

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (RLST)

*** RLST 0035b / HIST 0623b / HUMS 0360b / JDST 0035b, Jerusalem: Judaism, Christianity, Islam** Sarit Kattan Gribetz

The Old City of Jerusalem is just 0.35 square miles large, about half the size of Yale's campus. Have you ever wondered what makes this tiny city so beloved to—and the object of continual strife for—Jews, Christians, and Muslims? Through engagement with a wide range of sources—including biblical lamentations, archeological excavations, qur'anic passages, exegetical materials, medieval pilgrim itineraries, legal documents, maps, poetry, art, architecture, and international political resolutions—students develop the historiographical tools and theoretical frameworks to study the history of one of the world's most enduringly important and bitterly contested cities. Students encounter persistent themes central to the identity of Jerusalem: geography and topography; exile, diaspora, and return; destruction and trauma; religious violence and war; practices of pilgrimage; social diversity; missionizing; the rise of nationalism; peace efforts; the ethics of storytelling; and the stakes of studying the past. Enrollment limited to first-year students. HU RP

RLST 1030a / HEBR 1170a, Elementary Biblical Hebrew I Dina Roginsky

An introduction to biblical Hebrew. Intensive instruction in grammar and vocabulary, supplemented by readings from the Bible. No prior knowledge of Hebrew required. L1

RLST 1150a / AMST 1115a, How to Build an American Religion Staff

This course offers an introduction to religion in the United States and theories from religious studies that argue its patterns. HU o Course cr

RLST 1270a / HUMS 4501a / PHIL 1118a / SAST 2610a, Buddhist Thought: The Foundations Staff

This class introduces the fundamentals of Buddhist thought, focusing on the foundational doctrinal, philosophical, and ethical ideas that have animated the Buddhist tradition from its earliest days in India 2500 years ago down to the present, in places such as Tibet, China, and Japan. Though there will be occasional discussion of the social and practical contexts of the Buddhist religion, the primary focus of this course lies on how traditional Buddhist thinkers conceptualize the universe, think about the nature of human beings, and propose that people should live their lives. Our main objects of inquiry are therefore the foundational Buddhist ideas, and the classic texts in which those ideas are put forth and defended, that are broadly speaking shared by all traditions of Buddhism. In the later part of the course, we take up some of these issues in the context of specific, regional forms of Buddhism, and watch some films that provide glimpses of Buddhist religious life on the ground. HU o Course cr

RLST 1315a / HSHM 2210a / HUMS 1315a, What Was the University? Noreen Khawaja

A deep history of the university as a political, intellectual, and ritual institution. Focus on key chapters and cases in the university's formation, from the mutual-aid societies of medieval Europe to modern research institutions such as Yale. What conditions gave rise to the particular type of school we call a university? How have universities played a role in the development of modern society? How might the history of this institution help us understand its role at the center of politics today? HU o Course cr

RLST 1480a / ER&M 2519a / HIST 1219a / JDST 200 / JDST 2000a / MMES 1149a,**Jews and the World: From the Bible through 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 o Course cr

RLST 1600b / HIST 1280b / ITAL 1315b, 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 1710b / EALL 2190b / EAST 2201b / HUMS 214 / PHIL 1119b, Introduction to Chinese Philosophy Lucas Bender

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 o Course cr

*** RLST 2010a / HIST 3232a / HUMS 4430a / JDST 3270a / MMES 3342a, Medieval Jews, Christians, and Muslims In Conversation** Ivan Marcus

How members of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities thought of and interacted with members of the other two cultures during the Middle Ages. Cultural grids and expectations each imposed on the other; the rhetoric of otherness—humans or devils, purity or impurity, and animal imagery; and models of religious community and power in dealing with the other when confronted with cultural differences. Counts toward either European or Middle Eastern distributional credit within the History major, upon application to the director of undergraduate studies. WR, HU RP

RLST 2020b / HIST 1645b / JDST 3265 / MMES 1148, Jews in Muslim Lands from the Seventh to the Sixteenth Centuries Ivan Marcus

Jewish culture and society in Muslim lands from the time of the Prophet Muhammad to that of Suleiman the Magnificent. Topics include Islam and Judaism; Jerusalem as a holy site; rabbinic leadership and literature in Baghdad; Jewish courtiers, poets, and philosophers in Muslim Spain; and the Jews in the Ottoman Empire. HU o Course cr

*** RLST 2120a / NELC 2620a, Death, Memorial, and Immortality in the Hebrew Bible and its World** Jacqueline Vayntrub

What does the Hebrew Bible have to say about human mortality, divine immortality, and the afterlife? Are these ideas more consistent with later Jewish and Christian notions of death and the afterlife, or are they closer to the views of their ancient Near Eastern neighbors? In this course we examine the development of biblical and ancient Near Eastern concepts of death and life-after-death. We look at a variety of different types of texts that touch upon these themes, such as narrative, poetry, ritual, and law in biblical and other ancient Near Eastern texts. Topics include the depiction of human mortality and divine immortality in literature, dying as a social process, the development of the notion of an afterlife and the concept of the 'soul', and communication with the dead, how these texts have been received in the West, and how they have shaped inherited ideas of the immortality of the soul, human suffering, and divine justice. The aim of the course is to develop an awareness of the ancient historical and cultural context in which these texts were authored, and to deepen our understanding of modern views of mortality. HU

*** RLST 2290a / EAST 4602a, Buddhist Ethics** Marta Sanvido

In this course, we will explore ethical issues in Buddhism across a wide range of contexts and time periods. Together, we will examine how Buddhism addresses fundamental moral and ethical questions, such as: How should I behave? What are the implications of my actions? What is good and bad? How can we bridge the gap between knowing what is right and acting accordingly? The course is divided into two parts. In the first part, we will explore foundational topics in Buddhist ethics, focusing on themes such as retribution, precepts, the Bodhisattva's path, meditation, and the role of feelings. The second part centers on Buddhism's responses to contemporary ethical issues, including abortion, gender, race, and environmental ethics. This course integrates both the theory and practice of ethics. The structure and assignments are designed to help you engage with theoretical systems that may differ from those you are familiar with, while also applying these abstract ideas to reflect on the relationship between theory and practice. HU

*** RLST 2310b / HIST 3226b / JDST 3470, How the West Became Antisemitic: Jews and the Formation of Europe 800-1500** Ivan Marcus

Students study how Jews and Christians interacted on a daily basis as medieval Europe became more restrictive and antisemitic, a contributing factor to the Holocaust. In this writing seminar, students discuss a variety of primary sources in class—laws, stories, chronicles, images—while researching and writing their own seminar paper structured by sessions on topics, bibliographies, and outlines. WR, HU

*** RLST 2330a / ENGL 3846a / HUMS 2530a, Poetry and Faith** Christian Wiman

Issues of faith examined through poetry, with a focus on modern poems from 1850 to the present. Poems from various faith traditions studied, as well as to secular and antireligious poetry. HU

*** RLST 2510b / NELC 1290b, Magic and Ritual in Ancient Egypt and the Near East** John Darnell

Introduction to ancient Egyptian magic and rituals with an overview on the use of magic and discussion of the different rituals and festivals attested in Ancient Egypt and the Near East. HU

*** RLST 2555a / HUMS 2555a, Metaphysical Fictions** Nancy Levene

This course takes up works that explore predicaments in historical and conceptual reality. At issue are world building, disruption, and alteration, perspective and time, relationship, interpretation, and varieties of threat and response. HU

*** RLST 2820a / HUMS 4598 / PHIL 4474 / SAST 2690a, Philosopher Queens of Hinduism and Buddhism** Sonam Kachru

Inspired by the bestselling book *The Philosopher Queens*, this course seeks to make cognitive room for women in the history of Indian (and Indian Buddhist) philosophy, and to reflect on what making such room involves: we explore the arguments and concerns of neglected figures—some human (like Nanduttara or Lalleshwari), some not; some historical (Laksmikaradevi), some not—and explore philosophical concerns involved in the reconstruction of their voices and views. HU

RLST 2830a / HIST 1215a, Reformation Europe, 1450–1650 Staff

Examination of a series of religious revolutions in Europe between 1450 and 1650. The causes and nature of the reformations that changed the religious, political, social, and economic landscapes of early modern Europe and shaped the course of Western civilization as a whole. HU o Course cr

*** RLST 2890a / ER&M 4444a, Race, Religion, and Transnational Mobilities** Gana Ndiaye

This course surveys how “migrants” and “desirable migrants” are produced through race and religion in the Americas and Europe. It also examines how racial identities and religious beliefs inform human mobilities and shape the experiences of such mobile persons as settlers, exiles, asylum seekers, temporary workers, and economic migrants. By the end of the course, participants will familiarize themselves with the crucial roles that religious beliefs and practices play in causing and responding to human mobilities. Students will also gain familiarity with the ways in which migrants’ religious practices transform local cultures, politics, and societies as their own religious practices are reconfigured by and in the context of host nations. Topics to be covered include citizenship and cultural difference, religion and the public sphere, multiculturalism, Islam and democracy, Christian Pentecostal missions, liberation theology, and African diasporic religions. so

*** RLST 2930a / HIST 2621a, The Shari‘a 101: From Medieval Jurists to Modern States, Why Islamic Law Matters Today** Matthew Steele

This course aims to provide students with an alternative reading of the Islamic legal tradition. It upends the view that Islamic law was in some way allergic to change. Likewise, it problematizes the notion that the medieval legal tradition either lacked innovation or was rendered obsolete by colonial reforms and modernist critique. It approaches Islamic law through the speculative enterprise of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the work of legal scholars to elaborate God’s most likely position regarding any legal dilemma. Through the literature and opinions (*fatwās*) of legal specialists from the ninth through the twentieth century, the class interrogates the relationship between change and continuity in Islamic law. We explore how jurists balanced the doctrine of trans-regional schools of law with the local dilemmas faced by the communities in which they lived and served. Similarly, we consider not only the opportunities but also the risks that arise from adapting Islamic law to local conditions. The course challenges students to ask what is change within a tradition? In the debates and polemics of legal scholars, we contemplate the appeal and the limitations of

reform within Islamic law, tracing how both have been contested and have evolved across different geographies and periods in the Muslim World. Likewise, we rethink the boundaries of continuity. We question how a legal school and a legal canon are constructed and revised, examining the ways in which both are capable of reinforcing – or imperiling – the Islamic legal tradition. Last, we explore the endurance of Islamic law in contemporary Muslim societies. The course reflects on the processes and the consequences of various projects of “modernizing” the Shari‘a, asking how the institutions of the colonial and postcolonial state have reconfigured Islamic law in radically different ways. HU

*** RLST 3130a / ER&M 3030a, Islam in Africa** Gana Ndiaye

Islam is the dominant religion in many African nations. Countries such as Libya, Comoros, and Western Sahara have Muslim populations exceeding 99%. In Senegal, over 95% of the population adheres to Islam, while more than 79% of Egyptians identify as Muslim. Nigeria has the largest Muslim population on the continent, with over 100 million Muslims. This course focuses on the histories, politics, and cultures of Muslim Africa. We examine the spread of Islam across the continent from the 7th century through trade, education, and jihad. Drawing primarily from anthropology, we explore the impact of faith on governance and social structures, as well as its interactions with other religious traditions on the continent. By the end of the course, students will: a) learn about key issues in the study of Islam in Africa, including Islam noir, Africanization of Islam, Ajami, and lived Islam, b) develop tools for studying how Africans on the continent and the diaspora practice Islam in various contexts and time periods, and c) acquire research skills for studying Islam ethnographically. HU, SO

*** RLST 3145a / HIST 3265a / ITAL 3387a, Francis of Assisi and His Legacy** Carlos Eire

Francis of Assisi is undoubtedly one of the most important figures in European history. As one of Catholicism’s most revered saints (often considered to be the greatest male saint ever), his radical message of voluntary poverty, humility and fraternity significantly revived the Catholic church in a moment of profound crisis, and has since been accepted as one of the foundational elements of European thought, receiving universal admiration from diverse thinkers who are often unaffiliated with the Catholic tradition. This course seeks to take both challenges head on. Its pedagogical intent is three-fold. First, by offering a comprehensive overview of the layered accumulation of narratives that has given us the Francis figure so beloved today, it encourages students to examine the ambiguous boundaries of “reliability” with regard to historical narratives, especially those with a mythopoetic flavor. Other than the well-known “Little Flowers,” students are also exposed to less-known “lives” of the saint and are expected to critically compare these sources. Second, students are invited to Socratically wrestle with Francis’ spiritual legacy in light of its obvious conflict with prevalent notions of the “good life” in contemporary America. Third, students will gain a robust understanding of the Franciscan tradition which has left its footprint in vast regions outside of Europe (Jerusalem, East Asia, the Americas), has generated an important school of theology, and continues to stoke prominent public debates through controversial modern figures such as Padre Pio. Background readings on medieval religious history will also be provided. Topics will include orthodoxy and heresy, factional conflict within religious orders, missionary activities, mysticism, female religious life, and faith and the visual arts. L4, HU

*** RLST 3240a / HIST 3768a / JDST 3451a / PLSC 3464a, The Global Right: From the French Revolution to the American Insurrection** Elli Stern

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 3300a / ANTH 2252a / SAST 3760a, Religion, Place, and Space** Harini Kumar

This seminar explores why 'placemaking' is significant for practitioners of various religions worldwide. From the holy city of Mecca to the sacred landscape of Banaras in India, religious traditions are tethered to sacred geographies. These locations are often physical sites imbued with sacred energies and social meaning. Religious activities can occur in churches or mosques, forests or mountains, community centers, public squares, or homes. The course materials consider specific religious sites and contexts (including those on the Yale campus), examining how these places simultaneously become sites of worship, articulations of identity and heritage, claims of political significance, and hubs of social and emotional life. Special attention is given to how space and place are gendered, racialized, and shaped by emotions, senses, and memories. HU, SO

*** RLST 3400a / SPAN 4610a, The World(ing) of Tarot** Todne Thomas and Nicholas Jones

This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to the exploration of tarot. It joins together religious studies, social scientific, historical, and aesthetic approaches to teach about contexts of practice, genealogies of tarot phenomena, and their visuality. It establishes a foundational knowledge of tarot by exploring popular culture (mis)representations, tracing its longstanding eclectic history, and studying its archetypes. Conceptually, the course uses tarot as an avenue to discuss conceptual themes of materiality and aesthetics, esotericism, politics, gender, culture, and worlding. Through this guided study of tarot, we explore tarot's enduring, yet contested appeal and relativize Western epistemologies, including that of the academy itself.

*** RLST 3430b / EAST 4601b, Tibetan Buddhism** Staff

This course provides a broad introduction to the intellectual history, philosophy, practices, and culture of Tibetan Buddhism. In this course, we will approach Tibetan Buddhism through four topics: 1) the historical development of Buddhism in Tibet and its key characters, including major gods, goddesses, and human figures; 2) Buddhist ideas about a central theme in nearly all religions: human suffering; 3) ideas and practices that address the problem of human suffering; and 4) the lives of individuals in contemporary Tibetan Buddhist communities. We will we will read and discuss

excerpts from Tibetan Buddhist literature; learn to appreciate and analyze Tibetan art and architecture; and watch short documentaries about Tibet that allow us to see how the ideas and practices from the texts connect to peoples' lives today. HU

*** RLST 4100b, Freud and Interpretation** Nancy Levene

A seminar on the contribution of Freud's ideas to the work of interpretation. We read Freud's landmark book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, as well as some of his essays, and works by other authors and artists that extend or adapt the principles or that spur readers to situate Freud in a wider family of ideas. Themes include desire, duplicity, transposition, mistake, learning, limit, and understanding. Prerequisite: Coursework in philosophy or literature. HU

*** RLST 4180a, Secularisms** Supriya Gandhi

This seminar investigates secularism, a multidimensional and multivalent category, together with its multiple lineages. We read influential scholarly interventions tracing the European genealogies of secularism together with critiques of secularism as a form of power. We put these readings in conversation with discussions of secularism and histories of the secular in global contexts including South and West Asia and North Africa. Through these we critically examine various, sometimes conflicting, understandings of secularism. Deployments of Islam as a foil to secularism, and the question of the Islamic secular, constitute important themes of the course. HU

*** RLST 4210a / HSAR 4421a, Saints and Relics in Medieval Europe** Jacqueline Jung

In medieval Europe, the dead were always present, and none had a greater impact on visual arts, material culture, and architecture than the "very special" dead known as saints. This course examines the men and women whose holy lives and often spectacular deaths loomed so large in the Christian imagination, including biblical saints such as the apostle Peter and Mary Magdalene, early martyrs such as St Stephen and St Foy, and thirteenth-century celebrities such as Francis of Assisi and Christina the Astonishing. We look at how their stories inspired iconic and narrative representations in various media (textual and visual), and how their bodily remains, enshrined in various forms of reliquaries, forged communities of the faithful over centuries. HU

*** RLST 4250a / EAST 4620a, Korean Religions** Staff

This seminar examines the diverse and dynamic religious traditions of Korea including shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and New Religions from the pre-modern developments to religious experience in contemporary Korea including North Korea. This course adopts an interdisciplinary approach by discussing the histories and philosophies of religions, and their roles in Korean culture and society. It also deals with women's position in traditional and contemporary Korean religions. Why study Korean religions? How can we approach Korean religions from an academic perspective? What role have religions played in Korean history, culture, and society? Through a reflection on Korean religions, students are encouraged to think critically about the concept of religion and its role. HU

*** RLST 4450a / NELC 4580a, Introduction to Arabic and Islamic Studies** Travis Zadeh

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. Previously NELC 490.

*** RLST 4880a and RLST 4890b, Individual Tutorial** Eric Greene

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 4900b, Religion and Society** Maria Doerfler

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 4910a and RLST 4920a or b, The Senior Essay** Eric Greene

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.