

COURSES FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Religious Studies Courses

REL100 Intro To Religious Studies

HU

Hours 3

Various methodological approaches to the academic study of religion, with examples of religious life and thought drawn from a variety of cultures. This course is required of all majors and minors.

Humanities

REL101 The Violent and the Sacred: Religion and the Problem of Human Suffering

HU

Hours 3

This introductory course examines the socio-cultural constructs called "religion" and "violence" with the help of academic theories and theorists in order to consider relationships between the two. The course introduces theories of evil, violence, and hatred, using historical and contemporary case studies on such topics as terrorism and genocide.

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Prerequisite(s) with concurrency: N/A

Humanities

REL102 Intro to Religions of the World

HU

Hours 3

This comparative study of religions highlights complexity in world religions. Topics, such as texts, practices, and deities, organize the study of different pairs of religions.

Humanities

REL103 Religion in the News

HU

Hours 3

This introductory level course examines the place and function of religion in modern culture by examining the way stories are (or are not) identified as religious in news media. Drawing on various historical examples—from print to digital media—the course introduces students to the academic study of religion through case studies of how religion is commonly represented in the media, paying particular attention to the possible motives and practical consequences to classifying claims, actions and organizations as religious or not. As part of the core curriculum, this course addresses the ability of students to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in the humanistic fields of religious studies and history. The course is broad in scope and takes a global perspective of religion and news media and the relationship between all points of view on these subjects. The emphasis of the course is the history and appreciation of religion, media, and culture.

Humanities

REL104 Religion in Pop Culture

HU

Hours 3

Instead of assuming that religion is a distinct aspect of the human, one that interacts only with elements of elite or high culture, this course examines the ways that the beliefs and behaviors that we commonly classify as religious are a part of everyday culture—in particular, the ways that they are produced by and in turn influence popular culture. Myths, rituals, and traditions circulate all throughout mass culture via print, radio, television, and now the web. The course therefore introduces students to a set of recent, historical examples where the scholar of religion can shed light on the workings of contemporary day-to-day life. As a part of the core curriculum, this course addresses the ability of students to deal with questions of values, ethics, or aesthetics as they are represented in the humanistic fields of learning regarding the study of religion, film, art, music, and online media. The course is broad in scope and takes a global perspective on religion and popular culture as well as the relationship between all points of view on these subjects. The emphasis of the course is the history and appreciation of religion and popular culture.

Prerequisite(s): None.

Prerequisite(s) with concurrency: None.

Humanities

REL105 Honors Intro Relig Study

HU, UH

Hours 3

Honors version of REL 100.

Humanities, University Honors

REL106 Introduction to Ancient Greek Religions

HU

Hours 3

This course is an introduction to the myths and practices of what contemporary scholars call ancient Greek religion. It examines the problem of defining "religion," and translating specific ancient greek terms as "religion," and the implication involved in this process.

Humanities

REL110 Intro To The Old Testament

HU

Hours 3

Introduction to the books of the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible as it is known in Judaism, in their historical setting, with emphasis on textual analysis and on literary forms and their function and use in the past and present.

Humanities

REL112 Intro To New Testament

HU

Hours 3

Introduction to the Hellenistic world of early Christianity, examining the early traditions about Jesus that were organized into the Gospels and the letters of Paul.

Humanities

REL120 Religion and Science

HU

Hours 3

This course is a broad, interdisciplinary introduction to the ways in which "science" and "religion" have been defined.

Humanities

REL124 Religion and Film in America

HU

Hours 3

This course considers popular film as a site for investigating and critiquing religion in America. Historically significant, as well as currently popular, films are examined in relation to academic writings about film and religion in order to gain a greater understanding of the role religious rhetoric, imagery, and concepts play in American popular culture.

Humanities

REL130 Religion, Politics, and Law

HU

Hours 3

This introductory level course examines the construction of religion through law, politics, and the nation-state. Students are introduced to the role of religion in liberal political theory, secularism, and the modern rise of the nation-state. This course will be particularly helpful to students interested in religious studies, history, political science, law, and philosophy.

Humanities

REL209 Buddhism

HU

Hours 3

This course offers a survey of religious themes and movements related to Buddhism in various Asian countries and North America. The topics include historical narratives, interpretations of texts, transformations of rituals, diaspora and identity, nationalism and politics, and Buddhism in contemporary culture.

Humanities

REL220 Survey Of Asian Religion

HU

Hours 3

Introductory survey of the major religious traditions of Asia, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto.

Humanities

REL223 Holocaust Historical Perspecti

Hours 3

Examination of this event, and scholarship on it, from various historical and critical perspectives.

REL224 Judaism

HU

Hours 3

A study of some of the leading schools and interpreters of Judaism and a review of modern developments including the Holocaust and the State of Israel.

Prerequisite(s): No prerequisites required.

Humanities

REL226 African Diaspora Religions

HU

Hours 3

Examination of African influence throughout the Americas (e.g., Candomblé in Brazil, Vodou in the Caribbean, African-American religions in North America), focusing on the interplay between religion, culture and politics.

Humanities

REL231 Religious Existentialism

HU

Hours 3

This course surveys the history of a very influential school of modern, Western religious thought called religious existentialism. We will review the major texts, authors, and themes of this eclectic movement. The course will include study and discussion of texts by Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Buber, Heidegger, de Beauvoir, Sartre, Fanon, Derrida, Cixous and Zizek.

Humanities

REL234 Women And Religion

Hours 3

The role and place of women in several religious traditions, ancient and modern.

REL236 Islam

HU

Hours 3

An introduction to the traditions of Islam, including their history, texts, intellectual debates, and contemporary practices.

Humanities

REL237 Self Society & Religions

Hours 3

A survey of psychological and social theories used to study religion, drawing on different cultural and historical data of relevance to the approaches surveyed.

REL238 Philosophies Of Judaism

Hours 3

Survey of major philosophical formulations of the nature and role of Jews and Judaism, written by select Jewish thinkers.

REL240 Apocalypse In Popular Media

HU

Hours 3

Examines contemporary depictions of apocalypse and dystopia in popular media.

Humanities

REL241 American Religious History

HU

Hours 3

This course offers a survey of religious themes and movements in American culture from the period before European colonization to the present. It is of particular use for students interested in American history, law, American studies, religious studies, and cultural studies.

Humanities

REL245 Honors Hist. Religions of Amer

UH

Hours 3

This Honors course offers a survey of religious themes and movements in American culture from the period before European colonization to the present.

University Honors

REL310 REL Goes to the Movies

Hours 1

This one credit course involves monthly films, discussions, and attending either the annual Day or Aronov Lecture.

REL311 English Bible As Literature

W

Hours 3

Analytical and critical study of a number of books of the Bible; each book is examined and evaluated as an example of a particular literary genre. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL315 Digital Humanities in Religious Studies

Hours 3

This cross-disciplinary course introduces students to the methods of the digital humanities by applying those methods to the study of religion. Students will learn a variety of digital methods and tools and apply those to data drawn from religious studies. Students do not need a background in computing or religious studies.

REL321 Rel & Ident in South Asia

Hours 3

Investigates the intersections of various social divisions and identities with religious labels and practices by analyzing case studies from South Asia.

REL322 Tales from Asia: Told and Retold in Film and Popular Culture

W

Hours 3

This core writing course analyzes retellings of ancient tales within contemporary popular culture, investigating versions of two specific stories, the Ramayana and Journey to the West, to address issues surrounding myths and cultural identity and the ways people adapt stories for various ideological purposes, including the politics of translation, adaptation, and classification. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Prerequisite(s): None

Prerequisite(s) with concurrency: None

Writing

REL336 Islam and the West

W

Hours 3

Media coverage of Muslims in the United States and Europe often focus on some kind of comparison or contrast between Islam and "the West." This course examines how ideas of Islam and the West have been co-constructed. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL341 Theories of Myth

W

Hours 3

From Hercules to Achilles, to Odysseus, and from Oedipus Rex to Medea, myths of the ancient Greek world are as popular today as they were thousands of years ago. Why do we re-tell those ancient myths today? What makes something a myth? What's the difference between a myth and a story? How did scholars try to explain the origin and function of myths? Do we produce myths today? The course will address those questions by looking at several myths of the ancient Greco-Roman world but also will look at the theories scholars developed in order to understand those stories. The course examines the history of differing theories of myth, conceived as a sub-type of narrative. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL342 Theories of Ritual

W

Hours 3

This Core Writing course explores a wide range of rituals in diverse religious, social, and cultural contexts. We examine various theories about the definitions, meanings, and roles of ritual. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL347 Jewish-Christian Relations

W

Hours 3

Critical examination of the 2,000-year-old relationship focusing on areas of commonality and difference. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL351 Asian Religions in America

W

Hours 3

This course introduces the history and development of Asian religions in American culture. Topics will include immigrant groups, American-born converts, and the ways Asian religions have been represented and imagined in American culture. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL355 The Rhetoric of Religious Conviction

W

Hours 3

Examines the resort to religion in the rhetoric and actions of selected public figures. Appeals to religious values will be critically analyzed in relation to the writings and works of persons such as Dorothy Day, Desmond Tutu, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Malcolm X, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King, or Sojourner Truth. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL360 Individual Research

Hours 1-3

Supervised research of the student's choice. May be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics. Speak with the professor before registering.

REL361 Individual Research

Hours 1-3

Supervised research of the student's choice. May be repeated for a maximum of 12 hours for differing topics. Speak with the professor before registering.

REL370 Adv Study Religion In Religion and Communication

Hours 3

Specific context will be determined by faculty responsible for the course that semester. May be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics.

REL371 Adv St Religion and Conflict

Hours 3

Specific context will be determined by faculty responsible for the course that semester. May be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics.

REL372 Adv Std Religion and Context

Hours 3

Specific context will be determined by faculty responsible for the course that semester. May be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics.

REL373 Seminar Rel and Communication

Hours 3

Specific context will be determined by faculty responsible for the course that semester. May be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics.

REL400 Religious Studies Honors Thesis

Hours 3

REL 400 is an independent research course in which the student conducts Honors Thesis research under the guidance of a thesis advisor. Research projects will include the development of an original research question; in-depth research into relevant secondary and primary sources; a prospectus outlining the proposed thesis; a 15-25 page long essay with reference notes and annotated bibliography; and an oral presentation of the research. Students will meet regularly with the thesis advisor throughout the semester during which which the course is undertaken. Talk to the REL advisor for more information.

Prerequisite(s): Permission of the Instructor

REL410 Religion and Genocide

Hours 3

Explores the phenomenon known as genocide by examining its relationship to the religion in both its institutional and theological frameworks.

REL415 Religion in the American South

W

Hours 3

This Writing course will look at the roles and implications of myths and rituals in the American South, using the UA campus as its own case study and talking about how notions of “the past” come to be invented in different ways for different social purposes through memorials and monuments. Because the course carries the Core “W” designation, an important component of the seminar is the culminating term paper, which we will take through the writing process throughout the semester. This includes brainstorming, drafting, peer editing, and revising. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL419 Adv Studies in Myth and Ritual

W

Hours 3

Examination of the theories and methods used to study the relations between religious narrative and behavioral systems, with a focus on myth and ritual. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL420 Gospel Of Mark

W

Hours 3

Investigates the Gospel of Mark through the disciplines of contemporary biblical, literary, and cultural criticism. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL430 Religion and Literature

W

Hours 3

This course will examine religion and literature in light of what both discourses rely heavily on: namely, canon formation. From a critical starting point that views these two categories as socio-cultural products, we will discuss problems of authorship, readership, and canonicity with a particular eye toward the questions and implications of decisions that are made regarding what “counts” in literary or religious traditions. An important component of the seminar is the mastering the steps in the writing process, which we will be utilizing throughout the semester. These steps include brainstorming, drafting, peer editing, and revising. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Writing

REL436 Making Islam: Debating Authenticity and Authority

Hours 3

This course is a study of how various agents (both Muslim and non-Muslims) construct, debate, and refute ideas about Islam in popular culture and academic sources. We will pay particular attention to how scholars attempt to make sense of such diverse accounts, the assumptions that they make, and the roles that they play in debates over the nature of Islam.

Prerequisite(s): None

REL440 Theories of Religion

Hours 3

Examines classic and contemporary theories of religion such as functionalism, structuralism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. Emphasis may vary with each offering.

REL450 Religion & Power in Colonial India

Hours 3

This course explores the ways Britons and South Asians imagined, debated, conspired, and coerced one another in the construction of “religion” during the colonial period of South Asian history.

REL455 Popular Culture and Religion Seminar

Hours 3

A seminar on method in the study of religion and popular culture based in the ongoing projects of seminar participants.

Prerequisite(s): permission of instructor

REL460 Individual Research

Hours 1-3

Supervised research of the student’s choice. May be repeated for a maximum of 12 hours for differing topics. Speak with the professor before registering.

REL461 Individual Research

Hours 1-3

Supervised research of the student’s choice. May be repeated for a maximum of 12 hours for differing topics. Speak with the professor before registering.

REL480 Seminar Rel and Conflict

Hours 3

Specific context will be determined by faculty responsible for the course that semester. May be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics.

REL483 Seminar Rel and Context

Hours 3

Specific context will be determined by faculty responsible for the course that semester. May be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics.

REL490 Senior Capstone Seminar

Hours 3

A seminar offered spring semester of each year for seniors pursuing a major or minor in religious studies or minor in Judaic studies. The professor and subject of the seminar rotate through the four areas of the curriculum. Required of all majors and minors in the Department. May be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics.

REL501 Social Theory and Religious Studies

Hours 3

This three credit hour graduate seminar introduces students to terms and ideas from social theory and their relevance to the academic study of religion. Throughout the course, students will apply theories to analyze examples relevant in Religious Studies, both ancient and modern. Each student will also select an important work in their chosen field of study in consultation with their advisor and analyze that work in depth in relation to the various issues discussed in the course.

Prerequisite(s): None, except admission to degree program

REL502 Public Humanities and Religious Studies

Hours 3

This graduate seminar introduces students to public humanities and digital humanities approaches to the study of religion. Students learn methods and tools for conducting digital research and explore ways to communicate theoretical and religious studies research to public audiences through digital media. Students are introduced to a number of digital tools for research, scholarly communication, and public engagement and will work to apply those tools to their individual research interests and goals.

Prerequisite(s): None, except admission to degree program

REL503 Methods for the Digital Study of Religion

Hours 1

This graduate seminar introduces students to methods for the digital study of religion with a focus on the interfaces that enable computationally mediated scholarship. Students will tackle two core issues in digital scholarship: the development of computational research questions and the design and creation of digital text. Each student will develop a proof of concept for a computation-driven research question in their chosen field of study and a web page that introduces their project idea. The course is structured around a series of intensive, hands-on and collaborative workshops, the first focused on questions of computation and the second on web development.

REL504 Special Topics in Religion in Culture

Hours 3

To illustrate the gains of applying social theory to the study of religion, this course will draw upon current examples to study in light of the skills gained in the social theory foundations course. Specific content will be determined by faculty responsible for the course each semester. This course may be repeated for a maximum of 9 hours for differing topics.

Prerequisite(s): None, except admission to degree program

REL511 History of Religious Studies

Hours 3

This graduate seminar surveys the origins, objects of study, and pivotal thinkers that scholars often highlight when outlining the historical development/current shape of Religious Studies. By course end, each student will narrate the study of religion in light of their own research interests.

REL512 Debates in Method and Theory

Hours 3

This graduate seminar will acquaint students with contemporary debates and authors, emphasizing the work of a newer generation of scholars, in order to consider more closely the tools that scholars use to study religion, the various contexts in which they carry out their work, and some of their wider implications.

REL521 Self & Society

Hours 3

This graduate seminar introduces students to terms and ideas related to constructions of the self and society and their relevance to the academic study of religion. Towards the end of the semester, a specific case study will serve as a site where students will apply theories discussed to analyze examples relevant in Religious Studies. Each student will also select an important work or issue in their chosen field of study in consultation with their advisor and analyze that work in depth in relation to the various issues discussed in the course.

REL522 Power & Persuasion

Hours 3

This graduate seminar introduces students to terms and ideas related to expressions of power and persuasion and their relevance to the academic study of religion. Throughout the course, a specific case study will serve as a site where students will apply theories discussed to analyze examples relevant in Religious Studies. Each student will also select an important work or issue in their chosen field of study in consultation with their advisor and analyze that work in depth in relation to the various issues discussed in the course.

REL523 Discourse & Practice

Hours 3

This graduate seminar introduces students to terms and ideas related to discourse and practice and their relevance to the academic study of religion. Throughout the course, students will apply theories to analyze examples relevant in Religious Studies, both ancient and modern. Each student will also select an important work in their chosen field of study in consultation with their advisor and analyze that work in depth in relation to the various issues discussed in the course.

REL524 Past & Present

Hours 3

This graduate seminar introduces students to terms and ideas related to the construction of the past and its relation to the present and their relevance to the academic study of religion. Throughout the course, students will apply theories to analyze examples relevant in Religious Studies, both ancient and modern. Each student will also select an important work in their chosen field of study in consultation with their advisor and analyze that work in depth in relation to the various issues discussed in the course.

REL525 Identity & Place

Hours 3

This graduate seminar introduces students to terms and ideas related to issues of identification and place and their relevance to the academic study of religion. Throughout the course, a specific case study will serve as a site where students will apply theories discussed to analyze examples relevant in Religious Studies. Each student will also select an important work or issue in their chosen field of study in consultation with their advisor and analyze that work in depth in relation to the various issues discussed in the course.

REL560 Independent Study in Social Theory in Religious Studies

Hours 1-9

This variable credit hour graduate course provides students with the opportunity to pursue a topic of their choosing in relation to social theory and its relevance to the academic study of religion. Throughout the course, students will meet with the professor to select and discuss readings and writing assignments.

Prerequisite(s): None, except admission to degree program

REL561 Independent Study in Social Theory in Religious Studies

Hours 1-9

This variable credit hour graduate course provides students with the opportunity to pursue a topic of their choosing in relation to social theory and its relevance to the academic study of religion. Throughout the course, students will meet with the professor to select and discuss readings and writing assignments.

Prerequisite(s): None, except for admission to degree program

REL565 Religion in Culture Applied

Hours 1-9

This course reflects the Department's aim to help prepare students with a wide variety of research and professional interests for futures beyond their M.A. To that end, the Department has established relationships with a variety of offices on- and off-campus whose workplaces rely on the kinds of skills students learn in the M.A. degree program. When students sign up for this course, they will be assigned to a supervisor working in one of these professional settings. This assignment will consist of participating in at least five hours per week of hands-on training, while also applying the analytical and digital skills gained in their M.A. coursework. Various projects will be determined by the supervisor overseeing the graduate student's work, in conversation with the Graduate Director. By the end of the semester, the student will have not only completed a number of site-specific tasks but also written at least one blog post for the Department's website synthesizing their take-aways from the experience.

REL580 Academic Writing in the Study of Religion

Hours 3

The purpose of this seminar is to shape a piece of each student's critical writing into publishable form. To this end the class will be run as a workshop, with the students' own writing as the primary material. On days when there is focus on a single student's essay, another class member will be assigned to present that essay to the class, by identifying its thesis, describing its situation in a larger critical field of religious studies, and outlining its argument. At other times students will be asked to bring in pieces of their essays for more intense focus. At the end of the class each student will submit their essay to a refereed journal in the academic study of religion.

REL590 Capstone Seminar in Social Theory in Religious Studies

Hours 3

In this culmination class experience, normally enrolled in final Spring semester, students will present their ongoing original thesis research for the purposes of soliciting feedback from the instructor and classmates. In light of the feedback, students will respond and revise their work. Having begun the degree with two common foundations courses (one on social theory and one on public humanities digital skills), students in this course will integrate and apply the skills learned throughout the degree.

Prerequisite(s): None, except admission to degree program

REL599 Religious Studies Masters Thesis

Hours 1-9

This independent research course which partially fulfills required master's-level thesis hours for students completing a formal thesis project as part of their degree program. The course is conducted under the guidance of the student's thesis advisor. Material covered will be of an advanced nature aimed at providing master's students with an understanding of the latest research and current developments within the field. Discussion and advisor guidance will be directed towards readings of research articles and development of research methodology, with the aim of producing an original research contribution that represents a novel development in the field, or a novel perspective on a pre-existing topic in the field. Research projects will result in the production of an article length essay or equivalent digital project (as approved by the thesis advisor), as well as an oral presentation of the research. Students will meet regularly with the thesis advisor throughout the semester during which the course is undertaken.