We will examine four case studies of Jews and Christians engaged in dialogue about their respective religious traditions and communities. The first two case studies are historical: Justin Martyr’s dialogue with Trypho, in which the Christian theologian attempts to convince his Jewish interlocutor of the truth of Christianity and Judah Halevi’s *Kuzari*, in which a king evaluates Christianity, Islam, and Judaism through dialogue with representatives of each faith. The third case study is a modern philosophical classic, Martin Buber’s *I and Thou* (1926), in which Buber argues that human beings can be transformed through true dialogue with others and even God. Finally, the course will culminate with consideration of theologian Catherine Cornille’s description of the conditions necessary for a meaningful inter-religious dialogue in her 2008 work *The Im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*. We will focus on developing analytical reading and writing skills while also learning how to talk about our highest values and commitments with those who don’t agree with us.

One of the largest and most ancient of all religions, ‘Hinduism’ is actually a family of related traditions. Over the last 6000 years, the Hindu traditions of South Asia have developed an astonishing diversity of rituals, beliefs, and spiritual practices and a pantheon of hundreds of gods and goddesses, from the elephant-headed Ganesha to the fierce goddess Kālī. This course will examine the breadth of the Hindu traditions as they developed over time, highlighting the shared features that make them a family, such as ritual sacrifice (*yajña*), world renunciation (*samnyāsa*), law (*dharma*), spiritual discipline (*yoga*), devotion (*bhakti*), worship (*pūjā*), and theology. We will pay particular attention to how these traditions have contributed to the development of modern Hinduism, and students will have the opportunity to engage Hinduism in Chicago. We will explore the great works of Hindu literature, such as the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa* as well as other important sources such as art, architecture, anthropology, and film.

This course will examine the texts of the New Testament, with attention to themes and interpretations and to historical context. The lectures, the textbook, and the supplementary readings will expose students to a variety of interpretive perspectives-theological and historical, from traditionalists, from revisionists within the Christian tradition, and from outsiders to that tradition-and students will be expected to engage in an intellectually serious way with this diversity of views.

This course will examine core aspects of Judaism and their development from the religion’s biblical beginnings through today. Against the background of Jewish and world history, we will seek to understand the roots and evolution of Jewish rituals, literature, traditions, and beliefs. Judaism and Jewishness have changed so much over the centuries that sometimes this might seem like a course in comparative religion. Our challenge will be to understand why these changes occurred while also identifying the continuities that connect Jews across time and space.
This course is an introduction to the history of Christianity. In the first part of this course we will explore the history of Christian beliefs, institutions, and contexts. We will trace the roots of the contemporary varieties of western Christianity and distinguish among the three main branches of contemporary Christianity (Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox). We’ll interrupt this history to explore briefly some religious practices of each branch and their connection with religious spaces. The course concludes with a study of the ways Christianity in the U.S. has been shaped by (and in many cases has shaped) colonization, assimilation, modernity, and other forces.

REL 313: Tibetan Religion and Culture/ Jacoby/ MW 12:30-1:50pm

What is Tibet and what are the major features of Tibetan religions? What distinguishes the Tibetan cultural region from its neighbors? How have images of Tibet come to encompass everything from a peaceful Shangri-la on the roof of the world to a superstitious backwater in need of liberation? What does liberation mean in the case of Tibet—both as a religious and a political concept? Who is the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet and how has he come to be regarded as a god-king for many Tibetans and a splittist aiming to divide the motherland according to the People’s Republic of China? This course will examine the religions of Tibet (primarily Buddhism but also Bön) with a focus on their significance within Tibetan culture, society, and politics in Tibetan history from the time of Tibet’s Imperial Dynasty (7-9th centuries) to the present day. Topics the course will explore include Western imaginations of Tibet, Tibetan religious and political history, Sino-Tibetan conflicts, Tibetan religious and philosophical traditions, Tibetan autobiographical literature, Tibetan medical arts, death rituals, them status of women and nuns in Tibet, the Tibetan Diaspora, the post-Cultural Revolution revival of religion in Tibet, and contemporary restrictions imposed on Tibetan religious institutions and practices by the People’s Republic of China. Course materials include English translations of major Tibetan historical and religious texts, secondary source analyses of these materials, and Tibet-related films and documentaries.

REL 330: Varieties of Ancient Judaism/ Balberg/ TTH 2:00-3:20pm

Oftentimes when we think of Scripture or Sacred Literature we think of writings that resist any sort of change or intervention, writings that are fixed not only in their wording but also in their meaning. However, when we examine the literature composed by Jews in antiquity, we see that nothing could be further from this description. Throughout antiquity, the Hebrew Bible, because it was seen as a sacred and authoritative text, was constantly being rewritten. Various authors, each with their own agenda, ideology, convictions, and creative inclinations, have ventured to retell the biblical stories, to reconstruct the biblical laws, and to present the biblical texts anew – not with the purpose of replacing Scripture but with the purpose of making Scripture resonate with their own world and come to life as a powerful source of meaning. This phenomenon of rewriting the Bible so as to approach it through changing lenses and concerns continues to this day, as we can see through contemporary literature and film.
What does it mean to be a ‘modern’ Muslim? How might this be different from merely being a Muslim in the ‘modern world’? Are there ways in which Muslims have attempted to make modernity their own, as it were, by articulating an ‘Islamic’ modernity or modernities? This course attempts to answer these questions by exploring how Muslims have variously engaged, adapted and resisted ‘modernity’ in various contexts and locales. After surveying some major scholarly theories of modernity, we will focus on three broad domains of ‘the modern’ in Islam: gender, law and the state.

Pre-requisites: REL 250 (Introduction to Islam) or permission of instructor

REL 350: The Qur’an/ Ingram/ TTH 12:30-1:50pm

One of the most influential books in world history, the Qur’an is believed by Muslims to be the literal speech of God in Arabic. It is recited daily by Muslims throughout the world, transformed into beautiful calligraphy, and venerated as a sacred object. The course explores the text’s historical milieu and the life of the Prophet Muhammad, its form and structure, its ethical worldview, its role in the ritual lives of Muslims, how it has been variously interpreted in multiple contexts, as well as critical issues pertaining to the Qur’an in the contemporary world. The course proceeds under the premise that understanding the Qur’an is an essential aspect of a broad liberal education in the humanities.

Pre-requisites: REL 250 (Introduction to Islam) or permission of instructor

REL 359: Islamic Modernity/ Ingram/ TTH 3:30-4:50pm (RLP)

What does it mean to be a ‘modern’ Muslim? How might this be different from merely being a Muslim in the ‘modern world’? Are there ways in which Muslims have attempted to make modernity their own, as it were, by articulating an ‘Islamic’ modernity or modernities? This course attempts to answer these questions by exploring how Muslims have variously engaged, adapted and resisted ‘modernity’ in various contexts and locales. After surveying some major scholarly theories of modernity, we will focus on three broad domains of ‘the modern’ in Islam: gender, law and the state.

Pre-requisites: REL 250 (Introduction to Islam) or permission of instructor

REL 363/GENDER 390: Women and Religion in America/ Dugan/ T 2:00-4:50pm (RSG)

This course offers an introduction to women’s historical and contemporary roles in American religious life. Focusing on women’s creative productions and experiences, we will examine how women have contributed to the formation and transformation of religious culture in this country. We will also explore the importance of gender roles, issues of sexuality, leadership, women’s religious meanings and motivations, experiences and identities. Much of the readings will be drawn from primary source documents that students will consider and evaluate in view of the course’s thematic questions and concerns. Among the questions we will address are: How have women’s experiences been expressed both within and in opposition to American religious traditions? What factors are involved in women becoming religious leaders or entrepreneurs? How have women responded to traditions in which they do not have access to formal authority? In what ways might some religions make sacred women’s traditional roles? How might others extend women’s roles beyond existing social constraints? How have women’s religious experiences and narratives shaped and in turn been shaped by American culture?

Pre-requisites: REL 250 (Introduction to Islam) or permission of instructor (RELIGION, SEXUALITY AND GENDER)
REL 374: Evolutionary Spirituality/ Mortensen/ MW 3:30-4:50pm

This course addresses the growing awareness of the universality of evolution in all existence. This awareness recognizes the sequential emergence of values-based stages in human cultural development, the development of life forms, and the development of prebiotic forms back to the big bang. We shall explore some of the impact of this way of seeing things. We shall take on the conflict between science and religion, as demonstrated in the varying ways Darwin's work is viewed today. We shall discover the ways this view assists in our interactions with others, as revealed in game theory models. And we shall ponder the new understandings of the divine that evolution stimulates. The possibilities for new syntheses and future development will emerge from these readings, along with new cooperative relationships within the world and its religions.

REL 376: Christianity and the Making of Modernity/ Helmer/ TTH 9:30-10:50am

Why is modernity usually linked to the loss of religion? In this course we consider the question of how religion, primarily European Christianity, contributed new ways of thinking, being, and acting to the emerging understanding of what it means to be modern. The period we focus on begins with the turbulent religious reformation of the early sixteenth century. At this time three new Christian confessions were born—Lutheran, Reformed, Roman Catholic—each with distinct contributions to the idea of modernity. Subsequent history witnessed the political reconfiguring of the European map, the expansion of economic capitalism, religious wars, and new ideas about religion in relation to reason, culture, and history. We thus explore modernity by considering reflections on religion as they emerged in this new historical context. The authors studied are are some of the most famous in the history of modernity: Luther, Calvin, Avila, Locke, Kant, Spener, Schleiermacher.
What can theology contribute to the modern study of religion? In this seminar we read closely foundational texts in the study of religion from theological, historical, and philosophical perspectives. Many of these texts were written by trained theologians (Schleiermacher, Troeltsch, Otto) who were intellectually excited about explorations and studies of non-Christian religions, and many saw new possibilities for interpreting Hebrew and Christian scriptures in light of historical and archaeological evidence in a broader world context (e.g. the Bible-Babel controversy in Berlin in 1902). We will study the concepts of religion and the realities of religion as they are invoked and defined in primary texts; investigate the theological assumptions and claims made as they shape an understanding of religion; and study the Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophical conceptual framework that determines the modern study of religion. By looking at the history of the study of religion from theological and philosophical perspectives, we aim to better appreciate the mutual indebtedness among these disciplines. This course will also give graduate students in religious studies the necessary foundations in theological, philosophical, and historical topics required for the theory and methods exam.

REL 379: Dying for God/ Balberg/ TTH 11:00-12:20pm (RLP)

At the center of this class stands one idea that had an enormous influence on world history: that dying can be a conscious religious and political action, and moreover, that dying can be the single most important action that a person will perform in his or her entire life. The roots of this idea are firmly grounded in the ancient world, and it played a key role in the shaping of Christianity and Judaism as we know them today and of the western world more generally. In this class we will get to know some of the critical concepts, perceptions, stories, and traditions that stand behind the idea of martyrdom as it evolved, and we will consider in what ways these concepts and stories still inform the arenas of religion, law, and politics in our own times. (RELIGION, LAW AND POLITICS CONCENTRATION)

REL 385: The Catholic 60s/ Orsi/ MW 9:30-10:50am

An examination of the major social and religious transformations in American Catholicism during and after the Second Vatican Council. Topics include: changing roles of priests and nuns; innovations in Catholic ritual and devotion; radical Catholicism; and the making of a new ways of being Catholic. Readings to include primary and secondary sources, documentary film, visual art, and selections from the relevant documents of the Second Vatican Council Joseph P. Chinnici and Angelyn Dries, eds. (ROMAN CATHOLIC STUDIES MINOR)

REL 470/GER 441/PHIL 410: Theology and the Study of Religion/ Helmer/ MW 12:00-2:30pm

What can theology contribute to the modern study of religion? In this seminar we read closely foundational texts in the study of religion from theological, historical, and philosophical perspectives. Many of these texts were written by trained theologians (Schleiermacher, Troeltsch, Otto) who were intellectually excited about explorations and studies of non-Christian religions, and many saw new possibilities for interpreting Hebrew and Christian scriptures in light of historical and archaeological evidence in a broader world context (e.g. the Bible-Babel controversy in Berlin in 1902). We will study the concepts of religion and the realities of religion as they are invoked and defined in primary texts; investigate the theological assumptions and claims made as they shape an understanding of religion; and study the Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophical conceptual framework that determines the modern study of religion. By looking at the history of the study of religion from theological and philosophical perspectives, we aim to better appreciate the mutual indebtedness among these disciplines. This course will also give graduate students in religious studies the necessary foundations in theological, philosophical, and historical topics required for the theory and methods exam.
How do socio-cultural conditions shape distinct mystical worldview and why? Why do mystical ideas travel from the periphery of an ethnic group to the center, galvanizing the masses and triggering the rise of new sects and messianic movements? What is the impact of mystical beliefs and practices on the emerging modernity and anti-modernity? Why has the deeply Kabbalistic concept *tikkun olam* (fixing the world) become a major thinking tool of modern liberal Jews? To answer these questions, we will discuss Jewish mysticism-in-the-making after the destruction of the Second Temple, explore the formation of Kabbalah in late medieval Spain, and travel to the circle of the Lurianic mystics in Safed (Tzfat). We will study specific early modern and modern historical contexts in which various forms of mystical practices emerged, underscore the historicity of mystical texts and practices, and introduce Judaic sectarian and messianic movements built on these practices—including the Kabbalists (Judaic and Christian), the Sabbateans, the Frankists, the Hasidim, and the Religious Zionists. This course will focus mainly on the socio-cultural, political, and practical/behavioral aspects of the mystical groups and messianic movements. Explore how Judaic mystical endeavors helped early modern and modern Jews revisit their traditional texts, redefine their rites and practices, and change the profile of the Jewish people in their encounter with modernity.