### RELS 1120-001
**The Bible and its Interpreters**  
*Wednesday 3:30-6:15/John Reeves*
An exemplification of the multiple ways ‘Bible’ has been produced, read, and manipulated by biblically allied Near Eastern religious communities up to roughly the end of the first millennium of the Common Era. We will also isolate and discuss the conceptual suppositions which flaw almost all scholarly work published on this topic to date. Within this course special attention will be given to the diverse ways in which Qur’ān participates in a shared ‘biblical’ universe of discourse.
- **Historical or Textual Analysis**

### RELS 1200-UOL
**World Religions**  
*Online/Ashley Bryan*
A study of the historical origins, central teachings, and devotional practices of the major religious traditions alongside those of smaller and newer religious movements.
- **Cultural or Historical Analysis**

### RELS 2000-001
**Religion and Culture in Polynesia and Oceania**  
*MW 2:00-3:15/Ashley Bryan*
Religious beliefs and cultural practices found throughout Polynesia and Oceania will be the focus of this course. Films, current events, and historical accounts will all be utilized to comprehensively study this utterly fascinating and underappreciated region of the world.
- **Cultural or Historical Analysis**

### RELS 2000-002
**Religion in Latin America**  
*MW 2:00-3:15/Eric Hoenes*  
(Cross-Listed with LTAM 2001)
This course will examine the richness and diversity of Latin American religions, paying special attention to how the intercultural encounters between Indigenous Americans, Africans, and Europeans shaped identities, practices, and institutions in the region.
- **Cultural or Historical Analysis**

### RELS 2000-003
**Magic in Medieval Europe**  
*MW 11:00-12:15/Hugh Goforth*  
(Cross-Listed with HIST 2001)
This course traces the changing attitudes, in medieval European societies toward practices and beliefs that post-Enlightenment thought might consider magic. From late antiquity to the late Middle Ages ambivalence in regard to practices, (e.g. the use of spells, charms, amulets, talismans, and various forms of divination) developed into widespread panic over imagined conspiratorial demonic attacks, witch trials and witch hunts in the early modern era. The so-called learned magical arts, (e.g. necromancy and alchemy) also receive careful consideration, with an eye toward tracing the development of the Modern notions of magic, religion, and science.
- **Historical Analysis**

### RELS 2000-UOL
**Death and the Afterlife in Asian Religions**  
*Online/Janna Shedd*
This online course is an introduction to religious concepts of death and death-related practices in South and East Asian religions. Students will explore Asia's wide variety of funerary practices; beliefs in heaven-realms, underworlds, in-between realms, and paths of rebirths; ghost stories and festivals; near-death experiences; and the gods and goddesses of death. Course “readings” will be assigned weekly and will include a variety of materials including films, images, myths, textbook chapters, and instructor-produced introductions and explanations of topics.
- **Cultural or Textual Analysis**
RELS 2102-UOL
Introduction to Asian Religions
Online/Janna Shedd
This online course is an introduction to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shintoism. Emphasis on the myths, stories, symbols, rituals, ideas, and ethical practices of these religions in their classical formulations and in their contemporary practices.
- Cultural or Textual Analysis

RELS 2104-UOL
Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament
Online/Barbara Thiede
There is no such thing as "The Bible." But there is a fascinating story behind the creation of ancient biblical literature. In this class, we will look at the linguistic, historical, and archaeological evidence that helps scholars understand who wrote biblical literature and why. We will learn about the Ancient Israelites to help us understand the texts they produced and we will explore the writers’ senses of humor and political agendas. Students will explore how later readers re-imagined biblical narratives and created whole new characters that never existed in the Hebrew!
- Cultural or Historical Analysis

RELS 2105-001
New Testament and Christian Origins
TR 11:00-12:15/David Clausen
Our earliest sources for the origins of the Christian faith are to be found in the 27 books of the New Testament. When were they written? Who wrote them? We will conduct historical and textual investigations of the gospels, Acts, and the letters of Paul in order to reveal the nature of the early church and to describe the creation of its foundational literature. Along the way we will ask such questions as: Are there four or five gospels in the NT? How do we access the historical Jesus? What was Paul’s impact on the composition of the Christian church?
- Historical or Textual Analysis

RELS 2120-001
Christianity
MW 11:00-12:15/Eric Hoenes
What is Christianity? Who is a Christian? How has the idea of being Christian changed over time and across cultures? This course will survey the global development of the Christian tradition from antiquity to the present. Our goal will be to appreciate the diversity of Christian communities’ beliefs and practices, and to critically examine the intersection of religion, politics, and culture.
- Historical or Textual Analysis

RELS 2131-001
Islam
TR 9:30-10:45/Kathryn Johnson
(Cross-Listed with HIST 2215)
An introduction to the practices and doctrines shared by the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims and the history of Muslim societies. Subjects explored include the development of the Sunni and Shi’i traditions, modern Islamist reform movements, and Islam in the United States.
- Historical or Textual Analysis

RELS 2157-001
South Asian Buddhism
MW 11:00-12:15/Alex Kaloyanides
(Cross-Listed with HIST 2002)
This course examines Buddhist communities of South and Southeast Asia. We will cover material from ancient India through contemporary Southeast Asia with a focus on the development of the Theravada tradition and its religious, political, artistic, and economic contexts. Course topics include the ascendance of Buddhist monasticism, early forms of Buddhist sculpture and poetry, Buddhism in the period of European colonialism, local ritual practices, the modern insight meditation movement, and the role of gender in contemporary Southeast Asian religious life.
- Historical or Textual Analysis

RELS 2216-001
The Modern Middle East
TR 12:30-1:45/Kathryn Johnson
(Cross-Listed with HIST 2216)
We’ll begin our study of the history of the modern Middle East in the WWI period and conclude with an examination of current issues confronting the region. Topics covered include the history of the Arab/Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the long term impact of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and the role of the Islamic State (ISIS) in regional instability.
- Cultural or Historical Analysis
REL 2600-001
Orientation to the Study of Religion
Wednesday 3:30-6:15/Alex Kaloyanides
This writing intensive course is required of all majors as early in their program as possible. Orientation to the Study of Religion examines the animating theoretical and methodological questions in the academic study of religion. We will consider the emergence and history of the field as well as prominent themes such as myth, experience, and culture. This course pays close attention to the particular research, reading, and writing practices that shape the field.

REL 3000-004
Why God Lies
TR 2:00-3:15/Barbara Thiede
Who is the God of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible? Angry, vituperative, filled with rage? Or loving, compassionate, and forgiving? Is the deity omniscient and omnipotent? Or is God frequently stumbling, stumbling, and stumbling? In this course, we will explore difficult passages of Hebrew Bible in which the deity appears to fib, connive, or outright lie to patriarchs, prophets, and the people. We'll work to understand the texts of Hebrew Bible in their cultural and historical context and consider how western cultures have “read” the character of God.
- Textual Analysis

REL 3000-001
India, Bollywood, and Religion
MW 12:30-1:45/Ashley Bryan
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.
- Historical or Textual Analysis

REL 3000-002
The Women of Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament
TR 9:30-10:45/Barbara Thiede
(Cross-Listed with WGST3050)
From Sarah to Tamar, from the Levite's concubine to the mysterious 'wise woman' of Abel, the women of Hebrew Scriptures present a complicated picture. They are judges, prophets, and victors in war. They exercise authority over men (and other women) but fall prey to sexual violence and abuse. This course examines their stories in historical context and asks how western cultures have employed these figures in defining, oppressing, empowering and liberating women of our own time.
- Cultural or Textual Analysis

REL 3000-003
Religion and Power
TR 12:30-1:45/Julia Moore & Barbara Thiede
This course examines the way religions, religious leaders, and religious communities create abusive conditions, how they disempower and subjugate, how they work with the powerful to oppress, how they become part of legal, political, social and economic systems of control. We will also look at the ways in which religions, religious leaders, and religious communities use their traditions and beliefs to empower, to free, to work toward social change. We’ll ask: Should religions have anything to say about conditions of the real world and if so, how and when?
- Cultural or Textual Analysis

REL 3000-005
The Biblical Black Arts
Wed/Fri 11:00-12:15/John Reeves
A survey of a broad range of biblical characters, stories, and rituals which intersect with some of the vocations and practices popularly known as “the black arts”; namely, sorcery, divination, necromancy, ritual magic, astrology, and alchemy.
- Historical or Textual Analysis

REL 3000-006
Study Abroad: World Religions in London
Monday 3:30-6:15/Joanne Robinson
(Cross-Listed with HIST 3001 & INTL 3000)
Students will travel to London for March break, an ideal microcosm for the study of religious practices, symbolism, and spaces of people in multiple religious traditions. Site visits will include several major and minor Christian churches as well as a Sikh temple, a Jewish synagogue, an Islamic mosque, a Hindu temple, and a Buddhist meditation center. Students will experience a Roman Catholic Mass in Latin, explore a crusader church, enjoy a lunchtime chamber music concert in a historic church, and a day trip will allow students to experience Stonehenge, Salisbury Cathedral, and the Roman city of Bath. There will be few class meetings during the semester apart from the trip, but students will do academic work both before and after.
- Cultural or Historical Analysis

REL 3000-007
History of Witchcraft (Ancient Roman to the Present)
TR 9:30-10:45/Amanda Anderson
(Cross-Listed with HIST 3001)
The primary objectives of this course are to develop an understanding of the history of witchcraft and magic in Western civilization from Antiquity to the modern era, to explore broader cultural, sociological, and historical themes as they relate to attempts to understand the phenomena of witch beliefs, and to engage critically with primary documents as pieces of historical evidence.
- Historical Analysis
### RELS 3000-008
**Western Africa and the African-American Connection**  
**Thursday 6:30-9:15/Timothy Geysbeek**  
(Cross-Listed with HIST 3003 & INTL 3000)  
This course is intended for students interested in African and African American history. The class will begin by overviewing the key contours of Western Africa’s pre-colonial history, with an emphasis on Islam, the Asante empire, and the Atlantic slave trade. The class will then examine how slaves and their descendants reordered their lives in the Carolinas, with particular focus on the emergence of the Gullah in the coastal Carolinas and the impact of Muslims who settled there. This will be followed by examining contributions that African Americans made in founding of Sierra Leone and Liberia, spreading Christianity, and reporting about current events on the continent, and working with their African counterparts to spread Pan-Africanism. Also included will be an examination of African Americans who have returned to their ancestral roots in Africa, and Sierra Leoneans who have established connections with the descendants of their forbearers who were shipped to the Carolinas as slaves. - Cultural or Historical Analysis

### RELS 3000-009
**TR 2:00-3:15/Simon Gibson**  
(Cross-Listed with ANTH 3090 & HIST 3003)  
Contact the History Department for title and course description.

### RELS 3113-001
**Jesus**  
**TR 9:30-10:45/David Clausen**  
The systematic quest for the historical Jesus has been on-going for over one hundred years. Join us as we avail ourselves of the fruits of the labor of countless scholars who have combined history, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, and ancient textual studies in order to develop the necessary context for understanding this enigmatic yet enormously influential religious figure. Was Jesus a wise sage? An apocalyptic prophet? A wonderworker? Or something altogether different? Why don’t our sources agree? How can we make sense of the data? Where in the various ancient accounts and interpretations is the real Jesus of history? - Historical or Textual Analysis

### RELS 3163-001
**Religious Art & Architecture of India**  
**MW 9:30-10:45/Dan White**  
The visual art of Hindus, Buddhists, Jainas, and Muslims in the architecture, paintings, and sculptures of India. - Cultural or Historical Analysis

### RELS 3213-001
**Jesus on the Silver Screen**  
**TR 11:00-12:15/Kent Brrintnall**  
(Cross-Listed with ENGL 3050 & FILM 3051)  
Attempts to tell the story of Jesus using the language of film are as old as the art form itself. Every Jesus film has offended some viewers deeply and moved others profoundly. This course will consider each film in relation to the Christian New Testament and the historical context in which it was produced. We will focus particularly on the choices each film makes in telling the story of Jesus of Nazareth. We will gain a better understanding of this narrative’s cultural meaning and operation. - Cultural or Textual Analysis

### RELS 3242-001
**Philosophy of Religion**  
**MWF 1:00-1:50/Tina Talmsa**  
(Cross-Listed with PHIL 3350)  
Philosophical implications of religious experience including the definitions, development, and diverse forms of the problems of belief and reasoning in modern thought. - Textual Analysis

### RELS 4000-090
**Annihilation of the Self: The Literature of Sufi Islam**  
**Tuesday 6:30-9:15/Will Sherman**  
This course examines persistent questions found in the literature of mystical, Sufi Islam: what is the self? What is its relationship to language? And must it be annihilated through “unsaying” in order to know God? By reading a range of Sufi texts in translation, this course explores how “annihilation” is an important theme throughout the history of the Islamic world, including in the contemporary period. In the cryptic musings of early Baghdadi Sufis, the love-struck poems of Rumi, and the miraculous stories of saints, this course traces the methods and paradoxes by which Sufi Muslims have attempted to use language to mold—and unmake—the self. - Historical or Textual Analysis

### RELS 4000-001
**The Archaeology of Earliest Christianity**  
**TR 3:30-4:45/James Tabor**  
(Cross-Listed with ANTH 4090)  
What is the material/archaeological evidence that sheds light on our understanding of the origins and emergence of earliest Christianity? This will include an examination of, newly discovered texts and inscriptions, artifacts, and ancient sites related to both 1st and 2nd century Judaism and early Christianity. Special emphasis on the emerging new consensus on the material culture of 1st century Galilee as it relates to Jesus and his movement. - Cultural or Historical Analysis
**REL 4150-002**  
*Religion in the Contemporary United States*  
*Thursday 3:30-6:15/Sean McCloud*  
(Cross-Listed with AMST 4050)

What can one say about contemporary American religious cultures? Has American religion changed in the last 70 years? Can one discuss “American religion” as if it were an undifferentiated whole? And can we easily pick out some social formation we call “religion” that can be separately examined as a field apart from “culture,” “politics,” “economics,” or other categories we might construe? There are multiple ways—complementary and contradictory—in which one might describe contemporary American culture and its religious imaginaries. Our class will focus on three characterizations: the consumerist, the haunted, and the therapeutic.

- Cultural or Historical Analysis

**REL 4600-001**  
*Senior Seminar*  
*Wednesday 3:30-6:15/Will Sherman*

Senior Seminar is the capstone course for religious studies majors. As students of religion, we are often asked familiar and frustrating questions: What is it that you do in religious studies? What is “religion” and how does one identify a “religious” object, event, or practice? What is the difference between a department of religious studies and a seminary or divinity schools? These questions reward concentrated inquiry as the answers are far from obvious. Through a critical evaluation of recently published books in the field of “religious studies,” we will map and articulate possible answers to the questions above.

---

**Liberal Studies Courses**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2101-335:</td>
<td>Western History &amp; Culture - Death and Afterlife</td>
<td>TR 2:00-3:15</td>
<td>James Tabor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2101-336:</td>
<td>Western History &amp; Culture - Racist Religions: Racism and Religion in America</td>
<td>Online/Julia Moore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2101-337:</td>
<td>Western History &amp; Culture - Racist Religions: Racism and Religion in America</td>
<td>Online/Julia Moore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2102-335:</td>
<td>Global Connections - Globalizing Asian Religions</td>
<td>TR 2:00-3:15</td>
<td>Janna Shedd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2102-336:</td>
<td>Global Connections - Globalizing Asian Religions</td>
<td>TR 3:30-4:45</td>
<td>Kathy Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2102-337:</td>
<td>Global Connections - Religious and Cultural Expressions in Asian Cinema</td>
<td>MW 3:30-4:45</td>
<td>Ashley Bryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2102-338:</td>
<td>Global Connections - The Middle East in the 21st Century</td>
<td>TR 3:30-4:45</td>
<td>Kathryn Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2102-339:</td>
<td>Global Connections - The Middle East in the 21st Century</td>
<td>MW 12:30-1:45</td>
<td>Kathryn Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2102-340:</td>
<td>Global Connections - The Middle East in the 21st Century</td>
<td>Wednesday 12:30-3:15</td>
<td>Celia Sinclair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2102-341:</td>
<td>Global Connections - The Middle East in the 21st Century</td>
<td>Wednesday 3:30-6:15</td>
<td>Celia Sinclair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2215-335:</td>
<td>The Ecological Citizen</td>
<td>TR 11:00-12:15</td>
<td>Tina Katsanos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2301-335:</td>
<td>Critical Thinking and Communication</td>
<td>MW 11:00-12:15</td>
<td>Tina Katsanos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2301-336:</td>
<td>Critical Thinking and Communication</td>
<td>MW 12:30-1:45</td>
<td>Tina Katsanos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2301-337:</td>
<td>Critical Thinking and Communication</td>
<td>Tuesday 12:30-3:15</td>
<td>Celia Sinclair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBST 2301-338:</td>
<td>Critical Thinking and Communication</td>
<td>Tuesday 3:30-6:15</td>
<td>Celia Sinclair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information visit www.religiousstudies.uncc.edu

---

**Department Chair**  
Joanne Robinson  
Joanne.Robinson@uncc.edu

**Director of Undergraduate Studies**  
Dan White  
jdwhite@uncc.edu

**Director of Graduate Studies**  
Sean McCloud  
spmcclou@uncc.edu