

RELIGION

REL 105 An Introduction to World Religions (4 Credits)

An introduction to the study of Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian and Islamic religious traditions. Readings come from primary religious sources, including the Bhagavad Gita, Shantideva's guide to Buddhist awakening, the Passover Haggadah, Christian gospel narratives, the Quran, and diverse works of poetry, philosophy and art. Group projects, films and stories and virtual visits to religious sites online provide ways to begin seeing what the world looks like through the eyes of religious adherents. Lectures and background readings provide historical context, and recurring themes such as sacrifice, community, liberation, devotion, worship and salvation are considered throughout the semester. {H}

Fall

REL 107 Spiritual But Not Religious (4 Credits)

The number of Americans who identify as spiritual, but who are not affiliated with any traditional religion, has doubled in the last twenty years. More than 20% of Americans now identify as "spiritual but not religious" (SBNR), and the number is growing. In this course, students will try to make sense of this phenomenon by studying what these Americans practice, such as mindful meditation, ethical eating and forms of political activism. What is their lived experience? What counts as spirituality? Students will engage with primary and secondary sources on American SBNRs and conduct original ethnographic research about spirituality at Smith. {S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 108/ PHI 108 The Meaning of Life (4 Credits)

Offered as REL 108 and PHI 108. This course asks the big question, "What is the Meaning of Life?" and explores a range of answers offered by philosophers and religious thinkers from a host of different traditions in different eras of human history. We explore a variety of forms of philosophical and religious thinking and consider the ways in which philosophical and religious thinking can be directly relevant to our own lives. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Annually

REL 109 Rest (4 Credits)

The ubiquitous message is to work harder and be more productive. In doing so, the promise is stability, good lives and good jobs. What if this is all wrong? What if "rest" is what humans are really missing? This course explores this question by reading sociologists, historians, psychologists, public health scholars, critical disability scholars, Jewish philosophers, Black Christian activists and Zen masters. This course considers how "rest," as conceived by these diverse people, encompasses visions for just economic systems and antiracist praxis, as well as the flourishing of ecosystems. Finally, students experiment with rest themselves. {E} {H}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 110Hl Colloquium: Topics in Thematic Studies in Religion- Jerusalem and the Holy Land (4 Credits)

This course will examine the religious and historical legacy of the city of Jerusalem and the Holy Land in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It will explore the ways Jerusalem and the Holy Land have been sanctified in scripture, art, architecture, literature, poetry, and film. It will also explore how rulers tapped into this sanctity and significance to promote their own legitimacy and agendas. In this respect, the course emphasizes Jerusalem and the Holy Land as a common, shared heritage to the three monotheistic traditions, yet how it has inspired religious and political conflict in the past and today. Enrollment limited to 20. {H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 112 Introduction to the Bible I (4 Credits)

The Hebrew scriptures (Tanakh/Old Testament). A survey of the Hebrew Bible and its historical and cultural context. Critical reading and discussion of its narrative and legal components as well as an introduction to the prophetic corpus and selections from the wisdom literature. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Annually

REL 125/ JUD 125 The Jewish Tradition (4 Credits)

Offered as REL 125 and JUD 125. Who are the Jews? What is Judaism? How have Jews understood core ideas and texts, and put their values into practice, from biblical times until today? An interdisciplinary introduction to the dramatic story of Jewish civilization and its conversation with different cultures from religious, historical, political, philosophical, literary and cultural perspectives, organized around different themes. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Annually

REL 140/ RES 140 Putin's Russia: After Communism, After Atheism (4 Credits)

Same as REL 140. Often portrayed as hostile to the West, Vladimir Putin and the Russia he rules remain little known. Going beyond the headlines, this course examines contemporary Russia, and historical events and figures that have shaped Putin-era Russia. We will trace the culture wars that have ensued in this post-communist and post-atheist state, across historical documents, art, film, literature, and journalism. Topics include state power and political opposition; the resurgence of religion, and tensions between religion and the secular in the public sphere; debates over the Soviet past, including revolution, war and political terror; human rights and "traditional values." {H}{L}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 145 Introduction to the Islamic Traditions (4 Credits)

The Islamic religious tradition from its beginnings in seventh century Arabia through the present day, with particular emphasis on the formative period (A.D. 600–1000) and on modern efforts at reinterpretation. Topics include Muhammad and the Qur'an, prophetic tradition, sacred Law, ritual, sectarianism, mysticism, dogmatic theology and popular practices. Emphasis on the ways Muslims in different times and places have constructed and reconstructed the tradition for themselves. The course concludes with examples of modern Islamic thought (modernism, feminism and militancy). {H}

Fall, Spring, Annually

REL 164 Buddhist Meditation (4 Credits)

This course will explore classical and contemporary forms of Buddhist meditation theory and practice. It will examine both classical formulations and contemporary expositions with an eye to seeing how the theory and practice of Buddhist meditation are being adapted to fit the needs of people today. Enrollment limited to 25. {H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 171 Introduction to Contemporary Hinduism (4 Credits)

This course is an introduction to the ideas and practices of contemporary Hinduism in India and the diaspora, with an emphasis on how Hindu identities are constructed and contested, and the roles they play in culture and politics. Materials to be considered include philosophical writings, ritual texts, devotional poetry and images, religious comic books, legal treatises, personal memoirs, as well as ethnographic and popular films. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 200 Colloquium: What is Religion? (4 Credits)

What is religion really? Is it an explanation of the world, a vehicle for reaching divinity, or a system for social connection? Is it a by-product of human evolution, a reflection of economic practices, or a category created by colonialism? Is it somehow all of the above? And how does "religion" and its intersections with race, class, gender, and politics inform our place in the world? We explore these questions by reading classic and contemporary scholars, drawing from disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, American studies, and gender studies, and investigating what religion means and does for Smith students. Enrollment limited to 18. {H}{S}

Fall

REL 201 Colloquium-Ritual: Performance and Paradoxes (4 Credits)

A central feature of religious traditions and lived religious experience, ritual is often thought of as repetitive, unchanging, and prescriptive. Yet, enacted rituals are often open-ended and allow considerable room for creativity and innovation. Through embodied action and symbolic drama, rituals serve complex functions of making meaning, deepening spirituality, performing cultural identity, and advocating for social change. In this course, students will study various theories of ritual and examine ritual practices (religious and secular) in diverse traditions and societies. For their final project, students will themselves participate in the process of ritualizing—that is, crafting new rituals. Enrollment limited to 20. {H}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 204 Colloquium: Blasphemy! (4 Credits)

Commonly associated with pre-modern societies, the term "blasphemy" has taken on new life in today's technologically-connected world. This course examines the notion of blasphemy—its meanings, the invisible boundaries it presupposes both in some of the world's major religious traditions and in secular contexts, and the different ways of seeing it often signifies. Based on case studies, it explores contemporary public uses of the term, the competing understandings of the "sacred" it often assumes, and the cultural and political challenges the term presents in a globalized society. The course considers the implications of the public charge of blasphemy in light of issues such as: the religious and the secular; humor and satire; commodification and consumerism; "insiders," "outsiders, and cultural appropriation; art, film and the sacred; museum conservation and display; and free speech and human rights. Enrollment limited to 20. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 205 Philosophy of Religion (4 Credits)

This course introduces the history of philosophy of religion and enters into its major debates: Is there a God? Can religious belief be squared with the existence of suffering and evil? What is the relationship between faith and reason, between faith and doubt? Can religious or mystical experience be trusted? Is there reason to hope for life after death? Lectures, discussion, short papers and group projects focus on classic and contemporary responses to these questions, with readings drawn from Plato, Buddhist philosophical texts, Avicenna, al-Ghazali, Anselm, Maimonides, Aquinas, Hume, Kant, Kierkegaard, William James, Linda Zagzebski and others. {H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 206 Heaven, Hell and Other Worlds: The Afterlife in World Religions (4 Credits)

How do the world's religions picture the journey beyond death? This course examines conceptions of heaven, hell and purgatory; immortality, rebirth and resurrection; the judgement of the dead and the life of the world to come. Readings include classic and sacred texts such as The Epic of Gilgamesh, Plato's Phaedo, the Katha Upanishad, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Dante's Divine Comedy and Newman's Dream of Gerontius, and a variety of philosophical and theological reflections on the meaning of death and the hope for eternal life. Enrollment limited to 35. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 208 The Inklings: Religion and Imagination in the Works of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and Their Circle (4 Credits)

The Inklings were a group of Oxford intellectuals who met in the Magdalen College rooms of the literary historian, apologist and fantasist C.S. Lewis to read aloud and discuss their works in progress. This course examines the Inklings' shared concerns, among them mythology, philology, recovery of the Christian intellectual tradition and resistance to "the machine." Readings include essays and letters by Tolkien, Lewis, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield and quasi-Inkling Dorothy Sayers, as well as selections from their major works of fiction, theology and criticism. Enrollment limited to 35. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 209 Why Believe? Investigating Faith and Doubt (4 Credits)

What is it like to be a believer? What sort of evidence is needed for religious belief to be justified? Can doubt coexist with faith? This course investigates connections between religious belief and acts of knowing, trusting, searching and doubting. The class examines personal testimonies along with philosophical and literary reflections on belief and doubt. Readings from Blaise Pascal, William James, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ramanuja, the Nyaya-sutra, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali, Thomas Aquinas, as well as contemporary philosophers of religion, sacred writings from several religious traditions, and the letters of Mother Teresa on her long "dark night." Occasional films. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 211 What Is the Good Life? Wisdom from the Bible (4 Credits)

Critical reading and discussion of Wisdom texts in the Hebrew Bible and Apocrypha (Job, selected Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, etc.) as well as some of the shorter narrative and poetic texts in the Writings such as Ruth, Esther and Song of Songs. {L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 213 Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible (4 Credits)

An exploration of biblical prophecy with a focus on how the prophets called for social and religious reform in language that continues to resonate today. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 214/ JUD 214 Women in the Hebrew Bible (4 Credits)

This course focuses on the lives of women in ancient Israelite society through close readings of the Hebrew Bible. We look at detailed portraits of female characters as well as the role of many unnamed women in the text to consider the range and logic of biblical attitudes toward women, including reverence, disgust and sympathy. We also consider female deities in the ancient Near East, women in biblical law, sex in prophetic and Wisdom literature, and the female body as a source of metaphor. {H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 215 Introduction to the Bible II (4 Credits)

The literature of the New Testament in its broader historical, religious and cultural context. This course will emphasize literary genre, social-historical factors such as cultural identity in the Jewish Diaspora, and continuity with other religious traditions of the Greco-Roman Jewish world. Enrollment limited to 35. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 221 Philosophers and Mystics (4 Credits)

The rise of Jewish philosophy and mysticism (Kabbalah) in the Islamic world and in medieval Spain, and the development of these theological and intellectual trends as decisive influences upon all subsequent forms of Judaism. Analysis of Jewish philosophy and mysticism as complementary yet often competing spiritual paths. How did Jewish philosophers and mystics consider the roles of reason, emotion and symbols in religious faith and practice? What interrelations did they see between the natural and divine realms, and between religious, philosophical and scientific explanations? Expressions of philosophy and mysticism in religious texts, individual piety, popular practice and communal politics. Readings drawn from the works of the great philosopher Maimonides, the mystical classic the Zohar and other thinkers, as well as personal documents of religious experience and thought. All readings in English. {H}

Fall, Spring, Alternate Years

REL 230 Jesus (4 Credits)

Who do you say that I am? Reportedly posed by Jesus to his disciples, this question remained no less relevant to future generations of his followers as well as their detractors, and continues to challenge views of Christianity's Christ to this day. This course examines some of the most prominent texts, images and films that have informed understandings of Jesus over the past two millennia and have contributed to making Jesus one of the most well-known yet controversial figures in history. Open to first-year students. Enrollment limited to 25. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Alternate Years

REL 235 Catholic Philosophical Tradition (4 Credits)

Faith and reason, worship and the intellectual life, the meaning of redemption and the nature of Catholicism according to major thinkers in the Catholic tradition. Readings from Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Pascal, John Henry Newman, G.K. Chesterton, Simone Weil, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II), Elizabeth Anscombe, Alasdair MacIntyre and others. {H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 238 Mary: Images and Cults (4 Credits)

Whether revered as the Mother of God or remembered as a single Jewish mother of an activist, Mary has both inspired and challenged generations of Christian women and men worldwide. This course focuses on key developments in the "history of Mary" since early Christian times to the present. How has her image shaped global Christianities? What does her perceived image in any given age tell us about personal and collective identities? Topics include Mary's "life"; rise of the Marian cult; Marian apparitions (e.g., Guadalupe and Lourdes) and miracle-working images, especially in Byzantium and Russia; liberation and feminism; politics, activism, mysticism and prayer. Devotional, polemical and literary texts, art and film. Enrollment limited to 35. {H}

Fall, Spring, Alternate Years

REL 240 Religious Thought and Spirituality in Revolutionary Russia (4 Credits)

The 19th and early 20th centuries marked one of the most brilliant yet destructive periods in Russia's history. This course explores the spiritual and religious-philosophical ideas that fueled a renaissance in the arts as well as a political revolution, both of which had enormous impact worldwide. Based on works of art and literature, religious-philosophical and political writings, and film, it introduces students to some of the best-known radical thinkers and cultural innovators in Russia's late imperial and Soviet past, and in its post-Soviet present. Topics include: religious faith, materialism and science; the meaning of history; "new religious consciousness"; theosophy and the occult; art, beauty and the Absolute; human creativity and god-building; divine wisdom and "all-unity"; the body, sex and spirituality. (E) {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 242/ RES 242 The Politics and Culture of Russian Sacred Art (4 Credits)

Offered as REL 242 and RES 242. As devotional objects, political symbols, and art commodities, Russia's sacred art—the icon—has been revered as sacred, vilified as reactionary, embraced in rebellion, destroyed as dangerous, and sold as masterpieces. Engaging the fields of religion, material and visual culture, and ritual studies, this course examines the life and language of this art form, and its role in shaping Russia's turbulent history. Topics include the production and reception of images; diverse meanings and functions of sacred imagery; visibility and spirituality; secularization and commodification; history, memory, and collective identities; the icon, avant-garde art, and film; controversial images and protest culture. No prerequisites. Open to first-year students. {A}{H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 246 Muslims, Modernity and Islam (4 Credits)

Major themes addressed by Muslim thinkers since the 19th century, such as Islamic reform and revival, the encounters with colonialism and imperialism, nationalism and other modern ideologies; and Islamic discussions of modernity, liberalism, democracy, feminism, sexuality, and militancy. Reading of primary sources in translation. {H}

Fall, Spring, Annually

REL 247 The Qur'an (4 Credits)

The Qur'an, according to the majority of Muslims, is God's word revealed to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel over a period of 22 years (610-632 C.E.). This course introduces students to Islam's scriptural text: its content, form, structure and history. It also situates the Qur'an in the larger frame of the genre of Scripture: What does it mean for a text to be revealed? Study of the Qur'an as a seventh-century product, as well as the history of reception of this text. Analysis of its varying impact on the formulation of Islamic salvation history, law and legal theory, theology, ritual, intellectual trends, and art and popular culture. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Annually

REL 248jh Topics in Modern Islam-Jihad (4 Credits)

The persistence of the ideology of jihad in modern Islam drives revivalists and apologists to disagree over the meaning of "jihad" and whether it should be understood to necessitate violence or as an interpersonal spiritual struggle. This course examines the most important modern debates about Jihad and how each position engages and appeals to the foundational Islamic sources (e.g. Qur'an, Muhammad, Sharia/Islamic Law) and Islamic history for legitimacy. It also explores the factors that make the rhetoric used by modern jihadists popular among certain Muslim constituencies, inspiring them to wage holy war against "infidels" as well as fellow Muslims. Course may be repeated for credit with a different topic. Enrollment limited to 35. {H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 249/ MUS 249 Colloquium: Islamic Popular Music (4 Credits)

Offered as MUS 249 and REL 249. Music is a complex issue in many Islamic societies. There are tensions between those who believe that music has no place in Islam and try to prohibit it, those for whom it is a central component of mystical devotion, and those who tolerate it, albeit within well-defined parameters. The debate intensifies in the case of popular music, a core part of the self-identification of young people everywhere. Despite this, there is an amazing variety of vibrant popular music throughout the Islamic world. This course explores the religious debates over music and the rich musical tradition (including religious music) in Islam. Enrollment limited to 35. {A}{H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 261/ BUS 261 Buddhism, Race and Justice (4 Credits)

Offered as REL 261 and BUS 261. What can Buddhist texts and practices teach about analyzing and responding to contemporary forms of injustice, such as oppression based on race, caste, class, gender and sexuality? And how might responding to these forms of injustice lead to a reformulation of Buddhism? Drawing on classical and contemporary texts, this course addresses Buddhist contributions to the analysis of injustice and the practice of making social change. Working collaboratively, students explore the ethics of attention; the body, identity and identity politics; the place of anger in response to injustice; the phenomenology of marginalization and liberation; and the practice of violence and non-violence. (E) {L}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 270 Zen Buddhism and Japanese Culture (4 Credits)

The development of Buddhism and other religious traditions in Japan from prehistory through the 19th century. Topics include doctrinal development, church/state relations, and the diffusion of religious values in Japanese culture, particularly in the aesthetic realm (literature, gardens, tea, the martial arts, etc.) {H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 275 Religions of Ancient India (4 Credits)

This course is an introduction to the literature, thought and practice of religious traditions in India, from ancient times to the medieval period. Readings include materials from the Vedas, Upanishads and epics, from plays and poetry, as well as Buddhist and Jain literature. Particular consideration is given to the themes of dharma, karma, love and liberation as they are articulated in Classical Hinduism. {H}

Fall, Spring, Alternate Years

REL 280 South Asian Visual Culture (4 Credits)

How does one make sense of what one sees in South Asia? What is the visual logic behind the production and consumption of images, art, advertising and film? This course considers the visual world of South Asia, focusing on the religious dimensions of visibility. Discussions include the divine gaze in Hindu and Buddhist contexts, the role of god-posters in religious ritual and political struggle, the printed image as contested site for visualizing the nation and the social significance of clothing and commercial films in colonial and contemporary India. Students also work closely with holdings from the Smith College Art Museum.

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 284 Tantra and Yoga in India (4 Credits)

Tantra and yoga teach techniques to attain magical powers, achieve liberation, and transform the world. These traditions have influenced nearly every aspect of Indian religious life over the last two millennia, and yet they have often been shrouded in secrecy because of their potency. This course explores these complex traditions by considering source materials in translation as well as contemporary theoretical literature on practice, ritual, transgression, and historiography. {H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 288 Colloquium: Mormonisms (4 Credits)

Mormonism has gone from a religion of a few families to a global family of small sects and large denominations. This course explores the diversity of contemporary and historical Mormonisms. Discussions include the creation of new scriptures; conflict between church and state; the dynamics of religious schism; temple spaces and the politics of secrecy; constructions of race, gender, and sexuality; missions and evangelism; modern pilgrimage; and the globalization of modern Mormonisms. In addition, students conduct oral histories with women from around the world who have been ordained within a progressive Mormon church. Enrollment limited to 18. (E)

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 291 Colloquium: Ordaining Women in America (4 Credits)

In the 1970s, many Christian, Jewish and Buddhist communities in America began ordaining women as ministers, rabbis, priests and teachers. This change in policy provided women long-denied vocational paths, necessitated new theological self-understandings and ritual forms, and served as a proxy for larger culture war divisions in America. While focused on the last fifty years, this course provides a wider historical narrative for these developments, from the bold revivalism of colonial-era women preachers to anti-racist activism by contemporary Zen senseis. As part of a class project, students will conduct interviews with ordained women and construct podcast episodes from these interviews. Not open to students who have taken FYS 114. Enrollment limited to 18. (E) {H}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 301wb Seminar: Topics in the Philosophy of Religion-Why Believe? Investigating Faith and Doubt (4 Credits)

What is it like to be a believer? What sort of evidence is needed for religious belief to be justified? Can doubt coexist with faith? This seminar investigates connections between religious belief and acts of knowing, trusting, searching, and doubting. We examine personal testimonies along with intellectual and literary expressions of belief and doubt. Readings from such authors as Nagarjuna, Ibn Sina, Aquinas, Pascal, David Hume, William James, Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as contemporary philosophers of religion; Buddhist, Hindu, and biblical texts; al-Ghazali's *Deliverance from Error*; and letters of Mother Teresa on her long "dark night." Enrollment limited to 12. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission required. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 304/ PSY 304 Seminar: Happiness: Buddhist and Psychological Understandings of Personal Well-Being (4 Credits)

Same as PSY 304. What is happiness? What is personal well-being? How are they achieved? This course examines the core ideas of the Buddhist science of mind and how they are being studied and employed by psychologists, neuroscientists, cognitive scientists and psychotherapists. The focus of the course is the notion of "happiness," its cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary definition as well as the techniques advocated for its achievement by both the Buddhist and the psychologist. Prerequisite: PSY 100, REL 105, one course in Buddhist traditions or permission of instructor. Enrollment limited to 15. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission required. {N}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 305ec Seminar: Advanced Topics in Religion-Eastern Christian Worlds: Prayer and Politics (4 Credits)

From Putin's Russia to Assad's Syria, Eastern Christianity has seen increasing media attention over the past two decades. But what is Christianity like outside "the West?" This course explores: the beliefs, spirituality and practices that link these "other" Christians—who have historically lived in such diverse regions as Armenia, Bulgaria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Romania, Russia, Syria and Ukraine; the historical memories and political power struggles that have divided them; the geopolitical implications of Eastern Orthodoxy's unexpected comeback in post-Soviet Russia; and the complex relationship between Eastern Christianity and its western Roman Catholic and Protestant counterparts. The course considers mystical, philosophical, theological and political sources, both ancient and contemporary, as well as art, literature and film. Enrollment limited to 12. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission required. {A}{H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 305mc Seminar: Advanced Topics in Religion-The Muslim World and the Crusades: Then and Now (4 Credits)

This course explores the historical, religious, political, social and cultural impacts of the Crusades on the Muslim World from the late eleventh century until today. Special attention is given to the variety of Muslim reactions to and encounters with the Franks, including hostile and friendly relations. The course also considers the effect of the Crusades on the course of Islamic history and religious thought and its enduring legacy by examining texts, films, novels, poetry, etc. The broader objective is to understand how and why specific historical narratives generate powerful religious discourses that shape the current political, social and cultural realities. Enrollment limited to 12. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission required. {H}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 305pl Seminar: Advanced Topics in Religion-Pilgrimage (4 Credits)

This seminar surveys modern pilgrimage practices in traditional religions, new religious movements, and religion-like assemblages, such as fan scenes. In studies ranging from an ethnography of Jim Morrison's Paris grave to a history of Birthright trips to Israel, we will examine the diverse ways that humans engage travel, shrines, and constructions of the sacred. In doing so, we will also analyze how pilgrimage intersects with issues of national identity, racialized hierarchies, gender and sexuality, religious orthodoxy and heterodoxy, migration, memory, and nostalgia. Finally, we will reflect on the limits and generative possibilities offered by pilgrimage as an academic category. Juniors and seniors only. Enrollment limited to 12. Instructor permission required. {H}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 305vn Seminar: Advanced Topics in Religion-Violence, Non-violence and Revolution (4 Credits)

How do religious traditions justify acts of violence? And when and why do they embrace nonviolence? And what happens when these choices lead to revolution? This course considers the logic and practice of violence and non-violence in a variety of religious traditions around the world, as well as the ethical, social, and political consequences of these phenomena. Topics include suicide bombing and self-immolating, Gandhi's ahimsa and Martin Luther King's agape, spiritual ecology and ecoterrorism, and much more. Enrollment limited to 12. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission required. {H}{L}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 310is Seminar: Hebrew Bible-Why Do the Innocent Suffer? (4 Credits)

Many biblical texts question whether God consistently rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. Prominent examples include Job, Ecclesiastes and certain Psalms, but similar ideas occur in the Torah and the Prophets. While focusing most deeply on Job, this course introduces students to an array of biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts, as well as some post-biblical and even modern literature, to illuminate the Hebrew Bible's discourse surrounding this issue. Enrollment limited to 12. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission required. {H}{L}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 345sl Seminar: Topics in Islamic Thought-Muslims and Shari'a law (4 Credits)

This seminar explores the complexity and history of Shari'a Law in Islam. It examines the formation of a variety of schools of Shari'a from very early Islamic history until today and the way Muslim jurists have maintained the relevance of Shari'a to their respective societies and times. It covers the theory and application, purpose, sources (e.g., Qur'an, Muhammad, customs), hermeneutical tools (e.g., reason, public good, doubt) and the Shari'a laws themselves. The course also discusses the interaction of Shari'a with other legal systems, especially in the context of today where Shari'a is restricted to a small realm (primarily family and personal law). Enrollment limited to 12. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission only. {H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

REL 400 Special Studies (2-4 Credits)

By permission of the department, normally for senior majors who have had four semester courses above the introductory level.

Fall, Spring

REL 430D Honors Project (4 Credits)

Fall, Spring, Annually