



# COLLEGE of CHARLESTON

DEPARTMENT OF  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## COURSE OFFERINGS FOR SPRING 2018

Course	Title	Meeting Days	Begin Time	Room	Instructor
FYSE134.02	Maidens, Mothers, Mystics and Martyrs	MWF	1200-1250	TBA	Doire
HONS381.05	ST: Cults and Conversion in Modern America	TR	1505-1620	MYBK 320	Gallagher
RELS101.01	Approaches to Religion: Messiahs and Messianic Movements	TR	1050-1205	ECTR 219	Huddlestun
RELS101.02	Approaches to Religion: Messiahs and Messianic Movements	TR	1215-1330	ECTR 219	Huddlestun
RELS101.03	Approaches to Religion: Sacred and Special Stuff	TR	1340-1455	ECTR 103	Cressler
RELS101.04	Approaches to Religion: Sacred and Special Stuff	MW	1400-1515	ECTR 103	Cressler
RELS101.05	Approaches to Religion: Afterlife	MWF	1300-1355	ECTR 103	Irwin
RELS101.06	Approaches to Religion: Evil and Suffering	MWF	1000-1050	ECTR 118	Doire
RELS105.01	Intro to World Religions	TR	0925-1040	ECTR 103	Lowe
RELS105.02	Intro to World Religions	TR	1050-1205	ECTR 103	Lowe
RELS105.03	Intro to World Religions	MWF	1000-1050	ECTR 103	McDaniel
RELS105.04	Intro to World Religions	MWF	1100-1150	ECTR 103	McDaniel
RELS105.05	Intro to World Religions	MWF	0900-0950	ECTR 103	Tepera
RELS105.06	Intro to World Religions	MWF	1200-1250	ECTR 219	Tepera
RELS185.01	Women and Religion	MWF	1300-1350	TBA	Doire
RELS210.01	Theories in Study of Religions	MW	1400-1515	ECTR 219	Huddlestun
RELS215.01	Religion and Globalization	TR	1215-1330	ECTR 103	Gallagher
RELS235.02	The Islamic Tradition	MWF	0900-0950	ECTR 219	Foody
RELS248.01	Religious Traditions of China and Japan	TR	0800-0915	ECTR 219	Bjerken
RELS248.01	Religious Traditions of China and Japan	TR	0925-1040	ECTR 219	Bjerken
RELS298.01	Special Topics in Religious Studies: Occult America	MWF	1000-1050	ECTR 219	Irwin
RELS298.02	Special Topics in Religious Studies: Religion, Water, and Sustainability	TR	1340-1455	ECTR 219	LeVasseur
RELS301.01	Jewish Mysticism	TR	0925-1040	JSC 210	Shanes
RELS365.01	Religion and Psychology	MWF	1300-1350	ECTR 219	McDaniel
RELS370.01	Adv. Topics in American Religion: Colonialism, Freedom, and African American Religions	TR	1050-1205	MYBK 119	Cressler
RELS451.01	Capstone Colloquium	W	1600-1650	MYBK 119	Bjerken

# Religious Studies Department Spring 2018 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. 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 or America Religions), 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 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, 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. and the one additional course at the 300-level or above
5. Two additional courses in Religious Studies.



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# Religious Studies Department Spring 2018 Course Descriptions

**FYSE 134.02**                      **Maidens, Mothers, Mystics and Martyrs**                      **Prof. Doire**  
**MWF**                              **12:00-12:50 pm**                      **TBA**

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.

**HONS 381.01**                      **ST: Cults and Conversion in Modern America**                      **Prof. Gallagher**  
**TTh**                                **3:05-4:20 pm**                      **MYBK 320**

This course examines the history of new religious movements in the U. S. and the various social responses to them. It focuses on the processes of conversion, and de-conversion, asking what leads people to found, join, leave, and oppose new religions. Specific case studies will include groups such as the Church of Scientology, contemporary Paganism, and the Nation of Islam, among others.

**RELS 101.01/02**                      **Approaches to Religion: Messiahs & Messianic Movements**                      **Prof. Huddleston**  
**MWF**                              **10:50-12:05 pm**                      **ECTR 219**  
**MWF**                              **12:15-1:30 pm**                      **ECTR 219**

This course introduces the student to the academic study of religion through an examination of a particular theme in a handful of selected traditions. Following some discussion of the topic of religion and how to define it, we will focus on messiahs and messiah-like figures (and related movements) in three religious traditions: Judaism (setting the biblical foundation), Islam, and Buddhism (especially the Future Buddha Maitreya). Our examination of these will draw principally upon primary texts, along with some supplementary readings. The approach will be historical and more comparative as the course progresses, with some attention to various theories regarding failed messianic movements. The messiah theme provides an entry into many of the central ideas or concepts of each tradition; in this manner, the student should acquire some understanding of the basic tenets of each tradition and also an appreciation for its respective adherents.

**RELS 101.03/04**                      **Approaches to Religion: Sacred and Special Stuff**                      **Prof. Cressler**  
**MWF**                              **1:40-2:55 pm**                      **ECTR 103**  
**MW**                                **2:00-3:15 pm**                      **ECTR 103**

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 101.05**                      **Approaches to Religion: Afterlife**                      **Prof. Irwin**  
**MWF**                              **1:00-1:50 pm**                      **ECTR 103**

This course is a comparative survey of religions 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.

Prerequisites: none

**RELS 101.06**                      **Approaches to Religion: Evil and Suffering**                      **Prof. Doire**  
**MWF**                              **10:00-10:50 pm**                      **ECTR 118**

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion through a particular theme. In this course we will focus our study on the topics of good and evil, and human suffering. Our examination will incorporate traditional understandings and cultural constructions of these themes as they have been presented in Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism. The human experience of evil and suffering has been and continues to be a fundamental element of religious reflection. 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 105.01/02**                      **Introduction to World Religions**                      **Prof. Lowe**  
**TTh**                                **9:25-10:40 am**                      **ECTR 103**  
**TTh**                                **1050-12:05 pm**                      **ECTR 103**

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 105.03/04**                      **Introduction to World Religions**                      **Prof. McDaniel**  
**MWF**                              **10:00-10:50 am**                      **ECTR 103**  
**MWF**                              **11:00-11:50 am**                      **ECTR 103**

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 105.05/06**                      **Introduction to World Religions**                      **Prof. Tepera**  
**MWF**                              **9:00-9:50 am**                      **ECTR 103**  
**MWF**                              **12:00-12:50 pm**                      **ECTR 219**

This course provides a basic introduction to prominent religious traditions and how they have impacted the world around them. We will focus primarily on Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Yoruba. These religions will be studied as cultural phenomena and repositories of knowledge to better understand the interaction of religion and culture in the modern world.

**RELS 185.01**                      **Women and Religion: Maidens, Mothers, Mystics and Martyrs**                      **Prof. Doire**  
**MWF**                              **1:00-1:50 pm**                      **TBA**

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 210.01**                      **Theories in the Study of Religion**                      **Prof. Huddlestun**  
**MW**                                **2:00-3:15 pm**                      **ECTR 219**

Is the human being fundamentally a religious animal, a *homo religiosus*? Is membership or participation in a religious tradition necessary for being able to understand it? Or is detached objectivity required in order to avoid religious bias? Does it make sense to speak of "inauthentic" religions? Is anything really sacred, or is one person's sacred another person's profane? How can you study those religious practices and ideas with which you personally disagree? Should scholars of religion be neutral observers or serve as religious and cultural critics in the public arena? This class will introduce some of the leading theorists who have addressed these and other similar questions. As a survey of theories of religion, the course examines some of the controversial debates that have animated the discipline, such as the insider/outsider problem, explanations for the origins of religion, the value of description versus explanations for religion, the manner in which human communities authorize systems of behavior, and religion's psychological, sociological, and political functions. By the end

of the course, students will possess a working knowledge of the basic theoretical and methodological issues in the field of Religious Studies.

**RELS 215.01 Religion and Globalization Prof. Gallagher**  
**TTh 12:15-1:30 pm ECTR 103**

This course provides an introduction to the academic study of religion by focusing on various dimensions of the contemporary globalization of religion. In its first section it will provide a basic orientation to the descriptive and analytical concepts of "religion" and "globalization" as they are used in current academic and popular discourse. In its second section, it will concentrate on three case studies that will treat aspects of Christianity, Islam, and Rastafari in the contemporary world.

**RELS 235.02 The Islamic Tradition Prof. Foody**  
**MWF 9:00-9:50 am ECTR 219**

This course explores Islamic traditions from the life of Muhammad to the present. We will explore a number of themes in the history and practice of Islam, including the importance of revelation and the life of Muhammad, debates over the roles of women, Muslim politics and political history, and religious rituals and bodily practices. Students will be introduced to how Muslims have understood their own religious practice as well as the methods and theories used by scholars and students of religion to study Islam and other religious traditions.

**RELS 248.01/02 Religious Traditions of China & Japan Prof. Bjerken**  
**TTh 8:25-9:15 am ECTR 219**  
**TTh 9:25-10:40 am ECTR 219**

This course will explore the East Asian religions of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism in China, and Shinto, Christianity, and the "New Religions" of Japan. However, the course is **not** a systematic survey of each religion. Rather than aiming at breadth, the course is designed around major themes: East Asian religions as "invented traditions;" their views of nature and the cosmos; death, the afterlife, and ancestor worship; meditation and the solitary lives of mountain hermits; religious experience and conversion; and ritual and its worldly benefits; The course will begin in China with forms of divination and ancestor worship that appeared some 3,300 years ago, and shift to Japan at mid-semester; we will end with religious debates over the topics of abortion and organ transplant and the 1995 sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway by members of Aum Shinrikyo. We will consider how, given the myriad doctrines and practices encountered in Asia, one might go about defining "religion" there. The course will call into question our common distinctions between self & society, church & state, and religion & spirituality.

**RELS 298.01 Special Topics in Religious Studies: Occult America Prof. Irwin**  
**MWF 10:00-10:50 ECTR 219**

This course explores the topic of the "occult" and "supernatural" in America, primarily from the trans-religious perspective. Because occulture in America has been a liminal topic, associated with fringe movements, New Age, and popular culture, the course will delve into topics outside of mainstream religions. Topics covered will include the following: ghost encounters, mediumship, UFO sightings, Big Foot hunts, paranormal subcultures, psychic talents, and other strange and unusual topics. The approach will be historical and comparative with some emphasis on key movements and individuals; the later part of the course will explore theoretical models for the interpretation of the phenomena being studied. The course is also interdisciplinary and will draw on a range of disciplines – religion, anthropology, paranormal research, and transpersonal studies. At the end of the course we will read a sustained argument that seeks to establish the validity of paranormal experience as a creditable area of philosophical and religious research. Prerequisites: none.

**RELS 298.2 Special Topics in Religious Studies: Religion, Water, and Sustainability Prof. LeVasseur**  
**TTh 1:40-2:55 pm ECTR 219**

This course introduces students to the environmental humanities by utilizing theoretical lenses afforded by the study of religion and nature. The course will explore religious values, beliefs, institutional practices, and ritual activities as these relate to the human conception of, relation to, and management of water where sources of water are considered to be sacred. Students will study Hinduism and the contemporary pollution of the Yamuna river in India; indigenous/Buddhist/Hindu syncretism in managing water in traditional rice farming communities on the island of Bali; and water/religion/ethics interactions via the lens of the Buddhist bioregionalist Gary Snyder. These case studies will

present an entryway into investigating the sustainable, or unsustainable, use of water as a resource where such use is mediated by religious systems.

**RELS 301.01 Jewish Mysticism Prof. Shanes**  
**TTh 9:25-10:40 am JSC 210**

Jewish mysticism is an exhilarating branch of Judaism that reads holy texts in amazing ways to answer fundamental questions of life, including the nature of God and the universe, the nature of human souls, and how we can foster our connections to each other and God. It teaches the cosmic impact of each and every person. This class will study the major forms of Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah) and especially its modern expression in the Hasidic movement.

**RELS 365.01 Religion and Psychology Prof. McDaniel**  
**MWF 1:00-1:50 pm ECTR 219**

This course will examine a range of topics in the field of Religion and Psychology, including major theorists in the field (Freud, Jung, Maslow, Frankl); Asian and western models of the psyche (including humanistic and transpersonal psychology), religious violence, authoritarianism, faith and healing, possession trance, entheogens, lucid dreaming, and psychological understandings of a variety of religious experiences. There will be films and guest speakers.

*Prerequisite(s)*: Three credit hours in religious studies or instructor permission

**RELS 370.01 Advanced Topics in American Religions: Colonialism, Freedom, and African American Religions Prof. Cressler**  
**TTh 10:50-12:05 pm MYBK 119**

Freedom is an ironic idea in African American religious history. African American Studies scholar Eddie Glaude defines the category "African American religion" as a practice of freedom in the midst of white supremacy. At the same time, the very concept of freedom was forged in an age of empires, colonial conquest, and transatlantic slavery. What is "freedom" and how is it connected to colonialism? What can the study of African American religions teach us about freedom struggles in the past and in the present? This upper-level seminar will explore these questions (and more) through close readings of primary sources and contemporary scholarship at the intersection of African American Studies and Religious Studies. The course will cover an array of religions across the African diaspora ranging from Yoruba traditions, Voodoo, and conjure to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

**RELS 451.01 Capstone Colloquium Prof. Bjerken**  
**W 4:00-4:50 pm MYBK 119**

This 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 lives. The Colloquium is designed to give students, in the company of other majors, the opportunity to: 1) review their own study of religion at CofC in order to identify their distinctive interests in particular subjects; 2) write an intellectual autobiography; 3) evaluate how their training served as a bridge between other academic disciplines; and 4) grasp how the study of religion might prepare them to put their learning to work in the world. *Prerequisite(s)*: Three credit hours in religious studies or instructor permission