

SPRING 2012 RELIGION COURSES

HBR1103/REL5204

Beginning Hebrew II

Dr. Levenson

HBR 1103 continues HBR 1102 and completes coverage of the essentials of Biblical Hebrew grammar. During the course of the semester selections from Genesis and the entire book of Jonah will be read. In addition, there will be some reading from poetic texts (including songs). After the completion of HBR 1103, the student will be prepared to read any portion of the Hebrew Bible with the aid of a dictionary and commentary.

HUM2937

Christianity and Birth of the Modern State

Dr. Dupuigrenet

How did Christian thought conceive the ideal of the Christian Commonwealth, embodied in the idea of Empire, and the reality of Christian states as they developed during the late medieval and early modern period? How did Christian political thinkers view the dismantling of the feudal system that gave way to the sovereign form of the state? How did they consider non-Christian forms of state such as the Ottoman Empire, the greatest power in the Mediterranean world in the XVIth and XVIIth century? How, between 1300 and 1800 were conceived such tenets of our contemporary conception of the state as the nature of sovereignty, the exercise of citizenship, the legitimate use of violence, the role of religion in the state, or civil and ecclesiastical toleration?

Starting with Dante's treatise on monarchy, this course will focus on the ideological make-up of the European state from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, emphasizing such defining moments as the birth of Protestant states in the sixteenth century, the English Revolution, the treaties of Westphalia in 1648 that put an end to more than a hundred years of religious wars in Europe.

Particular emphasis will be given to a seminar-form discussion of Dante's *Monarchy*, Thomas Hobbes's *On the citizen*, and Rousseau's *Social Contract*.

REL1300

Introduction to World Religions

Staff

"Introduction to World Religions" surveys the major religious traditions of the world, with attention to their origins, principle beliefs and practices. The course will have achieved its purpose if you complete the semester with a working knowledge of the world's main religions and an appreciation for the pluralistic spiritual views of humanity. *Meets Liberal Studies Area IV and Gordon Rule requirements.*

REL2121**Religion in the U.S.****Staff**

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the historical study of religion in the United States, with an eye toward ways that social and cultural contexts have shaped the religious experience of Americans in different places and times. The course is structured around 4 themes, each of which is comprised of a pairing of common analytical concepts used in the study of religion, (i.e the first theme is “pluralism and syncretism”). Readings, lectures, and class discussions will explore the relationship between the 2 concepts in specific places and times in U.S. history. Over the course of the semester we will survey religious developments, movements, groups, and individuals, stopping to linger over representative “soundings” within each historical period. The primary goal of the course is for you to become familiar with the history of American religion both by learning about central events and trends. *Meets Liberal Studies Area IV and Gordon Rule requirements.*

REL2210**Introduction to the Old Testament****Staff**

The word “Bible” is derived from the Greek word “biblia” which means “books.” While revered as a single book, the Bible is a collection of many texts that were composed by different authors at different times for different reasons. This course is an introduction to the critical study of this assorted literature and the world in which it was produced. We will examine individual texts of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament within their historical contexts while taking into consideration other methodological approaches such as literary criticism and theology. *Meets Liberal Studies Area IV and Gordon Rule requirements.*

REL2240**Introduction to the New Testament****Dr. Levenson**

An introduction to the literature of the New Testament and to the academic approaches to it. The distinctive concerns and literary features of individual texts will be studied in the contexts of the historical development of the early Christian church, ancient Judaism, and the wider Greco-Roman world. Emphasis throughout will fall on the variety of interpretations of the Christian message as Christians encountered new social circumstances and theological challenges. *This course meets the Liberal Studies literature requirement and the “Gordon Rule” writing requirement.*

REL2315**Religions of South Asia****Staff**

Overview of religions in the South Asian cultural region, emphasizing Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Islam. The history and cultural contexts of these traditions will be explored with particular attention to sacred stories, holy people, religious leadership, and gender issues. This course also serves as an introduction to the academic study of religion. No previous background is required. Students will gain familiarity with the basic concepts of the religious traditions of South Asia, will develop interpretive skills in the academic study of religion, and will have the opportunity to develop research and writing skills by exploring a topic of special interest. *Meets Liberal Studies Humanities and Multicultural (x) requirements.*

REL2350 **Religions of East Asia** **Staff**

This course combines thematic and historical approaches to religions of East Asia, focusing primarily on China and Japan. Specifically, it examines interactions among Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Shinto, and popular new religious movements. Students will approach the histories of East Asian religions as processes of change, border-crossing, acculturation, and mutual-alteration. Readings have been drawn from secondary scholarship as well as a variety of primary sources in translation, including myths, canonical scriptures, polemical tracts, hagiography, and narrative tales. Assigned readings will be augmented by occasional in-class films.

REL3054 **Critics of Religion** **Staff**

This is an introduction to what sometimes goes by the name “modern Western religious thought,” a discourse that has been obsessed with the proper arena of religion within Western culture. As part of this obsession, it has deployed certain critical arguments toward religious belief. In this course, we will examine the nature and scope of these arguments, whether they are about the origin of religious impulses (fear, or desire, or neurosis), about the morality of religious belief, about the lack of rational justification for arguments for religious belief, or about the conceptual clarity of the whole religion kit and kaboodle. The course ends with a look at what how these arguments, whose representatives in this class are British and German, have continued and changed in classical American philosophy.

REL3112 **Religion and Fantasy** **Dr. Cronin**

This course offers an overview of theological and anti-theological elements in twentieth and twenty-first century fantasy literature from authors Lewis, Tolkien, Rowling, and Pullman.

REL3128 **Psychology in American Religious History** **Dr. Porterfield**

This course will explore psychological aspects of religion in different faith traditions in the U.S., focusing on their historical development in the 20th and 21st centuries.

REL3142 **Religion, Self and Society** **Dr. Day**

The Spring 2012 version of this course is framed by one thesis and one question. First, the thesis: *there is no such thing as religion—only “religion.”* That is to say, we should abandon the habit of treating some discourses or practices as being irreducibly distinct from mundane political and economic life. Rather, we must learn to recognize how the category of “religion” itself mystifies a variety of all-too-human phenomena by isolating them from everything else. There is a rich tradition of modern social theory regarding religion, but we have barely begun articulating a social theory of “religion” as an expression of both the will to order and the will to power. Thus, the question this course sets out to answer is: Which elements from our past theories of religion can be most fruitfully refashioned in order to theorize “religion”?

REL3145 **Gender and Religion** **Staff**

This course examines the impact of gender on religious beliefs and practices and the impact of religious beliefs and practices on gender, cross-culturally. We will be looking at the intersections of religion and culture, in general. In doing so, we will look at a history of feminist thought in religious studies and the current gender issues that have arisen through women's examinations of religious thought and the study of religion. We will use a variety of texts, some film, class discussion, and writing to explore these topics as fully as possible.

REL3170 **Religious Ethics** **Staff**

This introduction to the study of religious ethics meets the Gordon Rule requirement, the liberal studies area IV requirement and the multicultural x requirement. Students will examine the moral problems raised by issues such as deception, capital punishment, war, the environment, and human sexuality in the context of religious views about love, duty, good, and evil. They will undertake this examination through close readings of texts describing views of different religious traditions including Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam. They will also develop and fine-tune their writing skills by completing two 1500 word papers.

REL3171 **Bioethics and Religion (Honors Section)** **Dr. Kalbian**

This undergraduate honors course is an introduction to theoretical and practical issues in bioethics from the perspective of a variety of religious positions. By the end of the course students will know and understand how religious views have influenced the development of bioethics, the difficulties of cultural diversity in the context of medicine, and theories and approaches used in resolving issues in bioethics. They will also learn about the history of bioethics, the vocabulary specific to bioethics, and how to interpret moral and religious arguments as they relate to specific case studies.

REL3180 **Ethics and Food** **Dr. Reid**

Religious Ethics of Food is a course exploring and examining our religious and cultural attitudes about food as well as ethical aspects of food production, dissemination, and use. In this course, we will be looking at the role of food in defining ourselves and our own cultures. We will also study the ways in which both agriculture and livestock, the substance of our food, interrelate with our political and economic systems, as well as the environment. It is the intention of this course to make you aware of the importance of food to our emotional, religious, and cultural lives, as well as the ethical dilemmas presented by our current system of food production. As such, we will be looking at the religious significance of food choices, often a primary factor in religious life, and the reasoning behind the mores that have arisen regarding food. We will also be examining religious systems of ethical thought and how food and its production fit into these, sometimes as a moral good and sometimes as a moral problem. We will also explore the paradigm shifts of thought and ethics regarding food over the course of the past century, how it has moved from —"sustenance" on many levels to —"nutrition" on one.

REL3194**The Holocaust****Dr. Kavka**

This course is a survey of responses to the attempted extermination of European Jews between 1933-45, often called the Holocaust or the Shoah, a Hebrew word meaning "disaster."² It is not a survey of the means by which this extermination was attempted; students interested in a historical approach to the material should take one of the classes in the Department of History that speak to this topic. Instead, this course is a survey of literary, theological, and cinematic responses to the Holocaust. (If time, the syllabus will also include a brief unit on the architecture of Holocaust memorials.) The course's primary aim is to study the ways in which one represents this traumatic event, the techniques by which one bears witness to it, and the extent to which this event challenges the foundational narratives of the Jewish and Christian traditions.

There will be required film screenings, outside of class, on four evenings during the course of the semester. These will be scheduled during the first week of class. Requirements: three papers of at least 1500 words.

REL3293**Sex in the New Testament and Early Christianity****Dr. Kelley**

This course examines what early Christian writings – including but not limited to the texts of the New Testament – have to say about issues such as sexual activity, lust, biological sex, and gender. We will read a number of ancient texts along with modern scholarly discussions. Selected topics include: the depiction of Jesus as an exemplar of Greco-Roman ideals of masculinity; the use of sexual slander in ancient Christian polemics; same-sex relations in ancient Christianity; and the impact of slavery on discussions of sexual morality.

REL3293/5292**Aramaic****Dr. Goff**

An introduction to Biblical Aramaic, focusing primarily on the book of Daniel, but also including some discussion of other dialects of Jewish Aramaic. All the Aramaic sections of Daniel (2:4b through chapter 7) will be read as well as selected passages from Targum Onqelos (the most widely used Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch). The grammar will be studied inductively as we read the texts.

REL3337**Goddesses, Women, and Power in Hinduism****Dr. Erndl**

This course explores ways in which the "divine" and "female" are interrelated in the Hindu tradition, using sources such as sacred texts, ethnography, history, art, and film. Students become familiar with the myths, rituals, and iconography of the major Hindu goddesses, images and roles of women, and the concept *Śakti* (creative female power), which is integral to the Hindu worldview. Students develop writing, analytical, and interpretive skills in relation to Hinduism, goddesses, and gender issues through individual and collaborative learning activities. No previous background is required. **Note: There will be several required films, which will be screened on selected Wed. nights at 6:30 PM.**

REL3936**Ecstatic Religion****Dr. Hellweg**

Beyond and sometimes within the confines of mainstream religion, a range of more emotional, more physical, more mystical practices proliferates—from spirit possession, trance, prophecy, and shamanism to asceticism, ritual healing, and speaking in tongues. While public opinion and popular media may portray these practices as demonic, exotic, irrational, or superstitious, they incarnate the deepest longings for and grandest visions of the divine. This course explores various forms of embodied mysticism around the world—in Africa, Latin and North America, and Asia. Our goal will be to understand the logics behind these practices that make them sources of power and meaning for their practitioners. Because religious minorities as well as women, marginal men, sexual minorities, and transgendered persons often play key roles in these practices, issues of politics, economics, gender, and sexuality take center stage. And because there are various ways to explain mystical experiences, the course will compare competing neurological, psychological, psychiatric, sociological, and theological explanations for them. Ultimately, the course will argue for an anthropological approach, one that sees the transcendent experience of the holy as immanent within the cultural context of daily life.

REL3936 The Reformation and Christianity in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700 Dr. Dupuigrenet

With the same methods as its companion course *Introduction to medieval Christianity*, *The Reformation and Christianity in Early Modern Europe* presents an in-depth analysis of two centuries that deeply altered the course of Christian history, from the Lutheran challenge to the Roman Catholic Church to the peace of Westphalia that sanctioned the mutual recognition of Catholic and Protestant states at the end of the Thirty Years War. If prominent in the course will be great figures of religious reformers such as John Calvin, of reformed sovereigns like Elizabeth I of England, or of artists such as Hans Holbein or Johann Sebastian Bach, all of whom contributed to the definition of Protestant forms of civilization, I will not examine the sole Protestant world but will evaluate globally the long lasting consequences of the Reformation on European Christianity, thus on the side of the Catholic Church as on the side of the Reformed ones. In “Europe’s house divided” (Diarmaid MacCulloch) reformers and counter-reformers alike considered that the Bible was the ultimate judge of their controversies, and an unsurpassable model both for the Christian state and for a science that could not contradict divine Revelation. The existence of this common biblical culture clearly differentiates the period under consideration from the “critical years of the European mind” (Paul Hazard) at the end of the seventeenth century, when the authority of the Bible, and of all Christian Churches, will be under attack from the forerunners of the Enlightenment and soon the the *Encyclopédie* of D’Alembert and Diderot will substitute the Bible as the great code of culture.

REL3936**Religion in Africa****Dr. Hellweg**

This course explores religious practices across the African continent as pragmatic strategies for daily life, political struggle, and social action. From birth to death and beyond, African rituals shape persons in relation to their world. Sorcery, divination, initiation rites, spirit possession, funeral celebrations, and sacrifices for communing with the dead have practical consequences that are as real, reliable, and useful to their practitioners as the cars that we drive. In Africa, ritual is a technology, a form of expertise that gives one access to the unseen double of the world in which real power is achieved and manipulated. This is as true for Christians and Muslims in Africa as it is for those who practice autochthonous rites. Religion is a confrontation with reality, not a flight from it. African ritual life is deeply embedded in the dynamics of gender, sexuality, nation building, globalization, and public health. The history and ethnography of religion in Africa is therefore an ideal lens through which to view the dynamics of colonialism and nationalism that have shaped today's nation-states and the challenges they face, such as ethnically charged tensions that emerge over funeral arrangements and controversies stemming from female genital cutting. Africans are using such ritual contexts to forge new identities in innovative ways.

REL4044**What is Religion?****Dr. Kavka**

What Is Religion? What Is Religious Studies? This course is limited to undergraduate majors in the Department of Religion. It is split up into two halves. In the "What Is Religion?" half, we'll survey what various modern thinkers have said what religion is and the social-scientific and philosophical approaches that they take in their answers to questions about the origin, essence, and function of religion. In the "What Is Religious Studies?" half, we'll still engage to some extent with the question of what religion is, but we'll do so by a closer look at what it means to be a scholar of religion to look at a religious community, or a tradition, from the outside. To what extent can a scholar bracket her or his own commitments or presuppositions in talking about religion? If the answer to the former question is ³not at all,² does this mean that Westerners are unable to study Asian religions well? Does it mean that historical research published by moderns says more about the present than about the past? Does it mean that it is illegitimate to include subfields that make normative judgments (say, religious ethics) in the field of religious studies?

REL4190**Catholic Sexual Ethics****Dr. Kalbian**

This advanced undergraduate seminar examines the development of Roman Catholic thought on various issues related to human sexuality. Through careful reading of primary and secondary texts, we will explore the way that theological ideas such as sin, creation, sacrament, and natural law have influenced Catholic evaluations of sexuality. We will focus on how ideas about gender complementarity reinforce Catholic views about marriage, procreation and homosexuality.

REL4190/5195**Ethics of Torture****Dr. Twiss**

Critical examination of torture practices, both historically and in the contemporary period, especially goals, justifications, and limits—legal, moral, and political. Attention to proposed legalization of torture, connections with just war theory, and religious perspectives on such practices.

REL4290/5297**Rabbinic Judaism****Dr. Levenson**

An advanced introduction to the rabbinic literature of late antiquity. Prerequisite: one semester of Biblical or Modern Hebrew. The course will focus on a close reading of representative texts from the major rabbinic collections in order to give students the tools to understand the distinctive rabbinic modes of legal argumentation in the Babylonian Talmud, the varieties of techniques for interpreting the Bible in both halakhic (legal) and non halakhic midrashim, and the rhetorical strategies used in the construction of narratives about famous rabbis from the past. In addition to units devoted to learning how to read rabbinic texts by the detailed analyses of a passage from the Babylonian Talmud and from Genesis Rabbah, there will be units on rabbinic interpretations of the Joseph story with comparison to other ancient Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions, the emergence of mystical traditions in rabbinic circles, rabbinic ideas about the messiah, and the distinctive rabbinic contribution to a variety of religious practices and legal traditions such as the recitation of the Shema, sanctification of ordinary and festival meals, Sabbath, Passover, Marriage, and Divorce. All readings will be in English, but there will be references to individual words and phrases in Hebrew and Aramaic and a brief presentation of the distinctive features of rabbinic Hebrew.

REL4359/5354**Imagining India****Dr. Erndl**

This seminar is an exploration of various ways in which India has been “imagined,” including indigenous, foreign, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, secular, colonialist, Orientalist, nationalist, post-colonialist, diasporic, and cosmopolitan perspectives. Sources will include religious texts, history, travel literature, fiction, memoir, art, and film. The course runs on a seminar format with active and in-depth discussion of common readings, weekly response essays, and individual research projects. . **There will be several required films, which will be screened on selected Wed. nights at 6:30 PM. Permission of the instructor is required.**

REL4359/5354 Death and the Afterlife in Buddhist Cultures Dr. Cuevas

Death is central to both Buddhist philosophical thought and Buddhism's traditional social roles. Buddhist teachings stress that all is impermanent; awareness of one's mortality is traditionally said to be a necessary impetus to the religious life. At the same time, performing rites for the well-being of the deceased in their postmortem state has been a chief task of Buddhist ritualists throughout Asia. Rituals and beliefs surrounding death also reflect specific cultural values. In this seminar we will study Buddhist approaches to death, dying, and the afterlife with a focus on South and Southeast Asia, Tibet, China, and Japan. Topics include Buddhist cosmology and the doctrine of karmic causality; tales of exemplary deaths; accounts of journeys to the hells and other postmortem realms; the placation of ghosts, demons, and the walking dead; Buddhist funerary and mortuary practices; and changes in contemporary Buddhist funerals. We will consider both Buddhist doctrinal teachings and social roles with respect to death and the afterlife, as well as interactions of Buddhism with local religious cultures. The course will run on a seminar format with active and in-depth discussion of readings and intensive individual writing projects.

REL4369/5368 Islam in North America Dr. Gaiser

REL 4369/5368, Islam in North America, surveys in seminar format the manifestations of Islam in the United States, as well as American perceptions of Islam and Muslims. Beginning with the early 18th century, the course examines early American attitudes toward Muslims, and then moves to the experience of Islam among African-Americans. The latter third of the course is devoted to the assimilation of Muslim immigrants in the US, and how the issues of race, gender, "trans-nationalism" and stereotypes impact the American Muslim community.

REL4511/5515 Christianity in Late Antiquity Dr. Kelley

This reading intensive course is an advanced survey of important events, movements, ideas, and people in the development of Christianity during the fourth and fifth centuries CE. The course is organized around a series of topics of particular significance in ancient Christianity, including the relationship between Christians and the Roman empire, Christological controversies, the formation of the canon, early creeds and councils, asceticism and monasticism, and the lives of the saints. Particular emphasis is placed on careful reading of relevant primary texts in English translation. By the end of this course, students will be able to: (1) summarize the major themes of important works of Christian literature in the fourth and fifth centuries CE; (2) evaluate the historical, social, and theological significance of these works; (3) apply their knowledge of late antique Christian history to the interpretation of these texts; and (4) describe major developments in the history of Christianity during the fourth and fifth centuries CE.

REL5497**Soul and the Self****Dr. Dupuigrenet**

The aim of this course is to introduce students to a selection of major texts that address the metaphysical make-up of the human person in Christian thought during the medieval and early modern period. Motifs stemming from Greco–Roman philosophers, especially Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Seneca, were reinterpreted through the lens of the Bible and the Revelation to create a religious conscience of the self.

From Augustine’s Soliloquies to Montaigne’s *Apology for Raymond de Sebond*, the texts for this course have been purposefully chosen to emphasize the centrality of Augustinian thought for all Christian authors, and of the figure of Augustine as God’s interlocutor – hence the great number of apocryphal dialogues published during the middle ages under the name of the saint. After three excerpts from Augustine, very diverse texts are proposed: two sets of university “questions” (Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther), a dialogue in the manner of Plato (Petrarch), an academic speech (Giovanni Pico della Mirandola), two philosophical treatises (Nicolaus Cusanus, Pietro Pomponazzi), a satire (Erasmus), and an essay from the inventor of the genre (Montaigne). These texts will be analyzed as representatives of precise doctrinal views and of shifting historical mentalities and sensitivities. As such they will be confronted with literary texts, with works of art, or humbler documents such as sermons, private letters or wills.

All texts exist in English translation, but students with knowledge of Latin, or French in the case of Montaigne, are invited to consult them also in their original language.

REL6176**Comparative Religious Ethics****Dr. Kelsay**

This course focuses on scholarly debates concerning the method and purpose of the comparative study of religious ethics. We begin with the discussion surrounding Little and Twiss' 1978 proposal, *Comparative Religious Ethics*. We then move to Scott Davis 2012 work, *Believing and Acting*. From that point, we will take up a number of studies that are usually counted as significant contributions to comparative ethics, with an eye toward answering the questions: are some of these works better than others? If so, why?

REL6298**Hebrew Bible Proseminar****Dr. Goff**

This class is a forum in which RWA graduate students will examine fundamental issues in the study of the Hebrew Bible. Topics that will be addressed include the history of scholarship, leading critical approaches towards the study of the text, and major topics of debate in the field.

REL6498**Religion and Emotion****Dr. Corrigan**

We will study a range of recent theories about emotion, drawing on research in the behavioral and social sciences, neuroscience, history, and other areas, with an eye especially to constructedness, context, locality, universality, cognition, the body, and performance in emotional life. We will consider such issues with respect to a number of different religious settings, including major faith traditions, highly localized religion, and new religious movements.

REL6596**Religion and American Law****Dr. Porterfield**

This graduate seminar will explore the codependence of religion and law in US history, focusing on the changing character and implications of this codependence from the ratification of the US Constitution to the problems associated with post-secularity today.

SRK5237**Intermediate Readings in Sanskrit II****Dr. Erndl**

Sanskrit, known as the "—language of the gods", is a classical language of India and scriptural language for Hinduism and Buddhism. As a member of the Indo-European linguistic family, it is related to Greek, Latin, and English, as well as to languages of modern India such as Hindi, Marathi, and Bengali. After completing the final lessons in the Devavanipravesika textbook, students increase their speed and confidence in reading Sanskrit texts of increasing difficulty. Writing, grammar, oral recitation, and pronunciation are also emphasized. This is the first semester of the second year course. **For continuing students only. Permission of instructor required.**

