Exploring Religion

Religious and religions as historical phenomena. Non-textual and textual religions. Theories of the origins and functions of religion. Exemplary voices from various traditions examined in their historical and doctrinal settings.

Introduction to Biblical Literature

A critical survey of biblical texts, including the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and writings found in the Apocrypha/Deuterocanon, that combine historical and literary analysis with attention to the ancient religious context of this literature.

Myth, Self, and Religion

The mythic quest for meaning, identity, value, and transcendence as seen through religious biography and literary narrative. Myth in relation to religious symbols and life-cycle rituals. Cross-cultural perspectives on religious world views and the interpretation of myth as sacred narrative.

Religion and Media

Portrayal of religion by the media in cultures around the world. Use of the media to promote religious beliefs. Examples from documentary film, television, print media and the internet.

Religion in America

History, themes and issues of religions in America from precolonial times to the present.

Shamanism, Trance and Sacred Journeys

Shamanic practice in different cultural and religious contexts. Ecstatic, cosmological, and performatif dimensions. Healing, sacred knowledge, spiritual journeys, sacred space, presence in world religions, patterns of pilgrimage, theoretical debates regarding shamanism.

The Hindu Yoga Traditions

Thought and practices (religious, philosophical, psychological, and social) of the Indian discipline known as Yoga. Yogic systems of the ancient and modern Hindu world.

Magic and Mysticism: Western Esoteric Traditions and Practices

Surveys the history of Western esoteric traditions in Europe, England and North America including alchemy, magic, Jewish and Christian mysticisms, and secret or semisecret groups like Freemasonry. Transdisciplinary investigation of religion, science, literature, art and history.

Independent Study

Fall, Spring. 1 to 4 credits. A student may earn a maximum of 12 credits in all enrollments for this course. R: Approval of department.

Special projects arranged by an individual student and a faculty member in areas supplementing regular course offerings.

Native American Religions

Indigenous forms of spirituality among the Native American peoples. Materials from myth, ritual, ceremonial life, and art as ways of obtaining and sharing religious knowledge. Pervasive spiritual and cosmological themes.

Judaism


Religion and Gender

Spring of even years. 3(3-0)

The relationship between religion and gender viewed through foundational sacred texts and historical interpreters that define gender, sexuality, the body, the divine. Contemporary responses to the relationship between religion and gender through ritual, liturgy, new religious movements, and feminist theology.

Christendom


Islam


Hinduism

Fall. 4(4-0): R: Not open to freshmen. Historical, philosophical and doctrinal development. Vedic Sacrifice, Upanishads, devotional Vashnavism, Yoga and meditation, Tantric and medieval forms, ritual and temple forms. Modern syncretism and interaction with Western world views.

Buddhism in South Asia


Southeast Asian Religions

Fall. 3(3-0): R: Not open to freshmen. Southeast Asia as a religious and cultural crossroads. The historic mix of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Chinese religions. Diversity of indigenous animistic religions. Past and present relations between religions and the state.

African Religion: An Introduction

Spring of odd years. 3(3-0): R: Not open to freshmen. Variant forms of the religions of Africa. Indigenous African religions examined through their mythology, rituals, symbols, and social consequences. Islam and Christianity. Interaction between religion and politics.

The End of the World in America

Spring. 3(3-0)

Examination of the ways in which Americans have anticipated the end of the world. Focus on millennial desires and anxieties within a larger theoretical and historical context. Sacred text, utopian ventures, prophecy, new religious movements, cultural constructions of endtimes theology.

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Fall. 3(3-0): R: Not open to freshmen or sophomores. Historical setting and types and meaning of the text of the Hebrew Bible (Christian Old Testament) explored through various techniques of historical, literary, and textual analysis.

Modem Jewish Thought

Spring of even years. 3(3-0): R: Not open to freshmen or sophomores. Representative Jewish thought from the Enlightenment to the present. Authors such as Moses Mendelssohn, Abraham Geiger, Leo Pinsker, Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig, Ahad Ha-Am, Martin Buber, Mordecai Kaplan, A. I. Heschel, and Emil Fackenheim.

New Testament

Spring. 3(3-0): R: Not open to freshmen or sophomores. The historical setting and types and meaning of the text of the New Testament explored through various techniques of historical, literary, and textual analysis.

Muhammad and the Qur'an

Spring of odd years. 3(3-0): R: Not open to freshmen or sophomores. Life and contributions of the Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an as a historical source. Origin, compilation, contents, and arrangements of the Qur'an. Forms of the Qur'an: recitation, scripture, calligraphy, theological concept.

Religious and Secular Cosmologies

R: Not open to freshmen or sophomores. Cosmological contents of religions. Religious questions raised by secular cosmologies. Perspectives from phenomenology and anthropology of religion.

The Ritual Process

Spring. 3(3-0): R: Not open to freshmen or sophomores. Definitions of ritual. Aspects of ritual, such as repetitiveness and drama. Generic forms of ritual including passage rites, renewal rites, liminality, sacrifice, taboo, and divination. Experience of ritual and its power to inform and transform the participant.

Anthropological Approaches to Religion

Fall. 3(3-0): R: Not open to freshmen or sophomores. Religion and language as distinguishing human traits. The capacity to create symbols and the power of symbols. Early explanations of the origins of religion. Later functional appreciations of religion based on field studies. Leading theorists from different schools of religious studies.

Comparative Studies in Religion

Fall, Spring. 3(3-0): A student may earn a maximum of 9 credits in all enrollments for this course. R: Not open to freshmen or sophomores. Multidisciplinary topics such as patterns in comparative religion, comparative mysticism, or comparative mythology.
490 Independent Study
Fall, Spring. 1 to 4 credits. A student may earn a maximum of 12 credits in all enrollments for this course. R: Approval of department.
Special projects arranged by an individual student and a faculty member in areas supplementing regular course offerings.

491 Special Topics in Religious Studies
Fall, Spring. 3(3-0) A student may earn a maximum of 12 credits in all enrollments for this course. R: Approval of department.
Special topics supplementing regular course offerings, proposed by faculty on a group study basis.

499 Senior Thesis Research (W)
Fall, Spring. 1 to 4 credits. A student may earn a maximum of 12 credits in all enrollments for this course. P.M: Completion of Tier I writing requirement. R: Approval of department.
Individual research project supervised by a faculty member that demonstrates the student's ability to do independent research and submit or present a major paper.

890 Independent Study
Fall, Spring. 1 to 4 credits. A student may earn a maximum of 12 credits in all enrollments for this course. R: Approval of department.
Special projects, directed reading, and research arranged by an individual graduate student and a faculty member in areas supplementing regular course offerings.