

Faculty

Joseph A. Adler
Professor

Miriam Dean-Otting
Professor

Ennis B. Edmonds
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 The New Testament

Americas:

RLST 230 Religion 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, with a small group of students and faculty, of the senior papers).

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 2004-05:

SOCY 243 Ethics and Social Justice:
The Ancient and Modern Traditions
ENGL 331 The Reformation and Literature: Dogma and Dissent
HIST 353 The Mongols and the Medieval World

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.

First Year Seminar: Introduction to the Study of Religion: Women in Religion

RLST 103 (1/2 unit)
Dean-Otting

This course presents an introduction to the study of religion, focusing particularly on women. A variety of religious traditions will be explored as we look into myths, rituals, and practices of women. Traditions to be explored may include Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and some Native American religions. Students will have a hand in shaping the syllabus in the last third of the semester with the expectation that individual interests can be accommodated. Enrollment limited to twelve first-year students.

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 religions traditions of Vodou, Santeria, and Rastafari, paying close attention to their social history, their understanding of 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.

Hebrew Scriptures/The Old Testament

RLST 310 (1/2 unit)
Dean-Otting

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.

Christian Mysticism

RLST 329 (1/2 unit)
Suydam

This course explores the evolution and development of the Christian mystical traditions from the origins of Christianity to about 1500. It analyzes the philosophical traditions based upon neoplatonic theories, the development of monasticism, and ecstatic mystical practices. One goal of the course is to problematize the term "mysticism" and trace its linguistic and philosophical development through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Questions we will be asking include: Is mysticism a solitary or a communal experience? Do mystics who engage in somatic practices (such as copious weeping, bleeding, or fasting) represent a "less pure" variant of mysticism than those who prefer solitary contemplation? Questions of gender are also pertinent, as women's access to the philosophical traditions were more limited than men's. We will also explore the role of mystical traditions in "mainstream" Christianity.

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 Greek drama of Aeschylus and 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, Aeschylus, 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, the trial, and abortion and Roe vs Wade. 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 2004, the course will focus on the trial of Anne

Hutchinson, the abolition debate, and the Scopes trial.

Religion and Nature

RLST 481 (1/2 unit)
Dean-Otting

This seminar examines various religious perspectives on the meaning and value of the natural world and the relationship of human beings to nature. Topics to be explored will include, but not be limited to, creation myths, gender symbolism, rituals, and environmental ethics. We will examine several traditions, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Native American religions, to see what conceptual resources they can offer to a contemporary understanding of a healthy relationship with the natural world. Prerequisite: RLST 101 or a foundation course in religious studies (200-level) or ENVS 112 or permission of instructor. 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*; *Breaking the Waves*; *Kundun*; *La ultima cena*; *Mahabharata*; *The Quarrel*; *King of Kings*; *The Message*; *Nazarin*; *Secret Roan Inish*, and *Alien*. 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.

Limited enrollment; permission 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.

The Judaic Tradition

RLST 210 (1/2 unit)
Dean-Otting

This course will explore the origins of Judaism and the development of fundamental Jewish ideas and practices from the Babylonian exile to the Middle Ages. Monotheism, *mitzvot* (commandments), Torah, covenant, holy days, and rituals are some of the topics that will be covered. We will study the Hellenistic sects of Judaism (including early Christianity and the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls), as well as the works of the philosopher Philo and the historian Josephus, both of whom were deeply influenced by Greek ideas. Non-biblical literature found in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha will offer insights into the extraordinary vitality of ancient Judaism. Rabbinic Judaism will be presented through primary texts (Mishnah and Talmud). We will examine some aspects of the mystical literature of medieval Judaism. Finally, we will study the medieval philosophers, including Saadia Gaon, Jehuda ha-Levi, and Maimonides, both through philosophical works and poetry.

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 historical and contemporary relationship between religious beliefs/values and the social and political dimensions of American life. Themes covered include Puritanism and pluralism; separation of church and state (from its Constitutional enshrinement to the present controversy about prayer in school and “one nation under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance); religion, race discourse, and race relations; revivalism and social reforms, including abolitionism and the Social Gospel; religion and the African-American community, including the Civil Rights Movement; immigration and the configuration of religious life; religion and women’s rights; secularization and religious resurgence; mega-churches and televangelists; and New Age or unconventional spirituality. Readings, lectures, and discussions will facilitate the exploration of these themes.

South Asian Religions

RLST 250 (1/2 unit)
Schubel

The South Asian subcontinent has been the home of a fascinating array of religions and religious movements. Focusing on Hinduism, this course will examine the development of religious practice in South Asia and the interaction of competing religious ideas over time. The course will include discussions of Indus Valley religion, Vedic Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism, the Upanishads, classical Hinduism, Bhakti, Islam, and Modern Hinduism.

Japanese Religions

RLST 275 (1/2 unit)
Adler

This course is a historical and contemporary survey of religious life in Japan, focusing on the Shinto, Buddhist, and Confucian traditions.

We will pay special attention to the ways in which religious ideas, values, and practices are integrated into the common forms of Japanese culture today. Classes are a mixture of lecture and discussion

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.

The Mongols and the Medieval World

RLST 350 (1/2 unit)
Ruth Dunnell, associate professor of history; Kilic-Schubel

One modern historian has called the thirteenth century Mongolian invasions the “first global event,” giving birth to the first “permanent world institution”—the “basic information circuit,” a notion that encompasses the profound cultural impact of the first sustained linking of Eastern and Western Eurasia. Typically, historians of conquered polities have not looked fondly on the Mongols. The conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 is often seen as

the beginning of the decline of Islamic civilization. In reality, the period between this event and the rise of European political and economic dominance saw remarkable cultural florescence throughout Eurasia. During this time, the center of Islamic civilization shifted from the Arab world to Asia, where new empires—Safavids, Ottomans, Timurid-Mughals, Shaybanid Uzbeks—were founded by Turco-Mongol Muslims. These centuries also saw the rise of diverse new political institutions, transformations of religious thought and practice, and the creation of extraordinary literary, artistic, and technological achievements in the Islamic world and East Asia. However contemporaries and later historians characterize the events of the thirteenth century and their long-term consequences, the Mongol invasions churned up a wealth of commentary and reportage, from one end of Eurasia to the other. Using these and other materials, the seminar will examine some of the many strands in the rich legacy bequeathed by the Mongols to medieval Eurasia. (Fulfills history major advanced seminar and Asia/Africa and/or premodern requirements.) NOTE: This course is cross-listed as HIST 353.

Meanings of Death

RLST 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, Donne, Tennyson), psychological interpretations (Kuebler-Rose and Lifton), and social issues (AIDS, atomic weapons, ecological threats) to examine the questions death poses for the meaning of existence. Prerequisite: sophomore standing. Enrollment limited.

Prophecy

RLST 382 (1/2 unit)
Dean-Otting

Prophets were the messengers of justice and social responsibility in antiquity. This course poses the question: Are there contemporary prophets? We will first focus on the origins of prophecy in the ancient Near East then explore a number of contemporary writers and social movements. Readings in Max Weber, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Cornel West will provide theoretical perspectives. After establishing a theoretical model, we will examine the role of the biblical prophets (Amos, Isaiah, Micah, and others) and the prophetic roles of Jesus and Mohammed. In the last two thirds of the semester we will study a selection of modern writers. This section may include: Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X (racism and civil rights), Sr. Helen Prejean (the death penalty), Wendell Berry (agribusiness and community), Arundhati Roy (globalization), Jonathan Kozol (inequities in public education), and Peter Singer (animal rights).

Religion and Popular Music in the African Diaspora

RLST 442 (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. This course will examine the relationship between the religious traditions and the popular music of the African Diaspora. After a brief survey of the characteristics and genres of African Diaspora music, the course will focus primarily on the African-American (U.S.) musical tradition, reggae music from Jamaica, and calypso from Trinidad. 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 discourse. Readings, videos, and audio tapes or CDs, along with discussions and student presentations, will assist us in the exploration of various facets of our topic. Enrollment limited.

Voices in Contemporary Islam

RLST 443 (1/2 unit)
Schubel

This seminar will explore some of the crucial issues and debates in the contemporary Muslim world. Issues to be examined will include the compatibility of Islam with democracy, the connections between Islam and terrorism, the role of Wahabism in the construction of contemporary Islamic movements, feminist movements within Islam, Islam and pluralism, and Sufism in the contemporary context. The course will focus on primary sources, including writing by Khaled Abou Fadl, Fatima Mermisi, Abdulaziz Sachedina, and Mohammed Arkoun. Prerequisite: RLST 240 (Classical Islam) or permission of instructor. Enrollment limited.

Confucian Thought and Practice

RLST 471 (1/2 unit)
Adler

This seminar will explore the philosophical and cultural history of the Confucian tradition, primarily in China, from its inception to the present day. Readings will include both primary texts and secondary studies covering the Five Classics and the sayings of Confucius and Mencius, the Neo-Confucians of the Sung and Ming dynasties, and the "New Confucians" of the twentieth century. Among the general questions to be considered are: In what senses can Confucianism be considered a religious tradition? How is Confucianism in China related to the tension between tradition and modernity? Which aspects of the tradition are culture-bound and which are universally applicable? The last four weeks will focus on a particular question of contemporary interest, such as the role of women in Confucianism or the question of human rights.

Individual Study

RLST 494 (1/2 unit)
Staff

Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

The following courses may be offered in 2005-06:

RLST 220 Faith of Christians
RLST 260 Buddhist Thought and Practice
RLST 321 The Reformation
RLST 421 Modern Catholicism
RLST 422 Victorian Religion
RLST 441 Islam in Central Asia and the Turkic World
RLST 472 Taoism

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
ASIA 490 The Silk Road Legacy
CLAS 114 Classical Mythology
INDS 231 The Holocaust
PHIL 200 History of Ancient Philosophy
PHIL 240 Philosophy of Religion
SOCY 243 Ethics and Social Justice