

Department of Religion Undergraduate Course Offerings

Spring 2015

As of: 1/6/15

840:111	<p>THE RELIGIOUS QUEST: THE HERO'S QUEST (3)</p> <p>This course will focus on a major theme found in the narratives of nearly every major (and minor) world religious tradition: the hero's quest. This common theme appears in the scriptures, stories, and legends of religions as different as the animism of the Trobriand islanders to the strict monotheism of Islam. While the details differ, representations of the hero's quest follow a remarkably similar pattern across time and distance. In analyzing this common theme, we will explore the genre of "mythology," as it relates to other categories of religious narratives. While examining the Hero's Quest step by step as it appears in religious narratives, we will also discover how this theme is present in the contemporary world in popular fantasy literature and film. Some 20th century scholars of religion have argued that "modern man" lives in a "desacralized world," and we will use the course material to question this assumption, and consider what is meant by the term "modern," and indeed, what is meant by the term "religion," in today's world.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">01, TTh5, LC</p>
840:112	<p>DEATH AND AFTERLIFE</p> <p>Various religious concepts of death, resurrection, reincarnation, and other forms of afterlife; their relevance to this-worldly life. (Open to freshmen and sophomores.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">01, TF1, DC (<i>hybrid section: in-class meetings will be on Tuesdays</i>) 02, MTh3, DC 03, MW5, CAC</p>
840:115	<p>THE BIRTH & DEATH OF GOD FROM MESOPOTAMIA TO POST-MODERNISM (3) ONLINE COURSE</p> <p>How do people characterize God and gods? How has the idea of god developed over time, and in relation to what cultural developments? We begin with how gods are born in ancient Near Eastern traditions; how gods are organized into family and political structures in ancient pantheons; and the notion of there being one "Most High" god who is king of other divine beings. We continue with early Jewish, Christian, and Muslim descriptions of God, identifying continuity with ancient Mediterranean theologies and innovations throughout late antiquity and into the middle ages. From the Renaissance and into the modern period, European developments in philosophy and science, which were thoroughly intertwined, led to changing conceptions of god and the role of the divine in the human world. Finally, in contemporary secular societies there are vast notions of gods and God, including views labeled as: antitheism, atheism, agnosticism, pantheism, polytheism, theism, and monotheism. We will locate the history of these concepts, analyzing how the long-held conception of the cosmos as full of divine beings is related to more recent conceptions of a cosmos with only one god, or alternatively, no gods at all.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">92, By Arrangement</p>
840:202	<p>NEW TESTAMENT (3)</p> <p>Interpretation of basic Christian scriptures in translation; influence of Jesus and Paul on the early Christian community. (<i>Same as 563:223.</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">01, MTh1, DC 02, TTh6, CAC</p>
840:203	<p>ISLAMIC SCRIPTURES: QURAN AND HADITH (3)</p> <p>Introduction to sacred texts of Islam; emphasis on words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, collectively known as the Hadith or Sunnah. The course will explore how revelation bridges the gap between the divine and human by examining Islamic scriptures in their historical, theological, legal, and mystical contexts. (<i>Same as 01:685:233.</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">01, MW5, CAC</p>
840:204	<p>Interpretation of basic Hindu scriptures in their historical, literary, and theological contexts to see how they contributed to the development of various traditions and spiritual paths in Hinduism.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">01, TTh5, CAC</p>

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840:206	<p>INTRO BIBLE II: PROPHETS AND POETRY (3) Second course of two-semester sequence. Introduce students to the literature of the Bible, focusing on the Prophets, historical backdrop of the prophetic message as revealed mainly through the book of Kings, and other relevant poetic material (Psalms, Job, etc.). Emphasis placed on literary, historical, theological matters. Special use made of archaeological discoveries. Bible studied against the backdrop of ancient Near Eastern culture. (Credit not given for both this course and 01:563:206). 01, TTh4, CAC</p>
840:211	<p>RELIGIONS OF THE EASTERN WORLD (3) Religious beliefs, practices, and sacred writings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto. 01, TTh6, CAC 02, TTh5, CAC 03, MW5, LC</p>
840:212	<p>RELIGIONS OF THE WESTERN WORLD (3) Religious beliefs, practices, and sacred writings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. 01, TF2, DC (<i>hybrid section: in-class meetings will be on Tuesdays</i>) 02, MTh3, CAC 03, MW6, CAC</p>
840:222	<p>THE QUESTION OF GOD IN MODERN CULTURE (3) Questions faced by religion in the contemporary era: faith and reason, religious experience, role of religion in a scientific society, nature of God. 01, TTh5, DC</p>
840:307	<p>JESUS (3) ONLINE COURSES The career and teaching of Jesus viewed in historical context; development of the Gospel tradition and its effect on later concepts of Christ. 90, Chat Sessions, Thursdays 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. 91, Chat Sessions, Thursdays, 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.</p>
840:312	<p>GREEK CHRISTIANITY (3) Eastern church tradition from the second through the eighth century; theological controversies and the development of liturgy, monasticism, and mysticism. (<i>same as 01:489:312</i>) 01, MTh2, DC</p>
840:314	<p>ORIGINS OF WESTERN MORALITY (3) The ways that early Christian groups used Jewish and Greek moral traditions and reshaped them according to their developing interests. These interests came to shape the moral language, laws, politics, and social codes of Christian Europe and America. The course will pay particular attention to the roles of Hellenistic philosophy, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the letters of Paul, the teaching attributed to Jesus in writings from the end of the first century C.E., and the development of ascetic practices and ideology. Issues of importance to the course include the variety of ancient options available for thinking about ethical psychology, the concept of porneia (harlotry) and the attack on traditional Mediterranean religion, the family/household and opposition to it, wealth/poverty, slavery, sexual ethics and gender norms. 01, TTh5, CAC</p>
840:316	<p>20th CENTURY EVANGELICALISM (3) Explores key developments within American evangelicalism over the course of the twentieth century, focusing especially on evangelicals' varied responses to major political, economic, social, and cultural trends in the United States. 01, MW5, CAC</p>

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840:319	<p>RELIGION IN AMERICAN HISTORY (3) Survey of American religious history, exploring the relationship between religion and trends in such areas as politics, science, technology, gender relations, economy, and immigration. 01, M 2/3, DC</p>
840:327	<p>ENCOUNTER OF RELIGIONS (3) Religions in a pluralistic world; concepts of God, man, spirit, freedom as understood in East and West. Interreligious dialogue, religious synthesis, and universalism. (Cross listed with 16:840:552:01). 01, T 1/2, DC</p>
840:337	<p>TIBETAN RELIGIONS (3) Historical development of Tibetan religious beliefs and practices, with a focus on the four main Buddhist schools, the Bön tradition, and Muslim populations. Other topics include religion and politics, literature, pilgrimage and ritual, monasticism, gender, art and iconography, and global context. 01, MTh3, CAC</p>
840:358	<p>BHAGAVAD GITA (3) An analysis of this important Hindu scripture. Influential commentaries will be studied, and attention directed to Indian and western appropriations of the text. (Cross listed with 16:840:558:01). 01, TTh4, DC</p>
840:362	<p>POSTMODERN APPROACHES TO SACRED LITERATURE (3) An examination of some significant aspects of postmodern literary and cinematic approaches to religion through the close analysis of a few select texts. The course does not deal primarily with the theological or historical interpretation of canonic sacred texts, but rather is designed to highlight the literary daring and the sometimes even outrageous postmodern freedom of authors who, through a process of <i>bricolage</i>, and via reference to a canonical sacred text, create statements of religious orientation and personal declarations of faith. By means of the elaboration of a creative and original literary, cinematic and/or psychological response, these authors come to terms personally with the ongoing power of the sacred text to captivate modern minds. Their own texts, when put into juxtaposition with the original sacred texts, may be taken to some degree as personal confessions in terms of their particular <i>sensibilité religieuse</i>. The course will analyze key texts by such original postmodern interpreters as Sigmund Freud (<i>Moses and Monotheism</i>/the Biblical story of Moses), D.H. Lawrence (<i>Apocalypse</i>/ John of Patmos' <i>Apocalypse</i>), C.G. Jung (<i>Answer to Job/The Book of Job</i>), and Marcel Proust (<i>Time Regained</i>/the ritual of the Tridentine Mass). The analysis will also include films of two modern directors (Peter Weir's <i>The Last Wave</i>/apocalyptic themes and Jean-Luc Godard's <i>Hail, Mary</i>/the Annunciation to the Virgin) and my own literary contextualization of the <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> (based initially on van Buitenen's <i>The Gita in the Mahabharata</i>). These analyses will provide material for the study of such postmodern religious themes as the antinomy of Good and Evil, apocalypse as a myth of both world and individual transformation, and the feminine side of God. The course will require two examinations, several short response papers, and one long course paper. The three particular goals of the course are to train students to think and write freely (in the postmodern spirit) about traditional sacred texts; to do close reading and analysis; and to compare related texts in meaningful ways (the particular focus of Comparative Literature and intertextuality). (Cross listed with 01:195:318:01.) 01, MW7, CAC</p>
840:393	<p>TOPICS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION: WOMEN AND ISLAM An examination of women's role in Islam through analysis of the primary Islamic texts: the Qur'an, the Hadith, and Tafsir; and the narratives about the historical figures of the Prophet's wives and female relatives. The relevance of this tradition for Muslim women in the 21st century is addressed throughout the course. (Cross listed with 01:685:396:04, 01:988:396:03, and 16:840:593:01.) 01, TTh6, LC</p>

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840:403	<p>SEMINAR ON THE VEDANTA SUTRAS (3) The Vedanta, or Brahma, Sutras has emerged as the most important of the six schools of Indian philosophy, and, indeed, has almost become synonymous with Hindu philosophy. Written in order to clarify the sometimes abstruse statements of the Upanishads, the oldest philosophical texts in Hinduism, the cryptic nature of the Vedanta Sutras in turn produced a number of distinct streams of commentarial interpretation. This course will attempt an overview of the main schools of Vedantic thought up to the medieval period -- Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka, Vallabha and Baladeva. Attention will be paid to some of the prominent points of agreement as well as contestation amongst some of these schools. The course will focus on primary texts. <i>(Only open to Religion majors in their junior or senior year. Some prior knowledge of Hindu philosophy recommended.)</i> 01, TTh6, DC</p>
840:427	<p>TOPICS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION: READINGS IN BIBLICAL HEBREW PROSE (3) Advanced course in reading selected prose texts in the Hebrew Bible, with a special focus on material from Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel. (Cross listed with 01:563:433:01 and 16:563:420:01. Prerequisite: 01:563:210.) This course does not fulfill seminar requirement for Religion majors. 01, MW6, CAC</p>