

COLLEGE of CHARLESTON

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Spring 2009 Course Brochure

All religious studies courses satisfy the Humanities requirement. There are both a major and a minor in religious studies for those with a serious interest in the study of religion.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES: 33 semester hours, that must include:

- 1) RELS 101 or 105
- 2) RELS 210 Theories in the Study of Religions
- 3) One of: RELS 225, 230, or 235
- 4) One of: RELS 240, 245, or 248
- 5) One of: RELS 250, 260, 270
- 6) One of: RELS 201, 202, or 205
- 7) RELS 450: Senior Seminar in Religious Studies
- 8) One additional course at the 200-level or above
- 9) Two additional courses at the 300-level or above
- 10) Additional elective: 1 course from RELS 105-499

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 8 or 9 above.

Religious Studies Course Offerings

ASST 105.001	Value & Tradition in Asian Civilizations	Siegler	TR	10:50-12:05	ECTR 219
FYSM 160.001	Religion & Tradition of Friendship	Doire	TR	09:25-10:40	ECTR 219
HONS 240.090	Value & Tradition in Asian Religions	Bjerken	MW	04:00-05:15	HON/G 200
RELS 101.001	Approaches to Religion	Doire	TR	12:15-01:30	ECTR 103
RELS 101.002	Approaches to Religion	Doire	TR	01:40-02:55	ECTR 103
RELS 101.003	Approaches to Religion	Irwin	MWF	11:00-11:50	ECTR 103
RELS 105.001	Intro to World Religions	Cormack	MWF	09:00-09:50	ECTR 103
RELS 105.002	Intro to World Religions	Cormack	MWF	10:00-10:50	ECTR 103
RELS 105.003	Intro to World Religions	McDaniel	MWF	02:00-02:50	ECTR 103
RELS 105.004	Intro to World Religions	McDaniel	MWF	03:00-03:50	ECTR 103
RELS 202.001	New Testament: History and Interpretation	Huddlestun	TR	12:15-01:30	ECTR 219
RELS 202.002	New Testament: History and Interpretation	Huddlestun	TR	01:40-02:55	ECTR 219
RELS 230.001	The Christian Tradition	Cormack	MWF	12:00-12:50	ECTR 219
RELS 240.001	Buddhist Tradition	Bjerken	TR	08:00-09:15	ECTR 103
RELS 240.002	Buddhist Tradition	Bjerken	TR	10:50-12:05	ECTR 103
RELS 250.001	Religion in America	Thomas	MWF	09:00-09:50	ECTR 219
RELS 250.002	Religion in America	Thomas	MWF	10:00-10:50	ECTR 219
RELS 280.090	Religion and Film	Siegler	T	07:00-09:45	TBD
			R	07:00-08:15	TBD
RELS 298.001	Special Topics in Religion	Thomas	MW	02:00-03:15	ECTR 219
RELS 301.001	Mysticism & Religious Experience	McDaniel	MWF	11:00-11:50	ECTR 219
RELS 335.001	Western Esotericism	Irwin	MWF	01:00-01:50	ECTR 103
RELS 450.090	Senior Seminar in Religious Studies	Huddlestun	MW	04:00-05:15	ECTR 219

ASST 105: Value & Tradition in Asian Civilization

Prof. Siegler

Section 001 (TR 10:50-12:05)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course surveys major ideas and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Shinto, through the reading of primary religious texts. The course also considers the importance of religion in modern Asia, by focusing on important figures such as Gandhi, the Dalai Lama and Mao Zedong.

FYSM 160: Approaches to Religion

Instructor Doire

Section 001 (TR 09:25-10:40)

NO PREREQUISITES

This seminar will examine the broad range of relationships suggested by the Aristotelian understanding of *philia* or, "friendship." Readings will include narratives and essays that appear in the sacred texts and writings of Judaism, Christianity and Chinese Confucian philosophy. Themes will include civility, hospitality, romantic love and forgiveness. Narrative "case studies" that illustrate ideas and ideals of friendship will include the stories of David and Nathan, Naomi and Ruth in Hebrew Scripture; Jesus and Mary Magdalene in Christian scripture, as well as stories that appear in Confucian tradition.

HONS 240: Values & Traditions in Asian Religions

Prof. Bjerken

Section 090 (MW 04:00-05:15)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course will explore the motivating values found in the religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism that have formed the civilizations of South and East Asia. The course is designed around major conceptual themes, including meditation and monasticism; asceticism and the hermit's life; death, the afterlife, and ancestor worship; the transformation of foreign traditions to fit native worldviews; and the effects of modernization on religions today. We will watch a number of contemporary films that explore the conflicts between tradition and modernity in contemporary cultures in Asia. The course will follow an easterly route, beginning in India and moving to China and Japan, at the same time as we move from ancient times down to the present day. We begin with the ancient Indus Valley civilization that appeared some 4,000 years ago, and end with religious debates over the topics of abortion and organ transplant in Japan today. We will see that Asian religiosity tends to have different emphases than the Judeo-Christian religious traditions. The course will call into question our common distinctions between self and society, church and state, and religion and spirituality.

RELS 101: Approaches to Religion "Evil and Suffering"

Instructor Doire

Section 001 (TR 12:15-01:30)

Section 002 (TR 01:40-02:55)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion through a particular theme. In this section we will focus our study on the topics of good and evil, and human suffering. Our examination will incorporate theological (when applicable) understandings and cultural constructions of these themes as they have been confronted and represented by Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism. Specific areas under study include the creation story in Genesis, post-Holocaust responses and the Passion of Jesus. The student will also be introduced to some of the basic tenets of each tradition. The methodology will consist in analysis through historical, literary, comparative and feminist criticism. Both primary and secondary texts will be utilized.

RELS 101: Approaches to Religion

Prof. Irwin

Section 003 (MWF 11:00-11:50)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course surveys the concept of the "holy person" or the person who represents the spiritual ideals of a tradition. To better understand this concept as a comparative theme in different religions, we will study four specific types of contemporary holy persons: a Crow Indian shaman or medicine man; a Hindu woman saint or Yogini; a Christian esoteric Master; and a Zen Roshi of Japanese Buddhism. In each area we will discuss the ideal of the holy person and his or her relationship to both the history and philosophy of each religious tradition. We will also read one theoretical article for each religion in order to explore various theoretical approaches to the study of religion. The task is to understand how each holy person is located in his or her cultural and religious worldview and how that worldview might be interpreted by non-participant scholars in the study of religion. We will also explore the question of how each person helps to shape and develop their religious worldview as a creative leader and not just as an example of an ideal. This is a course about religion in transformation, both theoretically and descriptively, and the holy person is presented as reflecting religious change and adaptation to the modern world.

RELS 105: Introduction to World Religions

Prof. Cormack

Section 001 (MWF 09:00-09:50)

Section 002 (MWF 10:00-10:50)

NO PREREQUISITES

The goal of this course is to introduce you to the beliefs, practices, and history of the major religions of the world. We will approach each tradition impartially, studying its beliefs concerning divinity/ies, the universe, the place and obligations of human beings within that universe, the afterlife, and how these beliefs were represented in cultural artifacts – poetry, statues, temples, sacred texts. We will consider how the beliefs developed and how they relate to the societies that adhere to them. You will learn about how people from many different cultures look at the world, and how to think both critically and sympathetically about a variety of world-views.

RELS 105: Introduction to World Religions

Prof. McDaniel

Section 003 (MWF 02:00-02:50)

Section 004 (MWF 03:00-03:50)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course will introduce the beliefs and practices of a wide variety of world religion, including indigenous religions and shamanism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam, and Gullah religion. The class grade will be based on four tests, one paper, and regular attendance.

RELS 202: The New Testament: History and Interpretation

Prof. Huddleston

Section 001 (TR 12:15-01:30)

Section 002 (TR 01:40-02:55)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course introduces the student to that group of documents known collectively in Christian tradition as the New Testament. In addition to generous readings from the biblical text itself, we will examine extra-biblical documents designed to situate the early Christian canonical writings in their pristine historical, religious, and social contexts. Particular attention will be given to the position of early Christianity as one among a number of Jewish sects in the diverse religious world of first-century Palestine and its gradual emergence from this ancient Jewish matrix. We will examine the New Testament writers' use of traditional Jewish interpretive techniques alongside their polemical efforts to distance themselves from competing Jewish groups.

RELS 230: The Christian Tradition

Prof. Cormack

Section 001 (MWF 12:00-12:50)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course is a historical survey of Christianity. We will examine how the religion's beliefs and rituals develop and change with time, reflecting the cultures in which it is practiced. We will make extensive use of primary sources from different historical periods.

RELS 240 Buddhist Tradition

Prof. Bjerken

Section 001 (TR 08:00-09:15)

Section 002 (TR 10:50-12:05)

NO PREREQUISITES

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 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 two books (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 250: Religion in America

Prof. Thomas

Section 001 (MWF 09:00-09:50)

Section 002 (MWF 10:00-10:50)

NO PREREQUISITES

The course will emphasize the religiously diverse and pluralistic character of the U.S. American religion begins with Native American peoples, and incorporates the Christianity and Judaism of European settlers, the cultures of the African diaspora, the traditions of religious humanism, and new arrivals from South and East Asia. The cultural, social, economic, and political landscape of American society serves the larger context within which American religion functions.

RELS 280: Religion and Film

Prof. Siegler

Section 090 (T 07:00-09:45; R 07:00-08:15)

NO PREREQUISITES

In this course students will analyze, discuss, and write about a variety of films to be screened in class. Students will become familiar to various approaches to religious studies, and with the basic terms of film vocabulary. The course will cover how film represents many religious traditions, including, but not limited to Judaism, Islam, Paganism, Shinto, Buddhism, and Native American spirituality. Film genres covered will include science fiction, the Western, the horror, romantic comedy, animated film, and the Biblical epic.

RELS 298: Spiritual Utopias: American Communitarianism

Prof. Thomas

Section 001 (MW 02:00-03:15)

NO PREREQUISITES

Even before Independence, the U.S. has been home to religious movements seeking to create the perfect human society. Religious communitarians separated themselves from mainstream American society, seeking the freedom to live in a purer and more authentic manner, a life based on particular interpretations of sacred texts and spiritual experiences. Communities examined include the Shakers, Catholic monasteries, Jewish communes, New Age ashrams, with special focus on the Amish and the Mormons.

RELS 301: Mysticism & Religious Experiences

Prof. McDaniel

Section 001 (MWF 11:25-11:50)

PREREQUISITE: *Either three semester hours in religious studies or permission of the instructor.*

This course will study the intense emotions and altered states of consciousness that people experience when they are deeply involved in religion. It will include trance and possession states, visions of heavens and hells, yogic samadhi, the Buddhist Void, union with the Tao, the Greek mystery schools, visions of angels, nature spirits and ancestors, and the experiences of prophets, seers, mediums and saints. There will be three tests and two papers. The course will also include films and guest lecturers.

RELS 335: Western Esotericism

Prof. Irwin

Section 001 (MWF 01:00-01:50)

PREREQUISITE: *Either three semester hours in religious studies or permission of the instructor.*

This is an advanced survey course on Western Esotericism beginning with the Greco-Roman period and covering the following topics in a roughly historical order: Pythagoreanism, Hermeticism, Kabbalah, Grail, Alchemy, Rosicrucians & Masons, Esoteric Christianity, and contemporary, esoteric teachings. The learning-teaching strategy is to provide a general overview of each area and to show interconnections in a general pattern of historical development, including some of the problematic aspects of studying esotericism. The goal of the course is to provide students with an overview of the development and complexity of Western Esoteric traditions apart from mainstream religious teachings or institutions. We will not be studying normative Christianity, Judaism or Islam but esoteric traditions or schools that have developed in parallel to these mainstream traditions, often in circumstances of oppression or institutional persecution. We will examine why these traditions have been persecuted and why they often have secret rites and an underground history. At the end of the course, we will consider the increased popularity of esotericism and its impact on New Religious Movements

RELS 450: Prophets, Messiahs, and their Followers: History, Legitimacy, and Authority

Prof. Huddleston

Section 001 (MW 04:00-05:15)

PREREQUISITE: *Either three semester hours in religious studies or permission of the instructor.*

In this seminar we will examine the seminal historical, interpretive, and theoretical issues surrounding the founding figures of some of the major religious traditions, including Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad. Additionally, we will consider some important figures in more recent history and the movements they engendered (e.g., Shabbatai Sevi, the “Mystical Messiah” of the 17th century in the Middle East and Europe, and Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher “Brooklyn Messiah”).

MAYMESTER 2009

RELS 105: Intro to World Religions

Instructor Doire

Section 001 (MTWRF 08:30-12:00)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course is designed to be an introduction to the study of religion and of the world's major religious traditions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Our study will include each tradition's historical development, sacred text, ritual, concept of the divine and soteriology. The methodology will include analysis through historical, literary, comparative and feminist criticisms. Primary and secondary texts will be implemented.

RELS 298: The Quran and its Place in Contemporary Islam (cross listed with ASST 240)

Prof. Ghazi Abuhakema

Section TBD

NO PREREQUISITES

The Quran, the Holy Scriptures of Islam, is the ultimate, divine source of legislation for Muslims, the primary authority for their daily lives. This course is designed to introduce students to some of the key ideas of the Quran, including as well some discussion of its structure, compilation, the history of its interpretation, and the role it has played in shaping Muslim life throughout history. The course will also discuss the relationship between the Quran and the Hadith, prophet Mohammad's tradition. In addition, we will examine some current, and in some cases controversial, issues (e.g., the role of women in Islam, Jihad, the Islamic view of other religious traditions, etc.) and explore how particular Quranic passages have been cited and interpreted with respect to these. Our readings of the Quran and related texts (including classic and contemporary commentaries) will be based on English translations; knowledge in Arabic is not required for this course.

SUMMER I 2009

RELS 101: Traditions of Friendship in Religion

Instructor Doire

Section 001 (MTWRF 09:45-11:30)

NO PREREQUISITES

In this course we will examine the broad range of relationships suggested by the Aristotelian understanding of *philia* or, "friendship." Readings will include narratives and essays that appear in the sacred texts and writings of Judaism, Christianity and Chinese Confucian philosophy. Themes will include civility, hospitality, romantic love and forgiveness. Narrative "case studies" that illustrate ideas and ideals of friendship will include the stories of David and Nathan, Naomi and Ruth in Hebrew Scripture; Jesus and Mary Magdalene in Christian scripture, as well as stories that appear in Confucian tradition.

RELS 115: Approaches to Religion

Prof. Bossman

Section 001 (MTWRF 11:45-01:30)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course will study the social and political dimensions of religion, including the role of religion in the framework of culture and history.

STUDY ABROAD - SUMMER 2009

RELS 340: Advanced Topics in Asian Religions: The Himalayan Religions of Ladakh

Prof. Bjerken,

Section T01

PREREQUISITE: Must be taken with RELS 298

The most distinctive feature of RELS 340.T01 is that the course will creatively integrate extended excursions to important historical and religious sites in the Indian Himalayan region of Ladakh with academic readings and relevant lectures about those places. Readings will be chosen to provide historical background and interpretive tools for the sites and communities visited as well as to introduce pertinent religious themes and social issues. Lectures will be designed to provide students with a conceptual framework and specific information with which to carry out on-site assignments. Documentary films on Ladakhi Buddhism shown in Leh, the capital of Ladakh, will illustrate how religious ideas and practices are woven into many aspects of everyday life. These films will serve as ethnographic texts, and their content will supplement our site visits and be integrated into written assignments too.

The course will begin with a close reading of a famous work on Tibetan Buddhist practice called *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*. This text will be read in advance of our travel to India, and it will systematically introduce students to Buddhist theories and practices from India (Hinayana, Mahayana, and Tantra) that come to hold an important place in the Buddhism practiced in Ladakh. On arrival in Ladakh, students will be introduced to a historical overview of the re-birth of Buddhism in Ladakh that began in the 11th century and study Buddhist iconography and monastic life, "reading" the sacred landscape at pilgrimage places, understanding spirit mediums and healers, contemporary Buddhist revitalization and cultural restoration, and the anticipation of the end times and salvation with the cult of the future Buddha Maitreya and the *Wheel of Time Tantra*.

RELS 289: Special Topics: Religion and Globalization

Prof. Siegler

Section T02

PREREQUISITE: Must be taken with RELS 340

This course examines the point of contact between religion and globalization. Sometimes religion is part of a rebellion against globalization, and at other times it serves the globalizing process by transporting cultures and traditions across national boundaries. International migration disperses religious cultures into myriad diaspora communities, and the process of conversion expands religious ideologies and communities around the world.

This course explores these aspects of global religion by focusing on transnational religions in the cosmopolitan urban cityscape of New Delhi, India's capital, and also the globalized forces on the contemporary religious landscape of Ladakh. Ladakh is a region often represented as a place where "pure" and "ancient" forms of Buddhism are practiced today, but it has in fact been a cultural crossroads for many centuries, and thanks to an exponential increase in tourism, has become a religiously diverse, complex region. In the capital of Ladakh, students will speak with a third-generation Ladakhi Moravian minister, a leader of the Muslim community, and a former Theravada Buddhist monk who teaches meditation courses for visiting tourists. They will also visit a center for Jewish travelers and a Sikh Gurudwara, maintained by members of the Indian Army. In Delhi, they will visit the Baha'i House of Worship, the Hare Krishna Temple, and India's largest mosque.

RELS 248: Religions of China

Prof. Siegler

Section T01

PREREQUISITE: Must be taken with HTMT 360

This course provides an overview of the history, worldviews, and practices of Chinese religions. We begin with the earliest period of Chinese history, the Shang dynasty (ca. 1550-ca. 1030 B.C.E.), and end with the present day. Although we will consider discrete traditions such as Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and various new religious movements, we pay special attention to thematic issues (religion and the state; religion and popular culture; religious change) that have contemporary relevance. In Beijing, students will focus on the sacred geography of Beijing, both imperial (Temple of Heaven, Tiananmen Square) and modern (Chairman's Mao mausoleum, Olympic venues), and how this contributes to the worship of the state. We will also visit the Lama Temple, the former seat of Tibetan Buddhism in China. In Nanjing, we will visit a church and a theological school, and the famous Confucius temple, among other sites. In Chengdu, we will focus on Daoist and Buddhist sacred sites, including Qingcheng Mountain, the birthplace of religious Daoism. In Hong Kong, we will take advantage of the atmosphere of religious freedom by investigating religious organizations, often of recent vintage, that are banned in the rest of China, including Yiguandao, Fa Lun Gong, and a spirit-writing group.