RELIGIOUS STUDIES (RLST)

* RLST 012a / HUMS 092a, Divine Law in Historical Perspective  Christine Hayes
Exploration of the divergent notions of divine law in Greco-Roman antiquity and biblical Israel; the cognitive dissonance their historical
encounter engendered and attempts by Jewish, Christian, and contemporary secular thinkers to negotiate competing claims. Topics
include: debates over the attributes and nature of divine law versus human law; the grounds of divine law's authority; law as a religious
expression versus law as debasement of the divine-human relationship; the impact of divine law debates on secular legal theory.
Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  HU

* RLST 110a / LING 102a / SOCY 104a, Introduction to Language and Religion  Roslyn Burns
This survey course examines topics related to how language structures intersect socially with concepts related to religion. Students
develop tools to talk about how linguistic form and meaning reflect different properties of religion through building their knowledge of
linguistics literature. Students demonstrate their ability to synthesize their own novel research that expand on current lines of research.

* RLST 113b, The Prophetic Tradition and Democracy  Alex Ozar
This course explores and evaluates the viability, and perhaps necessity, of prophetic political action in the context of liberal democracy in
general and contemporary America in particular. Prophecy offends the canons of liberal reason and reasonableness: Where liberal theory's
ideal citizen engages their fellows through respectfully deliberative, rational dialogue on the basis of presumed equal standing and by
appeal to shared premises, the prophet seems to arrogate to themselves an authority they do not take their audience to possess, uncivilly
condemning their detractors while demanding societal transformation in light of a truth to which they purport to enjoy privileged access.
Our question is whether the offense of prophecy can find a legitimate home in liberal democracy and whether liberal democracy can be
safe for the oppressed without it.  HU

* RLST 114b, What's the Matter (with Religion)?  Stephen Davis and Camille Angelo
We (and everything around us) matter and are made of matter. When it comes to common cultural conceptions, however, religion is all
too often conceived of as a purely spiritual, transcendent, and supernatural domain. This course challenges those assumptions by drawing
on recent approaches that emphasize and also interrogate the power and agency of things, whether human or non-human, organic or
inorganic, tangible or intangible. Part one of the course equips students with key theoretical frameworks, including thing theory, vital
materialism, animacies, entanglements, symmetrical archaeology, and affect and emotion. Part two consists of deep dives into selected
case studies, organized under the following thematic headings: aniconism and the immaterial, materializations of ritual practice (oracles,
magic, and fetishes), apparitions and hauntings, movements and migrations, consumption and consumerism, illness and contagion, and
ecology and the environment. As we traverse these topics, we encounter materialities ranging from ancient Greek rock art, Roman oracle
shrines, and recipes for magical spells and visions of saints in Egypt, to devotional items confiscated from undocumented immigrants, the
marketing of religion by Goldman Sachs and Kanye West, viral epidemics, and “natural” disasters. Students come away from this seminar
better able to recognize and act upon what matters in the world.  HU

RLST 115b / AMST 116b, How to Build an American Religion  Kathryn Lofton
How communities can be organized through code, charisma, ritual, and cosmology. Topics include strategies for concretizing utopia and
establishing communal principles, expanding audiences, and specifying creed. This course serves as an introduction to religion through
theoretical readings and specific examples drawn from the transnational American scene, past and present. Discussion of particular
leaders, sects, practices, and media will offer insights into how ideas organize societies and individuals establish themselves as icons.
Students adapt strategies taught in the course in order to practice their own capacity to foster social movements, develop and critique
brands, and consider the relationship between religion, politics, and economy.  HU

* RLST 119b / WGSS 319b, The Animal and Religion  Wendy Mallette
This interdisciplinary seminar analyzes key texts formulating the question of the (non)human and animal by examining the recent
proliferation of work on animality, not only in religious studies, but also in Black studies, gender studies, philosophy, and anthropology.
The course critically examines key accounts of religion and the animal in relation to colonialism, capitalism, race, gender, sexuality, and
class. Questions explored include: What does animal religion or religious animality look like? How is the category of religion understood
with respect to the nonhuman or less-than-human? What is the relationship of conceptions of the (non)human in modernity to the
slave trade and colonialism? How do notions of personhood, spirituality, dominion, evolution, empathy, and cosmology relate to the
(non)human and animal?  HU

* RLST 121a / EALL 296a / EAST 391a, Religion and Culture in Korea  Hwansoo Kim
Introduction to Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Christianity, and new religions in Korea from ancient times to the
present. Examination of religious traditions in close relationships with social, economic, political, and cultural environments in Korean
society. Examination of religious tensions, philosophical arguments, and ethical issues that indigenous and foreign religions in Korea have
engaged throughout history to maximize their influence in Korean society.  HU

* RLST 128a / ANTH 128a / CLCV 307a, Emotion and Identity in Antiquity  Daniel An
“You are what you feel.” But how much control do we have over how we feel? Does—or can—everyone experience the world through the
same categories of feeling, or “emotions”? To what extent are people’s emotional options constrained or scripted by aspects of identity
such as religion, gender, class, and language? This seminar explores the connections between emotions and identity in the context of the
ancient Mediterranean world, with reference to modern theories of emotion along the way. Topics covered include (1) ancient theories of what emotions are and how they relate to the "self"; (2) norms concerning which emotions are "proper" and for whom (including humans, animals, and gods; women and men; and "pagans," Jews, and Christians); and (3) practical methods used to cultivate certain emotions over others.

HU

RLST 141b / AFST 112b / ARCG 222b / NELC 112b, Egyptian Religion through the Ages  John Darnell

Diachronic approach to topics in Egyptian religion. Religious architecture, evidence for protodynastic cults, foreigners in Egyptian religious celebrations, music and vocal expression in Egyptian religion, Re and Osiris, the Amarna interlude and the Ramesside solar religion, and the goddess of the eye of the sun. Readings in translation.  HU

RLST 145a / HUMS 135a / J DST 110a, The Bible  Christine Hayes

The writings common to both Jewish and Christian scripture examined as diverse and often conflicting expressions of the religious life and thought of ancient Israel. The works' cultural and historical setting in the ancient Near East; the interpretive history of selected passages influential in Western culture. Introduction to a wide range of critical and literary approaches to biblical studies. Students view course lectures, which survey the entire Bible, on line; class time focuses on specific biblical passages and their subsequent interpretation in Jewish and Christian culture.  HU

RLST 148a / ER&M 219a / HIST 219a / J DST 200a / MMES 149a, Jewish History and Thought to Early Modern Times  Ivan Marcus

A broad introduction to the history of the Jews from biblical beginnings until the European Reformation and the Ottoman Empire. Focus on the formative period of classical rabbinic Judaism and on the symbiotic relationships among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Jewish society and culture in its biblical, rabbinic, and medieval settings. Counts toward either European or non-Western distributional credit within the History major, upon application to the director of undergraduate studies.  HU  RP

* RLST 156a, Buddhism and Hip-Hop  Kati Fitzgerald

This course explores Buddhist music with a particular focus on contemporary hip-hop and rap. The first part of the course provides students with an overview of foundational Buddhist principles, monastic music, music as a form of offering practice and devotional songs. In unit two, students explore the emergence of popular contemporary music in the Buddhist Himalayas, using case studies and ethnographic works to understand how Bollywood, Rock n Roll, Hip-Hop, and digital sampling worked together to form a unique version of Himalayan contemporary music. Unit three delves into an in-depth analysis of the relationship between Buddhism and Hip-Hop, thinking through concepts such as appropriation, solidarity, alternative moralities, responses to globalization, critiques of cultural tradition, and the formation of a new Buddhist youth movement. Students leave this course with a deeper knowledge of Buddhism, contemporary music in the Himalayas, and the often-arbitrary lines drawn between sacred and secular cultural domains.  HU

RLST 160a / HIST 280a / ITAL 315a, The Catholic Intellectual Tradition  Carlos Eire

Introductory survey of the interaction between Catholicism and Western culture from the first century to the present, with a focus on pivotal moments and crucial developments that defined both traditions. Key beliefs, rites, and customs of the Roman Catholic Church, and the ways in which they have found expression; interaction between Catholics and the institution of the Church; Catholicism in its cultural and sociopolitical matrices. Close reading of primary sources.  HU  o Course cr

RLST 171b / F ALL 219b / EAST 220b / HUMS 214b / PHIL 119b, Introduction to Chinese Philosophy  Lucas Bender and Eric Greene

This course represents an introduction to the most important philosophical thinkers and texts in Chinese history, ranging from roughly 500 BC–1500 AD. Topics include ethics, political philosophy, epistemology, and ontology. We discuss the basic works of Confucian and Daoist philosophers during the Warring States and early imperial eras, the continuation of these traditions in early medieval "dark learning," Buddhist philosophy (in its original Indian context, the early period of its spread to China, and in mature Chinese Buddhist schools such as Chan/Zen), and Neo–Confucian philosophy. The course emphasizes readings in the original texts of the thinkers and traditions in question (all in English translation). No knowledge of Chinese or previous contact with Chinese philosophy required.  HU

* RLST 175b / EAST 431b, North Korea and Religion  Hwansoo Kim

Ever since the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 1948 and the Korean War (1950–1953), North Korea has been depicted by the media as a repressive, oppressive, and military country, its leaders as the worst dictators, and its people as brainwashed, tortured, and starving to death. The still ongoing Cold War discourse, intensified by the North Korea's recent secret nuclear weapons program, furthers these negative images, and outsiders have passively internalized these images. However, these simplistic characterizations prevent one from gaining a balanced understanding of and insight into North Korea and its people on the ground. Topics other than political, military, and security issues are rarely given attention. On the whole, even though North Korea's land area is larger than South Korea and its population of 25 million accounts for a third of all Koreans, North Korea has been neglected in the scholarly discussion of Korean culture. This class tries to make sense of North Korea in a more comprehensive way by integrating the political and economic with social, cultural, and religious dimensions. In order to accomplish this objective, students examine leadership, religious (especially cultic) aspects of the North Korean Juche ideology, the daily lives of its citizens, religious traditions, the Korean War, nuclear development and missiles, North Korean defectors and refugees, human rights, Christian missionary organizations, and unification, among others. Throughout, the course places North Korean issues in the East Asian and global context. The course draws upon recent scholarly books, articles, journals, interviews with North Korean defectors, travelogues, media publications, and visual materials.  SO
central philosophical, religious, and pagan, principles of those groups associated with this designation? How have the core ideas of the role played by religious and pagan traditions. This course seeks to answer the question, what constitutes the right? What are the introduction of modern Islam, including some historical background. Case studies of important countries in the contemporary Muslim world, such as Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Islam as a reactive force to Western colonialism; the ideals of Shari’a and jihad; engagement; practices of concealment and revelation; images as embodiments of the divine; the framing and staging of ritual through architecture.

A wide-ranging, cross-temporal exploration of religious images, objects, and architecture in diverse cultures, from ancient Mesopotamia to modern Manhattan. Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and various polytheistic traditions are represented. Thematic threads include the human body; transformations of nature; death, memory, and afterlife; sacred kingship and other forms of political engagement; practices of concealment and revelation; images as embodiments of the divine; the framing and staging of ritual through architecture. 

Introduction to modern Islam, including some historical background. Case studies of important countries in the contemporary Muslim world, such as Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Islam as a reactive force to Western colonialism; the ideals of Shari’a and jihad; violence and self-sacrifice; and Islam as a political ideology.

This seminar explores the history of right-wing political thought from the late eighteenth century to the present, with an emphasis on the role played by religious and pagan traditions. This course seeks to answer the question, what constitutes the right? What are the central philosophical, religious, and pagan, principles of those groups associated with this designation? How have the core ideas of the
right changed over time? We do this by examining primary tracts written by theologians, political philosophers, and social theorists as well as secondary literature written by scholars interrogating movements associated with the right in America, Europe, Middle East and Asia. Though touching on specific national political parties, institutions, and think tanks, its focus is on mapping the intellectual overlap and differences between various right-wing ideologies. While the course is limited to the modern period, it adopts a global perspective to better understand the full scope of right-wing politics. HU, SO

* RLST 350a / EAST 404a / HIST 305Ja, Faith in Law in East Asia: Beginnings to 1800  
Philip Gant
This course investigates law in East Asia from ancient times to 1800 from the perspective of belief. We debate treatises, codes, cases, and cultural products from across East Asia’s legal traditions, tracing the lives they took on. We work to understand firsthand law in its diverse contexts. More fundamentally, we consider the many ways in which people formed beliefs about what “law” might be or do. We examine the philosophical and faith traditions—and the hopes and fears—through which law was articulated, justified, realized, and then immediately contested. Throughout, we ask: What does it mean to invest law with one’s faith? How much of one’s belief is law? How much does law depend on one’s belief? What gave people pause about this over time? You develop your own answers, with an eye toward how all of this has been understood, misunderstood, and appropriated across cultures and time. So the next time you hear an analyst or government official explain something in East Asia as rooted in “a Confucian disdain for law,” or “Japanese ‘Justice,’” (feat. in NYT) you will be equipped to strike up a conversation about just how they arrived at that belief. HU

* RLST 408b / JDST 400b, Interpreting the Bible in Antiquity: Case Studies  
Christine Hayes
Examines the rich and polyphonic tradition of interpretation of two biblical narratives that were classical loci of Jewish-Christian polemic. Beginning with inner-bible exegesis, and continuing with ancient translations, Second Temple and Hellenistic period literature, early Christian sources, and finally classical rabbinic texts, this course explores the interpretative techniques and rhetorical strategies of ancient readers (especially *midrash* and allegory) and considers the way sacred texts have been employed to stake out competing intellectual and cultural claims. Prerequisite: reading proficiency in Hebrew. HU

* RLST 420a, Introduction to Syriac Christianity  
Maria Doerfler
This seminar aims to introduce students to the literary, historical, and theological tradition of Syriac Christianity and the developing field of Syriac Christian studies. In this vein, students encounter a number of the tradition’s key authors; learn to locate its development in the context of different imperial cultures and religious interlocutors, including Judaism and Islam; and explore topics at the vanguard of current scholarship, including distinctive approaches to asceticism, ritual, and historiography. In addition to weekly meetings, the seminar further requires attendance for three special sessions: a visit to the Beinecke Rare Books & Manuscripts Library and its considerable Syriac manuscript holdings; a visit to the Yale University Art Gallery and its collection of relevant artefacts and coins; and an introduction to the use of digital humanities in Syriac Studies through the Yale Digital Dura-Europos (YDEA). Permission of Instructor is required. HU

* RLST 428b / ANTH 428b / PHIL 431b, Neighbors and Others  
Nancy Levene
This course is an interdisciplinary investigation of concepts and stories of family, community, borders, ethics, love, and antagonism. Otherwise put, it concerns the struggles of life with others—the logic, art, ethnography, and psychology of those struggles. The starting point is a complex of ideas at the center of religions, which are given to differentiating “us” from “them” while also identifying values such as the love of the neighbor that are to override all differences. But religion is only one avenue into the motif of the neighbor, a fraught term of both proximity and distance, a contested term and practice trailing in its wake lovers, enemies, kin, gods, and strangers. Who is my neighbor? What is this to ask and what does the question ask of us? Course material includes philosophy, anthropology, psychology, fiction, and film. HU

* RLST 430a / PHIL 430a / SAST 470a, Indian Philosophy in Sanskrit Literature  
Aleksandar Uskokov
In this course we focus on issues of philosophical significance in Sanskrit literature of “non-standard” philosophical genres, i.e., other than the treatise and the commentary. Specifically we read from canonical Hindu texts such as the Upaniṣads, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa, Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Bhagavad-gītā, and Yogācāra; the classical genres of drama and praise poetry; and hagiographical literature, all in English translation. Attention is paid not only to substance but also form. The selection of philosophical problems includes philosophy of mind and personal identity; allegory; the ethics of non-violence; philosophy, politics, and religious pluralism; the highest good; theodicy; philosophical debate, etc. HU

* RLST 433a / AFAM 402a, Black Religions in Slavery and Freedom  
Nicole Turner
This course explores how enslaved and free black people created and sustained religious communities in the United States during the eras of slavery and freedom. It explores the resonances of African traditions, the role of conjure, Islam and Christianity in sustaining Black people through slavery and the transformations that developed after emancipation. The course challenges the paradigm of black religion as always pointing toward freedom while exploring how the transition in status from enslaved to free was reflected in and influenced by black religious practices and communities. This course explores the religious communities of the “slave quarters,” underground railroad, independent black churches on the political landscape of freedom through the end of the 19th century. This course aims to provide participants with a deeper exploration of the developments within the period from the 19th century through 1915 and the advent of Jim Crow and U.S. imperialism.
* RLST 437b / HIST 428Jb / HSHM 477b / HUMS 463b, Critical Theories of Science and Religion  Noreen Khawaja and Joanna Radin
This course is an introduction to new thinking about the relationship of science and religion in global modernities. Drawing from work in feminist and indigenous studies, critical race theory, postcolonial studies, and multispecies thought, we explore systematic questions at the intersection of metaphysics, history of science, and politics. How can attending to the role of practice alter our understanding of how knowledge is produced across scientific and religious worlds? What is a world, and who gets to define it? How might a new contract between science and religion reveal fresh possibilities for an ethical response to late capitalism: addressing historic exclusions, structural inequalities, and human-nonhuman relations? Readings may include: Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, Kim TallBear, Anna Tsing, Isabell Stengers, Cathy Gere, Mary-Jane Rubenstein, Karen Barad, Robert Bellah, Gabriel Marcel, Elizabeth Povinelli, Nadia Abu El-Haj, Aicha Beliso-De Jesus, Marilyn Strathern, Catherine Keller, Abou Farman, Webb Keane. HU

* RLST 445a / MMES 490a / NELC 490a, Introduction to Arabic and Islamic Studies  Frank Griffel
Comprehensive survey of subjects treated in Arabic and Islamic studies, with representative readings from each. Methods and techniques of scholarship in the field; emphasis on acquiring familiarity with bibliographical and other research tools. Enrollment limited to senior majors in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, except by permission of instructor. HU

* RLST 485a, African American Religious History  Nicole Turner
A seminar focused on the history of African American religions. African American religions are dynamic and multifaceted. Oft depicted as sources of black resilience and emblems of black resistance, African American religions have also been criticized for marginalizing and racializing black people, as well as encoding archaic gender paradigms and reinforcing class divisions. This course explores the ways histories of African American religions have produced these various interpretive frames. Questions that animate the course include: What role have African American religions played in African American life? How have scholars studied the history of African American religions and ultimately shaped the discourse about African American religious life, and by extension African American history? This course resolves these questions through an examination and production of historical writing. Intended for advanced students pursuing specific senior-level research. HU

* RLST 486a / EALL 221a, Introduction to Chinese Buddhist Literature  Eric Greene
This class is an introduction to Chinese Buddhist literature. Although written in classical Chinese, Buddhist texts in China were written in a particular idiom that was much influenced by the Indian languages and which can be difficult to understand without special training. This class introduces students who already have some reading ability in literary Chinese to this idiom and the tools and background knowledge needed to read and understand Chinese Buddhist literature. We read a series of selections of some of the most influential Chinese Buddhist texts from various genres including canonical scriptures, apocryphal scriptures, monastic law, doctrinal treatises, and hagiography. Secondary readings introduce the basic ideas of Indian and Chinese Buddhist thought to the extent necessary for understanding our readings. Prerequisite: CHNS 171 (Literary Chinese II) or equivalent, or permission of the instructor. Students of Japanese or Korean literature who can read basic kanbun or gugyeol are also welcome to enroll; no knowledge of modern, spoken Chinese is required. L5, HU

* RLST 488a, Individual Tutorial  Staff
For students who wish, under faculty supervision, to investigate an area in religious studies not covered by regular departmental offerings. The course may be used for research or for directed reading. A long essay or several short ones are required. To apply, students should present a prospectus with bibliography of work they propose to undertake to the director of undergraduate studies together with a letter of support from the faculty member who will direct the work.

* RLST 490a, Religion and Society  Eric Greene
Seminar on religion and society. Topics covered vary by year, but may include one or more of the following: ritual and its social functions, different concepts of social life, the operation of violence in social relationships, religion as both champion and critic of society, and theoretical models of religion and society.

* RLST 491a and RLST 492b, The Senior Essay  Travis Zadeh
Students writing their senior essays meet periodically in the fall and weekly in the spring for a colloquium directed by the director of undergraduate studies. The essay, written under the supervision of a member of the department, should be a substantial paper between 12,500 and 15,000 words.