Spring 2017 Undergraduate Courses

101-20: Why College?/ Helmer, MW 9:30-10:50 am

This seminar will give first-quarter freshwomen and freshmen the opportunity to reflect personally, critically, thoughtfully, and together with peers, on the question: why go to college? There are many expectations that parents and society place on the college experience. But now that we are in college, how shall we think about it? Is it an experience or is it an education? Is it a ticket to a job or is it the pursuit of knowledge? What do professors do anyway? How is contemporary culture reflected in the university? We address various facets of the college experience, from student life to the value of the humanities. We survey the history of the modern university and learn about the "crisis" of the contemporary university. The goal is to reflect more deeply at the beginning of college what the "experience" is all about.

210: Introduction to Buddhism/ Preston, MW 12:30-1:50 pm

This course might be called an introduction to Buddhisms and Buddhists, with an emphasis on the plural. Throughout the course, we will study the various philosophies, ethical concerns, and practices oriented around the Buddha and his teachings, the historical journey of Buddhist ideas and practices through Asia, the people who observe these forms of Buddhism (from followers of Amitabha to Zen monks), and interactions between Buddhist groups and governments.

We will begin by studying the origin of Buddhism's fundamental teachings in the context of Indian religion and society, and we will proceed to trace the tradition's efflorescence as it spread through Southeast Asia, Tibet, China, and Japan accumulating new practices, texts, and philosophies as it spread through time and space. We will also consider Buddhism's involvement in modern socio-political concerns, from its politicized return to modern India, to the politics of Tibetan autonomy, to Buddhists' engagements in social advocacy. We will have occasion towards the end of the class to look at Buddhism's newest interpretations as it spread to the United States during the Beat Generation and sparked the popular modern Mindfulness movement.

Throughout the course of the course, we will be analyzing primary texts, viewing and discussing ritual practices, considering the philosophical and moral questions at stake, noting the socio-political contexts in which Buddhist ideas developed and exist today, and hearing the stories and experiences of practicing Buddhists.

240: Introduction to Christianity/ Traina, MW 11:00-12:20 pm

This course explores the basic beliefs and key historical developments of Christianity from a religious studies perspective by thinking deeply about eight Christian communities at eight different periods and places on the globe. We'll look into architecture, worship, controversies, politics, and other factors that distinguish Christianity in each time and place to gain a sense of the varied traditions have endured under the single umbrella of this tradition. Students will also learn about contemporary local Christianity by observing and analyzing Christian worship.

Spring 2017 Undergraduate Courses

250: Introduction to Islam/ Ingram, TTH 11:00-12:20 pm

This course introduces Islam, one of the major religious traditions of world history. We will develop a framework for understanding how Muslims in varying times and places have engaged with Islamic scripture and the prophetic message of the Prophet Muhammad through diverse sources: theological, philosophical, legal, political, mystical, literary and artistic. While we aim to grasp broad currents and narratives of Islamic history, we will especially concentrate on the origins and development of the religion in its formative period (the prophetic career of the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an, Islamic belief and ritual, Islamic law, and popular spirituality) and debates surrounding Islam in the contemporary world (the impact of European colonialism on the Muslim world, the rise of the modern Muslim state, and discourses on gender, politics and violence).

272: Luther and the West/ Helmer, MW 2:00-3:20 pm

When the 16th-century Catholic friar, Martin Luther, stood up for his convictions before pope and emperor, the history of the West was changed forever. In this course we will study the powerful impact that Luther had on the West, both its history and aspects of its culture. Themes addressed are: the secularization of the modern West, economics, political theology, philosophy of religion (Kant and Hegel), anti-Semitism, reason and the will, modern subjectivity, the arts. The course aims to show how religion and theology are related to broader cultural, political, social, and aesthetic issues. Class evaluation is based on quizzes, study guides, class participation, and a written paper. ***This course is also listed under GERMAN 272.***

309: Gods, Demons, and their Games of Thrones: The Living Hindu Epics/ Preston, TTH 12:30-1:50 pm

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, two classic South Asian epic texts, offer entertaining tales of gods and their battles against demons, along with a host of other captivating stories. Yet unlike some "epics" of Western culture, these two accounts have had an enduring influence on South Asian culture. They contain foundational ideas for Hindu ethics and philosophy, and they are part of everyday life for Hindus. This class will investigate the texts in translation, compare various versions and interpretations in different media (including cartoon, theatrical, and cinematic media), and explore their significance as "living" texts in the South Asian tradition.

Spring 2017 Undergraduate Courses

PHIL 310: Maimonides/ Seeskin, TTH 11:00-12:20 pm

This course will consist of an intensive analysis of Mose Maimonides' views on God, the interpretation of sacred texts, creation, prophecy, providence, religious ritual, and human perfection. Reference will also be made to Aristotle, Plotinus, Alfarabi, Aquinas, Spinoza, and Kant.

339-20: Gender and Sexuality in Judaism/ Sufrin, 9:30-10:50 am

How does Judaism define what it means to be male or female? How does gender shape Jewish experience? How have feminist and queer activists changed Judaism in the last century? In this course, we will use gender and sexuality as lenses for analyzing Jewish ritual, theology, and sacred texts. We will also consider how attention to gender and sexuality sheds light on the lives of Jewish men and women of the past and present and how the practice of Judaism today is shaped by new ways of understanding gender and sexuality.

Counts towards the Religion, Sexuality and Gender (RSG) major concentration.

339-21: Ethnic Communities on Contemporary Israel/ Ringel, MW 11:00-12:20 pm

In this course, you will learn about the variety of ethnic and religious minorities in the State of Israel. The State of Israel defines itself as a Jewish and democratic state. At the same time, about 25 percent of its population is not Jewish, and Jews themselves are divided along ethnic and ideological lines. Among Jews, Sephardim (Jews whose origins trace back to Spain) and Mizrahim (Jews whose origins trace back to the Islamic world) struggled against an Ashkenazi (central and eastern European) elite up through the 1990's, which saw waves of Russian and Ethiopian Jews come to the country. The largest ethnic group among non-Jews is the Arab/Palestinian population, which is divided in terms of religion between Christians and Muslims on the one hand and between Bedouin and settled communities on the other. Armenians, Circassians, and Druze, who often speak Arabic at home but largely do not regard themselves as Arab, likewise occupy a place in Israeli culture and society. In recent decades, immigrants from the Far East and refugees from Africa have added to the rich ethnic tapestry, even as the refugees' arrival has been accompanied by increasing tensions.

The course is multi-disciplinary, exploring both the politics and culture of different minorities in the state. The course therefore devotes time to exploring the cultural productivity of different minority groups within the realms of religion, music, art, literature and cinema. On the political level, the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have often exacerbated tensions between the Arab minority and Jewish majority and between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and likewise have divided these groups amongst themselves. At the same time, religious minorities have official recognition in certain spheres of life.

Counts towards the Religion, Law and Politics (RLP) major concentration.

Spring 2017 Undergraduate Courses

344: Christian Ethics/ Traina TTH 11:00-12:20 pm

The primary questions addressed in this course have to do with relations between economics and religion. These questions have attracted attention because of Max Weber's analysis of modernity in terms of the impact of Calvinist theology on modern capitalism. Yet Weber's is only one of many important studies that have considered the way in which religion shapes a particular understanding of economics. In this course we will look at key texts in the west that have contributed religious and theological ways of thinking about economics. Questions discussed will consider the Bible in relation to economic exchange, how God's play a role in capitalism, religion in relation to critiques of economic exploitation, and proposals for economic justice as informed by religious commitments. Texts by the following authors will be studied: Martin Luther, Martin Luther King Jr., Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and Hannah Arendt. Class evaluation is based on study guides and reflections, class participation, and a written paper.
Counts towards the Religion, Law and Politics (RLP), Religion, Sexuality and Gender (RSG) and Religion, Health and Medicine (RHM) major concentrations.

349: Economics and Religion in German Culture/ Helmer T 2:00-4:50 pm

The primary questions addressed in this course have to do with relations between economics and religion. These questions have attracted attention because of Max Weber's analysis of modernity in terms of the impact of Calvinist theology on modern capitalism. Yet Weber's is only one of many important studies that have considered the way in which religion shapes a particular understanding of economics. In this course we will look at key texts in the west that have contributed religious and theological ways of thinking about economics. Questions discussed will consider the Bible in relation to economic exchange, how God's play a role in capitalism, religion in relation to critiques of economic exploitation, and proposals for economic justice as informed by religious commitments. Texts by the following authors will be studied: Martin Luther, Martin Luther King Jr., Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and Hannah Arendt. Class evaluation is based on study guides and reflections, class participation, and a written paper.
This course is also listed under GERMAN 326.

Spring 2017 Undergraduate Courses

359: Islam in Asia/ Henning TTH 9:30-10:50 am

This class introduces you to a wide variety of ethnographies on Muslim communities in Asia, both in the range of regions and states – Iran, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China – as well as in terms of themes – how Muslims engage secularizing states, coexist with hegemonic non-Muslim majorities, survive as refugees on the battleground of rival nation states, and, with native languages other than Arabic, make the Qur'an collectively meaningful.
This course is also listed under ASIAN_ST 390-3-22 and ANTHRO 390-0-31.

379-20: Religion and Magic/ Kieckhefer TTH 3:30-4:50 pm

This course will examine the ways magic is viewed and practiced in various cultures, its relationship to mainstream religious practice in each of those cultures, and a range of theories that have been proposed regarding the relationship between magic and religion.
This course counts towards the Religion, Health and Medicine (RHM) major concentration.

379-22: Life is Not Fair: Theories and Practices of Justice/ Zoloth TTH 2:00-3:20 pm

This course will look at historical and comparative theories of justice from theological and philosophical sources in the Western Tradition. We will begin by a review of justice theory within the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Quran, and explore how the concepts of fairness, treatment of the vulnerable, equity, freedom, rights and contracts expand our historical ideas about how to distribute social goods in a world of scarcity and finitude beginning with Enlightenment ideas of fairness. We will critically examine the turn toward utility and happiness, then contract theories of justice as modernity expanded our ideas of fairness. We will explore contemporary theories of justice, including Rawl and his critics, and Singer, Nussbaum. Sachs, and challenges to liberal theorists by liberation theology, African American political theory, and feminist critique. The class will conclude with an exploration of how justice theories are applied in practical terms against problems of access and distribution in American public life.
This course is also listed under PHIL 390-21.
Counts towards the Religion, Law and Politics (RLP) major concentration.

Spring 2017 Undergraduate Courses

462: Graduate Seminar: Topics in American Religious History/ Johnson, M 2:00-4:50 pm

This graduate seminar examines key themes in American religions: transnationalism, empire, race, indigeneity, and national security. Students will read theoretical and historical studies of Americans religions to engage with several fundamental problems that have commanded recent scholarly attention. How have globalization and hemispheric approaches reshaped the way scholars conceptualize the "origins" and trajectories of American religions? How have formations of US empire shaped religion and politics? What have scholars meant by the "co-constitution" of race and religion, and how has this manifested throughout the history of American religions?
What is the "national security paradigm," and how has it reshaped the relationship between religion and state power? Are recent anti-Muslim state practices a novel development or an iteration of an historical pattern? What analysis of American religions is demanded by accounting for indigeneity?

471-20: Graduate Seminar: The Colonial Project: European Expansion and the Development of the Colonial/Postcolonial World/ Molina, TH 2:00-4:30 pm

In this seminar, we will read in the history of comparative colonialisms from 1492 to the middle of the 20th century. We will privilege the history of Spanish and British trade and territorial expansion in Africa, the Americas, and India. The required texts will focus on communication, conversion, cultural conflicts, knowledge systems, the development of ethnic and racialized systems of rule, and nationalist struggles (see below). In addition, we will read essays that attend to trade-networks and economic transformations. For students whose research interests pertain to colonialism, empire, globalization, and anti-colonial nationalisms, the seminar will furnish them with a foundation to begin to compare similarities and differences in the history of 450 years of European colonial expansion. Additionally, I will provide (and we will build together) an extensive bibliography that will be useful to those who wish to construct an exam field related colonialism, empire, and globalization. ***This course is also listed under LATIN_AM 401-20.***

481-2: Graduate Seminar: Theory and Method of Religion/ Taylor, F 12:00-2:30 pm

In this graduate seminar, we explore exciting contemporary work being produced at the intersections of religious studies and cultural studies, with an eye toward visual culture, new technologies, and the dynamics of participatory culture. Drawing from an array of interdisciplinary sources, we will look at such areas as: the cult of personality in the media age; religion, media, and changing platforms of authority; the religious dimensions of transmedia storytelling, media world-building, and intersectionality; religion as communication; online group identity formation, religio-political identity construction, and the culture of surveillance; code-switching, consumerism, and blurred boundaries of "the sacred and the secular;" virtual religion, and how a better understanding of intermediality in the digital age might inform our theoretical understandings of religion. Students will be asked to conduct original research, compose a final seminar paper, and to present their research in a conference-like format at the conclusion of the course. Students will also receive guidance as to key professional organizations, guilds, research centers, and journals that support work in our field.