Fall 2016 Courses Designed for Undergraduates

CultBlf 25   Studying Buddhism, Across Place and Time
Gyatso       T Th 11:30am-1:00pm
This class studies the basic elements of Buddhist thought, practice, and historical communities, and their vision of human flourishing. We will study Buddhist classic writings as well as later works from South, Central and East Asia on meditation, discipline, and creativity. Key themes of our readings are the relationship between self and other, the education of the emotions, paths of self-cultivation, and the (im)possibility of perfection. We will be especially attentive to how the approach to such things has shifted as Buddhism spread through Asia, and more recently to the rest of the world, as received by the 19th century Transcendentalists, the Beat poets, and socially engaged religion. Throughout the course we will consider the relevance of this material to our own views of the world and how we should lead our lives.

CultBlf 39   The Hebrew Bible
Cohen        M W F 10:00am-11:00am
This course is a survey of the major books and ideas of the Hebrew Bible (commonly called the Old Testament). The course will also treat the historical contexts in which the Bible emerged, and the Bible's role as canonical scripture in Judaism and Christianity. All readings in translation. No prior knowledge of the subject is assumed. Occasional Fridays are required. Please check course syllabus for details.

CultBlf 57   Animated Spirituality: Japanese Religion in Anime, Manga, and Film
Hardacre     T Th 10:00am-11:00am
This course addresses the representation of religion in Japanese popular culture, with emphasis on anime, manga, and film. The course examines depictions of religious figures, themes, and human dilemmas in contemporary popular culture as a gateway to understanding the significance of religion in Japanese society and history.

EastD 140   Major Religious Texts of East Asia
Abe          W 2:00pm-4:30pm
This course aims at enabling students to read and analyze in depth major religious texts of East Asia, representing diverse traditions and genres. The course encourages students to take up their reading of texts not only as ways to acquire knowledge on Asian religious traditions, but as practice, labor, and play in which their ordinary way of understanding/experiencing the world and themselves will be challenged, reaffirmed, and renewed.
EthRson 18  Classical Chinese Ethical and Political Theory
Puett  M W 10:00am-11:00am

What is the best way to live a fuller and more ethical life? Concretely what should we do to begin to live in a more flourishing and inspiring way? Questions such as these were at the heart of philosophical debates in China. The answers that classical Chinese thinkers developed in response to these questions are among the most powerful in human history. Regardless of whether one agrees with them or not, they should be studied and taken seriously by anyone who cares about ethics, politics, and the ways to live life more fully.

FrSemr 36P  To Far Places: Literature of Journey and Quest
Graham  Th 3:00pm-5:00pm

In this course, we read a highly diverse group of engaging texts in English translation. Most are fictional, mythic, or epic texts. All engage the theme of journey, quest, pilgrimage, passage, or sojourn. We will be attentive to enduring themes and basic questions associated with this varied literature, including parting and return, separation and reintegration, homelessness and homecoming, epic adventure and exploration, trial and suffering, loss and recovery, heroic action, tragedy, pathos, orientation and disorientation, internal and external travel, faith and courage, aesthetic vision, heightened perception, self-discovery and growth, companionship, loneliness, risk, and death. Readings will be selected from among the following: Gilgamesh, J.R.R. Tolkien’s Hobbit, Homer’s Odyssey, Virgil’s Aeneid, Matsuo Basho’s Narrow Road to Oku, Hermann Hesse’s Siddhartha, Thomas Mann’s Death in Venice, Rudyard Kipling’s The Man Who Would be King, Ashvagosha’s Life of the Buddha, Shusaku Endo’s Deep River, Annie Dillard’s Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, John Hersey’s A Single Pebble, Charles Frazier’s Cold Mountain, Fariduddin Attar’s Conference of the Birds, Naguib Mahfouz’s Journey of Ibn Fattouma, Cormac McCarthy’s The Road, Rachel Joyce’s The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry, and Italo Calvino’s Invisible Cities.

FrSemr 43D  Christianity and Slavery in America, 1619-1865
Brekus  W 1:00pm-3:00pm

Most people today assume that Christianity and slavery are incompatible. For most of Christian history, however, the opposite was true. Christians not only owned slaves, but they argued that slavery was sanctioned by the Bible. This course will explore the relationship between Christianity and slavery in America from 1619, when the first slaves arrived in Virginia, to the Emancipation Proclamation in 1865. We will ask several questions. How did white Christians become convinced that slavery was sinful? Why did many slaves convert to Christianity, the religion of their oppressors? How did enslaved
Christians make sense of their suffering? Students will read major historical interpretations of slavery, but they will particularly focus on primary documents, including proslavery tracts and sermons, abolitionist speeches, poems, and the personal religious narratives of enslaved men and women. We will also read parts of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, one of the most controversial novels ever published in the United States. In addition to discussing the readings during class meetings, we will listen to spirituals and analyze paintings, photos, and other objects (for example, abolitionist tokens). In addition to our regular class meetings, we will take a guided walking tour of Boston’s Black Heritage Trail. The tour will include an exploration of the African Meeting House.

**FrSemr 60H**  
**Faith and Fiction in American History**

Holland  
T 3:00pm-5:00pm

Moving chronologically from the early national period to the turn of the twenty-first century, this course uses key literary works to examine the religious history of the United States. Wrestling with questions of deism, Calvinism, revivalism, race, gender, secularization and much more, we bore into the faith-inflected cultures of American history through the imagined narratives of some of its most celebrated writers, including the likes of Susanna Rowson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, James Baldwin, Rudolfo Anaya, Pearl Abraham and Marilynne Robinson. I will offer mini-lectures to contextualize these works in their historical moment. We will read a pair of scholarly works to give us some theoretical tools of analysis. But mostly we will read and talk about the novels themselves.

**ModMDest 100**  
**Introduction to the Modern Middle East**

Zeghal  
M W 10:00am-11:00am

An introduction to Middle Eastern Studies focusing on the modern period. Lectures will be sequenced according to historical chronology but will be thematically organized. This is not a survey course and it will not be exhaustive in its coverage of the region. Readings will consist of primary and secondary sources. This course is designed to give students a good grasp of the history of the modern Middle East and of the major themes in modern Middle Eastern Studies. Students will critically engage with some of the most important topics that resonate in that area of the world, and will also be exposed to the diverse ways in which the scholarly literature has shaped and approached these topics across disciplines. The larger aim of the course is to develop students’ critical thinking in dealing with the history, cultures, politics, and political economies of the contemporary Middle East. Required for all concentrators in The Modern Middle East. Open to all undergraduate and graduate students. There are no prerequisites for this course.
The World’s Religions in Multicultural America: Case Studies in Religious Pluralism

Eck

T Th 11:30am-1:00pm

An exploration of the dynamic religious landscape of the US with special focus on Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh traditions in the most recent period of post-1965 immigration. How are faith and freedom negotiated in a more complex society? In what contexts do minority religious communities encounter long-dominant Christian and Jewish communities? How is America changing as religious communities struggle with civic, constitutional, ethical, and theological issues, especially in the post-9/11 period? Readings, films, discussion, and class projects will focus on particular cases and controversies.

Incarnation and Desire

Bickel Lamberth

T Th 1:00pm-2:00pm

The course offers an introduction to Christian thought by considering major texts, figures and ideas from the first century to the present in their changing cultural contexts. Central themes include the categories of body, flesh and soul; free will, desire and sin in relation to divine grace; and the meaning of incarnation. Texts include canonical and non-canonical early Christian literatures, Patristic and medieval texts, Reformation theologies, as well as modern and contemporary authors. Students will develop a sense of the distinguishing features of the Christian world view, while gaining an appreciation for the significant diversity across the tradition.

The Letters of Paul: Ethnicity, Sex, Ethics, and the End of the World

Nasrallah

T Th 11:30am-1:00pm

This introductory course focuses on 1) the Pauline epistles in their first-century sociopolitical context, and their earliest interpretations; 2) recent trends in Pauline studies, including feminist and postcolonial interpretation, the New Perspective, and European philosophical treatments (Badiou, Zizek). Special attention will be given to ideas of the gendered/enslaved body and its potential for transformation and pollution, ethnicity in the Roman world, the relations of communities to Roman imperial power, and views of time and the impending eschaton.

Cultures of Health and Healing: Religion, Medicine, and Global Health

Block

W 1:00pm-3:00pm

What does it mean to “be healthy” and “to heal” in different contexts? What sorts of medical, ritual, or religious expertise authorizes different sorts of healers and forms of healing? What conceptions of human bodies and their capabilities are assumed? These
questions probe entanglements of religion and medicine in everyday life. This course focuses on ways in which these issues might inform, challenge, and enrich thinking about global health. We will examine moral and religious histories of the global health movement alongside pressing contemporary questions such as, how do disease epidemics shape religious practice? How does religious belief shape the reception of biomedical technologies? We will consider examples from a range of contexts and traditions. Topics include colonialism, medical missionaries, social gospel and public health, human rights, bioethics, and liberation theology. Throughout the course, we will discuss the relevance of socio-economics, race, gender, and sexuality.

Religion 1009 Religion, Gender, and Politics in Transnational Perspective

Braude, Ahmed  W 1:00pm-4:00pm

The course follows key themes in religion and gender as these were shaped and reshaped through the colonial and post-colonial eras. In particular, the religious history of American women and the history of women in Islam primarily in relation to the Middle East (Professors Braude’s and Ahmed’s fields respectively) are intertwined and brought into conversation. The interaction of religion, gender and sexuality and the turns and complexities imparted to these by the politics of imperialism, race, resistance, and the politics of class, are examined in the context of the emergence of modernity, nationalism, feminism and the globalization of religions in the wake of empire and Christian mission.

Religion 1022 Art and Religion

Jackson  T 2:00pm-4:00pm

This course explores the common ground between art and religion. It seeks to go beyond such binaries as secular/sacred, material/spiritual, primitive/modern in order to understand the work of art as a labor-intensive process whereby inner compulsions, mundane objects, and organic processes become the raw material out of which shareable images, affecting presences and transcendent experiences are fashioned. The course will be focused on artists from many cultures and many periods of history, using many different media, but students will be encouraged to develop projects around artists of their own choosing.

Religion 1025A Anthropology of “the Religious” Part 1: Theory

Beliso-De Jesus  W 1:00pm-4:00pm

Conducting fieldwork with groups and people based on their religious/spiritual beliefs requires a complex understanding as well as critical knowledge of both the theory and methods of the "field research" process. This year-long course will provide students interested in conducting anthropological style "field research" with religious/spiritual
groups/peoples, an in-depth and critical survey of theory and methodological approaches towards an anthropology of "the religious." The first semester will focus primarily on the theoretical questions/problems in the study of religion in anthropology, including what is a field site, how is it constituted, and how do we understand our own research and theory in relation other academic projects? The second semester is a methodological workshop, where students will be required to conduct method-intensive weekly projects. Through different methodological modalities, students will be required to think about what their research means to the communities they intend to work with as well as questions of positionality, the divide between participant/observer, new forms of research methods and other problematics of research.

**Religion 1046 Introduction to Religion and Ecology**

**McKanan M W 10:00am-11:00am**

This course will explore the intersection between religious traditions and ecological activism, with special attention to current conversations about "ethical eating." We will consider both the resources that religious traditions provide to ecological activists and the ways these activists have challenges aspects of traditional religion. The course will also function as a general introduction to the multiple ways of knowing that comprise the scholarly study of religion, with attention to scriptural interpretation, history, ethnography, theology, ethics, and comparative studies.

**Religion 1059 God, Hindu and Christian**

**Clooney T 2:00pm-4:30pm**

This course examines the processes by which theologians study theologies across religious boundaries, bringing this learning into dialogue with home traditions, by careful comparison, dialogical reflection and, ideally, a well-informed theological understanding of what it means to belong to one tradition and learn from another. Readings include (by way of the necessary example) Hindu primary texts and texts from the Roman Catholic traditions, but students are encouraged to bring their knowledge of and interest in other traditions into the discussions. Prior knowledge of either tradition, though desirable, is not required.

**Religion 1212A Judaism: The Liturgical Year**

**Levenson T Th 11:30am-1:00pm**

An introduction to the Jewish tradition through an examination of its liturgical calendar. The ancient Near Eastern affinities and biblical forms of the Jewish holidays; the observance of the holidays in rabbinic law, their characteristic themes as developed in rabbinic non-legal literature, their special biblical readings, the evolution of the holidays
over the centuries, contemporary theological reflection upon them. Emphasis on classic texts, focus on theological and literary issues.

Religion 1410  Contesting Sex and Gender, Making Early Christianity

King  W 5:00pm-8:00pm

Religion has been and remains a critical site both for constructing and for contesting sex/gender identities, roles, and sexualities. Women’s relationship with religion has been particularly fraught. We will examine early Christian and contemporaneous texts through different lenses, drawing upon: feminist biblical interpretation and hermeneutics, literary and legal theory, anthropology, historical-critical studies, theology, lesbian-feminist theory, transgender studies, rabbinics, and classics. We will give special attention to critical theories of religion in gender/feminist studies, emphasizing the plural possibilities, contestations, and instability of religious texts. We will introduce various resources for critically engaging constructions of sex/gender/sexuality of both “orthodox” and “heretical” materials in conversation with Greek, Roman, and Jewish materials. The aims are to promote analytic reading strategies that engage the constructed, contested, and multi-perspectival character of varied religious materials and to discuss both the limits and the possibilities that this material offers for imagining a more expansive sphere for human flourishing today.

This course is being offered through The Graduate Consortium of Women’s Studies. The first class will be held September 7 and runs through December 7. Interested students are required to apply via the online application system for GCWS: http://web.mit.edu/gcws/courses/application.html. The GCWS will accept applications until August 22, 2016. The faculty team will meet soon after that date to make their selections for the course and students will be notified by the GCWS Program Manager, Andi Sutton.

Religion 1434  History of Western Christianity, 150-1100

Madigan  M W 4:00pm-5:30pm

This course is designed to provide a historical overview of the Church and society in Western Europe from the second through the twelfth century. Thus, this course will investigate late-antique and early medieval Christianity in its social and its cultural context. Narrative and theological story lines to be pursued will include the varieties of early Christianity; relations with the Roman state (including persecution of Christians by it); the emergence of normative or “early Catholic” Christianity; early and early medieval monasticism; the search for the Christian doctrine of God and Christ; early Christian architecture, piety and worship; Christianity and other world religions (especially Judaism and Islam); western and eastern Christianity; the emergence of the Roman primacy; the Christianization of the north of Europe; the nature of parochial Christianity;
the emergence of the pope, in the eleventh century, as an international religious force; the crusades; and early medieval piety. We will also be strengthening our skills as interpreters of primary sources. Some attention will be paid to major historiographical issues.

Religion 1449  Philosophy in the Desert: An Introduction to Egyptian Monasticism

Stang   Th 2:00pm-4:00pm

The fourth century CE saw the explosion of a new forms of Christian community, what we have come to call collectively “monasticism”: men and women withdrew from society, renounced sexuality and other pleasures (and burdens) of the flesh, and devoted themselves to spiritual exercises such as prayer, study, contemplation, and (crucially) wrestling with demons. This way of life was styled a new “philosophy,” and much informed by the vibrant intellectual scene in Alexandria. Egypt was at the center of this wider counter-cultural movement, and its deserts became the scenes for the pursuit of holiness – hence “philosophy in the desert.” This course will introduce students to the major figures and texts associated with Egyptian monasticism, including Antony the Great (through his Life and Letters) and the other early Desert Fathers (through the Apophthegmata), Pachomius, Evagrius of Pontus, Palladius of Hellenopolis, and finally John Cassian.

Religion 1518  Religion in Colonial North America and the United States, 1580-1865

Brekus   T Th 10:00am-11:30am

This course is a survey of American religion from the French, Spanish, and British settlements of the 1600s to the Civil War. Topics include Puritanism, Native American religion, witchcraft trials, the First Amendment, revivalism, immigration, African-American Christianity, abolitionism, religious intolerance, and the religious roots of the Civil War. Throughout the course we will pay close attention to both religious ideas and practices. Besides reading major scholarly accounts, we will consult a wide variety of primary sources, including memoirs, diaries, sermons, theological treatises, music, and portraiture. Readings will highlight the diversity of religious traditions in America, including Methodism, Congregationalism, Judaism, Mormonism, Unitarianism, Catholicism, and the Baptists.

Religion 1572  Sex, Gender and Sexuality

Hollywood   T 2:00pm-4:00pm

The course will explore the theoretical articulation of sex, gender, and sexuality in twentieth-century theory, particularly in psychoanalysis, philosophy, and feminist and queer theory. Readings will include texts by Sigmund Freud, Simone de Beauvoir,
Religion 1582  The Niebuhr Brothers, Past and Present
Gaston  M 2:00pm-4:00pm

This course will explore the work of two of the most influential Protestant ethicists and theologians of the twentieth century: Reinhold Niebuhr and H. Richard Niebuhr. We will survey the similarities and differences between the brothers and their most important writings, with a particular eye to themes of race, class, Judaism, Catholicism, religious pluralism, feminism, and secularism. We will also ask how the legacies of the Niebuhr brothers speak to contemporary movements such as Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ rights, and environmentalism. The rich decades-long dialogue between the brothers will also be explored, both in their published writing and their private correspondence, some of which resides in the Andover-Harvard Theological Library at HDS. In addition, the premiere of a new PBS documentary on Reinhold Niebuhr this fall will give us an opportunity to talk with the filmmakers about the documentary process, work with the Niebuhr materials in the HDS archives, and consider how films like this can contribute to the public discourse on religion and ethics.

Religion 1592  Believing Lives: Biography and Religion in the United States
Holland  T 12:00pm-2:00pm

This course considers the strengths and liabilities of the life story as a genre of religious scholarship. Introducing theoretical work that considers the intellectual merits of biographical writing in general, it grapples with the specific intersection of biography and the study of religion and also engages exemplary works of scholarship in the genre. The list of biographies covered includes Anne Hutchinson (LaPlante), John Winthrop (Bremmer), Sarah Osborn (Brekus), Jonathan Edwards (Marsden), Francis Asbury (Wigger), Tenskwatawa (Edmunds), Sojourner Truth (Painter), William Ellery Channing (Mendelsohn), Joseph Smith (Bushman), Aimee Semple McPherson (Epstein), Dorothy Day (Forest), Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X (Cone), Jimmy Carter (Balmer).

Religion 1600  Introduction to the Hindu Traditions of India
Monius  T Th 10:00am-11:30am

An introduction to the many distinct yet interrelated religious traditions of South Asia that are often labeled "Hinduism." This course considers the ways in which Hindus from a variety of historical time periods, local traditions, and social backgrounds have attempted to make sense of their world and their lives within it.
Religion 1701  Introduction to Buddhist Scriptures and Their Critical Interpretations

Hallisey        T Th 8:30am-10:00pm

An introduction to basic issues in the contemporary understanding of textuality, history, and interpretation and their relevance to the study of Buddhist scriptures. Examples of Buddhist scriptures will be drawn primarily from the Mahayana traditions.

Religion 1842  Religion, Gender, Identity: Readings in Arab and Muslim Autobiography

Ahmed          M 4:00pm-6:00pm

We will read autobiographical works mainly by 20th century 'Arab' writers, Muslim, Christian and Jewish, paying particular attention to issues of religion, gender and identity, exploring how these are at play in the texts and in authorial constructions of self, history, and meaning.