101-20: The Seven Deadly Sins/ Balberg, TTH 11:00-12:20pm

The notion of sin is one of the most central facets of religion in the Western world. Thinking of religion as a system that orients human beings to certain beliefs and actions, we naturally assume that a critical part of these beliefs and actions has to do with questions of right and wrong, and that the “wrong” in religious systems is often classified as “sin.” But what is “sin,” exactly? What constitutes a sinful act and what makes one a sinner? In this seminar, we will approach these questions from a critical point of view and delve into the very rich and complex concept of sin so as to understand how it has evolved through time and how it shaped and continues to shape our own world. At the center of the course will stand “the seven deadly sins,” an idea that started to develop around the fourth century C.E., according to which there are seven major sins that essentially generate all possible sins: gluttony, lust, anger, envy, greed, sloth, and pride. We will see how the “seven deadly sins” have emerged against the background of earlier notions of sin (Greek, Jewish, and Christian) and we will look closely into each one of those “deadly sins,” considering why and how it came to be viewed as a sin and how it resonates in the world in which we live.

200: Introduction to Hinduism/ Preston, MW 12:30-1:50pm

The vast array of texts, practices, beliefs, social and political constructs, geographical variations, and historical contexts that fall under the vague subheading of “Hinduism” suggest that any introduction to the subject must be, at least, an introduction to “Hinduisms.” But it is just this variety that makes “Hinduism,” and the problem of the singular, so compelling. This course will emphasize the rich stories, philosophies, rituals, and cultural practices that are most commonly associated with Hinduism, but significant care will be taken to investigate and probe the ways in which the Hindu religion has been manifold and variable in history and throughout South Asia and beyond. To the extent that the classroom experience makes possible, we will try to emphasize the lived experience of Hinduism, in other words what it means to be Hindu in different political and historical moments, what it feels like to undergo rituals, to subscribe to certain philosophies, to produce and patronize religious art and music, and to know and think about the world through prominent myths and stories. The course will require a fieldwork exercise at a Hindu religious site in or around Chicago.

JW_ST 210: Overview of Jewish Studies/ Sufrin, W 5:30-7:30pm

Jewish Studies encompasses the study of Judaism, Jewish history, Jewish culture and the lives of contemporary Jews. This course offers an introduction to the field through seminar-style discussions with members of NU's Jewish Studies faculty. Students will become familiar with the methodologies scholars use to research, understand, and analyze Jewish culture while gaining knowledge of specific topics in Jewish Studies. Open to students of all backgrounds interested in a better understanding of the academic study of the humanities.
221: Introduction to New Testament/ Dingeldein, MW 11:00-12:20pm

Today, the New Testament is widely known and accepted as Christians’ authoritative and sacred collection of texts. But roughly 2,000 years ago, there were no Christians, and there was no New Testament—there was only a small group of people who had begun to worship a deceased Jewish healer and teacher as divine. It is this historical moment to which we turn in this course. We will study the people, events, and texts of the first and second centuries that shaped this small Jewish movement into the religion known as Christianity, using as our main evidence the letters and stories of the New Testament.

260: Introduction to Native American Religion/ S. Dees, TTH 11:00-12:20pm

This course examines diverse Native American religious traditions in the shifting historical and contemporary contexts of Euro-American and Native American interaction and exchange. We will balance our examination of particular traditions—including those originating in the Northwest, Southwest, Great Plains, Midwest and Southeast—with a consideration of broader themes including identity, artistic expression, politics, and the environment. We will also consider ethical issues pertinent to the study of Native American religions, such as the debate about cultural appropriation, and discuss the impact of colonialism on Native American religious groups. The course is also listed under AMER_ST 310-24. Counts towards the Religion, Law and Politics (RLP) major concentration.

319: Narrative & Nirvana: Buddhism Through its Stories/ Preston, TTH 2:00-3:20pm

Can you read your way to nirvana? Is enlightenment to be found at the end of a book, like the big reveal in some mystery novel? This course is an attempt to explore narrative, by which I mean entertaining stories rather than dry doctrine, as an important part of Buddhist expression, experience, and pedagogy. We will begin with the Sanskrit drama known as the Buddhacharita, continue on to select Jataka tales, bounce over to parts of the Tibetan Lalitavistara and Life of Milarepa, jump to collections of stories from China and Japan, and then leap forward to Herman Hesse’s Siddhartha and Jack Kerouac’s Dharma Bums. We’ll also watch a modern Hollywood flick with Buddhist undertones (it’s a surprise!). Throughout the course, we will ask a variety of questions, including: Does narrative provide a unique means of conveying or comprehending Buddhist ideas? What are the strength and weaknesses of narrative for Buddhist purposes? How do certain narratives and Buddhist ideas change in different historical and cultural contexts? What makes a story Buddhist or not, e.g. can a narrative with no obvious reference to anything Buddhist still convey Buddhist ideas? Is there anything about Buddhism that lends itself to the importance of narrative, and how might it be similar and different from the role of narrative in other religions?
Religious Studies Courses Winter 2017

339: Religion and Politics in the State of Israel/ Ringel, TTH 12:30-1:50pm.
This course discusses the relationship between religion and politics in Israel. We will explore the theoretical/ideological background and historical development of that relationship; the advantages and disadvantages of that system; the various religious groups and parties represented in the political system; and how that relationship affects government policies regarding both domestic issues and foreign policy, including a section on religious violence and peace-making. We will likewise delve into broader questions as to the applicability of the Israeli model to other part of the world, to what extent the Israeli model represents broader trends in the Middle East specifically and in the world at large, and the complex nature of the relationship between democracy and religion (or between religion and politics in a democracy). This course will utilize academic literature from a variety of fields, including anthropology, political science, religion, and history, and employs literature from interdisciplinary fields, including Jewish Studies, Islamic Studies, and Middle Eastern and North African studies. By the end of the course, it is hoped that you will understand the ways in which religion and politics in Israel impact each other, the cultural and historical context of how those interactions developed, the impact that relationship has, and how the study of religion and politics in Israel is relevant to our lives in the US. The course is also listed under POLI_SCI 390-24. Counts towards the Religion, Law and Politics (RLP) major concentration.

359-20: Histories of Islam in the United States/ Caldwell, MW 11:00-12:20pm
This course will explore the overlapping histories of Islam in the United States from the presence of enslaved African Muslims in the original colonies to present day debates over the place of Islam in secular society. Special attention will be paid to the role of Muslims in the African diaspora as an enduring social, cultural, and political force shaping this history. Students will therefore learn especially about the routes of Islam through plantation slavery and slave rebellion, as well as twentieth-century Pan-African organizing, the Civil Rights movement, and hip hop. We will also connect this history to more recent trends in immigration, the "War on Terror," and state surveillance of mosques. There are no prerequisites, though it is highly recommended that students arrive with an understanding of the basic terminology of Islamic studies, and a keen interest in exploring the Islam's connection to issues of American race, religion, colonialism, and secularism. Counts towards the Religion, Law and Politics (RLP) major concentration.

359-21: Anthropology of Islam: Symbol, Discourse, Practice/ Yildiz TTH 3:30-4:50pm
This seminar is designed to analyze anthropological approaches to the study of Islam and Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa. We will begin the course by critically revisiting the historical legacies that mediate contemporary debates on and representations of Muslims and Islam in anthropology. We will explore what it means to take Islam as an object of anthropological analysis and the kinds of normative assumptions that underlie references to “religion” and “tradition.” Second, we will closely examine canonical interventions advanced by Ernst Gellner, Clifford Geertz and Michael Gilsenan before turning to Talal Asad’s analysis of anthropological categories of religion and his attempts to reformulate the study of Islam as a discursive tradition. Situating these debates within the broader intellectual history of anthropological thought, we will then proceed to examine the analytical purchase and subsequent critiques of Talal Asad’s reconceptualization of symbol, discourse and practice. In the second half of the course, we will shift our attention to more ethnographically grounded materials that explore Muslim engagements with, and responses to, various facets of modernity such as gender equality, capitalist economics, and the secular nation-state. The course is also listed under MENA 390-21 and ANTHRO 390-29. Counts towards the Religion, Law and Politics (RLP) major concentration.
364: American Teenage Rites of Passage/ Taylor, TH 2:00-4:50pm

This seminar is specially geared to American Studies and Religious Studies majors, although it engages materials of interest to both to RTVF majors and those in the social sciences. Drawing from anthropological and sociological case studies, we will examine various rites of passage experienced by teens in the U.S. In analyzing these rites, students will become conversant with theories of ritual, contemporary surveys of teen demographics and cultural trends, gender studies and cultural studies literature dealing with teen popular media and consumption, as well as historical literature on the rise and development of the American teenager as a cultural phenomenon. Students will be asked to generate original research for their seminar final project, applying the tools of the course to a case study of their own choosing. This seminar will make rigorous use of multimedia primary source materials and will require multi-source digitized media viewing and analysis as integral to course assignments. Attendance is required and recorded. The course is also listed under AMER_ST 310-22.

369: Asian American Religions/ Tse, MW 2:00-3:20pm

If there's anything for which Asian Americans are usually exoticized and Orientalized, it's usually their traditions of religion and spirituality. What is strange, though, is that Asian American religions are seldom discussed in Asian American studies. In this course, we will try to use the topic of religion to think through Asian American studies. In the first part of the course, we will examine the way that religion has been framed in American public spheres in relation to Asia and discuss ways that Asian Americans have performed religion to disrupt this orientalizing framework, especially in literature, film, and art. In the second part of the course, we will look more closely at the lived religious practices of Asian Americans and their communities; this will include field trips to sites in Chicago and Evanston. Assignments will include weekly reading reflections, a novel/film/artistic review, and a community immersion project. This course should be of interest to students in Asian Americans studies, American and contemporary religions, and Global Asias.

The course is also listed under ASIAN_ST 350-1.

371: Religion, Existentialism/ Molina, TH 11:00-2:00pm

In the aftermath of the World War I, many artists and filmmakers asked new questions about the relationship between realism and religion. Could one reconcile concrete reality (or realism) with faith in the other-worldly? Many of the artists under discussion in the course drew upon themes that had already been raised by Kierkegaard in the 19th century. What was the relationship between religion and modernity, faith and ethics, reality and the supernatural, observable phenomena and invisible causes? How did one make sense of death in a meaningless universe? Was the universe meaningless? Could meaning be found in realism itself?

Through engagement with films by directors ranging from Robert Bresson, Luis Buñuel, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Ingmar Bergman, to Woody Allen and Harold Ramis, we will study mid-to-late 20th century films whose common theme is the quest to understand the meaning of life, either actively through taking up religious life, or because the protagonists consider themselves inhabiting a godless and meaningless universe. Class will be discussion-based, with a few short lectures to set up pertinent themes. Our discussions will likely range broadly, but important themes will be realism, existentialism, atheism, and the quest for philosophical truth to be found in filmic portrayals of everyday life. Class readings will include Kierkegaard, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, among others.
374: Evolution and God/ Mortensen, MW 3:30-4:50pm

This course investigates some of the ways in which evolution finds its way from a purely scientific enterprise back to notions of the divine. It also looks at how spiritual systems have explored various ways to see the divine. Evolutionary Spirituality demands this project, as it recognizes levels of development not only of species, but of the human person, the human group and even group systems of thought. In each of these, there was a purely material stage of seeing existence, and in each, the spiritual returns, like a bad penny.....suggesting that it must be dealt with. We shall use Chopra's HOW TO KNOW GOD to show development of ideas about God. Wilber's EYE OF THE SPIRIT will provide some groundwork in Integral Theory. Marion's DEATH OF THE MYTHIC GOD accounts for the developmental experiences of human society and McIntosh's PRESENCE OF THE INFINITE shows the leading edge of spirituality in the Evolutionary movement. TEACHING METHODOLOGY

379-20: Christianity & Colonialism: Thinking about Conversion/ Molina, T 3:00-6:00pm

From its beginnings, Christianity has been concerned with the making of new persons and worlds: the creation of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. It has also maintained a tight relationship to power, empire, and the making of what some scholars call “modernity.” While nine weeks is a short time to cover such a huge topic, we will examine a few cases studies of missionary action in the era of European global expansion and the development of overseas empires. We will focus on both Catholic and Protestant missionaries' efforts to convert non-Christians and build new Christian communities in the Americas, Japan, China, and South Asia.

379-21: Pilgrimage/ Kieckhefer, MW 2:00-3:20pm

This class will examine pilgrimage in historical, anthropological, and comparative perspective. It will begin by examining the origins, history, and modern experience of the Camino to Santiago de Compostela, one of the most important Christian pilgrimages, and one to which many pilgrims still go by traditional means: on foot. The second unit of the course will be devoted to theories of pilgrimage—that of Victor and Edith Turner, and then critiques of and alternatives to the Turner interpretation of pilgrimage. The third will return to Christian pilgrimages, surveying a variety of medieval and modern examples, and will explore how pilgrimage has changed over time, particularly in response to the challenges of modernity. Finally, the course will turn to manifestations of pilgrimage in other religious traditions and ask how those affect our understanding of the phenomenon. The central question in much literature on pilgrimage is how far the experience is unifying and bonding (i.e., how far it engenders a sense of communitas among those who travel together to the holy places), and how far, to the contrary, pilgrimage is always an experience of difference and contestation. Those who write about pilgrimage ask also about motives and their implications: what difference it makes whether the stated motives for undertaking pilgrimage are religious, spiritual, or secular. Pilgrimage is also a metaphor for life, and those who go on pilgrimage often view it as a life-transforming experience; understanding its significance thus means also seeing how pilgrimage relates to broader conceptions of religious life and behavior. Counts towards the Religion, Health and Medicine (RHM) major concentration.
Religious Studies Courses Winter 2017

383: Catholic Social Ethics/ Traina, TTH 9:30-10:50am

Beginning in the 1890s but stretching roots back to the medieval period, modern and contemporary Roman Catholic church teaching and academic ethics have been shaped by important domestic and international issues. This course will follow the trajectory of Roman Catholic social ethics from the late 19th century to the present. Among the trends and topics studied are the living wage movement, the Catholic Worker movement, peace and justice initiatives, liberation ethics, race, immigration, and environment. The transformation of sexuality and gender from “private” to “social” ethics will also be discussed. Our interest in this class is not to defend or defeat a particular perspective in ethics, but to use critical and analytical skills to show how an important, influential tradition in ethics has evolved over time. The course will involve daily readings and several short papers leading up to a final longer paper. **This is a core course for the Catholic Studies minor and counts towards the Religion, Law and Politics (RLP) major concentration.**

481-1: Classical Theory of Religion/ Balberg, W 9:30-12:00pm

The purpose of this class is to explore an array of questions and challenges pertinent to the study of religions and religious phenomena, and to chart out various avenues and directions for conceiving of “Religious Studies” as an academic discipline. The class is meant to introduce the students to some of the most elemental and influential works that have shaped the field, while at the same time using those works to trace the multiple directions in which the study of religion has developed recently. Essentially, this class provides a preliminary road map to help the students commence their own journeys as scholars of religion. Although the class sets out to provide critical literacy in the so-called “canon” of Religious Studies, it is structured thematically rather than historically. Each session is dedicated to one critical term, which plays a definitive role in the study of Religion, and pairs together a “classical work” with other more recent pieces that address the same theme from a different angle. These pairings will help us trace how the field of Religious Studies is changing, and how theories and methods of the study of religion continue to evolve.

482: Comparative Religious Ethics/ Zoloth, T 2:00-4:50pm

Comparative Theories of Justice with Climate Change as a Case study: This graduate seminar will introduce, elucidate, and critique the standard candidates for theories of justice in philosophic and theological systems of thought, including arguments about distributive justice across socio-economic class, racial and ethnic divides, genders, and generations. We will study classic theories and the original texts from which the theories are developed, as well as the contemporary manifestations of the theory. We will ask: how do competing ideas about rights and duties; concepts of the self; understandings of the state and its power; and languages about the past and the future play a role in the seminal texts of justice? How can classic theories clarify current debates about distributive justice or political theology within the academy and our discipline(s) of religion, philosophy, and policy? In the second half of the quarter, we will explore the pragmatic implications of these theories of justice by looking closely at one case: climate change. In the classic literature we will have explored in Part I of the seminar, all theory has been developed in a world of intrinsic climatic security, if not constancy or stability. Yet, the UNIPCC has stated that this is no longer the case, and that the world is facing catastrophic changes that will affect all distributive systems. So, how will our theories of justice work? In claiming this as the central ethical issue of our time, scholars in theological and philosophical literatures have suggested the overturning of justice theory must have an immediate practical application and suggest responses, upon which we will reflect. We will both examine this claim and explore the implications of its acceptance or denial to test the limits of the theories of justice against the actuality of the world of scarcity that the case study describes, and raise questions about the nature, goal and meaning of the study of ethics and justice when scholars are called upon to shape policy.