

# DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES



**STUDENTS, PLEASE NOTE:** Since you will want to attend to the matter of cognates when you enroll, we are providing you with the current active cognates linked to the REL courses that are listed below, as of the printing of this Course Guide. Please be sure to check all your other course cognates. If you have already declared a cognate that is now deactivated, you WILL be able to complete the requirements. You may search for active and deactivated cognates by course at <https://cognates.miami.edu/> or consult the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

### **REL 101: Introduction to Religion**

[Callender | on-line asynchronous](#)

An introduction to the study of religion focusing on the texts, peoples, and events identified with the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course includes an examination of the analytical category "religion" and considers how these well-known Asian and Abrahamic texts and traditions address a range of human concerns from spiritual and emotional to social and political.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Islam and the Arab World
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

### **REL 101: Introduction to Religion**

[Shockley | T, TH 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm](#)

This introductory course introduces students to the critical study of religious traditions. This course provides an overview of Abrahamic and Asian faith traditions (e.g., Judaism; Christianity; Islam; Zoroastrianism; Hinduism; Buddhism; Confucianism; Taoism) as worldviews. We explore religious perspectives concerning ultimate reality, humanity, and the world with their cultural, historical, moral, philosophical, practical, spiritual, and textual distinctiveness, similarities, and practices. Emphasis is also given to the nature, definitions, and contributions that religious studies makes in human thought and life. Lastly, we also consider how these faith traditions address a wide range of human concerns from spiritual and emotional to social and political.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Islam and the Arab World
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

## **REL 102: Problem of God**

**Maklakiewicz | T 5:05 pm – 7:50 pm**

Contemporary religious issues related to the concept of God. Foundational to this course is an examination of the religious dimension of human experience and consciousness in relation to a number of historical and contemporary problems and challenges. This course approaches "the problem of God" from the angle of human experience, focusing on the various historical, social, and existential determinants of belief. Topics include: globalized religion, the challenge of atheism and humanism, the impact of secularization on religion, and an exploration of the historical, social, and theological images of creation and the divine.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

## **REL 131/AMS 324: Religion in America**

**Kling | T, TH 11:00 am – 12:15 pm**

The history of religion in the U.S. from the pre-colonial period to the present. Includes study of the religion of Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, women, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and members of cults.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Religious Traditions and Texts

## **REL 161: Religion and Medicine: Health Care as a Spiritual Practice**

**Newell | T, TH 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm**

An exploration of the history of medical care and the history of medicine as calling, as well as the changing professionalism of health care; the role of virtue ethics in the practice of medicine; the tensions between religion and medicine; the place of personal religious beliefs in health care; and the changing landscape of health, holism, healing, faith and the science of medicine.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Religion and Medicine

**REL 231/JUS 231/AMS 324: Jewish Civilization and Intro to Judaism, Jews, and Jewishness from Abraham to Wonder Woman**

Green, H. | T, TH 9:30 am – 10:45 am

Introduction to Jewish Civilization from Abraham to present.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- The Evolution of the Jewish People in their Homeland and the Diaspora

**REL 244/ARC 589: Sacred Space**

Green, W. | TH 2:00 pm – 4:45 pm

An inter-disciplinary seminar, SACRED SPACE explores the multiple, layered intersections of religion and architecture through case-studies of contemporary and historic religious buildings across culture, time and place. Students from across the University and the faculty investigate if, how, and to what extent architecture and the sacred are connected and if they require one another. Over the course of the semester, students prepare a case study for group discussion. This course is offered in the Harkness Table format which emphasizes discussion-based learning.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

**REL 250/AMS 324: Spiritual, Not Religious**

Newell | T, TH 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

In "Spiritual, Not Religious" we will examine the spiritual outlets and the fabric of religious life in the 21st century; we will explore such spiritual phenomena as the New Age movement, the rise of yoga as a spiritual practice, the growth of the self-help phenomenon, the influence of spiritually-oriented figures like Oprah on modern spirituality, and the adaptation of religious practice to spiritual seeking.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

**REL 271: Introduction to Islam**

Husayn | T, TH 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm

Interested in learning about Islam? In this introductory course, students will learn about the

religion, culture, and history of Islam. The course examines Muslim beliefs about God, the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an, the caliphate and the emergence of various sects. No prior knowledge is assumed.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Islam and the Arab World
- Religious Traditions and Texts

### **REL 281: Introduction to Buddhism**

**Ritzinger | T, TH 11:00 am – 12:15 pm**

What is Buddhism? What does it teach? How is it practiced? How has it grown and changed over time? And how does it inform the lives of ordinary practitioners? This course will attend to the ideas and practices for which Buddhism is famous, while situating Buddhists in their social contexts at key historical moments. Throughout we will give attention to the issue of our own perspective and what it means to think across the porous borders of culture in an interrelated world.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- China Studies
- Religious Traditions and Texts

### **REL 351/AMS 324: Religious Issues in Death and Dying**

**Walsh | TH 11:00 am – 1:45 pm**

For as long as we have documented history on the subject, human beings have debated issues about what it means to be mortal, what it means to live well, how to die well, and whether death is truly the end of life. This course surveys discourses about death and death rituals from the ancient Mediterranean (ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome) to the present day. Some of the issues we will discuss include (but are not limited to): the history of certain perspectives on illness, death, and burial; the relationship between organized religious systems and death and dying; personhood; theodicy; euthanasia; and the afterlife. **For Fall 2025, this course will also be offered in conjunction with the Lowe Museum on UM's campus and will involve engagement with objects and artifacts related to our subject matter.**

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Religion and Medicine
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

## **REL 354/PHI 351: Religion and the Problem of Evil**

**Shockley | T, TH 5:05pm – 6:20pm (on-line)**

We will explore the origin and nature of evil, cruelty and suffering as it relates to various religious and philosophical worldviews in both Western and Eastern thought (e.g., nature of G-d, reality; humanity; ethics; beauty; happiness). Some of the major problems we will consider include moral evil, natural evil, pointless evil, G-d as author of evil; G-d as finite being, the non-existence of evil, and the non-existence of G-d. We will also study the logical and evidential problem of evil. We will also read and discuss insights made by thinkers such as St. Augustine, Buddha, Albert Camus, Philip Hallie, Laozi, C. S. Lewis, Blaise Pascal, Alvin Plantinga, Desmond Tutu, and a wide array of Jewish thinkers on the European Holocaust (e.g., Martin Buber; Ignaz Maybaum; R. L. Rubenstein).

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

## **REL 356: Myth and Religion**

**Callender | T, TH 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm**

The primary focus of this course is the concept “myth” in relation the idea of religion. The course will explore theories of myth. It will give special attention to the concept’s usefulness for thinking about what we call “religion,” and how these relate to notions such as “meaning”, “reality”, “truth”, and “belief”. We will consider not only the realm of individual experience but also that of the social and political. In addition to reading key theorists, we will examine a variety of texts, religious and otherwise, ranging from ancient Mesopotamian traditions to selections from the Bible to the works of modern authors.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

## **REL 371 / GSS 350: Women, Gender, and Islam**

**Husayn | T, TH 5:05 pm – 6:20 pm**

An examination of issues related to women and gender with an emphasis upon themes pertaining to the Muslim world. We will study the contributions of progressive/feminist Muslim writers in addition to secular academic research on the subject. Topics include Qur'anic revelations concerning women; understanding how Islamic texts and doctrines have both reinforced and challenged certain gender categories; and the experience of Muslims living in the U.S. and the Middle East, addressing racial as well as gendered hierarchies.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- A Cross-Cultural and Historic Examination of Sexuality
- Islam and the Arab World

### **REL 375/JUS 301: Democracy and Religion in Israel and Palestine**

[Green, H. | T, TH 11:00 am – 12:15 pm](#)

Israel's evolution as a nation and a society by focusing on the impact of religion on ethnicity, culture, and democracy and with a lens on the relationship with the Palestinians.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Politics and Religion
- Studies of Modern Day Israel
- The Evolution of the Jewish People in their Homeland and the Diaspora
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

### **REL 384: Karma**

[Ritzinger | T, TH 9:30 am – 10:45 am](#)

Karma is one of the most central doctrines of Buddhism and by far the most viral. Through tip jars, pop songs, and TV shows, the concept has become familiar to many. But what is karma? How does it work? What does it mean to live in a karmic universe? This course will examine these questions through a consideration of Buddhist doctrine, ritual, ethics, and narrative. No prior knowledge required.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Religious Traditions and Texts

### **REL 403: Supervised Reading in Religious Issues or Problems**

[Green, W. | Does Not Meet | By Instructor Permission](#)

Independent study enables students to read extensively in an area of personal interest in religious issues or problems.

### **REL 406/ Special Topics in Religious Issues or Problems: Religion and Human Evolution**

[Green, W. | W 5:05 pm – 7:50 pm](#)

If humans are part of the order of nature, and if evolutionary theories offer the most comprehensive and empirical description of that order, how do these theories explain the origin and persistence of religion in human experience? In this course we will work together to understand, analyze, and assess different contemporary answers to that question.

Counts toward the following cognate:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities

**REL 406/PHI 391 Special Topics in Religious Issues or Problems: Religion, Evolution and, the Constitution**

[Haack | M, W 2:30 pm – 3:45 pm](#)

This interdisciplinary course, including topics in history, religion, law, philosophy, and biology, will focus on the Religion Clauses of the U.S. Constitution, with special emphasis on the Establishment Clause, and specifically its application to the teaching of evolution in public high schools.

Counts toward the following cognate:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities

**REL 491 – Sr. Honors Thesis**

[TBA | Does Not Meet | By Instructor Permission](#)