AVAILABLE
RLG COURSES
WINTER 2023

*Courses with availability as of December 12, 2022. If you have any questions, please contact the Undergraduate Assistant, Phoebe, at religion.undergrad@utoronto.ca.
Courses by Content:

- Judaism
- Christianity
- Islam
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Philosophy of Religion
- Capstone Courses
  - Exploring Varieties of Religious Expression

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Judaism

RLG202H1S: Judaism
Professor Bob Gibbs | Winter – Mondays 2pm-4pm and Wednesdays 2pm-3pm
An introduction to the religious tradition of the Jews that explores key themes as they change from ancient times to today. The set of themes will include: the Sabbath, Study, Place, Household, Power. Each year will focus on one theme. We will read holy texts, modern literature, history, ethnography, and philosophy, covering each theme in a range of genres and across the diverse span of Jewish experience. Check out Professor Gibbs’s interview about the course.

RLG327H1S: Hospitality and Ethics in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
Professor Harry Fox | Winter – Thursdays 10am-12pm
Refugee crises in modern times have raised questions concerning what degree of hospitality is owed the stranger or foreigner whose motivation is a new, safe, and secure home rather than being treated as a guest passing through on a time-limited visa. Jacques Derrida’s ideas of both conditional hospitality (e.g., tourists) and unconditional hospitality (e.g., strangers) need to be explored from the perspective of philosophical and ethical traditions including Jewish, Christian, and Muslim ethics.

RLG343H1S: Kabbala: A History of Mystical Thought in Judaism
Professor Kenneth Green | Winter – Wednesdays 10am-12pm
A historical study of the Kabbala and the mystical tradition in Judaism, with emphasis on the ideas of Jewish mystical thinkers and movements.

Christianity

RLG241H1S: The Earliest Christians
Professor John Kloppenborg | Winter – Tuesdays 5pm-7pm, with tutorials
What can the earliest writings of Early Christianity tell us about the movement and its founding figure? We examine these writings critically and historically in order to understand the immense variety of early Christianity as it grew within Judaism and within the Greco-Roman World. No familiarity with Christianity or the New Testament is expected.

RLG242H1S: Bible in America
Professor Nyasha Junior | Winter – Mondays 12pm-2pm, with tutorials
This course will focus on the use, influence, and impact of biblical interpretation in the United States of America. We will uncover how texts are repurposed, corralled, and coerced into addressing various issues, including governance, enslavement, war, and poverty. No prior knowledge of biblical texts is required.

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JCR303H1S: Global Christianities  
*Professor Reid Locklin and Edward Escalon Jr.* | Winter – Mondays and Wednesdays 12:00pm-1pm  
Did you know that some of the most ancient Christian traditions find their home in diverse regions of Asia? Have you ever wondered how questions of church and state might play out differently in contexts like mainland China, the Philippines or Central America? Are you curious about how racialization, social class and global economics have shaped many churches' practices of mission and worship up to the present day? And . . . are you aware that JCR303, offered jointly by Christianity and Culture and the Department for the Study of Religion, can count as either a CHC or an RLG course in your program?  
Intrigued? Consider joining a theologian (Locklin) and an ethnographer (Escalon) this winter term to take a tour of contemporary Christianity as a global, transnational movement. You may be surprised by what you learn.

Islam  
RLG355H1S: Living Islam  
*Sara Hamed* | Winter – Mondays 2pm-4pm  
This course introduces students to studies of contemporary Islam that are based on extensive periods of research with Muslim communities in their own languages using anthropological methods. What do such studies teach us about the varied ways Muslims engage their religious tradition in the modern world? And how can such studies make us think differently about gender, economy, medicine, and secularism?

Hinduism  
RLG460H1S: Ramayana in Literature, Theology and Political Imagination  
*Professor Arti Dhand* | Winter – Wednesdays 12pm-2pm  
This course explores how this conception is the result of a historical process by examining documentable transformations in the reception of the Ramayana. Our focus will be on the shift in the classification of the Ramayana from the inaugural work of Sanskrit literary culture (adi-kavya) in Sanskrit aesthetics to a work of tradition (smrti) in theological commentaries, the differences between the Ramayana’s ideal of divine kingship and medieval theistic approaches to Rama’s identification with Visnu, the rise of Rama worship, and the use of Rama’s divinity in contemporary political discourse.

Buddhism  
RLG371H1S: Interdependence  
*Dr. Eleanor Pontoriero* | Winter – Mondays 12pm-2pm  
This year, we will explore socially engaged Buddhist ethics and practice from Theravada and Mahayana perspectives. Our theme is interdependence – how this ethic informs, and manifests in socially engaged Buddhist approaches to human rights, peacebuilding, racial, gender, and environmental justice and inter- and intra- faith dialogue. Our focus will be contemporary, intersectional, and diverse.

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RLG373H1S: Buddhist Ritual  
*Professor Amanda Goodman | Winter – Wednesdays 11am-1pm*  
In this course, we will certainly do some thinking about Dunhuang and its medieval Buddhist practice communities. We will consider the structure, scope, and significance of Buddhist rituals – monastic and lay ordinations, initiations and life-cycle rituals, meditation practice, pilgrimage, healing rites – across Buddhist communities, past and present. Relying on written sources, ethnographic accounts, audio-visual sources, and material artifacts, we will consider ritual as both text and event, and draw on theoretically informed scholarship to critically explore the utility of “ritual” as a cross-cultural category.

**Philosophy of Religion**

RLG332H1S: Reasonable and Radical Hope  
*Professor Sol Goldberg | Winter – Tuesdays 2pm-4pm*  
This course is, to me, the flipside of RLG303 (Evil and Suffering). But whether or not you are interested in human beings at their worst (moral evil) or their most unfortunate (natural evil), you might want to think about the resources which humans have to respond to those disturbing possibilities of our existence; that is, you might want to understand also why people may, and how they can, hope despite malevolence and misfortune. This course is designed to tackle those important questions.

RLG383H1S: Interpretation and Dialogue  
*Professor Sol Goldberg | Winter – Thursdays 10am-12pm*  
This course is motivated by a question as much existential as theoretical: how, if at all, can we understand people whose backgrounds, values, orientations, etc. make them profoundly different from us? This question occupies historians, anthropologists, and ethnographers of religion in their professional capacity; but, with growing divisions within and between societies, it is a question which should interest all of us. This course is a good chance to explore it.

RLG389H1S: Special Topics: Heretical and Irreligious Thought from Antiquity to the Modern Age  
*Dr. Ariel Peckel | Winter – Tuesdays 4pm-6pm*  
This course offers you the opportunity to explore philosophical, theological, political, and scientific ideas condemned by the religious establishments of their time from antiquity to the modern age. Penalties for perceived affronts ranged from censure to capital punishment and affected such diverse figures as Socrates, Al-Ma’arri, Sabbatai Zevi, Galileo, Hobbes, Spinoza, Thomas Paine, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Darwin, and many others. We will examine the critical and philosophical content of the ideas that earned these figures condemnation as heretical or irreligious thinkers, the differences between these labels, and the current acceptability or ongoing resistance of those ideas to contemporary religious and cultural values.

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Capstone Courses

RLG404H1S: Departmental Capstone – Research
*Tamara Cohen / Winter – Wednesdays 10am-12pm*
In this course we will think about why research at a university matters, its purpose and function, and we will learn strategies for how to approach a research project. A capstone course is meant to be the culmination of your studies at the university, and it is an opportunity for you to put what you’ve learned to use and write about a topic relevant to the Study of Religion that is of interest to you.

Exploring Varieties of Religious Expression

RLG234H1S: Language and Religion
*Professor Libbie Mills and Anne-Marie Fowler / Winter – Tuesdays 4pm-6pm*
Can religion be construed outside of the realm of human language?
Can artificial agents engage in it?
What do our reactions to these questions tell us?
Join Anne-Marie and Libbie in thinking through the interoperation of language and religion in this all-new course. Check out the [syllabus](#) as well.

RLG239H1S: Special Topics: Spirituality and Nature
*Professor Alexander Hampton / Winter – Mondays 12pm-2pm*
Humans, in diverse cultures and throughout history, have felt a deep connection to their environment, and to the plants and animals, and cycles and seasons that characterize them. At times, this has fostered a deeply sustainable relationship between humans and the nature of which they are a part. While modernity has often marginalized spiritual connections to nature, in the context of the environmental crisis, they may be one of our greatest resources. This course will explore various nature spiritualities as they are expressed in literature, arts and practices, from various traditions, including world religions and indigenous traditions and folk practices.

RLG304H1S: Language, Symbols, Self
*Professor James DiCenso / Winter – Thursdays 4pm-6pm*
Theories of the self that involve the constitutive role of language in its various forms. Problems of socially-conditioned worldviews and sense of self as related to discourse. Myth, symbol, metaphor, and literary arts as vehicles for personality development and self-transformation along religious lines.

RLG393H1S: Graphic Religion: Myth and the Spiritual in Graphic Novels
*Dr. David Perley / Winter – Wednesdays 1pm-3pm*
This course explores the various ways religion and religious themes connect with graphic novels, comic books, and sequential art. We look at not only religion in comics, but also explore: the use of comic books as a form of religious pedagogy within particular traditions (e.g., Jack Chick tracts); comparisons between religious imaginaries and comic book myths and cosmologies (e.g., superhumans, multiverses, and alternate realities); alternative-independent graphic novels as a means to express marginalized experiences; and finally, an analysis of the power and effectiveness of a medium that is a complicated combination of word and image.

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