



RELIGION STUDIES

Fall 2024

REL 007 **What is Religion? (4)** **HU**

Prof. Michael Raposa (TR, 10:45am-12pm)

Prof. Ben Wright

The word "religion" is fairly recent in origin, its linguistic roots unclear, and the phenomena that it has been used to designate both vast and amorphous. This course explores some of the most prominent attempts to define "religion," definitions produced both by religious thinkers and by critics of religion. We will examine some of the methods used by scholars to study religion. Finally, we will ask how the meaning of the word may be shifting in a modern, secular age.

REL/JST 070 **Antisemitism Past and Present (4)** **HU**

Prof. Hartley Lachter (MW, 3:00-4:15pm)

As a ubiquitously present minority in western Christian societies over time, Jews have served as a foil for western identities in ways that continue to resonate in the modern and contemporary contexts. This course will consider the role that anti-Judaism and antisemitism have played in western culture from the ancient period to the present day.

REL/JST 073 **The Jewish Tradition (4)** **HU**

Prof. Hartley Lachter (MW, 1:35-2:50pm)

Judaism is both a textual tradition and a lived religion. Students read basic Jewish texts—Bible, Talmud, Midrash—and study the ways Jews sanctify the life cycle through rites of passage, and the round of the year through the festival cycle.

REL/ASIA/GS 077 **The Islamic Tradition (4)** **HU**

Prof. Khurram Hussain (TR, 1:35-2:50pm)

A thematic introduction to Islamic history, doctrine and practice. Topics include: Qur'an; prophecy and sacred history; ritual practices; community life; legal interpretation; art and aesthetics; mysticism; politics and polemics.

REL/JST 095 **Religion, Superstition, and Film (4)** **HU**

Prof. Minjung Noh (MW, 12:10-1:25pm)

What distinguishes the boundary between religion and superstition? Which concepts, bodily rituals, sensory representations, racial dynamics, gender roles, and emotional dimensions are linked to superstition, and conversely, to religion? Furthermore, how do mainstream media and films amplify, exploit, and contest established perceptions of religion and superstition? This course explores the modern boundary-making between religion and superstition through visual media. Open to all levels, the course will discuss concepts such as magic, paganism, New Age beliefs, the occult, spiritualism, shamanism, reiki, yoga, and many other popular spiritual practices.

REL/JST 122 **Archaeology and the Bible (4)** **HU**

Prof. Benjamin Wright (TR, 1:35-2:50)

In this course we will examine the way that archaeological work can inform the study of the Bible. One important consideration is how archaeological data have been used either to confirm or falsify the biblical texts. We will look at how archaeologists work and how archaeological data and the Bible intersect. We will examine in detail several archaeological sites in order to understand better the difficulties in interpreting the material remains that archaeologists dig up.

REL/GS 140 **Globalization and Religion (4)** **HU**

Prof. Rob Rozehnal (TR, 3:00-4:15pm) **WRIT**

This course examines the complexity of globalization and its multi-layered impact on religious identity and piety. Though comparative in methodology and historical framework, the class will give special attention to Islam and Hinduism in South Asia. Topics include: European colonialism; Orientalism and its legacy; religious nationalism; Islamophobia; and the Internet and mass media.

REL/ASIA 169 **Enlightening Lives:** **HU**

Buddhist Auto/Biography in Asia and the US (4)

Prof. Annabella Pitkin (MW, 12:10-1:25pm)

How do Buddhists imagine a "good life"? Buddhist biographies, autobiographies, poems, paintings, and films from Asia and the US reveal how Buddhists describe an ideal human life, addressing love, art, war, religious awakening.

REL/ASIA/WGSS 173 **Sex, Celibacy and Sainthood:** **HU**

Gender and Religion in East Asia (4)

Prof. Annabella Pitkin (MW, 3:00-4:15pm)

This course explores themes of sexuality, celibacy, gender, and sainthood in East Asian religions. We will pay special attention to the experiences of religious women from many walks of life and time periods, from traditions including Buddhism, Daoism, and shamanism. Through film, poetry, autobiography, philosophical writing, visual art, and descriptions of visionary experience, students will encounter Buddhist and Daoist nuns, lay women, mothers, shamanic healers, oracles, activists, and royalty, from Tibet, Korea, Japan, China, and the U.S..

REL/PHIL 347 **American Religious Thinkers (3-4)** **HU**

Prof. Michael Raposa (TR, 3:00-4:15pm)

An examination of the writings of key figures in the history of American religious thought (such as Edwards, Emerson, Bushnell, Peirce, James, Royce, Dewey and the Niebuhrs). Attention will be directed both to the historical reception of these writings and to their contemporary significance.

For First-Year Student ONLY

REL/POLS 090 **Are Children People? (4)** **HU**

Prof. Khurram Hussain

Prof. Nandini Deo (TR, 9:20-10:35am)

To what extent are children members of political communities entitled to self-determination? Asking this question allows us to reflect on and articulate the meaning of personhood, the rights and responsibilities of persons, of citizens in a democracy, of members of a society. Most theorists who advocate for equality of persons treat children as a special case. Why? What is distinctive about them in ways that merit ethical or political exclusion? How have societies answered these questions in different times and different places? We will also investigate and illustrate the "invention" of childhood as a social category. Related topics will include the nature and meaning of parenthood, children and labor, ethics of abortion and/or infanticide, and the status of advanced AI and even animals.