Colby

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Chair, *Professor Nikky Singh*
Professors Debra Campbell and Nikky Singh; Associate Professor Carleen Mandolfo; Assistant Professor David Freidenreich

The study of religion in a college curriculum involves the historical and comparative scrutiny of the religious traditions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. Inevitably, the examination of basic questions about religion, such as the existence and nature of God, religious experience, and the role of religion in society, are central to the discipline.

Requirements for the Major in Religious Studies

A minimum of 10 courses, to include at least one from each of the following groups: Eastern religions (211, 212); Judaism and Islam (181, 182, or History 285); Christianity (121, 216, 217, 236, 255, 258, 259); and Bible (143, 144). The 10 required courses will include three religious studies courses at the 300 level or above; and a senior independent study project. The three required 300-level courses may not include courses from other departments or institutions. The senior independent study project may take one of three forms: a four-credit independent study (491 or 492) with a religious studies faculty sponsor, a two-semester project in the honors program (483, 484) described below, or a Senior Scholars project with one mentor from the religious studies faculty. As part of the culminating experience, all seniors are required to present their independent research as part of the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

The point scale for retention of the major applies to all courses that count toward the major.

Honors Program in Religious Studies

Students majoring in religious studies may apply during their junior year for admission to the honors program. Students are expected to submit their proposal to the department chair by April 15. Admission is contingent upon GPA of 3.65 or higher in the major at the completion of their junior year. On successful completion of the work for the honors program, including a thesis, their graduation from the College will be noted as being “With Honors in Religious Studies.”

Requirements for the Minor in Religious Studies

A minimum of six courses in religious studies, including at least one from each of the following groups: Eastern religions (211, 212); Judaism and Islam (181, 182, or History 285); Christianity (121, 216, 217, 236, 255, 258, 259); and Bible (143,144). The six required courses will include two religious studies courses at the 300 level or above. The two required 300-level courses may not include courses from other departments or institutions.

Courses From Other Departments That Can Serve as Electives in Religious Studies Major

Art

- 313 Art of the Early Middle Ages
- 314 Art of the High Middle Ages

English

- 231 Tolkien’s Sources
- 364 Buddhism in American Poetry

Government

- 251 Israelis and Palestinians: Conflict and Accommodation
- 252 Politics of the Middle East

History

- 285 Foundations of Islam
- 317 The Gothic Moment: Paris and the Isle-de-France, 1100-1250
- 413 Joan of Arc: History, Legend, and Film

Music

- 254 Music of Meditation

Philosophy

- 114 Central Philosophical Issues: Nature and God
- 274 Philosophy of Religion

Course Offerings

RE117s A Passage to India: India and the Western Imagination Beginning with Walt Whitman's romantic journey toward the "soul" of the universe, Western attitudes towards India and India's encounter with Western culture will be studied. Literature and film include *A Passage to India*, *The Razor's Edge*, *The English Patient*, *Siddhartha*, *The Namesake*, *Gitanjali*, *My Son the Fanatic*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, and *Four Quartets*. Historical, political, religious, and visual context of the texts will be provided. A close reading of the texts for their aesthetic value, their existential disclosures, and as narratives on colonialism, racism, and orientalism. *Four credit hours.* **L** SINGH

[RE119] Sanskrit: The Sacred Language of Krishna and Gandhi The "divine" (*devanagari*) writing system of India, with an introduction to Sanskrit grammar and vocabulary. An exploration of some basic concepts of Hinduism and Buddhism with readings from the original texts of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. *Three credit hours.*

RE121j Catholic Church and Hollywood Explores various ways in which the histories of the Catholic Church and Hollywood intersect: in the works of God/church-obsessed directors (e.g., Alfred Hitchcock and Clint Eastwood); in Hollywood's treatment of Catholic teachings and ritual and of pivotal moments in the Catholic community's history; and in the Catholic hierarchy's attempt to act as Hollywood's censor. Designed to increase students' understanding of Catholic history and culture; provide practice in the art of discussing controversial religious topics; refine students' writing through brief, focused essays on Catholic films; and prepare students to reach their own conclusions about Catholics and Hollywood. *Three credit hours.* **H, U** CAMPBELL

RE143f Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Explores the best-selling book of all time by focusing on the first part of the Bible called the Tanakh by Jews and often referred to as the Old Testament by Christians. We will examine the original context of the texts as well as how these texts have impacted history and contemporary society in the development of laws, customs, literature, film, art, and the theological beliefs of Jews and Christians. *Four credit hours.* **L** MANDOLFO

RE144s Introduction to the New Testament Continues the exploration of the Bible begun in Religious Studies 143, although that course is not a prerequisite. We will examine the varied writings that compose the New Testament from social, historical, literary, and theological perspectives. Students will become familiar with the lives and teachings of Jesus and Paul and discuss their impact on our modern world, including their influence on classical and popular culture. *Four credit hours.* **L** MANDOLFO

RE181f Conceptions of Jews and Judaism A survey of the history of the Jewish people and the religion called Judaism from the biblical era through the Middle Ages, tracing the development of ideas, texts, beliefs, and practices that continue to influence Jewish life and thought today. Examines Christian and Islamic ideas about Jews and Judaism and the historical impact of inequality, prejudice, and persecution on Jewish society and culture. Students will acquire basic knowledge of the subject matter and will develop skills in the analysis of religious texts both as historical sources and as windows into the ways religious communities make sense of the world. *Four credit hours.* **H, I** FREIDENREICH

RE182s Jews and Judaism in the Modern World A survey of the social, cultural, intellectual, and political history of the Jews of Europe, the United States, and Israel/Palestine from the 17th century to the present. Traces the emergence of contemporary Judaism in its various manifestations. In addition to developing basic familiarity with the subject matter, students will learn how to interpret specific ideas, movements, biographies, and works of cultural production within the framework of broader dynamics associated with Jewish life in modern times. *Four credit hours.* **H, I** FREIDENREICH

RE211f Religions of India A study of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism, and Sikhism with a focus upon their religious texts and the cultural context within which they developed. An examination of the relationship these religious traditions have to one another, their metaphysical understanding of reality, their theories of self, and their views of the social, as expressed in myth, art, and ritual performance. How do these Indian religious traditions enrich our "patchwork heritage" in the United States? Readings, slides, sacred music, and film clips will be used to introduce the respective traditions. *Four credit hours.* **S** SINGH

RE212s Religions of China, Japan, and Tibet An examination of Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, and Buddhism—the indigenous religions of China, Japan, and Tibet—tracing the entrance of Buddhism into China, Japan, and Tibet and the resulting transformation of this religion in its interaction with these civilizations. The political ideology of Confucianism, the mystical dimensions of Taoism, the mythological aspects of Shinto, the meditative experiences of Zen (haiku, swordsmanship, the tea ceremony, etc.), and the psychological and artistic practices of Tibet. *Four credit hours.* **S** SINGH

RE216s Church History and Theology in Medieval Europe Listed as History 216. *Four credit hours.* **H** TAYLOR

[RE217] Religion in the U.S.A. A historical approach to religion in the United States from the Colonial period to the present. Traces the evolution of the dominant Christian tradition and focuses upon pivotal moments in the development of American Judaism and selected indigenous traditions. Examines the diversity of contemporary American religion and the relationship between religion and popular culture. Intended to provide students with practice in the art of discussing and writing about the controversial topic of religion in America so that they can reach their own informed conclusions about American religion, now

and throughout their lives. *Four credit hours.* **H**

[RE219] Texts of Terror: Violence and the "Religions of The Book" From the practice of human and animal sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible to the "sacrifice" of Jesus in the Christian Scriptures to the horror of 9/11, an examination of the intersection of violence and religion as portrayed primarily in the texts and traditions of the three Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Sacred texts, works of literature, and current events that illustrate and explore the theme of sacred violence will be the focus. Formerly offered as Religious Studies 297A. *Four credit hours.*

RE221j Topics in Maine's Jewish History Maine is home to a distinctive yet under-researched Jewish community with deep historical roots. Participants in this civic engagement course will advance scholarly and popular understanding of the experiences of Jews in Maine by producing original works of oral- and document-based historiography. In the process they will learn skills of critical ethnographic historianship and effective oral and Web-based communication. Students will also explore the nature and consequences of popular anti-Semitism and the ways in which American Jews have overcome this prejudice. Topic for January 2013: Jews at Colby. *Three credit hours.* **H, U** FREIDENREICH

RE224s Jewish Theology Listed as Jewish Studies 224. *Three credit hours.* ISAACS

RE226j Sociology of Martin Luther King Jr. Listed as Sociology 226. *Three credit hours.* **S, U** GILKES

RE236f Christianity from the Reformation to the Present Examines critical turning points in the relationship between Christianity and modernity, including the Protestant Reformation; the encounter between religion and reason; the emergence and development of evangelical Christianity; Christianity's complex relationships with movements to fight racial, ethnic, gender, and class-based oppression. Designed to increase students' understanding of the evolution and diversity of Christianity, provide practice in discussing controversial religious topics, refine writing skills, and prepare students to reach their own conclusions about Christianity and its history. *Four credit hours.* **H** CAMPBELL

RE244f Anthropology of Religion Listed as Anthropology 244. *Four credit hours.* **I** STROHL

RE246s Engaging Muslim Worlds Listed as Anthropology 246. *Four credit hours.* **I** STROHL

[RE255] The Catholic Novel An examination of the Catholic novel as an act of the Catholic imagination, a personal narrative, an exploration of the meaning of Catholic assimilation into non-Catholic cultures, and a plea for change in the church or society. Provides students with an opportunity to explore Catholic theology and spirituality in depth, both in writing and in class discussions. Prepares students to reach their own conclusions about Catholics and their church. *Four credit hours.* **L**

[RE256] The African-American Religious Experience A sociological analysis and historical overview of the diverse religious organizations, leaders, experiences, and practices of black people in the United States. Emphasis upon the predominant Afro-Christian experience, its relationship with the African background, contemporary African religions, other religions (e.g., Islam), political institutions, social change, urban problems, and the arts. Special attention to the role of black Christian women in church and society. Formerly offered as Religious Studies 356. *Four credit hours.* **U**

RE258s Religion and Literature in Modern Ireland Examines the complex interplay between Irish religion and culture from late 19th-century Anglo-Ireland through the postcolonial, multicultural, religiously diverse Irish state of the early 21st century: stories, poems, plays, and films. Designed to increase students' understanding of modern Irish literature and religious history through reading and discussing selected texts, to provide practice in discussing controversial religious topics, to refine writing skills, and to prepare students to reach their own conclusions about religion in Ireland, past and present. *Four credit hours.* **L, I** CAMPBELL

RE259f Catholics An examination of the history and culture of the Catholic Church during the past century, with special emphasis on the recent past: Vatican II, Catholic social teachings, Catholic culture wars, and what makes Catholics different from other Christians. Intended to provide students with practice in the art of writing about and discussing controversial religious topics and help them to form their own opinions concerning Catholicism—past, present, and future. *Four credit hours.* CAMPBELL

[RE275] Contemporary Wicca: Formalists, Feminists, and Free Spirits History, historicity, and practice of contemporary Wicca. One of the fastest-growing religions in North America, Wicca, often erroneously confused with Satanism, is an Earth-based religion centered on Goddess (and God) imagery stressing the sacredness of individuals and all life. Readings, videos on thea/ology, rituals, practices, and political activism of Wiccans. Experiential components (discussions with Wiccans, ritual design, participation in an open circle, personal use of divination) and questions: How does feminine divine imagery affect the development, structures, practices? How has feminism shaped Wicca in North America? Why are many Wiccans activists? Why is there public resistance to, discrimination against Wiccans? *Three credit hours.*

[RE277] Religious Responses to Harry Potter Close reading of Harry Potter novels will uncover some of the religions and ethics that have contributed to the world of Hogwarts. Students will research the principal voices in the discussion, develop an understanding of both Christian and pagan religious expressions, and write their own evidence-based analysis of the question,

what are the religious influences in the Harry Potter novels? *Three credit hours.*

RE312f South Asian Women at the Crossroads: Tradition and Modernity Study of South Asian women as they contest issues of gender, sexuality, race, class, globalization. Includes novelists, poets, philosophers, translators, artists, filmmakers, and comedians. How do modernity and tradition intersect in their texts? How do literary ideals, religious traditions, societal issues overlap? How do literary creations convey the harsh reality of honor killings, dowry deaths, female feticides, widowhood, arranged marriages, purdah? How do they express their dislocation and hybridity? What is the role of language in identity formation? Of gender-inclusive translations of scripture? Of unique tropes and metaphors from South Asia for our own thinking and being in the West? *Four credit hours.* **L, I** SINGH

[RE317] Sikhism: Scripture, Sacred Music, and Art How does the sacred text translate into the daily life, music, literature, and even the physical identity of the Sikhs? How can their text influence Sikh gender politics? With its focus on Scripture, the seminar explores not only the Hindu and Islamic parameters within which Sikhism originated but also its encounter with British colonialism and the influence of mass migration in the modern world. *Prerequisite:* Religious Studies 117, 211, or 212. *Four credit hours.* **S, I**

RE319s Bollywood and Beyond: South Asian Religions Through Film A study of South Asian religions through Bollywood and world art cinema. Focus will be on religious diversity, the partition of the Indian subcontinent, and topics of gender, sexuality, diaspora, and transnationalism. Films and assigned readings will provide historical, social, and aesthetic contexts. Goals are to expand students' knowledge of South Asia, to hone their verbal and writing skills, and to inspire awareness of and empathy for inequities and injustice. Attendance at a weekly evening film screening (to be arranged) is required. *Four credit hours.* **L, I** SINGH

RE322s Food and Religious Identity An examination of the ways in which religiously inspired food practices and food restrictions relate to the establishment and preservation of communal identity. Explores sources from diverse religious traditions and time periods with an eye both to commonalities and to elements found only within specific communities. Students will develop proficiency in the contextual analysis of primary sources and the critical evaluation of secondary literature. *Four credit hours.* **S** FREIDENREICH

RE333s Death and Spirituality An examination of selected examples of the rich and diverse literature about death and spirituality in the West, including historical and therapeutic studies, personal narratives, novels, and plays. Seeks to understand the experience of death and the challenges it poses for the terminally ill and their loved ones, medical practitioners, and caregivers. Designed to increase students' understanding of death and spirituality; provide practice discussing controversial topics related to death and spirituality; refine students' skills in oral and written communication through short reflections, daily discussions and a final project; and help students form their own opinions on death and spirituality. *Prerequisite:* Religious Studies 216, 217, 236, 258, or 259. *Four credit hours.* CAMPBELL

[RE335] The Sixties and Beyond: A Religious Revolution Examines selected texts and films from a variety of genres to explore what made the 1960s a revolutionary moment in the global history of religion. Designed to help students understand the religious legacy of the 1960s, provide practice in discussing controversial religious topics, refine writing skills, and prepare students to reach their own conclusions about the nature and long-term effects of the religious revolution of the 1960s. *Prerequisite:* Religious Studies 217, 236, or 258. *Four credit hours.*

RE357f *Jesus Christ Superstar*: The Bible in Film An examination of Hollywood's (and other filmmakers') obsession with retelling the stories of the Bible. Beginning with De Mille's classic *The Ten Commandments,* through Gibson's controversial *The Passion of the Christ*, including films that range in interpretative expression from literal to metaphorical—the former being an attempt to recreate the story, the latter being an attempt to reinterpret the story. Students also will learn some basic film theory as well as techniques for interpreting film. *Four credit hours.* **A** MANDOLFO

RE381s Women and Gender in Islam Listed as History 381. *Four credit hours.* **H, I** TURNER

[RE382] Abraham in the Abrahamic Religions "Tales of ancestors are signposts for their descendants." For no figure is this Rabbinic aphorism more true than Abraham, revered by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. A critical examination of the evolution of tales about Abraham within these three traditions from biblical times to the present. What can we learn from these changing stories about the people who tell them? What does it mean to call a religion Abrahamic? *Four credit hours.* **L**

RE384f Jewish Responses to Ethical Dilemmas An exploration of Jewish responses to genuinely difficult ethical choices and the ways in which Jewish authorities justify their normative opinions. Examines classical and contemporary responses to dilemmas in such fields as business and labor ethics, environmental ethics, and biomedical ethics, enriching Jewish sources with literature from other religious traditions and works by secular ethicists. Students will develop skills in the analysis and critique of ethical argumentation and the ability to examine and defend their own values. *Four credit hours.* FREIDENREICH

[RE386] Medieval Judaism, Real and Imagined Ideas about Judaism—those of Jews and also those of Christians—influenced medieval Jewish life in profound and diverse ways. Through a series of case studies, we will explore the development of imagined Jewish identities and their impact on real Jews in Islamic and Christian societies. We will devote particular attention to the impact of prejudice, inequality, and oppression on Jewish society and culture. Students will learn how historians approach the study of

medieval religion and will develop their own historiographic skills. *Four credit hours.* **H, I**

RE397f Reading and Researching in Biblical Hebrew I Knowledge of Biblical Hebrew is an exciting and necessary skill for advanced biblical interpretation. Students will acquire a rudimentary but working knowledge of Biblical Hebrew, as well the concomitant research skills that will allow for richer interpretation of these fascinating ancient texts. (Students should note that Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew are not coequal.) *Four credit hours.* MANDOLFO

RE398s Reading and Researching in Biblical Hebrew II Knowledge of Biblical Hebrew is an exciting and necessary skill for advanced biblical interpretation. Students will acquire a rudimentary but working knowledge of Biblical Hebrew, as well the concomitant research skills that will allow for richer interpretation of these fascinating ancient texts. (Students should note that Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew are not coequal.) *Prerequisite:* Religious Studies 397. *Four credit hours.* MANDOLFO

RE483f, 484s Religious Studies Honors Program Research conducted under the guidance of a faculty member and focused on an approved topic leading to the writing of a thesis. *Prerequisite:* A 3.65 average in the major at the end of the junior year and permission of the department. *Four credit hours.* FACULTY

RE483Jj Religious Studies Honors Program *Noncredit.* SINGH

RE491f, 492s Independent Study Individual projects in areas where the student has demonstrated the interest and competence necessary for independent work. *Prerequisite:* Permission of the instructor. *One to four credit hours.* FACULTY