FALL2021 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 Dr. Elijah Siegler (siegler@cofc.edu) or Dr. Zeff Bjerken (bjerken@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 450: 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.

RELS COURSE OFFERINGS FOR FALL 2021

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<th>Course</th>
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<td>Approaches to Religion: Messiahs &amp; Messianic Movements</td>
<td>MW</td>
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<td>RELS101.03</td>
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<td>Approaches to Religion: Belief and Make-Believe</td>
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<td>HONS175.01</td>
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RELS 101.01/02  Approaches to Religion: Messiahs & Messianic Movements  Prof. Huddlestun
MW  
1400-1515 and 1600-1715
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 101.03  Approaches to Religion: Belief and Make-Believe  Prof. Lowe
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 101.04  Approaches to Religion: Religion and Transcendence  Prof. Fisher
Sex, Drugs and Rock & Roll
TR  
1505-1620
This course is designed to introduce students to the academic study of religion by exploring the complex relation between Religion and Transcendence. It will do so by examining the variety of ways in which religious traditions and communities “access the divine,” either through ritualized participation in, or devoted abstinence from, certain “temporal” or “mundane” experiences and/or activities—notably, sexual practices, the use of intoxicants, and the medium of music. Through thoughtful analysis and lively discussion of pagan and indigenous, Abrahamic, and Eastern traditions, we will examine the extent to which our decidedly “material” lives are intertwined with a cosmic “other.” In doing so, students will begin to develop the critical skills necessary to assess the varieties of religious experience as well as their continuing influence on “living” religious communities.

RELS 105.01  Introduction to World Religions  Prof. Siegler
MWF  
1000-1050
This course introduces the beliefs and practices of important religious traditions, emphasizing how religions change and interact with each other in the modern world. Topics will include: Theories of Religion, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, 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  Prof. Fisher
TR  
1050-1205 and 1215-1330
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 supposedly “secular” society like the United States. In our discussions we will briefly examine the historical developments of each tradition, and pay special attention to the myths, texts, rites, rituals, and narratives that are considered essential to qualifying each as a “lived” religious tradition. There is no prerequisite for this class.

RELS 105.04  Introduction to World Religions (ONLINE EXPRESS II)  Prof. Tarleton
MW  
1600-1845
Students will encounter religious traditions from around the world and be challenged to ask what is a “World Religion” anyway. Who is excluded from this category, and who is included? This course will use material culture artifacts (including movies, objects, television, art, and ritual sites) to explore how different religious traditions engage with materiality to express their worldview, their history, and their own self definitions of what we call “religion.”
RELS 105.05  Introduction to World Religions (EXPRESS II)  Prof. Greenwell
TR   1730-2015
This survey course begins by questioning the philosophical, anthropological, and sociological definitions of religion. Employing a double approach featuring primary sources and living cultural portraits, subsequent topics of study include specific snapshots of the Religions of Samsara (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism), the Religions of the Book (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), the Religions of the Far East (Taoism and Shintoism), as well as a sampling of belief systems from Africa, North America, and Antiquity. In addition to gaining culturally literacy, successful completion of this course empowers the student to develop a working definition of religion as the historical intersection of transcendent and immanent.

RELS 120.01  Religion, Art and Culture: Searching for the Sacred in the Art, Food, and Music of the South  Prof. Bjerken
TR   1215-1330
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.

RELS 185.01/02  Women and Religion (ONLINE)  Prof. Tarleton
MWF   1100-1150 and 1200-1250
How have women encountered religion through history? How have ideas about femininity in religion affected social structures, politics, and culture? This course will focus on images and roles of women within various global religious traditions. This course will use primary and secondary texts, as well as material culture artifacts, works of art by and about women, and film to offer a robust and careful consideration of the roles that women have held in traditions over time. Attention and care will be paid to the ways that gender and identity construction has changed over time, and the expectations of roles, participation, and leadership from women in certain religious spaces.

RELS 240.01  The Buddhist Tradition  Prof. Bjerken
TR   925-1040
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 260.01  Native American Religions  Prof. Keegan
TR   1340-1455
This course will introduce students to the history and contemporary realities of Native American traditions across North America. We will foreground Indigenous voices and evaluate and analyze the rich cultural, ceremonial, and ideological diversity of Native American religious practices and beliefs. We will analyze how engagement with Euro-American missionaries, settlers, and soldiers, dispossession and cultural genocide, affect ritual practice and religious belief over time and the need for decolonized approaches. Topics will include creation stories, sacred landscapes, food sovereignty, gender and the body, religion and the environment, as well contemporary revitalization and protest movements. Throughout, we will consider what “counts” as religion in America and how religious traditions shape and are shaped by other forms of difference.
In the contemporary United States Islam is often perceived as a foreign newcomer to the American religious landscape. Indeed, congresswomen of Muslim heritage were recently told to “go back where they came from.”

Religious Studies Courses:

**RELS 298.01 Special Topics in Religious Studies: American Islam**
Prof. Davidson
MWF 1000-1050

**RELS 360.01 Myth, Ritual and Symbol: Black Atlantic Religions**
Prof. Lowe
TR 1050-1205

Magic bundles, the four stations of the sun, sacred mirrors, and cornmeal cosmograms – this course explores the convergence of Euro-American Christianities and ancient West African ritual traditions that combine in the “Black Atlantic” (Afro-Caribbean) context. Beginning with theoretical explorations of myth, ritual, and symbol drawn from ritual studies and performance studies, we will take a deep dive into the sometimes strange but always inspiring world of ritual practice in Haiti, Cuba, and Brazil.

**RELS 450.01 Senior Seminar in Religious Studies: Spirituality**
Prof. Siegler
MW 1600-1715

How does one study spirituality? Where does it come from? Why do so many people say they are “spiritual but not religious”? What is spirituality anyway? This class will be an investigation of spirituality through the lenses of phenomenology, history, and critical theory. We will be looking at a variety of examples, including in-depth studies of spiritual tourism in China and in U.S. National Parks. We will also spend 24 hours at spiritual retreat center in Myrtle Beach. Students will research and present papers in their own area of interest. This class will be conducted as a seminar, modeled on those found at graduate programs in religious studies. Students are expected to actively participate in discussion including serving at least once as discussion leader, and once as recording secretary.

**FYSE 134 Who Do Voodoo? We All Do! Exploring Magic and Ritual in Religions Familiar and Strange**
Prof. Lowe
TR 1340-1455

Voodoo dolls, zombies, and witchdoctors – the popular portrayal of Black Atlantic religious practices makes them seem strange, magical, and even dangerous. But, how different are these ritual practices from the practices of much more familiar “religions”? To answer that question, this course will closely examine “Black Atlantic” religions like Haitian Vodou, Brazilian Candomblé, and Cuban Santeria as well as the ritual practices of more familiar traditions like American Evangelicalism. By focusing on theoretical approaches to ritual and concepts like “magic” and “religion,” we will uncover surprising points of continuity that suggest that, at least some of the time, we all “do Voodoo.”

**HONS 175 Approaches to Religion: Sacred Spaces**
Prof. Keegan
TR 1050-1205

This course introduces students to Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Native America through the study of sacred space. These “sacred spaces” may be found in the natural world, the built environment, or even the human body. Students will engage key theorists and approaches to the academic study of religion and to some of the central questions that animate the study of sacred space. We will explore and evaluate case studies through diverse traditions and geographical locations, including our own Holy City. We will evaluate how religion relates to the social, political and economic contexts in which it is embedded; not merely as something people think or believe but as something people do.

**HONS 225 From the Holy to the Mundane: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol**
Prof. Huddlestun
TR 1340-1455

Drawing from literature in religious studies, anthropology, and sociology, this course addresses a number of questions across a range of religious, social, and political situations. Do (or must) myths or symbols have universal meaning? What is the relationship between myth and ritual? Must one precede the other? Do myths, rituals, and symbols reflect reality, or 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, as well as the ways in which myth, ritual, and symbol are created, used (or abused), revised, or reinvented to reinforce existing religious and socio-political institutions.
MAYMESTER 2021

RELS105.02  Introduction to World Religions (ONLINE)  Prof. Keegan
MW  1100-1215 (ONLINE Meetings)
This course will explore a variety of human cultural traditions from around the world that are traditionally considered “World Religions,” including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Daoism, and Native American religions. In addition to learning about important practices, texts, objects, and beliefs, the course will consider what we mean by the word “religion” itself. 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.

RELS280.01  Religion & Film  Prof. Siegler
TR  1100-1215 (ONLINE Meetings)
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 I 2021

RELS105.01  Introduction to World Religions  Prof. Lowe
ONLINE
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 always be paying attention to the word “religion” and the history 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.

RELS120.01  Religion, Art and Culture: Religion and Harry Potter  Prof. Keegan
ONLINE
What exactly is magical thinking? What are magical practices? And how do such activities relate to religious thought and practices? This course will use the Harry Potter book series as a guide through the overlapping and extraordinary worlds of religion and magic. We will analyze the history and presence of ghosts, cursed objects, potions, and wizardry, as well as the power of Harry Potter in the popular imagination. Students will engage critiques and celebrations of the series from religious people and explore the intersections of religion, art, and culture in the contemporary world.
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.

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.”