

# RELIGION (REL)

## REL 100 Religion Matters

This course serves as an introductory exploration to the interdisciplinary study of religion and theology. While few would argue with the statement that religion exerts enormous power in the world today, it is not an easy topic to discuss in our increasingly diverse society. Students investigate both the personal dimensions of religion that matter in their lives and the substance and cultural impact of religion in society through reflection and analysis of texts, teachings, and practices. Throughout the semester, students identify dimensions of religion and theology that are significant to their lived experience, compare "the matter" of religious traditions on something that "matters," and articulate the challenges of religious identity in a multicultural world.

## REL 140 Moral Quandaries - Health Care

## REL 170 Special Topics

## REL 175 Special Topics

## REL 200 Theories & Methods in R & T

This course builds upon students introductory exposure to religion and theology in REL 100: Religion Matters. Student survey various theories and methods and learn the intellectual scaffolding of the discipline. Theories and methods include but are not limited to anthropological, comparative, contextual, decolonial, ethical, ethnographical, hermeneutical, historical, literary, phenomenological, psychological, and systematic. This course is required for Religion and Theology majors and minors and completes the Expanded Literacies requirement for majors.

## REL 210 Mysteries of the Hebrew Scriptures (formerly Mysteries of the Hebrew Bible)

This course examines the Jewish canonical writings in their historical and cultural contexts, introduces the scholarly tools employed to discover the meaning(s) of the documents, and investigates the rich and complex development of the religion of ancient Israel and biblical Judaism(s). The deuterocanonical writings, those not included in the Jewish canon, will also be discussed.

## REL 211 The New Testament

This course examines the Christian canonical writings in their historical and cultural contexts, introduces the scholarly tools employed to discover the meaning(s) of the documents, and investigates the continuities and the transformations of Christianity from a Jewish movement to an independent religion.

## REL 212 The Prophets of Ancient Israel

This an emphasis on the study of prophecy and prophetic literature in the Bible; this course explores prophecy as an institution in the Near East and its unique development in Israel in connection with the theological message of the biblical prophets.

## REL 214 The Gospels

This course is an introduction to the four New Testament gospels. While these texts agree on major events in the life of Jesus, they individually offer unique perspectives on who Jesus was. The synoptic gospels: Mark, Matthew, and Luke will be studied first, with special attention given to the question of literary relationships between these three texts, what scholars identify as the "Synoptic Problem." Next, we will study the Gospel of John, the most unique of the four gospels. Finally, we will briefly explore apocryphal (extra-biblical) gospel traditions about the life and teachings of Jesus.

## REL 220 Catholicism in the Modern World

This course is a historical and theological introduction to the study of Catholicism as it shapes and is shaped by the social, economic, political, and religious contexts of the 21st century. Catholicism will be studied in light of the history of the issues and current theological thought.

## REL 221 Christian Origins

This course is an introduction to the development of Christianity from a fringe, Jewish apocalyptic movement to the state religion of the Roman Empire. The course objectives are as follows: (1) to familiarize students with the history and literature of formative Christianity in its GrecoRoman context; (2) to explore Jesus traditions in the New Testament and later Christian writings; (3) to discuss the diversities of "heretical" and "orthodox" Christianity in the first four centuries; and (4) to explore the roles of women in the earliest Christian communities.

## REL 223 Jesus and His Mission

This course includes a careful study of the images of Jesus presented in the Christian Scriptures and reflected in the lived practices of communities of faith from the earliest Christians to today. The course examines how Jesus' challenge to the social and religious structures of his day stands as a challenge to Christians in the contemporary world and may consider how women, people of color, and those of diverse cultures, religious beliefs, and economic status continue to engage him and his message. The course may also include an examination of beliefs of incarnation, salvation, and Trinity.

## REL 224 Christian Spirituality: Visionaries, Mystics, and Saints

This course explores the ways in which Christians, both Eastern and Western, have striven to express and deepen love of God and others. The course will analyze the origins and development of their various movements in spirituality and the means used to embody Christian discipleship.

## REL 225 The Sacraments

This course inquires into the origins and developments of, as well as the current theological issues concerning, Christian rites and symbols. This course also studies some of the problems of contemporary sacramental theology. Prerequisite(s): REL 100, 150, or 153

## REL 226 Christian Worship

This course is a study of the shape and practice of worship, especially in Western Christian Sunday liturgy. The course understands worship as lying between art and life, and examines both symbol and ritual, and surveys the development of Sunday worship and contemporary issues.

## REL 231 Buddhism in Asia and Beyond

This course examines how the Buddha's question of how to end suffering developed out of the historical, religious, and cultural context of his time as well as how his insights spread and were adapted throughout Asia and into the modern world. It investigates the source of such practices as yoga, meditation, and mindfulness, which have become influential in the West, and considers ways of thinking about the self, death and dying, and the mind—all of which have challenged and expanded approaches to psychology, the hospice movement, and neuroscience in the world today.

## REL 232 Judaism, Islam, and Other Religions from the Near East

This course examines Judaism and Islam within the framework of comparative study of religions. It investigates the historical origins, roots, and developments of Judaism and Islam, their sacred texts as the bases of their laws, rituals, values and material culture. It explores interactions among the traditions, as well as with other religions and considers how such interactions influence the ways Jews and Muslims live in contemporary times. Secondary attention will be paid to Middle Eastern Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Ba'há'í, or other aspects of the religious life of Israel, North Africa, and the Middle East.

**REL 233 Islam in America**

How do American Muslims live and interpret Islam in a Western, secular society? Students will learn about the teachings of Islam, its historical development in the United States from the antebellum period to the emergence of local and diasporic Muslim communities in contemporary times. Various dimensions of Islam are examined, along with the social-political-economic contexts and issues that helped shape these communities. Topics may include Qur'an as interpreted in the American environment, women and gender, religion and race, American Muslim politics and civic engagement after 9/11, visual expressions of Islam, as well as expressions of Islam in American popular culture. Site visits to local Mosques and Islamic centers are usually integrated into the course.

**REL 235 Women & Gender in Islam****REL 236 Christian/Muslim Relations****REL 237 Hinduism:Yoga/Dharma/Devotion**

Yoga, as it has evolved in modern times from the meditation techniques described in Patañjali's Yoga Sutras, is now practiced by millions around the world. We will examine some of the traditional sources of these philosophical and meditative approaches as well as related practices for living in harmony with others and intimately connecting with the divine in the traditions that make up what is known today as Hinduism. Tracing the historic development of yogic traditions from the early culture of the Indus Valley to modern movements in India and the diaspora, we will explore sacred texts, works of literature, art, films, cultural sites and practices of liberation. Topics for discussion will include gender, sexuality and the body, philosophies of non-violence vs. radical devotion, and the use of yoga as medicine. Students will have an opportunity to develop a final project based on their own interests in the course.

**REL 238 Tibetan Buddhism**

This course explores the cultural and spiritual traditions of Buddhism that developed in Tibet and continue to flourish in various parts of the Himalayas, China, Mongolia, and the West. It will focus on what Tibetan Buddhists refer to as the Crazy Wisdom that can free the mind stuck in conventional patterns of thought that cause suffering in order to awaken the natural clarity, peace, and joy that are said to lie within. Through readings, films, and experiential engagement, we will examine the various practices and techniques used by Tibetan Buddhists to overcome obstacles, develop compassion for enemies, and navigate the mysterious passage between one life and the next.

**REL 240 Contemporary Religious Thought**

This course offers a critical study of contemporary writers and thinkers who continue to shape and challenge our understanding of the relationship between religion and culture. Drawing upon the works of these figures, each section of the course is structured around a significant theme or questions. Themes may include the relationship between religion and politics, the challenges of secularism, the place of the individual in society, diaspora communities, amongst others.

**REL 241 Women in Religion**

Are religions necessarily patriarchal? This course introduces students to the diversity of women's experiences of and contributions to religious belief and practice in at least one of the world's religious traditions. Topics may include feminist understandings of the divine, the role of women in the origins and development of religious traditions, feminist interpretations of sacred texts, feminist spiritualities, historical and contemporary efforts by women to reform religious traditions.

**REL 242 Sports and Spirituality**

This course explores contemporary spirituality in relation to the phenomena of sports. Students study how human beings encounter the Holy in the midst of everyday life with emphasis on how experiences associated with sports, either as an athlete participant or as identifying with athletes and teams, impact on developing a critical assessment of one's personal values system. This assessment, in turn, becomes a focus on the ways in which one relates to the Holy or the Transcendent in the course of one's life.

**REL 243 Religion and Contemporary Literature**

The course explores the intersection between themes from the world's religions and contemporary literature. Works studied cross religious and geographic boundaries, as well as literary genres, and provide the opportunity for both literary critical and religious analyses highlighting themes such as identity, suffering, mystery, doubt, evil, the supernatural and reconciliation. Students do independent reading and research in this class. This course is cross-listed as ENG 243.

**REL 244 Religion in the United States**

This course will examine the formation and development of the US national identity-- the religious and secular roots that have nourished it, the myths that have informed its sense of self, especially concepts of being a chosen people, of progress and unlimited freedom. Areas of focus will include dominant expressions of Protestantism, along with conventional "outsiders," such as Islam, Catholicism, Judaism, Native traditions, the Black Church, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Underlying this approach is a tension between narratives of the United States as a messianic "Christian" nation, while also being a haven for pluralism and Church-State separation.

**REL 245 Catholicism in the United States**

Is it possible to be a good Catholic and American at the same time? The answer often depends on who is asking the question. This course examines the history and place of the Roman Catholic community in the United States from the colonial period until the present. Some topics and central figures may include ethnicity, devotional life, John F. Kennedy, and the sexual abuse crisis.

**REL 246 Encountering Evil**

This course uses an interdisciplinary approach to offer a wide range of perspectives on the topic of evil. Students will explore the following themes: religious accounts of and explanations for evil; the philosophical problem of evil; the use of evil as a moral category for evaluating human behaviors and history; the science of evil; and representations of evil in contemporary popular culture (e.g. art, literature, and film).

**REL 247 Theologies of Suffering**

This course examines one of the most profound experiences in all of creation, as well as one of the most vexing theological problems. Sources include sacred texts and ongoing responses to them from Christian, Jewish and Muslim thinkers.

**REL 248 Rel/Ethics/Civil Rights Movmnt****REL 250 Religion and Ethics in Contemporary Culture**

This course introduces students to foundational approaches to ethical reasoning informed by religious traditions, and examines a variety of moral and religious perspectives on selected contemporary issues. Examples may include world hunger and poverty; the causes and symptoms of social inequality; sexism and sexual violence; the death penalty and incarceration; and the degradation of the environment.

**REL 251 Peace and Justice in the Christian Tradition**

This course explores fundamental principles that have influenced religious considerations the social imperative to work for peace and justice. Although the principal focus is on Western Christian thought and action other traditions, both religious and secular, may also be included. Particular subtopics that may be investigated include militarism, socioeconomic inequality, race, gender, class, sexuality, environmentalism, liberation theologies, and nonviolent struggle.

**REL 270 Special Topics**

Special topics are offered in accord with student demand. These courses are assigned the numbers listed above.

**REL 271 Islam in the Contemporary World**

Special topics are offered in accord with student and faculty interest on an ad hoc basis.

**REL 272 Special Topics**

Special topics are offered in accord with student demand. These courses are assigned the numbers listed above.

**REL 273 Jesus in Film**

Special topics are offered in accord with student and faculty interest on an ad hoc basis.

**REL 274 Special Topics****REL 275 Special Topics****REL 276 Economic Justice for All**

Special topics are offered in accord with student and faculty interest on an ad hoc basis.

**REL 277 Special Topics****REL 278 Special Topics****REL 279 Special Topics****REL 280 Special Topics****REL 300 Rhetoric/Dialogue in R & T**

This course builds on the knowledge and application of theories and methods developed in REL 200. It introduces students to the skills of rhetoric and dialogue in religion and theology through close examination and evaluation of the writing and public discourse of contemporary scholars. Students will work with their peers to develop their own rhetorical styles and apply them both to a form of written communication fitting their post-graduate plans and to an oral presentation for an appropriate public whether in or beyond the department. This course is required for Religion and Theology majors and meets the Effective Expression requirement for majors.

**REL 315 St. Paul**

This course is a study of the 13 New Testament letters associated with Paul. These letters bear witness to a diversity of belief and practice in the earliest Christian communities. This course will examine the following: the first century historical and political context, Paul's Jewish background, authorship of the letters, Jesus according to Paul, Paul and women, and primitive Christianity as described in his letters.

**REL 316 Women in the Bible**

This course is a select survey of "women" in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and New Testament, this course examines biblical stories about women; biblical attitudes about femaleness; women's religious and social roles in their respective historical settings; and recent feminist biblical interpretation.

**REL 319 Special Topics****REL 324 La Salle And His Legacy**

John Baptist de La Salle (1651-1719), saint, scholar, priest, founder, educational innovator, spiritual guide, and universal patron of teachers, initiated a spiritual and educational legacy that drew upon the religious currents of his times and has endured into the present. This course will explore the life experiences, spiritual insights, educational innovations, and lasting influences of St. La Salle, with particular attention to how his legacy continues to inspire and guide Lasallians worldwide today. As participants in an upper division course, students will engage in theological discourse, read and analyze foundational texts, and research and write about course topics with an appropriate level of skill. Prerequisite(s): REL 100, 150, or 153

**REL 331 World of the Early Christians****REL 345 Religion in Philadelphia**

This course explores the changing religious landscape of Philadelphia from William Penn's "Holy Experiment", ensuring freedom of religious expression, to contemporary diversity brought about by transitional migration, new religious movements, and conversion. It examines the intersections of race, gender, ethnicity and religion through the prism of significant moments in this historic city, including the abolitionist movement and establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the adoption of Islam by African American Philadelphians, the increasing influence of Hinduism and Buddhism in both immigrant and convert communities, and the social activism that has resulted in the first ordinations of women and support of gay marriage in some religious communities. Sources include primary and secondary readings and films, as well as active dialogue with communities on the ground, today, through visits to historic and contemporary religious sites.

**REL 350 Theology and Racism**

This course examines Christianity's role in the historical construction and social implementation of racial categories and resulting systems of racial discrimination and privilege. It considers historical and contemporary sources from the Christian tradition that have been used to sustain and resist racism and then applies them to contemporary situations of racial injustice. In addition to learning key concepts in critical race theory and theological ethics, students will also gain skills needed for engaging in constructive dialogue about racism and creating inclusive communities on campus and beyond.

**REL 351 Open Number****REL 352 Playing God: Religion, Ethics, and the Life Sciences**

This course will examine the dilemmas and debates related to many of today's most controversial issues in the life sciences, as well as the role of religion as a frame for understanding and evaluating the ethical dimensions of these controversies. Topics will include: the American healthcare system, stem cell research, genetic engineering, cloning, drug development, pollution, global warming, euthanasia, plastic surgery, and reproductive technology. Prerequisite(s): REL 100, 150, or 153

**REL 353 Social Justice and Community Organizing**

This course is designed for students who would like to become involved in community outreach activities or who have already demonstrated an ongoing commitment to such activities. This course will integrate community service with issues of justice from the perspective of theology. Its purpose is to provide not only analysis, but also a deeper appreciation and respect for the disadvantaged, and a more long-lasting commitment to enter into solidarity with them in their struggle for justice. Through readings, reflection, a community service project, and discussion, this course will allow students to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the social, political, spiritual, and economic causes of injustice and how their service influences the cause of social justice.

**REL 354 Love, Sex, and Friendship: Religious Perspectives on Human Relationships**

What is the nature of love and desire? What role does friendship play in our happiness? Can sex be a religious experience? This course will explore how different religious and secular traditions have shaped our ideas of love, sexuality, gender and relationships, and how our changing understanding of these dimensions of the human experience inform and/or challenge religious traditions today.

**REL 355 Meditation & Mindfulness**

This course provides both a theoretical and experiential-learning focused introduction to meditation and mindfulness practices which developed in Buddhist traditions and have been increasingly applied in a variety of secular contexts. We will consider mindfulness-based approaches used by therapists to address anxiety and depression, as well as those used by medical practitioners to address issues such as pain management, and end-of-life care. We will examine how meditation and mindfulness have been used to increase focus, reduce stress, improve teamwork, creativity and performance in sports, education, business, and the arts. We will also explore how such practices have been implemented to connect communities, promote peace, and heal the trauma of racial injustice. Finally, we will consider how meditation and mindfulness have been misused as forms of "self-help" in the absence of professional care, and the harm that may result when one learns meditation from a book or an app, without the guidance of an experienced teacher. This class will provide such guidance in exercises taught in class, in ongoing feedback on the daily practices students will report and reflect on each week, and in individual and small group discussions. Readings, reflections and class participation are important for gaining insight into the specific historical contexts and practices of meditation and mindfulness we will consider. However, this course especially emphasizes experiential learning. While there are no formal papers or exams, students should note that it is quite challenging. Strict attendance, a willingness to try new things, and a commitment to meditate daily are required. Students will apply what they have learned in the course to a final project based on their own interests

**REL 360 Religious History of Ireland**

This course explores the foundations of Ireland's religious history from its foundations in Celtic-Druidic religious practices to its Christianization under the missionary ingenuity of Patrick and the subsequent influence on Irish Catholicism, political conflicts, and cultural development. Students focus on how the more democratic monastic movement entered into conflict with the hierarchical Roman Church and what role Irish monasteries played as centers of culture and education from the Dark Ages to the medieval period. Students also examine the ways a powerful Roman Catholicism served the people in periods of persecution following the Reformation and in the struggle for independence from Great Britain in the 19th and 20th centuries. The course addresses the struggles of the Irish peoples to survive penal laws and the Great Famines and looks at Ireland's Declaration of Independence from Great Britain, the war that followed, and how that conflict led to Ireland's civil war. Finally, the course examines the "Troubles," The Republic of Ireland's conflict with Northern Ireland, the "Peace Process" that ensued, and the problems Roman Catholicism faces in modern Ireland. As a travel/study course, students journey to Ireland to see first-hand the various sites that illustrate Ireland's impressive and diverse religious history and culture.

**REL 370 Special Topics**

Special topics are offered in accord with student demand. These courses are assigned the numbers listed above.

**REL 371 Special Topics**

Special topics are offered in accord with student demand. These courses are assigned the numbers listed above.

**REL 372 Special Topics**

Special topics are offered in accord with student demand. These courses are assigned the numbers listed above.

**REL 375 Special Topics****REL 377 Special Topics****REL 379 Special Topics****REL 400 La Salle and Beyond**

As the department's capstone experience, this course synthesizes student learning their coursework in the major. Students will identify the "persistent preoccupation" that has driven their studies in Religion & Theology, inventory the various skills they have learned and developed through their studies that may be useful for a future career path and in life generally, and pursue a final project appropriate to their post-graduate plans that links their academic studies to life beyond La Salle. This course is required for majors, fulfills the Broader Identity commitment of the core (2.2), and supports the "Vision for La Salle Education" with its emphasis on preparing ethical and engaged graduates committed to the global common good. Restriction(s): Senior Religion Majors and Dual-Majors only. Prerequisite(s): REL 100, 150, or 153

**REL 444 Research in REL I**

This course provides the student with an opportunity to do research with a faculty member. The student and the faculty member agree on the research project before the student registers for the course.

**REL 445 Research in REL II**

This course is a continuation of the 444 research course. It provides the student with an opportunity to continue to conduct research with a faculty member.

**REL 460 Internship****REL 470 Special Topics**

Special topics are offered in accord with student demand. These courses are assigned the numbers listed above.