

The College of Charleston

Religious Studies Department Summer and Fall 2017 Course Brochure

All Religious Studies courses satisfy 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 by . If you would like to learn more about the Religious Studies major, please speak with your Religious Studies professor or with the Chair.

Requirements for the Major in Religious Studies: 34 semester hours, that must include:

1. RELS 101 or 105
2. RELS 210 Theories in the Study of Religions
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), 270 (African American)
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 in Religious Studies
8. RELS 451: Capstone Colloquium (1 Credit Hour)
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 105
2. One of: RELS 225, 230, 240, 245, or 248
3. One of: RELS 201, 202, 205 or 310 (note: 310 cannot be used to satisfy both sacred text course requirements and the one additional course at the 300-level or above requirements)
4. One course from RELS 300-499, not including 451
5. 2 additional Courses.

Fall 2017

CRN	Course	Title	Instructor	Day	Time	Time	Building	Room
13676	FYSE 134.01	Religion, Animals, & Animal Ethics	LeVasseur	MWF	9:00	9:50	ECTR	219
13680	FYSE 134.03	Not Fit for Dinner: Religion, Race, & Politics in America	Cressler	TR	10:50	12:05	ECTR	219
10640	HONS 175.01	Approaches to Religion	Bjerken	TR	10:50	12:05	MYBK	320
10760	RELS 101.01	Approaches to Religion	Irwin	MWF	11:00	11:50	ECTR	116
10761	RELS 101.02	Approaches to Religion	Tepera	MWF	9:00	9:50	ECTR	103
10762	RELS 101.03	Approaches to Religion	Tepera	MWF	10:00	10:50	ECTR	103
13866	RELS 101.04	Approaches to Religion	Lowe	MWF	12:00	12:50	ECTR	101
13867	RELS 101.05	Approaches to Religion	Lowe	MWF	1:00	1:50	ECTR	101
10765	RELS 105.01	Intro to World Religions	McDaniel	TR	1:40	2:55	ECTR	118
10763	RELS 105.02	Intro to World Religions	Doire	TR	10:50	12:05	ECTR	103
10764	RELS 105.03	Intro to World Religions	Doire	TR	12:15	1:30	ECTR	103
13215	RELS 115.02	Religion and Society	Tepera	MW	4:00	5:15	ECTR	219
13210	RELS 120.01	Religion, Art, and Culture	Doire	MW	2:00	3:15	ECTR	103
11681	RELS 120.02	Religion, Art, and Culture	Doire	MW	3:25	4:40	ECTR	103
13212	RELS 230.01	The Christian Tradition	Lowe	MWF	10:00	10:50	ECTR	219
13213	RELS 245.01	The Hindu Tradition & Other Indian Religions	McDaniel	TR	9:25	10:40	ECTR	219
13214	RELS 270.01	African-American Religions	Cressler	TR	1:40	2:55	ECTR	219
13216	RELS 310.01	Sacred Texts	Bjerken	MW	4:00	5:15	MYBK	119
11277	RELS 450.01	Senior Seminar: Religion & the Paranormal	Irwin	MW	2:00	3:15	ECTR	219

Summer/Maymester 2017

CRN	Course	Title	Instructor	Day	Time	Time	Building	Room
30047	RELS 105.01	Intro to World Religions	Schadler	Online				
30467	RELS 105.03	Intro to World Religions	Schadler	Online				
30173	RELS 280.01	Religion and Film	Doire	MTWRF	8:30	12:00	ECTR	219
30207	RELS 298.01	Nature, Spirituality, Ecotopia, & Applied Ecovillage Living	LeVasseur	MTWRF	10:00	11:45	ECTR	103
30400	RELS 298.02	Interfaith Atlanta Across the Color Line	Cressler	MTWRF	8:30	12:00	ECTR	103

FYSE 134.01 Religion, Animals, & Animal Ethics**Prof. Todd LeVasseur****For Freshmen****Section 01 (MWF 9:00 – 9:50)****ECTR 219**

This course is designed to introduce College of Charleston students to how religions have conceived of, used, taught about, and interacted with non-human animals via ethics, rituals, myths, sacred texts/narratives, and diet. The course operates under an evolutionary epistemology, tracing the development of animals and human-animal interactions from the dawn of Homo sapiens through the current mass extinction crisis with religion providing a point of entry into understanding these interactions. Students will also research and discuss ethical issues about conservation biology, preserving the genetic fitness of species, intensive animal agriculture, emerging findings from animal ethology, and the treatment of companion animals. Methods and theories of inquiry will be comparative in scope (between religious traditions), as well as interdisciplinary (ethics/philosophy, religious studies, conservation biology, cognitive ethology, ecopsychology).

FYSE 134.03 Not Fit for Dinner: Race, Religion, and Politics in America**Prof. Matthew Cressler****For Freshmen****Section 03 (TR 10:50 – 12:05)****ECTR 219**

What are you told not to talk about around the dinner table? Religion... politics... and we're encouraged not to talk about race pretty much anywhere. The irony, of course, is that we live in a society deeply divided along these very lines. This course seeks to break these taboos by cultivating the tools to engage in conversations around the issues that really matter in the twenty-first century. What is race? What is religion? How are these concepts connected? And how do they shape politics in the United States, not just electoral politics but even more so the politics of everyday life? We will examine these questions by exploring America's past and present in the classroom and around Charleston.

HONS 175.01 Approaches to Religion: "Searching for the Sacred, the Strange, & the Sounds of Faith in the South"**Prof. Zeff Bjerken****For HONS Students****Section 01 (TR 10:50 – 12:05)****MBYK 320**

This course surveys different understandings of the "sacred" found in the American South. We begin by reading the studies of a few "Road Scholars" who seek unusual forms of religiosity manifest in art and song while undertaking a common American ritual: the road trip. On their journeys they discover unifying themes that are central to religious life in America: the desire to recreate sacred time and space, creativity as religious devotion, prophecy and the apocalypse, and the relation between religious vision and social marginality. 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 local Gullah-Geechee tradition of communicating with the dead and African ancestors through visions, dreams, stories, sweetgrass basketry, and ecstatic song. We will learn how stories, rituals, and performances serve as an expression of the religious imagination, where Southern religious folks have sought to re-create the "substance of faith."

RELS 101.01 Approaches to Religion: Life After Death**Prof. Lee Irwin****No prerequisites****Section 01 (MWF 11:00 – 11:50)****ECTR 116**

This course is a comparative introduction to religion organized around the theme of death 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. We will start by 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.

RELS 101.02/03 Approaches to Religion: Death & Dying**Prof. Courtney Tepera****No prerequisites****Section 02 (MWF 9:00 – 9:50)****ECTR 103****Section 03 (MWF 10:00 – 10:50)****ECTR 103**

This course is a comparative introduction to religion organized around the theme of death and the rituals and afterlife beliefs that accompany it. The first half of the course will examine attitudes and religious beliefs in life after death among the religions of the world by comparing teachings on death held by Native American, Yoruban, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. The second part of the course will discuss modern issues surrounding the psychology of death and medicalized dying and the impact of those developments on our understanding of death and modern death practices such as memorials and life celebrations.

RELS 101.04/05 Approaches to Religion: The Spirit and Spirits in the Study of Religion

Leonard Lowe

No prerequisites

Section 04 (MWF 12:00 – 12:50)

Section 03 (MWF 1:00 – 1:50)

ECTR 101

ECTR 101

To introduce students to theoretical and methodological approaches to the academic study of religion, the course will take as its focus on the different ways that religious cultures express the idioms of **Spirit** or **spirits**. In each of three units on Buddhist, Protestant, and Afro-Caribbean traditions, 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.

RELS 105.01 Introduction to World Religions

Prof. June McDaniel

No prerequisites

Section 01 (TR 1:40 – 2:55)

ECTR 118

This course will introduce the beliefs and practices of a wide variety of world religions, including indigenous religions and shamanism, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Judaism, ancient Egyptian religion, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam, and new religious movements (such as Scientology and Wicca). There are no prerequisites, and the class will require three tests, two papers, and attendance. There will be films and guest speakers.

RELS 105.02/03 Introduction to World Religions

Prof. Louise Doire

No prerequisites

Section 02 (TR 10:50 – 12:05)

Section 03 (TR 12:15 – 1:30)

ECTR 103

ECTR 103

This course is designed to be an introduction to the study of religion and of the world's major religious traditions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Our study will include the historical development, sacred text, ritual, concepts of the divine, and soteriology.

RELS 115.02 Religion and Society: Spirituality and Alternative Religions in Modern America

Prof. Courtney Tepera

No prerequisites

Section 02 (MW 4:00 – 5:15)

ECTR 219

This course is an introduction to non-traditional religions and spiritualities as they are practiced in the contemporary United States. The course will begin with a brief history of metaphysical religion in American history. We will then turn to a deeper exploration of the beliefs and practices of neo-Paganism, yoga, UFO religions, Satanism, and the spirituality of Oprah. We will discuss these traditions as developments and critiques of American culture and traditional religions.

RELS 120.01/02 Religion, Art, & Culture: When Home Is a Stranger

Prof. Louise Doire

No prerequisites

Section 01 (MW 2:00 – 3:15)

Section 02 (MW 3:25 – 4:40)

ECTR 103

ECTR 103

Students in this course will approach religion as “movement in time and place,” enacted in and through the body, the home, the homeland and the cosmos. Through the media of literature and film, we will examine the narratives of individuals and/or groups that negotiate self, religion and culture through the experiences of displacement as the stranger, “the outsider.” How does one create “a home” in an alien place? How does one traverse a cultural and religious terrain that is “foreign?”

RELS 230.01 The Christian Tradition

Leonard Lowe

No prerequisites

Section 01 (MWF 1:00 – 1:50)

ECTR 219

This course is designed to introduce students to 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 Latin (Roman) 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 245.01 The Hindu Tradition and Other Religions of India

Prof. June McDaniel

No prerequisites

Section 01 (TR 12:15 – 1:30)

ECTR 219

This course will introduce some major forms of Indian religion. It will focus on Hinduism, but will also include information on Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam. It will include readings from primary texts, data from fieldwork, films and guest speakers. There will be sections on yoga, religious art, music and dance, and analysis of meditation and other ritual techniques. There will be three tests and two papers

RELS 270.01 African-American Religions

Prof. Matthew Cressler

No prerequisites

Section 01 (TR 1:40 – 2:55)

ECTR 219

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 310.01 Sacred Texts of Asia

Prof. Zeff Bjerken

3 credit hours

Section 01 (MW 4:00 – 5:15)

MYBK 119

This course will focus on four Asian religious classics in depth: *The Bhagavad Gita*, *The Kamasutra*, *The Lotus Sutra*, and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. We will explore the problems involved in the writing, transmission, and study of these classic sacred texts, and in their reception in the modern west. First we will place these texts in their Hindu and Buddhist contexts and consider how they were used in India, China, and Tibet, before we examine how new meanings and values were discovered when these texts were consumed in modern America. We will consider how to read religiously, the relationship between genre, gender, and social roles, and how texts “script” religious experience and inform cultural norms. We will investigate how scriptures become the object of veneration, what criteria are used to identify a text as “sacred,” and the ways in which texts create religious authority. We will also watch films and documentaries that appropriate these texts for a contemporary western audience. *The texts and images we will use in this class contain explicit representations of sex, death, and violence. If you are offended by sexually explicit, morbid, or violent images, or if you feel that discussing such images could unduly exploit or demean you, then this may not be the class for you.*

RELS 450.01 Senior Seminar: Religion and the Paranormal

Prof. Lee Irwin

JR or SR Major, RELS 210, 9 credits

Section 01 (MW 2:00 – 3:25) ECTR 219

This course will be an interdisciplinary course on the relationship between the sacred and the paranormal. We will first look at a few specific areas of study starting with Frederic Myers and the SPR and then venture into studies on western occulture and contemporary research in paranormal studies. We will investigate the following topics: UFO phenomena, with reference to Science Fiction and the psychosocial hypothesis; supernormal powers in relation to Hinduism and PSI research; modern alchemy and magic in contemporary America; and the impact of theories in cosmology, biology, and physics on religion and religious conceptualizations. Student will be expected to do short intensive writing assignments and write a final research paper. Prerequisites: RELS 210, junior or senior religious studies major with at least nine semester hours in religious studies, or permission of the instructor.

Maymester**RELS 105.01 Introduction to World Religions**

Prof. Peter Schadler

No prerequisite

ONLINE

An introductory survey of the major religions of mankind, beginning with a treatment of tribal religions and including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

RELS 280.01 Religion and Film: Saint Joan Goes to Hollywood
Prof. Louise Doire **No Prerequisite**

Section 01 (MTRWF 8:30 – 12:00) **ECTR 219**

In this course students will examine and explore the pervasive presence of religious themes in film including representations of female saints and sinners, and interpretations of redemption, God, self-sacrifice and the human condition. There are no prerequisites for enrolling in this course.

RELS 298.02 Special Topic: Interfaith Atlanta Across the Color Line
Prof. Matthew Cressler **Program fee**

Section 01 (MTWRF 8:30 – 12:00) **ECTR 103**

Interfaith work is often imagined as building bridges, whereas racial justice activism “speaks truth to power.” Do struggles for racial justice conflict with building bridges across the lines of faith? This course explores this question in the classroom and with a week away in Atlanta. We’ll visit the Martin Luther King Center for Social Change, build a Habitat for Humanity home, experience life in Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and Black Christian communities, and more!

Summer I

RELS 105.03 Introduction to World Religions
Prof. Peter Schadler **No Prerequisite**

ONLINE

An introductory survey of the major religions of mankind, beginning with a treatment of tribal religions and including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

RELS 298.01 Special Topic: Nature, Spirituality, Ecotopia, & Applied Ecovillage Living

Prof. Todd LeVasseur **Co-requisite URST 313/program fee** **Section 01 (MTWRF 10:00 – 11:45)** **ECTR 103**

Ever wondered what an “Ecovillage” is, or what it is like to create and live in one? This course explores ecovillages and how these intentional communities may help humans live more sustainably by incorporating ecocentric ethical values, ecological design, and environmentally friendly technologies. This Summer I course will meet on campus for two weeks, and then will spend 6/17 to 6/23 living in residency at Earthaven Ecovillage in Black Mountain, NC, outside of Asheville. During this time, students will participate in hands-on learning modules about permaculture, organic farming, alternative building construction, nature spirituality, alternative energy, and other aspects of sustainable intentional community in the Appalachian mountains. Upon returning from the trip students will pursue a research paper and will not be required to be on campus.