

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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The Religious Studies curriculum approaches the history of human thought and practice while focusing on specific geographical, cultural, and philosophical areas of scholarly interest. Courses explore when, how, and why communities forge systems of value. Faculty guide students to examine institutions, practices, texts, and ideas simultaneously: to see how texts influence institutions, how institutions prescribe habits, and how human beings resist and reiterate the given institutions and practices of their specific geographic and historical contexts. The Religious Studies department is particularly known for its promotion of scholarly research by undergraduates. Undergraduate majors acquire the linguistic, philosophical, and historical acumen necessary for an in-depth research project during their senior year.

COURSE NUMBERING

Religious Studies course offerings, other than first-year seminars, are arranged in four categories. Group A features general and comparative courses that engage more than one tradition, concept, or text. Group B includes survey courses that provide a broad introduction to a particular religious tradition or scripture in historical context. Group C includes courses on specialized topics in religious studies, both introductory and intermediate. Group D offers advanced courses on specialized topics which typically have specific prerequisites or require the permission of the instructor. Students who want a broad introduction to the study of religions can choose courses listed under Groups A or B, though courses listed under Group C are also open without prerequisite. Religious Studies majors develop specialized concentrations as they plan a major program in consultation with the DUS and other members of the faculty.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The department offers two programs for students majoring in Religious Studies: the standard major and a major in which religious studies is combined with another subject closely related to the senior essay. Both programs require a core of six courses, a seminar, and a two-term senior essay.

Core requirement A core of six courses in Religious Studies is required of all majors and should be selected in consultation with the DUS. Students select one core course from Group A that involves the comparative study of religions and three core courses from Groups B and C that concentrate on the historical or textual study of three different religious traditions or regions. Students are encouraged to select religions and regions as widely divergent as possible in order to balance in-depth study with global diversity and connection. One core course must focus on systematic thought (ethics, philosophy, or theology). The final core course is RLST 490, Religion and Society, the junior seminar on the academic study of religion; this course is required for all majors.

Seminar requirement Before the end of the junior year, students must complete a seminar (in addition to the junior seminar) that requires a major research paper. In Program I, this seminar must be an elective in Religious Studies. In Program II, it may be a course in Religious Studies, or it may constitute one of the four term courses outside the department.

Program I. The standard major Program I consists of twelve term courses in Religious Studies, including the core of six required courses, the two-term senior essay, and four electives. The electives are usually selected from Groups C and D and form a coherent unit to help the student prepare for the senior essay. Certain cognate courses in other departments that are integral to the student's area of concentration may count toward the major with permission of the DUS. Normally the maximum number of cognate courses that may be applied is two. Two terms of an ancient language related to the study of religion may, with permission of the DUS, be counted.

Program II. Religious studies with another subject Program II consists of eight term courses in Religious Studies (the core of six required courses and the two-term senior essay) and four term courses outside the department, one of which may fulfill the seminar requirement outlined above. The four courses outside the department need not directly concern religion, but they must form a coherent, focused unit of concentration. Through them students can develop expertise in a methodological approach, cultural area, historical period, or body of literature contributing to the senior essay. Examples of successful combinations might be: four courses in Chinese history, language, and literature with a senior essay topic on Chinese Buddhism; four courses in early American history and literature with a topic on colonial American religion; four courses in a specific area of biology and medical science with a topic on biomedical ethics; or four courses in globalization and international relations with a topic on religion and globalization. Each student's petition to take this program will be judged on its contribution to the student's senior essay. Normally, introductory courses in other departments may not count among the outside courses; appropriate language courses at a higher level may. Students electing Program II must, at the end of the junior year and in no case later than the beginning of the senior year, obtain approval for their proposed program from the DUS. Students who think they may elect this program should consult the DUS as early as possible in their studies to begin suitable selection of courses.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

Students in both programs must write a senior essay under the supervision of a faculty adviser in the student's area of concentration. In selecting a senior essay topic, students normally choose a subject on which they have completed course work before commencing the senior year. The essay counts as two term courses toward the major and is taken in both terms of the senior year. The student should begin choosing a senior essay topic during the second term of the junior year, and early in the first term of the senior year must submit a Statement of Intention approved by a faculty adviser and the DUS. The senior essay course, RLST 491 and 492, includes research and

writing assignments as well as colloquia in which seniors present and discuss their research. The student must submit at least ten pages of the essay to the DUS by the last day of classes in the first term in order to receive a grade of "satisfactory" for that term.

ADVISING

Students majoring in Religious Studies who plan to do graduate work in the subject are strongly encouraged to study the languages that they will need for their graduate programs.

Courses in the Divinity School Some Divinity School courses may count toward the major, with permission of the DUS. Divinity School faculty are eligible to advise senior essays. Information about courses and faculty may be found in the Divinity School bulletin.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites None

Number of courses 12 term courses (incl senior req)

Specific course required RLST 490

Distribution of courses *Both programs* – 1 course in comparative religions; 3 courses in historical or textual study of religious traditions, as specified; 1 course in systematic thought, as specified; *Program I* – 4 electives, one of which is seminar as specified; *Program II* – 4 nonintro courses in another subject linked with senior essay, one of which may be seminar, approved by DUS

Substitution permitted *Both programs* – Divinity School courses, with DUS permission; *Program I* – 2 related courses in other depts, with DUS permission

Senior requirement Senior essay (RLST 491, 492)

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Professors Gerhard Böwering, Stephen Davis, Carlos Eire, Steven Fraade, Paul Franks, Bruce Gordon, Philip Gorski, Phyllis Granoff, Frank Griffel, John Hare, Christine Hayes, Noel Lenski, Kathryn Lofton, Ivan Marcus, Sally Promey, Harry Stout (*Chair*), Shawkat Toorawa, Robert Wilson

Associate Professors Zareena Grewal, Noreen Khawaja, Hwansoo Kim, Nancy Levene, Eliyahu Stern, Travis Zadeh

Assistant Professors Maria Doerfler, Eric Greene

Senior Lecturers John Grim, Margaret Olin, Mary Evelyn Tucker

Lecturers Jimmy Daccache, Supriya Gandhi, Stephen Latham

First-Year Seminars

* **RLST 012b / HUMS 092b, 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 017a, Authenticity** Noreen Khawaja

The origins of personal authenticity in Western thought and the impact of this idea on modern notions of truth, sincerity, and identity. The "true" self as a historical idea and as a social performance. Readings in philosophy, literature, and religious thought from antiquity to the present. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. HU

General, Comparative, and Thematic Courses (Group A)

RLST 100b / MMES 191b, Introduction to World Religions Gerhard Böwering

Introduction to the literature, ideals, concepts, practices, rituals, and institutions of four major world religions as they have appeared in history: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. A historical survey combined with a phenomenological treatment of principal topics. HU

* **RLST 107a / PHIL 192a, Metaphysics and Modernity** Nancy Levene

This course surveys concepts and controversies in and among select works of philosophy, theology, and literature. The focus is twofold: on reading works in view of their own principles, thus on questions of truth and interpretation, and on histories of the ideas, thus on questions of origin, change, and story. What and when is metaphysics? What and when is modernity? HU

RLST 158a / CLCV 129a / HIST 159a / HUMS 129a / NELC 326a, From Jesus to Muhammad Stephen Davis

The history of Christianity and the development of Western culture from Jesus to the early Middle Ages. The creation of orthodoxy and heresy; Christian religious practice; philosophy and theology; politics and society; gender; Christian literature in its various forms, up to and including the early Islamic period. HU

RLST 180a / HIST 342a / SAST 280a, Mughal India, 1500–1800 Supriya Gandhi

Exploration of religion and the state in Mughal India, focusing on the period between 1500–1800. Topics include sacred sovereignty, orthodoxy, Sufism, vernacular literary and religious cultures, and the early colonial encounter. HU

Surveys of Religious Traditions (Group B)**RLST 125a / EAST 125a / SAST 267a, Introduction to Buddhist Thought and Practice** Eric Greene

Significant aspects of Buddhism as practiced mainly in India and South Asia, including philosophy and ethics, monastic and ascetic life, meditation and ritual practices, and the material culture of Buddhist societies. The *Mahayana* tradition that emerged in the first century B.C.E.; later forms of esoteric Buddhism known as tantra; the development of modern Buddhism in Asia and its manifestation in the West. Readings from Buddhist texts in translation. HU

*** RLST 135b / EAST 335b, Zen Buddhism** Eric Greene

Survey of the history and teachings of Zen Buddhism in China and Japan. Emphasis on reading and interpretation of primary Zen texts in their historical and religious context, along with investigation of modern interpretations and appropriations of Zen in the West. HU

RLST 145a / HUMS 133a / JDST 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 147b / JDST 235b / MMES 235b / NELC 231b, Introduction to Judaism in the Ancient World** Steven Fraade

The emergence of classical Judaism in its historical setting. Jews and Hellenization; varieties of early Judaism; apocalyptic and postapocalyptic responses to suffering and catastrophe; worship and atonement without sacrificial cult; interpretations of scriptures; law and life; the rabbi; the synagogue; faith in reason; Sabbath and festivals; history and its redemption. No prior background in Jewish history assumed. HU

RLST 149b / HIST 220b / JDST 201b, Introduction to Modern Jewish History David Sorkin

A broad introduction to the history of Jewish culture from the late Middle Ages until the present. Emphasis on the changing interaction of Jews with the larger society as well as the transformation of Judaism in its encounter with modernity. HU

RLST 150b, The New Testament in History and Culture Zachary Smith

Introduction to historical development and cultural significance of the New Testament with special attention to material contexts ancient and modern. Focus on authorship and function of early Christian texts; interpretation and biblical criticism; and the use of New Testament in art, politics, theological debates, contemporary bible publishing, and museums. Includes trips to the Yale University Art Gallery and Beinecke Library. No prior study of New Testament required. 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

RLST 165b / MMES 138b / NELC 127b, Introduction to the Quran Travis Zadeh

Introduction to the study of the Quran. Topics include: the literary, historical, and theological reception of the Quran; its collection and redaction; the scriptural milieu of late antiquity; education and religious authority; ritual performance and calligraphic expression; the diversity of Muslim exegesis. HU

RLST 170a / MMES 192a, The Religion of Islam Gerhard Böwering

The rise of Islam in Arabia; Muhammad and the Qur'an; Muslim tradition and religious law; crucial issues of Islamic philosophy and theology; basic beliefs and practices of the Muslim community; Sufism and Shi'ism; religious institutions and modern trends; fundamentalism and violence; freedom and democracy. HU

Topics in Religious Studies (Group C)*** RLST 121a / EALL 296 / 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 183b / SAST 366b, The Bhagavad Gita** Hugh Flick

An examination of the Bhagavad Gita in its historical and religious context. Exploration of the major interpretations of this important religious text. All readings in translation. HU TR

* **RLST 184a / SAST 358a, The Ramayana** Hugh Flick

Exploration of the religious and ideological interpretations of this epic of ancient India as manifested in performance and in written texts. Emphasis on the religious and historical contexts from which the texts emerged. All readings in translation. HU TR

* **RLST 201a / HIST 232Ja / HUMS 443a / JDST 270a / MMES 342a, 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 214b / HIST 248Jb / JDST 293b, Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought** Eliyahu Stern

An overview of Jewish philosophical trends, movements, and thinkers from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first. Topics include enlightenment, historicism, socialism, secularism, religious radicalism, and Zionism. HU

* **RLST 233a / ENGL 346a / HUMS 253a, Poetry and Faith** Christian Wiman

Issues of faith examined through poetry, with a focus on modern Christian poems from 1850 to the present. Some attention to poems from other faith traditions, as well as to secular and antireligious poetry. HU

* **RLST 238b / JDST 282b / LITR 437b / SPAN 282b, Judeo-Spanish Culture, Language, and Literature** Allyson Gonzalez

This course explores the rich body of culture, language, and literature that emerged in the Sephardi (Judeo-Spanish) diaspora following the expulsion of Jews from Iberia in 1492, and continuing to the present. This course is taught in English. TR HU

RLST 245a / ARCG 244a / NELC 109a, The Age of Akhenaton John Darnell

Study of the period of the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaton (reigned 1353–1336 B.C.E.), often termed the Amarna Revolution, from historical, literary, religious, artistic, and archaeological perspectives. Consideration of the wider Egyptian, ancient Near Eastern, African, and Mediterranean contexts. Examination of the international diplomacy, solar theology, and artistic developments of the period. Reading of primary source material in translation. HU

* **RLST 249a / GMAN 254a / JDST 335a / PHIL 274a, Jewish Philosophy** Paul Franks

Introduction to Jewish philosophy, including classical rationalism of Maimonides, classical kabbalah, and Franz Rosenzweig's inheritance of both traditions. Critical examination of concepts arising in and from Jewish life and experience, in a way that illuminates universal problems of leading a meaningful human life in a multicultural and increasingly globalized world. No previous knowledge of Judaism is required. WR, HU

* **RLST 260a / AMST 451a / HIST 174Ja, Religion, War, and the Meaning of America** Harry Stout

The relationship between religion and war in American history from colonial beginnings through Vietnam. The religious meanings of Americans at war; the mutually reinforcing influences of nationalism and religion; war as the norm of American national life; the concept of civil religion; biblical and messianic contexts of key U.S. conflicts. HU

* **RLST 274a / HUMS 268a / PLSC 300a, Analyzing Antisemitism** Adam Stern

Analysis of the "longest hatred" from a historical as well as theoretical point of view; and the development of antisemitism and key manifestations from the ancient world to the present moment. Topics include how hatred of Jews relates to other forms of bigotry and prejudice; how antisemitism mutates in different times and places; antisemitism before the modern period; why antisemitism exists in countries that have no Jews; why antisemitism is once again on the rise around the world and how it can be combated.

RLST 283b / HIST 215b, Reformation Europe, 1450–1650 Carlos Eire

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

RLST 287a / MMES 391a, Islamic Theology and Philosophy Frank Griffel

Historical survey of major themes in Muslim theology and philosophy, from teachings of the Qur'an to contemporary Muslim thought. The systematic character of Muslim thought and of the arguments given by thinkers; reason vs. revelation; the emergence of Sunnism and Shi'ism; the reaction of Muslim theology (from 1800) to the challenges of the West. HU

* **RLST 291a / EP&E 273a / MMES 343a / SOCY 343a, Sociology of Islam** Jonathan Wrytzen

Social scientific studies of Islam; introduction to sociology of religion and its application to Islam; the utility of "Islam" and "Muslim" as analytical categories; debates about definitions of Islam and religion in anthropology and religious studies; comparative sociological studies both within Islam and contrasting Islam with other religions. SO

* **RLST 303b / PHIL 311b, The End of Metaphysics** Nancy Levene

Exploration of metaphysics in light of the supposition that it is at an end. Readings from classics and critics in the history of philosophy and religion. WR, HU

* **RLST 309a / AMST 327a / ER&M 393a / WGSS 280a, Religion and Capitalism** Lucia Hulsether

A comparative and interdisciplinary seminar exploring the religious qualities of capitalism and the economic qualities of religion. Topics include: consumer culture as religious practice; raced and gendered ethics of work; the legacy of Christianity for secular markets;

missionary humanitarianism and corporate social responsibility; images of diversity in global markets; technology, science, and the post-human; critiques of capitalism and alternative visions of freedom. Emphasis on critical race, feminist, and queer analysis. WR, HU

RLST 342b / AMST 234b / ER&M 243b / HIST 188b, Spiritual But Not Religious Zareena Grewal

Study of the historical and contemporary “unchurching” trends in American religious life in a comparative perspective and across different scales of analysis in order to think about the relationship between spirituality, formal religion, secular psychology and the self-help industry. HU, SO

* **RLST 347b / HIST 287Jb / SOCY 331b / WGSS 291b, Sexual Minorities from Plato to the Enlightenment** Igor De Souza

This interdisciplinary course surveys the history of homosexuality from a cross-cultural, comparative perspective. Students study contexts where homosexuality and sodomy were categorized, regulated, and persecuted and examine ancient and medieval constructions of same-sex desire in light of post-modern developments, challenging ideas around what is considered normal and/or natural. Ultimately, we ask: what has changed, and what has remained the same, in the history of homosexuality? What do gays and lesbians today have in common with pre-modern sodomites? Can this history help us ground or rethink our sexual selves and identities? Primary and secondary historical sources, some legal and religious sources, and texts in intellectual history are studied. Among the case studies for the course are ancient attitudes among Jews, early Christians, and Greeks; Christian theologians of the Middle Ages; Renaissance Florence; the Inquisition in Iberia; colonial Latin America; and the Enlightenment’s condemnation of sodomy by Montesquieu and Voltaire, and its defense by Bentham. HU

* **RLST 355a / ARCG 311a / ARCG 611a / CLCV 389a / CLSS 811a / NELC 389a / NELC 611a / RLST 833a, The Ancient Egyptian Temple as Cosmos: Correlation of Architecture and Decoration Program** Christina Geisen

The course focuses on the correlation of archaeology, iconography, and philology by analyzing ancient Egyptian temples under the specific consideration of the interplay of architecture and decoration program. The different types of temples and their developments over time are discussed. The main focus is the function of each temple type, which can only be understood by analyzing the architecture of the monument, its decoration program, related texts (such as rituals, myths, and festival description, but also historical texts), and its place in the cultic landscape of the specific location. The class also provides an overview of rituals performed and festivals celebrated in the temples, as well as of the administrative sphere of the temple. Optional field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to see the Temple of Dendur. No previous knowledge of ancient Egyptian culture or languages is necessary; all texts are read in translation. HU

* **RLST 357b / EAST 392b / WGSS 359b, Buddhism and Sexuality** Hwansoo Kim

Critical examination of the relation of religion and sexuality with special attention to Buddhism. Discussion of religious interpretations of sex, sexuality, and gender; the codification and normalization of these rules through texts, symbols, and practices; and recent challenges to these interpretations. Topics include homosexuality, same-sex marriage, abortion, contraception, gender equality, clerical marriage, married clerics' wives, and clerical sexual abuse. Draws on religious theory, gender theory, and critical theory. Places Buddhism in conversation with Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. HU

* **RLST 368b / EVST 368b / HIST 491Jb / HSHM 479b, The History of the Earth from Noah to Darwin** Ivano Dal Prete

Young earth creationism and flood geology have long been among the most divisive features of American culture and politics. Yet a basic postulate is shared across the spectrum: for better or worse, the old age of the Earth is regarded as the recent product of a secular science, consistently rejected by traditional Christianity. This seminar challenges this long-established narrative, by uncovering the surprising boldness, complexity, and societal diffusion of pre-modern debates on the history of the Earth, and of humankind itself. Students have opportunity to explore the nature, assumptions, and methods of Earth sciences before the advent of modern geology, to question ingrained assumptions about their relation to religion and society, and to place outstanding issues into historical perspective. How have the great monotheistic religions dealt with the possibility of an ancient Earth? Was a young creation always important in traditional Christianity? If not, what led to the emergence of young Earth creationism as a force to be reckoned with? What are the intellectual roots of American preadamism, which claims that the black and white races were created at different times and do not descend from the same ancestor? These and other questions are addressed not only through scholarly literature in the field, but also with the analysis of literary, visual, and material sources available on campus. WR, HU

* **RLST 370a / EP&E 401a / HUMS 325a, Law, Morality, and Religion** Andrew Forsyth

The relationship – if any – between law, morality, and religion. Topics include the twentieth-century jurisprudential debate on law and morality; debates on law’s relationship to reason and will, flourishing and restraint, in the “Western” tradition from antiquity to early modernity; and the U.S. Constitution and debates over free exercise and establishment of religion. HU

RLST 375b, Hindu Nationalism Supriya Gandhi

This course analyzes the development of Hindu nationalism from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Students interrogate the emergence of Hinduism as a religion, before exploring the reform and revivalist movements in the nineteenth century that paved the way for the articulation of Hindu nationalism. Students also read from key writings of several Hindu nationalist thinkers of the twentieth century and investigate the historical and social contexts leading to the emergence of Hindu nationalism as a major political force. Topics include: colonialism, modernity, the idea of Hinduism, nationalist ideologies, gender, and religious violence. HU, SO

Advanced Topics in Religious Studies (Group D)

RLST 402a / PHIL 326a, The Philosophy of Religion John Hare

The relation between religion and ethics, traditional arguments for the existence of God, religious experience, the problem of evil, miracles, immortality, science and religion, and faith and reason. HU

* **RLST 405a / JDST 392a / NELC 382a, Mishnah Seminar: Tractate Sanhedrin** Steven Fraade

Close study of a section of the Mishnah, the earliest digest of Jewish law, treating religious courts and their jurisprudential practice. Dual attention to the historical significance of the institutions of law represented and to the cultural significance of the rhetoric of that representation. Consideration of the textual practices of rabbinic legal discourse in relation to its social function, as well as to the interplay of law and narrative. Prerequisite: reading fluency in ancient Hebrew. L5, HU

* **RLST 407a / JDST 391a / NELC 381a, Midrash Seminar: The Exodus from Egypt** Steven Fraade

The Exodus from Egypt as seen through rabbinic eyes. Close readings of the early rabbinic commentary (midrash), Mekhilta, to the narrative of Exodus 13:17ff (the lection Beshallah). Particular attention to the methods and language of rabbinic exegesis and to the rhetorical interplay of tradition and scriptural commentary. Interpretations and interpretive strategies compared and contrasted with those of other ancient biblical exegetes (Jewish and non-Jewish), where available. Prerequisite: reading fluency in ancient Hebrew. L5, HU

* **RLST 422b / EGYPT 147b, Egyptian Monastic Literature in Coptic** Stephen Davis

Readings in the early Egyptian classics of Christian asceticism in Sahidic Coptic, including the desert Fathers and Shenute. Prerequisite: EGYPT 127 or equivalent. Counts as L4 if taken after EGYPT 137 or equivalent. L3

* **RLST 423a / EGYPT 137a, Gnostic Texts in Coptic** Harold Attridge

Reading, translation, and analysis of Gnostic and Valentinian literature from Nag Hammadi, in several dialects of Coptic. Prerequisite: EGYPT 127 or equivalent. Counts as L4 if taken after EGYPT 147 or equivalent. L3

* **RLST 427a / HIST 378Ja / MMES 139a, Islam, Conquest, and Conversion** Travis Zadeh

Through examination of conquest and religious conversion in the formative periods of Islamic history this course interrogates the idea that Islam was spread by violent domination. Case studies are drawn from the Middle East, South and South East Asia, the Indian Ocean, Iberia, and West Africa. HU

* **RLST 450a / JDST 219a / PHIL 403a, Spinoza and the God of the Bible** Nancy Levene

This course considers Spinoza's metaphysics and social and political thought in light of a family of problems named religion: the concept of God, the relations among politics, divine law, and their institutions, the value of Judaism and Christianity, and the interpretation of the Bible. We read from Spinoza's principal works as well as from the Bible and a few other thinkers, medieval and modern, in conceptual proximity to Spinoza. HU

Other Courses

* **RLST 489b, 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 490b, Religion and Society** Noreen Khawaja

Seminar on religion in its social formations. Issues include different concepts of social life, the operation of violence in social relationships, and religion as both champion and critic of society.

* **RLST 491a or b and RLST 492a or b, The Senior Essay** Staff

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.