religion. Conversely, many religious traditions intensively regulate gender, sex, sexuality, and especially queerness. This course will explore how religious studies can enrich queer theory and how queer theory can reshape our thinking about religious studies. But beyond the mutual disinterest, anxieties, and animosities, queer studies and religious studies share actually a whole range of core interests and questions, such as embodiment, sexuality, gender-variability, coloniality, race appearing as religious identity and religious identity as gendered, as well as the role of catastrophe, utopia, and redemption in our experience of the world. We will examine questions about religion come to the fore when we pay especially attention to queerness, gender, sexuality, pleasure, pain, and desire. Equally, we will examine how queer discourses mobilize religious and theological images and ideas, especially where these images and ideas are no longer clearly recognizable as having religious origins. Rather than trying to settle on definitive answers, this course will cultivate a process of open-ended collective inquiry in which students will be encouraged to think autonomously and challenge facile solutions. Students should come away from the course with an expanded sense of how we grapple with issues related to gender, sexuality, desire, and embodiment in our everyday lives and how religion and religious formations are entangled with these issues well beyond religious communities. Ideally, students should experience this course as enlarging the set of critical tools at their hands for creative and rigorous thinking.

RELUN3518 Buddhism in East Asian Medical Cultures. 3 points.
This seminar introduces students to the intersections between Buddhism and medicine in East Asia in the premodern period. The course begins with Buddhist ideas and practices concerning health and disease in ancient India over two millennia ago, and follows the eastward transmission of these concerns and activities into China, Korea, and Japan until roughly the 16th century. In addition to secondary studies representing the latest research in this burgeoning field, this course gives special attention to critical readings of shorter selections of primary sources translated into English, including sutras, monastic regulations, recipe collections, liturgical documents, and longevity manuals. Reading these selections through multiple methodological frameworks—social history, history of the body, and material culture, students will gain an appreciation of the rich diversity that characterized Buddhist healthcare practices before the introduction of Western medicine. A fundamental premise of this course is that different currents of Buddhism constituted medical cultures in their own right, a perspective that will help us to complicate conventional notions of both “religion” and “medicine.” We will aim to achieve a nuanced understanding of the ways that healing concerns shaped how monks and nuns related to actors of other therapeutic communities, and therefore emphasis is placed on the social and cultural contexts in which Buddhist medical practices were embedded. Students will thereby acquire a basic grounding in East Asian Buddhism to complement our particular concern with the dynamics of medical history. Previous coursework in Buddhism or East Asian religion is thus recommended but not required.

RELUN3519 Embodiment: (Re)Defining the Human. 4.00 points.
Please note this course is for a GSAS Teaching Scholar With the rise of climate change, technological advances, and an abundance of everyday existential crises, you might be wondering what it means to be human in 2023. In this course, we begin with the claim that in order to understand “human being” in a time of critical discourse regarding the Anthropocene, we must explore embodiment. Starting with Cartesian Dualism and its legacy, we will progress to contemporary critiques and move into speculative understandings of embodiment and its role in human being in religious studies, philosophy, literature, and anthropology. We will think about how we define what it means to be human, who exactly this “we” is who gets to do the defining, and what happens to us and our worlds when we forget about or attempt to overcome embodiment. This course has several interactive components and utilizes media such as podcasts, films, comics, and practical engagement in addition to a wide variety of academic reading assignments.

RELUN3521 Muslim Masculinities. 4 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement
This interdisciplinary course explores a variety of Muslim modes of masculinity as they have developed over time and as they have varied across different regions of the Islamic World. Students examine and problematize the social and cultural construction of masculinity in various parts of the Islamic world, including in the Middle East, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the Muslim diasporas of Europe and the Americas. In trying to understand the complex ways in which men and manhood are made in Islamic societies we will center our attention on the perceptions of bodily and social differences in Muslims’ larger articulations of gender and sexuality. A particular focus will be on the relationship between masculinity and violence against women and non-Muslims.

RELUN3522 MUSLIM MASCELINITIES-DISC. 0 points.
Discussion section for REL UN3521 - MUSLIM MASCULINITIES
RELUN3575 EVANGELICALISM. 3.00 points.
Crossing denominations and encompassing a range of theological commitments, evangelical Christianity can be described as a theological disposition, a mode of hermeneutical practice, a theological-aesthetic sensibility, a mass spiritual movement, a practice of cultivating sacred affect, an errand to the world, and a genre of revivalism. This multidisciplinary seminar will emphasize the role of popular media in constituting an evangelical public, the gendered nature of evangelical subjectivity, the role of sex and sexuality in evangelical self-definition, and the ways that evangelical theological categories have shaped what we think of as “the secular” in the United States.
REL UN 3606 Religion and Media in America. 3 points.
This course examines the role of media in shaping religious identities, beliefs, practices, and institutions using case studies from American history and contemporary American culture. For the purpose of this course, the term media will be interpreted broadly to mean any technique or technology designed to communicate information such as verbal discourses, written texts, visual representations, ritual gestures, sacred objects, and telecommunication technologies. In foregrounding media, we will examine how religious beliefs and practices have been remembered, disseminated, translated, and contested in the American context. Just as important, we will examine how religious groups have negotiated their American identity through media practices and their narrative content.

As we will see, acts of transmission such as writing, mapping, broadcasting, and televising play essential parts in drawing and erasing communal boundaries from both within and without. With this in mind, we will not be attempting to identify what religion is, so much as the ways in which historical actors understood themselves to be religious. We will find that what counts as religion varies, sometimes dramatically, across times, spaces, and cultures; “America” is similarly unstable and contested. Our job, then, will be to understand the role of media and mediation in constituting their contours.

REL UN 3612 The Religious History of Hip Hop. 3 points.
This is an undergraduate lecture course introducing students to the study of religion through an engagement with the history of hip hop music. More specifically, this course is organized chronologically to narrate a history of religion in the United States (from 1970 to the present day) by mapping the ways that a variety of religious ideas and practices have animated rap music’s evolution and expansion during this time period. While there are no required prerequisites for the course, prior coursework in religious studies, African American studies, and/or popular music is helpful.

REL UN 3625 Hippie Physics, Counterculture, Cyberculture. 3.00 points.
The world inside your smartphone may not be all that it seems. Everything from your e-banking app to your TikTok algorithm can be traced back to the Woodstock-going, acid-taking, love (not war)-making attitude that permeated the youth (in spite of the generations before) in counterculture America. Today’s technosphere grew out of the convergence of the post-World War II and Cold War military-industrial complex and the 1960s counterculture. Resistance to the war in Vietnam, the Civil Rights movement, and the spread of Buddhist thought created social unrest and political disorder. (Almost) simultaneously, a counter counterculture emerged – conservative Christians joined forces with right wing and libertarian politicians to resist sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll, and promote a religiously, politically, and racially “purified” America. Sound familiar? In the midst of this turmoil, groups of physicists who had dropped out (but not necessarily tuned in) gathered in San Francisco and Palo Alto garages to create a technological revolution that continues to transform the world. This course will explore this seminal period through a consideration of music, films, and books of this era, as well as the technological and philosophical implications that quantum physics has on our society and culture today.

REL UN 3630 Religion and Black Popular Cultures. 3 points.
As an exploration of the relationship between religion, race, and popular culture, the course will begin with theoretical readings that expose students to a variety of definitions of and approaches to each of these categories. After tackling these theoretical concerns, the remainder of the course will entail a cross genre and thematic engagement with the terrain of black popular culture(s) in which students will be challenged to apply new theoretical resources in order to interpret a wide range of “religious” phenomena.

REL UN 3671 Religion and Human Rights. 4.00 points.
What is the relationship between religion and human rights? How have different religious traditions conceived of “the human” as a being worthy of inherent dignity and respect, particularly in moments of political, military, economic, and ecological crisis? How and why have modern regimes of human rights privileged some of these ideas and marginalized others? What can these complicated relationships between religion and human rights explain some of the key crises in human rights law and politics today, and what avenues can be charted for moving forward? In this class, we will attempt to answer these questions by first developing a theoretical understanding of some of the key debates about the origins, trajectories, and legacies of modern human rights’ religious entanglements. We will then move on to examine various examples of ideas about and institutions for protecting “humanity” from different regions and histories. Specifically, we will examine how different societies, organizations, and religious traditions have addressed questions of war and violence; freedom of belief and expression; gender and sexual orientation; economic inequality; ecology; and the appropriate ways to punish and remember wrongdoing. In doing so, we will develop a repertoire of theoretical and empirical tools that can help us address both specific crises of human rights in various contexts, as well as the general crisis of faith and and observance of human rights as a universal norm and aspiration for peoples everywhere.

REL UN 3755 AFRICAN-AMERICAN RELIGION. 3.00 points.
REL UN 3771 Early Modern Indigenous Thought. 4.00 points.
What is the source of truth and authority? What is the origin of the world and how does that determine the social order? Who ought to rule, why, and how? What are the standards for measuring justice and injustice? What is our relationship to the environment around us and how should its resources be distributed among people? How do we relate to those who are different from us, and what does it mean to be a community in the first place? Historically, the answers to these questions that have been described as “religious” and “political” have been the restricted to a specific tradition of Western European Christianity and its secular afterlives. However, these are questions that every society asks, in order to be a society in the first place. This course analyzes how indigenous peoples in the Americas asked and answered these questions throughout the first three centuries of Western European imperial rule. At the same time, this course pushes students to question what gets categorized as uniquely “indigenous” thought, how, and why
RELI UN3881 The Doctrine of Discovery: Religion, Law, and Legacies of 1492. 4.00 points.

How did European-Christians justify the colonization of the Americas? Did these justifications vary between different European empires, and between the Protestant and Catholic faiths, and if so, how? Do these justifications remain in effect in modern jurisprudence and ministries? This class explores these questions by introducing students to the Doctrine of Discovery. The Doctrine of Discovery is the defining legal rationale for European Colonization in the Western Hemisphere. The Doctrine has its origins in a body of ecclesiastic, legal, and philosophical texts dating to the late-fifteenth century, and was summarized by Chief Justice John Marshall of the United States Supreme Court, in the final, unanimous decision the judiciary issued on the 1823 case Johnson v. McIntosh. Students will be introduced to the major, primary texts that make up the Doctrine, as well as contemporary critical studies of these texts and the Doctrine in general

RELI UN3901 GUIDED READING AND RESEARCH. 1.00-4.00 points.

Prerequisites: the instructor's permission

RELI GU4120 GENDER IN ANC CHRISTIANITY. 4.00 points.

A seminar exploring gender in ancient Christianity. Students will be introduced to the key texts and authors, and will participate in a variety of exercises, including discussion, presentation, and written assignments. The course will focus on the role of gender in ancient Christianity, and will examine the ways in which gender has been interpreted in the history of the church.

RELI GU4015 Reincarnation and Technology. 4 points.

A seminar exploring reincarnation, resurrection, and their contemporary cyber-relatives, uploading and simulation. We'll explore Abrahamic, Amerind, Chinese, Greek, and Indian accounts, the Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation tradition and methodology in detail, and contemporary research on reincarnation, near-death, and out-of-body experiences. We will then turn to contemporary developments in science, religion, and philosophy concerning uploading consciousness to computer media and the probability that we are living a simulation. We will investigate whether religious traditions are consistent with or expressive of simulated reality, and the application of karma to all of the above.

RELI GU4002 CURATING ISLAM IN NEW YORK CITY. 4.00 points.

This course focuses on the ways in which museums conceptualize, contextualize, curate and display Islamic art. In the process, it interrogates the degree to which the orientalist past and the secular present shapes our understanding of the Muslim world. Students will not just engage with material objects from Muslim societies but also consider the choices museums make about their display and presentation. These choices, in turn, speak to the role of museums in defining a specific understanding of the "sacred." Finally, students will learn to thoughtfully and critically pose questions about the roles that museums as public institutions play in shaping public and private understandings of Islam. The course begins with a general discussion of material objects in the study of religion. This is followed by a broad survey of Islamic Art which both describes and critiques the category as it has been framed in the Academy. Students then visit a number of museums to learn about the style and content of their Islamic collections. The course concludes by engaging a different kind of curation, namely oral histories in the Brooklyn Museum.

RELI GU4105 RELIGION LAB. 4.00 points.

In their research, scholars of religion employ a variety of methods to analyze texts ranging from historical documents to objects of visual culture. This course acquaints students with both the methods and the materials utilized in the field of religious studies. Through guided exercises, they acquire research skills for utilizing sources and become familiarized with dominant modes of scholarly discourse. The class is organized around a series of research scavenger hunts that are due at the start of each week's class and assigned during the discussion section (to be scheduled on the first day of class). Additional class meeting on Thursdays.

RELI GU4120 GENDER IN ANC CHRISTIANITY. 4.00 points.

This seminar considers the difference gender makes in interpreting ancient Christian texts, ideas, and practices. Topics will include gender hierarchy and homoeroticism, prophecy and authority, outsiders’ views of Christianity, bodily pieties such as martyrdom and asceticism, and gender politics in the establishment of church offices. Emphasis will be placed on close readings of primary sources and selected scholarly framings of these sources.
RELI GU4160 GNOSIS. 4.00 points.

RELI GU4172 Confession. 4.00 points.
This seminar explores the idea and practice of "confession" in a range of manifestations (in legal and judicial contexts, in religious practice, in memoir autobiographie, in political and personal reckoning with the past, in art and popular culture, among others) and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (media studies, history, theology, literature, psychoanalysis, art history, and journalism). As the sacramental practice of confession recesses from significance within traditional religious contexts, the social practice of confession expands into new arenas. This seminar is devoted to theorizing this shifting terrain through the critical examination of a variety of primary sources and scholarly interventions.

RELI GU4202 TIME, MODERNITY, DEATH. 4.00 points.
The notion of modernity in the West implies a distinctive interpretation of temporality and subjectivity, which grows out of theological and philosophical traditions. Lutheran Protestantism, as developed by Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger, created the conditions for both the construction and the deconstruction of modernism and its extension in postmodernism. The course will examine these two trajectories by considering their contrasting interpretations of the relationship of human selfhood to time and death. On the one hand, the death of God leads to a radical immanence in which human subjectivity either is absolutized as the will to power or mastery that dominates or negates all difference and otherness, or is repressed by universal structures and infrastructures for which individual subjects are unknowing and unwitting vehicles. On the other hand, human subjectivity appears to be finite because its irreducible singularity is always given by an other that can be neither known nor controlled. The course will conclude by considering the alternative psychological, political, and ethical implications of these two contrasting positions.

RELI GU4204 Religions of the Iranian World. 4 points.
This course is a seminar open to undergraduate and graduate students who wish to gain an understanding of the diverse religious traditions of the Iranian world from ancient to contemporary times. This subject has often been organized around the assumption that a continuous tradition of an Iranian national religious heritage can be identified and traced through from ancient, Zoroastrian to medieval Islamic traditions, and then ultimately to contemporary Shi’ite and minority Zoroastrian and Bah’ai traditions. This perspective has presumed that such a legacy has been constitutive and determinative for Iranians’ sense of national identity and for their core religious word-view. From the outset, this course aims to problematize and ultimately overturn this approach, first of all, by historicizing the very idea of Iran and by challenging the assumption that an Iranian identity was even recognizable before the twentieth century, much less constitutive of some unbroken traditions of religious thought or practice. While there may be some persistent threads in language, mythic heritage, and religiosity that one can observe throughout the Iranian plateau and Central Asia across the centuries, it is more useful to examine these as part of a larger matrix of exchanges with adjacent cultural and religious systems. Students will examine a series of interrelated themes that are key to the studies of religion in the Iranian world. While the course does cover material that progresses roughly chronologically from the first millennium BCE to contemporary times, it is not a systematic historical survey. Each week will focus on a cluster of scholarly works and related primary sources on focused topics related to the successive religious traditions in Iran, the Mazdaien dualist traditions, Islam, and Bahai’ism.

RELI GU4205 Love, Translated: Hindu Bhakti. 4 points.
Hindu poetry of radical religious participation-bhakti-in translation, both Sanskrit (the Bhagavad Gita) and vernacular. How does such poetry/song translate across linguistic divisions within India and into English? Knowledge of Indian languages is welcome but not required. Multiple translations of a single text or poet bring to light the choices translators have made.

RELI GU4206 HISTORY, TIME, AND TRADITION. 4 points.
In Refashioning Futures, David Scott asks if the accurate reconstruction of the past of an identity is the crucial point of a theoretical intervention. He wonders, instead, if such a historicist analysis should be followed by an emphatic “But so what?” The importance of asking “so what” is that it allows us to begin to refuse, Scott writes, “history its subjectivity, its constancy, its eternity” and “interrupt its seemingly irreplaceable succession, causality, its sovereign claim to determinacy” (105) The question “so what?” requires, in other words, we answer for history’s prominence and providence as well as consider other possible formations of community, temporality, and inheritance not anchored by the weight of ‘history’. This seminar examines the overwhelming hold of “history” in the present by considering Scott’s poignant “But so what?” We will begin by examining the problem-space of ‘history’ itself and how ‘history’ emerged as the foundation to understanding and ordering religious life globally. We will explore the wide-ranging effects of Enlightenment rationality and Orientalist knowledge production as well as consider the imbrication of history with theology and the secular. This section of the course will help develop a shared set of concepts and problematics, which we will continuously encircle throughout. We will then examine how scholars have troubled this historical conscription, reorienting our understandings of temporality, tradition, and the past. The last half of the course, therefore, considers a range of different methods and theories that undo the importance of ‘history’ while remaining attuned to questions of the past, time, and inheritance.

RELI GU4207 Religion and the Afro-Native Experience. 4.00 points.
African Americans and Native Americans have a shared history of racial oppression in America. However, the prevailing lenses through which scholars understand settler colonialism, religion, and black and indigenous histories focus overwhelmingly on the dynamics between Europeans and these respective groups. How might our understanding of these subjects change when viewed from a different point of departure, if we center the history of entanglements between black and native lives? How does religion structure the overlapping experiences of Afro-Native peoples in North America? From political movements in Minneapolis, Oakland, and New York City to enslavement from the Cotton Belt to the Rio Grande, this class will explore how Africans, Native Americans, and their descendants adapted to shifting contexts of race and religion in America. The course will proceed thematically by examining experiences of war, dislocation, survival, and diaspora.

Fall 2023: RELI GU4207
Course Number 001/00300
Times/Location W 2:10pm - 4:00pm 227 Milbank Hall
Instructor Tiffany Hale
Points 4.00
Enrollment 9/15
RELI GU4209 Religion, Politics and Culture in Contemporary Black America. 4.00 points.
This course examines the period commonly referred to as the "post-Civil Rights era"—that is, from the 1960s up through the current moment: a span of time also theorized through the related rhetorics of "postmodern," "postcolonial" and "post-Soul. We will explore the inter-workings of religion, politics and culture (as they converge and diverge) in contemporary black life. Attention will be given to formal religious traditions (i.e. Christianity, Islam, African-derived traditions), but also to a range of ideas about religion and/or spirituality as they are revealed in the artistic expression, politics and activism, and popular culture and media. Taking analytical cues from critical race theory, questions of agency, power and difference will be foregrounded, as witnessed in how religious discourses and practices negotiate such categories as race, class, gender and sexuality. Ultimately, bringing together developments within the inter-disciplinary fields of black studies and the study of religion, ultimately this class will examine the ways in which various ideas about "religion" shape and circulate across various forms of black political organizing and cultural expression in our current moment. This seminar is open undergraduates and graduate students. While there are no require pre-requisites, students are expected have some prior background in religious studies and/or African American Studies

RELI GU4212 Modern Buddhism. 4 points.
What most Americans and Europeans call ‘Buddhism’ today is in fact a hybrid tradition dating back to the 19th century. It owes as much to European philosophy and esoteric thought as to Asian traditions themselves and appeared in the context of decolonization. This course will survey the history of this recent tradition, identifying cultural and political trends that contributed to its creation in various geographical areas. Readings include several primary texts by important proponents of Modern Buddhism. The texts should also be read in comparison with the appropriate scholarly works on the Asian traditions they supposedly draw on. One course on Buddhism or East Asian Religions is recommended, but not required, as background.

RELI GU4213 Islam and the Secular: Rethinking Concepts of Religion in North-Western Africa and the Middle East. 4.00 points.
The class offers a critical discussion of the conceptual apparatus of the anthropology of Islam and secularism and of the ways in which it shapes recent interventions in history and theory but also in Islamic studies with a particular focus on North-Western Africa and the Middle East. The questions that will be examined during the class read as follows: 1. What is Islam: a religion or a cultural formation, a discursive tradition or a way of life? How is one to construct a definition of Islam beyond orientalist legacies? Can one define Islam anthropologically outside the tradition itself? 2. How did French and British Empires transform or destroyed Islamic institutions while governing Muslims in the Middle East and North-West Africa? Are these colonial technologies Christian or secular and is there a significant difference between Christian slavery and secular colonialism? To what extent is secularism reducible to an imperial ideology or to Christianity itself? 3. How did Muslims respond to the challenge of modernity and to European imperial hegemony? How can one think philosophically within the Islamic tradition after the hegemony of Europe and colonialism?

RELI GU4214 African and North African Philosophy: An Introduction. 3.00 points.
What is African philosophy? Is a theory African simply because it is rooted in the political present of the continent? Is it African because it corresponds to an African cultural singularity or simply because his authors and inventors come from or live in Africa? This class will examine a) how religious traditions shape African theory b) how the influence of colonial anthropology on concepts of African culture and tradition can be challenged c) how African theory relates to African politics of decolonization, in North and “sub-Saharan” Africa. The major dialectical problem we will examine during the class is the ongoing contradiction between claims of authenticity and demands of liberation, traditionalism and modernity, religion and secularism, culturalism and Marxism

RELI GU4215 Hinduism Here. 4 points.
Historical, theological, social and ritual dimensions of “lived Hinduism” in the greater New York area. Sites selected for in-depth study include worshipping communities, retreat centers, and national organizations with significant local influence. Significant fieldwork component

RELI GU4216 Religion and Capitalism: Faith and the American Market. 4.00 points.
Is the market a religious system? Can we consider “capitalism” to be a key arena in which the relationship between the religious and the secular is both negotiated and performed? In this course, students will explore the complicated relationship between faith and the market, the religious and the secular, and the evolution of vice and virtue as they relate to economic thriving in the United States. While no hard and fast rules for thinking about the relationship between right conduct and material interests cut across all religious and philosophical traditions, human agents invest real faith into currency, into markets, and into the reigning economic order to bring about increased opportunities, wealth, and freedom to people across the globe. Throughout this semester, we will chart both the long shadows and the future trajectories of these beliefs from our American perspective

Spring 2023: RELI GU4216
Course Number | Section/Call Number | Times/Location | Instructor | Points | Enrollment
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RELI 4216 | 001/13068 | T 2:10pm - 4:00pm | Andrew Jungclaus | 4.00 | 14/20

RELI GU4217 American Religions in extremis. 4.00 points.
This seminar focuses on historical, sociological, and first-hand accounts of a diverse set of American non-conformist religious and spiritual groups (including MOVE, the Branch Davidians at Waco, Father Divine’s International Peace Mission, the Oneida Perfectionists, and Occupy and others). Diverse in their historical origins, their activities, and their ends, each of the groups sought or seeks to offer radically news ways of living, subverting American gender, sexuality, racial, or economic norms. The title of this seminar highlights the ways that these groups explain their reasons for existing (to themselves or others) not as a choice but as a response to a system or society out of whack, at odds with the plans of the divine, or at odds with nature and survival. Likewise, it considers the numerous ways that these same groups have often found themselves the targets of state surveillance and violence

Fall 2023: RELI GU4217
Course Number | Section/Call Number | Times/Location | Instructor | Points | Enrollment
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RELI 4217 | 001/12532 | T 10:10am - 12:00pm | Courtney Bender | 4.00 | 15/15
RELIGION

REL GU4218 Heidegger and the Jews. 4 points.
The conundrum of Martin Heidegger and the Jews continues. The recent publications of Heidegger's Black-Notebooks reignited the debate over his ties to the National Socialist party and his personal anti-Semitism. These notebooks reveal that Heidegger establishes a philosophical case for his prejudices against Jews, one which arguably cuts to the very heart of his thinking. And yet, many of his closest and most brilliant students were Jewish, and it is becoming increasingly clear that his philosophy has left an indelible mark on twentieth century Jewish thought. This course is divided into two units: In the first unit we will become familiar with some central themes of Heidegger’s thought and explore the question of the philosophical grounding of his political failing. In the second unit we will examine a variety of responses to Heidegger by Jewish thinkers who, in different ways and for different purposes, both profited greatly from his philosophical innovations and levelled profound criticism of his thought and actions. The animating question the course will attempt to answer is: Is it possible, as one student of Heidegger’s had suggested, to think with and against Heidegger?

REL GU4219 Colonialism and religion in South Asia. 4 points.
This course examines the conceptual trouble wrought by colonial rule in relation to boundaries, both of tradition and identity. We will begin by examining the category of ‘religion’ and how it emerged as an object of inquiry to understand and order life in the South Asian subcontinent. By exploring the wide-ranging effects of Orientalist knowledge production premised on secular historicity, this section of the course will help develop a shared set of concepts, which we will continuously encircle throughout. We will then question the role of this knowledge/power nexus in creating and reifying both notions of ‘fluid’ and ‘communal’ boundaries by studying the internal coherence and colonial inflection of several religious traditions in the subcontinent (Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, and Buddhism). In concluding, we will consider how colonialism shifted the parameters of selfhood, creating new grounds, as well as reifying old ones, from which subjects came to contest the parameters of a given tradition.

REL GU4220 Political Theology. 4 points.
Prerequisites: Prior coursework in Religion, MESAAS, political theory, or related field is advised.
This reading-intensive course will engage the notion of “political theology,” a phrase that emerges within the Western tradition (Varro, Augustine) and has become instrumental in thinking and institutionalizing the distinction between religion and politics over the course of the twentieth century. We will take as our point of departure the key texts that have revived this notion (Schmitt, Kantorowicz), and engage their interpretation of the Bible and of Augustine and medieval followers. We will then examine the role of Spinoza and Moses Mendelsohn, the extension of the notion of religion to “the East” (Said, Grosrichard, Asad), and conclude with some of the current debates over secularization in the colonizing and colonized world.

The main part of the course will be dedicated to the question of religion as it informs our thinking of disciplinary divisions. Is religion a sphere than can be isolated? How did it become so? What are the effects of this isolation?

REL GU4222 Heidegger and Derrida. 4 points.
This seminar will explore the relationship between Heidegger and Derrida through a close reading of texts in which they consider common questions and issues. Works from both early and late Heidegger will be considered. An examination of Derrida’s writings on Heidegger reveals how he simultaneously appropriates and criticizes Heidegger in developing his critique of the western philosophical and theological tradition. Special attention will be paid to their contrasting interpretations of time and their alternative accounts of the work of art. This course is a sequel to Hegel and Kierkegaard, though the previous course is not a prerequisite for this seminar.

REL GU4223 Dreams. 4.00 points.
This seminar for advanced undergraduates and graduate students is an interdisciplinary investigation of how dreams are viewed and understood across a range of the historical, sociocultural, political, and scholarly environments in which they are experienced and interpreted. Eclectic in approach, we will focus on close readings of a selection of dream texts, beginning with Freud’s “The Dream of Irma’s Injection.” We will aim to open out the text over several weeks. To facilitate this process, the syllabus will include an array of suggested readings linked to each week’s focus of inquiry. Students are expected to make a selection from these readings (or other readings that you find relevant) in order to prepare your own close reading of the dream text to discuss in class. We will then turn to other dreamers who draw on different aspects of the Islamic tradition to understand their own dreams, with supplementary readings drawn from history, anthropology, and religious studies to provide contexts for interpreting these dreams.

REL GU4224 Dialectics: Theology and Philosophy between Europe and Africa. 4 points.
What is dialectical reason? Is it still a mode of theological reasoning, as many critiques have argued, or a revolutionary form of secular critique? To what degree did it shape the language of revolutionary Marxism both in Europe and Africa, as the work of Fanon notably testifies? How does it still define the horizon of contemporary philosophy, French theory and postcolonial thinking? The class will address this question. Beginning with Hegel, it will trace the becoming of his legacy in Marx, Fanon, Sartre and contemporary issues in French theory and African philosophy.
RELIGION 23

RELIGION 4227 Empire and Decolonization in North Africa: Race, Religion, Climate. 4.00 points.
The course examines crucial debates in colonial and decolonial studies from a North African point of view, with a particular focus on Algeria. What does it mean to rethink conceptually and globally about empire and decoloniality from the point of view of North Africa? A region which is often marginalized in both postcolonial and decolonial theory? The questions that will guide us throughout the class read as follows: 1) How is one to rethink the Maghreb without either reducing it to the history of French colonialism or downplaying the impact of colonialism on North Africa? How can binaries of direct rule and indirect rule, settler colonialism in Algeria and protectorates in Morocco and Tunisia be challenged in order to understand the postcolonial Maghreb as a unit? 2) Can one think about the historicity of the Maghreb without taking the destruction of Al-Andalus and its influence on the birth of race as a point of departure? Does the Christian racialization of Jews and Muslims through the notion of a purity of blood permeate the French colonization of the Maghreb? Is French colonialism in North Africa secular or Christian? How does secularity emerge in the midst of this history by reconfiguring the legacy of the Crusades? 3) How are Muslims and particularly Sufi orders involved in the practices of resistance against French colonial violence? How are traditional Islamic languages and practices of sainthood or the longing of the Mahdi redeployed in this situation? How do these practices and languages of resistance transform themselves with the construction of anticolonial nationalism? How can one rethink decolonization by analyzing how Algiers became the capital of Third World resistance at a global scale? 4) How do contemporary debates about Islam, tradition and modernity deploy themselves in the Maghreb and particularly in Morocco? How do these debates shape our understanding of decolonization?

RELIGION 4228 South Asia and the Secular. 4 points.
This seminar explores different contestations and inflections of the secular in South Asia. We will begin by tracing a genealogy of the secular, which gave rise to a particular discursive grammar. Grounding ourselves in this formative space of the secular, we will study the constitutive nature of imperialism within the secular by examining the disciplining and conscripting role of Orientalism and the colonial state. Though noting these changes produced by colonial rule, this course also explores the arguments scholars of South Asia have made distinguishing between "secularisms" and the production of a tolerant and cosmopolitan South Asian orientation. In conjunction and against these possibilities, rather than consider the religious retrograde or communal, we will consider the continual striving toward political autonomy through disputation in the parameters of a given tradition—which resist incorporation into a broader pluralist or syncretic Indic model.

RELIGION 4255 Hegel, Information, “Artificial” Intelligence. 4.00 points.
The development of high-speed computers, artificial neural networks, miniaturized sensors, mobile phones, and Big Data has created the conditions for the transformation of artificial intelligence. These changes are not only transforming the world but are also recasting long-standing distinctions like nature/culture, natural/artificial, body/mind, complexity/simplicity, and organism/machine that have shaped human thought and life for centuries. This refiguring of opposites as irreducibly interrelated was anticipated by Kant's notion of self-organization and developed systematically by Hegel. This course will approach current forms of artificial intelligence through Kant's interpretation of self-organization and Hegel's dialectical logic and will reread Hegel's system through "natural" and "artificial" neural networks, complex systems, and information theory. If nature and culture are inextricably interrelated, then is "artificial" intelligence really artificial, and is "nature" every merely natural? What are the implications of these developments for the understanding of human "nature" that has shaped the Anthropocene since the time of Galileo, Newton, and Descartes?

RELIGION 4204 Krishna. 4 points.
Study of a single deity in the Hindu pantheon as illuminated in art, music, dance, drama, theological treatises, patterns of ritual, and texts both classic and modern. Special attention to Krishna's consort Radha, to Krishna's reception in the West, and to his portrayal on Indian television.

RELIGION 4305 SECULAR # SPIRITUAL AMERICA. 4.00 points.
Prerequisites: Majors and concentrators receive first priority. Are Americans becoming more secular or more spiritual (not religious), or both? What are the connections between secularism and what is typically called non-organized religion or the spiritual in the United States? We will address these questions by looking at some of the historical trajectories that shape contemporary debates and designations (differences) between spiritual, secular and religious.

RELIGION 4307 BUDDHISM # DAOISM IN CHINA. 4.00 points.
Prerequisites: one course on Buddhism or Chinese religious traditions is recommended, but not required, as background.
In recent decades, the study of the so-called "Buddho-Daoism" has become a burgeoning field that breaks down the traditional boundary lines drawn between the two Chinese religious traditions. In this course we will read secondary scholarship in English that probes the complex relationships between Buddhism and Daoism in the past two millennia. Students are required not only to be aware of the tensions and complementarity between them, but to be alert to the nature of claims to either religious purity or mixing and the ways those claims were put forward under specific religio-historical circumstances. The course is organized thematically rather than chronologically. We will address topics on terminology, doctrine, cosmology, eschatology, soteriology, excursus, scriptural productions, ritual performance, miracle tales and visual representations that arose in the interactions of the two religions, with particular attention paid to critiquing terms such as "influence," "encounter," "dialogue," "hybridity," "syncretism," and "repertoire." The course is designed for both advanced undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of East Asian religion, literature, history, art history, sociology and anthropology. One course on Buddhism or Chinese religious traditions is recommended, but not required, as background.
RELIGION

RELIGION GU4308 Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah. 4 points.
The purpose of this seminar is to study the interactions between two
major intellectual trends in Jewish History, the philosophical and the
mystical ones. From the medieval period to the twenty-first century, we
will discuss their interactions, polemics and influences. We will compare
Philosophy and Kabbalah in light of their understanding of divine
representation and in light of their respective Theology and conception of
God.

RELIGION GU4311 Fanon: Religion, Race, Philosophy in Africa and beyond. 4
points.
This class will examine the work of Fanon through its sources, its context
and its contemporary interpretations.

RELIGION GU4314 Bhakti Poets. 4.00 points.
Hindu poetry of radical religious participation—bhakti—in translation:
poets of different regions, genders, and theological leanings. Knowledge
of the original languages is not expected. Music, art, and performance
play a role

RELIGION GU4315 Sufis and the Qur’an. 4 points.
This course is a seminar for advanced undergraduates and graduate
students who wish to gain an understanding of the complexity and
richness of the Sufi exegetical tradition. the Qur’an has been the main
source of inspiration and contemplation for Sufis for centuries....

RELIGION GU4317 Islam in Southeast Asia. 4.00 points.
Despite the fact that a fifth of the world’s Muslim population lives
in Southeast Asia, the region is often considered peripheral to or
insignificant for the study of Islam more broadly. In this course, we will
not only learn about Islamic thought and practice in the history and
present of this important part of the Islamic world; we will also reflect
on issues that, while grounded in the Southeast Asian context, illustrate
a variety of key Islamic Studies issues. The first half of the course will
provide a historical overview over the development of Islam in Southeast
Asia while the second half will focus on contemporary issues. The Malay-
Indonesian world, home to 90% of Southeast Asia’s Muslims, will be
our primary focus. Our approach will be interdisciplinary, incorporating
anthropological, historical, and media studies approaches. Students in
this class are expected to have some prior knowledge of Islam

RELIGION GU4318 INTERPRETING BUDDHIST YOGA. 4.00 points.
Students and scholars approaching a vast amount of primary and
secondary literature, as well as accounts and anthropological and
sociological studies of Buddhism as a lived religion, are faced with an
array of stories, data, theories and practices, many of which appear to be
inconsistent with others. We try to make sense of these by interpreting
them. The art or science of interpretation – “hermeneutics” after
Hermes – has a long history in Asia and in the West. Buddhism itself
has a tradition of hermeneutics, as does each of the Western religious
traditions and Western philosophy and law, starting with Plato and
Aristotle, becoming “romantic” with Schleiermacher, and “modern” with
Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur. Today’s Western hermeneutics has
become largely de-regionalized from specific subject areas, and has been
extended to the interpretation of all human experience. After a grounding
in traditional Buddhist and Western hermeneutic principles, we will focus
on a number of aspects of Buddhism, including the central question of
whether there is a “self” or not, and on esoteric Buddhist yoga, Tantra,
central to several of the better-known forms of Buddhism today, including
Tibetan Buddhism. Here we will witness the confluence and, sometimes,
collision of traditional Buddhist and Tantric hermeneutics focusing in
large part on “spiritual” concerns, and the Western tradition, with its
emphasis on economics, power, and gender. In thinking about which
interpretations are “right” – indeed, whether any interpretation can be
“right,” and, if so, “how much?” – we will consider the cultures in which
these scriptures and practices originated, as well as ourselves and
our own contemporary perspectives, insights, presuppositions and
prejudices. A primary concern of hermeneutics is the interpretation of
so-called “objective” physical and subjective mental realities. In thinking
about the hermeneutics of outer and inner time and space, towards
the end of the semester we will consider whether the “objective” and
the “subjective” intersect, how much, and look at some descriptions of
quantum mechanics and the role of observation of physical reality there,
and analogize and contrast those to and with some Buddhist systems of
philosophy and practice
RELI GU4322 EXPLORING THE SHARIA: ISLAMIC LAW. 4.00 points. 
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

The platform of every modern “Istalist” political party calls for the implementation of “the shari’ah.” This term is invariably (and incorrectly) interpreted as an unchanging legal code dating back to 7th century Arabia. In reality, Islamic law is an organic and constantly evolving human project aimed at ascertaining God's will in a given historical and cultural context. This course offers a detailed and nuanced look at the Islamic legal methodology and its evolution over the last 1,400 years. The first part of the semester is dedicated to “classical” Islamic jurisprudence, concentrating on the manner in which jurists used the Qur’an, the Sunna (the model of the Prophet), and rationality to articulate a coherent legal system. The second part of the course focuses on those areas of the law that engender passionate debate and controversy in the contemporary world. Specifically, we examine the discourse surrounding Islamic family (medical ethics, marriage, divorce, women’s rights) and criminal (capital punishment, apostasy, suicide/martyrdom) law. The course ends by discussing the legal implications of Muslims living as minorities in non-Islamic countries and the effects of modernity on the foundations of Islamic jurisprudence. This class is designed for students interested in a close examination of the Islamic legal system; it is not a broad introduction to the Islamic religion. The format of the class will vary from topic to topic but students should anticipate *extensive* participation through in-class debates.

Spring 2023: RELI GU4322

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RELI GU4324 American Scriptures. 4.00 points.

What is scripture? How is cannon created? How do particular communities find meaning in varying works of literature? In this seminar, we will explore a number of influential American texts not simply in order to understand how they address questions of the holy and divine presence but also for how they provide creative ways of considering questions that have dogged Americans for centuries. In so doing, we will place literary works in conversation with contemporary theological trends and present-day scholarship on these connections. The course’s main thematic focus will be on government and collective rights; racial difference and questions of theodicy; children’s literature and disciplinary formation; the American libertarian streak; how best to care for the self; and humanity’s connection to nature. Students will examine a variety of texts — from the Declaration of Independence to Carl Sagan and Moby Dick — to better understand what matters to Americans and what do the literary artifacts we leave behind say about our current civilization moment. This course will have succeeded in its goals if by its end your operative definition of religion has been significantly jumbled, challenged, and complicated. While many of our historical actors will use the term in different ways, this course is invested not in identifying what is or is not properly “religious,” but rather in examining how ideas operate in the world for the people to whom they’re important. To a certain extent, we must take seriously the claims made by religious actors of God acting in their lives. But in terms of analysis, religion for us will be a fluid concept, one that evades simple definition, and that is always “real” in terms of its effects on belief, action, and identity.

RELI GU4325 Sufism. 4 points.

Prerequisites: Permission of instructor.

This is a seminar for advanced undergraduate and graduate students who wish to gain an understanding of the richness of Sufism (Islamic mysticism). We will examine the historical origins, development and institutionalization of Sufism, including long-standing debates over its place within the wider Islamic tradition. By way of a close reading of a wide range of primary and secondary sources, we will examine Sufi attitudes toward the body. Sufi understandings of lineage, power and religious authority, as well as the continued importance of Sufism in the modern world.

Fall 2023: RELI GU4325

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RELI GU4326 SUFISM IN SOUTH ASIA. 4.00 points.

Sufism or tassawuf has misleadingly been described as the mystical side of Islam, implying that it is somehow detached from the material world. Throughout the history of Islam, Sufi ideas, practices, and institutions have borne a complex, intimate, and sometimes fraught relationship with other aspects of Islamic tradition and practice, a relationship that has also been profoundly impacted by Orientalist scholarship in the colonial period and by global reformist currents in the postcolonial period. This seminar for advanced undergraduates and graduate students is an interdisciplinary investigation of how Sufism has been affected by the historical, sociocultural, political, and everyday environments in which it is experienced and practiced, with a particular focus on South Asia. Eclectic in approach, we will begin by considering how Sufism has been construed and even constructed by scholars, considering how modern notions of the self, religion, and the political have shaped scholarly understandings of what Sufism is. Focusing on bodily practices and well known individual Sufis who lived in South Asia during different historical periods, we will use them as a vehicle for understanding Sufi experience within the context of the evolving Sufi orders within specific local spaces. We will consider why Sufism has become such a target of controversy and ambivalence among Muslims in the modern world and trace some of the changing controversies and tensions that Sufis have struggled with over time, focusing on their understandings of self, society and reality.

Spring 2023: RELI GU4326

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RELI GU4355 AFR AM PROPHETIC POL TRADITION. 4.00 points.

Through a wide range of readings and classroom discussions, this course will introduce students to the crucial role that the unique African-American appropriation of the Judeo-Christian prophetic biblical tradition has played — and continues to play — in the lives of black people in America.
RELI GU4365 Revolutionary Women and Political Islam. 4 points.
Muslim female reformers and revolutionaries were at the forefront of many of the 20th and early 21st centuries’ historic socio-political and religious movements across the Global South. Members of diverse classes, families, and ethnic communities, many worked within the tenets of Islam in multiple ways to construct religious identity and work towards achieving and demanding civil and political rights. Yet the myriad theoretical and popular discourses underpinning emergent and longstanding women’s movements within revolutionary contexts are frequently overlooked. Moreover, representations of Muslim women too often rely on essentialist, ahistorical, static, victim-centered, and Orientalist descriptions and analyses. As a result, shades of difference in interpretation, ideology, practice, and culture are minimized. This course situates Muslim women as complex, multidimensional actors engaged in knowledge production and political and feminist struggles. We will read key texts and analyses from scholars and activists writing on religion, gender, sexuality, family planning, and women’s status in the contemporary Global South. The following questions will emerge in our discussions: “When is a hejab just a hejab?” “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?”, and “What is an ‘Islamic Feminist’ and Should We Care?” Readings include memoirs, editorials, ethnographies, and political treatises, as well as historical scholarship from North Africa, the Gulf, the Levant, and Southeast Asia.

RELI GU4376 A Political Introduction to the Christian Scriptures. 4.00 points.
In this course we will examine the New Testament canon and the twenty-seven texts that comprise it in light of their respective literary genres, their Jewish antecedents and Greco-Roman influences, which will include their historical, social, cultural, political and economic contexts, and the ways these factors impinged upon their various dimensions of meaning. Various modes of biblical interpretation, both ancient and contemporary, will be explored. A major emphasis will be on the ways select texts are utilized, misconstrued and weaponized in the public sphere in this contemporary moment.

RELI GU4411 RELIGION, MIND & SCIENCE FICTION. 4.00 points.
While not yet fully recognized as a literary or philosophical genre, science fiction, through the “dislocation” it operates, raises (or amplifies) questions that have long been the preserve of religion, metaphysics, or philosophy, and it has brought some of these questions into the realm of popular culture. Science fiction is often perceived as hostile to religion, yet it often blurs the boundaries between science and religion. Recent SF, unlike the traditional “space opera,” revolves around the relations between the human mind and Artificial Intelligence — a challenge that our fast-evolving technoscientific society is confronting with a new sense of urgency. This course examines overlapping issues and questions shared by religion and SF.

RELI GU4412 RECOVERING PLACE. 4.00 points.
RELI GU4416 Empire and Secularization in Africa: Reform, Mission, Islam. 4 points.
This course examines how Empires paved the way to a new form of domination in Africa. Secularizing processes will be analyzed in relation to imperial histories in Africa. From the Expedition in Egypt to the Berlin Conference, Empires in Africa were both secular and religious. We will examine the multiple ways in which Empires colonized Africa by encountering, regulating or transforming African religious traditions. The class will compare historical geographies of “North Western” and “North Eastern” Africa by focusing on the Maghreb and West Africa but also on Egypt and Sudan. We will examine the relations of Empires with Islam and Christian missions in Africa. We will also examine how African uprisings challenge and challenged Imperial and State powers both before and during the Pan-African movement. We will eventually look at both Imperial and Anti-Imperial legacies in Africa today.

RELI GU4417 Recovering Place. 4.00 points.
During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the intersection of multiple disruptions has led to the loss of a sense of place. This has resulted in pervasive alienation and disorientation, which has led to a growing desire to recover place. This course will examine the interplay between Displacement (Migration, Virtualization, Surveillance, Climate, Globalization) and Replacement (City, Rivers, Forests, Country). Special attention will be given to Displacement and Replacement in New York City. Students will have the opportunity to write a term paper or to create a project in an alternative medium.

RELI GU4418 On African Theory: Religion, Philosophy, Anthropology. 4 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

What is African Theory? Is a theory African simply because it is rooted in the political present of the continent? Is it African because it corresponds to an African cultural singularity or simply because his authors and inventors come from or live in Africa? This class will examine some central aspects of both African and Africana philosophy. We will study a) how religious traditions shape African theory b) how the influence of colonial anthropology on concepts of African culture and tradition can be challenged c) how African theory relates to African politics of decolonization, in North and “subsaharan” Africa. The major dialectical problem we will examine during the class is the ongoing contradiction between claims of authenticity and demands of liberation, traditionalism and modernism, religion and secularism, culturalism and Marxism.
RELIGIOUS WORLDS OF NEW YORK. 4.00 points.

Jews have stood on every imaginable side of criminal justice: accuser and accused; prosecutor, defendant, and defender; judge and judged; spectator; storyteller; journalist; critic; advocate. How did Jews approach these various roles, and what notions of crime, criminality, punishment, and justice did they bring with them? This course crosses chronological eras, geographical regions, and academic disciplines to explore configurations of crime and punishment in Jewish cultures. It strives to achieve a balance in its coverage of Ashkenaz vs. Sepharad; ancient, late ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary Judaisms; the specific and historical vs. the philosophical and theoretical; and varieties of sex, race, and gender. The role of classical Jewish texts, theology, and community in shaping Jewish approaches to criminal justice will all be considered.

Buddhism and Neurosciences. 4.00 points.

With the Dalai Lamas marked interest in recent advances in neuroscience, the question of the compatibility between Buddhist psychology and neuroscience has been raised in a number of conferences and studies. This course will examine the state of the question, look at claims made on both sides, and discuss whether or not there is a convergence between Buddhist discourse about the mind and scientific discourse about the brain.

Defining Marriage. 4 points.

This seminar examines the changing purpose and meaning of marriage in the history of the United States from European colonization through contemporary debates over gay marriage. Topics include religious views of marriage, interracial marriage, and the political uses of the institution.

Reincarnation and Technology. 4 points.

A seminar exploring reincarnation, resurrection, and their contemporary cyber-relatives, uploading and simulation. We'll explore Abrahamic, Amerind, Chinese, Greek, and Indian accounts, the Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation tradition and methodology in detail, and contemporary research on reincarnation, near-death, and out-of-body experiences. We will then turn to contemporary developments in science, religion, and philosophy concerning uploading consciousness to computer media and the probability that we are living a simulation. We will investigate whether religious traditions are consistent with or expressive of simulated reality, and the application of karma to all of the above.

The Politics of Freud in the Postcolony. 4 points.

This seminar examines the legacies of psychoanalysis through a critical exploration of how its concepts, practices and institutes have operated in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Weekly discussions will look at how practicing therapists, activists, anthropologists and others have extended, subverted and displaced psychoanalytic thought within non-European histories and imaginaries. Topics include challenges to the universality of the Oedipus emerging from early 20th century anthropologist's studies of kinship in Papua New Guinea, legacies of a self-made South Asian psychoanalyst's challenges to Freudian orthodoxies, and the study of a psychoanalysis of racism forged out of a Martinican psychiatrist's encounters with colonial neuroses in Algeria. We will also explore how psychoanalytic concepts have been deployed in debates about repression and sexuality in daily life during the Cultural Revolution and the psychic legacies of Maoism in contemporary China. In addition to reading the work of Freud and his critics, we will encounter primary materials—religious texts, movies, novels—that have been subjected to psychoanalytically-inflected interpretations. While attending to the cultural, racial and political assumptions suffusing psychoanalysis, our seminar will also show how variously situated authors have given this tradition new applications and meanings.

Gender, Islam and Society in North Africa. 4.00 points.

This course provides a range of perspectives for the study of gender and Islam in North Africa, foregrounding the entangled genealogies of religious, political and feminist thought across the region. Through lectures, readings, documentaries, and class discussions, students will be introduced to important conceptual and empirical frameworks related to the construction of religion and gender in the region. A significant part of this course will explore gendered experiences within sacred texts, rituals, political praxis and social expression. The course will also explore the different women's rights movements, with particular focus on the emergence of female Muslim activism. We will examine how feminism is shaped and/or challenged by the encounter with Islam, and look at the strategies and activism(s) of Muslim feminists and how they contribute to the development of civil society, social justice and feminist re-interpretation of religious texts. Students will be encouraged to think broadly across social, political and embodied ideas of gender and Islam, and therefore develop new avenues for capturing and interpreting the complexities of gender and religious subjectivity.
RELI GU4524 UNCONSCIOUS AND JEWISH THOUGHT. 4.00 points.
This survey aims to reflect on the specific dialogue between faith and theories of the mind. After an overview of pre-Freudian notions of the unconscious, the course will examine Freuds 1896 Theory of the unconscious mind and the key analytical concepts which display similarities between psychoanalysis and Jewish thought, from Talmudic hermeneutics to Kabbalah studies. We will explore the unconscious through readings from Leibnitz, Schelling, Goethe, von Hartmann, Freud, Jung, as well as its preludes and echoes in the Talmud and in the writings of Azriel of Gerona, the Magid of Mezrich, Krochmal, Leiner, Lou Andreas Salome, Scholem, Idel, Wolfson

RELI GU4526 Food and Sex in Premodern Chinese Buddhism. 4 points.
This course is an upper-level seminar on appetite and its management, designed for advanced undergraduates and graduate students. Our focus will be on the appetites of food hunger and sexual desire, and how Chinese Buddhist teachings propose to manage these. Food and sex are separate domains of experience, but as the primary objects of bodily appetites, they are analogous. Eating and sex both involve a direct and substantive interaction with the material world that is driven by powerful desiries. In Buddhist teachings, these desires are said to bind us to the cycle of rebirth (sa#sāra) and to shape the actions (karma), both mental and corporeal, that constitute our moral engagement with the phenomenal world. Hence it is important to know how a Buddhist on the path out of suffering is to manage these activities. What do monastic codes stipulate? What disciplines did lay Buddhists undertake? How are transgressions identified and handled? How do ancient Chinese and Daoist ideas inform the development of Chinese Buddhist attitudes toward sex and diet? How did Chinese Buddhist monastics come to adopt a meatless diet? How do religions use food and sex as tools for determining one’s ritual purity (i.e., moral worth)? We will explore these and related topics. Despite the common perception of Buddhism as a world-denying religion focused on transcending bodily needs, Chinese Buddhists (and their Indian or Central Asian counterparts) engaged in numerous body practices with worldly benefit, while at the same time mitigating the dangers of desire through various doctrinal and practical means. This course is an exploration of those means.

RELI GU4528 Religion and the Sexed Body. 4.00 points.
This seminar will examine how bodily practices associated with gender and sexualities are cultivated, regulated, and articulated within various religious traditions and how these practices have been influenced by global processes, including colonialism, the accelerating movement of people and technologies, and modern secularism and identity politics. Throughout the course we will track back and forth between theoretical works and ethnographic/historical writing, in order to articulate what is probably the most difficult aspect of original research: how to bring together “high theory” and primary sources ranging from field research to data drawn from a variety of media

RELI GU4535 BUDDHIST CONTEMPLATIVE SCIENCES. 4.00 points.
Buddhist arts and sciences traditionally are divided into the interconnected disciplines of ethics (śīla), wisdom/philosophy (prajñā), and “meditation” or experiential cultivation (samādhi/bhāvanā). This seminar course introduces the latter discipline, thus complementing and completing Prof. Yarnall’s Columbia seminars on Buddhist Ethics (RELI UN3500) and Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy (RELI GU4630), either of which—in addition to his introductory lecture course on Indo-Tibetan Buddhism (RELI UN2205)—are encouraged as prerequisites. This course will provide a detailed presentation of key Buddhist contemplative sciences, including: stabilizing meditation (śamatha); analytic insight meditation (vipaśyanā); cultivation of the four immeasurables, and form and formless trances; mind cultivation (lo jong); mindfulness meditation; Zen meditation; great perfection (dzogchen); and the subtle body: mind states activated and transformed through advanced tantric yoga techniques. These arts and sciences will be explored both within their traditional interdisciplinary frameworks, as well as in dialog with related contemporary disciplines, including: cognitive sciences, neuroscience, psychology, psychiatry, philospohy, epistemology, and so forth. To be conducted in a mixed lecture/seminar format (active, prepared participation required)

RELI GU4535 Sacrifice. 4.00 points.
This seminar provides an overview of sacrifice in both theory and practice. The concept of sacrifice, and its contestation, allows us to explore a range of issues and institutions related to the (often violent) act of “giving up,” or exchange. What must a sacrifice be, and how do its instantiations—for God; for country; for kin; for love; for rain; etc.—take shape? Readings are drawn from a range of sources, including Biblical texts and commentaries, the anthropological record, critical theory, comparative literature, and work on race and gender. The seminar aims to provide students with a strong foundation for relating sacrifice to broader concerns with the body, media-mediation, religion, politics, and kinship

RELI GU4547 Wittgenstein and Religion. 4 points.
Ludwig Wittgenstein is one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century, and probably one of the most widely read by non-philosophers. His influence on a number of intellectual disciplines (philosophy, politics, theology, social science, history, etc.) has been considerable. This course will focus on Wittgenstein’s own writings and their reception, with a focus on the study of religion and anthropology.
RELIGION 4565 Women and Islam. 4.00 points.
This course is a comprehensive engagement with Islamic perspectives on women with a specific focus on the debates about woman's role and status in Muslim societies. Students will learn how historical, religious, socio-economic and political factors influence the lives and experiences of Muslim women. A variety of source materials (the foundational texts of Islam, historical and ethnographic accounts, women's and gender studies scholarship) will serve as the framework for lectures. Students will be introduced to women's religious lives and a variety of women's issues as they are reported and represented in the works written by women themselves and scholars chronicling women's religious experiences. We will begin with an overview of the history and context of the emergence of Islam from a gendered perspective. We will explore differing interpretations of the core Islamic texts concerning women, and the relationship between men and women: who speaks about and for women in Islam? In the second part of the course we will discuss women's religious experiences in different parts of the Muslim world. Students will examine the interrelationship between women and religion with special emphasis on the ways in which the practices of religion in women's daily lives impact contemporary societies. All readings will be in English. Prior course work in Islam or women's studies is recommended, but not required.

RELIGION 4611 The Lotus Sutra in East Asian Buddhism. 4 points.
Prerequisites: open to students who have taken one previous course in either Buddhism, Chinese religions, or a history course on China or East Asian.
The course examines some central Mahayana Buddhist beliefs and practices through an in-depth study of the Lotus sutra. Schools (Tiantai/ Tendai, Nichiren) and cultic practices such as sutra-chanting, meditation, confessional rites, and Guanyin worship based on the scripture. East Asian art and literature inspired by it.

RELIGION 4613 Silence. 4 points.
We live in a world of noise where incessant buzz and endless chatter are used as strategies of distraction deployed for political and economic purposes. Increasingly invasive technologies leave little time for quiet reflection and thoughtful deliberation. As the volume rises, silence becomes either a tactic for repression or a means of resistance.

This course will consider the question of silence from the perspectives of theology, philosophy, literature, politics, and art. Special attention will be paid to the role silence plays in different religious traditions. An effort will be made to create a dialogue among philosophical, theological literary, artistic, and film treatments of silence.

Questions to be considered include: How does the importance of silence change with time and place? What are the theological and metaphysical presuppositions of different interpretations of silence? What is the relation of changing technologies to the cultivation of, or resistance to silence? What are the psychological dimensions of different kinds of silence? What is the pedagogical value of silence? How can silence be expressed in music, the visual arts, and architecture? How does the importance of silence change in different social, political, and economic circumstances? Do we need more or less silence today?

RELIGION 4615 Media and Religion. 4 points.
Typewriters, trains, electricity, telephones, telegraph, stock tickers, plate glass, shop windows, radio, television, computers, Internet, World Wide Web, cell phones, tablets, search engines, big data, social networks, GPS, virtual reality, Google glass. The technologies turn back on their creators to transform them into their own image. This course will consider the relationship between mechanical, electronic, and digital technologies and different forms of twentieth-century capitalism. The regimes of industrial, consumer, and financial shape the conditions of cultural production and reproduction in different ways. The exploration of different theoretical perspectives will provide alternative interpretations of the interplay of media, technology, and religion that make it possible to chart the trajectory from modernity to postmodernity and beyond.

RELIGION 4616 TECHNOLOGY, RELIGION, FUTURE. 4.00 points.
This seminar will examine the history of the impact of technology and media on religion and vice versa before bringing into focus the main event: religion today and in the future. Well read the classics as well as review current writing, video and other media, bringing thinkers such as Eliade, McLuhan, Mumford and Weber into dialogue with the current writing of Kurzweil, Lanier and Taylor, and look at, among other things: ethics in a Virtual World; the relationship between Burning Man, a potential new religion, and technology; the relevance of God and The Rapture in Kurzweil's Singularity; and what will become of karma when carbon-based persons merge with silicon-based entities and other advanced technologies.

RELIGION 4617 Image Theories in Chinese Religions. 4 points.
What does “image” mean in Chinese intellectual traditions? How did proponents of different religious persuasions construe the relationship between images and their referents differently and how did such construal change over time? Why did the practice of fashioning images often give rise to controversies in Chinese history? What makes images the object of adoration as well as destruction? Throughout the course, we will tackle these questions from diverse perspectives. The first half of the course examines a variety of accounts from Chinese indigenous classics and treatises. The second half looks at how discourses of the image further diversified after the arrival of Buddhism in China.
RELI GU4619 Islam in Popular Culture. 4.00 points.
This course interrogates seminal issues in the academic study of Islam through its popular representation in various forms of media from movies and television to novels and comic books. The class is structured around key theoretical readings from a range of academic disciplines ranging from art history and anthropology to comparative literature and religion. The course begins by placing the controversies surrounding the visual depiction of Muhammad in historical perspective (Gruber). This is followed by an examination of modern portrayals of Muslims in film that highlights both the vilification of the “other” (Shaheen) and the persistence of colonial discourses centered on the “native informant” (Mamdani). Particular emphasis is given to recent pop cultural works that challenge these simplistic discourses of Islam. The second half of the course revisits Muhammad, employing an anthropological framework (Asad) to understand the controversies surrounding Salman Rushdie’s Satanic Verses. The obsession with a gendered depiction of Islam is then examined through an anthropological framework that sheds light on the problems of salvation narratives (Abu Lughod). The course ends with a look at the unique history of Islam in America, particularly the tension between immigrant and African-American communities.

RELI GU4620 RELIGIOUS WORLDS OF NEW YORK. 4.00 points.

RELI GU4626 READING (IN THEORY). 3.00 points.
This reading-intensive course will engage, over time with essential texts of the current critical canon. Offered over a series of semesters, it is aimed at developing a practice of reading: close or distant, and always attentive. Let us say slow reading. What does it mean to read? Where and when does reading start? Where does it founder? What does reading this author (Freud, for example) or that author (say, Foucault) do to the practice of reading? Can we read without misreading? Can we read for content or information without missing the essential? Is there such a thing as essential reading? Favoring a demanding and strenuous exposure to the text at hand, this course promises just that: a demanding and strenuous exposure to reading. The course can be repeated for credit.

RELI GU4630 INDO-TIBETAN BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY. 4.00 points.
Examination of topics in the religious philosophy of Tibet and oral narrative through approximately 1910

RELI GU4637 TALMUDIC NARRATIVE. 4.00 points.
This course examines the rich world of Talmudic narrative and the way it mediates between conflicting perspectives on a range of topics: life and death; love and sexuality; beauty and superficiality; politics and legal theory; religion and society; community and non-conformity; decision-making and the nature of certainty. While we examine each text closely, we will consider different scholars’ answers — and our own answers — to the questions, how are we to view Talmudic narrative generally, both as literature and as cultural artifact?

RELI GU4807 DIVINE HUMAN ANIMAL. 4.00 points.
This course focuses on thinking with animals (Levi-Strauss) through the lens of the religious imagination. The concentration will be primarily on Western religious cultures, especially Judaism and the question of Jewishness.