



**UNC  
GREENSBORO**

Department of  
Religious Studies

# SPRING 2021 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## **REL 101-01, 02: Introduction to Religious Studies [GPR, GL]**

**01: ONLINE - ASYN**

**02: ONLINE - ASYN**

**David McDuffie**

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 variety of beliefs, rituals, and concepts associated with a diversity of religious traditions and expressions in order to evaluate the significance of religion and religious thought, both historically and in a contemporary context.

## **REL 104-01, 02: Religion, Ritual, and the Arts: "Death and Dying" [GPR]**

**01: T/TH 11:00AM - 12:15PM ONLINE - SYNC**

**02: T/TH 2:00PM - 3:15PM ONLINE - SYNC**

**John Borchert**

This course looks at religion and death through ritualizations of death: what people do, how they perform, and how they create meaning around death and dying. Rather than focus primarily on the ideas and ideologies of death and the afterlife, this course instead looks to how these ideas and ideologies play out in practice and are made sensible through action in ritualized settings. We will begin with understanding how to make sense of these rituals, before briefly surveying some dominant traditional religious death rites, before finally looking to American innovations within these traditions, and some uniquely human (and non-human) ritualizations of death.

**"In fact, if I went back to college today, I think I would probably major in comparative religion because that's how integrated [religion] is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today."**

**--John Kerry**

# SPRING 2021 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## **REL 109-01;02: Religion and Contemporary Culture [GPR]**

**01: ONLINE - ASYN**

**02: ONLINE - ASYN**

**John Borchert**

This course investigates how religion and popular culture have shaped each other in the 20th century, with a particular focus on how digital media impacts religious ideas. As a class we will look at how religion and pop culture combine in a few specific ways: religion in popular culture, popular culture in religion and religion as popular culture through examples from superhero films to children's television to social media advertising. We will interrogate the intersection of pop culture, religious expression, digital media, and contemporary social formations of race and gender to gain a fundamental understanding of religion in America.

## **REL 109-03: Religion and Contemporary Culture [GPR]**

**03: ONLINE - ASYN**

**David McDuffie**

This course is a study of the relationship between religion and politics. During the semester, we will examine the ways in which religious and political beliefs are formed and expressed and the ways in which religious and political perspectives interact and influence each other in a cultural context. Particular, though not exclusive, attention will be devoted to this relationship in an American context.

## **REL 111-01: Introduction to Asian Religions [GPR]**

**01: ONLINE - ASYN**

**Ashlee Andrews**

This course will grant you an opportunity to begin exploring a collection of religious traditions that originated in or are practiced in great number in South and East Asia. You will gain an acquaintance with Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jain, Sikh, Confucian, and Daoist philosophies, texts, and religious cultures, and discover how these traditions are lived out and shaped by individuals in contemporary South and East Asia. This course is designed to wet your appetite for further study and exploration of both the traditions we explore together and 'religion' more broadly. Thus, you will also begin to articulate what constitutes responsible religious scholarship and reflect upon how your definition of 'religion' might be shaped or transformed by the religious phenomena we study together.



# SPRING 2021 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## **REL 111-02: Introduction to Asian Religions [GPR]**

**02: ONLINE - ASYN**

**Rohit Singh**

This course presents a survey of historical and contemporary Asian religious traditions. The religions we will explore include Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, and Sikhism. Through closely examining beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, and scriptures, we will compare and contrast key similarities and key differences among these religions. We will also trace the social, political, and historical contexts out of which these religious traditions have arisen and developed. We will see that different religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam have developed in close relationship and interaction with one another through debate, dialogue, and the sharing of sacred traditions. In the course of this study, we will develop an appreciation for the unity and diversity found among different Asian religions.

## **REL 190-01: Introduction to Scriptural Language - Hebrew**

**01: M/W 6:00PM - 7:15PM ONLINE - SYNC**

**Samra Nissan**

This course will instruct students in Modern Hebrew, preparing them to read the Hebrew Bible as well. It will be offered in a 4 semester sequence that will enable students to achieve an intermediate-level proficiency that satisfies the College of Arts & Sciences' foreign language requirement.

## **REL 201-01: Bible, Africans and African Americans [GPR, GL]**

**01: ONLINE - ASYN**

**02: ONLINE - ASYN**

**Andrew Mbuvi**

This course examines the impact of the Bible's encounter with Africans and African-Americans going back to periods of slavery in the Americas and European Colonialism of Africa. We will also look at recent attempts to develop African and African-American hermeneutics and read works by African and African-American biblical scholars and theologians towards this end. Issues of race, slavery, colonialism, exploitation, suppression, and "white supremacy" will be focused on. Comparison will be made to Eurocentric approaches to Biblical interpretation positing the Postcolonial perspective that emerges from the African and African American perspectives.

# SPRING 2021 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## **REL 210-01, 02: Christianity to Reformation [GHP,GL, GPM]**

**01: ONLINE - ASYN**

**02: ONLINE - ASYN**

**David McDuffie**

This course will consist of a survey of Christian history and thought from the beginnings of the early church to the Protestant Reformation.

## **REL 215-01: Judaism [GHP,GL, GPM]**

**01: T/TH 11:00AM - 12:15PM ONLINE - SYNC**

**Ellen Haskell**

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 218-01: Chinese Religion [GN, GPR]**

**01: ONLINE - ASYN**

**Rohit Singh**

This course surveys historical and contemporary religions of China. The religions we will examine include Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, folk religions, and Islam. Focusing on the intersection of religion and politics, the course covers the regions of mainland China, Taiwan, and the Tibetan plateau.

## **REL 221-01, 02: Buddhism [GPR, GN]**

**01: ONLINE - ASYN**

**02: ONLINE - SYNC**

**Rohit Singh**

This course presents a survey of historical and contemporary Buddhist traditions. We will examine the rise and development of Buddhism throughout Asia in areas such as India, Southeast Asia, Tibet, and East Asia. Through closely examining doctrines, rituals, ceremonies, and scriptures, we will compare key similarities and key differences among diverse Buddhist traditions such as Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhism. We will also explore how Buddhist communities throughout Asia have responded to changing social, political, and historical contexts.

# SPRING 2021 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## **REL 223-01: Hinduism [GN, GPR]**

**01: ONLINE - ASYN**

**Ashlee Andrews**

This course will introduce you to the incredibly diverse and frequently contradictory collection of traditions that fall under the umbrella term 'Hinduism'. We will explore these traditions by looking at texts, practices, religious cultures and socio-political issues that are important to many individuals who identify as Hindu. Our exploration will focus upon contemporary and lived Hinduisms, and will highlight the multiplicity and diversity of Hindu traditions, as well as the manner in which Hinduisms, and scholarly understandings of what constitutes 'Hinduism', are shaped by context, power and history. In the process of our study, we will also wrestle with discerning the meaning of the equally complex term 'Religion', and articulating what it looks like to be a responsible scholar of Hindu traditions.

## **REL 229-01, 02: Introduction to African American Religious Traditions**

**[GHP, GMO]**

**01: ONLINE - ASYN**

**02: ONLINE - ASYN**

**Andrew Mbuvi**

This course examines the variety of African-American religious practices in this country, with some comparisons to African and Caribbean religious practices. The course will follow more of a historical trajectory starting by examining the West and Central African Religions (Islam and Africana Religions) that formed the religious backgrounds of the slaves brought to America in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. We will then familiarize ourselves with the encounter of the African religious past with Euro-America Christianity, before proceeding on to later African American religious practices, including humanism, Black Jews, Voodoo and others.



# SPRING 2021 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## **REL 231-01, 02: Religion in America [GHP, GMO]**

**01: T/TH 11:00AM - 12:15PM ONLINE - SYNC**

**02: T/TH 14:00PM - 15:15PM ONLINE - SYNC**

**Dana Logan**

This course introduces the diversity of religions in the United States (Iroquois, Lakota, Vodou, Mormonism, Islam, and white evangelicalism) and focuses on enduring questions in American religion such as the proper relationship of religion and the state, the difference between spirituality and religion, and the role of religion in American capitalism. We will begin with the European colonization of the Americas, the separation of church and state, and explore Native American spiritual creativity in the face of removal. Finally, we will explore how religion and politics interact in American Zionism, the Civil Rights movement, and the rise of the Religious Right. We will end the class with a consideration of Kanye's church and the role of religion in American consumerism.

## **REL 323-01: Religious Movements and Communities: Islam in India [WI]**

**01: T/TH 12:30PM - 1:45PM ONLINE - SYNC**

**Alyssa Gabbay**

This course explores the coming of Islam to India, its growth over time, and the development of South Asian Muslims' cultural, social, religious, and political life from the 11th century through the 21st. Emphasis will be placed on the issues and methodologies involved in studying Islam in a non-Arab context, and, especially, on the unique circumstances of Turkish dynasties fostering Persianate court culture in a region that was majority Hindu. Reading will include not only scholarly works but also material (in translation) from chronicles, biographies, memoirs, and other primary sources. Note: This is a new iteration of REL 323, so if you have taken it previously, you can take it again for additional credit. This course fulfills the "Cultural and Theoretical" requirement for the Religious Studies major and one of the elective requirements for the Islamic Studies minor.

# SPRING 2021 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## **REL 341-01: Topics in Jewish Thought: Modern Jewish Ethics [WI]**

**01: T/TH 2:00PM – 3:15PM ONLINE - SYNC**

**Ellen Haskell**

Explores issues in modern Jewish ethics, looking at their origins in Jewish law and practice, and their modern manifestations in Jewish culture. Topics may vary but will generally include Jewish views on bioethics, animal rights, environmental care, reproductive rights, social welfare, violence, and interfaith relations.

## **REL 382-01: Topics of Christian Thought: Monasticism [WI]**

**01: M/W 2:00PM - 3:15PM ONLINE - SYNC**

**Derek Krueger**

This course explores the history and literature of Christian monasticism from its origins in the fourth century Mediterranean basin through the Middle Ages. Topics will include the renunciation of family and wealth to pursue monastic life; asceticism and self-discipline concerning food and sexuality; patterns of ethical discernment and moral reflection and the knowledges of the self that such practices generated; and the formation and maintenance of communities in monasteries. Case studies will be drawn from the initial phase of monasticism in the Egyptian desert in the fourth century; the spread of monasticism in Syria and Palestine in late antiquity; the rise of monastic communities in the West in the early Middle Ages; the monastic reforms in 10th- and 11th-century Byzantium and among the Cistercians in 12th-century Europe. We will study saints' lives, monastic rules, ethical treatises, arts and architecture.

## **REL 410-01: Senior Seminar: Debates in the Study of Islam [SI,WI]**

**01: T 4:00PM - 6:50PM ONLINE - SYNC**

**Alyssa Gabbay**

The capstone seminar, required of all Religious Studies majors, helps students pull together the diversity of knowledge and modes of inquiry encountered over their course of study. Additionally, this iteration of REL 410 examines debates in the study of Islam – areas of unresolved tension that characterize Islamic scholarship today. Through examinations of approaches that include post-Orientalism, feminist theory, and intersectionality, we will explore questions of authority in Islam, asking, What is Islam? Who speaks for it, and who gets to define it? How and why has Islam been studied differently in the academy from other religious traditions? Most important, how might the study of Islam inform the way we “do” Religious Studies?



# MEET THE FACULTY



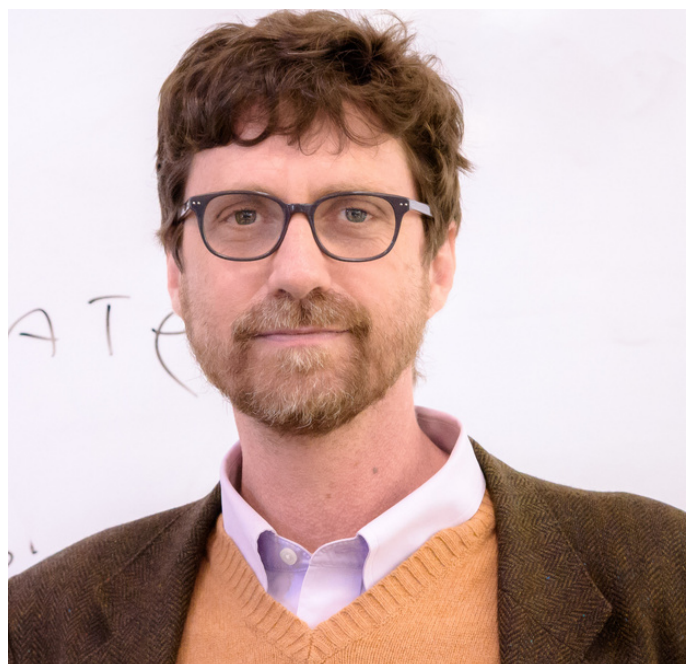
**ASHLEE ANDREWS**



**JOHN BORCHERT**



**ALYSSA GABBAY**



**GREG GRIEVE**



**ELLEN HASKELL**



**DEREK KRUEGER**



**DANA LOGAN**



**ANDREW MBUVI**



**DAVID MCDUFFIE**



**SAMRA NISSAN**



**ROHIT SINGH**