Comparative Study of Religion
Courses Designed for Undergraduates
Fall Term 2015

COMPARATIVE

NEW Religion 112. Dreams and the Dreaming
Instructor: Kimberly C. Patton
Course Description: This course will consider the religious role of the dream as initiatory experience, metaphor for aboriginal time, gateway to the other world, venue for the divine guide, healing event, “royal road” to the unconscious, occasion for quest or journey, epistemological paradox, and prophetic harbinger of the personal or collective future. Theories of dreams, the history of dream interpretation, and the relationship of dreams to both myth and ritual will be examined cross-culturally, including the theological and spiritual dimensions of human dreaming. Focus during the first semester is on ancient Greece, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; other traditions will be touched on, including recent research on American dreams.

NEW History of Science 192. The Empire Strikes Back: Science Fiction, Religion, and Society
Instructor: Ahmed Ragab
Offered jointly as HDS 2195
Course Description: From the seventeenth century to today, science fiction has reflected the aspirations of scientific innovation and anticipated new discoveries. It has reflected rhetorical practices by which science melds present contexts with futurism, extrapolation, and promissory logics. Authors have engaged with ethical problems, fears about innovations gone awry, and pessimism about the prospects of technological development, all while critiquing views on gender, race, and sexuality, and subverting colonial ambitions while engaging postcolonial aspirations. At the same time, science fiction has engaged religious and spiritual views, both interacting with religious imaginaries and engaging with the role of religion in society and in relation to science. In this course, we trace science fiction through history. We analyze how it has understood science and technology, war and colonialism, sex, race and gender, health and disease. We investigate how it has interacted with religion and influenced social and cultural attitudes. We will read major works in science fiction and understand how they live with and within us. Topics include: time travel, utopias and dystopias, race, gender, and sexuality, religion and culture, embodiment and disembodiment, posthumanism. In addition to novels and short stories, lectures will incorporate film, television, graphic novels, music videos, and other science fictional subgenres.

BUDDHIST

NEW Religion 74. Introduction to Buddhism
Instructor: David Eckel
Course Description: A study of the major themes of Buddhist thought and practice, beginning with the origins of the tradition in India and exploring the transmission and development of the tradition in Southeast Asia, Tibet, East Asia, and the modern West. Important themes include the concepts of reincarnation, karma, and nirvana; the legend of the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama; the nature of the self; the education of the emotions; and the possibility of liberation. The course will focus on scriptural, literary, and philosophical classics of Buddhist tradition, but it will also consider the tradition of Buddhist art and the formative rituals in Buddhist life, such as meditation, pilgrimage, and monastic discipline. 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. Note that the course has additional section hour to be arranged.
**NEW Religion 49. From Gospel to Allegory: Christian Narratives for Living**  
**Instructor:** Mark Jordan  
**Course Description:** The original form for teaching Christians how to live is not law but biography. Indeed, the most revered Christian texts are four versions of a teaching life—the canonical Gospels. Following the authors of the Gospels, many other Christians have offered their most important teachings in related forms. They have told holy lives as examples or wicked lives as warnings. They have described supernatural actions in their own lives. They have imagined lives in allegory and tried to reshape them by inventing new communities. These courses will read a series of primary Christian Texts that are in conversation with each other and the main sources of Christian doctrine.

**NEW Religion 58. The Body in Christian Thought**  
**Instructor:** Mayra Rivera Rivera  
**Course Description:** The course offers an introduction to Christian ideas about the body, by considering central teachings and areas of debate— including understandings of creation, incarnation, healing, and resurrection. Texts include early Christian literatures, Patristic and medieval texts, Reformation theologies, as well as modern and contemporary authors. The course will help students understand the distinctiveness and diversity of Christian positions on these topics.

**NEW Religion 441. Ancient Christian Martyrdom and Its Modern Legacy**  
**Instructor:** Karen King  
**Course Description:** The varied ways in which ancient Christians represented persecution in the Roman empire has left a rich and sometimes troubling legacy for the modern world. Their struggles are documented in stories of torture and public execution, revelations from God, treatise exhorting believers to confess, and polemics against fellow Christians who thought otherwise. Some advocated suffering and demonized their opponents, others ascetic withdrawal, pacifism, silent endurance, or even living well as the best witness to God. In the aftermath, they agonized over how to heal traumatized communities. This course will examine this literature and its legacy for contemporary issues such religious (in)tolerance, torture, and what it means to be fully human

**NEW Freshman Seminar 32C. The Christian Bible Then and Now: Formations and Debates**  
**Instructor:** Laura Nasrallah  
**Course Description:** Politicians, writers, religious leaders, and others today make arguments using the Bible, whether leading with the clause “The Bible says…” or through allusions to or quotations of the Bible. Together in this seminar we’ll learn and practice the analytical tools for addressing such claims. The seminar explores ancient and modern formations and uses of the Christian Bible, including ancient processes of canonization. It also explores how the Bible has been mobilized recently in the U.S. to address issues of sex and sexuality, economics, ecology, race, and slavery.

**ISLAMIC**

**NEW Freshman Seminar 41H. Islam in Black America**  
**Instructor:** Marla Frederick  
Much of the study of black religion in the United States has focused on its Christian roots. And, while the predominant impulse of black religious expression in the American context came from Christian worshippers, Muslim adherents were among those first brought to America’s shores under the force and violence of slavery. This course explores the history of Islam among African Americans from the ante-bellum period through the present. It looks at significant moments in the development and transformation of Islam in the US through what Sherman Jackson calls its three “resurrections.”
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NEW **Freshman Seminar 34c. The Problem of Evil and the Nature of Human Freedom**  
**Instructor:** Courtney Bickel Lamberth  
From the genocides of the 20th century to the homicides that fill our daily news, evil seems to be part of our ordinary language. But what do we really mean when we use the word "evil" to describe a person, an action, or an event? Why does the word pack an emotional punch that other terms-immoral, wicked, cruel, bad, sinful, unjust-do not? The term evil seems to capture an incomprehensible quality, marking the limits of our understanding, and evading our control. Theologians, philosophers, and creative writers have explored these limits, drawing on their imaginative powers in writing about the meaning of evil. This seminar considers the work of several authors whose writings have shaped the understanding of evil in the modern west: Augustine, Arendt, Dostoevsky, Camus and Flannery O’Connor. Open to Freshmen only.

NEW **Religion 51. Religious Liberty: Contested American Stories**  
**Instructor:** David Holland  
**Course Description:** This course considers the long history of the United States’ engagement with the ideal of religious liberty. From the Puritans’ conception of liberty as the freedom to hold correct beliefs, through Native American efforts to preserve sacred practices, to the current debates over the philosophical impossibility of true religious equality, the course will move across the full sweep of American history on the topic. It examines both the structural relationship of church and state—at federal and local levels—as well as more diffuse cultural attitudes. It combines scholarly literature and primary sources.

NEW **Religion 111. Cultures of Health & Healing: Religion, Medicine & Global Health**  
**Instructor:** Mara Block  
**Course Description:** 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.