

RELIGION STUDIES SPRING 2024

REL 040

Is God Dead? (REMOTE ONLY) Prof. Chris Driscoll (MW, 10:45AM-12:00PM)

Is God Dead? Some people think so. Do you? Come decide for yourself. This course looks at the idea of god in Western philosophy and theology, with particular attention to death of god movement(s), and the changing shape of these movements in light of culture wars and identity politics. The course surveys key thinkers to ask questions about the origins, functions, and future of god and gods in the contemporary world. Posed as an ongoing question-Is god dead?

REL 066

Religion and the Paranormal (4) (REMOTE ONLY) Prof. Chris Driscoll (MW 3:00-4:15pm)

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UFOs. Bigfoot. Ghosts. Cattle Mutilations. Life after Death. Angels and Demonic possession. Psychics, Telepathy, and other "Stuff They Don't Want You to Know." Is any of this stuff real? What does "real" mean, anyway? Ask an "experiencer" and the answer is surely yes, but ask a skeptic and it is all make believe. Some of the most well-known religious leaders, and many scholars of religion, too, focus attention on what today we call the paranormal. Debates about the paranormal offer a wonderful window into the study of religion, and the issue of how we understand and study human experience. Are our experiences shared? And if not, are they credible? Are you a believer? And, if so, in what? "The truth is out there," so come join us as we search for it in Religion and the Paranormal.

REL 095 Love (4) HU Prof. Lloyd Steffen (TR, 3:00-4:15PM)

This course will investigate the many sides of love, examining the ways philosophers, psychologists, creative writers, religious thinkers, and all manner of students of the human condition have thought about love, myths about love, and the various forms of love, including affection, friendship, erotic love, self-love and impersonal divine love (agape). Attention will be given to love as an emotion, the role of feelings, its relation to compassion and sympathy. To be examined are the ways love is associated with beauty, healing, completeness, even defining, for some, God while also playing a dynamic role in false hopes, illusions, self-deception, and human tragedy.

REL/JST 121

Sources for the Life of Jesus: The Jewish and Christian Context (4) Prof. Ben Wright (TR, 10:45AM-12:00PM) ΗU

Ancient sources that claim to provide information about Jesus of Nazareth. Approaches taken to Jesus' life and career; early Christian interpretations of the significance of Jesus; methodology in assessing evidence for the historical Jesus and his message.

Prof. Michael Raposa (TR, 9:20-10:35AM)

A critical look, from a philosophical perspective, at some fundamental problems of religion: The nature of religious experience and belief, reason and revelation, the existence and nature of God, the problem of evil, and religious truth.

REL 125 Comparative Religious Ethics (4) Prof. Khurram Hussain (MW, 1:35-2:50PM))

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How have thinkers within the three major Abrahamic traditions handled ethical questions and dilemmas throughout history? This course will focus on many issues including but not limited to violence and pacifism, debates concerning revelation versus reason, the different accounts of justice and peace, the nature of scripture and the divine. We will look comparatively both within and across these traditions.

REL/JST/PHIL/HMS 151 Judaism, Medicine, and Bioethics (4) Prof. Hartley Lachter (MW, 1:35-2:50PM)

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This class traces the relationship between Jews and medicine from 1100 to 2020. How does Jewish religion and culture cultivate an affinity for the healing arts? How does Jewish law, ethics, and culture inform contemporary bioethics?

REL/JST 152 American Judaism (4) Prof. Jodi Eichler-Levine (MW, 10:45-12:00)

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Diverse cultural and social forms through which American Jews express their distinct identity. Is American Jewry an example of assimilation and decline or creative transformation? What, if anything, do American Jews share in common? Compatibility of Judaism with individualism, pluralism, and voluntarism. How have the Holocaust and the State of Israel shaped the self-understanding of American Jewry?

REL 187 Science, Technology and the Religious Imagination (4) HU Prof. Michael Raposa (TR, 3:00-4:15PM)

Impact of the scientific and technological culture on the Western religious imagination. Roots of science and technology in religious ideas and images. Ways of knowing and concepts of experience in religion and science.

REL/ASIA/GS 196 The Culture of the Book: Art, Power and the Sacred (4) HU Prof. Annabella Pitkin / Prof. Ben Wright (TR, 3:00-4:15)

This class explores the material culture of religious writings and illustrations in amulets, scrolls, manuscripts, paintings, books, and related objects from time periods ranging from antiquity to the present day, and from regions including East, South and Southeast Asia, the Himalayas, the Middle East, North and East Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Students in this class will investigate core questions about some of the most treasured items in the religious life of communities around the world. These questions include, What is a text? Is it written, oral, both? Who can be said to "own" a sacred scripture? What makes an oral or written text religiously meaningful? How can religious scriptures be interpreted?

How are scrolls, amulets, books and related items crafted, stored, and used? This is a discussion-based seminar, with a museum activity and several hands-on and reflective assignments.

REL/JST 197 Messiah: Judaism and the End of History (4) HU Prof. Hartley Lachter (MW, 3:00-4:15PM)

The Jewish concept of a Messiah, or a divinely designated redeemer who will restore the lost kingdom of Israel, has played an outsized role in western culture. Since the rise of Christianity in the ancient world, the question of who the messiah is has been hotly contested. This course will explore the roots of this idea, and consider how Jewish approaches to the Messiah have evolved and changed over time, up to and including contemporary American culture. We will also consider how the Jewish notion of a messianic redeemer has informed ideas about the course - and destiny - of human history in western societies.

REL 198 Religion in Global Contexts (4) HU Dr. Minjung Noh (MW, 12:10-1:25PM)

Serving primarily as an introduction to the academic study of religion, this course surveys some of the most influential theories in the field and employs them to analyze substantive examples of two of the most prevalent and enduring aspects of human culture: religion and society. A wide range of religious traditions, movements, experiences, and personalities will be carefully discussed. This exploration will not only teach us how religion is studied but also what it amounts to in its various forms, from the practices of our earliest ancestors in Africa and Australia to the rich East Asian traditions and the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania. Recognizing the significance of human imagination and how fictional literature and film can sometimes convey a truer "sense" of religion than conventional scholarly work, we will draw examples from novels, feature films, historical, sociological, and anthropological articles on the subject.

REL/ASIA/ETH/EVST 254 Buddhism and Ecology (4) HU, WRIT Prof. Annabella Pitkin (TR, 12:10-1:25PM)

Buddhism's intellectual, ethical, and spiritual resources are reexamined in light of contemporary environmental problems. Is Buddhism the most green of the major world religions? What are the moral implications of actions that affect the environment?