

REL 101.01 *Introduction to Religious Studies*

STAFF 2:00-3:15, T/TH

Credits, GL/GPR

This course introduces students to the academic study of religion through a survey of the major beliefs, values, ritual practices, sacred writings and historical developments of the major western religions, namely, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. We approach these religions as things that *humans* do. In other words, we look at religion as an aspect of the societies, cultures and behavior of those human beings (past and present) who describe themselves as Jews, Christians and Muslims. Our main goal is to learn more about the different ways Jews, Christians and Muslims have thought, felt and acted over the course of their long histories. While we may have religious commitments and questions of our own, in this class we are not asked to “be religious.” Rather we are asked to be thorough investigators seeking to know, understand and appreciate our chosen subject matter. The course will consist mainly of regular lectures on relevant topics; regular assigned readings and periodic exams which require students to demonstrate detailed knowledge of the material presented in lectures and assigned readings.

REL 101.02 *Introduction to Religious Studies*

STAFF 3:30-4:45, T/TH

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demonstrate detailed knowledge of the material presented in lectures and assigned readings.

REL 109.01 *Religion & Contemporary Culture*

RAMSEY 10:00-10:50, MWF

Credits, GPR

In this course we will investigate current issues related to Creationism, Intelligent Design, and Evolution. Readings in the course will include works by Dawkins, Miller, Haught, Gould.

REL 109.02 *Religion & Contemporary Culture*

MCKINNON 12:00-12:50, MWF

Credits, GPR

This course is an attempt to address religious issues within our contemporary Western context. We will explore divergent voices and practices that have arisen between the religious and the secular, within certain “traditional” Western religions, as well as within “new age” religions. Specific issues in past semesters have included truth and relativity, language and reality, racism and religion, feminist religious thought, and the role of the Internet in contemporary religion. Classes are designed to include large-group lectures as well as small-group discussions and activities.

REL 111.01 *Non-Western Religions*

FOULKS 9:30-10:45, T/TH

Credits, GN/GPR

This course provides a historical and thematic overview of three major religious traditions of Asia: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Through a careful examination of various primary and secondary sources, we will consider ways in which South Asian Hindus, Indo-Tibetan Buddhists, and Chinese Daoists have attempted to understand the nature of the world, human society, and the person's

place within them. In examining religious traditions that in many ways seem wholly foreign or “other” in comparison to our own, our emphasis will be on the internal logic of each, on the resources that each provides for the construction of meaning, value, and moral vision.

REL 204.01 *New Testament and Origins of Christianity*

BIRD 2:00-3:15, MW

Credits, GHP/GL/GPM

This course will guide students through an academic study of the New Testament. It is intended to be an engagement with these texts, which includes asking questions about its origin, its authors, its content and its role in informing our modern social structures and expectations, in particular because we live in the Western world that has been significantly shaped by the Bible.

REL 204.02 *New Testament and Origins of Christianity*

STAFF 6:00-8:50, T

Credits, GHP/GL/GPM

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REL 207.01 *Modern Problems of Belief*

ROGERS WEB

Credits, GPR, WI

REL 207 Web-based, WI

This course examines challenges to traditional Christian thought from within and outside it during the 19th to 21st Centuries, including changing views of God, changing views of freedom, the social study of religion, the psychology of belief,

Christian views of women, feminine language for God, Christian views of Judaism and other religions, historical views of scripture, revivals of trinitarian thinking, the problem of evil, and controversies over ordination and marriage for sexual minorities. Previous students have found the reading difficult, and compared it to a philosophy course. This is not a course in ethics, and most contemporary ethical controversies will not appear. Rather, it is a course about how Christian groups disagree and how Christian doctrine and ritual change.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able, in writing, to identify, describe, and evaluate arguments about issues dividing Christian groups in the 19th to 21st Centuries. In particular, they will demonstrate in writing the ability to evaluate the rational coherence of different views on those issues—in other words, judge the way that an author's view hold together on its own terms, meets the objections of others, or both.

Readings from major, classic, and contemporary works of controversy will provide a variety of models for understanding the issues of the course. The same readings also provide critical evaluations of rival views. Expository readings and postings by the instructor will prepare students to identify topics, recognize compatible views, and differentiate rival views; they will inculcate understanding and offer further strategies for evaluation. Web-based interaction with the instructor and other students on the discussion board and by email will give students written practice in skills of identification, recognition, differentiation, demonstration, and evaluation, based on the readings. Weekly discussion board postings will provide further, written practice in those skills—especially evaluation—in full paragraphs, with very close reference to readings and the postings of the instructor and others. In particular, questions on the discussion board will guide the reading and anticipate later questions for tests or papers. Discussion board answers will provide students with a chance to react to the material, and the instructor a chance to signal exemplary or problematic understandings, before more formal writing in tests or papers. Three formal papers--5 pages each, the second a re-write of the first, will provide incentives and opportunities to demonstrate those skills in longer essays.

Why you should take this course:

1. You want to know what Christians are arguing about these days.
2. You like on-line discussion and writing.
3. It's a good first course in Christianity, designed to be informative to those who know little.
4. It's a good advanced course in Christianity, designed to be interesting, even surprising to those who know a lot.

5. The readings are great! We read some of the greatest hits in Christian thought.
6. First-years and sophomores couldn't take courses like this in high school.
7. Juniors and seniors need training for jobs that involve thinking, writing, or cooking up reasons. Theologians think about theology much as lawyers think about law. Students go on to law school, divinity school, architecture school, graduate school, consulting, and business.
8. It's part of a liberal education that the citizens of North Carolina should know something about religion.
9. The Religious Studies Department at UNCG is one the best public-university religious studies departments without a graduate program.
10. The course needs students from a variety of backgrounds to work well.

Why you should not take this course:

1. You think of it as Sunday School.
2. You don't like to read.
3. You think spirituality is a matter of individual experience apart from texts and communities.
4. You think that Catholics, Anglicans, or Eastern Orthodox people aren't really Christians.
5. You don't like philosophy.
6. You are afraid of Freud or Marx.
7. You prefer historical influence and effect to conceptual analysis.
8. You don't intend to come very often.
9. You're shy about speaking up in class.
10. You want to sit back and be entertained by a lecture.
11. You don't intend to do the reading very often.
12. You're afraid thinking is incompatible with Christianity.
13. You want to prove your faith by butting heads with 19th C. critics of religion.
14. You want to be in a homogeneous group where everyone thinks alike and is pious.
15. You intend to write sermons for postings and papers.
16. You don't like surprises.
16. You're a senior and you've planned to have a good case of senioritis: you've worked for it, you deserve it, and nobody's going to deprive you of it!
17. You're any year and you're pretty sure you need a semester off, but you haven't planned or maybe even admitted it to yourself yet, so you need to flunk out in order to get a break.

If any of these is the case, then don't do it to us!

REL 207.02 *Modern Problems of Belief*
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REL 209.01 *Elements of Christian Thought*

RAMSEY 11:00-11:50, MWF

Credits, GL/GPR

In this course we will study understandings of good and evil in the Christian tradition.

REL 215.01 *Judaism*

HASKELL 11:00-12:15, T/TH

Credits, GHP/GL/GPM

This course will provide a broad introduction to the religious tradition of Judaism. Central topics for the course include Jewish text, history, ritual, thought and culture. Course readings and discussions will stress the creative tension between tradition and innovation that has allowed Judaism to endure as a vital and diverse religion in an ever-changing world.

REL 215.02 *Judaism*
HASKELL 3:30-4:45, T/TH
Credits, GHP/GL/GPM

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REL 220.01 *Japanese Religion*
FOULKS 12:30-1:45, T/TH
Credits, GN/GPR

Surveys show that in Japan most people do not consider themselves religious, yet the cities are full of temples and shrines, the calendar has plenty of festival days, and many people have some kind of charm clipped to their handbag, mobile phone or briefcase. This class assumes that religion has played and still plays a major role in Japanese culture, but we may need to rethink what “religion” is in the case of Japan. As we explore the major ideas and themes within Japanese religion, we will read not only about Zen but also about baseball, and we will work with a variety of materials including anime, film, and comics.

REL 250.01 *Religious Traditions and Care of the Earth*
HEADINGTON 3:30-4:45, MW
Credits, ENV/GN/GPR

This course introduces the student to the study of religion by focusing on the ways that various religious traditions view and treat the natural world. Religious rituals, symbols, stories, and ethical systems generate different cultural and social responses to nature. In our present age, when species and natural systems are threatened with extinction, we need to understand the biases of various religious

traditions, especially those of the West, and offer proposals for an ethic of sustainability. We will study indigenous people and western and eastern religions. We will also look at current attempts in the West to fashion a more life-enhancing ethic.

Our study will take up three major themes: The Great Work, Food, and Simple Living. Each will comprise a third of the course.

For each theme or third of the course, you will have a test on the material we've covered in class and readings, and you'll have two projects to complete on Food and Simple Living. Thus, you'll have a theoretical and an experiential way of understanding the material

REL 250.02 *Religious Traditions and Care of the Earth*
HEADINGTON 6:00-8:45, TH
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REL 259.01 *Philosophy of Religion*
HART 2:00-3:15, T/TH
Credits, GPR/WI

In this course we explore process philosophy's attempt to construct a unified perspective on the nature of reality that integrates God and nature, religion and science.

REL 317.01 *Islam and the Construction of Gender*
BUCAR 11:00-12:15, T/TH
Credits, WGS

Discrimination against women in Muslim communities is often associated with *hijab*. At the same time, national laws restricting veiling in public places have been interpreted as violations of religious freedom. This course will use *hijab* to explore the relationship between Islam, gender, and the politics of dress. The course is comprised of two units. First, we consider the theological grounds for a Muslim form of gendered dress in the Quranic and Hadith injunctions to veil, and how these injunctions are interpreted or critiqued by contemporary religious and feminist thinkers. Second, through text-based sources (including ethnographies and court cases), we consider how Muslim women and men perform *hijab* in a variety of countries. In this unit we will be concerned with understanding what wearing *hijab* “can do,” that is, its political power. Case studies to be considered include women’s practice of “bad *hijab*” within the context of compulsory veiling in the Islamic Republic of Iran; the new veiling movements among middle class women in Egypt; the unveiling of school girls in France; and the wearing of *hijab* by men such as *warias* in Indonesia and *hijras* in India.

REL 324.01 *Marx, Freud, Nietzsche & Butler*
RAMSEY 6:00-8:50, M
Credits, SI/WI

In this seminar we will do a close reading of primary texts by Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Judith Butler. This course is designed for upper

level majors in Religious Studies. The course carries Writing Intensive and Speaking Intensive designations.

**REL 340.01 *Modern Jewish Thinkers: Roth*
LEVINSON 6:00-8:50, T
Credits, WI**

This course pursues three novels by Philip Roth, acclaimed by many, including, for example, *The New York Times* book critic. A. O. Scott, as the most acclaimed American writer throughout the past forty years. Roth identifies himself as an American who is ethnically Jewish. One question we'll confront is whether and if so, how Roth's being Jewish informs the concerns, plots, narratives and characters of the novels we'll be reading. The basic question he has asked, repeatedly, is "What has happened?" What has happened to the relatively pastoral or idyllic sense that many Americans had of themselves in the post-World War II 1940s and 1950s: Back then, many Americans identified themselves [1] as capable of pursuing their own individual dreams, [2] as able to resist bad laws and overcome wornout conventions, and [3] as able to contribute to the common good of the country, realizing the nation's motto, *e pluribus Unum*. But, actually beginning in the 50s, that dream began to turn into something of a nightmare. The 1950s brought us the so-called "Red Scare" and the subsequent 'hearings' of the Congressional House un-American Activities Committee, led by a notorious demagogue. Joseph McCarthy. This provides the backdrop and context for Roth's *I Married a Communist*. The 1960s were tumultuous, beginning, as it did, with the election of John F. Kennedy, his nationalist idealism, his decisions to commit the country's military forces to a war in Viet Nam, his subsequent assassination, the assassination of his brother, Bobby, and political-racial unrest throughout the U.S. This provides the context for *American Pastoral*. And, then again, The 1970s and 1980s saw the country beginning to abandon its motto, *e pluribus Unum*, for outright division into identity-communities, -cultures, and -geographies, with our gated-neighborhoods, our black and Chicano-Latino-Asian inner cities, along with a major personal tendency toward self-absorption. This provides the context for *The Human Stain*.

Books to buy:

American Pastoral

I Married a Communist
The Human Stain

REL 341.01 *Topics in Jewish Thought: Kabbalah*
HASKELL 2:00-3:15, T/TH
Credits, WI

This course will provide a broad introduction to the history and theology of Jewish mystical thought, covering a range of traditions extending from the ancient world through the modern period. Special attention will be given to the form of medieval mysticism known as Kabbalah. Key themes for the course will be the relationship between humanity and divinity, the role of mysticism in daily life, and the complex symbolic systems that guide the mystics in their search for divine encounter.

Note: This course was previously offered as REL 323. Although the number is different, it cannot be repeated for credit.

REL 368.01 *Religion in South Asia: A Global History of Buddhism*
GRIEVE 6:00-8:50, W
Credits

In this course we will trace the path of Buddhism from its conception in Nepal with the birth of the Buddha, its flowering in China and Japan, its spread to North America, and its eventual extension online as “cybersanghas.” This course is designed as a seminar and writing workshop. Student participation is essential, and while the professor will lead discussion and occasionally lecture, student-led discussion will drive the course. Students will also engage in library research, as well as study the craft of writing academic research papers.

REL 401.01 *Tutorial*
HART
Credits

TBA

REL 402.01 *Tutorial*
HART
Credits

TBA

REL 403.01 *Tutorial*
HART 12:00-2:00, W
Credits

TBA

REL 404.01 *Tutorial*
HART
Credits

TBA

REL 410.01 *Senior Seminar*
BUCAR 3:30-4:45, T/TH
Credits, SI/WI

Senior Seminar has three goals. First, it offers the Department a vehicle to examine how well students have mastered both the content and the skills that are critical to the academic study of religion. It does this by putting you in a real seminar setting in which you are called on to read, discuss, and critique three recent works in the field. Second, it affords majors an opportunity to fulfill both a writing intensive requirement and a speaking intensive requirement for the major. Finally, Senior Seminar serves as an important component of the Department's own assessment regime by providing feedback on the effectiveness of the major curriculum. I want to emphasize that this is not a "lecture" class. It is a seminar in which you are expected to engage the readings and the other students in the class. Other department faculty will be invited to class for formal oral presentations. All majors must pass Senior Seminar to graduate. The theme of this year's year's Senior Seminar is gender and religion. You will be reading, discussing, and critiquing three books.

REL 493.01 *Honors Work*
HART
Credits, HSS

TBA