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This course introduces students to the religious traditions of Asia, especially Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Japanese Shinto. But it does much more than that. It asks students to engage a variety of questions about religion itself, questions like What is religion? How do the adherents of Asian religious traditions talk about their own tradition and the traditions of others? What issues did the authors of religious texts believe were at stake in the works they produced? And, perhaps most importantly, what kind of world do we live in, and what are human beings to do about this world?
What is “religion”? How has the American religious landscape changed in the last 300 years? What does it mean to be “religious” in America? Why do many Americans identify as “spiritual, but not religious”? Where can religion be found in American culture? In this course, we will look for signs of religion in some unexpected places: not just churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples— but also theme parks, Disney movies, YMCAs, restaurants, hospitals, public schools, and sports stadiums. Our “texts” include music, films, websites, food, court cases, and walking tours. Besides traditional essays and exams, course assignments will ask you to make fresh observations of your everyday landscapes and relationships.

REL-R 160  MW 10:10-11:00A  + DISCUSSION  PROF. CANDY BROWN
CREDITS  [GENED A&H] [CASE A&H] [CASE DUS]

REL-R 170  MW 2:30-3:20P  + DISCUSSION  PROF. LISA SIDERIS
CREDITS  [GENED A&H] [CASE A&H]

The world is aflame. It is a contest pitting us against them, human against animal, consumption against conservation, today against tomorrow. This course introduces students to religious and ethical issues related to these conflicts and how they shape our individual lives, American society, and the world at large. We will examine issues related to medicine and technology, especially those that seek to enhance and transform the human; the use of technologies in animals and agriculture; the consequences of climate change, geo-engineering, and energy depletion; as well as land use and food ethics. Students will become familiar with ethical argumentation and the ways in which religions contribute to ethical decision-making and activism around the globe. In other words, we will learn how to think and talk about some of the most pressing issues facing our earthly existence.

RELIGION, ETHICS & PUBLIC LIFE

mindfulness  law  spirituality  Christianity  freedom  sin  yoga

human  animal  energy  technology  medicine  environment
INTRO TO OLD TESTAMENT/HEBREW BIBLE

REL-A 210  TR 9:30-10:45A
CREDITS GENED A&H  GENED WCC  CASE GCC  CASE A&H

Adam and Eve. Noah and the flood. The Burning Bush. Moses and the Ten Commandments. Many of us are familiar with these and other stories from the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament), a familiarity learned in synagogue, church, and devotional readings, as well as from movies, songs, and fiction. This course offers students an academic way to engage those stories. We will think about the Hebrew Bible in its Mediterranean and Near Eastern contexts, the collective authorship of the Torah, and the relationship of the Bible to other ancient writings, such as the Dead Sea scrolls and early Christian writings. To do so, we will examine how the collected writings of the Hebrew Bible have been read and interpreted in different ways by ancient religious communities and by modern scholars, an approach intended to encourage reflection on our own reading practices. The takeaway from this course is a greater appreciation of the variety, complexity, and ambiguity of one of the most important collections of texts in Western culture.

Revelation  Exodus  prophecy  exile  Judaism  Torah

INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

REL-B 210  TR 1:00-2:15P  PROF. RICHARD NANCE
CREDITS  GENED A&H  GENED WCC  CASE GCC  CASE A&H

This course surveys the development of Buddhism, from its origins in India to its subsequent expansion across the globe, including the United States. The course has two main goals: to familiarize you with the basic ideas and practices of Buddhism as they have taken shape in various historical and cultural settings. It also invites you to think critically and carefully about these ideas and practices, and what they imply for those who espouse and engage in them.

mindfulness  Zen  meditation  Dharma  nirvana
“Hinduism” is the umbrella term for the vast and multifaceted traditions of at least 80% of the people of India, and nearly 20% of all human beings on earth. In this course we can only begin to wrap our minds around its richness and diversity. Our goal is to gain a basic understanding of this religious tradition, to expand our own ideas of what it means to be human, and to broaden our understanding of what “religion” is. To do so, we will explore the tensions between different strands of Hinduism: renunciation and desire, form and formlessness, duty and freedom, temple practice and meditative withdrawal, just to name a few. The result will be a greater appreciation of Hinduism, religion, and what it means to be human.

What is our duty as human beings? How do we know what's the right thing to do in a difficult situation? This course explores how ancient Indians answered this question in the Mahābhārata, a foundational text of Indian civilization. This classical Indian epic offers tremendous mythic and psychological insight into the human condition. We’ll read significant excerpts from the epic itself, alongside recent scholarship on its literary, religious and historical contexts. We’ll also consider it as performance by watching several modern stagings of the Mahābhārata, as well as by reviewing recent novels that draw upon this classic epic.
Is religion good or bad? Is it a force for social cohesion, or a source of perpetual conflict? Does belief in god make sense, or are the gods just laughable? Is what we call “religion” really something else, like a means of ideological control, capitalist values in disguise, or an instrument of imperial and colonial power? Are some forms of religion “better” or more “authentic” than others? Although we might associate critiques of religion with modernity, humans have been critiquing and analyzing religion since antiquity. In this course, students will study critics and criticism of religion from Greek antiquity through the present.

power, ideology, conflict, love, hate, control, justice

What does it mean to say that God is dead? Does it mean that God was once alive, but is now deceased? Does it mean that God is alive, but hidden, absent, or silent and, thus, dead to humans? Does it mean that God has never existed, but humans are only recently becoming aware of this fact? Is God dead to some people, but alive to others? And what are the consequences of God’s death? Does it obliterate the possibility of truth, morality, and order? This course examines these and other questions by engaging the atheistic claim that “God is dead” and the various religious responses to it. To do so, we will read several of the major texts in the death of God literature, with the intent of exploring how competing claims about the death of God challenge our understandings of culture, knowledge, life, and death.

meaning, existence, nihilism, values, Nietzsche, freedom
This discussion-oriented course introduces students to Buddhism in China, Korea, Japan, and the East Asian diaspora. The course is organized into four units. First, we examine the structure of the Buddhist multiverse, from the heavens down to the hells. We then explore the monastery as a site for dedicated practice by religious specialists (mostly, but not exclusively, monks and nuns). Next we look at how rulers have used Buddhism for political purposes. Finally, we study pilgrimage, which brings people from all walks of life to sacred places. Course materials range from the classical to the contemporary, and from scripture to poetry to film.

- heaven
- hell
- pilgrimage
- devotion
- practice
- politics

The Jewish sages of late antiquity known as rabbis were masters of the Bible who, between 100 and 500AD, produced a complex set of laws and narratives known today as rabbinic literature. What did these rabbis believe? And how did they interpret the Bible? In seeking answers to these and other questions, this course introduces students to the literature and beliefs of rabbis who not only reimagined Judaism in Persian exile, but who also witnessed the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Over the course of the semester, we will examine key themes in rabbinic Judaism, such as God’s covenant, good and evil, the election of Israel, redemption, revelation, and the existence of demons and angels.

- Bible
- good + evil
- covenant
- Israel
- exile
- demons
- angels
Hindu Goddesses

Godesses have been worshipped in a variety of forms for thousands of years within the religious cultures of India. The goddess is typically conceived in India as a primal creative force animating the entire universe, as well as an intimate presence in many aspects of life. Worship of the divine feminine remains one of the most vital features of religious practice within India today. The goddess (Devi) in India is understood to be both one and many. This course is designed to introduce students to the “cast of characters” that comprise the goddesses of Hinduism and to the mythology, iconography, ritual practices, embodied forms, and theology associated with these goddesses.

Ancient Christianity: Constantine to Mohammed

How did Christians, a small minority cult, become a world religion? How did early Christians define relationships between church and state? What did they think about marriage and family? How was the Mediterranean and Near East “Christianized”? And how did Christians react to the rise of Islam in the early 600s? In this course, students explore these and other questions through readings of ancient and medieval texts in English translation. Students will come away from this course with a greater appreciation for the emergence, diversity, and complexity of early Christianity as its various communities engaged the world around them.
Our starting point in the course is the idea that religion, race, and ethnicity are not given or stable categories, but concepts that change over time, vary across contexts, and are often constructed in relation to one another. We will explore these ideas across the Americas by looking at three major topics: religion and immigration, African American and African Diaspora religions, and religion and national identity.

race  ethnicity  immigration  identity  Islam  Christianity  Judaism

This course examines the relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world and its inhabitants. We will engage various religious and secular schools of thought in environmental ethics, such as ecotheology and nature religions, ecofeminism, ‘land ethics,’ animals rights and liberation, and science-based approaches to the environment. Course topics include the values human cultures assign to nature and animals versus their intrinsic values; individualistic ethics versus holistic ethics; ecological and evolutionary science; obligations to future generations; climate change and energy depletion; diminishing species; environmental justice; and the economics of sustainability. This class will explore dilemmas associated with these issues, and will provide a forum for students to understand, articulate, and defend their own personal environmental worldviews.

ethics  nature  science  environment  climate  justice  politics
### American Profanity

**REL-C 401  T 5:45-7:55P**  
**PROF. COOPER HARRISS**

The “profane” has a special relationship with the sacred. It is an antagonist of the sacred—the anti-sacred or its violation—that, at the same time, depends upon, cooperates with, and in the process provides evidence of the sacred as it generates power and meaning. This course explores profanity in American culture in theory and context, matching critical takes on the topic with cultural case studies that may include the blues (and the ritual of the Saturday Night Jook), artistic dimensions surrounding New York's punk scene of the 1970s (including Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe), as well as legal and political debates from earlier centuries surrounding “foreigners,” “witches,” “bad books,” “possessions,” and much more.

- sacred
- anti-sacred
- punk
- witches
- art
- the blues

### Religion and/as Fantasy

**REL-D 375  TR 1:00-2:15P**  
**PROF. HEATHER BLAIR**

This discussion-intensive seminar looks at the relationship of religion and fantasy in two ways. It asks whether religion is—or can be—a type of fantasy, and it examines how fantasy makes use of—and often acts like—religion. We will be reading theoretical works by thinkers like Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, as well as exploring recent academic articles, science fiction stories, fantasy novels, and films.

- fantasy
- Marx
- Freud
- science fiction
- movies
Is religion good—or bad—for your health? How should healthcare providers respond to religious beliefs of patients? What ethical and legal questions arise when spiritual healing is integrated with (or replaces) conventional healthcare, or is taught in public schools? Topics include: yoga, mindfulness, Transcendental Meditation, acupuncture, chiropractic, Reiki, pentecostal divine healing, Jehovah's Witnesses' refusal of blood transfusions, and ethics in end-of-life care.

One frigid morning you happen upon your professor on campus. “It’s a lovely warm day!” she says. You pause. This odd statement could mean a number of things: Is your professor crazy? Delirious? Canadian? Or is she joking? She smiles and you realize that by saying the opposite of what she meant, she was being ironic. You laugh, being in on the joke’s meaning, but also recognize that in this ironic moment any number of “truths” were equally in play. Religion and literature are both meaning making enterprises. Sometimes their meanings are stable but more often they are not. Life is complicated and the meaning that we give it through literature and/or religion matches this instability. The concept of irony allows us to hold multiple meanings, contradictory truths, in tension, equipping us to deal with the absurdity of reality in meaningful ways—even when there may seem to be no stable meaning. This course considers irony as a literary, religious, and political concept, and then reads selected literary texts to consider how irony enriches our readings of these texts and how the process of reading ironically helps us to understand how religions build communities, while ironically keeping others away.
Nirvana is routinely understood as the ultimate end point of Buddhist practice, but the nature of this end point has long been an object of controversy among Buddhists. What, they ask, is lost in attaining awakening, and what is gained? How is nirvana embodied? And what does it mean to be a Buddha? Some Buddhists hold that Buddhas are simply human beings who are no longer afflicted by greed, hatred, and delusion, while others understand Buddhas in non-human (or super-human) terms: as beings who simultaneously possess multiple bodies, are omniscient, can shape-shift, disappear and reappear at will, speak multiple languages at the same time, and emanate whole universes without breaking a sweat. This course will explore these questions and complexities through an engaged reading of Buddhist texts about nirvana.

**THE POETICS OF TAO YUANMING**

Tao Yuanming (365–427AD) is one of the most recognized Chinese poets in the world. This discussion-oriented course engages in a close reading of Tao's poetry with an eye toward questions such as: What makes us happy? What things in life are worthy of grief if we do not have them? How ought we to respond to situations where our righteous desires are thwarted? How do we confront our own mortality? Previous coursework on Chinese philosophy, history, or religion is strongly recommended. All readings are in English, with the possibility of an extra session for those who read classical Chinese.
Kendrick Lamar. Lemonade. Jay-Z. Black Messiah. Janelle Monae. We know these names and titles from playlists, videos, and Instagram. They shape our politics, our fashion, our style, and our attitudes. But they also open up questions of the sacred, perhaps even the possibility of the sacred itself. By engaging hip-hop culture, as well as its deeper history in spirituals, gospel, and R&B, this course introduces students to the critical study of religion and culture.

Are we born bad? Selfish and greedy? Do we have a difficult time understanding why we do what we do? Of acting on behalf of others rather than ourselves? Are humans rational creatures? Or are we driven by emotions and desires that we often only dimly understand? These are questions you might encounter in a psychology class. They are some of the questions that neuroscientists and other empirical sciences seek to answer. But they are also the questions addressed by the religious doctrine of original sin, in some of the most formative and influential texts ever written. In this class we’ll demonstrate the enduring relevance of religious texts to contemporary questions of human psychology.
No one, not even God, is free from the toils of labor. And yet, from the Christian Garden of Eden to the Greco-Roman ideal of the Golden Age, human imaginings of perfect happiness emphasize a utopic world where human survival is assured and not dependent on our toils and troubles. Indeed, having to work for one's sustenance (‘to eat by the sweat of our brow” Gen 3:19) and to reproduce through painful labor are depicted as divine punishments for human disobedience. And yet, parallel to this punitive vision of work, Christianity also developed an ethos of liberating labor through the institution of monastic orders that exalted manual crafts and meditative practices as means of salvation. In this class we will examine on the one hand, this twin legacy of labor as punishment and as salvation as it appears in artistic, religious, political and philosophical texts and contexts, and on the other, we will explore the “others” of work (boredom, idleness, leisure). We will consider questions such as: to what extent is our humanity linked to our capacity for work: are we homo sapiens (‘knowing men’” or homo laborans (‘working men’”? Is labor gendered? Must labor be productive and produce a profit or can there be leisurely labor? Can labor heal? Why do we call artistic creations works of art? How do ideas of labor as punishment and labor as creation affect the social acceptance of art and artists?

- care
- creation
- human condition
- sex
- money
- playfulness
To become a Religious Studies major or minor, contact our undergraduate advisor, Aaron Ellis, at reladv@iu.edu.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR A MAJOR DEGREE**

- A minimum of 30 credits in Religious Studies.
- At least one upper-level course in each of the following areas:
  - A: Africa, Europe, and West Asia
  - B: South and East Asia
  - C: The Americas
  - D: Theory, Ethics, Comparison
- Majors Seminar in Religion.
- At least four additional courses at or above the 300 level.
- At least one more course at the 400 level.
- A maximum of two 100-level courses.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR A MINOR DEGREE**

- A minimum of 15 credit hours in Religious Studies.
- At least one upper-level course from three of the following four areas:
  - A: Africa, Europe, and West Asia
  - B: South and East Asia
  - C: The Americas
  - D: Theory, Ethics, Comparison
- At least three courses must be at or above the 300 level.
- No more than two 100-level courses.
- Critical Approaches courses taught by Religious Studies faculty can be counted in the minor.

Please refer to the Undergraduate Bulletin for more details.