

DEPARTMENT OF  
RELIGIONS AND CULTURES  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE  
  
COURSE GUIDE  
2023-2024

**DEPARTMENT OF  
RELIGIONS AND CULTURES  
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE GUIDE  
2023-2024**

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This course guide has been prepared months in advance of the 2023-2024 academic year and information contained herein is subject to change. Students are advised not to purchase any texts without the approval of the professor concerned.

Due to the renumbering of courses in the Department, students should consult the list of equivalent undergraduate courses in the back of the 2023-2024 undergraduate calendar.

## FACULTY

A list of the full-time faculty follows below. All possess degrees from universities and/or schools of advanced studies that represent the best academic centres for the study of religion in North America. All have published books that have made a contribution to their particular fields of study, have published in learned journals and given papers at learned societies. They have also won a reputation among their students for being good teachers, concerned about the quality of instruction at Concordia University, as well as for being "available" and committed to the development of a more meaningful student life.

### Full-Time Faculty

#### Chair

Naftali Cohn, Ph.D. (University of Pennsylvania)

#### Professors

Lynda Clarke, Ph.D. (McGill)

Carly Daniel-Hughes, Ph.D. (Harvard)

Lorenzo DiTommaso, Ph.D. (McMaster)

Richard Foltz, Ph.D. (Harvard)

Norma Joseph, Ph.D. (Concordia)

Leslie Orr, Ph.D. (McGill)

Norman Ravvin, Ph.D. (Univ. of Toronto)  
(sabbatical Fall 2023)

#### Associate Professors

Marc des Jardins, Ph.D. (McGill)

#### Assistant Professors

Sowparnika Balaswaminathan, PhD (University of California)

Miranda Crowds, PhD (The City University, London)

Marc Lalonde, Ph.D. (Concordia)

## INTRODUCTION TO THE DEPARTMENT

### *General Objectives*

The Department of Religions and Cultures is dedicated to the academic study of multiple religious and cultural groups in Canada and around the world. Our focus is on cultural phenomena, sometimes in comparative context, typically with attention to history, systems of thought and practices, literature and pop culture, power, gender, and sexuality.

### *Nature of the Study of Religions and Cultures*

The academic study of religion is a multidisciplinary enterprise. Current emphases in the department include decolonizing, gender and sexuality, feminism, intersectionality, history,

ethnography and fieldwork, literature, moving images, pop culture, systems of thought, and ethics.

## **KNOWLEDGE OF TWO MAJOR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS**

The Department believes that every Major or Honours student in Religion or in Judaic Studies should possess, at time of graduation, a knowledge of at least two major religious traditions. For example, the student who is pursuing a Major in Judaic Studies will take some courses in a religious tradition other than Judaism. This basic principle reinforces the emphasis upon the centrality of the discipline of the History of Religions. A particular religious tradition can best be understood in the context of the general religious history of humankind.

## **DEPARTMENTAL PROGRAMMES**

The Department of Religions and Cultures offers at the undergraduate level: minors, majors and honours programmes in Religion and in Judaic Studies. The degree requirements for all of these programmes can be found below. We also offer several graduate programmes: an M.A. in Religions and Cultures, an M.A. in Judaic Studies, and a Ph.D. in Religion. For further information on our graduate programmes, please contact the MA graduate programme director: [Lynda.clarke@concordia.ca](mailto:Lynda.clarke@concordia.ca)

### *Women, Gender and Sexuality*

As part of the Department of Religions and Cultures' undergraduate curriculum, a concentration in **Women, Gender, and Sexuality** is offered. A variety of special courses are included in the regular program for the BA major in Religions and Cultures. Religions and Cultures majors can focus on this area for either the primary or secondary concentration requirements.

The study of women and religion is a growing field in which the Department of Religions and Cultures of Concordia University has long been a leader. This structured concentration solidifies our commitment to this field and enables us to prepare students in a systematic and consistent fashion. The concentration furthers the work of the department in that it will allow students to pursue course work from a comparative, cross-cultural and multi-tradition perspective. The study of the role of women in the history and practice of religion introduces our students to an exciting and vital area of study.

### *Degree Requirements*

#### **60 B.A. Honours in Religions and Cultures:**

- 12 cr in a language related to thesis; or in a related discipline such as Anthropology, Classics, English Literature, History, Philosophy, Sociology, Women's Studies
- 6 cr chosen from RELI 209, 210, 214, 215, 220, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227
- 15 cr chosen from the following groups: Tradition; Region
- 12 cr chosen from the following groups: Themes in Religions and Cultures; Women, Gender, and Sexuality
- 6 cr chosen from Religions and Cultures courses at the 300 or 400 level
- 3 cr RELI 409 Methodology and the Study of Religion
- 6 cr RELI 410 Honours Thesis

#### **42 B.A. Major in Religions and Cultures**

- 6 cr chosen from RELI 209, 210, 214, 215, 220, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227
- 15 cr chosen from the following groups: Tradition; Region
- 12 cr chosen from Themes in Religions and Cultures; Women, Gender, and Sexuality
- 3 cr RELI 409 Methodology and the Study of Religion

#### **24 Minor in Religions and Cultures**

- 6 cr chosen from RELI 209, 210, 214, 215, 220, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227
- 18 cr additional elective Religions and Cultures courses at the 200, 300, and 400 level

#### **60 B.A. Honours in Judaic Studies**

- 9 chosen from: HEBR 210<sup>6</sup>, HEBR 241, HEBR 242, RELI 401  
Students who demonstrate fluency in Hebrew by a written examination may substitute RELI courses at the 300 and 400 level approved by the departmental advisor.
- 3 chosen from RELI 209, 210, 214, 215
- 12 chosen from RELI 220, 301, 326, 327, 328
- 27 chosen from courses in Judaism at the 200, 300, or 400 level. It is recommended that students take at least one 400-level course. Up to 12 credits may be substituted with courses in a related language such as Hebrew, Aramaic, or Yiddish, for a maximum of 15 credits combined.

#### **42 B.A. Major in Judaic Studies**

- 9 cr Hebrew language, chosen from HEBR 210, 241, 242, RELI 401  
\*students who demonstrate proficiency in Hebrew may substitute religions courses at the 300 or 400 level approved by the undergraduate advisor
- 3 cr chosen from RELI 209, 210, 214, 215

- 15 Electives chosen from courses in Judaism at the 200, 300, or 400 level. It is recommended that students take at least one 400-level course. Up to six credits may be substituted with courses in related traditions and related languages such as Hebrew, Aramaic, or Yiddish.
- 3 RELI 409<sup>3</sup>

**24 Minor in Judaic Studies**

- 3 Chosen from RELI 209<sup>3</sup>, 210<sup>3</sup>, 214<sup>3</sup> a 215<sup>3</sup>
- 9 Chosen from RELI 220<sup>3</sup>, 301<sup>3</sup>, 326<sup>3</sup>, 327<sup>3</sup>, 328<sup>3</sup>
- 12 Electives chosen from courses in Judaism at the 200, 300, or 400 level. Up to six credits may be substituted with courses in related traditions and related languages such as Hebrew, Aramaic, or Yiddish

**24 Minor in Iranian Studies**

- 12 Chosen from RELI 227<sup>3</sup>, 305<sup>3</sup>, 306<sup>3</sup>, 313<sup>3</sup>, 317<sup>3</sup>, 318<sup>3</sup>
- 12 Chosen from any courses related to Iran in various departments at Concordia approved by the undergraduate advisor, including those not already taken at the first level of requirement. Examples of courses offered at various times include Pahlavi and other ancient Iranian languages, Modern Persian, Iranian Mythology, Manichaeism, Avesta, and Classical Persian Music. Students may also request credit for Iran-related courses taught at other Quebec universities.

*Course Groups:*

*Tradition*

RELI 220, 223, 224, 225, 226, 230, 231, 301, 307, 308, 311, 313, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 324, 326, 327, 328, 332, 333, 334, 336, 337, 343, 344, 346, 350, 351, 363, 364, 368, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 390, 391, 392, 394, 395, 397, 401, 402, 404, 405, 407

*Region*

RELI 214, 215, 227, 306, 308, 315, 329, 332, 334, 336, 347, 348, 351, 353, 360, 361, 362, 375, 393

*Themes in Religions and Cultures*

RELI 209, 210, 216, 235, 298, 300, 310, 312, 325, 331, 354, 355, 357, 358, 365, 366, 370, 371, 373, 374, 378, 379, 394, 396, 398, 410, 496, 498

*Women, Gender, and Sexuality*

RELI 233, 372, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 393, 420

**Southern Asia Studies**

The Department of Religions and Cultures participates with History, Political Science and several other departments in the Southern Asia Studies Programme which offers a major and a minor as follows:

**MAJOR (42 credits)**

**6 credits** History 261 and Religion 215

**3 credits** Chosen from any relevant course in the Department of History

**3 credits** Chosen from any relevant course in the Department of Political Science

**6 credits** Chosen from any relevant courses in the Department of Religions and Cultures

**24 credits** Chosen from relevant courses in any department including but

not limited to History; Religion; Political Science; Classics, Modern Languages and Linguistics; Economics; English; Geography, Planning and Environment; Sociology and Anthropology; the Faculty of Fine Arts; and the John Molson School of Business. Students may also request credits for Southern Asia related courses (including languages) taught at other Quebec universities.

***MINOR (24 credits)***

**6 credits** History 261 and Religion 215

**3 credits** Chosen from any relevant course in the Department of History, Political Science, Economics or English

**6 credits** Chosen from any relevant courses in the Department of Religions and Cultures

**9 credits** Chosen from relevant courses in any department (see above)

Please see the Undergraduate Calendar for further details on the Southern Asia Studies Programme.

**30 Certificate in Iranian Studies**

18 Chosen from RELI 227<sup>3</sup>, 305<sup>3</sup>, 306<sup>3</sup>, 313<sup>3</sup>, 317<sup>3</sup>, 318<sup>3</sup>

12 Chosen from any courses related to Iran in various departments at Concordia approved by the undergraduate advisor, including those not already taken at the first level of requirement. Examples of courses offered at various times include Pahlavi and other ancient Iranian languages, Modern Persian, Iranian Mythology, Manichaeism, Avesta, and Classical Persian Music. Students may also request credit for Iran-related courses taught at other Quebec Universities.

For more information, contact:

Dr. Lynda Clarke: [Lynda.clarke@concordia.ca](mailto:Lynda.clarke@concordia.ca)

**SERVICES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS**

**Student Advising**

Students who have questions concerning their programme of study or need assistance relating to academic difficulties can contact the Department either by phone (848-2424, ext. 2065) or email [religion@concordia.ca](mailto:religion@concordia.ca) and make an appointment to meet with an undergraduate advisor.

**Undergraduate Listserve**

Religion students and students taking one or more Religion courses have the option of being added to the Religion Undergraduate listserve. This listserv helps to keep students informed of upcoming events, guest speakers and academic deadlines.

**Department Web Page**

Visit the Department's webpage and find information on the various courses offered, course outlines, faculty research interests, guest lectures and conferences, information on our graduate programmes plus much more:

<https://www.concordia.ca/artsci/religions-cultures.html>

**THE BOYD SINYARD AWARD**

Each year the Boyd Sinyard award is given to the outstanding graduating student in Religions and Cultures. The award is named after the first chairman of the Department of Religion at Sir George Williams University.

## **CONCORDIA RELIGION STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (CRSA)**

If you are studying within the Department of Religions and Cultures (i.e. if you are an Honours, Major, Minor or just taking a course offered by the department), you are a member of the CRSA. CRSA is a student-administered organization dedicated to fostering community and expanding the educational experience of all Religion students. Each year the executive branch of CRSA (five students elected to plan and administer CRSA affairs) offers Religion students the chance to meet each other and faculty at various social gatherings, as well as the opportunity to enliven their education by attending CRSA sponsored lectures given by learned academics and religious thinkers from all parts of the world. CRSA members are urged to take advantage of the student lounge located in the basement of annex R (2050 Mackay). This is a place where students can study, hang out or use the free phone. If you would like more information about CRSA, leave a message in our mailbox at the Department of Religions and Cultures.



## SUMMER 2023

**RELI 210/1 - A** (3 credits)  
RELIGION IN PRACTICE  
Instructor: TBA

M.W. 1315-1600

This course focuses on the day-to-day practice of religious traditions. Included are the expression of religious experiences through art, music, and scripture; transmission of these religious expressions through ritual, worship and mystical/ecstatic practices; and the construction and maintenance of different types of religious authority and communal identities. **Note:** *Students who have received credit for RELI 211 may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 378/1 - A** (3 credits)  
DEATH AND DYING  
Instructor: TBA

T.J. 1015-1300

This course provides a comparative perspective on the variety of conceptions and practices related to death and dying that are found in different world religions. In addition, the course considers how people in contemporary North American society utilize traditional religious concepts and rituals, scientific understandings and medical procedures, or innovative combinations of ideas and practices with which to cope.

## FALL 2023

**RELI 209/2 – A** (3 credits)

T.J. 1315-1430

THE RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION

Instructor: Marc Lalonde

This course explores the conceptual elements that underlie the religious experience. These elements include the notion of the sacred, beliefs, cosmologies and myths, the origins and understanding of evil, ethics and salvation. **Note:** *Students who have received credit for RELI 211 may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 214/2 – A** (3 credits)

W.F. 1315-1430

RELIGIONS OF THE WEST

Instructor:

This course surveys the history, doctrines, institutions, and practices of religions that arose in Western Asia, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course examines contemporary forms of religious life in those parts of the world where these traditions have spread, as well as Indigenous religions. The course explores the religious activities and experiences of both women and men within these various traditions. **Note:** *Students who have received credit for RELI 213 may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 215/2 – A** (3 credits)

W. 1 7 45-2015

RELIGIONS OF ASIA

Instructor:

This course surveys the history, doctrines, institutions, and practices of religions that have arisen in and spread throughout Asia, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and the religions of China and Japan. The course explores the religious activities and experiences of both women and men within these traditions. **Note:** *Students who have received credit for RELI 213 or RELZ 215 may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 220/2- A** (3 credits)

T.J.0845-1000

INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

Instructor: Miranda Crowdus

This course will examine the history of Jews and of Judaism from ancient times until the present. It will emphasize the continuities, changes and interrelationships with respect to Jewish social, religious and intellectual life through the ages. It will also carefully examine the varieties of belief and practice in contemporary Jewish life. **Note:** *Students who have received credit for RELI 222 may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 223/2 - A** (3 credits)

T.J. 1445-1600

INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

Instructor: Carly Daniel-Hughes

This course provides an introductory survey of key developments and enduring structures in the historical evolution of Christianity. It examines the variety of expressions of faith embodied in different churches and traces the ways in which beliefs, institutions, symbols, and rituals have in the past and continue today to carry forward the Christian tradition as a world religion in a variety of cultural contexts.

**RELI 224/2 – A** (3 credits)  
INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM  
Instructor:

W.F.1445-1600

This course explores the religious tradition of Islam through the beliefs and practices of the vast number of Muslims scattered throughout the world – in the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, North America, and other places. It examines the scriptures and common rituals or “pillars” of the religion, as well as expressions of life and culture in the past and present such as the law (shariah), mystical orders, and the arts.

**RELI 225/2 – A** (3 credits)  
INTRODUCTION TO HINDUISM  
Instructor: Sowparnika Balaswaminathan

M.W.1145-1300

Hinduism is a tradition that is one and many, consistent and chaotic, fixable and constantly evolving. The idea of Hinduism as a singular religion has been argued to be a colonial disciplinary practice. Thus, with diverse philosophical strains of thought about the meaning and goal of life, the existence of divine presence(s), the quality of matter and the self, and the practical ways in which an individual can and should lead their life, Hinduism is a catch-all term for often contradictory beliefs. Furthermore, the proximity of multiple religious traditions in South Asia has led to syncretic practices, wherein the lines between religious, cultural, and secular can blur and shift. In this course, students will encounter the various ways in which Hinduism has been imagined, disciplined, and practiced, through sacred texts and commentaries, scholarly debates, practices and rituals, and aesthetic, visual, and performative traditions. We will examine beliefs and practices that can be canonically categorized as Hindu, as well as those that challenge such categorization, and others that demand a change in the definitional boundaries of Hinduism. Lastly, we will also look at how power and hierarchy are woven through this tradition, and discuss historical and contemporary political issues relevant for understanding how Hinduism functions in today’s world, and what “modern” Hindus would consider a good life.

*Note: Students who have received credit for this topic under a RELI 298 number may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 226/2 – A** (3 credits)  
INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM  
Instructor: Leslie Orr

T.J. 1145-1300

This course introduces students to the diversity of forms of Buddhism that have emerged in history and are practised today. It examines those aspects that are shared in common by Buddhists all over the world, including reverence for the Buddha, support of the monastic order, and adherence to the Buddha’s teachings. The course explores the ways in which these ideals and beliefs are expressed through such Buddhist practices as worship, study, pilgrimage, and meditation.

**RELI 233/2 – A** (3 credits)  
INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN AND RELIGION  
Instructor

W.F. 1015-1130

This introduction to the particular problems and issues in the study of women and religion uses case studies from various religious traditions. The course presents a survey of the different levels of participation, the complex ritual activities, and the intriguing divine imagery associated with women that are found in many religious traditions. Questions pertaining to the contemporary feminist discourse on such topics as witchcraft, patriarchy, and goddess religions are also explored.

**RELI 300/2 – AA** (3 credits)  
CULTS AND RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY  
Instructor: Lorenzo DiTommaso

M.1745-20:15

This course takes a sociological and historical approach towards understanding new religious movements (NRMs), popularly known as “cults”. The course examines the reasons for their controversial status in society, and undertakes a survey of the beliefs, rituals, leadership, membership, recruitment strategies, and social organization of a number of specific NRMs. **Note:** *Students who have received credit for RELI 217 or for this topic under a RELI 298 number may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 301/2 – A** (3 credits)  
THE HEBREW BIBLE  
Instructor: Naftali Cohn

T.J. 1445-1600

This course introduces students to one of the great works of world literature, the Hebrew Bible. It familiarizes the student with the major genres of the Hebrew Bible and with the history, culture, and religion of ancient Israel. Particular attention is given to modern scholarly methods of interpretation, to the literary dimensions of the Bible, and to the subsequent development of Jewish interpretation and practice that builds on the Bible.

**RELI 312/2 – A** (3 credits)  
JUSTICE AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD  
Instructor: Marc Lalonde

T.J.1615-1730

This course considers ethical issues arising in the context of social, legal, and political relations. These issues are discussed in relation to both traditional and contemporary moral perspectives, both religious and non-religious. Topics covered typically include discussions of social and economic inequality, welfare, poverty, just punishment, business ethics, public ethics, economic development, and sustainable development.

**RELI 316/2 – AA** (3 credits)  
CLASSICAL ISLAM  
Instructor: Richard Foltz

T.1745-2015

The course explores the various aspects of Muslim civilization from its initial spread from Arabia to Spain, sub-Saharan Africa, India, and China, up to the age of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires in the 16th and 17th centuries. Special attention is given to the emergence of schools of law, theology, philosophy, and mystical orders, as well as the literature, arts, and architecture of diverse Muslim societies.

**RELI 346/2 - A** (3 credits)  
GANDHI, COLONIALISM, AND BEYOND  
Instructor:

M.W. 1315-1430

This course concerns Hindu traditions in the modern world, beginning with the period of colonial British rule in South Asia. Students examine the writings and historical contexts of influential Hindu reformers, intellectuals, and activists, including Ram Mohun Roy, Dayananda Sarasvati, Swamy Vivekananda, the Tagores, V.D. Savarkar, and especially Mahatma Gandhi. Issues of focus include the history of the modern idea of Hinduism, responses to European thought and institutions (including Christianity), Hindu understandings of modernity, social change and reform, religious nationalism, contemporary gurus and their transnational movements, and Hinduism in the diaspora.

**RELI 347/2 – A (3 credits)**

M.W. 16:15-17:30

RELIGION AND THE ARTS IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Instructor: Sowpamika Balaswaminathan

This course provides an introduction to the religious arts from South and South East Asia from prehistorical times to the contemporary. It covers artistic traditions from indigenous & tribal, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, Christian, and syncretic religions. What makes an art “religious” and is there a “religious” way of looking at art? What is the labour that art is uniquely situated to perform for religion? More specifically, what are the symbols used and messages encoded that are transmitted through religious art in the regions of South and Southeast Asia? In this course, students will acquire an expansive understanding of “religious” art, and practice skills of critical looking and thinking in order to challenge hegemonic “fixedness” of categories. Students will also understand the ways in which religion, politics, and economics intersect, as well as the impact on colonialism on traditional arts and crafts.

**RELI 361/2 - A (3 credits)**

M.1745-2015

RELIGIONS OF JAPAN

Instructor: Marc des Jardins

This course uses a historical approach to understand the development of Japanese religious traditions. It investigates popular Japanese cults and religions, the assimilation of foreign religious thought and practices, and the implantation of Buddhism, Confucianism, and other models from China. Religious sectarianism, state-regulated religious schools, cults, and the role of religion in the establishment of Japanese national identity are also studied.

**RELI 364/2 – A (3 credits)**

M.W.1015-1130

MAHAYANA BUDDHISM

Instructor:

This course studies the origins and evolution of the Mahayana Buddhist in India, and the spread and growth of various Mahayana traditions in East Asia. It examines developments in texts, doctrine, philosophy, ethical ideals, practices (worship and meditation), and institutions.

**RELI 366/2 – A (3 credits)**

M.W.0845-1000

RELIGION AND MUSIC

Instructor: Miranda Crowdus

This course explores sacred music in its religious and cultural contexts. It examines the ways in which religion has served as an inspiration and performance context for music across the world, and some of the ways in which musical expression has been central to religious practice. Topics range from Gregorian chant to Quranic recitation, from Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh devotional song in South Asia to esoteric Tibetan chant, and from J.S. Bach to Gospel singing in African-American churches.

**RELI 372/2 –A (3 credits)**

M.W.1145-1300

RELIGION AND THE BODY

Instructor:

This study of religious attitudes to the human body focuses on the body as a foundation for religious symbolism, religious community and identity, ritual, and religious experience. The course examines these problems with reference to various religious traditions. Issues examined include purification of the body; eating; mortification and

mutilation of the body; attitudes towards dead bodies and physical immortality; attitudes towards bodies as gendered; embodied spirituality and incarnation.

**RELI 398/2 –A** (3 credits)

M.W. 1615-1730

SELECTED TOPICS IN RELIGION  
QUEER SPIRITUALITIES

Instructor:

This course treats the intersection of gender, sexuality, spirituality and religiosity from an intersectional and queer theoretical approach. It introduces students to histories and discourses around these inter-related areas and is organized thematically. It will also address the construction and production of queer spiritualities and the queering of religion. Topics under consideration include, as follows: global sexualities; celibacy, asexuality and queerness; queerness in history; colonial and postcolonial understandings of sexuality and religion; queer pornography; tantric practice and other forms of esoteric spirituality.

**RELI 398/2 - AA** (3 credits)

Th. 1745-2015

(xlist POLI 313 B)

SELECTED TOPICS IN RELIGION  
RELIGION AND NATIONALISM: THE CAUCASUS

Instructor: Richard Foltz

Religion is often taken to be one of the principal markers of identity, and in modern times can overlap to a large degree with nationalism, even to the point where the two become conflated. The Caucasus, as one of the world's most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions, offers a particularly challenging case study for analyzing the interplay of religious and national identity, particularly since the fall of the USSR in 1991. This course will look at how the resurgence of national identities in the Caucasus region has been intertwined with an upsurge in religious ideologies whether Christian, Islamic, or nativist neo-pagan.

**RELI 409/2 – AA** (3 credits)

M.1745-2015

METHODOLOGY AND THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Prerequisite: Permission of the department

Instructor: Marc Lalonde

This class explores the conceptual and practical foundations that have established the discipline and study of religion as it has developed over the last century or so. At the conceptual level we will be concerned to enquire: how have scholars gone about the study of religion? What sorts of approaches and methods have they relied on? What are the suppositions of these approaches and methods? What kinds of languages and philosophies have been used to explain such scholarly efforts? We will also attend to the various interests that have inevitably guided such research. What are these interests? What are their sources and inspiration? How are they related to wider social, cultural, and historical realities? Thus ours will be a critical examination of religious studies as we endeavour to understand, analyze, and situate the component parts that make up the method and study of religion today. However, we will also be concerned to put these critiques into practice. Toward that end, a portion of this course will be devoted to a guided fieldwork project.

## WINTER 2024

**RELI 209/4 – A** (3 credits)

T.J. 1315-1430

THE RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION

Instructor: Marc Lalonde

This course explores the conceptual elements that underlie the religious experience. These elements include the notion of the sacred, beliefs, cosmologies and myths, the origins and understanding of evil, ethics and salvation. **Note:** *Students who have received credit for RELI 211 may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 216/4– EC** (3 credits)

online

ENCOUNTERING RELIGIONS

Instructor:

This course serves as an introduction to some of the religions of today's world, and explores several contemporary contexts where people of diverse religious backgrounds come into contact with one another. **Note:** *Students who have received credit for this topic under a RELI 298 number may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 227/2 – AA** (3 credits)

T.1745-2015

INTRODUCTION TO IRANIAN CIVILIZATION

(xlist HIST 298A)

Instructor: Richard Foltz

Iran has played a central role in world history, giving rise to Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and the Baha'i faith, as well as numerous sects. Iranian culture has also played a major role in informing and transforming Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. This course covers the long history of Iranian civilization and its influence on peoples from the Mediterranean world to South and East Asia in the realms of religion, literature, architecture, and the arts. **Note:** *Students who have received credit for RELI 412 or for this topic under a RELI 298 number may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 235/4 – A** (3 credits)

M.W.1145-1300

THE HOLOCAUST (HIST 235)

Instructor:

Beginning with a discussion of Jewish communities in Europe and America before 1933, this course traces the evolution of anti-Semitism, nationalism, and racism, the rise of Hitler and the Nazi movement, the shaping of Nazi ideology, the growing demonization of the victims of the Holocaust and the genocide against them in their various countries, resistance by the victims, and the parts played by bystanders in the outcome of the Holocaust.

**RELI 298/4 – A (3 credits)**

T.J. 1145-1300

**DECOLONIZING THE LOCAL: CONCORDIA, MONTREAL, AND RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL HISTORY**

(xlist HIST 298A)

Instructor: Norman Ravvin

This course follows key trends at the forefront of Canadian recognition of colonialism and its impact on Indigenous people. It will use as its epicentre Concordia - the history of the land where the campus stands, and around it - to enliven our sense of pre-colonial lives and the meaning of contact in the places where we attend and teach classes. It will radiate outward toward the rest of the city that was the earliest area of settlement, to tell the story and the stakes of Christian missionizing and its relationship to colonial power. It will consider the links between local institutional and cultural histories and Canadian Residential Schools, which were initiated by the Federal government and run by a variety of churches and orders, including the Grey Nuns, a key Montreal institution linked with Concordia and its surroundings. We will make use of literary and other creative renderings, attend to the way Canadian cities developed around the colonial facts we explore, while examining, as well, Concordia's platforms for "Indigenization" and decolonization.

**RELI 310/4 – A (3 credits)**

T.J.1615-1730

**SELF AND OTHER: IDENTITY AND ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Instructor: Marc Lalonde

This course considers ethical issues arising in the context of personal and interpersonal relations, families and friendships, and health and medical care. These issues are discussed in relation to traditional and contemporary moral perspectives, both religious and non-religious. Topics covered may vary from year to year, but may include discussions of conscience and career, privacy, sexual relations, harassment, substance abuse, abortion, euthanasia, and gay and lesbian relations.

**RELI 319/4 – A (3 credits)**

W.F.0845-1000

**MODERN ISLAM**

Instructor:

This course surveys some of the questions raised by modernity for Muslims and the various responses Muslims have sought to formulate and put into practice. Issues addressed may include government, law, gender, relations with the West, and religious authority.

**RELI 324/4 – A (3 credits)**

T.J. 1015-1130

**ON THE MARGINS OF CHRISTIANITY**

Instructor:

This course examines marginal forms of Christianity that have found themselves ignored, excluded, or suppressed by more mainstream Christian groups and institutions. Topics may include "heretical," apocalyptic, millenarian, and charismatic movements. The course considers the practices, self-understanding, and worldviews of marginal forms of Christianity within their particular cultural, political, and historical contexts.



**RELI 325/4 – A (3 credits)**  
LEADERS, REBELS, SAINTS: MOSES  
Instructor: Naftali Cohn

T.J.1315-1430

This course, which varies in focus from year to year, investigates the lives of controversial or influential women and men in the history of different religious traditions. Going beyond mere biography, the course situates particular figures within their social and cultural contexts, while dealing with how such prominent figures were viewed, portrayed, and used by others. Specific topics for this course are stated in the Undergraduate Class Schedule; examples are Moses, Jesus and Mary.

**RELI 331/4 – A (3 credits)**  
LITERATURE AND THE HOLOCAUST  
Instructor: Norman Ravvin

T.J.1445-1600

Religious, historical, literary, and political contexts have been applied to come to terms with the events of the Holocaust. All of these are relevant as students read important and provocative novels dealing with such issues as ethics, the relationship between art and history, the use of humour and popular cultural forms, as well as the way that storytelling helps direct our understanding of events that are often said to be incomprehensible. The wider impact of fiction dealing with the Holocaust on the popular media, including film, CD-ROMs, video, and news reporting, is also considered.

**RELI 344/4 – A (3 credits)**  
HINDU MYTH AND NARRATIVE  
Instructor: Sowparnika Balaswaminathan

M.W.1015-1130

What makes stories so powerful that they are able to enchant, persuade, inspire, and disillusion their audience? All religions have used narrative strategies to develop their systems and inculcate believers in their hierarchies of values. Hinduism is practiced not only in South Asia, but also in Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and diasporic communities all over the world. How have narrative traditions helped communities maintain their identity, and how have religious beliefs and practices transformed over time and place? In this course, we will examine the particular ways in which narratives have been used by the religion that is now known as Hinduism through texts such as the Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhakti poetry, Silapatikaram, and others, to disseminate ethical possibilities and limits, creative instructions, philosophies of living and dying, and political strictures. We will also examine heterodox challenges to these canonical texts in the form of textual, visual, and performative interventions in historical and contemporary times. Students will read translated primary sources, and consider the various genres in which ideas can be transmitted, and analyze how they differ and overlap. We will examine scholarly arguments from secondary sources that attempt to extrapolate theories about culture and community from textual and performative practices from South Asia and beyond.

**RELI 350/4 – AA (3 credits)**  
THERAVAD BUDDHISM  
Instructor: Marc des Jardins

W.1745-2015

This course examines the early history, doctrine, institutions, and practices of Buddhism in India, and follows the development of Theravada Buddhism in the countries of Southeast Asia up to the present day.

**RELI 355/4 – AA** (3 credits)  
RELIGION AND VIOLENCE  
Instructor: Marc Lalonde

M.1745-2015

This course explores how religion may be seen to engender or exacerbate violence, as well as the ways that religion may critique, prevent or even offer alternatives to violence. Sacred writings, theologies, rituals and communal actions of particular communities are studied, as well as notions of the self, the group, others, outsiders and enemies. In particular, the life-work and writings of such key figures as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King are studied in order to provide some religious perspectives on the relationship between non-violence and the resistance to injustice.

**RELI 380/4 – A** (3 credits)  
RELIGION AND SEXUALITY  
Instructor:

M.W. 1445-1600

This course examines, from a comparative and historical perspective, the interplay between religion and sexuality. It looks at the development of attitudes towards sexuality within diverse religious traditions, and religious manifestations of sexuality. Topics include, among others: human reproduction, gender roles and identity, birth control, abortion, celibacy, sexual variance, and homosexuality.

**RELI 381/4 – A** (3 credits)  
WOMEN AND RELIGION: JUDAISM  
Instructor: Norma Joseph

T.J. 1145-1300

This course explores the status and religious roles of women within the Judaic tradition. Its focus is on the practice of the religion, especially the ritual and legal spheres. The relationship between common practice, popular attitudes, and formal legal principles is examined in order to inquire into issues of gender and religion.

**RELI 383/4 – AA** (3 credits)  
WOMEN AND RELIGION: ISLAM  
Instructor: Lynda Clarke

J.1745-2015

The course explores various issues related to women and gender in Islam, including role models, ritual, gendered space, the rulings of Islamic law, and sexuality. The issues are examined principally through the lens of modern Islam and lives of modern Muslims, including those in Canada and the West.

**RELI 386/4 - A** (3 credits)  
WITCHCRAFT, MAGIC AND RELIGION  
Instructor:

W.F.0845-1000

This course approaches the study of magic, witchcraft, and religion from a variety of perspectives. Taking examples from indigenous cultures, the ancient world, medieval Europe, the early modern period and contemporary movements, the practices and rituals that have been labeled magic or witchcraft are examined, along with the responses to them. The course explores how magicians and witches view themselves, how different cultures relate to them, and how magic, witchcraft, and religion merge and diverge. **Note:** *Students who have received credit for this topic under an RELI 398 number may not take this course for credit.*

**RELI 387/4– A** (3 credits)

M.W. 1315-1430

**GODDESSES AND RELIGIOUS IMAGES OF WOMEN**

Instructor:

This comparative survey of female divinity and feminine imagery studies various religious traditions. Among the issues to be explored are the imaging of goddesses as mothers; the conception of forces like fertility, energy, materiality, and knowledge as feminine; the correspondences and relations between goddesses and women; and the contemporary feminist recovery of the Goddess.

**RELI 394/4 – AA** (3 credits)

T.1745-2015

**HISTORY OF SATAN: EVIL PERSONIFIED IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY**

Instructor: Lorenzo DiTommaso

This course investigates the origins, development, and significance of Satan in early Judaism and the history of Christianity. Consideration is given to some of the most important literary and visual depictions of this figure from the ancient world through the Middle Ages to present day. The course sheds light on how intellectuals thought of this figure and also how Satan came to play an important role in popular culture down through the centuries.

**RELI 398/4 – C** (3 credits)

M.W. 1615-1730

**SELECTED TOPICS IN RELIGION**

**WOMEN AND RELIGION: HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM**

Instructor:

This course takes as its premise the idea that the nexus of gender and sexuality fundamentally shapes religious practices and belief as well as the lives of women and gender non-conforming people. The central questions guiding this course are: How do religious traditions incorporate sexual practice and/or restraint into a vision of ethical life? When does one's gender become dangerous or unethical? What is the range of women's experience within Hinduism and Buddhism? In pursuing these questions, students will gain a deep familiarity with practices of women's religious asceticism, the place of erotics within religious discourse, new perspectives on queer and transgender theories, emic feminisms, and sexual ethics.

**RELI 398/4 – DD** (3 credits)

M.1745-2015

**SELECTED TOPICS IN RELIGION**

**RELIGION AND POPULAR CULTURE**

Instructor: Lorenzo DiTommaso

This course explores the intersections of religion and popular culture. Among topics for discussion include: defining popular culture in today's digitally integrated society; popular culture in multi-media form (film, anime, comics/manga, video games, TV/net series, music); religion *in* popular culture and religion *as* popular culture; fandom and virtual religion; the commodification of religion and spirituality; the functions of traditional religious themes and tropes in new pop-cultural forms; and the global "apocalyptic shift" of the past fifty years and its pop-cultural expressions.

**RELI 398/4 – E (3 credits)**

W.1745-2015

SELECTED TOPICS IN RELIGION

THE SILK ROAD

(xlist HIST 398 AA)

Instructor: Richard Foltz

The Silk Road is a concept used to refer to a network of overland trade routes that linked the Mediterranean, China, and India from around the beginning of the Common Era to the fifteenth century. A conduit for culture as well as material goods, the Silk Road played a major role in the development and transmission of Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam. Iranian, Indic, Chinese, and shamanistic religions were also part of this dynamic mix..

**Department of Religion - Timetable Fall 2023**

	<b>MON</b>	<b>TUE</b>	<b>WED</b>	<b>THUR</b>	<b>FRI</b>
0845-1000	366	220	366	220	
10:15-11:30	364	223	364 233	223	233
11:45-13:00	225 372	226	225 372	226	
13:15-14:30	346	209	346 214	209	214
14:45-16:00		301	224	301	224
16:15-17:30	347 398A	312	347 398A	312	
17:45-20:15	300 361 409	316	215	398 AA	
20:30-22:45					

**Department of Religion - Timetable Winter 2024**

	<b>MON</b>	<b>TUE</b>	<b>WED</b>	<b>THUR</b>	<b>FRI</b>
0845-1000		319	386	319	386
10:15-11:30	344	324	344	324	
11:45-13:00	235	298 381	235	298 381	
13:15-14:30	387	209 325	387	209 325	
14:45-16:00	380	331	380 319	331	319
16:15-17:30	398C	310	398C	310	
17:45-20:15	398 DD 355	227 394	350 398E	383	
20:30-22:45					