

Faculty

Joseph A. Adler
Professor

Miriam Dean-Otting
Professor (on leave)

Ennis B. Edmonds
Assistant Professor

Joan Friedman
Visiting Assistant Professor

Nurten Kilic-Schubel
Visiting Assistant Professor of History

Royal W. Rhodes
Chair, Donald L. Rogan Professor

Donald L. Rogan
Professor Emeritus

Vernon J. Schubel
Professor

Mary Suydam
Assistant Professor

The Department of Religious Studies approaches religion as a global and pluralistic phenomenon. We understand the study of religion as a crucial element in the larger study of culture and history. Our goals include helping students (1) to recognize and examine the important role of religion in history and the contemporary world; (2) to explore the wide variety of religious thought and practice, past and present; (3) to develop methods for the academic study of particular religions and religion in comparative perspective; and (4) to develop the necessary skills to contribute to the ongoing discussion of the nature of religion.

Since the phenomena that we collectively call “religious” are so varied, it is appropriate that they be

studied from a variety of theoretical perspectives and with a variety of methods. The diversity of areas of specialization and approaches to the study of religion among our faculty members ensures the representation of many viewpoints. Our courses investigate the place of religion in various cultures in light of social, political, philosophical, and psychological questions. We also encourage religious studies majors to take relevant courses in other departments, and our faculty members frequently team-teach with members of other departments.

The curriculum mirrors the diversity of the faculty. We offer courses in Judaism, Christianity, religions of the Americas, Islam, Buddhism, South Asian religions, and East Asian religions. Religious studies majors are required to take courses in at least four of these areas. In our courses we emphasize work with primary sources, both textual and nontextual. To this end, students are encouraged to study relevant languages, and to spend at least part of their junior year abroad in an area of the world relevant to their particular interests. Our courses require no commitment to a particular faith. Students of any background, secular or religious, can benefit from the personal questions of meaning and purpose that arise in every area of the subject.

Our introductory courses (RLST 101, 102, and 103) are designed especially for students new to the study of religion, although they are not prerequisites to other courses. RLST 101 is a regular class; RLST 102 covers the same material in the format of a seminar limited to first-year students; RLST 103, also a first-year seminar, covers equivalent material with a focus on women and religion. Students who enroll in any one of these, and wish to fulfill their humanities requirement with religious studies courses, may do so by taking any other course in the department. For this purpose we especially recommend our foundation courses (200 level), which can also serve as first courses in religious studies. The introductory and foundation courses are indicated below by the ♦ symbol. A few upper-level courses do have specific prerequisites, and a few with no specific course prerequisites do require sophomore or junior standing. They are so noted below.

Requirements for the Major

Students majoring in religious studies are required to take RLST 101, 102, or 103; RLST 390 (Approaches to the Study of Religion); RLST 490 (Senior Seminar), and 3 1/2 other units. These units must include foundation courses (200 level) in traditions or areas representing at least four of the five fields of study (see lists below). In one of the traditions/areas, at least one more

advanced course must also be taken. (Note: there are seven traditions/areas grouped in five fields of study. The advanced course must be in the same tradition or area, not just the same field.)

It is highly recommended that majors take all four of their required foundation courses, if possible, before their senior year. Students who are considering spending any portion of the junior year abroad should take RLST 390 (Approaches) in the sophomore year; otherwise the junior year is recommended.

Unless specified otherwise in the course description, any student may take any course; the numbering system does not correspond to levels of difficulty.

A. Fields of Study

(covering seven traditions/areas)

1. Judaism
2. Christianity
3. Religions of the Americas
4. Islam, South Asian religions
5. Buddhism, East Asian religions

B. Foundation Courses

(by tradition/area)

Judaism:

- RLST 210 The Judaic Tradition
RLST 211 Modern Judaism

Christianity:

- RLST 220 Faith of Christians
RLST 225 Jesus and the Gospels

Americas:

- RLST 230 Religion and Society in America
RLST 232 Afro-Caribbean Spirituality

Islam:

- RLST 240 Classical Islam

South Asian:

- RLST 250 South Asian Religions

Buddhism:

- RLST 260 Buddhist Thought and Practice

East Asian:

- RLST 270 Chinese Religions
RLST 275 Japanese Religions

The Senior Exercise in religious studies consists of (1) the Senior Seminar, RLST 490; (2) a comprehensive examination consisting of short-answer, objective questions on the seven traditions/areas; (3) a fifteen- to twenty-page essay on an assigned topic; OR, if approved by the department faculty, a longer comparative research paper (twenty to twenty-five pages); and (4) satisfactory participation in a Senior Symposium (a discussion and critique of the senior papers with a small group of students and faculty).

Students with an overall grade point average of 3.25 or better and 3.5 or better in religious-studies courses are eligible to submit a proposal for an honors project. Honors candidates select a field of concentration entailing 1 to 1 1/2 units of advanced research and writing under the supervision of one or more faculty members.

Requirements for the Minor

The religious studies minor is designed to expose students in a systematic way to the study of religion, while simultaneously giving them some degree of more advanced knowledge in at least one religious tradition. A total of 3 units is required for the minor in religious studies. The following are the minimum requirements:

- RLST 101, 102, or 103 (1/2 unit)
- A foundation course and at least one further course in one of the seven areas listed above (1 unit)
- A second foundation course in another religious tradition (1/2 unit)
- Two additional courses (1 unit)
- At least one course must be a seminar.

Cross-Listed Courses

The following courses are cross-listed in the religious studies offerings for 2005-06:

- ASIA 490 Asia in Comparative Perspective
ENGL 331 The Reformation and Literature: Dogma and Dissent
HIST 230 History of the Reformation 1500-1648
HIST 258 Ottoman History
HIST 261 Nomads, Merchants, and Bureaucrats: The Mongol Empire in World History
SOCY 243 Ethics and Social Justice: The Ancient and Modern Traditions

Year Course

Senior Honors

- RLST 497Y-498Y (1 unit)
Staff

Prerequisite: permission of department.

First-Semester Courses

Introduction to the Study of Religion

- ◆ RLST 101 (1/2 unit)
Staff

The format of this course is lecture and discussion. The usual enrollment in each section is twenty to twenty-five students. The course includes brief introductions to four or five major religious traditions, while exploring concepts and categories used in the study of religion, such as sacredness, myth, ritual, religious experience, and social dimensions of religion. Traditions such as Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, and Native American traditions are presented through their classic scriptures and traditional practices.

Readings vary among sections, but typically include important primary sources on Hindu thought and practice (e.g., the Upanishads,

the Bhagavad-gita), Buddhist thought and practice (The Questions of King Milinda, the Heart Sutra), Jewish life and thought (selections from the Hebrew Bible, the Sayings of the Fathers), Christian origins (one or more Gospels, selected Pauline letters), Islam (selections from the Qur'an and Sufi mystical poetry), Confucianism (the Analects), Taoism (the Tao Te Ching), and modern expressions of religion (e.g., Martin Buber's I and Thou). Many of the primary sources are studied in conjunction with relevant secondary sources (e.g., Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, important articles by anthropologists of religion). The Department of Religious Studies emphasizes writing, and several essays are assigned in this course. The course is open to all students.

First Year Seminar: Introduction to the Study of Religion

RLST 102 (1/2 unit)
Schubel

This course covers the same material as RLST 101 (see course description, above) but it is open only to first-year students and will be run in a seminar format.

Afro-Caribbean Spirituality

◆ RLST 232 (1/2 unit)
Edmonds

This course explores the contours of the religious expressions that people of African descent have forged in the Caribbean. It will examine the context of domination and resistance in which African spirituality was forged, give a brief overview of African influence on religious expressions in the Americas, and explore the religious traditions of Vodou, Santeria, and Rastafari, paying close attention to their social history, their understanding of the universe, their social structure, and their rituals and ceremonies.

Classical Islam

◆ RLST 240 (1/2 unit)
Schubel

Islam is the religion of nearly a billion people and the dominant cultural element in a geographical region that stretches from Morocco to Indonesia. This course examines

the development of Islam and Islamic institutions, from the time of the Prophet Muhammad until the death of Al-Ghazali in 1111 CE. Special attention will be given to the rise of Sunni, Shi'i, and Sufi piety as distinctive responses to the Qur'anic revelation.

Chinese Religions

◆ RLST 270 (1/2 unit)
Adler

This course is a survey of the major historical and contemporary currents of religious thought and practice in Chinese culture. Our aim will be to gain a richer understanding of some characteristic Chinese ways of experiencing the self, society, and the world. We will examine the three traditional "teachings" (Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism), as well as "popular religion," and the contributions of all four to Chinese culture. Specific themes will include ancestor worship, sacrifice and divination, religious ethics, meditation, and longevity techniques. In each section we will attempt to identify those aspects of Chinese religion which are inextricable from traditional Chinese culture and those which are capable of crossing cultural boundaries. Classes are a mixture of lecture and discussion. Readings will focus on primary religious texts, supplemented by films and slides.

Jewish Mysticism

◆ RLST 313 (1/2 unit)
Suydam

This course examines Judaism and the development of its mystical tradition from the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE to the Kabbalistic works of the thirteenth century. The course will also cover the later traditions such as Lurianic mysticism in the sixteenth century and Hasidism. Topics to be covered include the Merkebah mystics, who elaborated upon Ezekiel's vision of the fiery chariot; religion and magic; religious movements of later antiquity, such as Gnosticism, and their influences on Jewish mysticism; the influence of Jewish mysticism on the development of rabbinic Judaism and its classic

texts; the origin of Kabbalah and its reinterpretation of Torah. Texts will include translations of mystical texts of this period, such as Merkebah tracts, the Book of Creation, the Bahir, and the Zohar. Prior knowledge of Judaism is not required. This course counts as a foundation course for religious studies majors and minors.

Women and Islam

RLST 325 (1/2 unit)
Kilic-Schubel

This course will examine the construction of gender and the history of women in Islamicate societies. Challenging popular Western stereotypes and images of women in Muslim societies, it will explore a wide range of women's roles and experiences in a variety of cultural regions and historical periods. Through reading both primary and secondary sources by or about women, we will examine the historical processes that have influenced the status of women as well as the ways and strategies women have used to respond to them. Among the topics we will discuss are the methodological problems of approaching issues involving gender in Islamicate societies, women in early Islamic history, the diversity of positions of women in urban, rural, and nomadic societies in the premodern and modern periods, the roles of women in nationalist movements, and changing gender relations in new nation-states. We will proceed in chronological order, but the course will have a strong thematic approach. Prerequisite: RLST 240. Enrollment limited to fifteen.

Ethics and Social Justice: The Ancient and Modern Traditions

RLST 380 (1/2 unit)
George E. McCarthy, professor of sociology; Rhodes

This mid-level course will examine the development of theories of ethics and social justice from the ancient Hebrew tradition of Torah and the prophets, New Testament writers Luke and Matthew, and the political philosophy of Aristotle, to modern discussions about social, political, and economic justice. We will explore

how modern social theories have employed ancient Hebrew and Greek teachings as the bases for social ethics. Questions of justice, freedom, economic development, individualism, and alienation will be major themes in this study of liberalism, Christianity, and Marxism. Special emphasis will be on contemporary debates about the ethics of democratic capitalism, including conservative theology and philosophy and radical liberation theology. Readings will be from the Bible, Aristotle, Pope John Paul II, M. Friedman, E. Fromm, R. Pirsig, E.F. Schumacher, and N. Wolf. Prerequisite: introductory sociology or religious studies courses or permission of the instructor. This course is cross-listed as SOCY 243.

Approaches to the Study of Religion

RLST 390 (1/2 unit)
Adler

This course introduces students to the variety of academic approaches to the study of religion. We will cover the phenomenology of religion, philosophy of religion, hermeneutics, the anthropological and sociological approaches, the psychology of religion, feminist theory, and some theological approaches. Some of the major figures we will read include Marx, Freud, Jung, Weber, Durkheim, Otto, Eliade, Geertz, Turner, and Smart. The course is required for religious studies majors, who should take it before the senior year if possible. Prerequisite: RLST 101, 102, or 103.

Trials, Debates, and Controversies in American Religious History

RLST 411 (1/2 unit)
Edmonds

This course aims at an in-depth exploration of controversial issues in U.S. religious history—issues that resulted in trials and/or significant national debates, for example, the antinomian controversy and the trial of Anne Hutchinson, the Salem witch hunt, the Quaker Invasion, slavery and abolition, social gospel, Jim Crow and civil rights, and abortion and same-sex marriage. Each offering of

the course will explore two or three such issues, utilizing role playing or more specifically the pedagogical approach called “Reacting to the Past,” developed by Barnard College History Professor, Mark Carnes. Students will assume, research, and reenact the roles of the various participants in these controversies. For fall 2005, the course will focus on the trial of Anne Hutchinson, the abolition debate, and the Scopes trial. Enrollment limited.

Senior Seminar

RLST 490 (1/2 unit)
Rhodes

This year’s topic will offer opportunities to examine different relationships between film and religion. Rather than reject cinematic depictions of religion in comparison with “real” religion, we will explore film as a religious function in itself, tracking the diverse images of religion and religious traditions that circulate in contemporary cultures worldwide. How does this popular medium convey lessons about values, symbols, and beliefs that shape both religion and society? Themes of myth/ritual, world views, founder figures, and “otherness” will be discussed using such films as: *Devi*; *Kundun*; *La ultima cena*; *Mahabharata*; *The Quarrel*; *King of Kings*; *Nazarin*; *Secret of Roan Inish*; and *Aliens*. The course is required for, but not limited to, senior religious studies majors. Religious studies minors are encouraged to enroll, provided there is space. Non-majors should consult the instructor for permission to register for the course. Enrollment limited. Permission of instructor required.

Individual Study

RLST 493 (1/2 unit)
Staff

Prerequisites: Permission of instructor and department chair.

Second-Semester Courses

Introduction to the Study of Religion

◆ RLST 101 (1/2 unit)
Staff

See first-semester course description.

Modern Judaism

◆ RLST 211 (1/2 unit)
Friedman

This course is an answer to the question of why there are so many ways of being Jewish in the modern world. Pre-modern Jews knew only one way to be a Jew: to be a member of the nation that had heard the voice of God at Sinai and covenanted themselves thenceforward for all times to live according to the laws and teaching revealed there. But Enlightenment and Emancipation shattered this traditional world and forced Jews to define themselves in new terms: did they constitute a religion, a nation, a culture, a race? New forms of Jewish religiosity and new understandings of Jewish nationality arose in response to those questions.

Jesus and the Gospels

◆ RLST 225 (1/2 unit)
Rogan

This course presents a study of the career and impact of Jesus in early Christianity as interpreted in the four gospels of the New Testament, with careful attention to the historical background in Judaism and the Hellenistic Age. Prerequisite: sophomore standing.

Religion and Society in America (U.S.)

◆ RLST 230 (1/2 unit)
Edmonds

This course explores the religious history of the United States, with an emphasis on the relationship between religious beliefs/values and broader social and political processes. Section one examines the attempt of European immigrants to establish church-state compacts in New England and Virginia, while the middle colonies adopted a more pluralistic approach. Section two surveys the period between the American Revo-

lution and the Civil War, looking at the separation of church and state, the growth of religious pluralism, and the continued existence of the “Peculiar Institution.” Section three looks at how various social forces shaped religion in the United States from the Civil War to World War II: immigration, urbanization, prejudice, and the Social Gospel; expansionism and missions; and modernism and fundamentalism. Section four examines the shaping of the American religious landscape from World War II to the present through such forces as religious revitalization, activism for personal and civil rights, new waves of immigration, and new communication media.

Buddhist Thought and Practice

◆ RLST 260 (1/2 unit)
Adler

Buddhism has been one of the major connective links among the varied cultures of South, Southeast, and East Asia for over two millennia, and in this century it has established a solid presence in Europe and North America. This course will survey the history, doctrines, and practices of Buddhism in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Tibet, and East Asia. Readings will be in both primary texts and secondary sources, and will be supplemented by films. The format will be a combination of lecture and discussion.

Nomads, Merchants, and Bureaucrats: The Mongol Empire in World History

RLST 261 (1/2 unit)
Ruth Dunnell, associate professor of history; Kilic-Schubel

Why did Mongolian and Turkic nomads join together to conquer so much of the known world in the early thirteenth century? What impact did their conquests have on the civilizations they encountered and ruled, from southern Russia to Persia and China? In a sense, global history began with the conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, which is often seen as the beginning of the decline of Islamic civilization. In reality, the period between this event and the rise

of European dominance saw remarkable cultural florescence throughout Eurasia, as the center of Islamic civilization shifted from the Arab world to Asia, where new empires were founded by Turko-Mongol Muslims.

We will proceed by looking first at what it meant to be a nomad and how nomadic societies organized states and interacted with sedentary or farming civilizations (China and Persia, chiefly). Then we will contrast the bureaucratic agrarian civilizations of Persia and China. Taking up the career of Chinggis Khan and the new empires founded by his descendants, we will explore the role of religion, commerce, and cultural exchange in setting new paradigms of political and cultural expression in the areas conquered by the Mongols and their Turkic allies. The class will analyze diverse source materials, including chronicles, folklore, travelers' accounts, art, and artifacts. The format is lecture-discussion, with lectures on Wednesday and discussion/presentations on Friday. No prerequisites, but sophomore standing or above is required. (Fulfills history major Asia and premodern requirements.)

Hebrew Scriptures/The Old Testament

RLST 310 (1/2 unit)
Suydam

This course will serve as an introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), as they reflect the myths, history, and institutions of ancient Israel. Topics to be explored will include biblical narratives and poetry, law codes, prayers and ritual, the prophetic critique of religion and society, and wisdom literature. We will also read a selection of short fiction and poetry that have been inspired by biblical literature.

The Reformation and Literature: Dogma and Dissent

RLST 331 (1/2 unit)
Adele Davidson, associate professor of English; Rhodes

The Reformation deeply influenced the literary development of England and transformed the religious, intellectual, and cultural worlds of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The long process of Reformation, shaped by late-medieval piety, the Renaissance, Continental activists, and popular religion, illustrates both religious continuities and discontinuities in the works of poets and prelates, prayerbooks and propaganda, sermons and exorcisms, bibles and broadsheets. This interdisciplinary course will focus on a range of English literature, from the Humanists under early Tudor monarchs to the flowering of Renaissance writers in the Elizabethan and Stuart eras, in the context of religious history, poetry, drama, prose, and iconography. Writers and reformers, such as More, Erasmus, Cranmer, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Southwell, Herbert, and Donne, will be examined. NOTE: This course is cross-listed as ENGL 331.

Religion and the State in Islamic History

RLST 346 (1/2 unit)
Kilic-Schubel

Throughout their history, a central challenge to all Muslim polities has been negotiating the relationship between Islamic religious institutions and political authority. This seminar will focus on the continually changing relations between state power and religious institutions—such as the ulama and Sufi orders—in the construction of Islamic polities. The course will begin with the early problems of the establishment of the Caliphate and its authority, and continue chronologically, discussing issues related to the rise and decline of Umayyad and Abbasid power, the emergence of new regional empires following the conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, and the beginning of the modern era and the subsequent rise of European political dominance. Topics to be covered will include the balancing of shariah and traditional practices, the role of heterodox movements in the construction of official Islamic identities, the place of Sufi orders and shrine culture in political life, the complex relations between the state and religious elites, and issues of Islamic politics in the modern age. Prerequisite: RLST 240. Enrollment limited to fifteen.

Meanings of DeathRLST 381 (1/2 unit)
Rhodes

In all cultures, the idea of death and dying has shaped the imagination in myth, image, and ritual. This course will explore the symbols, interpretations, and practices centering on death in diverse religious traditions, historical periods, and cultures. We will use religious texts (the Bible and the Tibetan Book of Living and Dying), art, literature (Gilgamesh, Plato, Dante), psychological interpretations (Kubler-Ross), and social issues (AIDS, atomic weapons, ecological threats) to examine the questions death poses for the meaning of existence. Prerequisite: sophomore standing. Enrollment limited.

Religion and Popular Music in the African DiasporaRLST 342 (1/2 unit)
Edmonds

Religious spaces, ideas, and practices have exerted a formative influence on the cultures of the people of African descent in the Americas. Nowhere is this more evident than in the musical traditions of the African Diaspora. This course will examine the relationship between African Diaspora religious expressions and popular music in the United States and the Caribbean. It will focus primarily on the African-American (U.S.) musical traditions, *rara* from Haiti, calypso from Trinidad and Tobago, and reggae from Jamaica. Special attention will be given to the religious roots of these musical expressions and their social functions in shaping identity and framing religious, cultural, and political discourses. Readings, videos, audio tapes, and CDs, along with presentations and discussions, will assist us in the exploration of the various facets of our topic. Enrollment limited.

Fundamentalism in Comparative PerspectiveRLST 444
Schubel

The last century saw the rise and proliferation of a myriad of religious revitalization movements often grouped together under the rubric of

“fundamentalism.” This seminar will examine the development of fundamentalist movements in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism from a variety of perspectives. Issues to be addressed will include the relationship of fundamentalisms to their larger religious contexts, the political dimensions of fundamentalism, associations between fundamentalism and violence, and the special connection between fundamentalism and modernity. The course will be taught in a seminar format. Prerequisite: sophomore standing. Enrollment limited to fifteen.

TaoismRLST 472 (1/2 unit)
Adler

This seminar will examine the various expressions of Taoism (Daoism) in the Chinese religious tradition. Beginning with the classical Taoist texts of the third century BCE (often referred to as “philosophical Taoism”), we will discuss the mythical figure of Lao Tzu and the seminal and enigmatic text attributed to him (*Tao Te Ching*), the philosopher Chuang Tzu, and the shadowy “Huang-Lao” Taoist tradition. We will then examine the origins, beliefs, and practices of the Taoist religion, with its hereditary and monastic priesthoods, complex body of rituals, religious communities, and elaborate and esoteric regimens of meditation and alchemy.

Some of the themes and questions we will pursue along the way are: (1) the relations between the mystical and the political dimensions of Taoist thought and practice; (2) the problems surrounding the traditional division of Taoism into the “philosophical” and “religious” strands; (3) the relations between Taoism and Chinese “popular” religion; and (4) the temptation for Westerners to find what they want in Taoism and to dismiss much of its actual belief and practice as crude superstition, or as a “degeneration”—from the mystical purity of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. Prerequisite: any one of the following: RLST 270 (Chinese Religions), RLST 471 (Confucianism), HIST

250 (East Asia to 1800), or permission of instructor.

Individual StudyRLST 494 (1/2 unit)
Staff

Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

The following courses may be offered in 2006-07:

RLST 220 Faith of Christians
RLST 329 Christian Mysticism
RLST 382 Prophecy
RLST 421 Modern Catholicism
RLST 422 Victorian Religion
RLST 441 Islam in Central Asia and the Turkic World
RLST 471 Confucian Thought and Practice
RLST 481 Religion and Nature

Courses in other departments that meet requirements for the Department of Religious Studies:

The list below is a sample of courses taught in other departments that may be counted as meeting religious studies department requirements for the major, up to 1 unit. Religious studies majors who wish to use these courses (or others) to satisfy requirements for the major must discuss them with their advisors and with the chair of the department.

ANTH 252 Anthropology of Religion
ARHS 111 Art of Christian Europe
ARHS 235 Art of China
CLAS 114 Classical Mythology
HIST 187 African Christianity
HIST 323 Supernatural Latin America
INDS 231 The Holocaust
PHIL 200 History of Ancient Philosophy
PHIL 212 Early Chinese Philosophy
PHIL 240 Philosophy of Religion
SOCY 243 Ethics and Social Justice