

Graduate Course Offerings

2015-2016

Fall

RELI 610/2	Methods	W 16:00-18:15	N. Joseph	R103
RELI 616/2	Reading Buddhist Texts - Esoteric Buddhism	W18:30-20:45	M. des Jardins	FA202
RELI 619/2	Religion and the Arts in S and SE Asia	T 13:15-16:00	L. Orr	H629
RELI 620/2	Religions of the Silk Road	M 16:00-18:15	R. Foltz	R103
RELI 636/2	Religion and Literature (839 A)	J 16:00-18:15	N. Ravvin	R103
RELI 639/2	Cemeteries	T 15:30-17:45	H. Kaell	R103
RELI 670/2	The Dead Sea Scrolls	T 13:45-16:00	L. DiTommaso	FA202
RELI 891/3	Doctoral Seminar	W 13:00-15:45	L. Orr	R103

Winter

RELI 609/4	Theories of Religion	M 18:30-20:45	M. Lalonde	R103
RELI 612/4	The Quran & Its Interpreters (835A)	M 16:00-18:15	L. Clarke	FA202
RELI 614/4	Vaishnavism	W 18:30-20:45	S. Sharma	R103
RELI 619/4	Jainism	TJ 14:45-16:00	L. Orr	H540
RELI 630/4	Anthropology of Religion	TJ 13:15-14:30	H. Kaell	MB S1.105
RELI 630/4	Hear, See, Taste, Touch: Christianity & Material Culture (430 & 833A)	J 16:00-18:15	H. Kaell	R103
RELI 630/4	Religion, Violence, and the Interpretation of Sacred Texts	W 18:00-20:15	A. Gagne	D205
RELI 640/4	Reading Sex in the Bible	T 13:00-15:15	C. Daniel-Hughes	R103
RELI 649/4	Christian Masculinities (828A)	W 16:00-18:15	D. Boisvert	FA202
RELI 670/4	Ancient Jewish Biblical Interpretation (801A)	T 16:00-18:15	N. Cohn	FA202
RELI 697/4	Women in Jewish History: Modern	MW 11:45-13:00	N. Joseph	H564
RELI 891/3	Doctoral Seminar	J 13:00-15:45	N. Ravvin	R103

FALL**RELI 610/2 Methods****W 16:00-18:15****N. Joseph**

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the possibilities (and pitfalls) involved in the academic study of religion. Through a consideration of the work of some classic and more contemporary authors in the field, we will explore the various kinds of questions, approaches and techniques that are used in doing "comparative religion," "the history of religions" and "the social-scientific study of religion". Our investigation will focus on methodologies used and the ways in which these colour, control and reflect the representation of the distinct religious experience and expression under discussion.

RELI 616/2 Reading Buddhist Texts – Esoteric Buddhism W 18:30-20:45**M. des Jardins**

(xlisted RELI 498B)

Esoteric Buddhism is a form of religious practices and beliefs akin to mystery religions of antiquity. It consists of the performance of initiation rites, elaborate rituals, advanced forms of yoga with aims of spiritual enlightenment as well as mundane successes. This course examines the formation of Esoteric Buddhism in India and its spread to South-East Asia, China, Tibet and Japan. It studies its main doctrinal points, its contributions to local cultures and its social and religious functions. A basic knowledge of Buddhism is advisable to take this class.

RELI 619/2 – Religion and the Arts in S and SE Asia T 13:15-16:00**L. Orr**

(xlisted RELI 347)

This course is an introduction to the religious art of South and Southeast Asia, including an examination of Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic architecture, sculpture, painting, and performing arts. The course examines the ways in which sacred art is related to myth and symbol, religious values and goals, ritual, religious experience, and social and political realities.

This course is cross-listed with an undergraduate course. In addition to the weekly Tuesday afternoon meetings of the combined undergraduate/ graduate students, the graduate students enrolled in this course will meet regularly for separate seminar sessions.

RELI 620/2 - Religions of the Silk Road**M 16:00-18:15****R. Foltz**

(xlisted RELI 498)

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.

RELI 636/2 Religion and Literature**J 16:00-18:15****N. Ravvin**

(xlisted 498 & 839 & ENGL 498)

How do literary works help us understand religious traditions? In what way can literary texts stand as revisions or re-interpretations of religious texts and belief? This course will apply these questions with regard to a number of religious traditions. Readings will include canonical religious, literary and critical texts. We will consider how certain provocative books have created social and political unrest, and we will examine how certain thinkers help us understand literary work as expressions of religious modes of thought and creativity.

RELI 639/2 – Cemeteries T 15:30-17:45 H. Kaell
(xlisted RELI 498 A)

This course uses Mount Royal Cemetery as an axis around which students engage a number of themes related to changing notions of death from the mid-1800s to present. This includes theologies of the soul, developments in medicine and grappling with issues about how to share sacred space in an increasingly pluralistic Montreal.

RELI 670/2 – The Dead Sea Scrolls T 13:45-16:00 L. DiTommaso
(xlist RELI 337/ ENGL 398)

In 1947 a shepherd boy accidentally discovered some scraps of ancient texts in a cliff cave near the Dead Sea. Sixty years later, the Dead Sea Scrolls have radically altered our knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and early Judaism, and shed new light on the origins of Christianity. This undergraduate course, which is also being offered as a graduate seminar, introduces students to the Scrolls and their tremendous impact in these areas. Knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic is an asset but not required.

Winter

RELI 609/4 Theories of Religion M 18:30-20:45 M. Lalonde

The purpose of this course is to introduce, compare, and critically examine a selection of contemporary theories of religion. Some of these include the phenomenological, the cognitive, the critical, the feminist, the social scientific, and the theological. In the process, the student will encounter and sort through a variety of theoretical terms and approaches as well as engage numerous meta-theoretical perspectives and questions. Indeed, the latter task is just as important as surveying the different theories of religion. For here we will learn to think and talk about religion in a “theoretical way.” In the final analysis, it is hoped that this “way” will continue to inform the student’s examination of religion as they pursue their own particular course of study.

RELI 612/4– The Quran and its Interpreters M 16:00-18:15 L. Clarke
(xlisted RELI 498J/835)

The course examines selected issues and themes through various works of exegesis or *tafsir*, ranging from the formative texts to interpretations produced in modern times. Development of the exegetical tradition and the nature of various approaches are also considered. Language proficiency is not required, although original texts are available to those able to read them.

RELI 614/4– Vaisnavism W 18:30-20:45
(xlisted RELI 498G)

This course examines Hinduism's Vaishnava traditions across regions and historical periods, in and beyond India. Topics include the Hindu great epics, Vaishnava deities, mythology and theology, core scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita and Bhagavata Purana, the relationships between Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Vedic orthodoxy, and regional Vaishnava sects (e.g. Srivaishnavism, Bengali Vaishnavism, and the Pushtimarg), as well as Vaishnava traditions in the modern world.

RELI 619/4 – Jainism TJ 14:45-16:00 L. Orr

(xlisted RELI 363)

This course provides an introduction to the religious culture of the Jain community. The early history of the Jain tradition in India is explored through a consideration of the life stories of the great teachers of the tradition, of the classical systems of Jain philosophy, cosmology and ethics and of the rich traditions of Jain narrative literature and art. Contemporary Jainism, including the religious practices of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, and the contemporary relevance of Jainism's central precept of universal non-violence (ahimsa) are also studied. This course is cross-listed with an undergraduate course. In addition to the twice-weekly meetings of the combined undergraduate/ graduate students, the graduate students enrolled in this course will meet regularly for separate seminar sessions.

RELI 630/4 – Anthropology of Religion TJ 13:15-14:30 H. Kaell

(xlisted RELI 358A)

This course introduces students to debates and themes that have coloured the anthropology of religion over the last century. After covering classic anthropological texts, it focuses on contemporary issues including self-reflexivity, power/agency, materiality and consumption, post-colonialization, post-modernity/secularity and communitas.

RELI 630/4– B Hear, See, Taste, Touch: Christianity and Material Culture

(xlisted RELI 430/833)

J 16:00-18:15

H. Kaell

This course explores the myriad material forms that make faith tangible for Christians and other persons of faith: images and art, devotional and liturgical objects, architecture and sacred space, and mass-produced projects. It explores the importance of practices that incorporate objects like ritual, prayer, liturgy, instruction, and display. It pays close attention to the scholarly and theological debates that result.

RELI 630/4 - Religion Violence & the Interpretation of Sacred Texts W 18:00-20:15 A. Gagné

In this seminar, students will examine how certain religious texts (Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Qur'an) are sometimes used to justify violent actions. The course will also analyze the causes and mechanisms of radicalization, and seek to provide solutions to counter religious extremism.

RELI 640/4– Reading Sex in the Bible T 13:00-15:15 C. Daniel-Hughes

(xlisted RELI 498H)

What does the Bible say about human sexuality? This course examines the diverse ideologies of sexuality in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and related ancient Jewish and Christian writings. It addresses the historical context in which this literature was produced, and is centrally concerned with hermeneutics: how have Christians (some attention will be given to the Jewish tradition as well) read their Bibles in relationship to sexuality? What are the implications (e.g. ethical, social, religious, political) of these interpretations, historically and in our own time? Issues considered include: marriage, celibacy, gendered and sexual identities, same-sex relationships, sexual violence, human reproduction, masturbation, and desire.

RELI 649/4 – Christian Masculinities W 16:00-18:15 D. Boisvert

(xlisted RELI 498E/828)

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Masculinity has been a site of contestation in the Christian tradition. How it is understood, constructed, lived out and critiqued has varied over the centuries. There is not just one universal form of Christian masculinity, but rather a diversity of masculinities. This course will examine, from historical and sociological perspectives, these varying types of Christian masculinities.

RELI 670 Ancient Jewish Biblical Interpretation T 16:00-18:15 N. Cohn

(xlisted with RELI 498I/801)

This course introduces the major methods, genres, and authors of ancient Biblical interpretation—together with important recent theoretical approaches to this material. Ancient works considered include later biblical books, rabbinic midrash, and the works of early Jewish and Christian authors, such as Jubilees, The Gospels, and the writings of Philo and Josephus. In exploring the similarities and differences between these various authors and their interpretations, the course reveals the ways in which this central text was made ever new and relevant and the ways in which it serves for us as a mirror on the religious diversity of Classical to Late Antiquity.

RELI 697/4 –Women in Jewish History: Modern MW 11:45-13:00 N. Joseph

(xlisted RELI 392)

This course is integrated into Reli 392/4, Jewish Women in Modern Jewish History. You, as graduate students will be required to attend all undergraduate sessions. We will meet together every other week right after that class. Our "issue" for this semester will be the use of biographies, memoirs and autobiographies of women in the writing of modern Jewish history.

As we read many stories about and by women we will interrogate the process of using a life's tale in order to make "history." We will struggle with that process.

You will do all the readings and complete the semester with a research paper.

RELI 891/3 Doctoral Seminar J 13:00-15:45 L. Orr/N. Ravvin R 103

During the first semester of this course, we will examine the nature of the comparative enterprise in the study of religion. We will explore the question of how one might undertake comparisons among religions with respect to religious behaviour and the organization of religious communities. To what extent are the religious structures (or even definitions of "religion") that are found in various cultures commensurate with one another, and what are our aims in attempting to compare them? This leads us to the second theme we will be concerned with: historiography. We will consider the character of our sources for an historical approach to the study of religion; the issue of how and how much ideologies and systems of authority have served as historical forces in the shaping of social and religious behaviour; and the nature and value of different approaches to explaining religious change and processes of religious interaction. The semester will conclude with an examination of the impact on religion and on religious studies of colonialism and globalization.

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 colonialization 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

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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.