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.

**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

**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

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**Important Dates**

- **January 8**
  1st day of classes

- **January 15**
  No classes/university closed

- **January 15**
  Last day to add, drop with no grade

- **February 5**
  Deadline to apply for May 2018 graduation

- **March 5**
  Fall 2018 schedule available

- **March 5 - March 10**
  No Classes

- **March 5**
  Student registration appointment times available

- **March 19**
  Last day to withdraw from course

- **March 26**
  Registration for Summer & Fall 2018 begins

- **March 30**
  Spring weekend/no classes

- **May 1**
  Last day of classes

- **May 2**
  Reading day

- **May 3 - May 10**
  Final examinations

- **May 11 & 12**
  Commencement
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 archeological 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 reimagined biblical narratives and created whole new characters that never existed in the Hebrew!
- Historical or Textual 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 Sunnis and Shi’is 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
**RELS 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.

**RELS 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.  
- **Cultural or Historical Analysis**

**RELS 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**

**RELS 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**

**RELS 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 fumbling, bumbling, and grumbling? 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**

**RELS 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**

**RELS 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**

**RELS 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 political 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**
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

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

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

Jesus on the Silver Screen
TR 11:00-12:15/Kent Brintnall
(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 examine several well-known cinematic depictions of Jesus. We 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

Philosophy of Religion
MWF 1:00-1:50/Tina Talsma
(Cross-Listed with PHIL 3530)
Philosophical implications of religious experience including the definitions, development, and diverse forms of the problems of belief and reason in modern thought.
- Textual Analysis

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

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
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

**RELS 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.