Course Catalog

Religion

Faculty

Kimberly Bauser McBrien, Visiting Assistant Professor
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Sajida Jalalzai, Ph.D., Assistant Professor
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Chad S. Spigel, Ph.D., Associate Professor
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Requirements

The Major

The requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with a major in Religion are as follows:

I. Departmental requirements:

A. 32 credit hours in Religion including at least one course from each of the following two groups:

1. RELI 1320, RELI 1330, or RELI 1360
2. RELI 2354, RELI 2355, or RELI 2356

B. RELI 2400: What is Religion?

C. At least 16 of the credit hours in Religion to be upper-division courses selected in consultation with a faculty adviser in the Department of Religion.

D. RELI 4494: Religion Capstone.

E. A total of no more than 16 credit hours from RELI 3-90 and 3-91 may be counted toward the major without approval of the adviser and the Department.

II. University requirements: completion of all other required elements of the Pathways Curriculum and at least 124
credit hours.

The Minor

The requirements for a minor in Religion are as follows:

I. At least 18 credit hours in Religion.
II. At least 12 of the credit hours in Religion to be upper-division courses selected in consultation with a faculty adviser in the Department of Religion.
III. A total of no more than 8 credit hours from RELI 3-90 and 3-91 may be counted toward the minor without approval of the adviser and the Department.

Courses

Lower Division Courses at the 1000 Level

RELI-1320 Ethical Issues in Religious Perspective
Inquiry into the religious dimension of issues such as environmental pollution, violence, capital punishment, economic injustice, hunger, homosexuality, feminism, pornography, abortion, and euthanasia.

RELI-1330 Asian Religions
A study of Hindu, Buddhist, and East Asian religious traditions in theory and practice; attention to such topics as reincarnation, yoga and meditation, shamanism, ritual, salvation, personal religious experience, gender roles, spiritual ideals of art, and the relation of humankind to nature and the cosmos.

RELI-1360 Religion in the United States
A study of religious diversity in the United States with emphasis on the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Islamic traditions. Attention may be given to such topics as Native American religion, civil religion, new religious movements, women in religion, and televangelism.

Lower Division Courses at the 2000 Level

RELI-2400 What Is Religion?
This course examines the question of what religion is, including those aspects that today some people refer to as spiritual. Attention will be given to such related questions as: How do you think about or define religion? How have scholars thought about and defined religion? What are common elements of religious life found throughout the world? What are the various functions of religion for societies and for individuals? How have scholars studied religion? How does one study a religion, or religion, if one is an outsider or is non-religious?
RELI-2101 Biblical Hebrew
The primary goal of this course is to introduce students to ancient Hebrew so they will be able to read parts of the Hebrew Bible in the original language. This course begins with an introduction to the Hebrew alphabet and vowel system and therefore requires no prior knowledge of Hebrew. (Also listed as LAC 2101).

RELI-2460 Philosophy of Religion
A critical discussion of philosophical issues arising in religion and theology. Typical topics covered include: religious language, arguments for God's existence, religious experience, miracles and revelation, the relationship of faith and reason, the nature of God, the problem of evil, death and immortality. (Also listed as PHIL 2438.) (Offered every other year).

RELI-2354 The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
A study of the books of the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures in English translation. Some of the books will be read in their entirety, and substantial excerpts of most of the others will also be read so that all of the major types of literature present in the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures will be represented. The course will approach its subject matter primarily as literature, but attention will be given to the historical, cultural, and religious aspects of its production. The course will also consider the trajectory of its subject matter in Jewish and Christian thought, and in Western Culture.

RELI-2355 The New Testament
A study of the writings that comprise the New Testament, with attention also to certain other early Christian documents not included in the New Testament. Most of the writings are read in their entirety, and they are examined with reference to their historical, cultural, religious, and literary contexts; their use as historical sources for the reconstruction of Christian origins; their role as a basis for Christian belief and practice; and their wider influence in Western and world cultures.

RELI-2356 The Qur’an
Islam and Muslims have been embroiled in some of the most searing controversies of our age, and the Islamic scripture, the Qur’an, has been at the center of a number of these controversies. This course introduces students to the Qur’an, and how it is perceived by Muslims themselves. Religion 2356 deals with the importance of this sacred text for the religion of Islam, including its beliefs, rituals, and rites. The course also covers the history of the Qur’an and engages with key themes of the scripture. Students will be introduced to the content of the primary text and a selection of accessible secondary readings. Current hot-button questions such as "What does the Qur’an say about women?" or "Does the Qur’an legitimize violence?" will also be addressed.

RELI-2359 Pagans, Jews, and Christians
This course explores the development of early Christian and Jewish beliefs, practices and cultures in the contexts of the larger Mediterranean world. Through a combination of readings and visits to archaeological sites and museums in Rome and its surroundings, students will learn to locate emerging Jewish and Christian literature, ideas, and debates within Roman imperial social and religious practices, institutions and ideology. This course is part of a faculty-led study abroad program in Italy offered in the summer. Co-requisite: THTR 1343: Improvisation: Performance and the City.
Upper Division Courses at the 3000 Level

RELI-3401 Gender and Religion
An examination of the cultural expectations placed upon women and men in various religious traditions; the historical prevalence of patriarchy and differentiated gender roles; feminist and liberation movements for gender equality with a religious basis; challenges to heterosexism and the development of gay, lesbian, and transgender religious perspectives. (Offered every other year). Prerequisite: 1 course in Religion or consent of instructor.

RELI-3403 Death and Beyond
An examination of the significance of death for human existence and how various religious traditions find meaning in mortality; the ritual practices involved in the dying process, the disposition of the body, grieving, last rites, and the remembrance of the dead; cross-cultural concepts of heaven, hell, reincarnation, the soul, near-death experience, good and evil, salvation, enlightenment, and the ethical implications of religious notions of death. (Offered every other year). Prerequisite: 1 course in Religion or consent of instructor.

RELI-3312 Religion and Science in the West
An examination and discussion of issues in the history of the relation of religion and science in the Western world, with emphasis on developments from the Renaissance to the present. The course focuses on significant religion-science debates, such as those surrounding evolution and the mind/soul/body relation, and on methods and models in religion and science. Attention will be given to ways religion has influenced science, and science religion. Prerequisite: 1 course in Religion or consent of instructor.

RELI-3413 Religion and Science in Asia
An examination and discussion of issues in the history of the relation of religion and science in Chinese, Hindu, and Islamic Cultures. Topics will include cosmology, astronomy, and astrology, on one hand, and biology and traditional systems of medicine on the other. Major theoretical issues will include the colonized discourse on religion and science in the Asian context, the variety of traditional Asian responses to modern science and the impact of cultural perspectives on the scientific enterprise. (Offered every other Year). Prerequisite: 1 Course in Religion or consent of instructor.

RELI-3418 Religion and Film
This course introduces some of the many issues and theoretical perspectives in the study of religion and film. We explore images of religion and religious people in film and trace a number of recurring religious themes in recent popular films. We also examine popular films that do not have explicit religious themes through the lenses of theories of religion, myth, and ritual. (Offered every other year). Prerequisite: 1 course in Religion or consent of instructor.

RELI-3431 The Hindu Tradition
A study of the major developments and schools within the tradition, from ancient times to the present; attention to mythological/theological perceptions and interpretations of the world, as well as to meditational, devotional, and ritual practices. Emphasized throughout the course is the interplay between contemporary insider and outsider.
perspectives. (Offered every other year) Prerequisite: RELI 1330 or consent of instructor

RELI-3432 Buddhist Ecology
This course explores a central teaching of the Buddha, as well as a primary focus of Engaged Buddhism or Buddhist practice: the inter-relationship between humans and their environment. Buddhist Ecology examines the foundations of Buddhist ecological thinking through analysis of the Buddhist scriptural and historical traditions, as well as its applications in the modern world. Course texts include the sutras or discourses of the Buddha, the monastic code, contemporary statements by Buddhist thinkers and activists worldwide, and scholarly treatments of Buddhist thought and practice, Engaged Buddhism, and Buddhist Ecology. (Offered every other year)

RELI-3433 Chinese Religions: Unity and Diversity
Religion 3433 explores Chinese religion through an in-depth study of its formative texts and historical evolution to the modern era. Emphasizing original sources in translation as well as critical studies by modern scholars, the course examines the cosmological framework of Chinese Religion as well as attitudes towards religious belief and practice reflected in scripture, commentaries, and philosophical works. Students will conduct original research on Chinese religion in its contemporary manifestations. (Offered every other year.) (also listed as CHIN 3433.) Prerequisite: RELI 1330 or consent of instructor.

RELI-3434 Japanese Literature of the Spirit World
An examination of Japanese religions through the lens of Japanese literature, focusing on the modern period. The course will focus on Japanese consciousness, whether this is expressed as supernaturalism (ghost stories and other supernatural phenomena), religiously inspired aesthetic form (in poetic genres), mystical experience (in Japanese magical realism), or religious vocation (monastic practice and new religious movement). (Offered every other year.) Prerequisite: RELI 1330 or consent of instructor.

RELI-3338 Greek Religious Experience
A study of Greek religious festivals designed to produce a coherent image of a year in the religious life of the ancient Greeks. Through a combination of archaeological and literary evidence, we will attempt to reconstruct the rituals performed at the various festivals and explore the ways in which they organized and articulated the community through shared religious experience. We shall also consider the ways in which religion organized civic space and gave it meaning. (Also listed as CLAS 3338.)

RELI-3441 Creating Judaism
This course introduces the student to the cultural, religious, political and social lives of Jews, covering the entirety of Jewish history. Using historical and religious studies approaches, students in this course will discuss Judaism(s) at different times and in different geographical locations focusing on questions of identifications and definition. (Offered every Spring) Prerequisite: RELI 2354 or consent of instructor.

RELI-3442 Global Christianities
A study of Christianity within its modern socio-historical contexts. Possible topics within the course include the development of indigenous Christians in the two-thirds world, the rise of global Pentecostal-charismatic movements, the shift to the global south within Catholicism, the growth of post-communist Orthodoxy, mainline
Protestant missionary endeavors, and evangelical Christian influence on political and social policies worldwide. (Offered every other year). Prerequisite: One Religion course

RELI-3443 Islamic Worlds
An examination of Islam as a diverse, living tradition practiced by more than 1.5 billion people around the world. Students will learn about foundational aspects of the world’s second largest religion, from its historical development, scriptural source (Qur’an), and modes of practice. The course will also engage contemporary issues, from perspectives on global violence and gender equality to the phenomena of Islam in America and anti-Muslim sentiment. Prerequisite: RELI 2356 or consent of instructor

RELI-3444 Islam in North America
This seminar focuses on significant movements in the history of Islam in North America, including the forced arrival of African Muslim slaves to the "New World," the evolution of various African American ethno-religious communities, and various waves of Muslim immigration. We will look at processes of community building, institution building, and constructions of diverse North American Muslim identities. This course also examines how Islam has been and continues to be talked about and represented in North American society, for example, in political rhetoric and in the media. Special attention will be given to the issues of race, gender, and citizenship. (Offered every Spring.)

RELI-3350 The Dead Sea Scrolls
In 1947 hundreds of ancient scrolls - including biblical texts and sectarian documents - were discovered in caves overlooking the Dead Sea. In this course we will examine the scrolls in an effort to learn more about the world of Second Temple Judaism, the history of the biblical texts, and the lifestyle and religious ideas of a small sectarian community; studying the scrolls will also provide a context for the emergence of rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity. In addition to learning about the scrolls and their contents, this course will also look at the archaeological remains of the ancient village of Qumran, where the scrolls were found. Prerequisite: RELI 2354 or consent of instructor

RELI-3452 Jewish & Christian Apocalyptic Literature
This course examines ancient Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature by (a) placing some of the texts that make up the genre within their larger historical and cultural contexts, (b) studying some of its major Jewish and Christian literary expressions, and (c) exploring its possible social, cultural and religious function. We also explore the legacies of apocalyptic thought in Western culture, especially in recent political discourse and in film. (Offered every other year). Prerequisite: 1 course in Religion or consent of instructor

RELI-3353 The Gospels, Jesus, and Christian Origins
A study of the earliest extant literary portrayals of Jesus, with attention to what can be known about his life, message, activity, and fate as well as his significance for the origins of Christianity. Prerequisite: RELI 2355 or consent of instructor.

RELI-3454 The Letters of Paul
A study of the extant writings attributed to Paul and included in the New Testament, with attention to the historical,
cultural, religious, and literary context of these writings and to Paul’s influence in early Christianity and in the
history of Christian thought. Prerequisite: RELI 2354 or RELI 2355 or consent of instructor.

RELI-3455 Early Christian Literature Beyond the Canon
This course explores the diversity of early Christianity in the first few centuries of the movement by examining
eyearly Christian texts not included in what eventually becomes the canon of Christian scripture, the New Testament.
The course also explores the various methods and approaches used by scholars to study early Christian literature
and history. (Offered every other year). Prerequisites: RELI 2354, or RELI 2355, or consent of instructor.

RELI-3456 Digging for the Truth: Archaeology, Bibles, and Popular Media
This course explores the intersection of archaeology, the bibles, and popular media. More specifically, it explores
how the popular media uses archaeology and the bibles to create history, and how their process differs from an
academic approach. Some questions that will be addressed include: What is archaeology and how is it done? What
can archaeology teach us? What can’t archaeology teach us? What role should the biblical literature play in writing
history? How does popular media’s use of archaeology and the bibles differ from the historian’s use of archaeology
and the bibles? What kinds of motives - political, economic and religious - factor into the equation? Prerequisite:
RELI 2354, or RELI 2355, or consent of instructor

RELI-3457 Jerusalem
This is a course about the city of Jerusalem and the roles it has played (and continues to play) in lives of Jews,
Christians, and Muslims. In order to learn about the city in this manner, we will explore not only the religious, but
also the cultural, political, economic, and architectural histories of Jerusalem. What does Jerusalem mean to
different religious communities? Has the meaning changed over time? How and why did this particular city become
central to Judaism, Christianity and Islam?

RELI-3458 Medieval Christian Mysticism
A survey of writings in the tradition of medieval Christian mysticism, from Augustine (d. 430) to John of the Cross
(d. 1591). Major themes include the use of violent and erotic imagery, the move from Latin to vernacular languages
like English, German, Spanish, and French, the importance of gender (whether the author’s or the audience’s) in the
shaping of this literature, and the relevance of medieval mysticism to modern thought. (Also listed as ENGL 3457)
Prerequisite: At least one English course at the 2000 level or higher.

RELI-3370 Sociology of Religion
A study of institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of religious expression. Various forms of religious
expression, their social sources, and their societal consequences will be examined. The relation between religion
and secular institutions (the economy, polity, education, etc.) will be investigated. Particular attention will be
focused on emerging forms of religious expression in modern urban-industrialized society. (Also listed as SOCI
3333.) (Offered occasionally.)

RELI-3480 United States Latino Religious Practices and Traditions
This course examines the beliefs, theologies, and practices of diverse U.S. Latino communities. In addition to
Catholicism and Protestantism, the course will review the impact of African and Native American religious
traditions. The course critically examines how U.S. Latino religious experiences impact race, class, gender, and sexuality with a particular emphasis on examining the Latino community in San Antonio. (Offered every other year) Prerequisite: RELI 1360 or consent of instructor

RELI-3481 Native American Religions
This course is an overview of Native American religious traditions in the United States. Topics covered may include Native revitalization movements, traditional Pueblo and Sioux dances, Native Christianity, modern Native religious thought, Peyote religion, issues of gender in Native American religion, boarding schools and Americanization, the role of white Christian missionaries, and the modern Native American evangelical movement. (Offered every other year.) Prerequisites: RELI 1360 or HIST 1360 or consent of instructor

RELI-3482 African American Religions
This course will explore a wide variety of African American faiths that have grown into a diversity of religious traditions in the United States. This will include but not be limited to: African American Christianity, Voodou, Hoodoo, Conjure, Black Hebrews, Santeria, Nation of Islam, Father Divine and more. The goal of this class will be to introduce students to a variety of Afro-American traditions, explore issues of race and power within religious institutions, examine how African Americans have adapted to the American religious marketplace, and expose students to a variety of methods in the field of religion. (Offered every other year.) Prerequisite: RELI 1360 or consent of instructor

RELI-3-90 Reading and Conference
Individual work under supervision in areas not covered by other courses. Prerequisites: 12 semester hours in religion and approval of the department chair and instructor

RELI-3-91 Special Topics in Religion
From time to time, the department will offer special topic courses not described in the Bulletin. The topics may be in any area and may be offered at the initiative of departmental faculty or upon petition of interested students. Announcements of such courses will be by special prospectus. May be repeated on different topics. Prerequisite: Consent of instructor

Upper Division Courses at the 4000 Level

RELI-4371 Topics in Social Scientific Study of Religion
An introduction to classic and contemporary social scientific studies of religion. The course may focus on a specific method applicable to the study or religion, or on a particular topic commonly arising in social scientific inquiries. An example of the former would be the functionalist approach; an example of the latter would be the problem of the sacred/profane distinction.

RELI-4494 Religion Capstone
This course provides a capstone experience for students of Religion. During the semester students will: 1) reflect
on, analyze, and evaluate the different approaches to the study of Religion encountered and utilized in Religion courses; 2) examine how experiences as a Religion major prepare students for the future; 3) develop their own project that "caps" their academic experience; and 4) organize an end-of-semester Colloquium. (Offered every year). This course is normally taken in the Junior or Senior year. Prerequisite: 4 courses in Religion