Religion

GREAT BOOKS: THE BIBLE & WESTERN CULTURE
REL 2040-01 Peter Bekins 2:00-3:20  T,Th
REL 2040-02 Heidi Wendt 9:30-10:50  T,Th
REL 2040-03 Will Dilbeck 12:20-1:15  MWF
REL 2040-04 Heidi Wendt 11:00-12:20  T,Th  [Honors]

This course introduces students to the academic study of the biblical writings. Students read these texts both to explore religious practice in the ancient world and to think critically about such issues as: what their author(s) might have intended to convey; how they would have been received in particular historical contexts, and by what processes they were established as an authoritative canon of religious writings. Although students may bring different perspectives to the Bible, the course does not presume any prior familiarity with its writings. Rather, we will establish a common vocabulary and set of tools for discussing and analyzing these texts in an academic setting. This course fulfills a Core requirement in the WSU Core Curriculum.

WHAT IS RELIGION? Valerie Stoker
REL 2050-01 11:00-12:20  T,Th

This course will explore fundamental yet challenging questions for all students of religion: what is religion and how best does one study it? To answer these questions, we will explore the ideas of some of the most famous theorists of religion including Frazer, Freud, Durkheim, and Marx. We will also adopt a case study approach that will consider, in comparative perspective, the features of different religious traditions from around the world. Using this combined approach, students will learn to make their own contributions to the field of religious studies. This is a required course for Religion majors and minors.

WESTERN RELIGIONS Mark Verman
REL 2070-01 11:15-12:10  MWF

Judaism, Christianity and Islam constitute the major religious traditions of the West. Each stems from a common spiritual heritage that is rooted in shared biblical narratives and the land of Israel. Our task will be to study core scriptural texts from each of these seminal religious traditions, as well as examining their particular history, beliefs and practices. This is a required course for all Religion Majors and Minors.

INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM Awad Halabi
REL 3300/5300-01 3:35-4:30  MWF

The course is intended as an introduction to Islam, its practices and institutions. Topics that will be covered in class include the life of Muhammad, the development of the Islamic community, Islamic theology and law, the various branches of belief (Sunni and Shi‘i), Sufism, the themes of the Qur’an, gender issues, modern Islam and how Muslims have responded to the challenges of the modern era.
CHINESE RELIGIONS
REL 3410/5410-01
Judson Murray
12:20-1:15 MWF
This course is an introductory survey of the major currents of religious thought and practice in Chinese history and culture. We will primarily examine representative examples from the three traditional religious “teachings” (sanjiao)—Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism—but we will also begin the course by examining early patterns of Chinese religious life, and we will end the course by surveying religion in modern China. The course will examine the following key themes: the close connection between religion and politics in Chinese history, Chinese ideals of government, Chinese understandings of the cosmos, Chinese debates on human nature and how best to develop one’s person through various regimens of self-cultivation (e.g., morality, education, meditation, longevity techniques), and, finally, conceptions of the Chinese sage.

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN AMERICA
REL 3620/5620-01
Ava Chamberlain
12:30-1:50 T,Th
There has never been a period of greater religious experimentation in America than the 19th century. Following the Revolution there was an explosion of new religious movements, but the impulse for innovation continued throughout the century. This course will examine a variety of these 19th century movements, including Shakers, Mormons, Oneida Perfectionists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Christian Science. It will also consider such recent developments as the rise of New Age and Neopagan religions. In addition, we will discuss more general trends, such as health reform, spiritualism, and communalism, and look at the historical, religious, and political factors that contributed to the development of these movements.

PROPHETS & HISTORY
REL 3740/5740-01
Mark Verman
1:25-2:20 MWF
Biblical prophets constitute one of the core elements of ancient Israelite society. Commissioned to convey the Divine message to the people, prophets attempted to reorient the moral compass of the nation. These extraordinary women and men were impassioned social commentators. They formulated profound insights into the meaning and interpretation of history and continue to impact the spiritual consciousness of Judaism and Christianity to this day.

FOUR GOSPELS
REL 3760/5760-01
Heidi Wendt
2:00-3:20 T,Th
This course introduces students to the critical study of the canonical gospels, as well as a selection of non-canonical texts (e.g., the Gospel of Thomas, the writings of Josephus, the Life of Apollonius of Tyana, etc.) that are suggestive for thinking about broader questions of genre, composition, dating, historicity, authorial interest, intended audience, canonization, and, most importantly, the relationship of gospel literature to early Christian religious practice. In addition to close readings of the canonical gospels, we will also investigate the wider context of literary production and intellectual life in the first and second centuries of the Roman Empire. There are no prerequisites for the course, and no prior knowledge of the New Testament is presumed.
Many scholars of religion have noted a recent rise in religious fundamentalisms on a global scale. Certainly, today’s headlines attribute many regional and political conflicts to this phenomenon. But what exactly do we mean by the term ‘religious fundamentalism’ and can it be applied to all religious traditions? How can we explain the seeming upsurge in religious fundamentalisms? Do all versions of religious fundamentalism have common forms, causes, and goals? If not, what differentiates one form from another? This course considers these and other questions by examining examples of fundamentalism in three religious traditions: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Because this is a seminar course, students will be responsible for much of their own learning. Class time will be devoted to student-led discussions of readings and presentation of research as well as to viewing the occasional documentary film. Instructor permission is required for registration. REL 4930 Seminar in Religion is required of all Religion majors.