

## SUMMER & FALL 2020 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. Choose one of the following courses: RELS 101, 103, 105, 106, 115, 117, 118, 120, or 185
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 or 103 or 105 or 106
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 the sacred text and 300 level course requirements)
4. One additional course at the 300-level or above
5. Two additional courses in Religious Studies.

### COURSE OFFERINGS FOR FALL 2020

Course	CRN	Title	Meeting Days	Meeting Times	Instructor
RELS101.01	10576	Approaches to Religion: Making Believe and Making Belief in Religious Studies	TR	925-1040	Lowe
RELS101.02	11994	Approaches to Religion: Religion and Protest	MWF	1100-1150	Fisher
RELS101.03	10577	Approaches to Religion: Religion and Protest	MWF	1200-1250	Fisher
RELS101.04	11658	Approaches to Religion: Sacred Space	MWF	900-950	Keegan
RELS101.05	11659	Approaches to Religion: Sacred Space	MWF	1000-1050	Keegan
RELS105.01	10578	Intro to World Religions	MWF	1000-1050	Doire
RELS105.02	10579	Intro to World Religions	MWF	1100-1150	Doire
RELS105.03	10580	Intro to World Religions	MWF	1200-1250	Keegan
RELS105.04	13161	Intro to World Religions	TR	305-420	Fisher
RELS118.01	13556	Modern History of Religions: Religions in the Americas	TR	1215-130	Cressler
RELS118.02	13557	Modern History of Religions: Religions in the Americas	TR	140-255	Cressler
RELS120.01	11995	Religion, Art and Culture: Searching for the Sacred in Southern Art, Food, and Music	MW	400-515	Bjerken
RELS120.02	13163	Religion, Art and Culture: Searching for the Sacred in Southern Art, Food, and Music	TR	140-255	Bjerken
RELS202.01	13162	New Testament: History & Interpretation	TR	1050-1205	Huddlestun
RELS202.02	13163	New Testament: History & Interpretation	TR	1215-130	Huddlestun
RELS225.01	13165	The Jewish Tradition	MW	400-515	Huddlestun
RELS245.01	13166	The Hindu Tradition	TR	1050-1205	Bjerken
RELS298.01	13167	Special Topics in Religious Studies: The Religion of Trump	MW	200-315	Siegler
RELS370.01	13168	Adv. Topics in Religious Studies: Catholicism in America	TR	925-1040	Cressler
RELS450.01	10947	Senior Seminar: Ancestors and the Dead	TR	1215-130	Lowe
FYSE134.02	13510	Race, Gender and Climate Change	MWF	200-250	LeVasseur
FYSE134.01	13443	You Are What You Wear	MW	200-315	Doire
HONS175.01	11896	Approaches to Religion: Making Believe and Making Belief in Religious Studies	TR	140-255	Lowe
HONS225.03	13173	The Religion of Donald Trump	TR	1050-1205	Siegler

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES FALL 2020 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

**RELS 101.01**                      **Approaches to Religion: Making Believe and Making Belief**                      **Prof. Lowe**  
**in Religious Ritual**  
**TR**                                      **925-1040**

What is the relationship between what we *do* and what we *believe*, or perhaps, what we *become*? When does *make believe* transform into *making belief*? What role does *ritual* play in our both the mundane and exceptional parts of our lives? This course is designed to introduce students to theoretical and methodological approaches to the academic study of religion. The course takes as its gravitational center the concept of performance as a key approach to understanding religion and its role in the production of *self, the social world, values, politics, and economy* as well as its potential to introduce ruptures and changes to all of these.

**RELS 101.02/03**                      **Approaches to Religion: Religion and Protest**                      **Prof. Fisher**  
**MWF**                                      **1100-1150 and 1200-1250**

Is religion an aid or an obstacle to social justice? Is faith a catalyst for liberation and change or is it the mother of hate and intolerance? This course will introduce students to the academic study of religion by exploring the complex relation between religion and protest in the Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic traditions. It will do so in three ways: 1) by examining texts and events in which religious commitments have inspired individuals and groups to challenge perceived wrongs; 2) by considering significant critiques of religion and faith; and 3) by examining the current debate regarding religion and ecology. Through thoughtful analysis and lively discussion, students will begin to develop the critical skills necessary to make sense of current disputations concerning the role of religion in the public sphere.

**RELS 101.04/05**                      **Approaches to Religion: Sacred Space**                      **Prof. Keegan**  
**MWF**                                      **900-950 and 1000-1050**

For many religious traditions, religious activity is linked to specific places that have historical, ritual, or mythical significance. The “sacred spaces” may be found in the natural world, the built environment, or even the human body. But what is sacred space? Do we simply know it when we see it? And what happens if one person’s sacred space is not recognized by another? This course is designed to introduce you to the academic study of religion and to some of the central questions that animate the study of sacred spaces.

**RELS 105.01/02**                      **Introduction to World Religions**                      **Prof. Doire**  
**MWF**                                      **1000-1050 and 1100-1150**

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.

**RELS 105.03**                      **Introduction to World Religions**                      **Prof. Keegan**  
**MWF**                                      **1200-1250**

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 texts, rituals and concepts of the divine.

**RELS 105.04**                      **Introduction to World Religions**                      **Prof. Fisher**  
**TR**                                      **305-420**

This course is designed to introduce students to five of the world’s major religious traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well the role that religion plays in a secular society like the United States. In our discussions we will briefly examine the historical development of each tradition and pay special attention to the various concepts of divinity as well as the sacred texts, rites, rituals, myths, and narratives that are considered essential to each. With this background in place, we will then examine the ways in which these developments and concepts have influenced traditional and/or denominational variations within each tradition. Finally, we will apply what we have learned to critically analyze a culturally-specific contemporary topic inspired by our discussion and examinations. There is no prerequisite for this class.

**RELS 118.01/02      Modern History of Religions: Religions in the Americas      Prof. Cressler**  
**TR                      1215-130 and 140-255**

This course surveys the history of religions in the Americas during the modern era (1491 to the present). Students will be introduced to Indigenous American traditions; European Christianity and Judaism; African traditional religions, Christianity, and Islam; Asian religious traditions; and to the ways all these religious communities contributed to the making of the Americas as we know them today. The course situates religions in their social, political, economic, and cultural contexts, charting how religions shaped and were shaped by these historical forces. Questions considered over the course of the semester include: How did Indigenous American religions interpret the arrival of Europeans and Africans, and vice versa? How did Christianity support colonialism and slavery and how did this give rise to modern American nation-states? How has global migration and religious movements remade the religious landscape of the hemisphere?

**RELS 120.01/02      Religion, Art and Culture: Searching for the Sacred      Prof. Bjerken**  
**in Southern Art, Food, and Music**  
**MW and TR              400-515 and 130-255**

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.

**RELS 202.01/02      New Testament: History & Interpretation      Prof. Huddlestun**  
**TR                      1050-1205 and 1215-130**

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 New Testament manuscripts, the creation of an authoritative list of books in the New Testament, the origins of the diverse gospel traditions and non-canonical gospels, attempts to discover the “real” historical Jesus, evidence for Jesus outside the New Testament, the career and letters of the apostle Paul, and the apocalyptic genre (the book of Revelation in its ancient context). 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 225.01              The Jewish Tradition      Prof. Huddlestun**  
**TR                      400-515**

This course provides a window into the history, beliefs, and practices of Jewish tradition. Proceeding roughly chronologically, we begin with the Biblical foundations (Abraham) and continue up to the modern State of Israel. Particular emphasis will be given to modern Judaism (i.e., post-1800) and the various ways it has responded to changes in the world around it. As the survey progresses, we will examine the origins and rituals of the various Holy Days and select festivals celebrated or commemorated during the Jewish calendar year. Topics to be discussed include Rabbinic Judaism and the classic texts that emerged from it (Midrash, Mishnah, Talmud, etc.), the central role of study and debate in Jewish tradition, Jewish philosophy and mysticism, messianic movements, the emergence of non-Orthodox movements (e.g., Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Renewal, Humanistic, etc.), the origins of reform here in Charleston, Jewish responses to the Holocaust, and the never ending debates over Jewish identity.

**RELS 245.01                      The Hindu Tradition                      Prof. Bjerken**  
**TR                                      1050-1205**

This course provides a comprehensive overview of Hinduism's long history in India and its complex network of sacred stories, ritual practices, and rich philosophical thought. A number of enduring themes will be explored that pertain to Hindu philosophy (e.g. the relationship between Self and body), Hindu practices (sacrificial ritual, asceticism, and yoga), and politics and society (Hindu kingship, caste, gender politics, and Hindu nationalism). We will trace the transformation of Hinduism from ancient to modern India and into America today. Hindu culture is plural and inclusive, and it has evolved to meet the needs of people of different geographic regions within India and abroad. We will rely extensively on primary Hindu texts, but we will also read a pilgrim's travelogue, short stories, and watch documentary films that illustrate how Hindu ideas and practices are woven into many aspects of Hindus' daily life.

**RELS 298.01                      Special Topics in Religious Studies: The Religion of Trump                      Prof. Siegler**  
**MW                                      200-315**

The past few years have seen significant discourse about the role religion has played in Donald Trump's presidency. Why do some consider Trump chosen by God, whereas others see him as a "cult" leader? Why did 81% of white evangelicals vote for him in 2016, despite many people seeing him as biblically illiterate? What is Trump's own religious background and how does that connect him to Oprah? How does the religious worldview of Trump's VP, Attorney-General, and Secretary of State drive U.S. policy? How can studying American religious history and classical theories of religion help us understand Trump? Join this interdisciplinary, discussion-based class to find out. Expect exciting guest speakers and a flexible syllabus that will react to fast breaking news.

**RELS 370.01                      Adv. Special Topics in Religious Studies: Catholicism in America                      Prof. Cressler**  
**TR                                      925-1040**

Catholics have been in the Americas since Europeans and Africans first crossed the Atlantic. Nevertheless, their presence served as a source of conflict through much of United States history. Many Protestant Americans viewed Catholicism as antithetical to "real" U.S. American identity. Meanwhile, many Catholics imagined themselves to be the first, best, and truest Americans. This course will provide a broad history of Catholics and Catholicism in the lands that became the United States. It will also invite students to think through some critical questions in U.S. Catholic studies. How did colonialism and enslavement shape Catholicism as it developed in the Americas? Can we identify a distinctively American Catholicism? Have Catholics become indistinguishable from other U.S. Americans? What does the future hold? This course will seek to answer these questions, and more!

**RELS 450.01                      Senior Seminar: Ancestors and the Dead                      Prof. Lowe**  
**TR                                      1215-130**

From Catholic saints and West African orisha to hungry ghosts and ancestral shrines, concern for and engagement with the dead is a common feature of a vast array of religious cultures. This exploratory seminar will examine a variety of theoretical angles and methodological approaches for understanding human thought and practice concerning the dead. Case studies will be drawn from diverse contexts including African American literature and art, Catholic devotionism, Chinese ancestral devotion, Buddhist burial practices, and black Atlantic possession rituals in order to build a field of comparative analysis to illuminate and investigate questions about materiality and immateriality, transcorporeality, memory, and the ethics of remembrance. *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**

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.

**FYSE 134.02**  
**MWF**

**Race, Gender and Climate Change**  
**200-250**

**Prof. LeVasseur**

This course is designed to introduce College of Charleston students to theories, data, and other content related to the social constructs of race and gender; how these constructs shape human/nature interactions within the context of human-caused global warming; and how such warming will impact human animals (and nonhuman lifeforms) in various ways, with particular attention on the racial and gendered aspects of global warming. The course adopts an evolutionary scientific understanding and a feminist teaching perspective to ground these explorations. The course is structured as a mix of lectures, videos, group work and discussions, and reading seminar.

**HONS 175.01**

**Approaches to Religion: Making Believe and Making Belief**  
**in Religious Ritual**  
**140-255**

**Prof. Lowe**

**TR**

What is the relationship between what we *do* and what we *believe*, or perhaps, what we *become*? When does *make believe* transform into *making believe*? What role does *ritual* play in our both the mundane and exceptional parts of our lives? This course is designed to introduce students to theoretical and methodological approaches to the academic study of religion. The course takes as its gravitational center the concept of performance as a key approach to understanding religion and its role in the production of *self, the social world, values, politics, and economy* as well as its potential to introduce ruptures and changes to all of these.

**HONS 250.03**

**The Religion of Donald Trump**  
**1050-1205**

**Prof. Siegler**

**TR**

Was Donald Trump chosen by God? Or is he a “cult” leader? Why did 81% of white evangelicals vote for him in 2016, despite him being biblically illiterate? What is Trump’s own religious background and how does that connect him to Oprah? How does the religious worldview of Trump’s VP, Attorney-General, and Secretary of State drive U.S. policy? How can studying American religious history and classical theories of religion help us understand Trump? Join this interdisciplinary, discussion-based class to find out. Expect exciting guest speakers and a flexible syllabus that will react to fast breaking news.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES COURSE OFFERINGS FOR SUMMER 2020

Course	CRN	Title	Term	Meeting Days	Meeting Time	Instructor
RELS105.01	30028	Intro to World Religions	Maymester	Online	Online	LeVasseur
RELS230.01	30711	The Christian Tradition	Summer II	Online	Online	Lowe
RELS280.01	30982	Religion and Film	Maymester	Online	Online	Siegler
RELS298.01	30323	Spiritual Activism and the Climate Crisis	Summer II	Online	Online	LeVasseur

### MAYMESTER 2020

**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.

**RELS 280.01                      Religion & Film                      Prof. Siegler**  
**ONLINE**

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.

### SUMMER II 2020

**RELS 230.02                      The Christian Tradition                      Prof. Lowe**  
**ONLINE**

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 298.01                      Special Topics: Spiritual Activism and the Climate Crisis                      Prof. LeVasseur**  
**ONLINE**

This course adopts a religion and environmental humanities lens to investigate not only the causes and impacts of human-induced global warming, but also some solutions. Through a mixture of lectures, videos, and class discussions students will explore how religious identities, broadly speaking, may be mobilized to advocate for resilient solutions to the climate crisis. The course utilizes an intersectional understanding of climate change via ecofeminist and ecowomanist lenses that help analyze causes of climate change, and pathways to more just, resilient solutions to it. The course explores intentional community-based efforts at climate adaptation and resiliency, focusing on the ecospiritual aspects of Transition Towns, Ecovillages, and other sacred-ecologies of place lifeways. Lastly the course investigates the religious, spiritual, and ethical motivations of climate activists, especially intersectional activists in their teens and 20s, while also investigating the psychology of responding to climate change, focusing on how spiritual activism may promote advocacy for a more sustainable future for all.