UNCG Religious Studies Department
College of Arts and Sciences
Foust Building 109
(336) 334-5762

THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Why train for one job when you can prepare for many?

Spring 2014
Course Booklet

Religious Studies Department Heads
2000—present
About The Department

The UNCG Religious Studies Department provides a solid foundation in Religious Studies as a core discipline in the Liberal Arts for all College and University students in support of the General Education Curriculum. The Department also delivers rigorous training for majors, second majors, and minors in Religious Studies that enables students to advance to graduate study in the field, and in cognate fields, or to positions in primary and secondary education. At present, the Department has about 40 majors, including double majors and concentrators in primary education in the School of Education.

The Department vigorously supports key interdisciplinary, University, and College programs including Honors, Freshman Seminars, Communication Across the Curriculum, Residential College, Women’s and Gender Studies, African-American Studies, and International Studies. The Department provides exemplary learning environments and seeks to cultivate in its students the ability to analyze data critically, to express ideas clearly and effectively in speech and in writing, and to develop attitudes of tolerance, inquiry, and understanding in the best tradition of the Liberal Arts.

The Department teaches courses on such traditions as Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Shinto, and Taoism. Historical Studies include courses about religions in African, Asian, Middle Eastern, European, and American (especially United States) history. Cultural and theoretical studies include courses on religious philosophies, religious ethics, and theologies; courses exploring political, social, and psychological accounts of religious life; and courses investigating the role religion plays in politics, economics, social movements, arts, sciences, and diverse forms of personal conduct.

Religious Studies Faculty

Dr. William Hart  Professor and Head - Religion, Ethics, Politics, and African American Religion

Dr. Marc Bregman  Bernard Distinguished Professor of Religious and Jewish Studies

Dr. Derek Krueger  Joe Rosenthal Excellence Professor – Religion in Late Antiquity, Early Christianity, Byzantine Studies and Gender Studies

Dr. Gene Rogers  Professor -Modern and Medieval Western Religious Thought, Modern Eastern Religious Thought (On Leave)

Dr. Bennett Ramsey  Associate Professor -Contemporary Spirituality and World Religions.

Dr. Gregory Grieve  Associate Professor -South Asian Religion, Himalayan Traditions, Religion and Media and Theory

Dr. Ellen Haskell  Associate Professor -History of Judaism, Jewish Through Literature, Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah, Gender and Jewish Imagery.

Dr. Alyssa Gabbay  Assistant Professor - Islam in Iran and India, Gender in the Muslim World

David McDuffie  Lecturer - Religion and Culture, Religion and Ecology.

Heather Edgerly  Lecturer -Asian Religions

Jason Combs  Lecturer - Ph.D. Candidate, Ancient Mediterranean Religions
NEW COURSE

Gregory Grieve is an Associate Professor in the Religious Studies Department. He researches and teach at the intersection of Asian religions, media, and theory. Specifically, he is a leader in the field of digital religion, and a pioneer in the emerging field of religion in digital games. He publishes books and articles and presents internationally on these subjects.

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Other Courses Taught in the Department

104-01 RCO CORE
HSS Prob Belief: Rel Video Games
FMS Freshmen Seminar:
Spring 2014 Course Descriptions

REL 101.01 & 101.02
Instructor: David McDuffie
Intro to Religious Studies
Day & Times: MWF 9-9:50
             MWF 10-10:50
             WLC

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion. Entailed in this study will be an attempt to arrive at a better understanding of the meaning attributed to the concept of religion and to assess the ways in which religious traditions, communities, and individuals function within and consequently influence human culture. Furthermore, the course will consist of an examination of the ways in which cultures influence various conceptions of religious faith and practice. During the semester, we will explore a diversity of religious traditions and expressions and a variety of beliefs, rituals, and concepts associated with them in order to evaluate the significance of religion and religious thought, both historically and in a contemporary context.

REL 111.01
Instructor: Heather Edgerly
Nonwestern Religion
Day & Time: MWF 12-12:50

This course will provide a historical and thematic overview of the religious traditions of Asia, including Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. We will begin by exploring the South Asian religious traditions of Hinduism, Jainism, and classical Buddhism. We will then follow the spread of Buddhism across time and space throughout Asia, focusing on enduring ideas and practices and the way these have adapted to new cultural
Shaman, paragon, God-mode: modern video games are heavily coded with religious undertones. From the Shinto-inspired Japanese video game Okami to the internationally popular The Legend of Zelda and Halo, many video games rely on religious themes and symbols to drive the narrative and frame the storyline. Playing with Religion in Video Games explores the increasingly complex relationship between gaming and global religious practices. For example, how does religion help organize the communities in MMORPGs such as World of Warcraft? What role has censorship played in localizing games like Actraiser in the western world? How do evangelical Christians react to violence, gore, and sexuality in some of the most popular games such as Mass Effect or Grand Theft Auto? With contributions by scholars and gamers from all over the world, this collection offers a unique perspective to the intersections of religion and the virtual world.
REL 207.01
Instructor: Gregory Grieve
Problems of Belief: REL Video Games
Day & Time: MWF 10-10:50
MWF 11-11:50

Shaman, paragon, God-mode: modern video games are heavily coded with religious undertones. From the Shinto-inspired Japanese video game Okami to the internationally popular The Legend of Zelda and Halo, many video games rely on religious themes and symbols to drive the narrative and frame the storyline. Playing with Religion in Video Games explores the increasingly complex relationship between gaming and global religious practices. For example, how does religion help organize the communities in MMORPGs such as World of Warcraft? What role has censorship played in localizing games like Actraiser in the western world? How do evangelical Christians react to violence, gore, and sexuality in some of the most popular games such as Mass Effect or Grand Theft Auto? With contributions by scholars and gamers from all over the world, this collection offers a unique perspective to the intersections of religion and the virtual world.

REL 212.01
Instructor: Ben Ramsey
Christianity Reformation—Present
Day & Time: MW 2-3:15

This course is a survey of Christian thought from the Protestant Reformation(s) to the present, focusing primarily on Protestant and Roman Catholic theology in Europe and America, but also including Eastern Orthodox and more recent “Liberation” movements. We will read and discuss important primary texts representative of various forms of Christianity that have arisen since the sixteenth

REL 410
Instructor: Derek Krueger
Senior Seminar
TR: 11-12:15

This capstone seminar, required of all REL majors, will help students pull together the diversity of knowledge and modes of inquiry encountered in the major over their course of study. We will survey recent treatment of major topics in the academic study of religion and question the relationship between the students of religion and the religious phenomena they study. Assignments will include short essays, oral presentations, and a longer paper. The course will be a hybrid of face-to-face meetings and web assignments.

The course is both Writing Intensive and Speaking Intensive.

Readings will include:

Robert Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them and essays by various department faculty members.
Finally, we will examine Sufism in a modern and post-modern context. Readings of both primary and secondary sources will allow students to engage with Sufism as both a socio-cultural and a religious phenomenon.

Instructor: Alyssa Gabbay
-REL323.01 Continued-

REL 324.01
Instructor: William Hart
Philosophical Issues in Rel: Atheism
TR: 9:30-10:45

Theism and atheism are conjoint twins. This course explores the concept of atheism and related ideas such as misotheism (hating God), secularism, naturalism, and materialism. This course strives to place the concept of atheism into a historical narrative extending from the European Enlightenment to the present. Most of the figures but not all are recognized members of the Western philosophical tradition.

REL 333.01
Instructor: Ben Ramsey
Religion and Psychology
M: 6-8:5015

Religious Studies 333 is designed as an upper level seminar on the psychoanalytic tradition and its importance to theories of religion. Readings in the course will include works by Foucault, Lacan, Hillman, Kristeva, Benjamin, Keller.

Instructor: Ben Ramsey
-REL 212.01 Continued-

century. While not a course on the history of the church, some attention will be given to the social context of our readings. Our concern will be the ways in which Christianity has changed from context to context, on the conditions and ideals that have influenced these changes, and on the problems that arise within these various movements.

REL 215.01 & 02
Instructor: Ellen Haskell
Judaism
Day & Time: MWF 10-10:50
MWF 11-11:50
WLC

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 217.01
Instructor: Marc Bregman
The Synagogue
Day & Time: TR 3:30-4:50
WLC

This course provides an initial orientation to Judaism as a religion and as a culture. Students will be introduced to the development of basic Jewish practices, beliefs and institutions and to the major works of Jewish literature. The broad historical survey of Judaism from its beginnings until modern times will be concretized by focusing selectively on a number of specific texts, themes and topics.
REL 221.01  
Instructor: Heather Edgerly  
Buddhism  
Day and Time: MWF 12-12:50

This course will be an introduction to the family of religions we call Buddhism. We will begin by exploring classical Buddhism in South Asia and will then follow its spread across time and space through Asia and the West. Along the way, we will focus on enduring Buddhist ideas and practices and the way these have adapted to new cultural contexts. During the last quarter of the semester, we will examine Buddhist ethics by exploring both the philosophical concepts and practices which serve as the foundations for compassionate action. In this section, we will ask how Buddhist ethical principles can be applied to contemporary issues of war, terrorism, and ecological degradation and will look at the way Socially Engaged Buddhists have responded to these issues. As we will see, our exploration of Buddhism will inevitably involve inquiry into our own culture and its religious traditions as reflected in our understanding (or misunderstanding) of Buddhism.

REL 231.01 & 02  
Instructor: David McDuffie  
Religion in America  
Day and Time: TR 11-12:15 & TR 12:30—1:50 WLC

This course involves an exploration of the dynamic nature of religion in the United States. This will involve a historical examination of the diversity of religious expressions present in an American context as well as an explication of the significance of the plurality of religious traditions present in contemporary America. Particular attention will be devoted to understanding religious history and how various religious traditions have affected the religious topography in the United States. The following case studies will be emphasized: Religion and the American Revolution, New Religious Movements, Religion and Nature, and Religion and Science.

REL 313.01  
Instructor: Marc Bregman  
Jewish Law (WI)  
Day & Time: R 6-8:50

This course will survey the broad spectrum of interpretation of one biblical narrative, “The Sacrifice of Isaac” (Genesis 22:1-19), that is foundational for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Students will learn how the biblical text can be approached both objectively and subjectively through classroom discussion and guided writing assignments.

REL 323.01WI  
Instructor: Alyssa Gabbay  
Religious Movements/Communities: Islam’s Mystical Tradition  
MW 3:30—4:50

Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, stands as one of the most influential elements of Islamic piety. Sufis produced some of the greatest literature and music in the Islamic world; they also contributed to Islam’s political and theological thought and drove much of its expansion. In this course, we will begin by examining the historical formation of Sufism as a movement of asceticism in the early years of Islam. We will then consider Islamic mysticism’s medieval expression in its brotherhoods, devotional practices, theological writings, and musical and literary output.