Department of Religious Studies

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Students who take religious studies courses learn to appreciate the importance of religion in human culture and its role in history. In introductory and advanced classes, the faculty, who publish and lecture extensively and have received prestigious teaching awards and academic grants, explore both individual religions and the phenomenon of religion from a variety of perspectives.

Students may pursue a major, secondary major, or minor in religious studies. The department also serves other students who want introductory courses in religious studies or advanced courses coordinated with their special interests.

The religious studies major is a solid liberal arts program providing graduates with an excellent basis from which to pursue careers requiring imagination, problem-solving, communication skills and an awareness of human diversity.

Religious Studies

Bachelor of Arts Major Requirements

(183 credits required for the degree)  
Majors take a minimum of 40 credits in religious studies, beginning with 16 credits of introductory courses devoted to specific religious traditions and on-site, observational/experiential learning; a four-credit service learning course; and 12 credits of advanced courses devoted to the theoretical study of religion and intensive writing and research in specialized topics. The remaining eight credits should be chosen in consultation with a department advisor. Students may take approved courses in the study of religion taught by faculty members of other departments and are encouraged to participate in accredited international programs with religious studies content. Honors students and majors demonstrating high academic achievement in the discipline may pursue “distinction in the major” by completing a thesis or customized project on a topic of specific interest that has been designed in consultation with a faculty mentor in the department and approved by the faculty.

Secondary Major Requirements

40 credits. Same requirements as for BA degree.

Minor Requirements

The religious studies minor is a carefully planned program of 20 credits that combines effectively with other majors in the liberal arts and sciences, as well as other fields. Minors take 12 credits of introductory courses devoted to specific religious traditions; four credits of 3000-level courses devoted to the theoretical study of religion; and four credits of electives.

Here is a sample course list of how requirements for the major, secondary major and minor might be fulfilled:

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Writing Intensive - Express yourself! Major: 1 course (4 credits); Minor: N/A
RLGS 3192 Christian Classics 4
RLGS 3302 Islamic Fundamentalism 4
RLGS 3315 Religion & Moral Psychology 4
RLGS 3503 Quran and Hadith 4
RLGS 3570 Religion and Morality in the American Public Square 4

Theory - Think about religion in smart ways! Major: 2 courses (8 credits); Minor: 1 course (4 credits)
RLGS 3300 Psychology of Religion 4
RLGS 3400 Philosophy of Religion 4
RLGS 3740 Bodies and Souls 4
RLGS 3760 Globalization and Religion: Theory and Methods 4
RLGS 3813 Ritual 4
RLGS 4000 Theory and Methods in the Study of Religion 4

Electives - Follow your bliss and tailor the program to fit your interests! Major: 2 courses (8 credits); Minor: 1 course (4 credits)
RLGS 3024 Maimonides: Greek, Islamic, and Christian Encounters 4
RLGS 3151 Dead Sea Scrolls 4
RLGS 3318 Jesus on the Silver Screen 4
RLGS 3381 Religion & Psychobiography 4
RLGS 3452 Political Theology 4
RLGS 3502 Contemporary Islam 4
RLGS 3707 Religion and Film 4
RLGS 3832 Religious Lives: The Dalai Lamas 4
RLGS 3460 Nietzsche & the Death of God 4

Courses

RLGS 1101 Religious Lives: Jesus (4 Credits)
The title of this course has a double meaning. On the one hand, the title suggests ours is a study of a religiously important figure. Jesus is one such historical personage. Hence his life is the object of study. The course title also points to the character of the gospels. They are “lives,” “religious lives” of Jesus that arose out of storytelling cultures. In those contexts, stories were read and heard aloud, often “performed” and adapted. Gospels are not “biographies” of Jesus, as we typically think of that genre. It is important to recognize that in “telling the story of Jesus,” the gospel writers were also telling us a story of their own communities, framing stories that would influence how early Christians lived out their religious commitments to Jesus in a world shaped by the forces of late ancient Judaism and Greco-Roman imperialism. We must follow tantalizing clues and draw conclusions from texts—usefully compared to the scripts of plays—that were not interested, primarily, in objective, non-partisan, historical description. Both Jesus and the gospels rivet our attention in this course. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2001 Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: Defining Religion (4 Credits)
This course provides a historical and theoretical introduction to issues, thinkers, and texts in the academic study of religion. Topics covered include the development of religious studies as distinct from Christian theology; definitive questions and problems within the discipline; and the study of religions in relation to race, class, and gender realities.

RLGS 2005 Philosophy of Religion (4 Credits)
What is God? Can God be known or is faith precisely a relationship to something that cannot be known in the ordinary sense? What is the relationship between God and morality? Between God and science? Is it more reasonable to believe that your religion is the only path to God or more reasonable to believe that God is manifest in many ways across different cultures? Is it reasonable to believe in God at all? If it is reasonable to believe in God, what are the reasons? And if believing in God is not based on reasons in the ordinary sense, are there philosophical grounds for believing in God anyway? This course takes a “God friendly” approach to philosophical questions about religion, setting out to investigate ontological and epistemological questions about belief-in-God toward the goal of understanding different ways that philosophers over the years have philosophically gone about developing, upholding, and talking about relationship with God. The course includes consideration of philosophers from analytic and continental traditions, from American and European schools of thought, from ancient, medieval, modern and post-modern traditions, and from Greek, Islamic, Jewish, and Christian traditions. Thinkers to be addressed include Pascal, Anselm, Plantinga, Van Inwagen, Hick, Hume, Descartes, Spinoza, Plato, Aristotle, Ibn Tufayl, Averroes, Maimonides, James, Levinas, Marion, Badiou, Rosenzweig, Aquinas, Buber, Cohen, Mill, Lycan, Kant, Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard, and Kafka. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement. Cross listed with PHIL 2005.
RLGS 2101 Exploring Religion in America (4 Credits)
What do Americans believe? Is there a singular religion or set of religious beliefs that bind together the varieties of American faith traditions and ethnic cultures into a common national identity? E pluribus unum— from the plurality a unity is formed—is one of three official mottos adapted in 1782 to define and represent the U.S. To what extent is this true, both today and in the past? Americans are faced with the difficult task of creating a harmonious society from the encounter, repulsion, and attraction of discrete civilizations. At the vanguard of modern republican democracy, the U.S. is the central playing field upon which cultural/religious pluralism is negotiated, defined, and legislated. The course explores the evolution of the American nation as a pluralistic belief or faith community and explores the meaning and potential for a singular national religious community. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2102 Judaism, Christianity & Islam (4 Credits)
This course introduces students to the three major monotheistic religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the process of tracing the long and rich histories of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, we examine the beliefs and practices that became central and definitive for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. We begin with the ancient heritage of each religion (scriptures, founders, early institutions). Then we explore how these foundational traditions were preserved and re-invigorated in response to centuries of social change and critical moments of political upheaval. Most significant, in this regard, is the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim encounter with their respective holy Scriptures— as generation after generation of adherents have attempted to understand the revealed words of God, to proclaim their continual relevance for all places and all times and to inscribe them upon their bodies and hearts through prayer, worship, and daily life. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2103 Religions of China & Japan (4 Credits)
This is an introduction of some of the major East Asian religious and ethical traditions, focusing on Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Shinto. By examining both translations of sacred texts as well as scholarly analyses, we explore the basic ideas, practices, and historical development of these varied and interconnected traditions. Special attention is paid to how people incorporate East Asian religious and ethical ideas and beliefs into contemporary life and how gender shapes the experience of religion. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement. Cross-listed with ASIA 2702.

RLGS 2104 The Bible as Literature (4 Credits)
The Bible has been one of the most important works in all of Western society. In this course we read the Bible as a masterpiece of literature. Rather than focusing on theological questions about this work as inspired scripture, we instead focus on its rich literary qualities and explore some ways in which these stories have influenced modern society. Reading select passages, we discuss its literary genres, forms, symbols and motifs, many of which are important in literature today. Of the latter, we encounter stories of creation and hero tales, parables, apocalyptic literature, and themes of paradise and the loss of Eden, wilderness, covenant, and the promised land. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement. Cross listed with ENGL 2104 and JUST 2104.

RLGS 2105 Works and Lives (4 Credits)
This course is an introduction to the study of religion through the examination of religious works and lives. For purposes of our exploration, we think of religion as a system of relationships between major ideas and everyday life practices that orients people to a view of the whole of existence. "Works" is a term that covers two major aspects of religions: rituals and moral codes. The term "works" has to do with behaviors, whether they are the behaviors involved in a specifically religious situation (often rituals) or the behaviors in everyday life that are addressed by religious commands and prohibitions (often morals). We also consider stories of lives and guidelines for "lives." Some of these lives are clearly related to daily life within the religious traditions. Some are stories of lives that seem utterly fantastic. We question why such lives are written, what the reader can take from them, and what points they might make. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2106 Religious and Social Justice in Vienna (4 Credits)
This special travel course provides an opportunity for students to learn how certain major religions are globally engaged in the promotion of social justice through humanitarian relief work and cultural exchanges. In addition to a brief survey of the historical relationship between the beliefs, teachings, and social practices of the major Western traditions, the course offers hands-on experience and interaction with Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant relief agencies as well as other non-governmental organizations in Vienna, Austria, which has become the international center for UN-directed human services and humanitarian relief efforts as well as global headquarters for leading NGOs. Students discover how the culture, history, and geography of Vienna have nurtured the vast global human services "economy" to which these religious organizations contribute and which are built around the work of the United Nations. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2107 Culture and Conscience in Vienna (4 Credits)
This study abroad course focuses on the cultural and social history of the city of Vienna as the hub of politics, culture, and religion for Central Europe with special attention to its religious heritage as the seedbed for its rich cultural traditions. The course examines how its religious heritage, particularly Judaism, shaped its rich cultural heritage and the birth of modernism. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement. Cross listed with HIST 2107, JUST 2107.
RLGS 2108 Islam in the United States (4 Credits)
A historical introduction to the presence of Islam and Muslims in the United States, from an examination of the first Muslims in North America, to the substantive influence of the minority Indian evangelical Ahmadiyya movement, to Islam in African American communities. Also examines contemporary Muslim communities in the U.S. and the ways in which ritual and faith are today developing with "American" accents. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2109 Religions of Tibet (4 Credits)
This course explores the religious terrain of Tibet by looking at the historical and cultural development of the four main Tibetan Buddhist traditions: Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu and Geluk, as well as the indigenous religion called Bon. Topics include the sacred landscape of Tibet; key doctrinal features; cultural artifacts like sacred biographies, art, and poetry; the 20th-century spread of Tibetan Buddhism from the Himalayas to North American communities; the future of Tibetan Buddhism in exile; and China and the West. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2110 Buddhism in the U.S.A. (4 Credits)
Exploration of different viewpoints on complex issues related to the assimilation, acculturation and reinvention of Asian Buddhist traditions both locally and globally in the past 150 years. Students consider the "two-way traffic" between recent developments in various traditions of newly Americanized Buddhism and their respective cultures of origin through the processes of globalization and transnationalism. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2111 Islam and United States Politics (4 Credits)
This course offers students a historically grounded introduction to the relationship(s) between Islam and United States politics. Students consider the role played by Islam and Muslims in early American political thought, Americans' relationships with Muslims abroad and at home, as well as evangelization efforts. It examines the impacts of the Nation of Islam, the Cold War, Iranian Revolution and Gulf War I, as well as of the September 11 terror attacks, the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the 2006 and 2008 elections, and concludes by reflecting on the 2012 election and suggesting how Islam might impact U.S. politics over the next decade. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2112 Major Islamic Thinkers 1900s-2000s (4 Credits)
This course offers students a substantive introduction to the major Islamic thinkers of the 20th and 21st centuries. Starting with Abu `Ala Maududi, whose work on Qur'anic interpretation and the meaning of jihad laid the groundwork for new waves of radical activism in the modern Muslim world, this course exposes students to the works of major "movers and shakers" like Sayyid Qutb and Ayotollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Students engage these thinkers through a mixture of primary and secondary sources, developing a sense of context as they work through these thinkers' arguments. The course continues with an examination of some of the major later 20th-Century Islamic thinkers active in Muslim-minority spaces, focusing on Bosnian Grand Mufti Mustafai Ceric and the late Moroccan-French scholar Mohammed Arkoun. It concludes by looking at two major figures of the early 21st century, noting how they blend intellectual and political activism: Iranian cleric Mohsen Kadivar and American scholar Amina Wadud. Throughout the course, student groups present on various contemporary issues, helping them develop presentation and writing skills while allowing them to apply course knowledge to real-world issues. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2113 Islamic Empires (4 Credits)
This course offers students a historical introduction to the major empires of the Muslim world. Starting with an overview of the major empires of the late antique Mediterranean (Roman and Sasanid Persian), it provides students with a primer on the rise and major principles of Islam, turning to the Umayyad and Abbasid empires and their roles in supporting the institutionalization and sectarian developments of classical and early-medieval era Islam. Students then examine the emergence of the great Andalusi and North American empires, noting their long-lasting influence on Spain. The course culminates in a multi-week study of the three major early modern sources from each empire and considers the political, social, religious, and economic aspects of each. The course concludes with a look at contemporary attempts to remember or revive the notion of "Islamic empire," connecting past to present. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement. Cross listed with HIST 2330.

RLGS 2114 Yoga in History and Practice (4 Credits)
This course explores different ancient and medieval forms of yoga in their Indian cultural contexts as well as modern forms of yoga in India and North America. Some of the issues we will engage include different conceptions of the human self, how and why particular cultural and religious practices cross geographical and cultural boundaries, the role of the guru, and secularization. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement. Cross listed with ASIA 2714.

RLGS 2201 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible (4 Credits)
The legacy of the Hebrew Bible has been great for both Western and world culture. In this course, we read the books of the Hebrew Bible critically as literature, as religious text and as a source of sociological knowledge. The students gain a general overview of the narrative and historical development of the text while simultaneously being introduced to the various modes of biblical interpretation. Emphasis is placed on situating the literature and religious expression of the Bible within its ancient Near Eastern milieu. Cross listed with JUST 2201.

RLGS 2202 New Testament (4 Credits)
This course takes a multifaceted approach (historical, literary, and critical) to the writings that comprise the Christian New Testament. The New Testament are read as a collection of primary documents that chronicle the primitive Church's slow and often painful process of self-definition. In these writings it is possible to discern the tension that arose because of the strong religious and cultural ties early Christianity maintained with Palestinian Judaism, from which it emerged as a sectarian or reform movement. The careful reader also finds evidence of the new religion's encounter with the Greco-Roman world from whose variegated ethos and culture it borrowed considerably on the way to becoming an important religious force in the first century. In exploring the New Testament, then, we attempt to recover something of the sense of what it meant to be a Christian in New Testament times. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement. Cross listed with JUST 2202.
RLGS 2401 Social Justice in a Global Context: Theory and Practice (4 Credits)
Theories of social justice, beginning with the ancient Hebrews and Greeks and running up through the modern era. The religious sources of these ideas, drawn primarily from the monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are profiled. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement.

RLGS 2410 Religious Diversity in Israel (4 Credits)
Through religious, sociological and historical sources, as well as documentaries, movies and scholarly readings, this course examines religious diversity in Israel since its establishment in 1948 to current events today. This course counts toward the Analytical Inquiry: Society and Culture requirement. Cross listed with JUST 2410.

RLGS 2501 Islam on Film (4 Credits)
This course uses the medium of film to introduce students to the history, faith, practice, culture(s), and politics of Islam. Focusing on feature films and documentaries, it employs film to open up a broad spectrum of questions relating to personal piety, gender equity, generational conflicts, social class, governmental repression, and ritual practice. Proceeding thematically along a broad historical frame, the course focuses on the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, presenting a balanced picture of life in Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries and highlighting the complex picture of Muslim life today.

RLGS 2565 The Church in American History: Challenges and Changes in the Protestant Tradition (4 Credits)
For most of its history, a Protestant majority dominated religion in America. At times, Protestants seized new opportunities to shape and reshape the course of the nation. At other times, influence waned and tensions mounted. This course surveys the history of religion in the U.S. with a primary focus on the challenges and changes within the Protestant church as it has navigated a shifting and increasingly pluralistic culture. We explore how the faithful—from John Winthrop to the modern day evangelicals—have attempted to create a "city upon a hill" through their beliefs, practices, movements, and institutions. Special attention is given to Puritanism, disestablishment, revivalism, Mormonism, the Civil War, the Social Gospel, fundamentalism, civil rights, modern evangelicalism, and pluralism. Cross listed with HIST 2565.

RLGS 2980 Internship (1-4 Credits)
Designed to provide undergraduate majors and minors with valuable experience in non-profit, educational, faith-based, governmental, and related organizations. It helps students translate the knowledge and analytical skills learned in Religious Studies courses into a professional context, while exploring potential career paths and professional opportunities. Students interested in pursuing an internship must meet with the Undergraduate Advisor at the start of the previous quarter to discuss internship goals and identify potential placements. Students meet weekly with a faculty supervisor to monitor their internship experience, and complete the internship by writing a reflective essay. Restrictions: junior or senior standing; at least 20 credits of RLGS courses for majors or at least 12 credits for minors.

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 fait accompli. 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 3200 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 fundament 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 identifiablely separate tradition. It is a course about New Testament portraits 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)
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 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 goddesses; 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 logical 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 3899 International Service Learning Colloquium (4 Credits)
The colloquium is the service learning core of the Vienna faculty-led study abroad program. Undergraduate students must sign up concurrently with RLGS 2401. In conjunction with the colloquium, students perform a total of approximately 60-75 hours of service learning as well as weekly "dialogue" sessions of two hours each. Dialogue sessions focus among students on common experiences, insights, problems, and challenges they have met in an intercultural and international service learning setting. A number of these sessions are conversations with representatives of, or visits to, different United Nations agencies of NGOs pertaining to social justice work and global issues. Dialogue sessions are scheduled in accordance with the availability of personnel and their relevance to the topic at hand.

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