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 course details.

To become a Religious Studies major or minor, contact our undergraduate advisor, Aaron Ellis, at reladv@iu.edu.
RELIGION & SPORTS

REL-R 175  MW 12:20-1:10P  PROF. COOPER HARRISS
CREDITS  [GENED A&H] [CASE A&H]

This course considers the ways that religion and sports are alike and argues that you can learn a great deal about one through careful attention to the other. We’ll consider how fans treat sporting events like sacred rites, examine the civil religion of the Super Bowl, and delve into sports as religion, exploring topics like the peril of religious athletes (Tim Tebow or Muhammad Ali), sporting venues as sacred space, sporting competition as holy violence, and shrines of sacred memory (like halls of fame). By the end of the semester you should have a new and deeper appreciation of the fascinating and complicated ways religion works that comes from looking closer at sports. At the same time, you’ll never participate in or observe a sporting event again in quite the same way.

REL-A 210  TR 4:00-5:15P  PROF. LAURA CARLSON HASLER
CREDITS  [GENED A&H] [GENED WCC] [CASE GCC] [CASE A&H]

What is the Hebrew Bible? And what is good biblical interpretation? To answer the first of these two questions, this course equips you with a working knowledge of the contents of the Hebrew Bible and the context of its composition. We will explore a range of reading practices and themes within the Bible, especially the significance of particular interpretive issues for ancient and modern religious communities. As we answer the second question, you will be asked to keep refining your definition of good biblical interpretation by assessing various historical, aesthetic, and ethical perspectives on biblical and other ancient Jewish literature.

sports  religion  sacred places  ritual  athletes

Revelation  prophecy  exile  Exodus  Judaism  Torah
INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

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

This course surveys the development of Buddhism, from its origins in India to its subsequent expansion across the globe, including its presence in the United States. We will pursue two main goals: 1) to gain familiarity with the basic ideas and practices of Buddhism as they have developed in various historical and cultural settings, and 2) to think critically about these ideas and practices and what they imply for those who espouse and engage in them. Course requirements include open-book writing assignments and closed-book exams.

mindfulness  Zen  meditation  Dharma  nirvana

INTRODUCTION TO NEW TESTAMENT

REL-A 220  TR 3:35-6:05P (2ND 8 WEEKS)  NICOLÒ SASSI
CREDITS  GENED A&H  GENED WCC  CASE A&H  CASE GCC

This course introduces students to the New Testament, a fascinating collection of tales, poems, letters, and apocalyptic visions. Our aim is to understand how these texts radically transformed Eastern and Western cultures and worldviews and how they still permeate our contemporary life and thinking. Grades will be based on in-class discussions and assignments, three take-home exams, and some extra credit. Students will walk away from this class with a basic knowledge of all the major texts of the New Testament and with a new understanding of the transformative potential of religious practices and ideas.

religion  Jesus  literature  antiquity  Christianity
“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 humans on earth. In this course we can only begin to wrap our minds around Hinduism’s 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, just to name a few. The result will be a greater appreciation of Hinduism, religion, and what it means to be human.

- India
- devotion
- the universe
- time + space
- karma
- Dharma

What is Christianity? What does it mean to be Christian? How should a Christian act in the world? Can we ever hope to recover “original” Christianity, even though we are historically, socially, and culturally so far removed from its origins? In asking these questions, this course reveals that Christianity might just be both a possibility and an impossibility. Readings come from key texts in the history of Christianity. Grades are determined by several in-class assignments, two take-home exams, and some extra credit.

- love
- poverty
- otherworldliness
- interpretation
- experience
We face many problems in the world today; many argue that these problems are deeply interconnected. Deep Ecology is one response to these problems. It seeks fundamental transformations in our views of the world and ourselves, claiming that there is no divide in the forms of life on earth. Deep Ecology, therefore, aims for an environmentally sustainable and spiritually rich way of life that recognizes the intrinsic value of all life forms and the enchantment of the world. This course involves an introductory examination of Deep Ecology from a Religious Studies perspective that investigates traditions in terms of their thought, action, and communities.

human world life environment sustainability spirituality

This course is designed for students with little prior knowledge of Islam. We begin by learning about the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad, and about the similarities and differences between Islam and other monotheistic religions. Then we will explore how Muslims put into practice God’s teachings—and the various outcomes of these teachings and practices. Questions we will ask include: What is sharia law and what does it demand of Muslims? Why does Islam look so different in, say, the Middle East and Southeast Asia? Why do some Muslims support gender equality, queer acceptance, and democratic principles while others don’t? How do Muslims respond to contemporary developments like global capitalism and climate change? Grades are based mainly on in-class assignments, two take-home assignments, and two exams.

piety interpretation representation text and context Islam and the West
MAGIC & WITCHCRAFT IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

REL-A 300  MW 1:00-2:15P  PROF. JASON MOKHTARIAN
CREDITS  CASE A&H

Why did people in the ancient world believe in demons and other supernatural beings? Did they really perform exorcisms and burn witches at the stake? What was “magic” in antiquity, and how did it differ from “religion” and “science”? This course offers students a wide selection of readings that engage these questions. In particular, there is a focus on magical texts from Greco-Roman, Jewish, early Christian, and other ancient contexts. The course also introduces students to some of the common theoretical models about magic from the fields of anthropology and religious studies. Grades are based on a few homework assignments, in-class group activities, a midterm, and a final.

magic  shamanism  anthropology  science  antiquity

TRAUMA, THE BIBLE & AMERICAN IDENTITY

REL-A 300  TR 9:30-10:45A  PROF. LAURA CARLSON HASLER
CREDITS  CASE A&H

This course is about how Americans use the Bible to interpret pain. We will ask: How are biblical stories about individual as well as communal suffering used to understand pivotal moments in American history? The first unit focuses on biblical stories of communal pain (exodus, conquest, exile) and how they are applied in America's colonial period, its westward expansion, discourses on slavery, and the civil rights movement. The second unit addresses how biblical stories about individual pain (enslavement, sexual violence, or xenophobia) continue to shape American identities. Students will write four short papers, and a final assignment where you will dissect a contemporary piece of American biblical interpretation of your choice.

pain  violence  colonialism  Exodus  exile  interpretation
THE TRIAL OF JOAN OF ARC

REL-A 300  TR 1:25-3:55P (1ST 8 WEEKS)  PROF. WINNIFRED SULLIVAN
CREDITS  CASE A&H  CASE IW

Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in 1431. She was accused of heresy and war crimes, and was feared by both the French and English kings. Her story was reported all over Europe. Almost six hundred years later Joan continues to fascinate many. Her life and trial raise questions about the relationship of religion, law, and politics, the intersection of church and state, the construction of gender, the law of war, authority and authenticity in matters of personal spiritual experience, religious and psychiatric explanations for hearing voices, and many more. This class will focus on the records of her trials, including the setting of the trial, the charges, and its aftermath in the context of fifteenth-century religion, law, and politics, as well as considering the later religious, legal, cinematic, literary, and political lives of Joan right down to the present.

religion + politics  law + religion  religion + gender  martyrdom

MINDFULNESS

REL-B 300  TR 9:30-10:45A  PROF. RICHARD NANCE
CREDITS  CASE GCC  CASE A&H

The past decade has seen an explosion of interest across the United States in something called “mindfulness meditation.” Its benefits are said to be myriad, and it is said somehow to be related to a Buddhist tradition of meditation that stretches back thousands of years. What is this contemporary practice of “mindfulness”? What is it said to be good for? What is contributing to its current popularity? And what is the relation between it and the various forms of meditative practice that Buddhists have historically championed? This class provides students with opportunities to think through these questions and more.

Buddhism  meditation  mental health  contemplation  concentration
## The Mahabharata

**REL-B 300 TR 8:00-10:30A (2nd 8 Weeks)**  
**Prof. Rebecca Manring**

How do we decide what to do in a difficult situation? What is “evil,” and how do we confront it? This course explores how ancient Indians answered these questions in the *Mahābhārata*, a foundational text of Indian civilization. This epic offers tremendous mythic and psychological insight into the human condition, while providing some damn good stories along the way. We’ll talk about what our duty is as human beings, and how we can figure that out. Students will become better readers, thinkers, and writers as we study this important work. Grades are based mostly on five short assignments, a class presentation, and a research project.

- India
- ethics
- human condition
- myth
- life
- duty
- Hinduism

## Sound, Sexuality, and the Sacred

**REL-C 300 MW 4:00-5:15P**  
**Prof. J. Kameron Carter**

Looking at black popular culture, we consider what sound and sexuality have to do with “the sacred.” Put differently, this course engages black popular culture around three general ideas: sound (both in music and language), sexuality (as the site where race and gender are lived), and finally, the ecstasy of the holy and the unholy. This engagement will involve us “hearing” the sound and sexuality of the sacred. We will ground our reflections where sound and sexuality meet in the music of Kendrick Lamar and Beyoncé, Aretha Franklin and Prince, D’Angelo and Janelle Monae, and others, as well as in novels, poetry, films, memoirs, and works of scholarship that embody, live, and bring the sacred into black popular culture.

- black culture
- music
- films
- novels
- race
- the holy
- the unholy
This course examines the complicated relationship between Judaism and Christianity in the first seven centuries of the common era. Did Jews and Christians see one another as siblings or rivals? In the centuries after the death of Jesus, what were the beliefs and practices that made someone a Jew versus a Christian? In this class, students pay attention to the portrayals of Christians in ancient Jewish literature, and vice versa, while also learning about the role that other religious groups played in the development of Judaism and Christianity. Students will perform close readings of ancient texts as a way to explore the diversity of religious identities in antiquity and beyond. Grades are based on in-class group activities, quizzes, and a midterm and final.

**Jews, Christians, & Others in Late Antiquity**

**REL-A 316  MW 2:30-3:45P**

**CREDITS** [CASE GCC] [CASE A&H]

**PROF. JASON MOKHTARIAN**

This course examines the complicated relationship between Judaism and Christianity in the first seven centuries of the common era. Did Jews and Christians see one another as siblings or rivals? In the centuries after the death of Jesus, what were the beliefs and practices that made someone a Jew versus a Christian? In this class, students pay attention to the portrayals of Christians in ancient Jewish literature, and vice versa, while also learning about the role that other religious groups played in the development of Judaism and Christianity. Students will perform close readings of ancient texts as a way to explore the diversity of religious identities in antiquity and beyond. Grades are based on in-class group activities, quizzes, and a midterm and final.

**Superheroes and Religion**

**REL-C 303  MW 11:15A-12:30P**

**CREDITS** [CASE A&H] [CASE DUS] [CASE IW]

**PROF. CANDY BROWN**

Why do people love superheroes, and why do they love to hate villains? How do superheroes diagnose what is wrong with the world and how it can be righted? Can superheroes help us to understand and bring out the best in ourselves? This course asks what superheroes can tell us about religion, spirituality, and science—as well as race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and class and age—in American culture. We will read comic books and watch Marvel movies and DC Netflix series. Instead of taking exams, students will write papers that 1) analyze superheroes and 2) invent a superhero and/or heroic universe. Students have the option of creating their own comic book, game, or film.
From early American revivals to contemporary politics, evangelical Christians, including pentecostals and charismatics, have shaped U.S. cultural and political institutions. In this course, we will ask: Who are evangelicals? What do they believe, and how do they behave? Should non-evangelicals be worried about them? This course explores the causes, nature, and implications of evangelical influence through the lenses of history, literature, and religious studies. Our texts include fiction, poetry, music, film, and food. There are two short papers and two examinations.
FRIENDSHIP, BENEVOLENCE & LOVE

REL-D 365  TR 1:00-2:15P  PROF. AARON STALNAKER
CREDITS [CASE A&H]

Love and friendship seem crucial to any good human life—but what are they, exactly? In this course we examine these and related ideas by reading classic and contemporary works from different cultures and eras. The class is an experiment in cross-cultural understanding, and will refine our thinking on some of the most important and potentially fulfilling aspects of human social and religious life. Questions we will pursue include: What are the varieties of love and friendship? Are benevolence and compassion for others natural to human beings? Could true benevolence require actions that appear cruel? How can personal vices and corrupt social arrangements deform friendship, benevolence, and love? Is it possible to be friends with God? With the Dao?

love  God  friendship  eros  shame  cruelty  ethics

RELIGION AND DETECTIVE FICTION

REL-D 375  MW 4:00-5:15P  PROF. COOPER HARRISS
CREDITS [CASE A&H]

One hallmark of religion is its association with mystery and the mysterious—what is different from or unknowable to the human? Detective fiction emerged around the time people began to test the limits of these mysteries, asking what we can know and how we know it. Detectives solve mysteries just as skeptics and believers use reason and science to look for rational clues to what is “real” or “true” about religious claims. More recent mysteries reflect the anxiety that there may, in fact, be nothing to know. In this course we will discuss several mysteries and the detectives who solve them in the context of religious problems and debates that show these stories, novels, films, and other media in a new light. “Texts” include stories about Sherlock Holmes and other detectives, film noir, spy thrillers, and more recent works.

mystery  knowing  secular  reason  literature  film
The “profane” and the “sacred,” the unholy and the holy, dirt and cleanliness, God and gangsterism, have a special relationship to each other. They are antagonists. The profane violates sacred norms, while the sacred regulates or attempts to put a boundary around the profane. But the profane and the sacred also cooperate with and depend on each other. In other words, they need each other. This course examines this dynamic as a way to understand religion, modernity, society, and (the) America(s). We will draw from philosophy, feminist theory, queer theory, and/or critical race theory to understand the profane and the sacred, while examining case studies—like R&B, Hip-Hop, the blues, jazz, the visual arts, literature, and political debates—to illuminate how the profane and the sacred show up in lived experience.

race sexuality God the devil America the holy the unholy

To explore how religion intersects with popular culture, this discussion-intensive seminar takes a global, international perspective on Buddhism. How do media such as manga, film, and fiction shape and change our understandings of Buddhism? What does it mean for a human being or cultural product to be “Buddhist?” And how might Buddhist ideas illuminate our own participation in popular culture? Course materials range from Hollywood movies to philosophical treatises. Students need to participate in discussion, complete short weekly response postings, and write a final paper on a topic of their choice.

film movies media religion Buddha
Different cultures offer different visions of human life. But what are we to make of this diversity? Do we have any rational basis for evaluating the alternative possibilities for life presented by different religious and philosophical traditions? This course examines statements on the nature of human existence from both East Asia and the ancient and modern West, with a special focus on Christianity, Confucianism, and Daoism. Recurring issues in this course include the relationship between reason and emotion, as well as between our more animal and more human sides; problems in life that deform the self; the need, if any, for gods or the transcendent to actualize the self; various practices of self-cultivation; and the relation of individual and communal flourishing. All readings are in English or English translation.

self Dao God emotion happiness love virtue

Scientists claim that human actions have triggered a new “mass extinction” event on Earth. Activists are mobilizing to push for a rapid response to extinction and climate disruption. This event and responses to it raise a host of questions: Who are we as a species? What are the implications of mass extinction, including the prospect of human extinction, for religious practice, experience, and belief? How are religion and spirituality generating responses to the crisis? How do religion and spirituality shape environmental rituals of mourning, grief, and remembrance, as well as acts of resistance and protest? This course analyzes the relationship between religion and widespread destruction of biological life on Earth. Major requirements include in-class discussion, a final research paper, and regular, short reading responses.

extinction spirituality mourning activism apocalypse
This course will explore several issues under the broad topic of ‘death.’ We will study various cultural responses to personal death (i.e., one’s own death), the death of others, and the loss of other meaningful things. In this class, we will ask: how have people thought about death? How do people cope with personal death anxiety? How have various cultures dealt with the grief associated with losing someone or something significant? In thinking through these questions we will read the work of contemporary philosophers, anthropologists, and scholars of religious studies. This will involve learning about early China, futuristic Japan, and contemporary Europe and the United States. Students will explore the role of mourning across cultures, analyze various approaches to coping with anxieties associated with death, and think through the ways in which death might influence how people live.

DEATH

GLOBAL TOURISM

This course focuses on tourism, a major aspect of globalization that involves the cross-cultural consumption of experience. Our readings and discussions will center on the complex relationships among different kinds of tourists, tourism organizations, cultural representations, and host communities. Questions include: In what ways is tourism similar to religious pilgrimage? How do forms of travel that are for religious or spiritual purposes relate to tourism? What kinds of desires, fantasies, and promises of gratification motivate tourists? How does tourism affect local communities? What kinds of power relations exist between “hosts and guests”? We will begin the course with an overview of basic concepts in the study of tourism and travel, and then proceed to discuss several case studies from across the Americas.
EXPLORE THE WORLD
STUDY RELIGION

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES BLOOMINGTON

Course listings are subject to change. Please check on Student Information System (SIS) or the Schedule of Classes website for updated dates and times. We have a very dedicated teaching faculty and an active student organization. More information can be found at www.indiana.edu/~relstud/.