

# COLLEGE of CHARLESTON

DEPARTMENT OF  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## Spring 2010 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

HONS 392.090	Religion and Feminism	Doire	MW	04:00-05:15	MYBK 320
RELS 101.001	Approaches to Religion	Doire	TR	09:25-10:40	ECTR 103
RELS 101.002	Approaches to Religion	Doire	TR	12:15-01:30	ECTR 103
RELS 101.003	Approaches to Religion	Thomas	MWF	09:00-09:50	ECTR 219
RELS 101.004	Approaches to Religion	Thomas	MWF	10:00-10:50	ECTR 219
RELS 105.001	Intro to World Religions	Cormack	MWF	11:00-11:50	ECTR 103
RELS 105.002	Intro to World Religions	Cormack	MWF	12:00-12:50	ECTR 103
RELS 105.003	Intro to World Religions	McDaniel	MW	02:00-03:15	ECTR 103
RELS 105.004	Intro to World Religions	McDaniel	MW	03:20-04:35	ECTR 103
RELS 115.001	Religion and Society	Bjerken	MW	03:20-04:35	ECTR 219
RELS 205.001	Sacred Texts of the East	Irwin	MWF	01:00-01:50	ECTR 219
RELS 230.001	The Christian Tradition	Cormack	MWF	09:00-09:50	ECTR 103
RELS 248.001	Religious Traditions of China & Japan	Bjerken	TR	09:25-10:40	ECTR 219
RELS 248.002	Religious Traditions of China & Japan	Bjerken	TR	12:15-01:30	ECTR 219
RELS 250.001	Religion in America	Siegler	TR	10:50-12:05	ECTR 103
RELS 285.001	Religion and Feminism	Doire	MW	02:00-03:15	ECTR 219
RELS 298.001	Special Topics in Religion	Irwin	MW	11:00-11:50	ECTR 116
			F	11:00-11:50	ECTR 219
RELS 350.001	Phenomenology of Religion	McDaniel	MWF	10:00-10:50	ECTR 103
RELS 375.001	Special Topics: History of Religions	Thomas	MWF	12:00-12:50	ECTR 219
RELS 450.001	Senior Seminar in Religious Studies	Siegler	TR	01:40-02:55	ECTR 103

Maymester					
ASST 240.001	Special Topics in Asian Studies	TBA	MTWRF	TBA	TBA
RELS 105.001	Approaches to Religion	Doire	MTWRF	11:00-11:50	ECTR 103
RELS 280.001	Approaches to Religion	Siegler	MTWRF	12:00-12:50	ECTR 103
Summer I					
RELS 101.001	Intro To World Religions	Doire	MTWRF	09:45-11:30	ECTR 219
RELS 105.001	Approaches to Religion	Thomas	MTWRF	11:30-01:45	ECTR 219
Summer II					
RELS 120.001	Religion, Art, and Culture	Aghapour	MWF	11:30-01:45	ECTR 219

**HONS 392: Religion and Feminism**

Prof. Doire

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

NO PREREQUISITES

An examination of feminist theory and its influence on the academic study of religion that will include an introduction to feminist theory and analyses of the intersections between religion and culture, especially religion and socio-political organization. We will also examine feminist literary theory and its application to sacred scripture and other religious writings. Students will learn a variety of feminist hermeneutical models for reading and interpreting such texts. A section on feminist religious ethics will incorporate the critique of traditional categories of gender with concepts of "sin" and spiritual "achievement," as well as analyses of religion and its contributions to the pervasive violence against women in American culture. This course fulfills the HONS Interdisciplinary Course requirement.

**RELS 101: Approaches to Religion: Evil and Suffering**

Instructor Doire

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

Section 002 (TR 12:15-01:30)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion through a particular theme. In this course 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 presented in Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism. The student will be introduced to some of the basic tenets of each of these traditions. The methodology will consist in analysis through historical, literary, comparative and feminist criticism. Both primary and secondary texts will be utilized. The human experience of evil and suffering has been and continues to be a fundamental element of theological, religious and cultural ideology. As we proceed in our academic study, each student will be challenged to examine the theological, religious and cultural influences that have shaped and informed their own understanding of the universal experience of evil, the "Good," and human suffering.

**RELS 101: Approaches to Religion**

Prof. Thomas

Section 003 (MWF 09:00-09:50)

Section 004 (MWF 10:00-10:50)

NO PREREQUISITES

What is religious or spiritual experience? What makes religious or spiritual experience in general, different from other kinds of experience? We will look at several accounts of spiritual experiences, from the mundane to the mystical, from the awesome to the sublime. These experiences exist in the context of several different religious and spiritual traditions, including Protestant Christianity, Orthodox Judaism, religious humanism, and Tibetan Buddhism. In order to help organize our readings, we will interweave among our readings four perspectives that represent four different ways of understanding religion. One perspective suggests that religious experience originates from a real, external reality, while another posits that religion stems from an inherent function of human psychology. A third perspective argues that religion is a cultural and social creation that is imposed upon the world, while the last approach points to the origin of religion in biology. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, each has its strengths and weaknesses, and we will discover how each perspective contributes to our knowledge of religious and spiritual experience.

**RELS 105: Introduction to World Religions**

Prof. Cormack

Section 001 (MWF 11:00-11:50)

Section 002 (MWF 12:00-12:50)

NO PREREQUISITES

The goal of this course is to introduce you to the beliefs, practices, and history of the major religions of the world, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. 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. Through primary readings and films, you will acquire critical analytic skills and writing practice.

**RELS 105: Introduction to World Religions**

Prof. McDaniel

Section 003 (MW 02:00-03:15)

Section 004 (MW 03:20-04:35)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course will examine a wide variety of religions, including Indigenous religions (Hawaiian, Australian, African, Inuit), Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Ancient Near Eastern religions, Rastafarianism, varieties of shamanism and new religious movements. We shall discuss their beliefs and rituals, and assignments will include visits to religious sites in Charleston. There will be films and guest speakers, three tests and two papers.

**RELS 115: Religion and Society In India and Tibet**

Prof. Bjerken

Section 001 (MW 03:20-04:35)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course is an introduction to two Asian religious traditions, Hinduism and Buddhism, and how they have shaped the societies of India and Tibet. The course will survey the traditional social organization (e.g. the caste system, religious hierarchies, monasticism, the status of women), and the practices and beliefs of Hindus and Buddhists, including their origin myths, life cycle rituals, and their ethical norms. In particular we will examine the religious and political reforms of Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama, two of the most important leaders of the twentieth century. The non-violent spiritual ideals of Gandhi and the Dalai Lama present us with an alternative to our modern consumer-oriented technological culture, where people seek what they are programmed to seek. This course will help you become more informed and critical of how the news media represents other religions and their role in different societies, rather than be passive consumers of the media. This course will encourage you to really “Think Different,” as the Apple Computer advertisements that once featured both Gandhi and the Dalai Lama put it.

**RELS 205: Sacred Text of the East**

Prof. Irwin

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

NO PREREQUISITES

This course will explore the foundational texts of the religions of India, China, Southeast Asia, and Japan. The traditions we will cover are: Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Confucian, Taoist, and Shinto, with the greatest emphasis on Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist written texts. We will take an inductive approach to each text tradition and through careful reading of texts, seek to determine core beliefs of each tradition. We will consider historical context, spatial location, textual diversity, internal debates on interpretation, canon development, conceptual theories of the text, including text recitations, and the care of texts. We will also look at issues of oral versus written texts, image and symbol texts, and text transmission. No previous knowledge of these traditions is required for this course; this is a course on the hermeneutics of the texts and interpretations, not a survey of general beliefs and practices.

**RELS 230: The Christian Tradition**

Prof. Cormack

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

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 they were practiced. We will make extensive use of primary sources from different historical periods. The course includes a visit to a local church, and a term paper examining a Christian denomination or other religious organization, such as a monastic order. Students interested in this topic may want to consider taking ARTH 225, Medieval Art History, concurrently.

**RELS 248 Religious Traditions of China and Japan**

Prof. Bjerken

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

Section 002 (TR 12:15-01:30)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course will explore the East Asian religions of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism in China, as well as Shinto, Shamanism, and the "New Religions" of Japan. However, the course is **not** a systematic survey of each religion. Rather than aiming at breadth, the course is designed around major conceptual themes including: Asian views of nature, death, ancestor worship and the afterlife; meditation and monasticism; asceticism and the hermit's life; ritual and its worldly benefits; and the effects of modernization on religions today. The course will begin in China with forms of divination and ancestor worship that appeared some 3,500 years ago, and shift to Japan at mid-semester; ending with religious debates there over the topics of abortion and organ transplant and the 1995 sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway by members of Aum Shinrikyo. We will consider how, given the myriad doctrines and practices encountered in Asia, one might go about defining "religion" in Asia. 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 250: Religion in America**

Prof. Siegler

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

NO PREREQUISITES

This course will cover American religious history from the sixteenth century until today, including the religions of Native Americans, Puritans, Southern slaves and slave-owners, evangelicals, Jews, Catholics, Mormons, and many others. Students will learn how religion in America intersects with politics, culture and race. Students will have the opportunity to learn about the religions of the Charleston area and to explore their families' religious history.

**RELS 285: Religion and Feminism**

Instructor Doire

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

NO PREREQUISITES

An examination of feminist theory and its influence on the academic study of religion that will include an introduction to feminist theory and analyses of the intersections between religion and culture, especially religion and socio-political organization. We will also examine feminist literary theory and its application to sacred scripture and other religious writings. Students will learn a variety of feminist hermeneutical models for reading and interpreting such texts. A section on feminist religious ethics will incorporate the critique of traditional categories of gender with concepts of "sin" and spiritual "achievement," as well as analyses of religion and its contributions to the pervasive violence against women in American culture. Students may also enroll in this course for WGS credit.

**RELS 298: Special Topics:**

Prof Irwin

Section 001 (MWF 11:00-11:50)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course examines body, mind, and spirit from three disciplines: religious studies, anthropology, and philosophy. Drawing from a selection of both classic and contemporary materials, the course focuses on Daoist, Christian, Buddhist and western phenomenological perspectives. Topics include: ritual body and sacred space, conceptions of mind and body, and numinous experience. The course structure consists of joint weekly lectures and small group discussions by discipline. No Prerequisites for RELS 298 and PHIL 298; ANTH 319, must have taken ANTH 101 (or permission of the instructor).

**RELS 350: Phenomenology of Religion**

Prof McDaniel

Section 001 (MWF 10:00-10:50)

NO PREREQUISITES

What happens to human consciousness after death? Does it survive? If there is a soul, how does it work, and where does it go? In this class, we shall explore what various religions have understood to happen to the person after death, including heavens, hells, ancestor worlds, reincarnation, alternative universes, and states of enlightenment. We shall also examine death rituals in several cultures, near-death experiences, beliefs about possession by and communication with the dead, and concepts of the 'living dead' (European vampires, Haitian zombies, Indian vetalas). There will be films, guest speakers, two papers, and three tests.

**RELS 375: Special Topics: History of Religion: *Green Religion: Nature Religion in the Modern World***

Prof Thomas

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

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

In this course, we will examine "green religions" in the modern world, especially North America, and how green religions challenge predominant conceptualizations of what religion is. Green religions includes religions and spiritualities in which wilderness, the cosmos, and nature (including the human body) play a central, even salvific or liberatory, role in human life. The course will interpret American religious history through the lens of wilderness and nature, examining indigenous religions of America, deism, Transcendentalism, health movements, and modern environmentalism, all of which contain elements of green religion. Additional subjects will include the re-interpretation within Christianity of evolution as a divine process; the rise of scientific pantheism, deism, atheism, and naturalism as spiritual perspectives in the modern world; and Neo-Paganism and Wicca as nature religions.

**RELS 450: Senior Seminar in Religious Studies: Appropriation and Authenticity**

Prof Siegler

Section 001 (TR 01:40-02:55)

NO PREREQUISITES

What makes a religious person, place or experience "real"? Who decides? What are the ethical, political and intellectual ramifications of borrowing from another's religion? This course will wrestle with these questions by exploring how teachers, practices, and worldviews are transposed from their traditional religious culture to the Modern West. The course will focus on Tibetan Buddhism, Daoism, and indigenous shamanism, but students are free to pursue research in their own area of interest. This class will be conducted as a seminar, modeled on those found at graduate programs in religious studies. Students are expected to actively participate in discussion including serving at least once as discussion leader, and once as recording secretary.

## MAYMESTER 2010

### **ASST 240: Qur'an and Role in Cont Islam**

TBA

Section 001 (MTWRF TBA)

NO PREREQUISITES

This course will be a survey of the Qur'an. A detailed look at its contents and relate those contents to broader concerns within Islam.

### **RELS 105: Intro to World Religions**

Instructor Doire

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

NO PREREQUISITES

### **RELS 280: Religion and Film**

Prof. Siegler

Section 001 (MTWRF 01:00-04:30)

NO PREREQUISITES

## SUMMER I 2010

### **RELS 101: Approaches to Religion**

Instructor Doire

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

NO PREREQUISITES

### **RELS 105: Intro to World Religion**

Prof. Thomas

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

NO PREREQUISITES

## SUMMER II 2010

### **RELS 120: Religion, Art and Culture**

Instructor Aghapour

Section 001 (MTWRF 9:45-11:30)

NO PREREQUISITES