

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Fall 2012

RLST 1620-010

Religious Dimension in Human Experience

Professor Loriliai Biernacki

Humanities 250 on T & R from 2:00 -3:15 p.m.

Approved for Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum: Ideals and Values.

Religious Studies 1620: Religion in the Context of Evolution, Black holes and the Future of Humanity

This course looks at how religion and science are represented in the popular imagination of our culture and our time. My underlying goal is to make apparent the different metaphysical presuppositions that underlie our ideas of what science is and what religion is and how these approximate each other and diverge from each other. This goal is to think about how we have a whole set of assumptions about science and religion, further how the values that each espouse are embedded in world views that often depend on an opposition between these two. These assumptions are historically contingent and they pervade our culture, especially popular culture, as stereotypes.

RLST 1850-010

Ritual Media

Professor Holly Gayley

Hellems 199 on M & W from 11:00 – 11:50 a.m.with Recitations on W, R, F

Approved for Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum: Contemporary Society.

Though often associated with tradition, ritual continues to play an important role in contemporary societies. This course examines the elements and genres of ritual activity in both religious and secular contexts. Each class is designed around a case study—from African rites of passage to the Beijing Olympics. Over the semester, we explore theories of ritual as symbolic action and embodied performance, paying close attention to the role of media in capturing and transforming ritual. A significant portion of this course will be dedicated to viewing and analyzing films which depict rituals, while thinking critically about issues of representation in the choice and framing of scenes. As the capstone project for the course, students will form teams to create a multimedia case study of ritual, including an original documentary short.

RLST 2400-010

Religion and Contemporary Society

Professor Lucas Carmichael

Hellems 199 on T & R from 3:30 – 4:45 p.m.

Approved for Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum: Contemporary Society.

This course is an introduction to concepts and theories concerning “religion,” “society,” and their interactions. It is not a survey of various religions and societies. We will read classic and contemporary texts that explore such topics as the separation of religious and secular society, the relationship of the individual and the group, the connections between religious beliefs and corresponding behaviors, and global responses to religious diversity. These ideas will be applied to contemporary events ranging from the presidential elections to the sports field, from immigration to consumerism, and from college life to judicial decisions.

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RLST 2500-010

Religions in the United States

Professor Deborah Whitehead

Humanities 250 on M & W from 10:00 – 10:50 a.m. Recitations on W

Approved for Arts & Sciences Core Curriculum: United States Context or Ideals and Values.

This course will introduce students to the historical and contemporary study of religions in the United States. It will not seek to give either a comprehensive historical account of the development of *all* American religions, nor a survey of *all* religious institutions, movements, and traditions that have made up the vast and diverse U.S. religious landscape. Rather, the course approaches the topic of religions in the U.S. through the investigation of primary source texts, which, set in context, will give us glimpses or “snapshots” of religion as lived, practiced, and experienced by Americans of all backgrounds during the past 400 years. Along the way we will encounter many of the key religious traditions, movements, and figures that have shaped American religious belief and practice. In addition the course will consider such questions as: What major cultural forces shape and have shaped religions in America? How have Americans of different faiths and nationalities encountered, interacted, argued, clashed, and cooperated with one another? Have they seen America as a promised land or place of refuge—or as a place of conflict and suffering? What are some ways that religious Americans think about faith, spirituality, religious diversity and church and state? Ultimately, how does the academic study of religion shed light on what it means to be an “*American*” or a religious American?

RLST 3000-010

Christian Traditions

Professor Brian Catlos

Hale 270 on M & W from 11:00 – 11:50 a.m. Recitations on W & F

Approved for Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum: Historical Context.

This course surveys the history of Christianity from its remote Mesopotamian origins through to the present, with an emphasis on setting it within the context of broad regional, and global cultural and theological trends and analyzing its development as a social, economic, political and ideological phenomenon. Non-orthodox traditions, heresy, and apocrypha will be considered. This will lead us to consider larger questions regarding the nature of religion and its relation to society. Course requirements will include tests and written assignments.

RLST 3020-001

Advanced Writing in Religious Studies

Professor Sam Gill

Humanities 1B90 on MWF from 1:00 – 1:50 p.m.

This course is required of RLST majors and limited to majors and minors. The course is also an introduction to the Academic Study of Religion. Students will write extensively in many forms, will do extensive critical peer review, and will critically examine academic writing conventions. Many of the assignments will be set in the context of the history of the study of religion.

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RLST/JWST 3100-002

Judaism

Professor Elias Sacks

Humanities 250 on T & R from 11:00 – 12:15 p.m.

Approved for Arts & Sciences Core Curriculum: Historical Context.

This course will survey Jewish religious experience and its expression in thought, ritual, ethics, and social institutions. We will explore the development of Jewish belief, practice, and literature from the biblical period to modern times, encountering diverse voices and paying special attention to the changing contexts in which these voices have emerged: we will be particularly concerned with the ways in which Jewish life has been shaped by its political, religious, and social settings, and the ways in which the Jewish tradition has shaped the broader world. We will consider specific topics such as the concrete practices that have been associated with Jewish life, the ways in which Jews have understood the relationship between Judaism and other traditions, and attempts by Jews to imagine the role of Judaism in a modern state. Exploring these topics will lead us to reflect more broadly on the nature of religion.

RLST 3200-001

Hinduism

Professor Loriliai Biernacki

Humanities 1B90 on T & R 12:30 – 1:45 p.m.

This class will explore the variety of traditions subsumed under the rubric of Hinduism. Attention will be given to philosophical traditions as well as to the hands-on everyday practice of Hindu rituals. We will cover the religious practice and thought of ancient Indians and examine the permutations these bodies of religious ideals and ideas undergo up through the centuries continuing into the practice of Hindu traditions in India today. In particular special attention will be given the variety of manifestations Hinduism takes with respect to society and social relations.

RLST 3838-001

Dancing, Religion & Culture

Professor Sam Gill

Humanities 1B90 on M & W, Carlson Gym on F 2:00 – 2:50 p.m.

The examination of dancing, and views about dancing, in the contemporary Western Christian context followed by a number of studies of dancing traditions—Australian Aboriginal, Hinduism, Javanese, Flamenco, and Latin American—that offer inspiration for the development of a richer understanding of dancing. Lecture discussion on Mondays and Wednesdays and Latin American dancing (salsa, rueda de casino, bachata, etc.) in studio on Fridays.

HUMN 4650-001

Topics in Humanities: Religion, Power & Modernity

Professor Ruth Mas

Hellems 263 on T & R from 12:30 – 1:45 p.m.

This course examines the representation of religion in relationship to the claims made by modern narratives of power in fables, literature, graphic novels, visual materials and critical writings.

RLST 4/5050-001

Topics: Christianity & Culture-SASR **Professor Deborah Whitehead**

Humanities 270 on M from 3:00 – 5:30 p.m.

This is a SASR course.

This seminar will approach the topic of shifting formations of Christianity and culture from historical, theoretical, and theological perspectives, focusing on the context of the United States. We will begin by surveying some classic and contemporary models for theorizing this relationship. Then we will problematize and consider the potential applications of these models through an examination of such topics as nationalism, media, gender, material culture, consumerism and desire, popular culture, food, the body, kitsch, and subcultures/countercultures. This is SASR (Seminars in the Academic Study of Religion) course. This course will culminate in student presentations of original work. There is a prerequisite of 6 hours of

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RLST coursework or instructor permission.

RLST 5210-001

Advanced Sanskrit

Professor Loriliai Biernacki

Humanities 278 on T from 4:30 – 7:20 p.m.

Contact department to enroll.

RLST 4/5250-001

Topics: Transnational Buddhism-SASR

Professor Holly Gayley

Hellems 196 on W: from 3:00 – 5:30 p.m.

This is a SASR course.

Buddhism has become a global religion with transnational connections across Asia and to diaspora and convert communities in the West. Though Buddhism has long thrived with pan-Asian connections, such as along the Silk Road, this seminar explores the processes by which Buddhism has become global in the past century. We explore a range of transnational processes, including colonial contact, migration and diaspora, international tourism, and the internet. What new understandings of Buddhism and new forms of practice have emerged through transnational connections and interactions? How are ethnic and sectarian identities being shaped in new ways as a result?

RLST4/5260-001/JWST4260

Topics in Judaism: Love & Desire-SASR

Professor Elias Sacks

Muenzinger E432 on W from 3:00 – 5:30 p.m.

This is a SASR course.

This course will explore accounts of love and desire in pre-modern and modern sources. We will consider diverse understandings of divine and human passion, as well as the implications of these understandings for a variety of questions—questions such as the status of sexuality, the nature of politics, and the significance of religious practice. We will focus primarily on Jewish sources, while also placing this material in conversation with works drawn from other traditions.

RLST 6830/COML6040-001

Introduction to the Academic Study of Religion

Professor Ruth Mas

Humanities 270 on R 3:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Introduction to the graduate academic study of religion through the exploration of contemporary models and issues that demonstrate the theoretical and methodological nature and future of the field.

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Be sure to check online for the most up-to-date details. [MyCU info.colorado.edu](http://mycu.info.colorado.edu)