Christianity

RLG203H1: Christianity  
Professor Alexander Hampton - Tuesdays 10:00 – 12:00

We explore the multiple religious traditions of Christianity and follow key themes as they have changed throughout the last two millennia. The themes might include: the Bible and its translation; missionizing and colonial practices; belief and conversion; authority and power; capitalism and Christianity. The course will equip students to understand how and why Christianity has come to exert such influence around the globe. No familiarity with the Bible, Christianity, or the academic study of religion is assumed.

RLG322H1: Early Gospels  
Professor John Kloppenborg – Wednesdays 10:00 – 12:00

New approaches to the biographies of Jesus (known as ‘gospels’) show that they display extraordinary diversities: Jesus is variously represented as a miracle worker, as a rabbi, as a ‘stranger arrived from heaven’ whom no one understands, and as a precocious child. Learn the difference between modern biographies, what was expected in an ancient biography, and how to understand the differences in the representation of Jesus.

RLG324H1: The Apostle Paul and His Enemies  
Professor John Kloppenborg and Rebecca Runesson Sanfridson – Thursdays 10:00 – 12:00

The Apostle Paul (St. Paul) was a dividing figure, known to some as ‘the apostle to non-Jews’, to others as ‘a radical Jew’, ‘an apostate’, and the ‘inventor of Christianity’. He now is often viewed as misogynist. He inspired imitators, hagiographers, and detractors. This course develops critical readings of Paul’s letters, the book of Acts, pseudo-Pauline letters, and second century anti-Pauline writings.

Judaism

RLG202H1: Judaism  
Professor Robert Gibbs – Tuesdays 10:00 – 11:00 and Thursdays 10:00 – 12:00

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. For more information, read our Q&A with the instructor, Professor Gibbs:  

RLG345H1: Social Ecology and Judaism  
Dr. David Belfon – Mondays 15:00 – 17:00

This year’s course has been redesigned to focus on the social side of Jewish social ecology. Utilizing food and material studies, it explores Jewish foodways, including socio-cultural issues surrounding Jewish identity and dietary laws, preferences, aversions, and how Jewish food becomes part of wider cultural landscapes.
RLG346H1: Time and Place in Judaism  
Professor Harry Fox – Fridays 10:00 – 12:00

The meaning of holy time and holy place, the physics and metaphysics of time and space within Judaism. Topics include the garden of Eden, the temple, the netherworld, the land of Israel, and exile; the sabbath and the week; the human experience of aging as fulfillment and failing.

RLG415H1: Performance, Gender, Religion  
Professor Naomi Seidman – Fridays 10:00 – 12:00

This course will be organized around Professor Seidman's SSHRC research project on exploring the culture of Orthodox Jewish girls. While students will be encouraged to pursue their own research within these parameters, we will also work collectively on enriching the project website with maps, blogs, and photos: https://thebaisyaakovproject.religion.utoronto.ca/

RLG430H1: Judaism and Kantian Philosophy  
Professor David Novak – Thursdays 10:00 – 12:00

This course will deal with the philosophy of the great Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen (1842-1918), especially his posthumous book, Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism. We will examine how Cohen used Kantian philosophy to reinterpret the Jewish tradition, and how he used the Jewish tradition to reinterpret Kantian philosophy. Cohen profoundly influenced such 20th century Jewish thinkers as Franz Rosenzweig, Joseph Soloveitchik, Emmanuel Levinas and, also, the Christian theologian Karl Barth.

RLG431H1: Hospitality, the Cornerstone of Ethics in Early Rabbinic Judaism  
Professor Harry Fox – Fridays 13:00 – 15:00

Ever since Jacques Derrida turned his attention to hospitality, its urgency as an important ethical question in the humanities has been widely recognized. Hitherto hospitality had been relegated to the global tourist industry, each country vying with its competing neighbors to provide the most luxurious way to treat visitors who are encouraged to part with as much foreign currency as possible in order to bolster local economies. Warfare caused an ever-increasing displacement of populations both within their own borders and with significant spill-over to other sovereign nations’ territories. These refugee crises have been exacerbated in modern times and raised questions concerning what degree of hospitality is owed the stranger or foreigner whose motivation is a new, safe, and secure home rather than as a guest passing through on a time-limited visa.

It turned out that Derrida’s ideas of both conditional hospitality (e.g., tourists) and unconditional hospitality (e.g., strangers) need to be explored not only from the perspective of Western philosophical and ethical traditions, but also from the perspectives of Jewish ethics. These occasionally strengthen and enhance each other in an easy embrace but sometimes also clash and differ in significant ways. Furthermore, all notions of hospitality, both Jewish and Western, have been upset and challenged by the current global pandemic with its lockdowns and border closures. These themes and topics will be studied through Jewish texts and moral values. The primary texts used as sources will be Mishnah (circa 220 CE) and Tosefta (circa 250 CE). We will study these texts using multiple methods including philology, source and form criticism, intertextuality, and redactional analysis.
Hinduism

RLG205H1: Hinduism
Professor Srilata Raman – Tuesdays 10:00 – 12:00

This course explores themes relating to the religion of Hindus, called Hinduism since modernity. Topics include the canonical literatures, philosophies, and doctrines of Hinduism, along with the debates surrounding them; lived Hinduism, and the texts that inform its practice and experience; activities considered quintessential to Hinduism, such as temple visits, yoga, and venerating a guru; and the vibrant spectrum of Hindu expression one encounters in the diaspora. The course will equip students with fluency in core concepts and practices of Hinduism, as well as an understanding of Hindu history as one of dynamism and transformation.

RLG358H1: Hindu Royalty
Professor Srilata Raman – Tuesdays 10:00 – 12:00

In contrast to previous scholarship, which has focussed mainly on the literary and doctrinal cosmologies underlying South Asian kingship, such as the “wheel-turning monarch” embodied by king Ashoka, Vishnu or Rama embodied by medieval Hindu rulers, and the ‘visible God’ of Mughal state theology, or academic models such as those elaborated by Frazer, Hocart, and Tambiah, this course will amplify and explode existing rationalisations of kingship with the help of more recent theories of performance, media, fashion, and celebrity culture. We will read and analyze sources embedded in textual, material, and visual culture, such as photo albums, publicity footage, diaries, correspondence, authorized biographies, architecture, clothing, and other royal paraphernalia.

Psychology

RLG419H1: Ghosts to Ancestors: Racialized Hauntings and Reparative Promise in Psychoanalysis
Professor Marsha Hewitt – Tuesdays 14:00 – 16:00

Frantz Fanon was a psychiatrist and revolutionary who laid the foundations for ‘liberation psychology’. He combined traditional Marxist revolutionary theory with psychiatry to show how psychology can and must be part of the liberation struggles of colonized peoples. Described by Edward Said as Freud’s ‘most disputatious heir’, Fanon created a truly decolonial psychoanalysis that revealed it as both an ally and an enemy of social change.

RLG421H1: Fragments of Redemption: Sigmund Freud and Theodor W. Adorno
Professor Marsha Hewitt – Mondays 11:00 – 13:00

While most people have heard about Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis, the philosophy of Theodor Adorno is not widely known outside academic circles. Yet both thinkers anticipate many key contemporary social concerns. What hidden fantasies and unconscious impulses drive the intensity of racist ideologies? Why do human beings so often collude with those forces of oppression that harm them and others? No prior knowledge of psychoanalysis or philosophy is required.
Exploring Varieties of Religious Expression

RLG315H1: Rites of Passage
Professor Sarah Gallant – Wednesdays 12:00 – 14:00

We examine rituals of transition from one social status to another (such as childbirth, coming of age, marriage) from theoretical, historical and ethnographic perspectives. We pay particular attention to the importance of rites of passage in the construction of gendered identities.

RLG331H1: Creation Narratives and Epistemologies
Professor Kevin White – Tuesdays 13:00 – 15:00

The course will examine the importance of Indigenous cultural knowledge and values as presented in various Indigenous Creation Narratives. Creation Narratives or Cosmological narratives have long been studied as mere mythology. Yet, it is in these very narratives that complex, layered, and nuanced epistemologies emerge. Often, these narratives not only lay the epistemological frameworks of cultural value systems, but they also contain what many refer to as original instructions and purpose for the “Original People”.

RLG338H1: Religion and Religiosity in Israel/Palestine
Professor Yigal Nizri – Mondays 14:00 – 16:00

Focusing on present-day Israel/Palestine, this interdisciplinary course is intended for students interested in exploring a wide range of theoretical questions and examining their applicability to the study of sites, texts, rituals, and politics in the region. We will address the history of the land’s consecration from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim perspectives. Students will analyze specific sites associated with religious congregations and ritual practices, and study them within their local and regional contexts. Looking at the complex relationships between religious-political movements and institutions within Jewish and Muslim societies, we will delve into various attempts to secularize (and theologize) Jewish and Palestinian communities and their discontents. Rather than providing the typical emphasis on conflict, the course is a journey into the history and present of the land and its diverse communities.

RLG353H1: Politics of Charity
Professor Nada Moumtaz – Wednesdays 11:00 – 13:00

Politics of Charity is my favorite course to teach because the course critically examines a desire I share with many students: to make this world a better place. We look at real examples like the Gates’s giving and child sponsorship programs, and focus on the unintended effects of a lot of good intentions.

RLG392H1: The European Enlightenment and Religion
Professor James DiCenso – Mondays 14:00 – 16:00

This course explores some of the major thinkers of the European Enlightenment and their philosophical inquiries into the meaning and significance of religion as a set of cultural institutions. Special attention is paid to the analysis of religious concepts and institutions along epistemological, ethical, and political lines.
RLG393H1: Graphic Religion: Myth and the Spiritual in Graphic Novels  
*Dr. David Perley – Wednesdays 13:00 – 15:00*

Survey of themes connecting religious ideas, symbols, and representations with graphic novels and sequential art. The course will explore techniques of story-telling in mythic and visual representations in religious traditions and explore how these techniques and images are mirrored within popular comic-style (sequential) art.

RLG411H1: Global Perspectives on Religion & Ecology  
*Professor Alexander Hampton – Tuesdays 14:00 – 16:00*

Any attempt to address our environmental crisis must account for religion on a global scale. For over eighty percent of the world’s population religion is one of the key factors determining the cultural and civilizational context through which they conceptualise nature. Students will engage new scholarship from around the world in live discussions with authors. Scholars from Australia, Norway, Indonesia, Ireland, South Africa, the UK, and elsewhere will join the class. Materials engaging the topic of religion and nature will come from a range of fields including anthropology, classics, philosophy, religion and theology.

RLG414H1: Comparing Religions  
*Professor Reid Locklin – Thursdays 10:00 – 12:00*

Few methods have been more foundational to the scholarly study of religion, or more subject to searching criticism, than the practice of comparison. This seminar offers an advanced introduction to comparative method through close study of 4-6 recent works, from ritual studies, philosophy of religion, comparative theology and/or ethnography.

RLG418H1: The Varieties of Religious Experience  
*Professor Sol Goldberg – Fridays 13:00 – 15:00*

A seminar that explores a topic in the philosophical study of religion. Possible topics include: the nature of religious truth; the phenomenology of religion; descriptions of the holy; religion and the meaning of life; God-talk as literal or metaphorical language; naturalizing religious belief.