

COURSES IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

SPRING TERM 2020

The courses listed below are open to Harvard College students, and are eligible for concentration credit, with the approval of a Concentration Adviser.

NOTE THAT COURSES IN ALL-CAPS, ARE DESIGNED ESPECIALLY FOR UNDERGRADUATES.

REL 14 STUDYING RELIGION & MEDIA

HELEN HARDACRE

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE, IMAGERY, AND VALUES PERMEATE VIRTUALLY ALL ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LIFE, EVEN THOSE THAT ARE EXPLICITLY TAKEN TO BE "SECULAR." WHILE WE MAY DESCRY THE HORRIFIC ACTS OF TORTURE AND DESTRUCTION DONE IN THE NAME OF ISLAM BY ISIS, WE ARE FAR LESS LIKELY TO RECOGNIZE AS DEEPLY PROTESTANT THE VALUES AND ORIENTATIONS EMBEDDED IN AMERICAN CULTURE, PARTICULARLY IN THE CASE OF THE MEDIA, RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND IMAGERY CONTINUALLY BOMBARD US, OFTEN WITHOUT US RECOGNIZING THEM AS SUCH. THIS COURSE INVITES YOU TO THINK MORE DEEPLY ABOUT WHAT RELIGION IS AND HOW IT OPERATES ACROSS A WIDE VARIETY OF MEDIA IN THE UNITED STATES AND AROUND THE WORLD.

REL 22 INTERPRETING HUMANITY, INTERPRETING RELIGION

NICHOLAS BOYLSTON

THIS COURSE IS A GATEWAY TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION, PRESENTED AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF A LARGER QUESTION: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY? BASED ON THE PREMISE THAT SOLELY EUROCENTRIC APPROACHES TO WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN ARE SHORTSIGHTED AT BEST, WE SEEK TO THINK THROUGH NEW WAYS OF ENGAGING WITH GLOBAL SOURCES THAT SHED LIGHT ON OUR COMMON HUMANITY. THE COURSE DEVELOPS AROUND A CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CONCEPT "TRANSCENDENCE" WHICH WILL HELP US TO APPROACH ALTERNATIVE WORLDVIEWS WITHOUT ELIMINATING DIFFERENCE. AFTER THINKING ABOUT THE STAKES INVOLVED IN CULTIVATING THE LIFE OF THE MIND IN A CRISIS POINT FOR HUMAN EXISTENCE, WE BEGIN WITH AN EXTENDED REFLECTION ON THE INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL MOMENT IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES, INVESTIGATING HOW THIS CONDITIONS THE WAY WE FRAME QUESTIONS OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN. NEXT, WE TAKE AN HONEST LOOK AT THE WAYS IN WHICH THE DOMINANT MODES OF KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR CULTURAL, MATERIAL AND EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE. OUR EXPLORATION OF DIVERSE APPROACHES TO THE HUMAN CONDITION BEGINS HERE, AS WE THINK THROUGH A RANGE OF RESPONSES TO HUMAN-CAUSED SUFFERING. WE THEN APPROACH A RANGE OF QUESTIONS OF UNIVERSAL CONCERN: WHAT IS ULTIMATELY REAL AND HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW? WHAT IS THE GOOD, AND HOW IS IT TO BE ATTAINED? HOW ARE WE TO RELATE TO OUR FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS, PARTICULARLY WHEN THEY SEEM DEEPLY ANTAGONISTIC? THIS COURSE IS DESIGNED FOR FRESHMEN AND SOPHOMORES WHO ARE INTERESTED IN EXPLORING A VOCATION IN THE HUMANITIES. THROUGHOUT WE WILL DRAW OUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE READINGS FOR OUR OWN INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL LIVES. READINGS WILL INCLUDE PRIMARY TEXTS IN TRANSLATION DRAWN FROM TRADITIONS ACROSS THE GLOBE, AS WELL AS SELECTED SECONDARY LITERATURE.

REL 61 LITERATURE OF MODERN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE & REFLECTION: TEXTS IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

JAMES ENGELL

WORKS IN VARIOUS GENRES, E.G., POEMS, SERMONS, FICTION, EXHORTATIONS, PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS, ESSAYS, THAT REPRESENT A RANGE OF CHRISTIAN LIVED EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION ON EXISTENTIAL ISSUES OF MORTALITY, CHARITY, LOVE, SEX, SIN, INJUSTICE, CONTEMPLATION, AND FORGIVENESS. MALE AND FEMALE AUTHORS FROM THE LAST 600 YEARS. WRITERS MAY INCLUDE JULIAN OF NORWICH, WILLIAM LANGLAND, JOHN DONNE, GEORGE HERBERT, S. T. COLERIDGE, FREDERICK DOUGLASS, WILLIAM JAMES, DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., MARILYNNE ROBINSON. CROSS-LISTED WITH ENGLISH.

REL 40 INCARNATION & DESIRE

COURTNEY BICKEL LAMBERTH

THE COURSE OFFERS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF 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.

EASTD 141 EAST ASIAN RELIGIONS: TRADITIONS & TRANSFORMATIONS

JAMES ROBSON

THIS COURSE PROVIDES AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF EAST ASIAN RELIGIONS. IT COVERS THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM, DAOISM, CONFUCIANISM AND SHINTO. IT IS NOT A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY, BUT IS DESIGNED AROUND MAJOR CONCEPTUAL THEMES, SUCH AS RITUAL, IMAGE VENERATION, MYSTICISM, MEDITATION, DEATH, AND CATEGORY FORMATION IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION. THE EMPHASIS THROUGHOUT THE COURSE IS ON THE HERMENEUTIC DIFFICULTIES ATTENDANT UPON THE STUDY OF RELIGION IN GENERAL, AND EAST ASIAN RELIGIONS IN PARTICULAR.

MODMDEST 100 INTRODUCTION TO THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

MALIKA ZEGHAL

AN INTRODUCTION TO MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES FOCUSING ON THE MODERN PERIOD (19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES). LECTURES WILL BE BROADLY SEQUENCED ACCORDING TO HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY BUT WILL BE THEMATICALLY ORGANIZED. THEY WILL PROVIDE SOME HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR EACH TOPIC EXAMINED, AS WELL AS PRESENT SPECIFIC EXAMPLES THROUGH PRIMARY SOURCES, VISUAL SOURCES, AND NUMERICAL DATA WHEN RELEVANT. THIS COURSE IS DESIGNED TO GIVE STUDENTS AN OVERALL GOOD GRASP OF THE HISTORY OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST AND OF SOME 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. WE WILL COVER TOPICS SUCH AS REFORMISM, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM, AUTHORITARIANISM AND

DEMOCRATIZATION, SECTARIANISM, CULTURE, GENDER, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS, AS WELL AS THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN POLITICS. MOST OF THESE TOPICS, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, WILL SPEAK TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATION-STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND TO THE CHALLENGES THEY HAVE BEEN CONFRONTING. THIS IS NOT A SURVEY COURSE. IN PARTICULAR, IT WILL NOT BE EXHAUSTIVE IN ITS COVERAGE OF THE REGION IN SPACE OR TIME, AND IN ITS COVERAGE OF TOPICS. STUDENTS IN SEARCH OF A SPECIFIC TOPIC, COUNTRY, OR PERIOD ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE SYLLABUS PRIOR TO ENROLLING TO MAKE SURE THEIR SPECIFIC INTERESTS WILL BE COVERED. ASSIGNED READINGS WILL CONSIST OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES. STUDENTS WILL BE EXPOSED TO FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS BY PROTAGONISTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST (PRIMARY SOURCES) AS WELL AS TO THE DIVERSITY OF APPROACHES THAT THE SCHOLARLY LITERATURE (SECONDARY SOURCES) HAS TAKEN ACROSS DISCIPLINES, E.G. ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES, QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS, PHILOLOGY AND TEXTUAL STUDIES. 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.

REL 55 DENYING & DEFENDING GOD: CLASSIC TEXTS OF MODERN WESTERN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

CHARLES LOCKWOOD

DRAWING ON THINKERS FROM THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES, THIS COURSE CONSIDERS QUESTIONS THAT CONTINUE TO SHAPE MODERN RELIGIOUS REFLECTION: IS RELIGION A LIBERATING FORCE OR ONE OF OPPRESSION? IS RELIGION RATIONAL OR THE ANTITHESIS OF REASON? WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND MORALITY? CAN ALL HUMAN BEINGS BE CALLED RELIGIOUS? TEXTS ARE DRAWN FROM KANT, SCHLEIERMACHER, FEUERBACH, MARX, KIERKEGAARD, NIETZSCHE, BARTH, TILlich, KING, CONE, GUTIÉRREZ, DALY, AND WILLIAMS. SPECIAL ATTENTION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE RISE OF THE MODERN CATEGORY OF RELIGION, ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY; MODERN SUSPICION AND CRITIQUE OF RELIGION; AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF EUROPEAN THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS BY LIBERATION THEOLOGIANS IN NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA.

REL 1525 THE HOLOCAUST: RELIGION AND REPRESENTATION

KEVIN MADIGAN

THIS UNDERGRADUATE SEMINAR (INTENDED MAINLY FOR CONCENTRATORS) WILL FOCUS THE ISSUE OF REPRESENTATION OF RELIGION IN FILMIC, LITERARY AND MEMORIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST. AFTER A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST, WE WILL TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING ISSUES AND THEMES: PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE ISSUES OF REPRESENTATION, ESPECIALLY ON THE LIMITS OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA TO REPRESENT EXTREMES OF HUMAN EVIL AND SUFFERING; LITERARY TEXTS AND FILMS THAT ARE RECOGNIZED AS CLASSICS IN ATTEMPTING TO MEDIATE THE EXPERIENCE OF THE HOLOCAUST; ISSUES OF MEMORY AND POSTMEMORY; THE AESTHETICIZATION OF TRAUMA; GOD AND EVIL; AND THE RECEPTION OF CULTURAL ARTIFACTS IN GERMANY, ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES, PARTICULARLY AMONG RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES.

GEN ED 1062 BALLOTS & BIBLES: WHY & HOW AMERICANS BRING SCRIPTURE INTO THEIR POLITICS

DAVID HOLLAND

IN 2018, IN A PUBLIC SPEECH TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES USED A SCRIPTURAL PASSAGE TO DEFEND TOUGHER IMPLEMENTATION OF IMMIGRATION LAWS. HIS REFERENCE BEWILDERED OBSERVERS WHO WERE UNAWARE OF A LONG TRADITION OF CITING ROMANS 13 IN AMERICAN POLITICAL CONTROVERSIES, INCLUDING SUCH FORMATIVE CONFLICTS AS THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE SECTIONAL CRISIS OVER SLAVERY. THIS COURSE INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO A COMPLEX HISTORY OF POLITICAL INVOCATIONS OF SCRIPTURE, ENCOURAGING THEM TO THINK ABOUT WHY THIS PRACTICE PERSISTS, THE INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES IT INVOLVES, AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH SCRIPTURAL APPEALS FOR CIVIC CULTURE. CO-TAUGHT BY FACULTY WITH EXPERTISE IN BIBLICAL STUDIES AND AMERICAN HISTORY, THE COURSE ASKS STUDENTS TO ENGAGE TEXTS THOUGHTFULLY, TO CONSIDER HISTORICAL CONTEXTS THOROUGHLY, AND TO SEE WHY THESE TEXTS AND THEIR USE MATTERS IN THE PRESENT. COURSE MATERIALS INCLUDES PRIMARY SOURCES (E.G., CAMPAIGN SPEECHES, CONGRESSIONAL DEBATES, CIVIL RIGHTS SLOGANS) AND SCHOLARLY LITERATURE, SUCH AS THE WEALTH OF RESEARCH ON THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL JUSTIFICATIONS FOR WAR OR THE LEGAL THEORIES THAT GUIDE APPLICATIONS OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT. STUDENT PROJECTS AFFORD CLASS PARTICIPANTS THE CHANCE TO ENGAGE IN BOTH HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND TEXTUAL HERMENEUTICS. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE COURSE IS TO EQUIP STUDENTS TO RECOGNIZE THE HISTORICAL LEGACIES THAT CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS CARRY, TO ENGAGE CRITICALLY THE MODES OF TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION THAT INFORM POLITICAL RHETORIC, AND TO WRITE COGENTLY ABOUT THE COMPLEX IMPLICATIONS OF POLITICAL APPEALS TO SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY.

GEN ED 1149 ONE BOOK, TWO RELIGIONS, MANY TRUTHS

SHAYE COHEN

THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES, WHAT CHRISTIANS CALL THE "OLD TESTAMENT" AND JEWS CALL THE "BIBLE," ARE THE BASIS OF BOTH JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY, AND STAND BEHIND MANY DEBATES IN OUR CONTEMPORARY CULTURE WARS. IN THIS COURSE WE SHALL SURVEY HOW THIS WORK OF LITERATURE, THROUGH INTERPRETATION AND RE-INTERPRETATION, SPAWNED AND SPAWNS A WIDE VARIETY OF TRUTHS. IMPLICIT THEMES: WHAT IS TRUTH? HOW DO WE KNOW IT WHEN WE SEE IT? CAN A TEXT WRITTEN LONG AGO CONTAIN TRUTHS FOR CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY?

GEN ED 1142 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. AND THE QUESTION OF CONSCIENTIOUS CITIZENSHIP

BRANDON TERRY

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CONSCIENTIOUS CITIZEN? WHAT ARE OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS CIVIC-MINDED, MORALLY-ENGAGED MEMBERS OF OVERLAPPING COMMUNITIES? THIS COURSE SEEKS TO ANSWER SUCH QUESTIONS BY EXPLORING THE ETHICAL, RELIGIOUS, AND POLITICAL THOUGHT OF ARGUABLY THE GREATEST PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL AND ACTIVIST THAT THE UNITED STATES EVER PRODUCED, MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. IN INTERROGATING KING'S BODY OF PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY, AS WELL AS ITS LEADING CRITICS AND INTERPRETERS, WE WILL PURSUE A BODY OF QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN ESSENTIAL TO THINKING THROUGH THE PROBLEMS OF CITIZENSHIP IN THE CURRENT AGE. STUDENTS WILL DEBATE: HOW SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT THE TENSIONS BETWEEN CONSCIENCE AND COMMUNITY? HOW OUGHT WE THINK ABOUT THE ALIGNMENT OF MORAL ENDS WITH PRACTICAL AND POLITICAL MEANS (E.G.,

VIOLENCE, LAW, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, COERCION, REVOLUTION, REBELLION, ETC.)? IS THERE ROOM FOR PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE OR IS IT A CONVERSATION STOPPER? LASTLY, GIVEN THE PERSISTENCE OF EVIL AND INJUSTICE, CAN SUFFERING IN SERVICE OF JUSTICE BE REDEMPTIVE OR DOES SUCH HOPE SIMPLY REIFY THE STRUCTURES OF INJUSTICE?

PHIL 193 INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

PARIMAL PATIL

CLASSICAL INDIAN PHILOSOPHY IS ONE OF THE GREAT PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS OF THE WORLD. DEBATES BETWEEN RIVAL PHILOSOPHERS ON TOPICS SUCH AS THE SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE, THE MEANING OF WORDS AND SENTENCES, MORAL MOTIVATION, THE NATURE OF PERSONS, AND CONSCIOUSNESS INSPIRED GENERATIONS OF THEIR SUCCESSORS. IN THIS COURSE, WE WILL ENGAGE WITH SOME OF THE GREAT DEBATES IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY. WE WILL SITUATE THESE DEBATES IN THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND INQUIRE INTO WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THEM TODAY.

HEB 133 THE JEWISH LIBRARY: FOUR JEWISH CLASSICS

DAVID STERN

JUDAISM IS A FAMOUSLY TEXT-CENTRIC RELIGIOUS CULTURE, FOUNDED NOT ONLY ON A SINGLE BOOK, THE HEBREW BIBLE, BUT PROFOUNDLY INVOLVED IN THE STUDY AND RITUAL USE OF OTHER CLASSIC TEXTS LIKE THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD, THE PRAYERBOOK, BIBLICAL COMMENTARIES LIKE THAT OF RASHI, AND THE PASSOVER HAGGADAH. THIS COURSE WILL STUDY THE DEVELOPMENT OF THESE FOUR BOOKS AND THEIR TRANSFORMATION FROM TEXTS INTO BOOKS WITH DISTINCT PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL FEATURES. IN THE CASE OF EACH BOOK, THE TEXT WILL BE STUDIED HISTORICALLY-- "EXCAVATED" FOR ITS SOURCES AND ROOTS, AND ITS SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT OVER THE CENTURIES--AND HOLISTICALLY, AS A CANONICAL DOCUMENT IN JEWISH TRADITION. CLASS TIME WILL BE DEVOTED PRIMARILY TO LEARNING TO READ THE PRIMARY SOURCES IN TRANSLATION; SUPPLEMENTARY SECONDARY READINGS WILL PROVIDE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT. THE SEMINAR WILL ALSO INCLUDE REGULAR VISITS TO HOUGHTON LIBRARY TO LOOK AT MANUSCRIPTS, EARLY PRINTED EDITIONS, AND FACSIMILES OF THESE BOOKS IN ORDER TO STUDY THE CHANGING SHAPES THESE BOOKS HAVE TAKEN AS A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING HOW THEY WERE STUDIED AND USED, AND TO CONSIDER THE RELATIONSHIP OF MATERIALITY TO TEXTUALITY. WHILE EACH BOOK WILL RAISE ITS OWN SET OF ISSUES, WE WILL REPEATEDLY DEAL WITH THREE BASIC QUESTIONS: WHAT MAKES A "JEWISH" TEXT? HOW DO THESE BOOKS REPRESENT DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF JEWISH IDENTITY? WHAT CAN THESE BOOKS TELL US ABOUT THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF OTHER RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS? NO PREVIOUS BACKGROUND IN EITHER JUDAISM OR JEWISH HISTORY IS REQUIRED. ALL READINGS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION. WHILE THIS COURSE IS NOT A FORMAL INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM, IT DOES AIM TO INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO JUDAISM AND JEWISH CULTURE FROM INSIDE ITS CLASSIC TEXTS.

JAPNHIST 120 JAPANESE RELIGIONS IN THE 20TH & 21ST CENTURIES

HELEN HARDACRE

AN EXAMINATION OF RELIGION AND SOCIETY FROM THE END OF THE MEIJI PERIOD (1912) TO THE PRESENT. THIS COURSE EXPLORES THE MEANING OF THE MODERN IN JAPANESE RELIGIONS, THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND RELIGION'S RELATIONS WITH IT, RELIGION AND NATIONALISM,

AND THE INTERCONNECTIONS OF RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE WITH MATERIALISM, CONSUMERISM, PACIFISM, AND SPIRITUALISM.

GEN ED 1110 CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY: THE POWER OF MYTH IN ANTIQUITY & TODAY

BRIGITTE LIBBY

THE MYTHS OF ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME EMBODY BOTH OUR WORST NIGHTMARES AND OUR MOST FABULOUS FANTASIES. HEROISM, HAPPY ENDINGS, AND EVERLASTING LOVE BLEND WITH DISTURBING THEMES OF PARRICIDE, CANNIBALISM, INCEST, MISOGYNY, AND UNTHINKABLE VIOLENCE. THE RESULTING STORIES HAVE FASCINATED ARTISTS, WRITERS, AND THINKERS THROUGHOUT WESTERN CIVILIZATION, AND THIS COURSE WILL SERVE AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS DISTANT BUT STRANGELY FAMILIAR WORLD. WE WILL MOVE FROM THE VERY FIRST WORKS OF GREEK LITERATURE THROUGH THE CLASSIC GREEK TRAGEDIES AND THE ROMAN TALES IN OVID'S METAMORPHOSES. ALONG THE WAY, WE WILL ASK THESE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS: WHAT IS "MYTHOLOGY"? WHAT CAN THESE ANCIENT STORIES TELL US ABOUT OURSELVES AS HUMAN-BEINGS, AND WHY ARE THEY STILL SO RESONANT THOUSANDS OF YEARS LATER? AND HOW DOES MYTHOLOGY BOTH ANCIENT AND MODERN CONTINUE TO REFLECT AND SHAPE OUR WORLD VIEW TODAY? WE WILL USE EXAMPLES FROM CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY TO SEE HOW A SOCIETY CAN RE-REMEMBER AND REVISE TRADITIONAL STORIES TO FIT CHANGING CULTURAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES. OUR DISCUSSIONS WILL CONSIDER ANCIENT RATIONALIZATIONS OF MYTH, PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACHES TO MYTH, THE USE OF MYTH IN POLITICS, AND THE RECEPTION OF CLASSICAL MYTH IN THE MODERN WORLD.

COURSES OPEN TO UNDERGRADUATES AND GRADUATE STUDENTS:

REL 145 Forgiveness

Matthew Potts

When, if ever, are we obliged to forgive? What should forgiveness look like in the aftermath of violence? What conditions should be attached to its offer? Does forgiveness foster peace at the expense of justice? Should it? This course will examine the complicated problem of forgiveness through an examination of several diverse sources: theological, philosophical, and literary. The aim will be to develop a sophisticated understanding of the promise and problems of forgiveness in human lives, and to foster the critical application of such lessons to contemporary contexts and moral problems.

REL 2020 Ethnographic Methods in the Study of Religion

Michael Jackson

This course provides a general introduction to ethnography - an approach to understanding life-worlds through a double perspective in which active participation and immersion (with a goal of seeing the world from another's point of view) is coupled with systematic observation and documentation (recording life-stories, filming critical or ritual events, and keeping

fieldwork journals). Rather than reduce ethnographic practice to scientific protocols for data-gathering, we will approach it by reflecting on the shared elements of our humanity (sensus communis) that make it possible to interact with, understand, and write about others empathically, insightfully, and ethically. Accordingly, this course will not rely on textbooks in ethnographic method, but on readings and films that actually show ethnographers in the field and afford us glimpses into some of the research strategies, vital relationships, emotional stresses, and moral dilemmas associated with doing fieldwork outside our comfort zones. We will also explore the tension between studying others contextually rather than through texts, and ask how first-hand experience of life-as-lived can be reconciled with the demands of theory-building and knowledge production in the academy.

REL 1010 The Deep: Purity, Danger, and Metamorphosis

Kimberley C. Patton

Reflecting upon the many supernatural constructions of natural elements in lived religion, this comparative course examines metaphysical, mythical, and ritual responses to the sea, including its multiple and conflicting roles as arena of pilgrimage, catharsis, primordial generation, rebirth, desolation, or apocalypse.

ANTHRO 1401 Human Migration & US-Mexico Borderlands: Moral Dilemmas & Sacred Bundles in Comparative Perspective

David L. Carrasco

Responding to one of the major political, economic and religious developments of our times, this course locates the immigration crisis of the Mexico-U.S. borderlands within the epic context of human migration in history and global perspectives. The first part of the course will read and critique a series of books and articles about human migration, Mexican migrations to the U.S. in the last 120 years and the enigma and fluidity of national borders. The course will then develop a comparative perspective on immigration by comparing Mexican migrations with migrations from a) Latin America to the U.S, b) the African American migration within the U.S. from south to north, c) contemporary migrations from Africa to countries of the European Union. Questions such as "What economic and political forces cause people to migrate?," "Do they migrate as individuals or families?," "How do walls, fences and borders work and what do they mean?" and "What is immigration reform-anyway?" will be explored. We will examine the profound economic and moral dilemmas facing migrants, families, children, sending and receiving countries. The course uses Professor Carrasco's concept of "sacred bundles" to explore the question "What cultural and religious resources help migrants survive the ordeal of migration and establish new identities?"

REL 1040 Thinking Theologically in an Interreligious Perspective

Francis Clooney

This course examines the processes by which we learn interreligiously, by faith seeking understanding across religious boundaries. The goal is to bring this learning into dialogue

Spring 2020 Courses in the Comparative Study of Religion

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with one's home tradition, by careful comparison and contrast, 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 a necessary example) Hindu and Christian primary and secondary texts, but students are encouraged to bring their knowledge of and interest in other traditions into the discussion, and may write one of two course papers on traditions other than the Hindu and Christian.

ANE 120B Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament 2: Latter Prophets & Writings

Andrew Teeter

A critical introduction to the literature and theology of the Hebrew Bible, considered in light of the historical contexts of its formation and the interpretive contexts of its reception within Judaism and Christianity. The course, the second part of a divisible, year-long sequence, will focus on the Latter Prophets and the Writings.

RELIGION1400 Introduction to the New Testament

Karen King

The course will address the questions: What is the New Testament? What work does the New Testament do? We will examine various approaches including scripturalizing, minority Biblical criticism, and historical criticism. Topics include teachings of/by/about Jesus, Jews and Christians, empire and colonialism, the roles of women, Roman and US slavery, the politics of storytelling and canon formation, heresy, and sexualities/masculinities/gender.

REL 1469 The Protestant Reformations

Michelle Sanchez

The sixteenth century saw turmoil and rapid change in and beyond Europe: religious fragmentation, but also rising colonization, class warfare, new media, and the seeds of absolutism and nationalism. This course examines major movements of Protestant Reform, focusing on the role of theological arguments in reshaping concepts of power and representation. Why were certain reforms persuasive, and to whom? What were their political and social implications not only for clergy, princes, and merchant-class men, but also peasants, women, Jews, Muslims, intellectuals, and artists? Finally, we will read these histories alongside our present, in which media-driven crisis has become the norm.

REL 1256 Gender and Judaism in Modern America

Ann Braude

Both demographic and cultural reproduction pose critical challenges to minority religions, placing pressure on personal decisions, group dynamics, religious practices, and intergroup relations. This course follows the navigation of these pressures by American Jews, and explores the formations of gender and sexuality that result. Topics include marriage, dating and family formation, synagogue life and Jewish ritual, as well as social and political movements that have become vehicles of American Jewish identity: civil rights,

second-wave feminism, and Zionism. Readings include works by Riv-Ellen Prell, Lynn Davidman, Joyce Antler and Sarah Imhoff as well as fiction by Philip Roth and Anita Diamant.

REL 1046 Introduction to Religion and Ecology

Daniel McKanan

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. It will feature several field trips to spiritually inspired farms, communities, and organizations.

RELIGION1084 Encountering Motherhood: Sacred Histories

Kimberley C. Patton

Childbearing, pregnancy, and motherhood, and the uncanny bond between mother and child have been focal themes in the history of human religiosity since the Paleolithic period. This seminar considers the complex subject of motherhood through case studies in religion, ritual, and the archaeology of ideas from Neolithic Anatolia, Ancient Greece, Eastern Christian and Buddhist traditions, and Finnish epic. We will also read contemporary analytical works in religion, sociology, anthropology, art history, and literature. Limited to 15 by application in person at the first meeting.

REL 1290 Archaeology and History of Israel/Palestine from the Second Temple to the Early Islamic Period

Giovanni Bazzana

The course will focus on the history of Israel/Palestine in the span of time of almost a millennium that witnessed the emergence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Specific attention will be devoted to the changing landscape of the region and, by way of case studies, to archaeological excavations as evidence for cultural, religious, and socio-economic trajectories. The study of history and archaeology will be connected with the current religious and political situation of the region in order to highlight the ways in which the memory of the past shapes the present and is in turn shaped by present ideological concerns.

REL 1472 The Ethical and Religious Thought of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Preston Williams

A study of the life, thought, and actions of Martin Luther King, Jr. An ethical analysis of his primary concepts, ideas, and strategies based upon a reading and discussion of his writings and their sources.

RELIGION1522 Calvin, Schleiermacher, Barth, Cone

Michelle Sanchez

John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Karl Barth are major figures of Reformed Protestantism whose work directly engaged the political and intellectual concerns of their own times. In the 1970s, James Cone's Black Theology took its point of departure, in part, from Cone's critique of Barth. This course will closely read each author, looking at similarities and differences in how they approach theological topics (e.g., God, human being, scripture, nature, salvation, church). Throughout, we will consider what these four projects can teach us both about the "tradition" of Reformed theology and the task and responsibility of theology more generally.

REL 1556 Pragmatism and Religion

David C. Lamberth

This course surveys the American pragmatic tradition, attending in particular to views of religion. The first part takes up the classical pragmatic period, reading Emerson, then Peirce, James, Dewey, Jane Addams and Alain Locke. Topics include belief, experience, truth, pluralism, ethics, society, and the nature and role of religion. The latter half considers late 20th century neo-pragmatism, reading Rorty, Putnam, West, Chopp and Glaude. Prior work in theology or philosophy is recommended.

RELIGION1573 Sex, Gender, and Sexuality II

Amy Hollywood

The second of two parts, the course will continue to explore the theoretical articulation of sex, gender, and sexuality in feminist and queer theory, with attention to the role of other differences--racial, ethnic, religious, and differences in physical ability--in contemporary work. Prerequisite: REL 1572 or consent of the instructor.

REL 2549 Women, Religion, and the Problem of Historical Agency

Catherine Brekus

This course examines recent scholarship on women in American religious history, focusing particularly on questions of narration, agency and power. We will ask several interrelated questions: How have historians integrated women into narratives of American religious history? Whose stories have they highlighted, and why? How have they conceptualized women as historical agents? We will read major interpretive works as well as theoretical accounts of gender, social structure, and power. Readings will explore the diversity of religious traditions in America, including Puritanism, Judaism, Mormonism, Catholicism, African-American Christianity, evangelicalism, and Islam.

REL 1399 The Trial & Death of Jesus

Shaye Cohen and Giovanni Bazzana

The seminar will examine the accounts of Jesus's trial and death in order to address the historical and interpretive issues connected to this important and mysterious episode.

Spring 2020 Courses in the Comparative Study of Religion

Visit studyofreligion.fas.harvard.edu or email lamberth@fas.harvard.edu with any questions!

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Prominent attention will be given to primary sources and to their contextualization within early Judaism. Working knowledge of Greek and/or Hebrew is required. This course is jointly offered with Harvard Divinity School as HDS 1565.

REL 1615 The Bhagavad Gita and Its Commentators

Francis Clooney

Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu classic of devotion and theology, has received extensive classical and contemporary commentary. The seminar explores selectively the interpretations of classical commentators (Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhusudana Sarasvati), and 20th century interpreters (B. G. Tilak, Mohandas Gandhi, Bede Griffiths). Part of the series, Reading Hindu Texts Interreligiously, meant for students interested in closely reading Indian/Hindu texts, with attention to textual analogues from other religions. Sanskrit useful but not required.

REL 2505 Research in American Religious History

Catherine Brekus

This course is a seminar for students who wish to write research papers on American religious history. We will discuss every aspect of the research and writing process, including identifying a meaningful research problem, finding sources, making historical claims, and writing with clarity and grace. All students will make a presentation on their research and will submit a final paper of 25-30 pages in length.

REL 2514 Caribbean Materialisms: Wynter and Glissant

Mayra Rivera Rivera

This advanced seminar examines the works of two influential Caribbean theorists—Sylvia Wynter and Édouard Glissant—in dialogue with the sources that most shape their works. The course pays particular attention to their contributions to conceptualizing the relationship between materiality, coloniality, language and the sacred.

REL 1579 Theologies of Universal Salvation

Daniel McKanan

In honor of the 250th anniversary of John Murray's arrival in North America, this course will explore a wide range of Universalist theologies, from within and beyond the Universalist denomination. We will consider ancient and early modern articulations of the idea of universal salvation (Origen, Gerard Winstanley, Jane Lead, Paul Siegvolck, George de Benneville); the defining theologies of denominational Universalism (James Rely, Elhanan Winchester, John Murray, Judith Sargent Murray, Hosea Ballou); nineteenth century debates about ultra universalism and spiritualism; twentieth century attempts to redefine Universalism in a post-Christian context; and recent explorations of the possibility of universal salvation by Roman Catholic and evangelical theologians. In addition to weekly class sessions, the course will include approximately four public events at Massachusetts locations important to the history of Universalism.

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