

RELS - RELIGIOUS STUDIES

RELS120 Islamic Civilization (3 Credits)

Introduction to society and culture in the Middle East since the advent of Islam: as a personal and communal faith; as artistic and literary highlights of intellectual and cultural life; and as the interplay between politics and religion under the major Islamic regimes.

Cross-listed with: HIST120.

Credit Only Granted for: HIST120 or RELS120.

RELS133 God Wills It! The Crusades in Medieval and Modern Perspectives (3 Credits)

An examination of the identities and convictions both of the Western Europeans who participated in the Crusades and of the Easterners (Muslim, Christian, and Jewish) whom they encountered in the Holy Land. Focuses on the era of the first four great Crusades, from about 1095 to 1215. Consideration of the cultural impact of these movements on both Western Europe and the Middle East.

Cross-listed with: HIST133.

Credit Only Granted for: HIST133, RELS133 or RELS289D.

Formerly: RELS289D.

RELS170 Ancient Myths and Modern Lives (3 Credits)

What are myths and why do we tell them? What powers do myths have? We will tackle these questions by looking at the enduring and fascinating myths from ancient Greece and Rome. In addition to studying how they shaped ancient societies, we will also look at their modern influence and reflect upon the power that myths still hold in our contemporary world. Taught in English.

Cross-listed with: CLAS170.

Credit Only Granted for: CLAS170 or RELS170.

Additional Information: This course cannot be taken for language credit.

RELS171 Is Judaism a Religion? (3 Credits)

Jewish identity can be framed in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religious practice, but also in terms of more contemporary social constructions including social action, political engagement, and intellectual pursuit. In the context of such diverse social and individual frames, what does it mean to identify Judaism as a religion? Attention to Jewish society in historical and global perspective will provide a backdrop for a particular focus on contemporary Jews in the United States and Israel.

Cross-listed with: JWST171.

Credit Only Granted for: JWST171 or RELS171.

RELS219 Special Topics in Religious Studies (3 Credits)

Special topics in Religious Studies

Repeatable to: 9 credits if content differs.

RELS219K Reformers, Radicals, and Revolutionaries: The Middle East in the Twentieth Century (3 Credits)

The 20th century was a period of dramatic changes in the Middle East. Within the global context of the two World Wars and the Cold War, countries in the region struggled with the effects of colonialism and painful processes of decolonization. The course offers a thematic-comparative approach to issues such as social and political reform, nationalism, the colonial experience, independence struggles, models of governance, political violence, and Islamism. Course lectures and the analysis and discussion of primary sources will lead students to understand that the peoples of the Middle East found answers to the challenges posed by Western dominance based on their specific historical, cultural and socio-economic circumstances.

Cross-listed with: HIST245.

Credit Only Granted for: RELS219K or HIST245.

RELS225 Religions of the Ancient Near East (3 Credits)

Introduction to ancient Near Eastern religious systems and mythology, from the third millennium BCE through the fourth century BCE. Particular emphasis on Mesopotamia and ancient Israel.

Cross-listed with: HIST219I, JWST225.

Credit Only Granted for: JWST225, HIST219I, RELS225, or RELS219A.

Formerly: RELS219A.

RELS230 Inventing Traditions: The Making of Rabbinic Judaism (3 Credits)

Introduces the dramatic literary and cultural (as well as political and demographic) innovations that reshaped Judaism in late antiquity. Examines the fundamental works and genres of rabbinic literature and the religious movement that produced them. Special emphasis on the rabbinic uses of "tradition" to enhance authority and legitimacy, and to foster group identity.

Cross-listed with: HIST281, JWST230.

Credit Only Granted for: HIST281, JWST230, RELS219C or RELS230.

Formerly: RELS219C.

RELS236 Philosophy of Religion (3 Credits)

A philosophical study of some of the main problems of religious thought: the nature of religious experience, the justification of religious belief, the conflicting claims of religion and science, and the relation between religion and morality.

Cross-listed with: PHIL236.

Credit Only Granted for: PHIL236 or RELS236.

RELS250 Fundamental Concepts of Judaism (3 Credits)

A conceptual introduction to Judaism, analyzing its fundamental concepts from both analytical and historical perspectives. Discussion of "normative" Judaism as well as other conceptions of Judaism. Topics include: God, the Jewish people, authority, ethics, the sacred and the profane, particularism and universalism.

Cross-listed with: JWST250, PHIL234.

Credit Only Granted for: JWST250, PHIL234, or RELS250.

RELS264 Introduction to the New Testament (3 Credits)

A historical and literary introduction to the New Testament focusing on the context of the authors and the development of earliest Christianity.

RELS269 Special Topics in Study Abroad II (1-6 Credits)

Special topics course taken as part of an approved study abroad program.

Repeatable to: 15 credits if content differs.

RELS271 What is Religion? (3 Credits)

Draws upon examples from a wide variety of religious traditions to explore the question of what religion is and how to best understand it. Engagement with diverse approaches to religion including phenomenology and the study of "the sacred"; sociology and the study of religious communities; and questions of religious experience, ritual, and identity formation.

Credit Only Granted for: RELS289I or RELS271.

Formerly: RELS289I.

RELS273 Jesus, Mani, and Muhammad: The Dynamics of New Religious Movements (3 Credits)

We examine three significant ancient religious figures: Jesus (d. 30s CE), Mani (d. 276 CE), and Muhammad (d. 632). All three were founders of long-lasting religions that were part of a dramatic change in the society and religion of the ancient world. Special areas of focus: the biographies of these founding figures, and how we know them; a historical approach to religious founders; and the sociology of new religious movements.

Cross-listed with: HIST289T.

Credit Only Granted for: RELS273 or RELS289M or HIST289T.

Formerly: RELS289M.

RELS274 Jerusalem in Antiquity: The History of Sacred Space in a Holy City (3 Credits)

Examines the complex history of Jerusalem's status as a holy city, with a focus on constructions of sacred space in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Cross-listed with: JWST274.

Credit Only Granted for: JWST274, RELS274, JWST289J or RELS289J.

Formerly: JWST289J, RELS289J.

RELS289 New Explorations in Religious Studies (3 Credits)

Investigation of critical and innovative responses in Religious Studies. Although the topic will vary, the course will encourage intellectual exploration by students of fundamental problems and critical methods.

RELS289C Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Tolerance, Oppression, and the Problematic Past (3 Credits)

For 800 years, medieval Spain was home to one of the most religiously diverse societies in European history. Despite frequent hostilities, the interactions of Spanish Jews, Christians, and Muslims produced a flowering of science, theology, and literature in an often remarkably tolerant climate. Students will learn how medieval Spanish people themselves experienced interreligious contact and conflict. They will also discover the modern pressures, prejudices, and ideals that have shaped historians' interpretations of medieval Spain.

Cross-listed with: HIST289A.

Credit Only Granted for: HIST289A or RELS289C.

RELS319 Special Topics in Religious Studies (1-3 Credits)

Special topics in the study of religious history, literature, culture, and thought.

Repeatable to: 6 credits if content differs.

RELS340 Europe in the Making: The Early Medieval West (A.D. 300-1000) (3 Credits)

From one empire to another: Rome to Charlemagne. This period is approached as a crucible in which classical, Christian, and Germanic elements merged, yielding new experimental syntheses. This course will deal with issues of authority, cultural trends, and the formation of group solidarity.

Cross-listed with: HIST330.

Credit Only Granted for: HIST330 or RELS340.

RELS341 Europe in the High Middle Ages: 1000-1500 (3 Credits)

Medieval civilization in the 11th through 15th centuries. Emphasis on cultural and political developments of the high Middle Ages with study of the principal sources of medieval thought and learning, art and architecture, and political theory prior to the Renaissance.

Cross-listed with: HIST331.

Credit Only Granted for: HIST331 or RELS341.

RELS342 Renaissance Europe (3 Credits)

Intellectual developments in Italy and Northern Europe from 1300 to 1550 and their influence on the arts and religion; social and economic trends, including the rise of the commercial economy in cities; the family and the role of women in society; expansion of Europe overseas and the beginnings of colonization; emergence of the state and consequent changes in political theory.

Cross-listed with: HIST332.

Credit Only Granted for: HIST332 or RELS342.

RELS343 The European Reformations (3 Credits)

Examination of developments in European religion between 1450 and 1700; the late-medieval Church and its critics; rise of Protestant thought in Germany and its spread throughout Europe; reform efforts in the Catholic Church; religious wars and violence and their impact on state and society; consequences of religious reform in society and its impact on the family and women.

Cross-listed with: HIST333.

Credit Only Granted for: HIST333 or RELS343.

RELS346 History of Religion in America (3 Credits)

A history of religion, religious movements, and churches in America from the early Colonial period to the present, with special attention to the relation between church and society.

Cross-listed with: HIST306.

Credit Only Granted for: HIST306 or RELS346.

RELS347 Tradition and Change: Jewish Religion in the Modern World (3 Credits)

An exploration of the history of the different modern Jewish religious movements that developed in Europe, starting with messianic movements and ending with Reform and Orthodoxy. Emphasis will be placed on the influence of the academic study of Judaism on the development of modern Jewish religious ideologies and practices.

Cross-listed with: JWST347, HIST429X.

Credit Only Granted for: RELS347, JWST347, HIST429X, or RELS419R.

Formerly: RELS419R.

RELS369 Special Topics in Study Abroad III (1-6 Credits)

Special topics course taken as part of an approved study abroad program.

Repeatable to: 15 credits if content differs.

RELS370 Ancient Greek Religion: Gods, Myths, Temples (3 Credits)

Survey of Greek religious ideas and practices as they evolve from the Bronze Age to the early Christian period.

Cross-listed with: CLAS330.

Credit Only Granted for: CLAS330 or RELS370.

RELS408 Capstone Seminar for Religions of the Ancient Middle East (3 Credits)

A capstone seminar for majors in Religions of the Ancient Middle East, designed to provide the intellectual framework for a substantial, interdisciplinary research project. Course topics will be thematic and students will be encouraged to explore comparative or interdisciplinary approaches.

Repeatable to: 6 credits if content differs.

RELS419 Advanced Topics in Religious Studies (3 Credits)

The contemporary study of religion in which topics may address specific religious traditions, regional or historical developments, or methodological and theoretical issues.

Recommended: RELS216.

Repeatable to: 9 credits if content differs.

RELS427 The Epic of Gilgamesh (3 Credits)

One of the most famous tales from the ancient world, the Epic of Gilgamesh inspires readers with tales of friendship and loss, mortality, and the search for meaning. The story itself grew and changed over time and took on new meanings. Through study of the epic, its development over time, and the sources it drew from, this class will examine the meaning of the Gilgamesh epic and its impact on ancient Mesopotamian culture.

Prerequisite: JWST225, RELS225, HIST219I, or permission of the instructor.

Recommended: JWST262, ENGL262, or HEBR298B.

Cross-listed with: JWST427.

Credit Only Granted for: JWST419G, RELS419G, RELS427 or JWST427.

Formerly: JWST419G.

RELS429 Advanced Topics in Religious History (3 Credits)

Advanced study of religious history in a particular setting, with attention to particular themes, texts, events, or communities.

Recommended: RELS216 or RELS289.

Repeatable to: 9 credits if content differs.

RELS430 Dead Sea Scrolls (3 Credits)

A study of the Dead Sea Scrolls in their ancient and modern settings, and in terms of contemporary scholarly interpretations of their meaning. Interpretations of the historical significance of these documents, their connections to ancient Jewish sectarian movements, and their implications for our understanding of Judaism, Christianity, and the history of the Bible.

Prerequisite: Must have completed one JWST course or one RELS course; or permission of ARHU-Meyerhoff Program & Center for Jewish Studies. Cross-listed with JWST430.

Credit Only Granted for: JWST430 or RELS430.

RELS439 Advanced Topics in Religious Thought (3 Credits)

Advanced study of religious thought in a particular setting, with attention to particular themes, texts, events, or communities.

Recommended: RELS216 or RELS289.

Repeatable to: 9 credits if content differs.

RELS488 Honors Thesis Research in Religions of the Ancient Middle East (3 Credits)

Guided research on a thesis under the supervision of a faculty mentor.

Repeatable to: 6 credits if content differs.

RELS499 Independent Study in Religious Studies (1-3 Credits)

An advanced independent research project for qualified students, supervised by a faculty member, on a topic not ordinarily covered in available courses.

Prerequisite: Permission of ARHU-Meyerhoff Program & Center for Jewish Studies.

Repeatable to: 6 credits if content differs.