



Religion, Culture, & Society

SPRING 2026

REL/ETH/HMS 002

Death and Dying:

HE, HU

Religious and Ethical Perspectives (4)

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 032

Religion of Disney (4)

CC, HE, HU

Prof. Jodi Eichler-Levine (TR, 10:45am-12:00pm)

In its vast scope, power, various forms of consumer products, and enormous intellectual property holdings (including Star Wars and the Marvel Cinematic Universe, as well as its recent acquisition of 20th Century Fox), the Walt Disney Company has tremendous influence over modern American--and global--society. This course uses the rubric of "religion" to investigate both the fan culture surrounding Disney and its many properties, and the company's corporate aspirations, structure and ethos.

REL/PHIL 040

Is God Dead? Past, Present, Future

HU, HE

Prof. Chris Driscoll (TR, 12:10-1:25pm)

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/EVST/GS 096

Global Religions & the Environment (4)

CC, 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 097

Religion and Love as Political Ideas (4)

CC, HE, HU

Prof. Khurram Hussain (MW, 12:10-1:25pm)

Our modern understanding and expectation of 'politics' as a sphere of human activity separated from the spheres of religion and love is rooted in world-historical transformations that continue to this day. But inasmuch as they inform all human conceptions of community and belonging, both love and religion are, and always have been, political ideas as well. How do religious notions of love operate in the political life of human communities (here in the West, and elsewhere) in modern times? This course will attend to this question with assistance from historical figures, philosophers, artists, writers, musicians, clerics, and holy people, politicians and other scoundrels, and various forms of media like films, podcasts, documentaries, and the like.

- REL 098** **What is Shamanism? (4)** **CC, HE, HU**
Prof. Minjung Noh (TR, 1:35-2:50)
 This course explores global indigenous traditions often labeled as shamanism, mediumship, and possession. We will examine the history of the colonial study of religions and cultures during the formative periods of the field, and problematize the assumptions of the world religions paradigm and the belief-centered Protestant notion of religion. We will then broaden our view to traditions such as Korean Shamanism, Haitian Vodou, and other regional practices, studying them comparatively but from a decolonial perspective. Rather than serving Enlightenment epistemologies, we will critique such dualistic frameworks in order to imagine nondual possibilities.
- REL/JST/WGSS 138** **Sex, Gender, Jews (4)** **CC, HE, HU, W**
Prof. Jodi Eichler-Levine (TR, 9:20-10:35am)
 How do Jews of all genders tell their stories? What are the varied Jewish approaches to sexuality? How have feminist movements affected Jewish rituals? In this course, we will consider how religion, gender, sexuality, race, and class intersect in the lives of Jews, with a particular focus on North America. Topics will include: Jewish women's memoirs; the voices of LGBTQ Jews; recent innovations in Jewish ritual and leadership; Jewish masculinities; and the gendering of Jewish children's literature, among others.
- REL/ASIA/GS 145** **Islam & the Modern World (4)** **CC, HE, HU, W**
Prof. Khurram Hussain (MW, 9:20-10:35)
 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 159** **Roman Catholicism in the Modern World (4)** **HE, HU**
Prof. Michael Raposa (MW, 9:20-10:35am)
 A survey of the various intellectual, cultural, political and ecclesiastical developments that have shaped contemporary Roman Catholic life and thought.
- REL 196** **Religious Existentialism (4)** **HE, HU**
Prof. Michael Raposa (MW, 1:35-2:50pm)
 Existentialism is an important movement within modern philosophy and theology, although its significance has been somewhat muted by the dominance of analytic philosophy in recent decades. This course explores some classic texts associated with that movement, focusing on those that are preoccupied with religious questions. The ideas and perspectives of thinkers like Pascal, Kierkegaard, Buber, Tillich, and Marcel will be examined in the course. An attempt will be made to compare an existentialist approach with other approaches to philosophy and theology, most especially with philosophical pragmatism as another intellectual movement that emphasizes concrete lived situations as the appropriate starting point and context for engaging in reflection and inquiry.

REL/JST 197

Messiah: Judaism and the End of History (4)
Prof. Hartley Lachter (MW, 3:00-4:15pm)

**HE, HU, W,
WRIT**

The Jewish concept of a Messiah, or a divinely designated redeemer who will restore the lost kingdom of Israel, has played an outsized role in western culture. Since the rise of Christianity in the ancient world, the question of who the messiah is has been hotly contested. This course will explore the roots of this idea, and consider how Jewish approaches to the Messiah have evolved and changed over time, up to and including contemporary American culture. We will also consider how the Jewish notion of a messianic redeemer has informed ideas about the course - and destiny - of human history in western societies.

REL 198

Understanding Social Sin and Systemic Injustice (4)
Dr. Candace Jordan (MW, 10:45am-12:00pm)

CC, HE, HU

Ethicists often turn to structural sin or complicity with evil when addressing moral problems. They further aim to understand the extent to which persons inherit guilt for actions committed by those in close connection. This course explores the nature of systemic injustice, along with questions of responsibility, complicity, memory, and reconciliation. Engaging these topics through work in classical thought and modern liberalism, this course will explore moral responsibility in an interconnected world.

REL 296

Artificial Intelligence and the Making of Metaphysics
Prof. Chris Driscoll (TR, 3:00-4:15pm)

CC, HU, HE

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.