

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

# DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES



## SPRING 2025 COURSES

**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 102: Problem of God**

[Maklakiewicz](#) | M 6:35 pm – 9:20 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
- Individualized Cognate in People & Society
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

## **REL 105: Asian Religions: Transforming the Self**

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

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

## **REL 109: Anthropology of Religion**

[Nwokocha | M, W 12:20 pm-1:35 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
- Individualized Cognate in People & Society
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

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

[Crocker Papadakis | TH 9:30 am – 10:45 am \(on-line\)](#)

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**

[Crocker Papadakis | TH 6:35 pm – 9:20 pm \(on-line\)](#)

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

## **REL 232: A Global History of Christianity**

[Kling | T, TH 11:00 am-12:15 pm](#)

This course introduces the history, themes, and issues in Christianity from the first century

to the present. It takes a wide-view perspective on the most popular and influential religion in human history. Launched by Jesus of Nazareth 2000 years ago, the Christian movement currently has more than two and a half billion members. Its reach is worldwide. After examining Christian beginnings and four basic expressions of Christianity (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Pentecostalism), we will tour the world and explore Christianity's presence in Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa, Japan, and China.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Individualized Cognate in People & Society
- Western Civilization: Historical Approaches
- Religious Traditions and Texts

### **REL 235/AAS 290: African American Religions**

[Nwokocha | M, W 2:30 pm-3:45 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
- Individualized Cognate in People & Society

### **REL 236: Cults and New Religious Movements in America**

[Kling | T, TH 2:00 pm-3:15 pm](#)

This course focuses on modern religious groups in America, so-called "cults" or new religious movements (NRMs), located on the periphery of "mainstream" religion. We will examine the origins, beliefs, attraction, and interactions of the NRMs from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (historical, sociological, and psychological) as well as from a variety of thematic perspectives (potential for violence, "brainwashing," involvement of women, and charismatic leadership). Our goal is to increase our understanding of certain aspects of contemporary religious activity and the general societal response to them, and hence, of religion in general. Our task is not to commend or condemn particular religious groups, but rather to attempt

to reach some understanding of them, first on their terms, then on ours in the appropriate disciplinary contexts.

Counts toward the following cognates:

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

### **REL 312: The Torah and Ancient Law**

[Barras | T, TH 9:30 am-10:45 am](#)

The first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) in relation to their ancient Near Eastern historical, cultural, and religious context.

Counts toward the following cognates:

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

### **REL 325: Jesus in Myth and History**

[WALSH | T 2:00 pm-4:45 pm](#)

Who was Jesus? No other historical figure has been written about, depicted and debated more than the Galilean peasant known as Jesus of Nazareth. Nor has any other figure been interpreted with so many variations over time. This course surveys how Jesus has been portrayed from the earliest extant accounts of his life to the present day. Given our source material, we will focus on his treatment in literature, devotional accounts, art and popular culture, observing how his characterization shifts or changes according to particular historical, cultural, and social circumstances. As we move chronologically through this evidence, we will also test the thesis that Jesus has evolved over time to reflect the concerns and needs of those engaged in re-imagining his life and significance. In short, we will ask the question: is Jesus who we make him?

Counts toward the following cognates:

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

### **REL 350 / PHI 337: Current Issues in Religion – Religion and the Environment**

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

In this livestream online course, we will delve into contemporary environmental and ethical issues through the multifaceted lens of various religious and philosophical worldviews. Topics will include but are not limited to animal rights, biodiversity, climate change, genetic

modification, overpopulation, resource depletion, and the alarming loss of pollinators. Through the exploration of these perspectives, students will evaluate major environmental positions such as biocentrism, deep ecology, ecocentrism, ecofeminism, and ecospirituality. We will consider the bilateral relationship between religious traditions, nature, and responses to contemporary environmental problems. We will not only seek to understand how religious and philosophical traditions interpret nature but also how nature informs worldview beliefs, religious practices, and more (e.g., indigenous religions; nature deficit disorder; the integration of nature in urban landscapes, meditation and prayer gardens; the arts). We will also investigate the use of nature as religious symbols and teaching illustrations (e.g., blood; darkness/light; fire; fish; honey; lotus flower; pomegranate; soil; snakes; trees; water; white stag; wine).

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Belonging in a Diverse Society: Intersections of culture, identity, and social justice

### **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 principles 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
- Individualized Cognate in People & Society
- Religion and Medicine

### **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 399: Method and Theory in the Study of Religion**

[Callender | TH 5:05 pm-7:50 pm](#)

This course is an introduction to fundamental issues of theory and method in the academic study of religion. Religion is at once the newest and oldest subject in the humanities, and its study experiences persistent redefinition and recasting. We will critically examine some of the more important modern and contemporary theories of religion, assessing not only their rigor and persuasiveness, but also how they help us to think about and address a range of issues humans face in society today and in life.

Counts toward the following cognates:

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

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

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

### **REL 405/JUS 338: Special Topics in Religious or Historical Traditions**

[Retchkiman & Shaked | T 2:00 pm-4:45 pm](#)

Focus on the roots, events and results of the Nazis nearly successful annihilation of Jewish men, women, and children living under the Swastika. We will study Hitler's political aims, his Aryan superiority mythology, his domestic and foreign policies, and his conquests. We will also investigate how Germans, admired for their culture, became instruments of mass murder. Also included in this survey are the heroism of Jewish resisters and gentile rescuers who stood in direct opposition to the silence of the Christian churches and inactivity of the nearly all nations in the face of the Jewish disaster.



Counts towards the following cognate:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities

**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](#)

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 / MCY 540 / MCY 640: Special Topics in Religious Issues or Problems: Music and Religion**

[Green, W. | T, TH 2:00 pm-3:15 pm](#)

Music and Religion are fundamental aspects of human existence, evidence of which goes back some 30,000 years. This seminar course will explore musical and religious experiences in human history and the use of music within major religious traditions. It will include specific study of some of the major monuments of sacred music from around the world.

Counts toward the following cognate:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities

**REL 406 / ARC 589 / ARC 689: Special Topics in Religious Issues or Problems: Religious & Sacred Spaces in the Era of Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality:**

[Green, W. | TH 5:05 pm-7:50 pm](#)

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 491 – Sr. Honors Thesis**

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