Colby

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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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 (216, 236, 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
    - 475 Seminar in Devotional Art
- *English*
    - 231 Tolkien’s Sources
    - 349 Modern Jewish Writing: From the Diaspora to the Modern Israeli Novel
    - 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, Clint Eastwood, and Mel Gibson); 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 (i.e., the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament). We will learn about famous biblical characters and discuss shocking stories that one would never expect to encounter in the Bible. Students will gain an informed understanding of this rich collection of texts by concentrating on their literary, social, and historical contexts. Lectures will frequently incorporate film, art, and music. *Four credit hours.* **L** PARKER

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 to discover how these texts both reflect and challenge their Greco-Roman context. Students will become familiar with the lives and teachings of Jesus and Paul and discuss their impact on our modern world. Lectures will frequently incorporate film, art, and music. *Four credit hours.* **L** PARKER

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** MAIZELS

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** MAIZELS

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

RE217f 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** CAMPBELL

[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.*

[RE221] 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. Previously offered as Religious Studies 297J. *Three credit hours.* **H, U**

[RE236] 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 of evangelical Christianity and its involvement in missions and social reform; 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**

RE255f 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** CAMPBELL

RE256s 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** GILKES

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

[RE259] 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, liberation theology, and Catholic teachings on issues such as sexuality, capital punishment, medical ethics, social justice, and the role of women in the church. *Four credit hours.*

RE275j 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.* PUKKILA

[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.*

[RE282] The Making of Judaism Judaism, as we know it, came into being during the period from about 600 B.C.E. through 600 C.E. Its formation results from a complex interplay of internal innovation, external classification, and responses to dramatic political and cultural forces. An exploration of this crucial period in Jewish history, devoting particular attention to the impact of Hellenism, the rise of Rabbinic Judaism, and the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. *Four credit hours.* **H**

RE297f History of Anti-Semitism Traces the development of anti-Semitism from ancient times to the present. We will examine the origins of the word "anti-Semitism" and discuss the difficulties in assigning a simple definition to a phenomenon that has been referred to as "the longest hatred." Outlines various stages in the expression of animosity toward Jews in order to build historical knowledge of the changing nature of anti-Semitism. Students will read secondary sources and analyze primary documents, including written works, images, film, and contemporary websites. *Four credit hours.* MAIZELS

RE297Jj Jewish Theology An introduction to the multiple Jewish answers to life's big questions. We will explore how to live the good life, the role of God in determining our fate, the meaning of suffering in our lives, and the relationship between politics and faith. We will interrogate ideas found in the Hebrew Bible, Jewish liturgy, rabbinic texts, and works of modern thinkers such as Hermann Cohen, Mordecai Kaplan, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Abraham Isaac Kook. *Three credit hours.* ISAACS

RE298s Prostitutes, Queens, Prophets, and other Women of the Bible Explores the fascinating and surprising stories of the Bible's women and girls. We will discover and discuss female characters (Eve, Sarah, Mary Magdalene, Mary, and many others) within their literary and historical contexts. We will also uncover the various ways scholars have understood these stories, from traditional through feminist perspectives, while teaching skills to help students interpret the Bible themselves. We will further discuss ramifications of these interpretations and their relevance for women and men today. *Prerequisite:* Some knowledge of the Bible preferred. *Four credit hours.* PARKER

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. 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? Of fiction, poetry, and art in social transformation? *Four credit hours.* **L, I** SINGH

RE317s 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** SINGH

[RE322] 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**

[RE333] Death and Spirituality An examination of selected examples of the rich and diverse literature about death and spirituality, which includes historical and therapeutic studies, personal narratives, poetry, 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. Pays special attention to the spiritual and religious questions posed by public debates over the Terri Schiavo case and the global AIDS crisis as well as more private, personal struggles that take place within families, hospitals, and hospices every day. *Prerequisite:* Religious Studies 216, 217, 236, 258, or 259. *Four credit hours.*

RE334s Religion and World War II Examines religious and spiritual responses to World War II (including the Holocaust) as they are embodied in historical narratives, theologies, personal narratives, fiction, and film. Addresses how political crises catalyze spiritual awakenings and theological breakthroughs. Designed to increase students' understanding of World War II as a religious and spiritual turning point (for individuals, religious groups, and nations), provide practice in discussing complex and controversial religious topics, refine writing skills, and prepare students to reach their own conclusions about the spiritual and religious impacts of war. *Prerequisite:* One of the following: Religious Studies 217, 236, 257, or 259. *Four credit hours.* CAMPBELL

[RE357] *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**

[RE381] Women and Gender in Islam Listed as History 381. *Four credit hours.* **H, I**

[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? *Prerequisite:* History 181, 182 or 285 or Religious Studies 143, 144, 181, or 182. *Four credit hours.* **L**

[RE384] 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.*

[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 Passion of the Prophets What is the difference between a revered prophet and a ranting lunatic? Sometimes the line is fine, but this course helps students make the distinction from sociological and anthropological perspectives. Using the Bible's prophetic texts as our primary lens, we will explore the phenomenon of prophecy and its many passionate manifestations in the Bible. Students will analyze texts with close attention to the ways prophets meet their historical moment. We will learn about individual prophets—both men and women—and discuss how their messages reverberate through our world. *Prerequisite:* Religious Studies 143 or 144. *Four credit hours.* PARKER

RE398As American Jews and Judaism from World War II to the Present Addresses such subjects as middle-class domesticity and its intersection with "whiteness," acculturation to the middle class, postwar religiosity in the suburbs, "radical" Jewish political movements of the late 1960s, Jewish relations with other minority groups, Jewish involvement in popular culture, community reactions to the Holocaust, and the delicate balance between membership in a particular religious/ethnic minority group and loyalty to the universal ideals of the larger culture. Students learn through a variety of sources, including historical and sociological texts, literature, film, and audio recordings. *Four credit hours.* MAIZELS

RE398Bs Behind the Bible: Discovering an Ancient World Although the Bible was written thousands of years ago, many people believe this text is timeless. But is it? This seminar offers an in-depth look at life in ancient Palestine. How did folks survive? What was war like back then? What gods did people worship? How did they create sexual and other interpersonal relationships? We will delve into these and other questions through anthropological, sociological, archaeological, and historical approaches. By combining these disciplines with the information in the text, we explore the world that gave rise to the Bible. *Prerequisite:* Religious Studies 143 or 144. *Four credit hours.* PARKER

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

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