

# SUMMER & FALL 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 (sieglere@cofc.edu).

**REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES:** 34 semester hours, that must include:

1. RELS 101 (Approaches to Religion) or 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), or 248 (religions of China & Japan)
5. One of the American religions: RELS 250 (American Religions), 260 (Native American Rels), 270 (African American Rels)
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 or 103 or 105
2. One of: RELS 223, 225, 230, 235, 240, 245, 248, 250, 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 FALL 2019

Course	CRN	Title	Meeting Days	Meeting Times	Instructor
RELS101.01	10626	Approaches to Religion: Sacred and Special Stuff	TR	925-1040	Cressler
RELS101.02	13203	Approaches to Religion: Sacred and Special Stuff	TR	1050-1205	Cressler
RELS101.03	10627	Approaches to Religion: Messiahs & Messianic Movements	TR	1215-130	Huddlestun
RELS101.04	11972	Approaches to Religion: Messiahs & Messianic Movements	MW	200-315	Huddlestun
RELS101.05	11973	Approaches to Religion: Religion, Ritual and Performance (Freshmen Only – Learning Communities Section)	MWF	900-950	Lowe
RELS101.06	12095	Approaches to Religion: Religion, Ritual and Performance	MWF	1000-1050	Lowe
RELS105.01	10628	Intro to World Religions	MWF	1000-1050	Siegler
RELS105.02	10629	Intro to World Religions	TR	140-255	TBA
RELS105.03	10630	Intro to World Religions	TR	305-420	TBA
RELS120.01	13204	Religion, Art and Culture	TR	1215-130	Bjerken
RELS185.01	13205	Women and Religion	MWF	1100-1150	Doire
RELS185.02	13206	Women and Religion	MWF	1200-1250	Doire
RELS230.01	13259	The Christian Tradition	MW	200-315	Lowe
RELS270.01	13207	African American Religions	TR	140-255	Cressler
RELS298.	13508	Special Topics: Gender, Sexuality and Judaism	TBA	TBA	Rabin
RELS310.01	13208	Sacred Texts: Creation and Cosmos in the Ancient Near East	TR	925-1040	Huddlestun
RELS450.01	11039	Senior Seminar: Revisiting Religion after 9/11 Religion, Violence and Nationalism	MW	400-515	Bjerken
FYSE134.01	13595	You Are What You Wear: Just Fashion	MW	200-315	Doire
HONS175.01	12611	Approaches to Religion: Searching for the Sacred in the Art, Food, and Music of the South	TR	925-1040	Bjerken
HONS381.01	13199	Values & Science of Sustainability in Agriculture	TR	140-255	LeVasseur

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES FALL 2019 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

**RELS 101.01/02**      **Approaches to Religion: Sacred & Special Stuff**      **Prof. Cressler**  
**TR**      **0925-1040 am and 1050-1205 pm**

When we hear the word “religion,” the first thing that probably comes to mind is belief. But when we actually encounter religion in the world, we soon find ourselves face to face with lots of stuff: rosary beads and hijabs, gongs and incense, prayer shawls and peace pipes, amulets and daggers and dolls. This course will introduce students to the academic study of religion through an exploration of some of the stuff – meaning, physical objects and material culture – that is significant for Christians in America, Muslims in Africa, and Buddhists in Asia. And, in the process, we will consider one of the most central questions for religious studies: what makes some stuff special, or “sacred,” in the first place?

**RELS 101.03/04**      **Approaches to Religion: Messiahs & Messianic Movements**      **Prof. Huddlestun**  
**TR and MW**      **1215-130 pm and 200-315pm**

This course looks at messiahs and messiah-like figures in three religious traditions: ancient Israelite/Jewish tradition, Islam (both Sunni and Shi’i), and Buddhism (particularly the future Buddha Maitreya). The approach will be mostly historical and more comparative as the course progresses, with some attention to theories regarding failed messianic movements. In addition, the messiah theme provides an entry into many of the central ideas or concepts of each tradition.

**RELS 101.05/06**      **Approaches to Religion: Religion, Ritual and Performance**      **Prof. Lowe**  
**MWF**      **900-950 am and 1000-1050 am**      **Section 05 is for Freshmen Only**

This course is designed to introduce students to theoretical and methodological approaches to the academic study of religion. The course will take as its topical center of gravity the notion that much of what we call “religion” can be found in our “outer” life rather than our “inner” life. To that end, we will explore religion using the theories and analytical tools of both Performance Studies and Ritual Theory. In each of three units, the course will use film, music, lectures, and weekly readings paired with in-class and online discussions. By the end of the semester, students will be able to demonstrate understanding of several theoretical approaches to the study of religion and corresponding methodologies as well as some familiarity with several religious traditions from around the world. **Section 05 is for Freshman Only.**

**RELS 105.01**      **Introduction to World Religions**      **Prof. Siegler**  
**MWF**      **1000-1050 am**

This course introduces the beliefs and practices of diverse religious traditions, emphasizing how religions change and interact with each other in the modern world. Topics will include: Theories of Religion, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Religions of India, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Religions in America, Native American Religions, African-American Religions, and New Religious Movements.

**RELS 105.02/03**      **Introduction to World Religions**      **TBA**  
**TR**      **140-255 pm and 305-420 pm**

How does religion intersect with social, economic, and environmental justice? 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 how these traditions engage contemporary issues surrounding sustainability (social, economic, and environmental).

**RELS 120.01**                    **Religion, Art and Culture: Searching for the Sacred**                    **Prof. Bjerken**  
**in the Art, Food, and Music of the South**  
**TR**                                    **1215-130 pm**

This course will introduce students to unusual expressions of the sacred in the American South, including Southern “outsider” art, “soul food,” and “soul music,” including the jazz of New Orleans. We begin by reading the studies of two “Road Scholars” who interpret unusual forms of religiosity and art while they undertake a common American ritual: a road trip through the South. Then we move to New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz, where we will examine the relationship between African religions, voodoo, jazz funerals, and Mardi Gras Indians. Finally, we return to Charleston to examine the African American Gullah-Geechee tradition of communicating with the dead and the ancestors through visions, dreams, stories, sweetgrass baskets and ecstatic song. We will rely on texts that combine travel narrative, story-telling and religious study, as well as films and the HBO series Treme, to gain insight into the sacred art, rituals, and stories that inspire faith and create ties that bind communities together. Cross listed with SOST 175.

**RELS 185.01/02**                    **Women and Religion**                    **Prof. Doire**  
**MWF**                                    **1100-1150 am and 1200-1250 pm**

In this course students will examine two aspects of "woman" as she has been encountered in human religious history, i.e., through the religious roles of women, and representations of the divine feminine. Attention will be paid to religious and cultural gender constructions and role expectations. These roles include the priestess, the holy virgin, the saint, the martyr and the mystic. Treatment of the divine feminine will focus on images of the goddess through various historical time periods and cultures.

**RELS 230.01**                    **The Christian Tradition**                    **Prof. Lowe**  
**MW**                                    **200-315 pm**

This course explores the history, spread, and development of Christianity from its first century Palestinian origins to the impact of its numerous iterations in cultures across the globe. Starting and returning always to the question “what is Christianity?,” the course will give special attention to diversity – geographical, cultural, social, and theological – within the tradition. Therefore, in addition to important figures, dates and events that narrate Western Christian history, the course will seek to highlight Christian traditions as they developed in Asia, Africa and the indigenous Americas; the role of women in the development and spread of Christianity; and the impact of the effort to develop and maintain something called “orthodoxy.”

**RELS 270.01**                    **African-American Religions**                    **Prof. Cressler**  
**TR**                                    **140-255 pm**

This course will introduce students to African American religions in all their complexity and creativity. Students will explore the varieties of African American religion from the seventeenth century to the present, with special attention to the religious histories of Charleston and the Lowcountry. While much of our time will be devoted to African American Christianities, we will also explore African religions across the Atlantic as well as Islam, Catholicism, Judaism, and humanism. Throughout the semester we will discuss and debate key questions in the study of African American religion. What does Africa have to do with African American religions? Why would African American slaves become Christian and how did they transform Christianity? Were black churches catalysts or obstacles for black liberation? What is the relationship between religious and racial identity?

**RELS 298.01**                    **Special Topics: Gender, Sexuality and Judaism**                    **Prof. Rabin**  
**TBA**                                    **TBA**

This course will explore how Jewish texts and communities have understood and enacted gender and sexuality. While religions are typically seen as promoting conservative understandings of gender and sexuality, the case of Judaism demonstrates how religious communities and texts have engaged these topics in diverse – and perhaps surprising – ways in different times and places. Topics to be covered will include: Jewish ideals of femininity and masculinity, Jewish conceptions of marriage and sex, and Jewish feminism and LGBTQ activism.

**RELS 310.01**                      **Sacred Texts: Creation and Cosmos in the Ancient Near East**                      **Prof. Huddlestun**  
**TR**                                      **925-1040 am**

This course examines how those peoples of the ancient Near East (e.g., Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Canaanite, Israelite) explained the origins of the gods and the cosmos -- in short, the world as they understood it. Our examination of these ancient cosmic conceptions will proceed initially through a reading of primary texts regarding creation, including Pyramid and Coffin texts from ancient Egypt, some well-known Mesopotamian myths (Gilgamesh and Enuma Elish), and ancient Canaanite mythology. Following these, we then turn to the biblical traditions in Genesis and other lesser-known biblical passages (from Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Isaiah). Most importantly, the biblical texts will be examined and discussed as part of the larger ancient Near Eastern world view. *Prerequisite(s): Three credit hours in religious studies or instructor permission*

**RELS 450.01**                      **Senior Seminar: Revisiting Religion after 9/11**                      **Prof. Bjerken**  
**Religion, Violence and Nationalism**  
**MW**                                      **400-515 pm**

Religious violence is a slippery topic, one that is sensitive, complex, potentially offensive, but of major importance. Defining “religion” is notoriously difficult. Defining “violence” turns out to be just as tricky. This seminar will provide students with critical tools from the discipline of religious studies to make sense of current events in which religion is intertwined with nationalism and the preservation of ethnic and racial identities, for these toxic combinations often result in violence. We will examine Hindu-Muslim conflicts in modern India, conflicts between Christian evangelicalism and African animism, terrorism and the “war on terror” in America after 9/11, and the escalating role of religious rhetoric in American politics today. *Prerequisite(s): RELS 210 and at least 9 more hours in RELS courses, or permission of instructor*

**FYSE 134.01**                      **You Are What You Wear: Just Fashion**                      **Prof. Doire**  
**MW**                                      **200-315 pm**

Students will study the history of clothing making, and the just and unjust practices of global clothing manufacturing. We will examine the movements for sustainable production of cloth, organic fiber gardening, the use of natural dyes, and the history of cotton and indigo farming in Charleston. Other topics include the movement of “slow fashion,” and subversive art in clothing, textiles and embroidery.

**HONS 175.01**                      **Approaches to Religion: Searching for the Sacred**                      **Prof. Bjerken**  
**in the Art, Food, and Music of the South**  
**TR**                                      **925-1040 am**

This course will introduce students to unusual expressions of the sacred in the South, including Southern “outsider” art, “soul food,” and “soul music,” including the jazz of New Orleans. We begin by reading the studies of two “Road Scholars” who interpret unusual forms of religiosity and art while they undertake a common American ritual: a road trip through the South. Then we move to New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz, where we will examine the relationship between African religions, voodoo, jazz funerals, and Mardi Gras Indians. Finally, we return to Charleston to examine the African American Gullah-Geechee tradition of communicating with the dead and the ancestors through visions, dreams, stories, sweetgrass baskets and ecstatic song. We will rely on texts that combine travel narrative, story-telling and religious study, as well as films and the HBO series Treme, to gain insight into the sacred art, rituals, and stories that inspire faith and create ties that bind communities together.

This course is focused on a central and enduring question: can human communities via the technology of agriculture create, if at all, enduring communities of place that are able to enter the trophic pyramid in ways that are regenerative and that foster biodiversity and social equality, and do this in an era of rapid climate changes? The course will explore concepts of traditional ecological knowledge; foundational epistemologies of the Agricultural Revolution and then Scientific Revolution and Green Revolution; ecological agrarian literature and concepts of place and the value of farming; and intersectional perspectives on food security, biocolonialism/land grabs, food justice, and migrant/labor rights. Woven through these discussions will be an analysis of animal agriculture, monoculture farming of hybrid seeds, the impact of climate change on farming, deforestation due to farming, fisheries collapse, and how these all impact conceptions of and relationship to place, and the bodies of organisms in those places. Examples of regenerative, ethical, sustainable farming (permaculture, biodynamics, religious agrarianism, peasant farming regimes, indigenous farming, Land Institute, Via Campesina) will be provided throughout the course as alternatives which suggest more sustainable human/human and human/non-human interactions at the interface of agriculture. The values of such alternatives will be adumbrated and articulated.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS FOR SUMMER 2019**

Course	CRN	Title	Term	Meeting Days	Meeting Time	Instructor
RELS105.01	30033	Intro to World Religions	Summer II	Online		LeVasseur
RELS105.02	30709	Intro to World Religions	Extended Summer	MW	530-845 pm	Doire
RELS215.01	30711	Religion and Globalization	Summer I	Travel Abroad		Bjerken
RELS250.02	30708	Religion in America	Summer I	Online		Lowe
RELS280.01	30349	Religion and Film	Maymester	MTWRF	830-1200 pm	Siegler
RELS298.01	30712	Special Topics:	Summer I	Travel Abroad		LeVasseur

**MAYMESTER 2019 (May 13 - May 31)**

**RELS 280.01  
MTWRF**

**Religion & Film  
830- 1200 pm**

**Prof. Siegler**

What do film and religion have in common? How are myth and ritual expressed through film? How do filmmakers use editing and cinematography to express the religious? To explore these questions, we will watch and discuss a film each day in class. For the first half of the class we will watch a variety of “religious film classics” including *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, *The Matrix* and *Spirited Away*. In the second half, we will focus on the films of Joel and Ethan Coen (including *Raising Arizona*, *Barton Fink*, *Fargo*, *The Big Lebowski*, and *No Country for Old Men*). Students will learn to analyze, discuss, and write about films from a religious studies perspective.

**SUMMER I 2019 (June 4 - June 3)**

**RELS 215.01**

**Religion and Globalization: Encountering Religions and Globalization in the Indian Himalayas**

**Prof. Bjerken**

**Study Abroad**

The course will introduce students to the religious diversity present in the region of Ladakh, where Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians and Jews all encounter each other. We will examine how the forces of globalization affect this encounter, and explore various responses to globalization including the clash of religions (especially between Buddhists and Muslims), experiments with inter-religious dialogue, and the adaptations of religious institutions and spiritual entrepreneurs to global tourism and cosmopolitanism. In all of the sacred sites, pilgrimage destinations, and retreat centers that we visit we will explore how various agents—tourists, missionaries, leaders, immigrants and exiles—carry religious ideas and practices, and how macro-processes such as economic development, militarization, and modernization, impact the religious and social landscape.

**RELS 250.01**

**Religion in America**

**Prof. Lowe**

**ONLINE**

From Puritans in New England and Spanish-Indian encounters in the borderlands to Civil Rights and the Religious Right, this course surveys the unfolding story of Religion in America. Open to all students, this online-only course will offer exposure to texts and resources that explore the integral place of religion in the cultural and political lives of Americans. Students will engage important questions like: Was America founded as a “Christian Nation”? What was the role of religion in American slavery? What is “Evangelicalism” (and have they always been conservatives)? How long have Muslims been in America? Join us to discover the surprisingly diverse voices from the history of religion in America!

**RELS 298.01**

**Special Topics: Religion, Climate Change, and  
and Sustainable Development in the Indian Himalayas**

**Prof. LeVasseur**

**Study Abroad**

The course offers an interdisciplinary investigation of how the religions of Ladakh shape how local peoples relate to their environment, especially in light of the dramatic effects of climate change. Students will also be introduced to the key concepts and major drivers of international development, including how globalization, voluntourism, and infrastructure projects that feature solar energy and glacier grafting techniques impact local communities, including refugees. Students will participate in unique experiential learning opportunities related to case studies that focus on natural disasters and ongoing water and land issues. Students will better understand the role of religious leaders in climate change adaptation, and develop an ethical, grounded; empathetic and intersectional approach to social and environmental issues.

**EXTENDED SUMMER 2019 (May 13 – June 24)**

**RELS 105.02**

**Introduction to World Religions**

**Prof. Doire**

**MW**

**530-845 pm**

A basic knowledge of the world's religions is the mark of an educated citizen in the 21st century. This course is an introduction to the study of religion and of the world's major religious traditions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Our study will include historical development, sacred text, ritual, concepts of the divine, and soteriology.

**SUMMER II 2019 (July 8 - August 4)**

**RELS 105.01**

**Introduction to World Religions**

**Prof. LeVasseur**

**ONLINE**

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.