

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 35 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 play in politics, economics, social movements, arts, sciences, and diverse forms of personal conduct.

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Other Courses Taught in summer of 2015 & in Other Departments

REL 101.01	Intros to Religious Studies	David McDuffie
REL 109.01	Rel and Contemporary Culture	Matt McKinnon
REL 231.01	Religions in America	David McDuffie

FMS	Freshmen Seminar:	David McDuffie
HSS 206	Honors	Gregory Grieve

REL 101.01 & 101.02 and 101.81D

Instructor: David McDuffie

Intro to Religious Studies

Day & Times: MWF 9-9:50

WEB (2)

WLC

Course Description: 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

Course Description: 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 contexts. We will be looking closely at the religious traditions of Japan and Tibet and explore the ways in which Buddhism expresses itself within its interactions with the Indigenous Shinto and Bon Shamanistic traditions. Through a careful examination of various primary and secondary sources, we will consider ways in which Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists have expressed their understanding of the nature of the world, human society, and the individual's place within them. In examining religious traditions that may seem foreign in many ways, our emphasis will be on the internal logic of each and how they construct meaning, value, and moral vision.

REL 207.01

Instructor: Eugene Rogers

Modern Problems of Belief

Day & Time: MW 3:30-4:45

Course Description: 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. Three in-class tests, no exam during exam period.

Why you should take this course:

1. You want to know what Christians are arguing about these days.
2. You like in-class discussion and tests.
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
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.
 17. 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!
 18. 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!
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REL 210.01

Instructor: Derek Krueger

Christianity to Reformation

Time & Day: MWF – 11-11:50

Course Description: This course is a historical survey of Christian thought and practice from the second century to the dawn of the Protestant Reformation (around 1500). Through reading texts representative of Christian traditions, we will consider the variety and development of Christian theological teaching (on such topics as the incarnation and the Trinity), rituals and liturgy (including baptism, Eucharist, and the Christian calendar), ethics, and modes of life (such as monasticism). Particular attention will be given to expressions of Christianity in the ancient world, before the rise of Islam. We will then consider Christianity both in the Eastern Mediterranean (Byzantium) and in Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Students will learn to read and understand classic Christian literary and theological texts.

This is a course in the history of Christianity in pre-modern times--this is not a course in contemporary Christian beliefs and practices. Most of you will encounter religious forms vastly different from anything in your own experience, although many modern types of Christianity, such as Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and highly liturgical forms of Protestantism continue to bear strong resemblance to the Christianities of the ancient and medieval eras. This course is best understood as a course about past and foreign cultures. At every point we will be concerned to understand the material we encounter from the standpoint of the analytical study of religion, which interprets religious systems in terms of their beliefs and practices within the framework of the humanities.

REL 215.01

Instructor: Ellen Haskell

Judaism

Day & Time: TR 2-3:15

Course Description: This course provides 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 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: OL

Course Description: The synagogue has been and remains the center of Jewish life. This course will explore the history, architecture, art, and literature of the synagogue in ancient, medieval, and modern times.

This course will be conducted ONLINE using Blackboard.

REL 221.01

Instructor: Gregory Grieve

Buddhism

Day and Time: MWF 10-10:50

Course Description: 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 226W.01 & .02

Instructor: Alyssa Gabbay

Approaches to the Qur'an

Day & Time: 9:30-10:45

12:30-1:45

Course Description: Considered the Word of God by Muslims, the Qur'an is the scriptural foundation of Islam and the source of spiritual inspiration as well as legal, social, and moral teachings. This course will introduce the Qur'an as both sacred object and historical artifact and will explore the significance it occupies in the Islamic tradition. Among the Qur'anic themes to be considered are: eschatology and the afterlife; stories of earlier prophets such as Joseph; images of Jesus and Mary; and the role of women. The Qur'an's enactment through recitation – whether in daily prayers, gatherings in shops or homes, or to treat illness – will also be examined, for it is through recitation that believers affirm their dedication to God and Islam. This course will also acquaint students with the many critical debates associated with the Qur'an, its collection and codification.

REL 231.01

Instructor: David McDuffie

Religion in America

Day and Time: OL

WLC

Course Description: 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 major currents in American 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

Day & Time: OL

Course Description: This course will provide an introduction to Jewish Law. Students will learn the fundamentals of Jewish law through guided readings in primary sources and secondary literature. Writing assignments will require each student to summarize and to compare or contrast approaches to legal issues within the Jewish tradition.

This course will be conducted ONLINE using Blackboard.

REL 333.01W

Instructor: Ben Ramsey
Religion and Psychology
Day & Time: W 6-8:45

Course Description: 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.

REL 341.01W

Instructor: Ellen Haskell
Jewish Mysticism
Day & Time: TR 3:30-4:45

Course Description: 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 era. Special attention will be focused on the form of medieval mysticism known as Kabbalah. Through informational lecture, intensive discussion, and written explorations, we will become familiar with these traditions and their contexts. 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.

REL 382.01W

Instructor: Eugene Rogers
God, Body and Sexual Orientation

MW 3:30-4:45

Course Description:

This course tries to answer two questions: What does Christianity say the body is for, and what does the study of social bodies say God is for? Or, put another way, what does God want with a human body (my human body, the social human body, God's own human body); and what does a human society want with God? The course uses current debates about sexual orientation to address those issues. Arguments for and against same-sex marriage play a prominent role. Writing intensive—and “reading intensive”! 3 five-page papers, weekly discussion board participation, seminar discussion. This is not a bull session or a soapbox, but will require heavy reading, sober writing, and willingness to speak up thoughtfully in seminar. As a test of seriousness, a two-page reaction paper will be due the very first Friday of the term (the last day to add/drop or receive a refund).

Why you should not take this course:

1. You think of it as Sunday School.
2. You think spirituality is a matter of individual experience apart from texts and communities.
3. You think that Catholics, Anglicans, or Eastern Orthodox people aren't really Christians.
4. You don't like philosophy.
5. You prefer historical influence and effect to conceptual analysis.
6. You don't intend to come very often.
7. You're shy about speaking up in a seminar about sex.
8. You prefer to talk about your own views instead of the ones in the readings.
9. You don't intend to do the reading very often.
10. You're afraid thinking is incompatible with Christianity.
11. You don't want to hear what students of religion think about Christianity.
12. You want to be in a homogeneous group where everyone thinks alike and is pious.

13. You intend to write sermons for papers.

14. You don't like surprises.

15. 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!

16. 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.

REL 410.01

Instructor: Bill Hart

Senior Seminar

Day & Time: TR 11-12:15

Limited to upper level

Juniors and Seniors Majors

Course Description and Student Learning Objectives: In this “capstone” course we dig down toward foundational, “cornerstone” issues in the academic study of religion. Senior Seminar is a student learning assessment tool. It provides advanced majors with a “capstone experience” through which they can assess their grasp of religious studies as an academic discipline. The seminar also provides data that the Department uses to assess our success in teaching students what they need to know; that is, forms of knowledge and intellectual skills crucial to the academic study of religion. The seminar achieves these goals by exploring issues and controversies that have shaped the field. The course is designed to push students to the limits of their acquired knowledge.

REL 503.01

Instructor: Derek Krueger

From Constantinople to Istanbul

Day & Time: MW 2-3:15

TRAVEL TO ISTANBUL

Course Description: Learn about the history of Constantinople from Byzantine to Ottoman and topography.

- Understand the relationship of Christianity and Islam to architecture and the city.
- 3 credit course on the history, religion, art, architecture, and urban planning of the city.

INCLUDES AN 8 DAY FIELD TRIP TO ISTANBUL DURING SPRING BREAK.

Field Trip includes all room and board in Turkey (except some dinners), program related travel expenses, IPC fee, insurance, all museum and archaeological site entrances

Estimated cost of trip \$3,300, including airfare.*

HSS 206

Instructor: Gregory Grieve

Day & Time: MWF

*Limited to Honors Students

Course Description: 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.

FMS 142.01

Instructor: McDuffie

Freshmen Seminar: (WI)

Time & Day:

*Limited to Freshmen"

TBA

SUMMER 2015 COURSES

REL 109.01W- DL

Instructor: Matthew McKinnon

Religion and Contemporary Culture

Day & Time: OL

First Session

Course Description: Understandings of religion as shaped by contemporary social institutions, the arts, politics, and philosophy.

REL 101.11

Instructor: David McDuffie

Introduction to Religious Studies

Day & Time: MTWR 10:10-12:10

Second Session

Course Description: Inquiry into religion through consideration of forms, patterns, categories, symbols, and practices which characterize various religious experiences.

REL 231.01

Instructor: David McDuffie

Religion in America

Day & Time: MTWR 12:20-2:20

Second Session

Course Description: 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 major currents in American 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.