Fall 2015 Undergraduate Courses  
Department of Religious Studies  
www.religiousstudies.com

RELS 2000-001: “Evil” in Popular Indian Religious Traditions  
MW 2:00-3:15/Ashley Zulovitz  
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. - Cultural or Textual Analysis

RELS 2000-002: Rumors of Witchcraft  
MW 9:30-10:45/Mary Hamner  
An introduction to the Mythological, Historical, and Contemporary Witch. Despite the ubiquitous presence of the witch in literature, religion, and popular culture, she remains a difficult figure to precisely define. Even today, witchcraft is a point of controversy in contemporary religious practice, academic study, and gender politics. In this course, we’ll trace the witch throughout European and North American history attempting to answer a deceptively simple question: “What is witchcraft and why is it so scary?”  
- Cultural or Textual Analysis

RELS 2000-003: Introduction to Buddhism  
MW 12:30-1:45/Alex Kaloyanides  
This course is an introduction to Buddhism that begins with an examination of the earliest Buddhist texts, artwork, and institutions from South Asia and then moves geographically and chronologically to study Buddhist developments in East Asia, the Himalayas, Southeast Asia, and the West. With a focus on texts in translation and related artistic productions, this course explores topics such as enlightenment doctrines, life stories of the Buddha, monastic institutions, popular and esoteric practices, and transformations of Buddhism in the modern world. - Cultural or Textual Analysis

RELS 2000-004: Life in the Middle Ages  
TR 11:00-12:15/Hugh Goforth  
Cross-List with HIST 2001. What was life like in the Middle Ages? This course will consider major social institutes and cultural themes of Europe from late Antiquity through the Middle Ages to try to understand what life was like in Medieval Europe for the noble and not so noble. Starting with the history of its leaders, this course will use the scholarship of everyday life to deduce the experience of ordinary men, women, and children. Some of the major themes we will explore are: mythologies and religious practices; warfare; knighthood, chivalry, and courtly love; Feudalism and Manorialism; and life in the Medieval city.

RELS 2000-005: American Religious History  
MW 3:30-4:45/Klehr  
Cross-List with HIST 2000  
Discussion of a topic in U.S. History

Important Dates
August 24th - 1st day of classes

September 2nd - Last day to register, add, drop with no grade

September 7th - No Classes/University Closed

September 28th - Deadline for Undergraduates to apply for Dec. 2015 graduation

October 12th & 13th - No Classes

October 12th - Spring 2016 Schedule of Classes available

October 27th - Last day to withdraw from course

November 2nd - Registration for Spring 2016 begins

November 25th & 26th - No classes/University closed

December 9th - Last day of classes

December 14th-18th - Final Examinations

December 18th - Summer 2016 Schedule of Classes available
There is no such thing as "The Bible." But there is a fascinating story behind the creation of biblical literature. In this class, you will learn why you are visiting a library (rather than reading a book). 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. This course will not be a survey of the Hebrew Bible, but it will teach students how to approach, analyze, and understand its texts in academic terms.

- Historical 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 biblical literature. In this class, you will learn why you are visiting a library (rather than reading a book). 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. This course will not be a survey of the Hebrew Bible, but it will teach students how to approach, analyze, and understand its texts in academic terms.

- Historical or Textual Analysis

**RELS 2101-001: Introduction to Western Religions**

*TR 2:00-3:15/Tina Katsanos*

This class is a historical-critical introduction to the different variations of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Special emphasis is placed on the historical relationships between the three religions and between their respective myths and rituals. Lastly, particular consideration is given to the position of each tradition in the modern/post-modern global context.

- Historical or Textual Analysis

**RELS 2102-001: Introduction to Asian Religions**

*TR 2:00-3:15/Janna Shedd*

An introduction to three South and East religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Our emphasis will be on gaining familiarity and a working understanding of the major figures, myths, symbols, ideas, and practices of these religions in their cultural and contemporary contexts.

- Cultural or Textual Analysis

**RELS 2104-006: World Religions through Film**

*Online/Julie Hawks*

This course is an introduction to world religions through film. Students will explore the material culture, practices, and sacred stories of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, as well as Yoruba, Native American, and Shinto traditions. This course deals with some of the essential differences and similarities which exist among each religious tradition, and points to the uniqueness of each of them.

- 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 biblical literature. In this class, you will learn why you are visiting a library (rather than reading a book). 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. This course will not be a survey of the Hebrew Bible, but it will teach students how to approach, analyze, and understand its texts in academic terms.

- Historical or Textual Analysis
**Liberal Studies Courses:**
Religious Studies faculty teach the following courses for the General Education Program:

**LBST 2101-Q05-Q12: Sexing Shakespeare**
MW 12:30-1:45/Kent Brintnall & Kirk Melnikoff

**LBST 2101-335 & 336: Western History & Culture**
MW 11:00-12:15/ Francis Penkava

**LBST 2101-337: Western History & Culture**
TR 12:30-1:45/Barbara Thiede

**LBST 2101-H73: Western History & Culture**
W 12:30-3:15/Celia Sinclair

**LBST 2101-339 & 340: Western History & Culture**
TR 11:00-12:15/Marcy Goldstein

**RELS 2216-001: History of the Modern Middle East**
TR 9:30-10:45/Kathryn Johnson
(Cross-list with HIST 2216)
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 an understanding of the historical context needed to understand the region, its peoples, and its conflicts in greater depth.
- **Cultural or Historical Analysis**

**RELS 3000-001: Special Topics – Bollywood and Religion**
MW 2:00-3:15/Ashley Zulovitz
(Cross-list with FILM 3050) (Writing Intensive)
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, Textual or Historical Analysis**

**RELS 3000-002: Special Topics – Asian Renouncers**
**TR 12:30-1:45/Janna Shedd**
The most visible but perhaps least understood practitioners of Asian religions are the renouncers: the monks, nuns, hermits, sadhus, and gurus. “Asian Renouncers” is an introduction to the lives and motivations of individuals in South and East Asia who choose to leave the mundane, secular world in order to devote themselves entirely to spiritual goals. In this course we will explore the practices, histories, and worldviews of a variety of religious seekers within several religious traditions.
- **Cultural, Textual or Historical Analysis**

**RELS 3000-003: Special Topics: Why God Lies**
**TR 3:30-4:45/Barbara Thiede**
Who and what is the deity of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible? Angry, vituperative, filled with rage? Or just the opposite: Loving, compassionate, and forgiving. Is the deity omniscient and omnipotent? Or do we find the character of 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. Warning: This is not a class in theology, but one in which is will require an academic and secular approach. We’ll work to understand the texts of Hebrew Bible in their cultural and historical context, so our class material will also include the study and comparison of other myths and narratives of the Ancient Near East.
- **Cultural, Textual or Historical Analysis**

**RELS 3000-004: Special Topics: Law, Religion, and Political Power**
**M 2:00-4:45/Rob Young**
This course examines the historical interplay between law and religion, focusing upon the individual within the political state and how the religious worldviews of individuals, from ancient Manicheanism to Catholicism, have been negotiated. We will explore, through reading historical documents and texts, the motivation and action of political states who afford privilege to or persecute those who practice particular religious traditions. Lastly, we will give special attention to the question of whether a purely secular state is possible and the effectiveness of efforts, from Constantine’s Edict of Milan to the United States’ First Amendment, to provide for religious pluralism.
- **Cultural, Textual or Historical Analysis**

**RELS 3000-005: Special Topics: Iran and Iraq**
**TR 3:30-4:45/Kathryn Johnson**
(Writing Intensive)
This course will explore the complex relationship between Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran within the context of the IRI’s growing role as a regional power.
- **Cultural, Textual or Historical Analysis**

**RELS 3000-006: Special Topics - Women in Islam**
**MW 12:30-1:45/Hadia Mubarak**
This course will explore a cross-section of religious texts, interpretations, and normative practices on women in Islam. It will examine the construction of gender in Islam’s primary religious texts, examining issues such as sexuality, marriage, divorce, segregation, public participation, violence, and adultery. It will trace the development of gender issues in Muslim societies, ranging from the early Islamic period (7th century) to the modern period, including the rise of secular and religious feminism and women’s initiatives to reform patriarchal practices in contemporary Muslim societies.
- **Cultural or Historical Analysis**
RELS 3000-090: Special Topics: Legacy of the Holocaust
T 5:00-7:45/Judy LaPietra
(Cross-List with HGHF 3050)
The historical meaning and significance of the Holocaust will be explored, with particular emphasis on oral testimony. Through readings and discussions, we will analyze and discuss the behavior and perspectives of victims, bystanders, and perpetrators—and also our own perspectives, as students of the Holocaust. After reading what historians have written about the Nazi genocide, student teams will research the USC Shoah Foundation Institute’s collection of survivor testimonies.

RELS 3137-001: Religion in the African American Experience
TR 12:30-1:45/Julia (Dr. Rob) Robinson
(Cross-List with AFRS 3050 & HIST 3000)
Designed to introduce students to the evolution of black religious thought and culture in America from 1865 to the present. The religious traditions of Voodoo, Santeria, Christianity, Islam, the Nation of Islam, Moorish Science, and African American Judaism are points of emphasis in the course. Issues of race, class, gender, identity, and violence will be points of discussion in light of black religious life.
- Cultural or Historical Analysis

RELS 3150-001: African American Church and Civil Rights
TR 3:30-4:45/Julia (Dr. Rob) Robinson
(Cross-List with AFRS 3150 & HIST 3000)
Designed to introduce students to the historical beginnings of the local African American church within the Baptist and A.M.E denominations, this course investigates how African Americans forms of Christianity, as it was practiced in local black churches, shaped black political protest in the twentieth century. The activism of local black churches during the Modern Civil Rights Movement will be central points of investigation. African American Christian social constructions of sacrifice and ideas of the sacred will also constitute key foci throughout the progression of this class.
- Cultural or Historical Analysis

RELS 4000-001: Religious Studies in the Contemporary U.S.
R/2:00-4:45/Sean McCloud
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, given that the term itself has no stable meaning, 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. While these certainly aren’t the only tropes for understanding something out there called "contemporary American culture," they do provide useful monikers for getting at some prominent discourses that permeate contemporary social institutions and individual habits. The class format entails seminar-style discussions, student reading presentations, and writing assignments.

RELS 4000-002: Apocalypticism Ancient & Modern
T 2:00-4:45/James Tabor
(Cross-List with ANTH 4090)
A historical examination of the idea of the “end of the world” as it developed in ancient Judaism and early Christianity and has continued to manifest itself in modern times among both Christian and Jewish Groups. Topics emphasized include: The Dead Sea Scrolls, Jesus as an Apocalyptic Messiah, Paul’s Apocalyptic Outlook, Jewish Messiahs through the ages, American Millenarian movements including Waco, and apocalyptic visions of the Modern Middle East including Zionism and ISIS.
- Historical or Textual Analysis
RELS 4000-003: Critical Philosophy of Race
R 5:30-8:15/Shannon Sullivan
(Cross-List with PHIL 4990, PHIL 5050, AFRS 4050, AFRS 5000, WGST 4050)
Is race real? And if so, in what respects and to what effect? In this course on critical philosophy of race, we will study a variety of perspectives that examine the seeming naturalness or "givenness" of race. Beginning with philosophical arguments that the concept of race should be eliminated because it has no biological/genetic foundation, we next will turn to arguments that race is real even though (or, perhaps, precisely because) it is socially constructed. Then in contrast to these two opposing positions, we will question the dichotomy between the biological and the social that tends to reign in critical philosophy of race, examining arguments that critical conceptions of race can and should include human physiology and biology in some fashion. As the course examines the reality and effects of race, it will pay close attention to the operations of whiteness and white domination. It also will examine how race intersects with sex/gender and class, among other salient axes of lived experience. The main topics/readings for the semester will include: the racial contract, intersectionality, and biopsychosocial approaches to race and racial disparities in health. The upshot of the course will be for students to understand how theoretical questions about the reality of race can have concrete, practical effects in people's lives.

RELS 4121-004: Medieval and Reformation Christianity
F 11:00-1:45/Joanne Robinson
This course explores the variety and evolution of Christian beliefs and practices in medieval Europe from the fifth century CE through the sixteenth century reformations within and outside formal Church structures. We will read and analyze primary sources on topics including the "conversion" and Christian acculturation of European peoples; the power and appeal of Christian saints; notions of Christian authority and power; monastic, scholastic, and lay piety; issues of theological anthropology, free will, and the relation of human to divine; church creeds and rituals; pilgrimages and Crusades; dissent, heresy, and institutional response; and Protestant and Catholic theological divergence.
- Historical or Textual Analysis

RELS 2600-001: Orientation to Study of Religion
W 3:30-6:15/Eric Hoenes
(Writing Intensive)
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.

RELS 4600-001: Senior Seminar
W 3:30-6:15/Sean McCloud
(Oral & Writing Intensive)
Required of majors in final year of studies.

Undergraduate Designations for Courses: [C] Cultural Analysis, [T] Textual Analysis, [H] Historical Analysis
(These fulfill the specific requirements for the major in religious studies.)