

# RELIGION

## Overview and Contact Information

To major in religion is to ask questions about the many ways people have sought to make sense of their lives. Examining religious traditions—their notable leaders, their valued texts, and the social behaviors designed to embody their visions—is a central way to study the profound questions that direct so many areas of human endeavor. The study of religion is an excellent way of organizing a liberal arts education so that diverse cultures, artistic expressions, political forces, and gender assignments can be questioned and set in historical and changing contexts.

Our courses focus on sacred texts and interpretive traditions; religious thought; and religion in history and society. The study of religion is inherently comparative, international, and interdisciplinary in approach, embracing a range of methodologies from the humanities and social sciences.

## See Also

- Jewish Studies (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/jewish-studies/>)

## Contact Information

**Susanne Mrozik, Chair**

**Natalina Tulik, Academic Department Coordinator**

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<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/religion> (<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/religion/>)

## Learning Goals

The Religion major is, by its very nature, intercultural and comparative, multi-disciplinary, critical, integrative, creative and constructive. Students are expected to:

- Explore more than one religious tradition and engage the phenomena of religion comparatively across and within cultures.
- Understand and apply a range of methodological and theoretical approaches to religious phenomena.
- Examine and engage religious phenomena, including issues of ethical and social responsibility, from a perspective of critical inquiry and analysis of both the other and the self.
- Apply theoretical knowledge of religious phenomena to lived, practical contexts, both historical and current.
- Employ knowledge of religious phenomena and the skills of religious studies in the solving of complex problems, including those raised in the personal and social engagement of issues of life, death, love, violence, suffering, and meaning.

## Faculty

**This area of study is administered by the Department of Religion:**

Mara Benjamin, Irene Kaplan Leiwant Professor of Jewish Studies

Susanne Mrozik, Professor of Religion, Teaching Spring Only

Amina Steinfels, Associate Professor of Religion

Meredith Coleman-Tobias, Assistant Professor of Religion, Teaching Fall Only

## Requirements for the Major

A minimum of 32 credits:

Code	Title	Credits
20 credits in religion at any level		20
12 additional credits in religion at the 300 level <sup>1</sup>		12

Majors must ensure their course selections include at least three different religious traditions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, or Judaism. This requirement may be fulfilled by courses at any level and by courses that take a comparative approach.

<b>Total Credits</b>	<b>32</b>
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<sup>1</sup> Only one 395 course will count toward the 300-level requirement

## Additional Specifications

- The Religion Major does not have a prescribed sequence of required courses. Students choose their course of study in close consultation with their advisors.
- Independent work is encouraged and, if approved by the advisor, such work may constitute partial fulfillment of the above requirements.
- Courses with a substantial focus on a religious tradition or a religious theme offered by other departments may be counted towards the Religion major with approval of the advisor and department chair. Examples include:

Code	Title	Credits
CLASS-211	Gods and Mortals: Ancient Greek and Roman Myth	4
POLIT-342	Islamic Political Thought	4

- Please note this list is not comprehensive. Additional courses should be identified in consultation with the advisor or department chair.
- One extra-departmental course on relevant methodological or theoretical approaches may be counted towards the major with permission of the advisor. Such a course may be of particular value for students planning to do independent research. Examples include:

Code	Title	Credits
ANTHR-275	Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology	4
SOCI-225	Social Science Research and Data Analysis	4
GNDST-201	Methods and Practices in Feminist Scholarship	4

- Please note that such courses may have prerequisites set by their department or require the permission of the instructor.

## Requirements for the Minor

A minimum of 20 credits:

Code	Title	Credits
Four courses in religion at any level		16
At least one additional course in religion at the 300 level		4
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>20</b>

## Additional Specifications

- At least three of the courses should be taken in the Mount Holyoke Department of Religion.

## Course Offerings

### RELIG-100 Introduction to Religion

*Fall. Credits: 4*

This course is an introduction to the study of religion, assessing the nature of religion and methodological approaches through an examination of subject matter drawn from numerous traditions.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

*M. Benjamin*

*Restrictions: This course is limited to first-years, sophomores, and juniors*

### RELIG-102 Introduction to Islam

*Spring. Credits: 4*

This course examines Islamic religious beliefs and practices from the origins of Islam to the present, focusing on such central issues as scripture and tradition, law and theology, sectarianism and mysticism. Attention will be given to the variety of Islamic understandings of monotheism, prophethood, dogma, ritual, and society.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

*A. Steinfels*

### RELIG-108 Arts of Asia

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This multicultural course introduces students to the visual arts of Asia from the earliest times to the present. In a writing- and speaking-intensive environment, students will develop skills in visual analysis and art historical interpretation. Illustrated class lectures, group discussions, museum visits, and a variety of writing exercises will allow students to explore architecture, sculpture, painting, and other artifacts in relation to the history and culture of such diverse countries as India, China, Cambodia, Korea, and Japan.

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-105*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

*A. Sinha*

### RELIG-112 Introduction to Judaism

*Fall. Credits: 4*

Judaism is a 3,500-year-old tradition that has developed over time as Jewish communities all over the world creatively interacted with the different cultural and historical milieus in which they lived. This course explores the ways in which Judaism has sought to transform ordinary life into sacred life. What are the ways in which Judaism conceives of God, and what is the meaning of life? What roles do study, prayer, ethics, sex, marriage, family, rituals of the life cycle, and community play in Judaism? These and other questions will be taken up through study of diverse types of religious literature and historical evidence.

*Crosslisted as: JWST-112*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*M. Benjamin*

### RELIG-163 Introduction to Buddhism

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Some scholars have argued that there is no such thing as 'Buddhism' in the singular, but only 'Buddhisms' in the plural. This course introduces students to select historically and culturally diverse forms of Buddhism, including Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism, Japanese Zen Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism. The course pays particular attention to modern (and modernist) reinterpretations of Buddhism, including contested views of gender.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

*S. Mrozik*

### RELIG-181 Introduction to African Diaspora Religions

*Fall. Credits: 4*

Over the last century, religionists have labored to discover the meaning of African dispersal beyond the continent and its accompanying spiritual lineages. What theories of encounter sufficiently adjudicate the synthetic religious cultures of African-descended persons in North America, South America, and the Caribbean? What are the cross-disciplinary methodologies that scholars utilize to understand African religious cultures in the Western hemisphere? Firstly, this course will introduce the field of Africana religious studies. This background will inform the second and primary objective of the course: thematizing and exploring West and Central African religious traditions housed in the Americas.

*Crosslisted as: AFCNA-181, CST-149AD*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

*M. Coleman-Tobias*

### RELIG-201 Reading the Qur'an

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course examines the history, structure, and themes of the Qur'an and analyzes the place of the Qur'an in Islamic religious thought. Students will read the entire text of the Qur'an in translation, as well as selections from medieval and modern commentaries.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

*A. Steinfels*

### RELIG-207 Women and Gender in Islam

*Fall. Credits: 4*

This course will examine a range of ways in which Islam has constructed women—and women have constructed Islam. We will study concepts of gender as they are reflected in classical Islamic texts, as well as different aspects of the social, economic, political, and ritual lives of women in various Islamic societies.

*Crosslisted as: GNDST-210SL*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

*A. Steinfels*

### RELIG-208 Religion and Science Fiction

*Spring. Credits: 4*

This course examines the representation of religion and religious communities in science fiction. We will read works that speculate on the nature, origin, and function of religious beliefs and practices, and on the place of religion in imagined futures and universes. We will also explore science fiction-based religious movements, the use of science fiction to communicate religious ideas, and Afro-futurism. We will focus on mostly American novels, short stories, film, television, and music. Readings will include works by Ursula K. Le Guin, Octavia Butler, and Joanna Russ.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*A. Steinfels*

**RELIG-209 Disability and Religion***Fall. Credits: 4*

What do religions say about disability? How do people with disabilities engage with religious texts, images, practices, and communities? Drawing on different religions and cultures, the course explores the challenges and resources disability offers to religious communities. We study religious narratives that link disability to sin or karma and alternative narratives that reimagine the divine as disabled; access to worship spaces and rituals; ways healthcare professionals can support the religious needs of disabled clients; and the Disability Justice movement, which foregrounds the interlocking oppressions of disability, race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality.

*Crosslisted as: CST-249DR**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*  
*S. Mrozik***RELIG-225 Topics in Religion****RELIG-225AN Topics in Religion: 'Arts of India'***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

The multicultural course will survey architecture, sculpture, painting, and other arts of India from the earliest times to the twenty-first century. Students will explore the various arts as material expressions of a relationship between religious beliefs, geography and cultural conditions of the subcontinent of India in different historical periods. Class sessions will also provide opportunities for an examination of cross-cultural issues relating to the study of non-Western art in a Western academic discipline. Students will develop strategies for visual analysis and critical thinking through written assignments, class discussions, and close reading of scholarly articles.

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-263**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*  
*A. Sinha**Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors***RELIG-225KG Topics in Religion: 'Knowing God'***Spring. Credits: 4*

This course examines the following key texts from the ancient world that treat significantly the problem of knowing God and the mystery enveloping such knowledge: Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, Plato's *Phaedo*, Cicero's *Concerning the Nature of the Gods*, Job, Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, and others. Attention is also given to the different ways of thinking about the divine and human natures in these works, which are broadly reflective of Graeco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian value systems.

*Crosslisted as: CLASS-260**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*  
*B. Arnold***RELIG-225LT Topics in Religion: 'Race and Religion in Latin America'***Fall. Credits: 4*

We often imagine race and religion as two distinct aspects of social life. However, this course considers their historical and contemporary interconnections in Latin America. It begins with an investigation of the proto-racial and religious categories through which Europeans in the early modern era conceived of human difference. We then trace how the encounter between Europeans, Africans, and Indigenous Peoples transformed these notions, with particular attention to how the overlapping racial and religious hierarchies that emerged were both constructed and resisted. We conclude with a series of ethnographies that highlight the contemporary entanglements of race and religion in the region.

*Crosslisted as: ANTHR-216LT**Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives*  
*W. Girard**Prereq: ANTHR-105 or an introductory course in Religion.***RELIG-225MB Topics in Religion: 'Medieval Bodies'***Fall. Credits: 4*

In this course we will examine how medieval European thinkers and artists theorized and visualized the body in ways that are vastly different from how the body is conceptualized today. Indeed, the "medieval body" was not a monolithic entity, but rather a shifting constellation of ideas and practices that waxed, waned, and coexisted throughout the Middle Ages. A body could be understood as an earthly body – sexed, fleshly, corruptible – as well as a heavenly and divine body, including Christ's own. Our considerations will further contextualize representations of gendered, racialized, clerical, monstrous, animal, virginal, non-Christian, heretical, and resurrected bodies. Artworks and monuments include icons, reliquaries, altarpieces and other church decorations and liturgical objects, sculptural programs, illuminated manuscripts, prints, and incunabula.

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-290MB**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*  
*C. Andrews**Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors***RELIG-225NR Topics in Religion: 'Reimagining American Religious History: Race, Gender, and Alterity'***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course invites its participants to place critical race and gender studies perspectives in dialogue with the emergence of new religious movements in the United States. Course participants rely on the presupposition that only through a thorough examination of religious traditions on the 'margin' can we fully understand the textured meaning of American religious history as a sub-discipline. Privileging the founding stories and institutionalization of minoritized American religious groups, the course considers how subaltern voices have shaped and transformed American religious life.

*Crosslisted as: CST-249NR, GNDST-210NR**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*  
*M. Coleman-Tobias***RELIG-234 Women and Gender in Judaism***Spring. Credits: 4*

This course examines gender as a key category in Jewish thought and practice. We will examine different theoretical models of gender, concepts of gender in a range of Jewish sources, and feminist Jewish responses to those sources.

*Crosslisted as: JWST-234, GNDST-210JD**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*  
*M. Benjamin*

**RELIG-241 Women and Gender in Buddhism***Spring. Credits: 4*

Can women become Buddhas? Why is the Buddha called a "mother"? Who gets to ordain? Why would anyone choose celibacy? Who engages in religious sexual practices and why? This course examines the centrality of gender to Buddhist texts, practices, and institutions. We pay particular attention to the challenges and opportunities Buddhist traditions have offered women in different historical and cultural contexts. Throughout the course we consider various strategies of empowerment, including feminist, postcolonial, queer, trans\*, and womanist.

*Crosslisted as: GNDST-210BD**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives**S. Mrozik***RELIG-246 Womanist Religious Thought***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

As a conceptual framework which reconsiders the rituals, scriptures, and allegiances of religious black women, womanist thought has expanded the interdisciplinary canon of black and feminist religious studies. This course is a survey of womanist religious scholars from multiple religious traditions: Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Yoruba-Ifa -- as well as theorists who understand womanism as a "spiritual but not religious" orientation. Course participants will use the interpretive touchstones of cross-culturalism, erotics, earthcare, and health -- among others -- to examine contemporary womanist religious thought.

*Crosslisted as: AFCNA-246, GNDST-210WR**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives**M. Coleman-Tobias***RELIG-248 Islam in America: From Slavery to the "Muslim Ban***Fall. Credits: 4*

Is Islam an American religion? Muslims in the United States have often been treated with suspicion and their religion viewed as foreign and incompatible with American values. Yet, Islam was present in North America since at least the 1700s in the lives of enslaved Africans. And it was theoretically included in the religions whose free exercise is protected by the First Amendment. This course traces the fraught and complex history of Islam and Muslims in North America, from the loss and preservation of Islamic practices under the regime of slavery through the reclamation of Islamic symbols and identities in African-American movements of the 20th century (e.g., The Moorish Science Temple, The Nation of Islam, and The Five-Percenters) to the rapid growth of a diverse immigrant Muslim community post-1965. Particular attention will be paid to: the intertwining of race, gender, and religion in the self-construction of Muslim identities and the policing of Muslim persons; the depictions of Islam and Muslims in U.S. society and politics; and the use of Islamic themes and symbols in contemporary popular culture, such as hip-hop.

*Crosslisted as: CST-249SM**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives**A. Steinfels***RELIG-254 Eat This Book: A Cross-Cultural Introduction to Sacred Text***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Scripture is not only read or interpreted; it is also sung, illuminated, held aloft, buried, recited, eaten, and worn. In this thematic course, students examine what makes a text "scripture" by examining the idea of sacred text across multiple traditions. Students will become familiar with hermeneutic theory and will analyze embodied, material, and performative aspects of religious life as they pertain to the broad category of scripture.

*Crosslisted as: JWST-254**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives**M. Benjamin***RELIG-258 Topics in the Study of Christianity****RELIG-267 Buddhist Ethics***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This is an introduction to contemporary and classical Buddhist ethical ideals. Working with primary and secondary sources, we will ask the following questions: Is the universe moral? What are Buddhist ethical ideals and who embodies these? How do contemporary Buddhists interpret classical ethical ideals? What moral dilemmas do Buddhists face today? How do Buddhists grapple with moral ambiguity? We will consider the perspectives of Buddhists from different cultures including India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, and the United States.

*Crosslisted as: CST-249BE**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives**S. Mrozik***RELIG-269 Citizens and Subjects: Jews in the Modern World***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course examines key themes in Jewish intellectual, religious, and political life from the late 17th century to the present. We examine: the effect of civil emancipation and the Enlightenment on Jewish philosophy and theology; Jews as both architects of modern thought and the paradigmatic Other in European liberal nation-states; the transformation of traditional Jewish religious rituals and belief systems in response to dramatic social and political life; new patterns of gender and family organization; the effect of antisemitism, Zionism, and imperialism on Jewish politics; and contemporary Jewish intellectual innovation, including feminist and queer thought.

*Crosslisted as: JWST-269, CST-249JM**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**M. Benjamin***RELIG-271 Arts of Islam: Book, Mosque, and Palace***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Through investigation of major works produced in the Muslim world between the seventh and seventeenth centuries from Spain to India, this course explores the ways in which art and architecture were used to embody the faith, accommodate its particular needs, and express the power of its rulers. Topics include the calligraphy of the Qur'an, illustrated literature, the architecture of the mosque, and the aristocratic palace.

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-271**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives**The department**Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors***RELIG-295 Independent Study***Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 4**The department**Instructor permission required.***RELIG-311 Sufism: The Mystic Path in Islam***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Exploration of the mystical tradition in Islam known as Sufism, from its origins in medieval Iraq to its role in contemporary Islamic societies. This course focuses on how the Sufi pursuit of unity with, or annihilation in, God relates to the core monotheistic beliefs of Islam. Sufi theories and practices are studied through primary source materials. Special attention will be paid to the themes of love, desire, and beauty in the literature of Sufism.

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives**A. Steinfels*

**RELIG-331 Advanced Topics in Religion****RELIG-331AF Advanced Topics in Religion: 'African American Spiritualities of Dissent'**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course seeks to understand how protest fuels the creation and sustenance of black religious movements and novel spiritual systems in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We will examine the dissenting qualities of selected African American activists, community workers, scholars, spiritual/religious leaders and creative writers. By the end of this course, students will be able to thoughtfully respond to the questions, "What is spirituality?"; "What is dissent?"; and "Has blackness required resistive spiritual communities?"

*Crosslisted as: AFCNA-341AF, CST-349AF*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*  
*M. Coleman-Tobias*

**RELIG-331BK Advanced Topics in Religion: 'The Art of the Book: From Manuscript to Incunabula'**

*Spring. Credits: 4*

The subject of this course is the book, from its invention in the late antique era to the advent of printing in the fifteenth century, in Western Asia, Europe, North Africa, and Southeast Asia. We will study books made for devotion, instruction, entertainment, and pleasure, from the earliest accounts of Christ's life, to jewel-encrusted books painted with gold for emperors, to student-copied textbooks of the oldest universities, to vernacular literature, legends, and histories. Topics include technology and materials, integration of text and image, makers (monastic, courtly, and commercial), and readers and collectors, via first-hand study of manuscripts in nearby collections and independent research.

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-301BK*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive*

*C. Andrews*

*Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors*

*Prereq: 4 credits in art history.*

**RELIG-331CH Advanced Topics in Religion: 'Childhood and Children in Religion'**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course explores a diversity of religious approaches to the meaning of childhood and the nature of children. We critically examine influential writings, rituals and liturgy, fiction, and other types of literature to understand the construction of childhood as distinctive life stage that entails special rights and responsibilities. We will also examine how gender, power, race, social structures, and economic arrangements produce divergent understandings of what it means to be a child.

*Crosslisted as: JWST-350CH, CST-349CH*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*M. Benjamin*

*Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors*

*Notes: Students wishing to take this course for credit in Jewish studies must choose a research topic that builds on Jewish sources.*

**RELIG-331DE Advanced Topics in Religion: 'Destroying Art Past and Present'**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

In this course, we will investigate the destruction of artworks and monuments for religious or political reasons, called iconoclasm. The seminar addresses the current debates involving the removal and destruction of confederate monuments in the U.S. and responses from government, media, and social critics. Concurrently, we will study key historical moments of iconoclasm ranging from the Byzantine era to the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution. Studying iconoclasms in different historical periods raises the issue of the power of art in society. Through class discussion, group work, original research, and writing, we will explore how past iconoclasms may inform our understanding of the present. The work also involves an inquiry into art historical methodology as well as approaches from fields such as critical race theory, and a consideration of the role of the art historian in the present debates and social justice movements.

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-301DE*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*C. Andrews*

**RELIG-331LA Advanced Topics in Religion: 'Race and Religion in Latin America'**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

The course will begin with an investigation of the proto-racial and religious categories through which Europeans in the early modern era understood human difference. From there, we will trace how these notions were re-conceptualized in the centuries following the encounter between Europeans, Africans, and the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. As we examine this history – including the emergence of slavery, eugenics, *mestizaje*, and Liberation Theology – we will pay particular attention to how interwoven racial and religious hierarchies were both constructed and resisted. The final section of the course will concentrate on the contemporary entanglements of race and religion in the region.

*Crosslisted as: ANTHR-316LA*

*Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives*

*W. Girard*

*Prereq: 8 credits in Anthropology, Religion, or Latin American Studies.*

**RELIG-331LV Advanced Topics in Religion: 'Living in End Times: Religion and Climate Change'**

*Spring. Credits: 4*

Religion and climate change might seem to be an odd combination. After all, we tend to imagine religion as the domain of faith, emotion, and the otherworldly and the climate as the realm of science, objective knowledge, and the here and now. Nevertheless, this course investigates the sometimes surprising connections between them. For example, how do religious communities work to promote or oppose political action on climate change? How do religious conceptions about God's relationship with nature or with humanity have consequences for adherents' views on climate change? How do the futures predicted by climate models and those prophesied in sacred texts affect people's actions today?

*Crosslisted as: ANTHR-316LV*

*Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences*

*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive*

*W. Girard*

*Prereq: 8 credits in anthropology or religion.*

**RELIG-331NW Advanced Topics in Religion: 'Religion: It's Not What It Used to Be'**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Not so long ago, anthropologists had a relatively clear understanding of what they meant by "religion" -- any and all manner of beliefs and practices related to the supernatural or the sacred. However, in recent years, religion has been rethought in light of its own specific Western history, its normative tendencies, and its place in colonialism and other projects of domination. This course will begin with a review of the conventional ways that anthropologists have conceived of religion. It will then move on to investigate the exciting new theoretical and ethnographic perspectives that have emerged to more fully take into account the diverse world-making practices that humans engage in.

*Crosslisted as: ANTHR-316NW*

*Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives*

*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive*

*W. Girard*

*Prereq: 8 credits in Anthropology or Religion.*

**RELIG-331SE Advanced Topics in Religion 'Anthropology of Secularism'**

*Fall. Credits: 4*

What is secularism? For many of us, the answer is obvious: the world without religious belief, or the separation of church and state, or even the "really real" world. In recent years, scholars in number fields have begun to question these common sense notions about secularism. In this course, we will investigate this rapidly expanding literature and the critical lines of inquiry it has opened up: Under what specific cultural and historic conditions did secularism first emerge? Is secularism experienced today in the same way throughout the world? If not, how do they vary? What ways of being and living does secularism encourage or allow to flourish? Which does it stunt, block, or prohibit?

*Crosslisted as: ANTHR-316SE*

*Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives*

*W. Girard*

*Prereq: 8 credits in Anthropology or in Religion.*

**RELIG-331SL Advanced Topics in Religion: 'Spain and Islam'**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course will explore questions and concerns regarding the "Islamic constant" of Spanish history. We will focus on four major political and cultural contexts: the coexistence and conflicts among Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Iberia; the "moriscos" (converted Muslims) of Imperial Spain (sixteenth-seventeenth centuries); Spanish orientalism and colonial enterprises in Africa between the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries; and the question of the Muslim emigrants in contemporary Spain. Readings will include literary texts, political and legal documents, historical accounts, and other cultural material such as architecture, film, and documentaries.

*Crosslisted as: SPAN-330SL*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

*Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive*

*N. Romero-Díaz*

*Prereq: Two 200-level Spanish courses above SPAN-212.*

*Notes: Taught in Spanish*

**RELIG-343 The Sabbath**

*Spring. Credits: 4*

The practice of a weekly sacred day of rest has organized Jewish life for millennia. In this seminar, students will examine the Sabbath using narrative, folk, and legal primary sources from the biblical, Second Temple, rabbinic, medieval, and modern periods. Key themes include sacred time, cultural identity, and the transformation of religious practice. Experiential learning, and critical thinking about your experiential learning, are integral to this seminar.

*Crosslisted as: JWST-343*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*M. Benjamin*

*Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors*

**RELIG-352 Body and Gender in Religious Traditions**

*Spring. Credits: 4*

Do bodies matter in religious traditions? Whose bodies matter? How do they matter? By studying religious body ideals and practices, we examine the possibilities and problems different kinds of bodies have posed in religious traditions. Topics include religious diet, exercise, and dress; monasticism, celibacy, and sexuality; healing rituals, and slavery and violence. We pay special attention to contemporary challenges to problematic body ideals and practices coming from feminist, disability, postcolonial, queer, and trans theorists and activists.

*Crosslisted as: GNDST-333RT, CST-349RE*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

*S. Mrozik*

*Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors*

**RELIG-361 The Aquatic Life of Black Devotion**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Water informs religious and spiritual worldviews the world over; commonplace rituals from baptism to libation underwrite its prescience. The religious cultures of West and Central Africa, along with its multiple diasporas, theorize, encounter, and engage water centrally. Seminar participants will dive deeply into the water-based epistemologies of African and African diaspora religions, probing liturgical language, ritual performance and spiritual entities for aquatic common threads. Seminar participants will analyze the historical realities that have made water such a contested yet indispensable feature of black religious life.

*Crosslisted as: AFCNA-361*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

*M. Coleman-Tobias*

*Restrictions: This course is open to juniors and seniors*

**RELIG-363 Rastafari**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

From its counterhegemonic beginning as a nexus of Garveyism, Ethiopianism, and Pan-Africanism, Rastafari has shifted from a Caribbean theological movement to a new religious and socio-political movement globally. What were the epistemological tenets that enabled Rastafari to boast such a multi-sited diaspora? What was the role of reggae music in spreading the religious culture? How have women negotiated their roles within its textured prescriptions? Seminar participants will explore these questions, among others. Beyond understanding the diverse beliefs and practices of global Rastafari, seminar participants will consider some of the enduring motifs of black, dissentive religions as iterated through Rastafari.

*Crosslisted as: AFCNA-363*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

*M. Coleman-Tobias*

*Restrictions: This course is open to juniors and seniors*

**RELIG-395 Independent Study**

*Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 8*

*The department*

*Instructor permission required.*