

# Religious Studies

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## Courses

### REST 1501 Thinking About Religion

Nearly everyone has had some experience with something they would call religion, from at least a passing familiarity through the media to a lifetime of active participation in religious communities. But what do we actually mean when we use the word? What is a religion? What does it mean to call something a religion, or religious? And what does it mean to study religion, given the slipperiness of the concept itself? This course offers an introduction to the academic study of religion through a consideration of these questions: What is religion, and how can we study it? Do we need an answer to the first question to pursue the second? Why, and toward what ends, might we undertake such study? We will also consider what is at stake in our investigation and inquiry into religion—for the inquirers, for the subjects of inquiry, and for society more broadly—and what kind of lens the study of religion offers us on ourselves, our neighbors, and society, in turn. To these ends, we will discuss major theoretical approaches to the study of religion and significant work on religions and religious phenomena, toward a better understanding of what religion might be and how it might be studied today. No prior knowledge or experience of religion, religions, or anything religious is expected or required. This course is required for Religious Studies majors and minors.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H  
 Typical periods offered: Fall, Summer

### REST 1800 First-Year Seminar in Religious Studies

This course is for freshman only. The topic varies from semester to semester. Recent topics include Miracles; Sexuality in Early Christianity; and The Self in Chinese Thought.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM  
 Typical periods offered: Spring

### REST 1996 Religious Studies Elective: 100-Level

This course is for elective or transfer credits.

Credit 3 units. EN: H  
 Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

### REST 2020 Introduction to Religious Traditions I: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are elaborate and dynamic systems of belief and practice. While each of them is a distinct religious tradition, all three share a common cultural background, harbor similar views of the individual, and assume a linear perspective of history. Moreover, the historical trajectories of these three Western monotheisms have been intricately intertwined: Christianity emerged out of Judaism, and Islam took shape largely in a Jewish and Christian context. This course will explore these monotheistic traditions in a comparative perspective with ample attention to questions of historical context and development. Our coverage will be explicitly topical and comparative, and the themes

examined will include scripture and interpretive tradition, monotheism, authority, worship and ritual, ethics, material culture as well as religion and political order. Note: This class is open to all interested students and is required for all Religious Studies majors and minors.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall

### REST 2021 Introduction to Religious Traditions II: Asian Religions

This course is designed to introduce students to the study of religion by exploring the major religious traditions of Asia. Traditions that have taken shape in Asian cultural contexts include the Buddhist, Sikh, Islamic, Hindu, Taoist, Jain, and Confucian traditions. These traditions have shaped and been shaped by the rich traditions of literary and performative culture, ethics, sociality and polity in the regions of Asia. Familiarity with these traditions provides a foundation for understanding the cultures of South and East Asia, from film and literature to contemporary political life. Study of Asian traditions also deepens our understanding of the possibilities of human being and striving, and of the manifold aims and means of religious endeavor. Note: Specific traditions and regions emphasized in this course will vary. This class is open to all interested students and is required for all Religious Studies majors and minors.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

### REST 2310 Religion and Film in America

This course attends to how religion, religious groups, and religious practices have been historically represented in the American popular culture, specifically, film. This course will consider film as more than simple entertainment. We will examine not only how in the United States film has functioned as a means to establish what counts as religion, but also how and with what results imaginations of religion in film helped and continues to help to socially construct conceptions of gender, race, and ethnicity.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Spring

### REST 2996 Religious Studies Elective: 200-Level

This course is for elective or transfer credits.

Credit 3 units. EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

### REST 3000 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

The Hebrew Bible is the foundational text of Judaism and Christianity. It is a complex compilation of materials, reflecting great diversity in ideology, literary expression, social and political circumstances, and theology. In this course, we shall read a significant amount of the Bible in English translation. We shall study the various approaches that have been taken by scholars in trying to understand the Bible in its historical context. We shall also study how the Bible was traditionally interpreted by Jews and Christians during the last two thousand years.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

### REST 3066 Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christianity

From the time Jesus of Nazareth preached in the rural countryside of Judea, his followers interpreted his words differently and wrote varied accounts of what he said and did. As time passed and as Jesus' movement grew into a world religion -- Christianity -- disagreement among Christians only continued to increase, leading to the need to define and enforce correct beliefs and practices to create a Christian orthodoxy embodied in the now-familiar institutions of creed, canon, and clergy. Yet in the process of creating an orthodoxy, what was

left out? Whose voices were suppressed? Through the careful study of ancient texts that were long-ago deemed heretical and virtually lost until the 20th century, this course examines the wide varieties of Christianity in its nascent years and discusses how the framers of orthodoxy defined themselves against these alternatives.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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### REST 3095 Introduction to the New Testament

What can be known -- from an historical perspective -- about the life and teachings of Jesus and his earliest followers? How did Jesus see himself and how did his followers see him? How did the lives, teachings, and deaths of Jesus and his followers come to form the heart of a new movement? If Jesus and the apostles were all Jews, how did Christianity emerge as a distinct religion? This course investigates these questions through a focus on the earliest sources for Jesus and his first followers, including and extending beyond the canonical books of the Christian New Testament. Our approach in this course is historical and literary, rather than theological or confessional: we ask what Jesus, his first followers, and their Jewish and pagan contemporaries did and believed, and we try to catch glimpses of the worlds in which they lived and the cultures which they took for granted.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Art: HUM BU: HUM

Typical periods offered: Spring

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### REST 3111 From the Temple to the Talmud: The Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism

This course offers a survey of the historical, literary, social, and conceptual development of Rabbinic Judaism from its emergence in late antiquity to the early Middle Ages. The goal of the course is to study Rabbinic Judaism as a dynamic phenomenon -- as a constantly developing religious system. Among the topics to be explored are: How did Judaism evolve from a sacrificial cult to a text-based religion? How did the Rabbis emerge as a movement after the destruction of the Second Temple and how could they replace the old priestly elite? How did Rabbinic Judaism develop in its two centers of origin, Palestine (the Land of Israel) and Babylonia (Iraq), to become the dominant form of Judaism under the rule of Islam? How did Jewish ritual and liturgy develop under Rabbinic influence? How were the Rabbis organized and was there diversity within the group? What was the Rabbis' view of women, how did they perceive non-Rabbinic Jews and non-Jews? As Rabbinic Literature is used as the main source to answer these questions, the course provides an introduction to the Mishnah, the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, and the Midrash-collections -- a literature that defines the character of Judaism down to our own times. All texts are read in translation.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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### REST 3135 Religion and Violence

Is religion intrinsically connected with violence or merely manipulated to justify political positions and incite supporters? How has religion been the motivation and justification behind violent conflict, aggression and persecution? Does religion have a greater power to make war or peace? People have debated these questions for centuries as believers waged war in the name of their god(s). We'll study several critical theories about religion and violence and test them on historical and recent religious conflicts. Our investigation will be organized around five types of violence: 1) martyrdom and redemptive suffering, 2) claims on sacred space, 3) the violence of social stratification and othering, 4) war and 5) apocalyptic and spiritual warfare. Case studies ranging from early Christian martyrs and crusades to attacks on abortion clinics and Tokyo subways will help clarify patterns and types of religious violence.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: FAAM, HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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### REST 3141 The Problem of Evil: The Holocaust and Other Horrors

The question of how God can allow evil to occur to the righteous or innocent people has been a perennial dilemma in religion and philosophy. We study the classic statement of the problem in the biblical book of Job, the ancient Near Eastern literature on which Job is based, and traditional Jewish and Christian interpretation of Job. We study the major approaches to the problem of evil in Western philosophical and religious thought.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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### REST 3164 Religion, Race, and Gender in Early Modern Latin America

This seminar explores the history of religion, gender, and race in the context of empire in Latin America, focusing primarily on the colonial period (1492-1821), but including some pre-colonial materials. Through primary documents, secondary scholarship and student-centered discussion, we will consider connections between religious beliefs, gender norms and relations, and the ways race, class, and gender intersected with ideas about religion, empire and power. We will study the clash of religions that occurred during the conquest and its terrible aftermath, the politics of evangelization, and how marginalized subjects such as women, African slaves, and indigenous peoples navigated religious authoritarianism to develop their own spiritual beliefs and expressions.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH, HUM, IS EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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### REST 3170 Sexuality in Early Christianity

What did Jesus of Nazareth and his early followers teach about sexuality in terms of marriage, adultery, divorce, the virtues of procreation and celibacy, same-sex relationships, and erotic desire? How and why did ancient Christians take different stances on these issues, and how do these traditions continue to inform sexual ethics and gender roles today? In this course, we will study these questions by examining key passages from the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, Paul's letters, writings of early church leaders, martyr propaganda, monastic literature, and apocryphal books deemed heretical. We will also consider the interpretations of contemporary historians of religion informed by recent trends in sexuality and gender theories.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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### REST 3380 Hindu Reformations

Discussion of a group of movements that seek to reform Hinduism in both a religious and social sense.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM

Typical periods offered: Spring

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### REST 3404 Native American and Afro-Native Religious Traditions

This course introduces students to the ways in which Native American and Afro-Native religious traditions have been conceptualized, negotiated, and interpreted from the seventeenth century until today. Students will learn about sacred stories, deities, philosophies, and ceremonies. The course will also address the impact of Western

European settler-colonialism, American slavery, government assimilation policies, racial construction, sexual violence, the Red Power movement, and religious freedom issues on Indigenous and Black peoples within the United States of America.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM

Typical periods offered: Spring

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#### **REST 3525 Genesis**

Genesis, the first book of the Bible, remains among the most important literary, historical, and theological works ever written - at once beautiful, funny, perplexing, and challenging. In this class, we will take a deep dive into Genesis, while also exploring literary, historical, mythological, feminist, postcolonial, and other responses to the text. We will also consider the history of interpretation, with a particular interest in the reception of Genesis in literature and in popular culture.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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#### **REST 3635 Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion**

What is religion, and how can we study it? Do we need an answer to the first question to pursue the second? Why, and toward what ends, might we undertake such study? This course considers these questions through the investigation of significant attempts to study religion over the past century, paying particular attention to the methods, motivations, and aims of these works. Is the study of religion an effort to disprove or debunk it, or perhaps to support it? What would each mean? Is it an effort to describe the indescribable, or perhaps to translate complex beliefs and practices into a language in which they can be discussed by others? Why would such a translation be helpful, and to whom? Is the study of religion an investigation of a social phenomenon, an organization of communities, a specific formation of individuals, or perhaps a psychosis or illusion, evidence of the workings of power on our lives and the difficulty of bearing it? What is at stake in defining religion in these ways, and then in undertaking its study?

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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#### **REST 3715 Topics in Religious Studies**

The topic for this course varies. Recent topics include: Anime and Animi-A Popular Cultural Approach to Shinto; Religion and Violence; It's the End of the World As We Know It: Apocalypse in the Biblical World; and North American Religious Experience.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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#### **REST 3720 Religion in the Kitchen**

The kitchen is home to food preparation and everyday conversations, not a privileged place of formal religious rites. But much can be learned about religion by focusing our analytical gaze on this seemingly benign space. By expanding the focus of where, and how, we study religion, the kitchen is revealed as a remarkably unstable social space. In this course we will consider questions such as: Is the kitchen constructed as a sacred, profane, or an in-between space? How is the kitchen gendered? Is it perceived as a dominantly female (or male) space, and under what conditions of power? How is food used to construct religious or racial identity, and why is it so powerful? Are kitchen practices cultural or religious activities? And who identifies kitchen work as an authentic (or inauthentic) religious practice? To answer these questions, we will consider a variety of religious, and not-so-religious, traditions within North America.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM, IS EN: H

UColl: CD

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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#### **REST 3735 Major Figures in Christian Thought**

Critical examination of one or more of the major figures in Christian theology and apologetics (e.g., Jesus, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Kierkegaard). Subject matter varies each semester. May be repeated for credit. Prerequisite: a course in biblical literature, or permission of the instructor.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall

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#### **REST 3745 Topics in Christianity**

The topic covered in this course varies. Recent course topics include: The 'Other' Catholic Church: The Lived Experiences of Eastern Orthodoxy and The Apostle Paul: Communities and Controversies.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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#### **REST 3844 African and African American Religion and Thought**

This course examines the religious philosophies, practices, and experiences of African

Americans. It contributes to the academic discipline of religious studies by critically exploring

the complex evolution of African American religion. Although the African American Church in

the United States, which is commonly viewed as evangelical and decentralized, will be an object

of study in this course, it will not be viewed as normative. Students will encounter the social and

ideological forces that made some forms of African American religion more visible than others.

The primary objective of this course is to familiarize students with the diverse religious experiences, histories, and realities of people of African descent in the Americas. Students will learn that there is no one African American religious experience. This course is historical in its outlook and is reading intensive. The course is open to first year students.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall

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#### **REST 3996 Religious Studies Elective: 300-Level**

This course is for elective or transfer credits.

Credit 3 units. EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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#### **REST 4022 Material Religion**

This seminar examines contemporary theories and approaches to materiality in the study of religion. Particular attention is given to how scholars envision the relationship between bodies, rituals, religious objects, and the human ability to think, know, and act in the world. By attending to a variety of things -- prints, icons, ritual clothes, food, incense -- and to the history of their use within such traditions as Islam, Buddhism, Candomble, Lucumi, and Christianity, this course seeks to provide students with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with contemporary studies that take seriously the power of material objects to make and sustain religion. This course is simultaneously designed to allow students to practice utilizing material culture as a method in their own research.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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#### **REST 4061 Nuns**

Nuns -- women vowed to a shared life of poverty, chastity, and obedience in a cloistered community -- were central figures in medieval and early modern religion and society. This course explores life in the convent, with the distinctive culture that developed among

communities of women, and the complex relations between the world of the cloister and the world outside the cloister. We look at how female celibacy served social and political, as well as religious, interests. We read works by nuns: both willing and unwilling; and works about nuns: nuns behaving well, and nuns behaving scandalously badly; nuns embracing their heavenly spouse, and nuns putting on plays; nuns possessed by the devil, and nuns managing their possessions; nuns as enraptured visionaries, and nuns grappling with the mundane realities of life in a cloistered community.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall

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#### **REST 4095 Topics in Christianity**

Topics in Christianity is a course for advanced undergraduate and graduate students on specific themes in Christianity.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall

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#### **REST 4245 The Mystical Tradition in Judaism**

What is Jewish mysticism? What is its relationship to the category of religion? Is Jewish mysticism just one form of a general phenomenon common to a variety of religious traditions or is it a specific interpretation of biblical, rabbinic, and other Jewish traditions? Taking the above questions as a starting point, this course aims at a systematic and historically contextualized analysis of a broad range of Jewish texts that are commonly classified as mystical. (All primary texts are read in translation.) At the same time, we explore such overarching themes as: the interplay of esoteric exegesis of the Bible and visionary experiences; the place of traditional Jewish law (halakhah) within mystical thought and practice; the role of gender, sexuality, and the body in Jewish mystical speculation and prayer; the relationship between mysticism and messianism; Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions and their mutual impact on Jewish mysticism; the absence of women from Jewish mystical movements; esoteric traditions of an elite vs. mysticism as a communal endeavor; and the tension between innovation and (the claim to) tradition in the history of Jewish mysticism.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM, IS EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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#### **REST 4340 Topics in Religious Studies**

The topic for this course varies.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM

Typical periods offered: Spring

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#### **REST 4801 Senior Seminar in Religious Studies**

The topic for this seminar differs every year. Previous topics include Religion and Violence; Governing Religion; Saints and Society; and Religion and the Secular: Struggles over Modernity. The seminar is offered every spring semester and is required of all Religious Studies majors, with the exception of those writing an honors thesis. The class is also open, with the permission of the instructor, to other advanced undergraduates with previous coursework in Religious Studies.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

Typical periods offered: Spring

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#### **REST 4990 Independent Work for Senior Honors I**

Investigation of a topic, chosen in conjunction with a faculty advisor, on which the student prepares a paper and is examined. Students enroll in L23 498 in the fall semester and L23 499 in the spring semester. Prerequisite: Admission to the Honors Program.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall

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#### **REST 4995 Religious Studies Elective: 400-Level**

Fourth Year Religious Studies elective.

Credit 3 units. EN: H

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring

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#### **REST 4997 Independent Work for Senior Honors II**

Investigation of a topic, chosen in conjunction with a faculty advisor, on which the student prepares a paper and is examined. Students enroll in L23 498 in the fall semester and L23 499 in the spring semester. Prerequisite: Admission to the Honors Program.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Spring

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#### **REST 4999 Independent Study**

This course is for independent study.

Credit 3 units.

Typical periods offered: Fall, Spring