

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

# DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES



## SPRING 2024 COURSES

Students: 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 courses that are listed below. 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/>

## REL 101: Introduction to Religion

[Shockley | T, TR 3:30pm-4:45pm \(on-line\)](#)

An overview of religious perspectives concerning ultimate reality, humankind, and the world, with special attention to major Asian and Abrahamic religions.

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

[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 102: Problem of God

[Maklakiewicz TH 5:05pm-7:50pm \(on-line\)](#)

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 and People & Society
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

## REL 105: One Goal: Transforming the Self in the Asian Religions

Ritzinger M, W 10:10 am - 11:25 am

The religions of Asia loom large in American popular consciousness yet are at best dimly understood. This course will peel back the platitudes of fortune cookies and “Eastern wisdom” to reveal the richness and diversity of Asian religious traditions. In this selective survey, students will encounter major figures, doctrines, and ethical precepts, but special attention will be paid to one key element: the one goal of self-transformation and the techniques for achieving it. Along the way students will be exposed to major concepts and approaches to the academic study of religion.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities and People & Society
- Contemporary Issues in Religions
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- China Studies

## REL 109: Anthropology of Religion

Nwokocha M, W 5:05 pm – 6:20 pm

What does it mean to study religion anthropologically? What are the methods that are used to examine lived religion? This course introduces students to anthropological approaches of studying religion. We will explore multiple religious beliefs, meanings, experiences, expressions, and practices across diverse sociocultural environments. Through an engagement with anthropological works on ritual, myth, sacrifice, death, symbol, gender, healing, religious activism, and identities, to name a few, we will learn how religion is understood, experienced, and expressed across different sociocultural environments, both in the past, and within the contemporary moment. Throughout the course students will pursue individual research projects that will allow them to deepen their understanding of a specific question pertaining to religion and gain training in research, writing and presentation skills. The course also exposes introductory-level students to diverse world religious traditions: African and African Diasporic Religions, Religions in Latin America, U.S religious traditions and more.

Counts towards the following cognates:

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

## REL 111: Introduction to the Bible: Tanakh/Old Testament

Callender T, TH 9:30 am – 10:45 am

An examination of the earliest form of the Bible, known to Judaism as the Tanakh and to Christianity as the Old Testament. The course will consider what traditional and modern approaches have suggested about the origins and growth of the Tanakh/OT within the historical and cultural context of ancient Western Asia and Northern Africa (Egypt), and how the texts of Tanakh/OT have functioned in different historical periods for different communities through today. Through close readings of biblical and other texts we will give special attention to key issues such as: law, ethics, and justice; conceptions of divine and human authority; conceptions of God, gods, angels, demons and other divine forces; divine revelation and human knowledge; and the analytical categories of “culture” and “religion.” Using films, documentaries, and social media we will consider the Bible both as a religious document and as a force in popular and political culture today.

Counts toward the following cognates:

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

## REL 151: Religion and Moral Choices

Papadakis TH 6:35 pm – 9:20 pm

Using a narrative approach, this course introduces students to religious responses to dilemmas raised by issues such as capital punishment, biotechnology, abortion, euthanasia, and war. In this course, we will focus on formative narratives and biographies in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Because this course is part of the Religion and Health Care program, it will highlight issues related to health care. Key topics include reproductive planning/care, eugenics, abortion, gender vs. sex, vaccinations, mental health, end of life care, euthanasia, and organ donation. The course will be divided into two parts: 1. Formative religious narratives and 2. Health care topics in relation to religious ethics.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities and People & Society
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- Contemporary Issues in Religion
- Politics and Religion
- Religion and Medicine

## REL 235/AAS 290: African American Religions

Nwokocho M, W 6:35 pm – 7:50 pm

This course introduces students to the variety of African American religions that developed

in the U.S. The historical and ethnographical contexts surrounding the development of African American religions and the lived experiences of African Americans are the main topics of our course. The class includes discussion of West African and Central African religions, the impact of the Atlantic slave trade, the role of politics, the construction of racial identities, and most importantly, the diversity of African American religions. Thematically, we will work through concepts of the religion such as: memory, myth and authenticity; ritual and material practices; borders, migration, gender and sexuality, religious commodities and exchange. As we traverse through these various religious traditions, it is through the readings, lectures, invited speakers, films and class discussions that we will develop a complex understanding of integrative religious worldviews that impacts every aspect of life: family structure, gender relations, education, healing, economics, politics, arts, and so on. Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities and People & Society

## REL 305 The Ancient Near East: Religion and Culture

Callender T, TH 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

A survey of the cultural forms that arose in ancient Western Asia and North Africa from the beginning of writing to the rise of the Roman Empire. The course will consider how the material culture that people in these regions produced (a) reflected the social and political struggles of the times in which they lived; (b) addressed fundamental concerns of human experience; and (c) relates to our cultural products and efforts today. Through the examination of a variety of texts, practices, and personages – from the Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh and the Code of Hammurabi, to the Egyptian Osiris myth and the reforms of Akhenaten, to Moses and the works of the Israelite prophets and historians – the course will explore a range of topics, including:

- Conceptions of law, ethics, and justice
- Personhood and identity
- Conceptions of success and suffering, life and death
- Divinity and “unseen” forces (God, gods, angels, demons and others)
- “Religion” and technologies of self- and social regulation

This course will also consider the ways Western scholarship has approached these materials and how these approaches have shaped our reception of categories like nature and culture, irrationality and rationality, religion, and science.

Counts toward the following cognates:

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

## REL 334/AMS 301/JUS 360: The American Jewish Experience: Hollywood and Popular Culture

Green, H T 5:05 pm – 7:50 pm

Analysis and interpretation of the image of the Jew and the Jewish experience in American cinema by focusing on how Americans in general, and the American Jewish community in particular, have been reflected on the screen from the pre-World War II period until the present. The tension between maintaining an ethnic identity and assimilating is examined with the recent film, *Barbie* as a foundational pillar.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- The Evolution of the Jewish People in their Homeland and the Diaspora
- American Studies: Politics and Religion
- Popular Culture
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

## REL 351 Religious Issues in Death and Dying

Walsh T, TH 12:30 pm – 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; suicide; and the afterlife.

Counts toward the following cognate:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities and People & Society
- 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)

Major religious perspectives on the origin and nature of evil and human suffering.

Counts toward the following cognates:

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

## REL 360/ECS 372: Religion and Bioethics

Newell T, TH 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

In Religious Studies 360, we will examine the implications of religious thought for contemporary problems in biomedical ethics. Ethics—often defined as “right action” or principals that govern moral behavior—are frequently required to mediate between biomedical technologies, religious tradition, and human concerns. In this class we will focus on some of those concerns by examining contemporary issues in biotechnology, including (but not limited to) cloning, genetic engineering, stem cell research, assisted suicide, human subject clinical trials, gene therapies, vaccinations, and embryonic manipulation. We will explore these subjects in the context of both religious values and ethical principles by utilizing historical case studies and following current bioethical situations as they unfold.

Counts toward the following cognate:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Religion and Medicine

## REL 369 Is Star Wars a Religion?

Walsh T 2:00 pm – 4:45 pm

From a mysterious force that links the universe, to the resurrection of powerful figures, supernatural adoptions, and the ruins of its holy cities, the Star Wars franchise both invokes and evokes associations with what we might call religious themes and imagery. This course will explore the possible intersections between the Star Wars universe and the category of religion in an effort to test the proposition that Star Wars is-- or perhaps one day might become-- a religion. Among the questions we will ask are: what does it take for something to be a religion? How do new religious movements start? How do we theorize the study of religion? What turns certain narratives into canon? Do the similarities between *Star Wars* and religion represent intentional strategy on the part of the filmmakers, writers, artists, and imagineers, or does it reflect a larger social phenomenon?

NB: This is a Harkness/flipped classroom course and will be run in a seminar style with limited enrollment.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities and People & Society

## REL 370: Islam in the Modern World

Homayounvash T, TH 11:00 am – 12:15 pm

The survey course is designed to give students a broad-based exposure across a variety of conceptual debates, historical events, and policy issues at the intersection of Islam and the modern world and the paths forward. The issues, especially religiously-inspired and

informed international and intra-national relations-- and debates surrounding them have assumed prominence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the resurgence of religion in world politics and the subsequent struggle for Islam. These issues will be contextualized in normative, empirical and historical frameworks to equip students with a sophisticated and multi-dimensional conceptual toolbox to analyze them.

Counts toward the following cognate:

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

## REL 383: Activist Bodhisattvas: Buddhist Ethics & Social Engagement

[Ritzinger](#) M, W 2:30AM - 3:45AM

The Buddha said that the world is on fire, aflame with greed, anger, and delusion. This is all too apparent when we consider our own troubled times. This course will examine Buddhist ethics and how contemporary Buddhist activists have attempted to apply them through social activism to address war, racism, sexism, and our deteriorating environment. This course will explore these movements through a consideration of selected examples drawn from several traditions both to better understand Buddhism in the contemporary world and to serve as a resource for our own thinking as we confront a world on fire.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities and People & Society
- Contemporary Issues in Religion
- Politics and Religion
- Community Engagement and Social Change

## REL 406/COM 406/POL 499; HIS 396; JUS 401: Special Topics in Religious Issues or Problems: Persuasion, Propaganda, and Genocide

[Green, W.](#) W 5:05 pm – 7:50 pm (on-line)

The course examines how governments and other groups use propaganda to persuade citizens to murder or harm other citizens. It covers theories of propaganda and persuasion and examines historical and contemporary case studies and aspects of American media and society. It is a discussion-based course.

Counts toward the following cognate:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities

## REL 406/ARC 586/ARC 686/CIM 489/CIM 689 JUS/401: Special Topics in Religious Issues or Problems: Religion Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality

[Green, W.](#) TH 5:50 pm -7:50 pm (on-line)

The course explores how artificial intelligence and virtual reality will affect the future of



religion in both practice and spatial experience. It involves student-designed collaborative projects.

Counts toward the following cognate:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities

REL 409/HIS 396/JUS 401: Racism, Human Rights and Freedom of Religion: The Forgotten Exodus

Green, H. M 2:30 pm – 5:15 pm

Over the last 70 years, millions of people have been displaced from North Africa and the Middle East: Copts (Egypt), Jews (from the Atlantic Ocean to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers), Kurds and Yazidis in Iraq, and Syrians (Christian and Moslem) and Palestinians. The course examines the reasons why these minorities and populations have been displaced. Highlighting the International Declaration of Human Rights in the wake of the Holocaust (1951), the course engages students in collecting and documenting the testimonies of these refugees. The narratives include life in their countries of origin, their story of leaving and their experience of resettling in a new country. Core themes such as racism, religion, human rights, transnational identity, exile, diaspora, and migration are central to the course. Witnesses who have been exiled will be invited to the class to tell their stories of displacement.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Community Engagement and Social Change
- Study of Aspects of the Holocaust