Religious Studies (RLGS)

Courses

RLGS 3001 Judaism (4 Credits)
A literary and historical journey through Judaism. This course examines the "Jewish story" from its roots to its modern-day manifestations, focusing on select, classic Jewish texts in their historical contexts. From them, students explore Jewish tradition and practice and actively engage with and in the vivid interpretive imagination of the authors of Judaism throughout the ages. Cross listed with JUST 3001.

RLGS 3023 Great Thinkers: Maimonides (4 Credits)
Using "The Guide for the Perplexed" as our central text, we explore the complex philosophical ideas of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), one of the central figures in medieval philosophy and Jewish thought. Our study includes analyses of his ideas on principles of faith, human perfection, intellectual vs. "imaginational" approaches to truth, pedagogy and politics, reasons for the commandments, the nature of God and divine will, the limits of human knowledge, the mechanics of prophecy, and the parameters and implications of providence. Cross listed with PHIL 3023 and JUST 3023. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

RLGS 3024 Maimonides: Greek, Islamic, and Christian Encounters (4 Credits)
Using the "Guide of the Perplexed" as our central text, we explore the complex philosophical ideas of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), a central figure in the history of philosophy and in the history of Jewish thought. In this course, we examine in depth the relationship between Maimonides' core ideas and various Greek, Muslim and Christian thinkers, including: Aristotle, Plotinus, al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), al-Ghazali, Averroes (Ibn Rushd), and Aquinas. Topics to be explored include: what is "metaphysics"?; God's unity and essence as existence itself; the mystery of knowing and not knowing God (including a consideration of God's ways as well as "negative theology"--viz. the extent to which we do not know God); God as pure intellect; the nature of the cosmos and the "separate intellects"; creation vs. eternity vs. emanation: philosophical and religious perspectives on the origins of the universe and implications for "living in the world with/out God." In our study, we will also address the methodological implications of cross-religious and cross-language analyses, and how to spot and address (in your own work and in the work of others) tacit cultural biases at play in the interpretive process. Cross listed with JUST 3024 and PHIL 3024. Prerequisite: Junior standing or instructor's permission.

RLGS 3102 Early Judaism (4 Credits)
This course traces the development of Judaism in history and literature from the Babylonian Exile and the end of the biblical period through the origins of Rabbinic Judaism and the completion of the Babylonian Talmud (c. 650 CE). However, special emphasis is placed on Jewish culture in the late Second Temple period (c. 200 BCE to 100 CE) and its impact on the early Christian movement, including Jewish literature from the time of Jesus, lost texts of the Bible, new evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the few surviving historical sources of the Second Temple Period. In addition, students analyze how the Bible came to be and understand how sacred texts and their interpretations eventually became the new center of both Judaism and Christianity. Cross listed with JUST 3102.

RLGS 3150 The Bible & Dead Sea Scrolls (4 Credits)
This course includes an advanced study of the Dead Sea Scrolls with a particular focus on the Bible as it appears in the Qumran library. We will discuss the variant versions of the Bible, some of which were previously unknown before the discovery of the Scrolls, and how the findings of the Scrolls may question the very idea of "Bible" itself in the context of the late Second Temple Judaism. Further, we will place particular emphasis on studying the way biblical texts were engaged, interpreted and even written by the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In this way, we shall explore the origins of biblical interpretation and how the notion of the Bible came to be. Cross listed with JUST 3150. Prerequisites: One year of Hebrew language or equivalent or by special permission of the instructor.

RLGS 3151 Dead Sea Scrolls (4 Credits)
The Dead Sea Scrolls represent one of the greatest manuscript finds of the twentieth century and have been said to be the most important discovery in biblical archaeology. These scrolls offer a rare window into early Judaism and Christianity and offer us the earliest and most important witnesses to the (Hebrew) Bible. This course covers the Dead Sea Scrolls in their historical, literary and religious context in English translation, together with relevant scholarly research. Cross listed with JUST 3151.

RLGS 3192 Christian Classics (4 Credits)
Reading and discussion of influential historic books pertaining to Christian life and devotion.

RLGS 3203 Christianity (4 Credits)
This is an introductory course about the Christian religion, with a substantial component devoted to experiential learning. The primary goal of the course is to acquaint students with the richness, dynamism and diversity of one of the world's largest and most influential religious traditions. Even those students who have some general knowledge of Christianity benefit from the disciplined approach of the academic study of religion.
RLGS 3204 Christianity in the British Isles (4 Credits)
It is the contention of this course that Christianity in the British Isles constitutes a singular chapter in the history of the religion and must be approached and appreciated as such. The circumstances surrounding Christianity's introduction to Britain--as documented by the Venerable Bede in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People--presaged a destiny for the English Church that would be "peculiar." With decidedly Roman sympathies, Bede's reforming agenda is presented as historical fact accomplished. The narrative nevertheless bears witness to the vibrant and resilient character of Celtic spirituality. Although Henry VIII officially brought the Protestant Reformation to England from the Continent in the 1530s when he severed the English Church from the Papacy, the extent to which the Reformation in England was ever as theologically "Protestant" as it was in Europe is open to debate. The Oxford movement--at once reforming and catholicizing--would otherwise seem incongruous were that not the case. Indeed, as we shall see, the notion of semper reformanda ecclesia is, perhaps, most suited to this geographical context. Not surprisingly, playwrights, novelists, and filmmakers have found no little inspiration in Anglican reform's concomitant turmoil and intrigue.

RLGS 3212 Development of the New Testament: The Evolution and Transmission of Christian Scripture (4 Credits)
Using a variety of critical methods, this course explores the social, political, and religious influences that shaped the New Testament as it was written, copied, edited, canonized, and translated into its current forms. Students will perform a variety of exercises in class to illustrate the complicated process by which the New Testament was formed.

RLGS 3300 Psychology of Religion (4 Credits)
Beliefs, feelings and actions representing human religious response of experience; function of religion in individual life.

RLGS 3302 Islamic Fundamentalism (4 Credits)
This writing-intensive course introduces students to the history and scope of fundamentalist movements in the Muslim world, focusing on the Middle East. Beginning with a look at the internal traditions of renewal and reform built around the idea of a return to the fundaments or origins of Islam, the course examines the rise of major movements from the 1700s to the present. Students will engage with key questions, including the following: What distinguishes fundamentalism from radicalism? How do Sunni and Shi fundamentalisms differ? What roles have these movements played in politics and society, and how might these evolve in the future? How might policy makers and others best approach fundamentalist groups? A basic knowledge of Islam is assumed; students wishing to enroll without this background knowledge will be provided supplementary readings.

RLGS 3315 Religion & Moral Psychology (4 Credits)
Philosophical foundations and research strategies of psychological studies of moral thought; Aristotelian, Kantian and utilitarian thought included, as well as religious dimensions of morality.

RLGS 3318 Jesus on the Silver Screen (4 Credits)
First and foremost, this is a course in religious studies. It is a course about Jesus, a religious reformer of late ancient Judaism whose movement, by the end of the first century of the Common Era, gave rise to an identifiable separate tradition. It is a course about New Testament portrayals of Jesus in the Gospels. It is a course about contemporary, historical research on the figure of Jesus. It is also a course about film and cinematography, about reading film critically as a "text," and, in this context, the way in which film "translates" or "transforms" Jesus into another medium. Finally, it is a course about how Jesus films serve to convey modern cultural assumptions.

RLGS 3350 Culture, Psyche, and Religion (4 Credits)

RLGS 3370 Freud, Psychology, & Religion (4 Credits)
Readings, discussion, and papers help students learn about the life, intellectual and social environment, and clinical and theoretical work of Sigmund Freud. Attention is given to the influence of Freud's work on the understanding of religion at the beginning of the 21st century.

RLGS 3381 Religion & Psychobiography (4 Credits)
Use of different psychological theories to understand life and religious experience of individuals known through historical records.

RLGS 3400 Philosophy of Religion (4 Credits)
Inquiries into nature of religion, religious experience, language, methods of thinking.

RLGS 3452 Political Theology (4 Credits)
A general inquiry, focusing on the modern and postmodern eras, into various forms of philosophical reflection on the relationship between religion and political theory. Survey of the seminal ideas of such major thinkers as Kant, Hegel, Schmidt, Strauss, Derrida, Agamben, Asad, and Zizek.

RLGS 3455 Phenomenology and Theology: Husserl to Marion (4 Credits)
The implications of phenomenology for theology and the issue of theology in relation to phenomenology. The course starts with a reading of Husserl and 19th_century efforts to chart a "phenomenology of religion" in the work of Otto. It also explores the ideas of later figures such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Henry, Nancy, and Marion. Junior standing required or permission of the instructor. Cross listed with PHIL 3450.

RLGS 3460 Nietzsche & the Death of God (4 Credits)
This course will involve an intensive reading and discussion of Friedrich Nietzsche's 'Thus Spake Zarathustra,' together with relevant associated materials, especially 'The Gay Science.' Cross listed with PHIL 3460.

RLGS 3465 Derrida and Postmodernism (4 Credits)
Cross listed with PHIL 3465.
RLGS 3475 Deleuze and Semiotics (4 Credits)
Examines the development of the thought of the famous French postmodern thinker Gilles Deleuze with special attention to his cultural and semiotic theory to the degree that it is relevant to the philosophy of religion. The course also investigates how Deleuze's work has shaped, and is beginning to push in new directions, contemporary postmodern philosophy. Prerequisites: must be at least junior standing and have completed at least two undergraduate courses in philosophy.

RLGS 3500 Islam (4 Credits)
Introduction to the history, faith, practice, culture(s), and politics of Islam, starting with the Judeo-Christian Near Eastern context in which it emerged and tracing its theological development and geographic spread around the world. Proceeding thematically along a broad historical frame, the course ends with an examination of the numerous, often competing, trends in contemporary Muslim communities.

RLGS 3501 Pilgrimage in Islam (4 Credits)
Introduction to the ideas and practices of pilgrimage in Islam, focusing on the hajj as Islam's paradigmatic form of pilgrimage and the one to which all others are compared, but also considering other local or "lesser" pilgrimages, often known as ziyarat or visits. The course excavates the history of the practice of pilgrimage, situating it within the social, political, economic and cultural contexts that have helped frame Muslims' understandings of the spiritual and social meanings of various kinds of pilgrimages at different times and places across the Muslim world. The course includes consideration of the hajj experiences of non-Arab Muslims through documentary and news programs, investigates contemporary re-thinkings of the meaning of "hajj", and reflects on the key geo-political and religio-political issues that may surround Muslim pilgrimage in the 21st century.

RLGS 3502 Contemporary Islam (4 Credits)
This course introduces students to contemporary Islam. After a historical overview, the course looks thematically at different spheres of Muslim life. It considers changes that relate to political systems and forms of governance, styles of education, labor and professional work, changes in daily life habits such as timing and organization, changes in gender relations, and changes in religious authority. It also pays attention to the ways in which faith and practice are articulated through cultural practices like pop music and film.

RLGS 3503 Quran and Hadith (4 Credits)
This writing-intensive course introduces students to the key texts of Islam--the Qur'an and hadith--including their origins and meaning as well as how they have been interpreted by Muslims over time, and focusing as well on case studies that highlight issues of crucial relevance for today and the future.

RLGS 3570 Religion and Morality in the American Public Square (4 Credits)
Close focus on one or two moral issues in which religion is drawn into public debate in the contemporary U.S. Observation of the debate first hand at demonstrations, town meetings, and discussion groups, etc. Analysis of these observations is facilitated by readings on the subject and class discussion.

RLGS 3601 Religion and Culture in Vienna (4 Credits)
This course focuses on the cultural, religious and intellectual history of the city of Vienna as the hub of culture for Central Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries with special attention to the arts, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and the critique of Christianity. This course examines how religious past, particularly the influence of Judaism, shaped its rich cultural heritage and the birth of modernism. A special segment of the course is devoted to the Nazi period and the Holocaust, including a study of the resistance of religious groups. The course concludes with a history of the post-Nazi period with attention to the development of Vienna as the center of internation diplomacy and theories of globalization. The class combines lectures and online discussions with site visits to major cultural and historical sites as well as research centers around the city. The first week of the course is online.

RLGS 3604 Faith & Ethics-Religion Biography (4 Credits)
Modes of reconciling private (faith) and public (ethics) in thought and careers of selected modern individuals.

RLGS 3641 Religion and Race in America (4 Credits)
Explores the relationship between racism and religious activism by focusing on the biographies of activists.

RLGS 3680 American Religious Experience (4 Credits)

RLGS 3693 Religion and the Media (4 Credits)
Interactions between religion and all forms of communications media in American life.

RLGS 3701 Topics in Religious Studies (1-4 Credits)
An exploration of various topics and issues related to the academic study of religion. The subject matter of the course varies and may be taught by the regular faculty of the department or a visiting scholar. Some offerings may include a travel component.

RLGS 3707 Religion and Film (4 Credits)
Understanding religion requires us to take culture seriously. In doing so, we must consider products of culture, including popular culture. This course engages both classic and more recent films as “texts” to be analyzed, not as mere entertainments or diversions. We focus not only on those films that identify themselves explicitly as “religious” or reflect a particular religious tradition, but also moved that render the subject more obliquely, which reveal – via image and sound – religion as a complex human activity.

RLGS 3740 Bodies and Souls (4 Credits)
This course examines the unique place of the body in biblical religion. We ask how the Bible and its interpreters have shaped current views on sex and the gendered body in Western society. How has the Bible been (mis)used in relation to current understandings of the physical body? Is the saying that a “human” does not have a body, but is a body as true for the Hebrew Bible as the Christian New Testament? How have Judaism and Christianity (de)valued sexuality, procreation, and celibacy? How do the biblical traditions shape our modern opinions about the ideal physical body and body modifications? How can we understand “out-of-body” experiences and notions of death and afterlife in Western religion? Students are encouraged to interpret the Bible and their own beliefs from a uniquely embodied perspective. Cross listed with GWST 3740, JUST 3740.
RLGS 3760 Globalization and Religion: Theory and Methods (4 Credits)
This course explores how religious movements around the world both affect, and are affected by, the process of globalization. A major segment of the course is devoted to various theories of globalization and how they account for the increasingly important role of religion. Focus is largely on the relationship between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

RLGS 3813 Ritual (4 Credits)
Classical and contemporary theories about the meaning, functions, and processes of ritual, and its relationship to "religion.

RLGS 3814 Modern Hinduism (4 Credits)
Doctrines, practices and history of South Asian Hinduism; conceptions of Gods and gods; image worship and temples; and the influences of caste and gender on the experience of Hinduism. Cross listed with RLGS 3814.

RLGS 3816 Hinduism Through Texts (4 Credits)
History of ancient and medieval Hinduism, viewed through the lens of religious texts. Cross listed with ASIA 2706.

RLGS 3820 Buddhism (4 Credits)
Buddhist life and thought from origins to present in India, Tibet, Japan and China. Cross listed with ASIA 2704.

RLGS 3830 Buddhist Lives (4 Credits)
This course explores the literary canon of Buddhist life stories across time, traditions and cultures. Cross-listed with ASIA 3830.

RLGS 3832 Religious Lives: The Dalai Lamas (4 Credits)
This course explores the many lives of the Dalai Lamas and the transformation of a reincarnated religious teacher into the political leader of Tibet and, eventually, a worldwide religious personality. In order to understand that transformation, the course investigates the institution of the Dalai Lamas from historical, doctrinal, and ritual perspectives. We will look at the role of the Dalai Lama as an embodiment of the bodhisattva of compassion at the center of a tapestry of religious ceremony and ritual performances. The course will also consider the religious, ethical, and political thought of several of the most prominent Dalai Lamas, with significant attention given to the writings and work of the current, fourteenth, Dalai Lama. Cross listed with ASIA 3732.

RLGS 3890 Religion and Diaspora (4 Credits)
When forced to leave a homeland, displaced communities frequently turn to religion to maintain identity and adapt to--or resist--new surrounding culture(s). This course examines the role of religion and identity in three Jewish and Christian communities living in diaspora and poses questions such as the following: What is the relationship between religion and (home)land? How have the biblical themes of exodus, diaspora, promise and restoration been applied to contemporary experiences? And how have our American stories been interpreted through the lens of the Bible? As part of the service learning component, students have the opportunity to work with religious and immigrant aid organizations in the Denver community. Cross listed with JUST 3890.

RLGS 3891 Justice: A Biblical Perspective (4 Credits)
This is a service learning course designed for religious studies undergraduate majors, though non-majors are welcome to enroll. Cross listed with JUST 3891.

RLGS 3892 Grant Writing as Research and Community Engagement (4 Credits)
This service learning / community engagement course introduces student to non-profit work and to scholarship on non-profit activities. It connects students with community partners, continuing the department's commitment to experiential learning and to engagement with living faith communities. Students spend course time discussing scholarly research on grant writing and non-profit grant support and discussing logistical and other issues related to their service learning placements. This course is intended to help provide M.A. students with arenas for future research, including possible thesis topics, while also offering a unique practical opportunity for professional development. Experience in forming a 501(c)3 corporation and writing grant proposals will be an asset for students planning to work in non-profits as well as for those continuing on to doctoral work.

RLGS 3991 Independent Study (1-10 Credits)
RLGS 3992 Directed Study (1-10 Credits)
RLGS 3995 Independent Research (1-10 Credits)

RLGS 4000 Theory and Methods in the Study of Religion (4 Credits)
This course begins with a brief overview of the history of the study of religion in the west, from antiquity to the modern period. When it reaches the modern period, the course shifts to considering "representative" theories of religion, broken down roughly along ideological and/or disciplinary lines.

RLGS 4050 History of Islam (4 Credits)
RLGS 4100 Hebrew Bible Backgrounds: Seminar in Ancient Israelite Religion (4 Credits)
This course is designed to train the student in the method and means of engaging in archeo-historical study of the Hebrew Bible. The content of this course focuses on ancient Israelite religion in Iron Age Palestine, particularly on emergent ideas about God ('El) and the development and evolution of the priesthood. Cross listed with JUST 4100.
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<td>RLGS 4150</td>
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<td>Reading seminar in Biblical Aramaic. This course focuses on the vocabulary, syntax and expression of Aramaic in the Bible as well as in some related post-biblical texts (Targums, Dead Sea Scrolls, etc.).</td>
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