AREA V: COMPARATIVE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Courses in this area are grouped as follows. *Comparative Studies:* The exploration of non-Christian traditions with special emphasis on comparative religious questions. *Philosophy of Religion:* The study of conceptual issues that bear upon method in theology and ethics, the philosophical clarification of religious concepts and categories, and the examination of philosophical worldviews that are alternatives to traditional Christian perspectives. *Religion and the Arts:* Studies concerning the nature of human imagination in visual, literary, and musical forms that have shaped the religious life and its cultural expression, both within and outside the Christian church. The inquiry is normally undertaken within the context of ministry. *Study of Society:* The employment of normative and social-scientific tools to comprehend and bring under ethical and theological scrutiny societal institutions (including religious ones) and ideational patterns.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES

REL 924a, Foundations of Islam: Understanding Muslim Tradition, Practice, and Encounter Abdul-Rehman Malik

What is Islam? This course provides a comprehensive introduction to understanding and engaging with Islamic tradition, practice, and culture that will enable students to offer answers to this far-from-straightforward question. In particular, the course engages with Islam as a living tradition—a vibrant faith that is constantly and dynamically being developed, challenged, practiced, and lived. Three core themes run through the course: tradition, practice, and encounter. The course is especially designed to provide M.Div. and M.A.R. students with the language, vocabulary, terminology, foundational knowledge, and perspectives to begin—or further—their study and engagement with Islamic theology, texts, and ideas in particular, and with Muslim life in general. Special attention is paid to how Islam has developed—and is developing—in the United States, particularly through the lenses of liberation theologies, gender, and race. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 940b, The Chinese Theologians Chloe Starr

This course examines select readings from Chinese church and academic theologians (including Hong Kong writers and diaspora voices) to explore the nature of Chinese Christian thought. The readings cover late imperial Roman Catholic writers, early republican Protestant thinkers, high communist-era church theologians, and contemporary Sino-Christian academic theologians. Students read primary materials in English, supplemented by background studies and lecture material to help make sense of the theological constructions that emerge. The course encourages reflection on the challenges for Christian theology and life in a communist context, on the tensions between church and state in the production of theologies, and on the challenges that Chinese Christianity poses for global Christian thought. Area V and Area II. 3 Course cr

REL 941b, Chinese and Japanese Christian Literature Chloe Starr

What effect did Christianity have on modern Chinese literature, and what sort of Christianity emerges from Chinese Christian literature? Is Endō Shusakū the only

Japanese Christian writer (and does Martin Scorsese's film do justice to Endō's novel *Silence*)? This course tackles such questions by tracing the development of a Christian literature in China and Japan from late Imperial times to the beginning of the twenty-first century, with particular focus on the heyday (in China) of the 1920s and '30s, and on the Japanese side, on Endō's postwar novels. Using texts available in English, the course examines how Christian ideas and metaphors permeated the literary—and revolutionary—imagination in East Asia. Though rarely clearly in evidence, the influence of Christianity on Chinese literature came directly through the Bible and church education and indirectly through translated European and Western literature. The course tests the aesthetic visions and construction of the human being from texts set among Japanese samurai in Mexico to the revolutionary throes of modern China. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 942b, Islam at the Intersections: Readings in Liberation, Race, Gender, and Sexuality Abdul-Rehman Malik

How does the Islamic tradition address race, gender, sexuality, and power? In what ways does that tradition see itself as a means for spiritual, social, political, and economic liberation, seeking the establishment of just, merciful, and compassionate societies? How do contemporary Muslim theologians, thinkers, scholars, and jurists interrogate and engage the classical tradition at these "intersections"? How are Muslims asserting their faith through the expression of these often overlapping identities? These are the key lines of inquiry this course pursues. It is designed as a survey course—comprehensive, not exhaustive. We engage with Islam as a living tradition, a vibrant faith that is constantly and dynamically being developed, challenged, practiced, and lived. The course also provides thoughtful insights into current theological debates and discussions and seeks to center the work of those who are often marginalized by "dominant" discourses and theological formulations. Although the course has no prerequisites, students would benefit from prior introductory coursework in Islamic theology and/or tradition. Area V. 3 Course cr

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

REL 910a, Philosophy of Religion John Pittard

This course is a general introduction to the philosophy of religion, including such topics as classical and contemporary arguments for the existence of God, the problem of evil, the significance of religious experience, the relationship between faith and reason, possible tensions between science and religion, whether God is important to morality, and the possibility of life after death. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 929b, Theology of Plato and Aristotle John Hare

This course explores Plato's and Aristotle's views of the divine. Students read most of the important work of both philosophers on this topic. One aim of the course is to think about these philosophers as sources, sometimes congenial and sometimes not, for Christian reflection on a range of questions including the relation between goodness and the divine, the nature of the soul, the origin or lack of origin of the cosmos, and the relation between happiness and virtue. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 998a, Recent Work in Analytic Philosophy of Religion John Pittard and Keith DeRose

An advanced seminar engaging state-of-the-art work in analytic philosophy of religion, with attention given to both traditional questions and areas of emerging interest.

Possible topics include theodicy, alternatives to traditional theism and naturalism, fine-tuning arguments, creation ethics, skeptical worries facing various religious and nonreligious outlooks, and norms pertaining to religious hope and commitment. Area V. 3 Course cr

RELIGION AND THE ARTS

REL 900a, Sacred Sounds: Key Issues in the Ethnomusicology of Religion Bo kyung Im

How and why do religious practitioners around the world engage in the sonic dimensions of lived experience? What local, regional, and global histories impinge upon meanings that obtain in sacred music practices? This course examines the intersections between modern sonic and religious practice. First, we consider why, indeed, the whole world doesn't love chamber music and interrogate the ways in which various ontological and epistemic claims are forwarded in the planning, experience, and interpretation of sonic-religious practice. Thereafter, by addressing case studies that span both northern and southern hemispheres, the course engages key themes in the ethnomusicological and anthropological study of music and religion. Through topics such as music and postcolonialism, modernity, gender and sexuality, history, ritual, postsecularism, communication and technology, labor, and diaspora, discussions center the role of power in shaping the conditions under which truth is experienced on two interconnected levels: in "the field" where events themselves happen, and "at home" where events are interpreted and rendered into academic prose. Throughout the term, our learning community carves out intellectual space to consider the faith claims to which ethnomusicological interlocutors bear witness. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 943a, Gospel, Rap, and Social Justice: Prison and the Arts Ronald Jenkins

Students in this course collaborate with currently and/or formerly incarcerated musicians and other justice-impacted individuals to create performances inspired by their collective reading of Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow,* and a variety of texts documenting the impact of the carceral state on communities of color. Students learn how to apply the arts to community service and activism as they investigate the American criminal justice system and its relevance to Dante's poem from a social justice perspective. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 945a / MDVL 663a, From House Churches to Medieval Cathedrals: Christian Art and Architecture to the End of Gothic Orgu Dalgic

This course examines the art associated with, or related to, Christianity from its origins to the end of Gothic. It analyzes major artistic monuments and movements in a variety of regions, paying particular attention to how art shapes and is shaped by the social and historical circumstances of the period and culture. The class considers art in diverse media, focusing on painting, sculpture, architecture, and decorative arts. Trips to the Yale Art Gallery and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library are included. The course aims to familiarize students with key monuments of Christian architecture, sculpture, painting, and related arts, analyzing each within its particular sociocultural and theological perspective. The course stresses the importance of looking at works of art closely and in context and encourages students to develop skills of close observation and critical visual analysis. Additionally, students are encouraged to examine the ways parallel developments in Christian theology, dogma, and liturgy are influenced by art. Area V and Area III. 3 Course cr

REL 947a, Contemporary Worship Music: Commerce, Style, and Ethics Bo kyung Im

What is "contemporary worship music"? Why do twenty-first-century Christians sing it? What ethical debates inform church communities' adoption or rejection of contemporary worship music practices? This graduate seminar interrogates the relationship between commerce, style, and ethics in contemporary worship music. We address case studies from early twenty-first-century North America, Oceania, and the United Kingdom from a transnational framework that highlights the asymmetrical circulation of musico-religious ideas, practices, capital, and people in the global political-economy. Reading across scholarly fields such as music studies, liturgical studies, and ritual studies, we critically examine this subgenre of global popular music from both historical and ethnographic perspectives. The first part of the course historicizes contemporary worship music and introduces critical themes. The second part of the course focuses on influential contemporary worship groups including Hillsong, Passion, Bethel, Elevation Worship, and Maverick City. We consider the roles that competing definitions of "the good," sacred and secular constructs, race and ethnicity, imperialism, commerce, embodiment, and aesthetics play in power-inflected processes of self-making and community-building in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century global Christianity. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 963a, Literature of Trauma David Mahan

How can literary art respond to extreme suffering, particularly when it involves the trauma of large-scale violence and oppression, which seems to defy aesthetic response? How can literary artists fulfill a summons to bear witness and remember without vitiating the apparent senselessness of human atrocity? How do theological responses to trauma interact with those made by creative writers? This course examines these and other questions through the works of poets and novelists responding to the traumas of war (WWI poetry), genocide (Holocaust poetry and fiction), and historic violence and oppression (African American, Latin American/Latinx, and Native American/Indigenous Peoples poetry and fiction). This is not a course in clinical psychology or pastoral theology, though our themes relate to these disciplines. The class focuses on the literary-critical and theological issues that arise through close reading of these texts. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 971a, Creative Faith: Prose Christian Wiman

An assumption of the course is that the act of creating and the act of believing are intimately related. Indeed, for many artists they are inseparable. Students work on essays throughout the semester, with specific guidelines from instructor. This course is part seminar and part workshop. Half of the time is devoted to the reading and analysis of modern essays and half to discussing work done by students in the class. Students should have some background with creative writing, though formal instruction is not necessary. Instructor may be contacted directly to address questions/hesitations about enrolling in the course. Enrollment limited to twelve. Admission is at the discretion of the instructor. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 975a, Bach Among the Theologians Markus Rathey

Johann Sebastian Bach has occasionally been called "The Fifth Evangelist" and his music is often viewed as an expression of deep theological insight and devotion. But what does that actually mean? How does Bach's music relate to the religious and devotional traditions of his time? Was Bach indeed exceptional in that regard? The

course explores the religious landscape of Bach's time and demonstrate how Bach's music relates to the contemporary trends in theology and private devotion. The basis for the course is a new theological Bach reader (translated and edited by Markus Rathey), which makes accessible important theological documents from Bach's religious environment. The first half of the course provides a broad overview of central theological topics and their representation in Bach's music. In the second half, we explore selected cantatas and their relationship to the sermons and devotional texts from theologians who served with Bach in eighteenth-century Leipzig. Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 982b, Literature of Enchantment David Mahan
What does it mean to be enchanted? We think of states of awe, wonder, marvel, rhapsody, and epiphany, but also of strangeness, even bewitchment. What are the sources of enchantment? What makes experiences of it desirable, or dangerous? How does it relate to *dis*enchantment, as some have labeled our modern age? Are we in need of *re*-enchantment as moderns, or perennially as humans? What role does enchantment play in our sense of self and society, in our philosophical or religious outlooks? In this course we explore these questions and the many modes and moods of enchantment through the literary imagination. As resistant to a fixed definition as enchantment itself, literature of enchantment spans various genres: from fairy tales, fantasy, and science fiction, to allegory, myth, magical realism, surrealism, and blends of these elements in other forms. The works of fiction we study include those that both enchant us and are about enchantment, along with its corollaries of disenchantment and re-enchantment. One of our guiding questions from this study considers how the pursuit or experience of enchantment illuminates what it means to be human and challenges our perception of the real. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 992a, Art and Ritual at Mount Sinai—Travel Seminar Vasileios Marinis and Robert Nelson
This course looks at art and ecclesiastical and pilgrimage rituals at the monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai. Founded by Emperor Justinian on a site already venerated by Christians as the place where, supposedly, Moses encountered the Burning Bush, the monastery is one of the oldest continuously inhabited Christian communities in the world. Its holdings of icons have no parallel and offer the opportunity to study Christian imagery in the context of both devotional use and corporate rituals, if not place of origin. This course introduces various aspects of Orthodox liturgy and religious pilgrimage relevant to the explication of the surviving church arts at the monastery and the surrounding area. Area III and Area V. 3 Course cr

STUDY OF SOCIETY

REL 918a, Language and Social Justice in Religious Spaces Peter Grund
Language is intimately connected to issues of identity, power, and social hierarchies: language use can act to include people in or exclude them from communities and resources, and language varieties are evaluated differently with positive effects for some users and negative for others. Despite these differential social evaluations and impacts, language is often ignored in discussions of discrimination and social justice. In this course, focusing on English and especially Christian communities and spaces, we explore the importance of centering language in discussions of access, equity, inclusion, and belonging. As we do so, we draw on scholarship from a broad range of contexts to see how they apply to language issues in religious spaces, whether spaces

of worship, workplaces, or schools. We work to develop appropriate knowledge, tools, and language to have well-informed, evidence-based discussions about the English language and social justice, and we explore avenues and mechanisms to address linguistic inequities. These tools and skills can be adapted to any interest whether religious/congregational, nonprofit, educational, creative, linguistic, literary, or others. The final project is open to a number of different formats, including creative work, manuals or information sheets, and research papers. No prior coursework or knowledge of language studies is necessary. Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 997a, Black Religion, Black Thought Braxton Shelley and Todne Thomas
This co-taught course attends to the theory-making of Black religious practitioners, analyzing a host of ritual phenomena to uncover emic theorizations of space, materiality, voice, text, and belief itself. Course participants engage primary source texts, theoretical and methodological pieces in religious studies/ethics/theology and black studies to more thoroughly contemplate modalities of Black religious and spiritual knowledge. Though the course is grounded in African American Christian studies, it also pushes against these boundaries to explore Africana religious and spiritual formations throughout the African Diaspora. Area V. 3 Course cr