Major and Minor in Religious Studies: If you are interested in more information about a major or minor, you are encouraged to talk to any of the religious studies faculty. Complete information about the major and minor is available on the department web site: religiousstudies.uncc.edu/undergraduate-studies

RELS 1200.001: World Religions - A study of the historical origins, central teachings, and devotional practices of the major religious traditions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—alongside those of smaller and newer religious movements.
   Ashley Zulovitz/MW 12:30-1:45/Cultural or Historical Analysis

RELS 2000.001: “Evil” in Popular Indian Religious Traditions - An introduction to supernatural entities found on the Indian subcontinent. Throughout this course students will discover that ghosts and demons are not mere peripheral religious figures in India but instead are powerful forces that inform and confront dominant religious orthodoxies. Topics will include material from ancient texts to modern folklore and will cover a wide range of topics including the historical and religious development of ghosts and demons; conceptions of the body and popular beliefs about what transpires after death; ritual practices used to beckon or repulse these entities; and possessions, exorcisms, and communalism.
   Ashley Zulovitz/MW 2:00-3:15/Cultural or Textual Analysis

RELS 2000.002: Religion and Ecology - This course examines the historical and current interrelationships between the natural environment and religion. We will explore how indigenous, eastern, and western religious worldviews have each provided unique and sometimes similar lenses for viewing human responsibilities towards the earth and how, in this way, they have also shaped human interaction with the earth. Special attention is paid to how religious folk are reinterpreting their mythologies, reinventing their rituals, and revising their ideologies in order to engage in more sustainable relationships with the earth and its diverse forms of life.
   Tina Katsanos/WF 12:30-1:45/Cultural or Textual Analysis

RELS 2000.003: Martyrs, Heretics and Protestants: Religious Conflict in the West – When people think about religion it may evoke benevolent images of prayerfulness, faith, devotion, and worship. In this course we will consider a darker side of religion: conflict, sometimes violent, sometimes not. This course will survey the major conflicts of religions in the West, from the beginning of the Common Era to the Protestant Reformation, including persecutions, doctrinal debates, heresies, inquisitions, crusades, inter-faith conflicts, and reform movements.
   Hugh Goforth/TR 3:30-4:45/Cultural or Textual Analysis

RELS 2000.004: Creationism - This course is about the recurrent rejection of human evolution in favor of Biblical literalism over the last century and a half. We will explore the history of creationism and its implications for science and theology. Various versions of creationism will be presented, including natural theology, young-earth creationism, old-earth creationism, intelligent design, and non-Christian origin narratives. We will discuss various interpretations of Genesis and of evolution, what constitutes science, what constitutes religion, and their contested zones of overlap.
   Joanne Robinson/MW 2:00-3:15/Cultural or Historical Analysis
RELS 2102.001: Introduction to Asian Religions - An introduction to Hinduism, Buddhism, and other selected religions such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Islam. Emphasis on the myths, stories, symbols, rituals, ideas, and ethical practices of these religions in their classical formulations and in their contemporary practices.
   Janna Shedd/TR 2:00-3:15/Cultural or Textual Analysis

   Barbara Thiede/Online/Textual or Historical Analysis

   Chip Trammell/R 12:30-3:15/Textual or Historical Analysis

RELS 2110.001: Judaism - The development of Jewish religious thought from antiquity to the present.
   Barbara Thiede/MW 2:00-3:15/Textual or Historical Analysis

RELS 2131.001: Islam - The development of the traditions in Islam with emphasis on Islamic culture, literature, and mysticism.
   Kathryn Johnson/TR 12:30-1:45/Textual or Historical Analysis

RELS 2216.001: The Modern Middle East - An introduction to the history of this important and dynamic region. The course focuses on the issues that have defined the Middle East in the recent past and provides students with the historical context needed to understand the region, its peoples, and its conflicts in greater depth.
   Kathryn Johnson/TR 9:30-10:45/Cultural or Historical Analysis

RELS 2600.001: Approaches to Religious Studies - Required of all majors as early in their program as possible. Examines basic concepts, theories, and approaches that are involved in the critical, academic study of religion. Attention given to basic research materials and to standard writing practices in the discipline.
   Julia Robinson/W 3:30-6:15/Prerequisite: Religious Studies Major

RELS 3000.001: Sectarian Conflict – This course will investigate the origins of Sunni/Shi’i sectarian differences in Islam and how doctrinal differences are now being exploited to intensify multiple conflicts in the Middle East.
   Kathryn Johnson/TR 3:30-4:45/Cultural, Historical, or Textual Analysis

RELS 3000.002: God and Sex - Discussion of sexual boundaries, narratives of sexual abuse and sexual violence, tales of an apparent erotic eden – it’s all to be found in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. This course will discuss sexuality and gender in biblical literature and culture. Our topics will include God’s own sexual relationships to prohibited, apparently prohibited and permitted sexual relationships among humans. We will look at texts of terror and texts of amatory idylls. Our sources will include primary texts, midrashim discussions on the same, and academic commentaries.
   Barbara Thiede/MW 12:30-1:45/Cultural, Historical, or Textual Analysis

RELS 3000.003: God, Gangsta Rap, and Popular Culture - For many people, hip-hop and religion are incompatible. Hip-hop seems to be defined by materialism, greed, violence, sexism, and a general rejection of sacred ideals and values. In this course, we shall challenge these assumptions. We
will examine aspects of hip-hop (rap lyrics, video images, cultural rituals) that express religious commitments and sensibilities. We will ask questions like: Why do some rappers invoke God while talking about violence and sex? What does it mean to say that gangsta rappers are “religious” even if they reject institutionalized religions? How do rap artists use religious ideas and tropes in ways that both reinforce and challenge power structures? What is the relationship between hip-hop’s obsession with displaying wealth and the popularity of the prosperity gospel? The final section of the course will look closely at our culture’s fascination with Tupac and the redemptive function of his persona, music, and specter.

Joe Winters/TR 11:00-12:15/Cultural or Textual Analysis

**RELS 3000.004: Mahayana Buddhism** - A study of the schools, practices, beliefs, texts and major figures of the Northern forms of Buddhism.

Janna Shedd/TR 11:00-12:15/Cultural or Textual Analysis/Writing intensive

**RELS 3000.005: Bollywood and Religion** - This course will examine how “Bollywood” – the world’s largest cinema industry – portrays and reveals key aspects of religious traditions found on the Indian subcontinent. Religious experiences and perspectives with regards to communalism, caste politics, gender constructs, and family structures are just some of the topics that will be analyzed. Knowledge of any South Asian language is not required as all films will have English subtitles.

Ashley Zulovitz/MW 3:30-4:45/Cultural or Textual Analysis

**RELS 3116.001: Paul** - A close study of the writings of the apostle Paul in their historical contexts with consideration of the ways in which they played a role in the development of the emerging Christian movement.

Chip Trammell/R 3:30-6:15/Historical or Textual Analysis

**RELS 3163.001: The Religious Art and Architecture of India** - The visual art of Hindus, Buddhists, Jainas, and Muslims in the architecture, paintings, and sculptures of India.

Dan White/MW 9:30-10:45/Cultural or Historical Analysis

**RELS 3210.001: Religion and Popular Culture** - An examination of the interactions and intertwining of religion and popular culture. Topics may include, but are not limited to, popular literature, domestic rituals, material and visual cultures, space and place, fan cultures, media, and folklore. Emphasis on how religion and popular culture shape and are shaped by issues of identity, community, nostalgia, memory, commercialism, capitalism, power, and meaning.

Sean McCloud/TR 11:00-12:15/Cultural or Textual Analysis

**RELS 3213.090: Jesus on the Silver Screen** - An examination of cinematic representations of Jesus with attention to their relation to the historical, social and political circumstances of their production and to ongoing conversation about the character, meaning and significance of the Jesus story.

Kent Brintnall/T 6:30-9:15/Cultural or Textual Analysis

**RELS 4000.001: Early Mythologies of Evil** - A consideration of a number of influential myths within ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern religions about the genesis and proliferation of malicious entities and practices in human society. Was there a time when ‘evil’ did not exist? If so, who or what is responsible for its appearance? After some initial orientation, the bulk of the course will concentrate on a close reading and analysis of a variety of literary remains, including (but not necessarily limited to) portions of Bible, the Dead Sea scrolls, apocryphal writings and apocalypses, reports from Christian church fathers, Qur’ān, and later Jewish, Christian, and Muslim esoterica.

John Reeves/ F 11:00-1:45/Historical or Textual Analysis
**RELS 4000.002: The Violence of Hope** - It would seem that hope is the most basic desire. And, as a desire for a better, more just, more equitable future, it would seem that it is a commendable desire, or at the very least, a neutral one. The Christian tradition lists hope among the primary virtues; virtually all religious traditions seek to make plausible some form of longing for transformation, restoration, healing. In addition, it would seem that hope is a necessary resource for marginalized and oppressed groups struggling for recognition and respect. Yet hope—especially when linked to a desire for recognition and respect—often enables the order of things to stay in place; it all too often attaches us to narratives, arrangements, and identities that are funded by violence, exclusion, and hierarchy. This course will examine this “underside” of hope, interrogating future-oriented longings and examining the desire for recognition and respect. It will also consider the ethical implications and possibilities that emerge when hope and futurity are troubled by categories like trauma, loss, intimacy, ecstasy, and desire. Authors to be read will likely include G.W.F. Hegel, Sigmund Freud, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, W.E.B. Du Bois, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Georges Bataille, Lee Edelman, José Esteban Muñoz, Tim Dean, and Leo Bersani.

Kent Brintnall & Joe Winters/T 2:00-4:45/Cultural or Textual Analysis

**RELS 4000.090: Religion and Social Change in Latin America** - This course examines the role of religion in the changing social, political, and economic landscape of Latin America. By reading historical and ethnographic case studies we will look at the ways that Catholic, Pentecostal, mainline Protestant, and indigenous churches have sought to address material and spiritual development throughout the region in the wake of social and political instability. How have varying theological commitments shaped people’s engagement with the public sphere? In what ways have they supported or challenged revolutionary political movements or authoritarian regimes? How have economic changes impacted people’s religious lives? How has religion shaped experiences of migration, urbanization, and modernization? To what extent have indigenous revitalization and other identity-based social movements drawn on religion in configuring their agendas?

Eric Hoenes/T 6:30-9:15/Cultural Analysis

**RELS 4040.091: Ethnography of Religion** - Long a foundational methodology for anthropologists, ethnography has become an increasingly important way for scholars to investigate the role of religion in the contemporary world. This course offers an introduction to the methodological, theoretical, and ethical issues involved in the ethnography of religion and ritual. We will evaluate ways in which data may be collected and analyzed, as well as what is involved in producing written and video ethnographic material. The course will engage several broad questions including: 1) What contributions to the study of religion do ethnographic methods offer? 2) What are the ethical and political implications of representing religious “others” in fieldwork studies? 3) How can ethnographic case studies be used to build larger theoretical insights? Students will read a variety of works highlighting different ethnographic techniques and approaches. Students will also have the opportunity to practice these methods by designing research questions, gathering data, and analyzing findings.

Eric Hoenes/M 6:30-9:15/Cultural or Textual Analysis

**RELS 4600.001: Senior Seminar** - Required of majors in final year of studies.

Eric Hoenes/W 3:30-6:15/Oral Communication and Writing Intensive)

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**Liberal Studies Courses**: Religious Studies faculty teach the following courses for the General Education Program:

**Western History and Culture.** LBST 2101 sections 335-H74 are taught by Marcy Goldstein, Francis Penkava and Celia Sinclair.

**Global and Intercultural Connections.** LBST 2102 sections 335-342 are taught by Tina Katsanos, Janna Shedd and Celia Sinclair.

[Times and individual section descriptions for Liberal Studies](#)