

SPRING 2019 RELIGIOUS STUDIES COURSE BROCHURE

All Religious Studies courses 101-298 satisfy General Education Humanities requirements. There is both a major and minor in Religious Studies for those with a serious interest in the study of religion. All students who have earned 45 credits or more must declare a major. If you would like to learn more about the Religious Studies major, please speak with your Religious Studies professor or with the Chair, Dr. Elijah Siegler (siglere@cofc.edu).

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES:

- 34 semester hours, that must include:
1. RELS 101 (Approaches to Religion), RELS 103 (Death and the Afterlife), or 105 (Introduction to World Religions)
 2. RELS 210: Theories in the Study of Religions (only taught in spring semester)
 3. One of the Western Abrahamic religions: RELS 223 (Ancient Near East), 225 (Judaism), 230 (Christianity), or 235 (Islam)
 4. One of the Asian religions: RELS 240 (Buddhism), 245 (Hinduism), 247 (Daoism), or 248 (Religions of China & Japan)
 5. One of the American religions: RELS 250 (American Religions), 253 (Religions of Charleston), 260 (Native American Religions), 270 (African American Religions)
 6. One of the Sacred Texts: RELS 201 (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament), 202 (New Testament), 205 (Asian Sacred Texts) or 310* (Sacred Texts) --* if taken as a sacred text course, 2 more 300 level courses are needed
 7. RELS 450: Senior Seminar (only taught in fall semester)
 8. RELS 451: Capstone Colloquium (1 credit hour only taught in spring semester)
 9. One additional course at the 200-level or above
 10. Two additional courses at the 300-level or above
 11. Additional elective: 1 additional course

With the approval of the Chair of Religious Studies, one course (200 level or above) in a related discipline may be substituted for one of the courses listed under 9 or 10 above.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MINOR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES:

18 semester hours which must include:

1. RELS 101, 103 or 105
2. One of: RELS 223, 225, 230, 235, 240, 245, 247, 248, 250, 253, 260 or 270
3. One of: RELS 201, 202, 205 or 310 (note: 310 cannot be used to satisfy both sacred text course requirements)
4. One additional course at the 300-level or above
5. Two additional courses in Religious Studies.

COURSE OFFERINGS FOR SPRING 2019

Course	CRN	Title	Meeting Days	Begin Time	Instructor
HONS381.01	21033	Special Topics: Becoming American	TR	9:25-10:40	Cressler
RELS101.02	21339	Approaches to Religion: The Problem of Evil and Suffering	TR	9:25-10:40	Doire
RELS101.04	21498	Approaches to Religion: The Problem of Evil and Suffering	TR	10:50-12:05	Doire
RELS103.01	23424	Death and the Afterlife	MWF	12:00-12:50	Irwin
RELS103.02	21339	Death and the Afterlife	MWF	10:00-10:50	Irwin
RELS105.01	20801	Intro to World Religions	MWF	9:00-9:50	Lowe
RELS105.02	20802	Intro to World Religions	MWF	10:00-10:50	Lowe
RELS105.03	20803	Intro to World Religions	MWF	11:00-11:50	LeVasseur
RELS105.04	21848	Intro to World Religions	TR	3:05-4:20	Sullivan
RELS115.01	23255	Religion and Society: Black Religion and Black Nationalism from Slave Rebellions to Black Lives Matter	TR	12:15-1:30	Cressler
RELS115.02	23256	Religion and Society: Black Religion and Black Nationalism from Slave Rebellions to Black Lives Matter	TR	1:40-2:55	Cressler
RELS120.01	23222	Religion, Art and Culture: Religion and Popular Culture in America	MWF	10:00-10:50	Sieglere
RELS202.01	23257	New Testament: History & Interpretation	TR	10:50-12:05	Huddlestun
RELS202.02	23258	New Testament: History & Interpretation	TR	1:40-2:55	Huddlestun
RELS210.01	21223	Theories in the Study of Religions	MWF	11:00-11:50	Bjerken
RELS225.01	23227	The Jewish Tradition	TR	9:25-10:40	Shanes
RELS240.01	23259	The Buddhist Tradition	TR	9:25-10:40	Bjerken
RELS240.02	23260	The Buddhist Tradition	TR	12:15-1:30	Bjerken
RELS298.01	21622	Special Topic: Global Evangelicalism	MWF	1:00-1:50	Lowe
RELS305.01	23261	Tribal Religions: Shamanism	MW	2:00-3:15	Irwin
RELS360.01	23262	Myth, Ritual and Symbol	MW	4:00-5:15	Huddlestun
RELS451.01	21341	Capstone Colloquium	W	12:00-12:50	Sieglere

RELIGIOUS STUDIES SPRING 2019 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

HONS 381.01

Becoming American

TR

Prof. Cressler

9:25-10:30 am

What is America? What does it mean to be "American"? How does one "become" American? These questions rest at the heart of some of the most popular and provocative debates in the history of the United States, debates ultimately about what binds a nation together and what defines the boundaries of citizenship. In this course we will engage these questions from the vantage point of three particular communities. African Americans, Catholics, and Jews have each been characterized as outsiders at various points in American history. And yet, at other moments, each have been heralded as the epitome of the American Dream. This course will situate this seeming paradox in historical and cultural context. We will explore our three opening questions through a close engagement of a variety of primary sources, ranging from memoirs to court cases. Students will become familiar with significant scholarly work in the fields of African American Studies, American Studies, History, Jewish Studies, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Sociology. We will think through the consequences of these questions for our contemporary moment. In collaboration with faculty, students will present and facilitate discussion on how a contemporary source relates to the themes of the course.

RELS 101.02/04

Approaches to Religion: The Problem of Evil and Suffering

Prof. Doire

TR

9:25-10:30 am and 10:40-12:05 pm

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion. This course will focus on good and evil, and human suffering. We will examine theological (when applicable) understandings and cultural constructions of these themes as they have been presented in Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism. The student will be introduced to some basic tenets of each tradition. The human experience of evil and suffering has been and continues to be a fundamental element of theological, religious and cultural ideology. As we proceed in our academic study, each student will be challenged to examine the theological, religious and cultural influences that have shaped and informed their own understanding of the universal experience of evil, the "good," and human suffering.

RELS 103.01/02

Death and the Afterlife:

Prof. Irwin

MWF

12:00-12:50 pm and 10:00-10:50 am

This course is a comparative introduction to religion organized around the theme of death, soul concepts, and a variety of beliefs about life after death. In terms of culture areas, the theme will be internationalized by looking at a variety of model cultures: ancient Mediterranean religions; Judaism and Christianity in Europe and America; Islam in the Middle East; Hinduism and Buddhism in India; and Daoist and Confucian beliefs in China. The organization of the course starts with the culture areas and examine attitudes and religious beliefs in life after death among the religions of the world – this portion of the course will emphasize theories in comparative religions. In Christianity, we will look at an esoteric Christian writer on sacred cosmology and in Buddhism we will discuss a book by a famous Tibetan Buddhist leader on after death & afterlife processes. Toward the end of the course, we examine current research on life after death in a variety of studies linked to scientific investigation of post-mortem life independent of theories in religion or philosophy. No prerequisites, fulfills General Education requirements.

RELS 105.01/02

Introduction to World Religions

Prof. Lowe

MWF

9:00-9:50 and 10:00-10:50 am

This course will explore a variety of human cultural traditions from around the world that are traditionally considered "World Religions." In addition to learning about important practices, texts, objects, and beliefs, the course will look closely at the history of the word "religion" and the development of the idea of "world religions." The course will, therefore, be both historical and anthropological, looking at fascinating moments of the past and exploring present practices and politics of religion. Using lecture and discussion, film and music, the course will explore both the mundane and the extraordinary as integral pieces of human religious experience.

RELS 105.03	Introduction to World Religions	Prof. LeVasseur
MWF	11:00-11:50 am	
This online course is designed to introduce students to the more popular religions of the globe in terms of adherents. Adopting an approach that is comparative and historical, the course investigates the origins and contemporary flourishing of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students will learn about these religions by focusing on charismatic founders; sacred texts and rituals; and how followers use their religious identities to navigate contemporary issues ranging from homosexuality to climate change, from health care to abortion. The class consists of online lectures, reading works of scholarship, watching videos, and actively participating in online discussion groups. These discussions will investigate how religion is a driving force behind so many contemporary social and political issues and why we need to cultivate religious literacy as global citizens.		
RELS 105.04	Introduction to World Religions	Prof. Sullivan
TR	3:05-4:20 pm	
This course surveys the major religions of the world with a dual focus on the nature of religious experience as well as the place of religion in our contemporary, globalizing world. We will spend time on South Asian religions (Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism), Buddhism, East Asian religions (Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism), Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In our historical and philosophical engagement with these traditions, we will focus in equal parts on (1) the premodern development of these religions, (2) their respective challenges from modernity and colonialism, and (3) their postcolonial evolutions, covering the spectrum from fundamentalisms to postmodern iterations. An overarching theme – among others – will be the possibility of a global ethic in a world of religious diversity.		
RELS 115.01/02	Religion & Society: Black Religion and Black Nationalism from Slave Revolts to Black Lives Matter	Prof. Cressler
TR	12:15-1:30 and 1:40-2:55 pm	
This course introduces students to the religious ideas and practices from across the African diaspora that gave rise to the political tradition now known as “Black nationalism.” While the tradition is often imagined to be secular (even anti-religious), this course explores the deep religious roots of Black struggles to create a new nation—from slave rebellions to the Black Power revolution to our contemporary Black Lives Matter movement. Students will survey Black religion and Black nationalism as well as examine the emergence of “religion” and “nationalism” as modern categories.		
RELS 120.01	Religion, Art and Culture: Religion and Popular Culture in America	Prof. Siegler
MWF	10:00-10:50 am	
This course examines religion through the lens of popular culture, and popular culture through the lens of religion. We focus mainly on examples from contemporary America, including but not limited to music, TV, social media, and super hero comics. By looking at (among others) eating and dieting, sports, and theme parks, we will learn how the religious in our society manifests itself beyond its traditional institutional venues. Thus, students will become critical consumers of popular culture, while also learning how to analyze, appreciate, and articulate its deeper meanings.		
RELS 202.01/01	New Testament: History and Interpretation	Prof. Huddlestun
TR	10:15-12:05 and 1:40-2:55 pm	
This course examines that group of documents known collectively in Christian tradition as the New Testament. In addition to generous readings from the biblical text, we will examine selected extra-biblical documents (Jewish and Greco-Roman) designed to situate the early Christian canonical writings in their pristine historical, religious, and social contexts. Topics discussed include textual criticism, canon formation, sources within the gospel tradition, the quest for the historical Jesus, messianic movements, and the apocalyptic genre. Particular attention will be devoted to: (1) the position of early Christianity as one among a number of Jewish sects in the diverse religious world of first-century Palestine, and (2) the contentious debate over the requirements for gentile (non-Jewish) entry into the fledgling Jewish-Christian community as reflected in the writings of Paul.		

RELS 210.01	Theories in the Study of Religions	Prof. Bjerken
MWF	11:00-11:50 am	
What is religion and how should it be studied? Are human beings fundamentally religious? Is one person's sacred another person's profane? Is participation in a religion necessary for being able to understand it? These and other questions will be explored in this course, which surveys some of the most important thinkers who have shaped the development of religious studies. We will learn about the controversial debates that have animated the discipline, such as the insider/outsider problem, different explanations for the origins of religion, the value of description versus explanations for religion, and religion's psychological, sociological, and political functions. Although we will make an effort to apply each theory to various religious phenomena, ranging from Cherokee prayers to Buddhist beliefs, from Pentecostal preachers to Grateful Deadheads and New Age shamans, this course is not a survey of specific religions; rather, it introduces students to the tools that scholars use to interpret and compare religions.		
RELS 225.01	The Jewish Tradition	Prof. Shanes
TR	9:25-10:40 am	
This course offers a general introduction to Judaism and its development from its formative stages through its medieval and modern transformations. Through close analysis of primary sources – sacred texts are the key to understanding Judaism - we will see how elite and everyday Jews have defined sacred time, sacred space, and religious leadership. Throughout the term, we will focus on the dynamics of Judaism as a religious “tradition,” in which innovation and change emerges ironically through asserting continuity with the past.		
RELS 240.01/02	The Buddhist Tradition	Prof. Bjerken
TR	9:25-10:40 am and 12:15-1:30 pm	
It's time to wake up! This course will survey the traditions that derive from the teachings of the Buddha, the “Awakened One.” A number of enduring themes will be explored that pertain to Buddhist philosophy (e.g. Nirvana and the status of the self), Buddhist practices (e.g. meditation and monastic life), and politics and society (e.g. Buddhist kingship, women and Buddhism). We will trace the transformation of Buddhism from India into Thailand, China, Tibet, and into America today. Buddhism is a tradition of great complexity whose dimensions have evolved to answer the needs of people of different historical periods and cultures. We'll rely extensively on primary Buddhist texts, but we'll also read a spiritual travelogue and a novel about western seekers of enlightenment. We also will watch documentary films that illustrate how Buddhist ideas and practices are woven into many aspects of daily life in Asia.		
RELS 298.01	Special Topic: Global Evangelicalism	Prof. Lowe
MWF	1:00-1:50 pm	
What is “evangelical” Christianity? The word seems to be everywhere today, from political analysis to popular culture. But, many people (scholars included) aren't quite sure what it means. Are evangelicals also fundamentalists? Are evangelicals always social conservatives? Can Catholics be evangelicals, too? In this course we will use both historical and anthropological research to learn about the 18th century Atlantic origins of evangelicalism, observe its political transformations from progressivism towards conservatism in the U.S., explore its underlying assumptions about bodies, emotions, sex, history, truth and conversion, and examine its contemporary growth on a global scale.		
RELS 305.01	Tribal Religions: Shamanism	Prof. Irwin
MW	2:00-3:15 pm	
This course will explore various types of shamanic practitioners in four cultural contexts: first, the Siberian peoples of Russia, with emphasis on the shamans of Mongolia. Then we will look at a counter-example in Canada, the Ojibwa, and their religious practices related to shamanism. A third example will be the use of Ayahuasca in Peruvian shamanism. A final example will be contemporary Neoshamanism by a well-known American shaman teacher. Interspersed with the ethnographic accounts will be readings on theories of shamanism from the 16th century to the present. We will explore the contested meaning of "shaman" and "shamanism" and how these concepts have been constructed and deconstructed by writers and scholars of different disciplines. The primary questions of this course are: "What is shamanism?" and "What are the practices and beliefs of shamanism in a comparative context?" and "How has shamanism been evaluated by non-practitioners?" We will also look at various visual materials to better appreciate the non-cognitive, ritual aspects of shamanism. We will also explore the role of dreams, visions, paranormal perception and trance (ASC) in shamanic eco-cosmologies. Prerequisites: Either three semester hours in religious studies or permission of the instructor.		

RELS 360.01

Myth, Ritual and Symbol

MW

4:00-5:15 pm

Prof. Huddlestun

Drawing from the vast literature in religious studies and related fields, this course addresses a number of questions and concerns across a range of religious, social, and political situations. Do (or must) myths or symbols have universal meaning? What is the relationship between myth, ritual, and symbol? Must one precede the other? Do rituals simply reflect one's belief or worldview, or do they create it? What is the place of myth, ritual, and symbol in human social and political life? What about "secular" rituals or rituals that are performed incorrectly or fail? How would one determine (or who would determine) that a ritual had failed? Following a reading of some influential figures and selected responses to their work, we will focus on a number of theoretical issues relating especially to ritual, and on how myth, ritual, and symbol are created, used (or abused), revised, reinvented and given authority in modern life (e.g., birth, death, circumcision, abortion, political contexts, etc.) and ways in which they legitimate or reinforce existing religious and socio-political institutions.

RELS 451.01

Capstone Colloquium

W

12:00-12:50 pm

Prof. Siegler

This required course is designed to provide a capstone experience for majors in Religious Studies, and it will feature visits from RELS faculty and recent alumni as guest speakers. The Colloquium is not another course on the subject of religion, but a "meta-course" that will provide RELS students with an opportunity to reflect on the cumulative achievement of their studies and consider how they might apply their knowledge and skills in their future professional and personal lives.