

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (RS)

RS 100 R/S and the Quest for Meaning (5)

A comparative study of the variety of ways persons have experienced and interpreted religion. Topics may include: religious experience, God, faith, salvation and liberation, religious mythology and art, ritual, ethics, and the effect of religion on diverse societies in the modern world. GE C5

RS 1108 Jesus, Buddha, and the Moral Life (3)

This course studies the ethical thought of Jesus and Buddha. Based on the teachings found in the Christian New Testament and the Buddhist sutras, the ethics of Jesus and Buddha will be examined for their meaning within their respective religious world-views and the modern world; the teaching of Jesus and Buddha in relationship to contemporary moral theory, particularly virtue ethics; moral courage and leadership; and the application of the teachings of Buddha and Jesus to contemporary cases in ethical reasoning such as poverty, environmentalism, healthcare, sexuality, race and gender, altruism, forgiveness, and globalization. Prerequisite or corequisite GE A1. Satisfies general education requirement Area C2 Humanities and Theme S: Sustainability and Justice.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite or Corequisite A1

General Education Attribute(s): C2 Humanities, GE (C2) Humanities, Theme S: Sustainability & Just

Typically Offered: Spring

RS 1118 Religion and Film: Screening the Sacred (3)

This course offers students the opportunity to study religion through the genre of film. Religion reflects humanity's search for meaning and its attempts to maintain particular meanings in the face of cultural challenge and social pressure. In this course, we will use a number of films to examine some of the ways in which these processes occur. Using a wide variety of examples, we will learn how religion, whether explicitly or implicitly, has been a central inspiration for filmmakers, as well as how these films have often been a central concern for religious adherents. Prerequisite or corequisite GE A2. Satisfies general education requirement Area C2 Humanities and Theme Q: Quality of Life.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite or corequisite GE A2

General Education Attribute(s): C2 Humanities, GE (C2) Humanities, Theme Q: Quality of Life

RS 1128 A History of God (3)

This course studies the three monotheisms: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It focuses on each religion individually and comparatively. The course especially emphasizes context (social, cultural, historical, religious) and history (development over time), but also includes such topics as respective religious world-views, morals and ethics, and practice and spirituality. It considers each religion in both its historical and modern contexts. Prerequisite or corequisite GE A2. Satisfies general education requirement Area C2 Humanities and Theme R: Revolutionary Idea and Innovations.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite or corequisite GE A2

General Education Attribute(s): C2 Humanities, GE (C2) Humanities, Theme R: Rev Ideas & Innovatns

RS 1138 Religions of Asia (3)

This course introduces students to the field of religious studies and some of the great religious traditions of Asia. We will investigate how select sacred texts and practices in India, Thailand, Japan and China have advocated for lives of meaning and purpose and promoted diverse visions of human flourishing. Prerequisite or corequisite GE A2. Satisfies general education requirement Area C2 Humanities and Theme R: Revolutionary Ideas and Innovations.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite or corequisite GE A2

General Education Attribute(s): C2 Humanities, GE (C2) Humanities, Theme R: Rev Ideas & Innovatns

RS 2010 Cults in America (3)

Freedom of religion in the United States has inspired an ongoing and passionate creation of new religious movements. This course explores spiritual creativity and the development of new religious movements from the first colonies in New England to contemporary cults, from the Mormons and the Shakers to Scientology and the Branch Davidians. Students examine the concepts of religion, spirituality, new religious movements and cults; freedom of religion; New Age and neo-Pagan spirituality; UFO, science fiction and suicide cults; mainstream assimilation of new religious movements; cultural and political concerns and cult behavior; and counter-cult and anti-cult groups.

RS 2018 Anime Spirituality (3)

Religious and spiritual themes pervade the popular Japanese storytelling media of anime and manga. Nature spirits struggle with humanity Buddhist saints strive for social justice, and shrine maidens offer hope in apocalyptic worlds. This course examines contemporary Japanese religiosity and spirituality through the narratives, characters, and imagery of anime and manga. Along the way, students will gain an introduction to major religious traditions, such as Buddhism and Shinto, as well as significant moments in Japanese religious history. Prerequisite: GE A3 prerequisite or corequisite. Satisfies general education requirement Area C2 Humanities and Theme Q: Quality of Life.

Requisite(s): GE A3 prerequisite or corequisite

General Education Attribute(s): C2 Humanities, GE (C2) Humanities, Theme Q: Quality of Life

RS 2108 Latinx Spiritualities (3)

This course introduces students to the religious diversity of Latinx communities in the United States. We will pay close attention to the various ways Latinx devotional practices and rituals make religion meaningful and transformative. Through a series of case studies, this course will explore how religious and spiritual practices are shaped by issues of colonialism, race/ethnicity, class, gender, and migration. We will begin with an overview of the varieties of spiritualities and traditions practiced by Latinx groups and then proceed by looking at specific traditions including popular Catholicism, Marian devotion, mainline Latinx Protestantism, Pentecostalism as well as Cuban Santeria, Brazilian Candomblé, and Haitian Vodou. We will then circle back to a wider view in order to study the ways Latinx communities connect their spirituality to the larger social, cultural, geographical, and historical structures in which they are situated. Prerequisite or corequisite: GE A2. Satisfies general education requirement Area C2 Humanities and Theme Q: Quality of Life.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite or corequisite GE A2

General Education Attribute(s): C2 Humanities, GE (C2) Humanities, Theme Q: Quality of Life

Typically Offered: Fall, Spring

RS 2900 Exploring Religion (3)

This course introduces students to the academic study of religion. The class will explore religion through historical, anthropological, psychological, sociological, feminist, and postcolonial lenses to explain meaning-making, behavior, and practice among the world's diverse religious traditions.

RS 3208 Explorations in Scripture (3) 🌿

This course studies the scriptures of major world religions through the lens of themes such as social justice, forgiveness, and compassion. The course especially emphasizes context (social, cultural, historical, religious) and history (development over time), but also emphasizes respective religious world-views and comparative religion. It considers each religion's sacred text in both its historical and modern contexts. Prerequisites: at least 45 units and completion of LD Area C. Satisfies general education upper division Area UDC and Theme R: Revolutionary Ideas and Innovations.

Requisite(s): Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C.

General Education Attribute(s): Theme R: Rev Ideas & Innovatns, Upper Division C

Typically Offered: Spring

RS 3210 Judaism (3)

A study of the multiple histories, texts, and practices that shape and sustain Jewish civilization with particular attention to the classical rabbinic tradition and post-Enlightenment expressions of Jewish identity. Students will learn about central theological concepts, the cycle of Jewish holy days, life cycle events, and some of the variations in Judaism throughout the ages and today. Visits to local congregations will be included. Prerequisite: GE A2 or equivalent.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite: ENGL 1109 (GE A2) or the equivalent.

RS 3220 Christianity (3)

This course studies the history and literature of the Christian tradition from its beginnings as a small group within Judaism and may include its transformation into Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant branches. The course especially emphasizes context (social, cultural, historical, religious) and history (development over time), but also includes such topics as morals and ethics, practice, and spirituality. It considers Christianity in both its historical and modern contexts. Prerequisite: GE A2 or equivalent.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite: ENGL 1109 (GE A2) or the equivalent.

RS 3230 Islam (3)

This course studies the history, literature, religion, governments, and culture of Islam and Islamic civilization from its beginnings in the Arabian desert to its spread throughout Asia, Africa, and the Western world. The major topics we will cover are: Islamic Origins; The Quran (Koran) and Hadith (Islamic traditions), especially the former; the Formation of the Islamic Tradition; Islamic Institutions; Jihad (Struggle); Crisis and Renewal in Islamic History; Women in Islam; Progressive Islam; and Reimagining Islam in the Twenty-first Century. Prerequisite: GE A2 or equivalent.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite: ENGL 1109 (GE A2) or the equivalent.

RS 3240 Hinduism (3)

Hinduism is among the oldest, living religious traditions of the world. It continues to be the majority tradition in India, while also influencing cultures globally wherever Indian people have migrated or their traditions have traveled. This course looks at the central ideas, stories, practices, and peoples that have shaped Hinduism over the course of its history. We will also examine recent developments in Hinduism, contemporary Hindu leaders, and new problems facing the tradition.

RS 3250 Buddhism (3)

An introduction to the historical and thematic expression of Buddhist beliefs and practices from the time of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, to the present. Through the study of primary and secondary sources, we will explore the rich history of Buddhism as it has shaped, and been shaped by, its spread from India throughout Asia and the West. We will explore the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha) and how they each provide refuge for those suffering in samsara (endless rebirth). We will engage in close readings of the literary and philosophical texts central to Buddhism. In addition, a central means of our access into this tradition is writings by several contemporary Buddhists who bring to our study an additional level of immediacy and concreteness. Prerequisite: GE A2 or equivalent.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite: ENGL 1109 (GE A2) or the equivalent.

RS 3260 Indigenous Religious Traditions of the Americas (3)

This course introduces students to the rich and diverse religious traditions of indigenous communities across the Americas. We will investigate indigenous religions through the lens of colonialism, indigenous identity/culture, conversation, and contemporary forms of resistance.

RS 3270 Religion in America (3)

Examines the religious themes within America history and culture. The course focuses on a number of cases to analyze the power and pervasiveness of religion in American life as it both directly and indirectly informs public and private life. The course will focus upon the mythic vision of America and American exceptionalism; the roles of religious liberty in American life; the religious experiences of African-Americans; the rise of Fundamentalism and its influence on American politics; feminism and religion; and religious pluralism in America.

Typically Offered: Spring

RS 3340 Psychology of Religion (3)

This course studies the interaction of psychology, religion, and spirituality. Attention is given to various psychological theories of religion including those of James, Freud, Jung, Epstein, and Zimbardo. Topics include the psychology of religious experience, the problem of evil, mindfulness, altruism, forgiveness, eating disorders, cognitive science, and the evolutionary psychology of religion.

RS 3350 Sociology of Religion (3)

This course examines the roles of religion in society. It analyzes the complex relationships between religion and social change, including the influence that religion has on society and, in turn, the effects that social structure and culture have on religion. Different dimensions of religion will be explored, such as beliefs and values, attendance, religious identification, and participation in rituals. It highlights the relationship between religion, culture, community, and family, and special attention will be given to the functions of religion in contemporary secular and secularizing societies. The course also focuses on religious diversity and issues of discrimination and inequality.

Typically Offered: Fall Even Year

RS 3360 Religion of Literature (3)

This course examines the literary expression of religious experiences and ideas. The object of the course is to familiarize students with a selection of texts drawn from a variety of writers for whom religion and its literary portrayal are fundamental concerns; to examine the role of different genres such as scripture, sermons, poetry, essays, memoirs, and novels in shaping the expression of religious experiences and ideas, and the influence that form plays upon such depiction; to examine the role of myth, metaphor, symbol, and the creative imagination in religious literature; to develop a comprehensive understanding of critical approaches to the interplay of religion and literature such that the student may develop a good working ability to use and adapt such methods to her or his own work; and to chart the changes in the human understanding of religious ideas and institutions through the works of authors committed to the value and importance of issues of faith.

Typically Offered: Spring Even Year

RS 3368 Women, Religion and Sexuality (3)

A critical examination of the various ways major religious traditions, Western and Asian, represent and legislate women and sexuality in their literatures and institutions in diverse historical contexts. Using a range of methodologies, with particular emphasis on feminist critique, the course also examines the nature of women's participation and leadership in these traditions as it shaped by factors of race, class and sexual orientation, as well as religious choices made by "post" Jewish and Christian women. Prerequisites: Complete at least 45 units; prerequisite or corequisite: GE A2. Satisfies general education requirement Junior Year Diversity and Reflection.

Requisite(s): Prerequisites: Complete at least 45 units; prerequisite or corequisite GE A2.

General Education Attribute(s): Junior Year Diversity Reflection

RS 3378 Religious Diversity in California (3)

Religious Diversity in California explores the resistance to, and growth of, religious pluralism in the state. The course will examine the presence of world religious traditions, practices, and beliefs, with particular attention to contributions to cultural transformation and public life. Major topics include religious tribalism, interfaith dialogue, the emergence of new religious movements, and the creative contributions of religions to California. Lecture/discussion course offered annually. Prerequisites: Complete at least 45 units; prerequisite or corequisite GE A3. Satisfies general education requirement Junior Year Diversity and Reflection.

Requisite(s): Prerequisites: Complete at least 45 units; prerequisite or corequisite GE A3.

General Education Attribute(s): Junior Year Diversity Reflection

RS 3388 Interfaith Literacy and Leadership: Building Bridges (3)

Religious diversity is a fact, and this course explores the ways in which students can engage with religious difference in their communities by becoming interfaith leaders. Students examine the diverse American religious landscape, explore negative and positive approaches to religious diversity, and practice community building by becoming interfaith leaders on our campus and within our community. Students are required to complete 10 hours of Service Learning with a Community-Based Organization. Prerequisites: Complete at least 45 units; prerequisite or corequisite GE A2. Satisfies general education requirement Junior Year Diversity and Reflection and is a Service Learning course, with the potential to be an Applied Experience course for Religious Studies majors, at the department chair's discretion.

Requisite(s): Prerequisites: Complete at least 45 units; prerequisite or corequisite GE A2.

General Education Attribute(s): Junior Year Diversity Reflection

RS 3480 Applied Experience (3)

Applied experiences will vary depending on placement availability and student interest. This course provides supervised field experience and the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills obtained through religious studies and general education coursework in situations with groups and individuals in community organizations and institutions. Career-oriented experience in a community setting on or off campus is combined with academic activities in a college setting. This is a credit/no credit course.

Typically Offered: Spring

RS 3518 The American Dream (3)

A study of the revolutionary idea of the American Dream that will explore the many ways in which American culture has been claimed as unprecedented in world history, the ways such efforts have been realized or failed, and the irony of the American Dream found in the oppression of marginalized peoples. Among course topics are the revolutionary impact of early American life and culture; the international revolution of human rights and freedom from the monarchs of Europe and the establishment of religion arising from the American Dream's encapsulation of the pursuit of happiness, religious freedom, and equal opportunity for all. The course will explore the irony of the American dream for marginalized Americans who have created innovative movements for human rights, equal opportunity, and a more perfect union in America that has reimagined how the American Dream can revolutionize twenty-first century life. Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C. Satisfies general education upper division Area UDC and Theme R: Revolutionary Ideas and Innovations.

Requisite(s): Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C.

General Education Attribute(s): Theme R: Rev Ideas & Innovatns, Upper Division C

RS 3528 The Holocaust and Its Impact (3)

This course examines the Holocaust through the study of a wide range of primary and secondary sources. Topics central to the course include the rise of Nazi Germany; the problem of Holocaust representation and memory; the relationship between anti-Judaism and antisemitism; the experiences of survivors, perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers; Jewish and German resistance to the Holocaust; ethics and the Holocaust; and the persistence of genocide and antisemitism in the twenty-first century. Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C. Satisfies general education upper division Area UDC and Theme S: Sustainability and Justice.

Requisite(s): Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C.

General Education Attribute(s): Theme S: Sustainability & Just, Upper Division C

Typically Offered: Spring

RS 3538 Religion and Human Rights (3) 

This course studies the development of the revolutionary ideas of civil disobedience and human rights in relation to religious violence and non-violence. Employing primary texts and scholarly sources from religious studies, the social sciences, and history, the course studies Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of satyagraha and Indian independence; Martin Luther King, Jr.'s philosophy of non-violent resistance and the civil rights movement in the USA; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa; the Mothers on the Plaza protesting Argentina's Dirty War; religious myth and sexual violence in the Bosnian genocide; the UN and the Rwandan genocide; religious violence and 9/11; and peacemaking in relation to terrorism. Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C. Satisfies general education upper division Area UDC and Theme R: Revolutionary Ideas and Innovations.

Requisite(s): Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C.

General Education Attribute(s): Theme R: Rev Ideas & Innovatns, Upper Division C

RS 3548 The Spiritual Quest (3) 

This course studies the lives of persons who have undertaken a spiritual quest in pursuit of self-knowledge and insight into the meaning of life and happiness. The course investigates spirituality and its relationship to individual struggle, the creative imagination, and personal reflection. Guiding themes include self-knowledge and personal and social transformation; the portrayal of the spiritual quest in diverse genres and religious traditions; the example of spiritual autobiography; and the relationship between the spiritual quest and knowledge of God or ultimate reality. The course addresses the struggle for meaning and the personal experiences of historical and contemporary figures to study the various ways that people have discovered and defined happiness and meaning. Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C. Satisfies general education upper division Area UDC and Theme Q: Quality of Life.

Requisite(s): Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C.

General Education Attribute(s): Theme Q: Quality of Life, Upper Division C

RS 3770 Special Topics (1-3)

Topics to be offered will be announced prior to registration. May be repeated for credit with different topics up to a maximum of 15 units.

Repeatable for Credit: Yes, up to 15 units

RS 3780 New Testament Greek (3)

New Testament Greek is a course designed to give students a basic knowledge of the essential grammar, morphology, and syntax of Greek found in the New Testament. A working knowledge of the original language of New Testament and other Greek equip students with tools for informed interpretations of the New Testament and other Greek writings of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Students who successfully complete this course should, with limited resource dependence, be able to consult the Greek text as part of the interpretive task. May be repeated for credit up to a maximum of 6 units.

Repeatable for Credit: Yes, up to 6 units

RS 4410 Religion and Immigration (3)

In our ever more interconnected world, religion and migration have played important roles in shaping social, cultural, economic, and political relations. Focusing specifically on the Americas, this course will explore the intersection of religion and immigration and its relationship to concepts of transnationalism, diaspora, borderlands, hybridity, nativism, and colonialism. We will examine this relationship through a series of case studies that represent diverse religious traditions from colonial times to the present. We will explore a variety of questions such as: How do people use religion to orient themselves during and after migrations? In what ways do religions change as a result of migration? To what extent are religious ties maintained between sending and receiving communities? By the end of the course, students will have gained knowledge of key concepts in the study of migration and the ability to apply these concepts in the analysis of lived religion and transnational experiences as well as the connections, similarities, and divisions that shape our shared reality.

RS 4420 Miracles, Magic, and the Supernatural (3)

This course explores the major questions surrounding interpretations of supernatural events in modern scholarly work. We will discuss questions of the supernatural, radical presence, materiality, and embodiment through case studies of miracles, apparitions, ghosts, demons, and vampires.


Typically Offered: Spring Odd Year

RS 4518 The Meaning of Death (3) 

A study of the meaning of death in the major religious traditions of the world through investigation of their end-of-life and mourning rituals and afterlife beliefs. Additional topics may include hospice, advance directives, near death experiences, grief and loss, physician-assisted suicide, death penalty and genocide. Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C. Satisfies general education upper division Area UDC and Theme Q: Quality of Life.

Requisite(s): Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C.

General Education Attribute(s): Theme Q: Quality of Life, Upper Division C

RS 4528 Religion, Ethics, and Social Justice (3) 

A comparative examination of the various ways in which major world religious traditions construct worldviews that prescribe ethical theory and action in diverse historical contexts. Employing methodology in comparative studies in religion, the course examines the application of ethics and ethical leadership to issues such as poverty, war and peace, imperialism and colonialism, forgiveness, sexuality, environmentalism, religious fundamentalism, and religious pluralism. Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C. Satisfies general education upper division Area UDC and Theme S: Sustainability and Justice.

Requisite(s): Prerequisites: At least 45 units and completion of LD Area C.

General Education Attribute(s): Theme S: Sustainability & Just, Upper Division C

RS 4560 Philosophy of Religion (3)

This course provides a contemporary and global overview of the philosophy of religion. We will explore how philosophical perspectives provide an understanding of religious beliefs and practices across multiple cultures. Our topics include religious experience, the problem of evil, religious language, and religion and science. Although we will encounter some of the perennial questions and modes of argument that have shaped the classical, Western field of the philosophy of religion, we will also critique those earlier methods and their presumptions about religion. In doing so, we will draw upon recent developments in the field, such as those precipitated by affect, feminist, and post-colonial theories. Prerequisite: completion of GE A3 and 45 units. This course carries credit in either PHIL 4560 or RS 4560.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite: completion of GE A3 and 45 units.

Typically Offered: Spring Even Year

RS 4770 Special Topics (1-3)

Topics to be offered will be announced prior to registration. May be repeated for credit with different topics up to a maximum of 20 units.

Repeatable for Credit: Yes, up to 20 units

RS 4850 Individual Study (1-3)

Individual program with regular consultations and/or examinations as instructor may require. Prerequisite: GE A2 or equivalent. Admission with consent of department chair. May be repeated for credit up to a maximum of 3 units.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite: ENGL 1109 (GE A2) or the equivalent.

Repeatable for Credit: Yes, up to 3 units

RS 4860 Internship (1-3)

Supervised field experience in applying religious studies skills in dealing with individuals and in community organizations and institutions, including CSUB. Career-oriented experience in community setting is combined with academic activities in the college setting. Hours in the field, placement and academic requirements such as conferences, reports, and readings are arranged in consultation with the work supervisor and faculty supervisor. Prerequisites vary depending on the specific internship, but enrollment is limited to students with good academic records who are committed to understanding the religious elements present in professional life. May be repeated up to a maximum of 3 units

Repeatable for Credit: Yes, up to 3 units

RS 4880 Directed Study in the Instruction of Philosophy/Religious Studies (1-3)

Theory and method in undergraduate instruction in Philosophy/Religious Studies. Weekly meetings with faculty sponsor and supervised experience which may include developing and administering examinations or paper assignments, proctoring self-paced instructional units, course development, evaluation of student papers, lectures, leading class discussion and discussion groups, and in-depth directed readings of relevant topics. Offered on a credit, no credit basis only. Prerequisites: Senior (or graduate) standing and consent of instructor who will serve as sponsor. May be repeated up to a maximum of 3 units

Repeatable for Credit: Yes, up to 3 units

RS 4908 Senior Seminar (3) 🦋

This course serves as the culmination of work in the Religious Studies curriculum. Students in the course will produce their most substantial paper in religious studies so far. Students carry out extensive research and develop their approaches in consultation with a faculty advisor. The course also includes an oral presentation, and, as a Capstone, it requires a short essay reflecting upon General Education experiences. Prerequisite: At least 90 units and completion of JYDR. Satisfies general education requirement Senior Capstone.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite: At least 90 units and completion of JYDR.

General Education Attribute(s): Capstone

RS 5100 Advanced Research Participation (1-3)

Individual investigation under the supervision of an identified instructor. (Experience as a research or teaching assistant does not count for credit.) Prerequisite: 3.0 GPA and consent of department chair. May be repeated for credit up to a maximum of 20 units.

Repeatable for Credit: Yes, up to 20 units

RS 5770 Advanced Topics in Religious Studies (1-3)

Topics to be offered will be announced. Prerequisite: Graduate standing. May be repeated for credit with different topics up to a maximum of 20 units.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

Repeatable for Credit: Yes, up to 20 units

RS 5990 Advanced Individual Study (1-3)

Special projects developed by the individual in consultation with an identified instructor. Prerequisite: 3.0 GPA and consent of department chair. May be repeated for credit up to a maximum of 20 units.

Repeatable for Credit: Yes, up to 20 units

RS 6770 Advanced Topics in Religious Studies (1-3)

Topics to be offered will be announced. Prerequisite: Graduate standing. May be repeated for credit with different topics up to a maximum of 20 units.

Requisite(s): Prerequisite: Graduate standing.

Repeatable for Credit: Yes, up to 20 units