

CRN# Spring 2022 Religious Studies Cornerstone Course Descriptions**40375 RST 111-A, CS: Religions of the World****40376 RST 111-B, CS: Religions of the World**
Prof. R. Gribble, CSC

This course will examine the way religion has been studied as an academic discipline. We will explore both Eastern and Western religious traditions in their historical contexts and will focus primarily on how various religious concepts are understood and practiced in these major world religions. These will include the concepts of the Holy, revelation, sacred writings, good and evil, forgiveness, creation, the human condition, salvation, and ethics. In our study of religions we will explore a variety of practices in different historical contexts but common ground will be sought to illustrate how the sacred texts of each religious tradition define and illustrate how and why these groups practice the above mentioned concepts.

40377 RST 117-A, CS: Gods, Myths, and Rituals in the Ancient Mediterranean**40378 RST 117-B, CS: Gods, Myths, and Rituals in the Ancient Mediterranean**
Prof. N. DesRosiers

This class investigates the diverse religions of the ancient Mediterranean world (ca. 600 BCE-400CE), including Greek and Roman religions, formative Judaism, and the earliest Christianity. The course explores the history and development of these traditions by examining topics related to issues of ritual, myth, sacred space, gender, and concepts of divinity within each group. Particular focus is placed on the ways in which these groups influenced one another and reshaped cultural and religious landscapes through competitive interaction. Through a critical analysis of the sources students will begin to understand the practices, beliefs, and experiences of the Greco-Roman world and the communities that produced them.

40379 RST 120-A, HON: CS: Deviance and the Divine**Prof. S. Lowin**

This course will use the concept of deviance as the lens through which we will study the three major monotheistic traditions of the world – Islam, Judaism and Christianity. What are the major tenets and beliefs of each? What do they share and where are the conflicts? What does each consider normative and why? When does a belief or practice cross the line in deviance? Ultimately, are they all simply deviants of one another? In our investigation, we will also look to some lesser known religious traditions as foils, such as Scientology, Raelianism, the Nation of Islam, Jews for Jesus, Mormonism, and Christian Science.

Only open to Honors scholars. Fulfills the First-Year Seminar and the Religious Studies Cornerstone requirement.

40380 RST 121-A, CS: Religion as Pharmakon: Poison or Cure**40381 RST 121-B, CS: Religion as Pharmakon: Poison or Cure**
Prof. G. Shaw

For the ancient Greeks *pharmakon* meant both cure and poison depending on the context. Religion functions in the same way: it can heal us but can also poison us. We will explore the ambiguity and the power-both healing and destructive-of religious traditions.

40390 RST 122-A, CS: Pilgrimage and Passage: Religion as “Sacred” Journey**40391 RST 122-B, CS: Pilgrimage and Passage: Religion as “Sacred” Journey**
Prof. S. Wilbricht, CSC

The course begins with the premise that all religions are at their best when they are “betwixt and between,” living in the threshold, open to new and unexpected horizons. After a close reading of the Book of Exodus, which will provide the opportunity to identify various themes associated with ritual passage, we will concentrate primarily on the study of the three chief monotheistic religions of Semitic origin: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course will end with a brief exploration of Hinduism and Buddhism. Through comparative analysis of these religions, we will strive to determine similarities and differences in particular approaches to God, worship, institution, and moral conduct.

40392 RST 124-A, CS: God Doesn’t Do Religion**Prof. M. Leith**

We tend to think that religion is all about God, but why? And if God “doesn’t do religion,” who does? What do we even mean by “religion” in these questions? This course will inquire into the “building blocks” of religion and human religiousness, considering the practices of Jews, Christians and Muslims from an anthropological and historical perspective.

40393 RST 126-A, CS: Critique of Religion**40394 RST 126-B, CS: Critique of Religion**
Prof. D. Ullucci

This course is an introduction to the critical, academic study of religion. It will touch on both personal and broader societal issues that are involved in the contemporary study of religion. It will examine several of the most prominent modern critiques of religion, as well as the various responses to those critiques. Further, it will explore and ask students to reflect on the meaning of religion in today's culturally diverse and religiously pluralistic world. Its objectives are to acquire a basic knowledge of some of the foundational theories of religion, to acquire a working understanding of various methodologies in the critical study of religion, to reflect on one's own understanding and experience of religion, and to reflect on the role of religion in the contemporary world.

40395 RST 129-A, CS: From Cloister to Crossfit: Religion in Medieval and Modern Worlds

Prof. C. Tichelkamp

What makes a medieval monastery different from a modern-day brewery or gym? What is religion? What is secularism? This course covers medieval and modern religions through critical reading of texts, films, and artwork drawn primarily from Christianity, but also neighboring traditions (Judaism, indigenous religions) and modern movements (science, nation-building).

40396 RST 131-A, CS: What to Do With Suffering?

40397 RST 131-B, CS: What to Do With Suffering?

Prof. H. Dubois

From religious leaders to artists to politicians, people use the language of suffering to express deeply held experiences and to justify a bewildering range of behaviors. The first part of this course analyzes different types of suffering, explained in terms of violence, injustice, trauma, finitude, and transformation. The second part is a survey of constructive responses to suffering, discussed in terms of healing, justice, solidarity, accompaniment, and understanding. Throughout, the course pays attention particularly to Christian theological and spiritual interpretations and practices.

40398 RST 132-A, CS: Biblical Narrative and Artistic Images

Prof. L. Willis

The Bible contains many examples of great narrative literature—stories that move people with power and beauty. In the Jewish Bible (Old Testament), we find Genesis, Exodus, the warriors of Judges, the story of David's founding of Israel and the succession to Solomon, the kings and prophets, the story of Job. We find as well stories focused on remarkable women—Ruth and Esther, and in the Apocrypha, Susanna and Judith. The New Testament also features the story of Jesus's life and death in the gospels, and the experiences of the first followers of Jesus in the Book of Acts. These brilliant and powerful stories inspired equally powerful images in art and sculpture. Both story and image still affect us. This course will explore the ancient narratives as story and the art they inspired as visual image. How do the visual images alter the themes of the literary texts? Do they also reveal some of the "hidden" layers of the original texts in ways that we would not have noticed?

40399 RST 133-A, CS: Hearing Jesus' Stories: A History of Parable Interpretation

Prof. A. Booth, CSC

The Gospels often depict Jesus telling stories. How have people been interpreting those stories over the past two millennia? How have their contexts influenced how they read these stories and how they communicated their interpretations? This class uses Jesus' parables to explore how people read and interpret classic religious texts. The Gospels often depict Jesus telling stories. Good stories draw us into their world, evoke different reactions from different people, and impact how we live afterwards. How have people been impacted by Jesus' stories over the past two millennia? How have they communicated this impact to others? In this class, we will examine a wide range of readings of Jesus' parables, from people in different historical contexts, with different identities, beliefs and experiences, and who produce different types of writing in response. What do these examples tell us about the different ways reading and story-telling can function as religious practices?