

Program in Religion



Summer 2013

REL 204W Religious Experience

This course is intended to provide some insight into the meaning of a particular dimension of human experience, the “religious experience.” While anyone who is religious could be said to be having a religious experience at each moment, we will not be concerned with this broad perspective but focus instead on the narrower view of the religious “breakthrough,” that event through which a person becomes religious. This will mean that the course will concern itself very much with non-religious persons, following them as closely as possible up to and through the point of their religious breakthrough.

M, W 15:20-18:28 Haltenberger Room C113N

REL 251W Asian Religions

Religions proclaim attitudes toward every aspect of reality—personal, social, universal, and absolute—and then use these attitudes to structure the systems of meaning and value that ultimately form their adherents' relation to reality and the others they encounter within it. In this course we will study some of the fundamental texts of “Asian” Religions—Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Taoism—and examine the basic attitudes of each tradition with a special focus on the implications they carry into the lives of their followers.

M, W 18:40-21:48 Cereguas Room 206W

REL 252 Ancient Near Eastern Religions

This course is a survey of the basic history and of the most significant aspects of the religions of the major Near Eastern peoples in the Bronze Age (8000BCE-3000 BCE), including the Egyptians, Sumerians, Babylonians, Hittites, Canaanites, and Israelites. The magnificent civilizations that they built had an enormous influence on subsequent human culture. This course is based on primary material, of both archeological and literary natures, and will discuss the most important texts produced by religious and secular sources.

Tu, Th 15:20-18:28 Raver Room C113N

REL 253W Abrahamic Religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Introduction to fundamental religious ideas in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, focusing on the essential sacred texts in the Bible and the Qur'an. Attention is given to the influence of dualistic thought from Zoroastrianism and Gnostic systems, and to some mystical and contemporary interpretations.

M, W 8:00-11:08 O'Neil Room 406W

REL 256W Afro-Caribbean Religion

This course is a survey of some of the most salient forms of African-based religions in the Caribbean, South America, and New York City. The course will include some consideration of the transformations that have occurred in the journey of the belief systems from Africa to the New World and the effects of syncretism. The main focus of the course will be on the integrity of the Afro-Caribbean experience of religion. The course will include not only attention to beliefs, but to art and ritual forms in which these religions have expressed themselves. In addition, the course will encounter the question of the ongoing appeal of these religions.

M, W 15:20-18:28 Huffman Room 611W

REL 261.59 Faith and Reason

Is faith fundamentally opposed to reason and rationality? Today, a popular answer is simply, 'yes.' Our investigation, however, will explore this question more deeply and seek out the modern roots of this secularist response in the traditions of Western theology and philosophy. Focused primarily on thought developed in the nineteenth century "critique of religion," our readings will include constructive, critical, and conservative applications of reason to the meaning, value, and truth of faith. Authors considered will include Kant, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche.

M, W 15:20-18:28 Cereguas Room 206W

REL 270W Psychology and Religion

Our goal in this course is to explore the natures of psychology and religion by comparing and contrasting their ideas and methods, and to gain insight into the interrelationship of psychology and religion for human growth. To do this we will examine the ways in which psychology understands, describes, and values (or devalues) religion. Our approach is through the media of text, story, and film.

M, W 18:40-21:48 Haltenberger Room 610W

REL 308W Religion and the Arts

The arts have always been a medium for transforming spiritual beliefs, from prehistoric figurines to William Blake's mystical paintings. Even in today's society, the arts serve as a vehicle for religious expression, reflecting not only the individual's experience with the sacred but society's view of what art constitutes and how religion should be depicted. But how did we get to this point? We shall examine the relationship between religion and sculpture, painting, dance, theater, decorative arts, music and, finally, photography and film from a chronological and cross-cultural perspective.

Tu, Th 11:40-14:48 Raver Room 206W

REL 310W The Religious Meanings of Death

The fact of death is at the center of the study of religion. The meaning one gives to death often determines the direction of one's life. This course will explore the various meanings which different cultures in different historical periods have discovered in the reality of death. Attention will also be given to contemporary formulations. Material studied will be cross-cultural and interdisciplinary. Discussion will center on the assigned readings.

M, W 8:00-11:08 Adluri Room 224W

REL 317W Religion and Film

Film is one of the most popular forms of literature in contemporary society. This course will explore the relationship between Religion and Film. As a class we will examine how film makers use religion to convey their points of view, as well as examining how western religions (Judaism/Christianity/Islam) use film technology for propagating faith.

M, W 11:40-14:48 Bruinius Room 206W

REL 320W Hinduism

A study of the nature of Hinduism and its development, literature, philosophy, and religious practices. Readings in such traditional texts as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita, as well as in modern texts, will explore Hinduism's understanding of God, human beings, the feminine principle, society and community, time and history, and we shall study how these understandings develop from 2000 BCE to the 21st century.

M, W 11:40-14:48 Adluri Room 224W

REL 410 Independent Study in Religion

HRSTBA Sproul Room 1241W