

## 2017-2018 Religious Studies Course Descriptions

### Religious Studies

**REL 120H Reel Religion: Religion and Human Experience.** This course includes an examination of religion and religious traditions as an academic endeavor. Students will examine religious views and values through engagement with and evaluation of film, literature, and other aspects of culture. Through intensive discussion and corresponding written assignments, students will discover and wrestle with religious themes, symbols, and concepts. The purpose of the course is to develop in the student a heightened awareness of the significance of religion in human life and culture. 4 Semester hours.

**REL 180 Religion and Film.** This course applies interpretive and critical-analytical methods to the medium of film, which serves as an important conveyor of religious meaning and expression in society. Students will examine religious views and values through engagement with and evaluation of both contemporary and less-recent films. Through intensive discussion and corresponding written assignments, students will discover and wrestle with the latent (and sometimes blatant) religious themes, symbols, and concepts present in a variety of films. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 200H Biblical Texts and Contexts.** This course involves a close reading of biblical texts, which will be examined in light of literary, historical, social, and religious contexts. The course will address enduring questions raised by the text, including creation, suffering, community formation, ethics, and salvation. Students will learn and practice several critical methods of analysis, including the concept of social location. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 220H Religions of the World.** This course is an introductory study of the history, thought and practice of the religions of Africa, India, Asia and the Middle East. It will focus on the basic tenets, examine some of the basic texts, analyze the historical context in which the religion developed, and explore some of the rituals and worship practices. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 225 Native American Spirituality.** This course will examine the spirituality of Native Americans in Meso America. The course will focus on general concepts that are found in many Nations of the early America. The course will examine world views, place of ritual, the concept of time, relationship between the earth, animals, creation and humans. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 235 The Black Church.** This course surveys the growth and development of the Black Church by examining various modes of Christian worship and aspects of the Black Church. As such the course will examine the role of women, the place of the Bible, how public discourse is handled, preaching, role of music and the arts. The course will study the impact the Black Church has had on the Black community. This survey nature of this course will further the learning goals of the department in that the student has to demonstrate an understanding of the major ideas and tenets of the Black Church and understand the use of text and the oral tradition. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 240H Interreligious Understanding: Can't We All Just Get Along?** In this course students will learn to engage, sustain and enrich an interfaith dialogue. We will address such broad questions as: Why do we interact with others who are different from us? Why should we care? Does it water down your faith to meet and discuss with people of various religions? How does religious diversity influence our understanding of religious freedom? Do members of marginalized religions have the same rights and freedoms as those of the dominant religion? Are all religious observances respected or just some? We will look at the more practical implications of how religions are practiced in a multi-faith society. The course will include reading sacred texts from various traditions and learning about religious practice in context. In addition, the course will include conversations with representatives of various faith traditions and visits to places of worship, as we examine the history and future of interfaith dialogue in this country. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 255 Christianity: Past, Present, Future.** This course explores the Christian tradition. Attention will be given to the emergence of Christianity out of a 1st century Jewish context, the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, theological categories of Christian faith and practice (such as ecclesiology, the Trinity, sacraments, the Atonement), and the major divisions and denominations of Christianity. Some attention will be paid to the realities of contemporary Christianity in the United States and in the broader global context as well. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 260H Islam: An Introduction.** The course on Islam will study the development of Islam from its Arabic beginning to its Asian outgrowth. The student will come to understand how Islam came to be a major religion in the world. The course examines the major tenets, important rituals, significant people, profound developments and major viewpoints. The course seeks to provide an understanding of Islam that will broaden student's perspective on what it means to be a religious person in the 21st century. 4 semester hours.

**REL 270 Death and Dying.** The first half of this course surveys ideas about death and dying as found in both Western and Eastern religions and philosophies. The second half of the course is devoted to such practical and ethical issues as suicide, euthanasia, capital punishment, the grieving process, the funeral industry, living wills, hospice care, and the near death experience. Emphasis is placed throughout the course on how the inevitability of death encourages us to live more intentionally and meaningfully. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 300 Old Testament Interpretation.** A close study of a select group of texts from the Bible, focusing on Old Testament. The course will employ several interpretive approaches including historical, literary, feminist, and third-world perspectives. Topics will vary and may include individual books or blocks, such as Pentateuch, Deuteronomistic History, Prophets, and Wisdom literature. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 310 Jesus and the Gospels.** This course will focus on the New Testament Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, introducing critical methods in the study of the gospels. It will also address non-canonical texts and the study of the historical Jesus. Particular emphasis will be given to the historical, literary, and theological context of the gospels and the understandings of Jesus that arise from them. The portrayal of Jesus in music, art, and popular culture will also be explored. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 315 Paul and the Epistles.** This course will examine the apostle Paul and his writings, in the context of both the early Christian communities and contemporary times. Beginning with a survey of Paul's life and the early church as portrayed in Acts, it will then turn to a close reading of the Pauline letters. The latter part of the course will concentrate on important social issues raised by the letters. The course will

introduce students to the principles of biblical scholarship, which will be used to interpret the letters in their social, political, and economic context. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 330 Buddhism in Film.** This course is an introductory course to Buddhism. This course seeks to explore the basic concepts of Buddhism as they are presented in film. The course will examine the Buddhist concepts of karma, impermanence, Nirvana, enlightenment, desire as the cause of suffering, five aggregates, and no self. The course will explore these ideas and more through the characters and situations as they have arisen in various films. The course will also delve into the history of Buddhism as a religious phenomenon and briefly examine the life of the Buddha. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 340 Christian Social Ethics.** This course is an introduction to Christian ethics which stresses its social dimensions and addresses such issues as politics, human sexuality, economics and environmental problems. Students will have the option to research an ethical issue of their choice or to complete a semester-long service-learning project. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 360 Religious Conflict and Peace-Building.** This course investigates the role that religion plays in conflict and peace-building. Through a case-study approach in analyzing selected conflict zones, both past and present, the course explores the complexity of such conflicts and the role of religion in exacerbating or alleviating conflict. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 370 Gender and Religion.** This course will explore the myriad ways in which gender and religion interact. It will address feminist religious ideology and theology, masculinity studies, women's and men's roles in religious institutions, men's and women's religious expression, and the construction of gender in religious texts and structures. The roles that power, cultural attitudes, and social and political context play will be discussed with respect to the above categories. Both specific women and men and general trends within and across different religious traditions will be studied. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 400 Seminar in Religious Studies.** A student-driven, reading- and discussion-intensive course focusing on critical study and research of a specific area of religious studies. Topics will vary. Prerequisite: Junior standing or permission of the instructor. 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 410 Religious Studies Portfolio.** Students will create and submit a portfolio that demonstrates their achievement of the Religious Studies learning objectives. 1 Semester Hour.

**REL 490 Travel Seminar.** The Travel Seminar will normally consist of in-class instruction and a travel component, although occasionally academic instruction will be included as part of the travel component. Full participation in the Travel Seminar will be required to pass the course. 2 or 4 Semester Hours.

**REL 495 Independent Research.** Involves an extensive research project under the guidance of a faculty supervisor. The independent research may include an extended service-learning or related experiential learning project framed by additional and relevant scholarly work. Independent research projects require submission and acceptance of a proposal to the department before the research can begin. 2-4 Semester Hours.

**REL 499 Internship in Religion.** This course provides the frame work in which students can gain field experience in churches, church agencies, or other social institutions approved by the department chairman. The internship can provide a variety of pre-professional work experiences, e.g., parish administration, radio ministry, institutional chaplaincy, etc. Written application should be made to the internship coordinator (department chairman) during the first two weeks of the semester which precedes the internship. Graded S/U. 2-8 Semester Hours.