

RELIGION, CULTURE & SOCIETY

SPRING 2025

REL/ETH/PHIL 003 **Global Religion, Global Ethics (4)** **HE, HU**

Prof. Lloyd Steffen (TR, 12:10-1:25pm)

Introduction to philosophical and religious modes of moral thinking, with attention given to ethical issues as they arise cross-culturally in and through religious traditions. The course will reference the United Nations Millennium Goals to consider family life and the role of women, social justice, the environment, and ethical ideals. Particular focus varies but may include one or more of the following: abortion and reproductive health, the death penalty, religiously motivated violence, and problems of personal disorder (heavy drinking, anorexia, vengeance).

REL/PHIL 040 **Is God Dead? Past, Present, Future** **HU, HE**

Prof. Chris Driscoll (TR, 3:00-4:15pm)

Is God Dead? Some people think so. Do you? Come decide for yourself. This course looks at the idea of god in Western philosophy and theology, with particular attention to death of god movement(s), and the changing shape of these movements in light of culture wars and identity politics. The course surveys key thinkers to ask questions about the origins, functions, and future of god and gods in the contemporary world. Posed as an ongoing question-Is god dead?

REL/JST 081 **Jewish Mysticism (4)** **HU, HE**

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

This course will examine both the history and the central texts and ideas of the Jewish mystical tradition. We will read a broad range of texts, including the ancient Sefer Yetzirah or Book of Creation, the Zohar, the works of Isaac Luria and his disciples, and the writings of some of the 18th and 19th century Hasidic rabbis. We will also explore the contemporary emergence of Kabbalah and the activities of the Kabbalah Center in contemporary America.

REL/EVST/GS 096 **Global Religions & the Environment (4)** **HE, HU**

Prof. Minjung Noh (TR, 10:45am-12pm)

This course addresses questions about the intersection of religion and ecology, with particular attention to the religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, East Asian religions, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Indigenous traditions. It grapples with the ongoing ecological crisis, reflects on how we might change the "way things are," and considers the insights that religious traditions offer as an important part of the response. The course explores both religious worldviews and practices, with a special focus on issues of eco-justice.

REL/JST 112 **The Beginnings of Judaism & Jewish Origins:** **HE, HU**
Jewish Diversity in the Greco-Roman World (4) **W**
Prof. Ben Wright (TR, 10:45AM-12:00pm)

The variety of approaches to Judaism in the period following the Babylonian exile through the second century C.E. The literature studied will include Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

REL/GS 143 **Religious Nationalism in a Global Perspective (4)** **CC, HU**
Prof. Khurram Hussain (MW, 3:00-4:15pm) **SW, W**

Religion has become a renewed political force on the world stage in recent years. This course will focus on how religion has often provided both the Ideological language and the organizing principles for many modern nationalisms. Our exploration of this topic will take the form of case studies from various parts of the world, including but not limited to Pakistan, Israel, No. Ireland, India, Iran and USA.

REL/ASIA/GS 145 **Islam & the Modern World (4)** **CC, HE,**
Prof. Khurram Hussain (MW, 12:10-1:25pm) **HU, W**

Examines how numerous Muslim thinkers-religious scholars, modernists, and Islamists-have responded to the changes and challenges of the colonial and post-colonial eras. Special emphasis is placed on the public debates over Islamic authority and authenticity in contemporary South Asia.

REL/JST/PHIL/HMS 151 **Judaism, Medicine, and Bioethics (4)** **HE, HU**
Prof. Hartley Lachter (MW, 1:35-2:50pm)

This class traces the relationship between Jews and medicine from 1100 to 2020. How does Jewish religion and culture cultivate an affinity for the healing arts? How does Jewish law, ethics, and culture inform contemporary bioethics?

REL/JST 156 **Judaism & Comic Books (4)** **HE, HU**
Prof. Jodi Eichler-Levine (MW, 10:45am-12:00pm) **W**

Is The Thing Jewish? What does Superman have to do with the bible? Do Orthodox Jewish girls fight trolls? In this course, we will closely examine comic books and graphic novels in order to expand our understanding of what Jewishness might mean. With a POW! and a BAM!, we will consider many topics “from Krakow to Krypton,” including American Jewish history, how representations of Jews are gendered, global Jewish traditions, monsters and mutations, biblical adaptations, and more!

REL/ASIA 172 **Tibetan Buddhism & Society (4)** **HE, HU**
Prof. Annabella Pitkin (MW, 3:00-4:15pm) **W**

This course examines the history, rituals, practices and art of the Tibetan Buddhist world, and the interaction of Tibetan Buddhism with the Tibetan Bon religion and Tibetan Islam. Students will explore film, autobiography, visual arts, and religious writings, asking, How has Tibetan Buddhism shaped Tibetan societies, as well as neighboring cultures in East Asia and Inner Asia? In what ways is Tibetan Buddhism now a global religion?

REL/JST/THTR 177 **Jews & the Broadway Musical (4)** **HE, HU**
Prof. Jodi Eichler-Levine (MW, 9:20-10:35am) **W**

The history of American musical theater is deeply interwoven with the history of American Jews. This course examines how Jews have taken part in musical theater on multiple levels-as composers, lyricists, producers, and performers, among other roles. It also examines how Jews are depicted in Broadway musicals, with particular attention to gender and ethnicity.

REL 191 **Religion & Contemporary Fiction (4)** **CC, HU**
Prof. Ben Wright (TR, 1:35-2:50pm) **W**

In this course student think about different aspects of religion as exemplified in five contemporary novels. Class discussion will take two tacks: (1) understanding what is happening in the novels themselves is vital and a first step, but (2) we will pay close attention to the methodological issues that these books raise about the study of religion, whether they do so intentionally and explicitly or not.

REL/GS/WGSS 197 **Global Feminisms in a Postsecular World (4)** **HE, HU**
Prof. Minjung Noh (TR, 3:00-4:15pm)

In this course, we will explore the multifaceted world of global women’s religiosity through transnational and global feminist perspectives. Our central questions will be: How have colonialism, modern nation-building, Western Enlightenment ideals, global capitalism, migration, racism, and xenophobia shaped women’s religious lives in different parts of the world? What role has religion and spirituality played in the modern lives of people of diverse genders impacted by the coloniality of secularism? As we reflect on these questions, our main goal will be to create a framework for analyzing what constitutes women’s experiences—using categories such as class, gender, sexuality, political economy, ethnicity, race, nation, and others. Importantly, the category of “women” itself is not fixed and will be critically questioned throughout the course. This framework will help us bring insights to activism for justice.

REL 198 **Anger: Human & Divine** **HE, HU**
Dr. Candace Jordan (TR, 9:20-10:35a,

This course examines anger as a topic of philosophical analysis. Surveying a range of ancient and modern discourses, we will think together about the following questions: What is anger? What arouses anger? What motivates the release of anger? Does God get angry? If so, toward what? Does God’s anger countenance human anger? We will encounter diverse views on these questions, beginning by exploring how anger was conceived among ancient Greek and Roman philosophers and their influence on modern Christian theologians. Bringing together moral theology, ethics, and moral psychology discourses, this foundation will give us the tools to consider anger's role in contemporary movements for just social change.

REL/ASIA/ETH/EVST 254 **Buddhism and Ecology (4)** **HU, WRIT**
Prof. Annabella Pitkin (TR, 12:10-1:25pm) **CC, HE**

Buddhism’s intellectual, ethical, and spiritual resources are reexamined in light of contemporary environmental problems. Is Buddhism the most green of the major world religions? What are the moral implications of actions that affect the environment?

REL 296 **Artificial Intelligence and the Making of Metaphysics** **HU, HE**
Prof. Chris Driscoll (TR, 12:10-1:25pm)

This upper-level course examines the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Large Language Models (LLMs), and religion, focusing on “projection” theories from thinkers like Feuerbach, Berger, and Ricoeur. While experimenting with tools like ChatGPT and Adobe Firefly, students will critically explore the ethical and societal implications of AI and its growing influence on culture and society, gaining historical, philosophical, and technical insights, and helping to reimagine how humanistic knowledge is shared.