

Department of Religions and Cultures
Course Offerings
2019-2020

Fall

RELI 6001 Method & Theory of Religion	Th 16:00-18:15	FA 202
RELI 6002/835B The Quran and Its Interpreters	W 18:30-20:15	R 103
RELI 6004/839A Power and Religion in South Asia	W 16:00-18:15	R 103
RELI 6006/821B Querying and Queering the Bible	T 16:00-18:15	FA 202

Fall/Winter

891/3 Doctoral Seminar or 823/2 for non religion students	Th 16:00-18:15 (fall)	
	Th13:00-15:15 (winter)	

Winter

RELI 6003/821A Religion in the Public Square	Th15:00-17:15	FA 202
RELI 6007/839A Meditation in East Asian Traditions	W 16:00-18:15	FA 202
RELI 6017/821A Food, Sex, and Death	T 16:00-18:15	FA 202

FALL

RELI 6001 Method & Theory of Religion **Dr. N. Cohn** **Th 16:00-18:15**

This course provides an introduction to an array of important theoretical and methodological approaches in the study of religions and cultures, as well as specific examples that bring out the nuances of the variety of approaches we encounter. Together, we will explore the strengths and weakness of the questions asked and the manner of answering the questions. Further, we will ponder the ways in which both religious/cultural traditions and our scholarly framework shape our understanding of human activity. The aim of the course is to create a toolkit from which each student can draw in further coursework and in their final project.

RELI 6002/835B The Quran and Its Interpreters **Dr. L. Clarke** **W18:30-20:15**

The course examines the Quran and works of Quranic exegesis through the lens of issues such as gender, war and peace, and relations with other religions. Special attention is paid to the often radical approaches that emerged in the 20th and 21st centuries and sharp conflict between advocates of modern and traditional interpretation. We will also use internet fora to explore the neglected field of popular understandings. Students are invited to discuss parallels and differences in Judaic and Christian scriptural exegesis.

RELI 6004/839A Power and Religion in South Asia **Dr. L. Orr** **W 16:00-18:15**

This course examines the intersection of power and religion with a primary focus on early modern and contemporary South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka...). With a long history of religious pluralism and diversity, the region is home to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians, and Jews. Among the themes to be explored are: the religious undergirding of social hierarchies of gender, caste and race; religious ritual and power; pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial ideas of sovereignty and the state; "religious movements" and justice; and politics and religious identities. Many of these themes will be relevant to a broader analysis of religious dynamics and power relations, which students may wish to undertake, outside of the confines of this region.

RELI 6006/821B Querying and Queering the Bible Dr. C. Daniel-Hughes T 16:00-18:15
This course familiarizes students with the various ways that Christians have read their Bibles. We will ask: why did Christians include certain books and not others in their canons of scripture? How did and do Christians account for the cacophony of voices in scripture? What are the different ways that Christians have understood the Bible's authority? What reading practices and modes of interpretation have Christians used in different times and places? A major theme guiding our discussions will be how Christians' engagement with scripture has shaped and reflected changing ideas about sexuality, gender, and the body. We will also address how contemporary feminist and queer theories can unsettle heteronormative interpretations of the Bible.

823/2 & 891/3 part 1 Doctoral Seminar Dr. L. Orr LO/2 Th 16:00-18:15
Historiography, Religion and Power
In this course, we will track three themes. We begin with a brief examination of the history of the disciplines of the History of Religions, and of Comparative Religion. This leads us to the second theme we will be concerned with: historiography. We will consider the character of the sources we can use for making histories, and the nature and value of different approaches to historical study, especially in terms of their value for elucidating religious change and processes of religious interaction. The third theme is an extended treatment of colonialism, globalization, post-colonialism, decoloniality, and secularism as elements in or perspectives on contemporary religions and cultures.

WINTER

RELI 6003/821A Religion in the Public Square Dr. H. Kaell Th15:00-17:15
In North America, we have enshrined freedom of religion in our legal codes. Our population is also growing more religiously diverse each year. Since 1965, millions of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Muslims have immigrated, joining Protestants, Catholics and Jews. The number of people who self-identify as atheists or spiritual is on the rise as well. This course examines the exchanges and debates that result, asking how religion is practiced and contested in the 'public square' through, for example, political speeches or cultural events and ceremonies, in legal codes and in public places. We will focus especially on urban areas, which are hotbeds for religious diversity and innovation. Our discussions will focus on two overlapping themes (a) how religious people and religious groups interact in a pluralistic society (b) how we – as students of religion – can partake in public discussion and community engagement. Students' final projects will focus on some aspect of public engagement, pedagogy or display.

RELI 6007/839A Meditation in East Asian Traditions Dr. M. des Jardins W 16:00-18:15
This course explores a number of different systems of meditative practices with their corresponding philosophies and worldviews which were influential in China, Tibet and Japan. For example, students will be introduced to the alchemical transformative processes and the inner worlds of Taoism as well as the rituals of Esoteric Buddhism. The Chan\ Zen exercises and discourses which are aimed at provoking a spiritual crisis will be examined as well as the visionary meditations of Tibetan Buddhism. The goal of this course is to initiate students to the major spiritual trends and religious traditions which had as goal to bring its adepts to spiritual realization as conceived by these respective schools.

RELI 6017/821A Food, Sex, and Death

Dr. N. Cohn

T 16:00-18:15

This course explores three activities associated with the body – food, sex, and death – as they have been constructed throughout the past 2,000 years of Jewish history. Special attention is given to the cultural contexts in which Jewish practices and attitudes have been shaped, to the relationship between ritual practice and the construction of supernatural worlds, and to the interaction between embodiment and religious experience.

891 Doctoral Seminar

Dr. N. Ravvin

Th13:00-15:15

The second half of this course will take an interdisciplinary and cultural studies approach to questions explored in the first term. These will include: comparative study of religion and its discontents; the role of historiography in the study of religious thought and action; the impact and relationship of ideology, both in the study of religion and in religious phenomena themselves; while questions of colonization and modernization will remain relevant. We will examine these issues by way of particular case studies: the decline of magic and the witch craze in sixteenth and seventeenth century England; the rise of a false messiah in Jewish Eastern Europe; dynamics of power and ideology in the context of Kwakiutl and Aztec interaction with Europeans, as well as in the German Nazi treatment of Jews.

We will read, for the most part, critical work, but creative presentations of these issues will also play a part in our research and writing

The readings for each class will be indicated on the syllabus. The classes will be conducted as seminars, where the participation of everyone is essential. Every student will also be asked to direct at least part of one of the seminars during the term.