

Religion

The major and minor in religion are administered by the Department of Religion: Professors Crosthwaite (on leave spring 2010), Fine, Grayson (*chair*), Peterson (on leave fall 2009); Associate Professors Mrozik, Penn; Assistant Professor Steinfels; Visiting Instructor Heim.

Contact Persons

Anna May Dion, *senior administrative assistant*
John Grayson, *chair*

To major in religion is to ask questions about the many ways women and men 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.

Requirements for the Major

Credits

- A minimum of 32 credits
- 12 credits at the 300 level
- Only one 395 course will count toward the 300-level requirement.

Courses

At least one course from each of the following three groups:

- Sacred texts and interpretive traditions. For example, Religion 201, Introduction to the Qur'an
- Religious thought (ethics/religious law, philosophy, theology). For example, Religion 226, Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion
- History and society. For example, Religion 218, Women in American Religious History

Other

- Majors must take courses in at least three different major traditions—for example, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, or Judaism.
- Additional courses are selected in consultation with the advisor.
- Independent work is encouraged and, if approved by the advisor, such work may constitute partial fulfillment of the above requirements.

Requirements for the Minor

Credits

- A minimum of 20 credits (five courses)
- At least one of the five must be at the 300 level.
- At least three of the courses should be taken in the Mount Holyoke Department of Religion.

Recommended Courses for First-Year Students

The following courses are recommended for first-year students: 100, 109, 202, 203, 204, 207, 212, 226, 228, 235, 245, 261, and 263, 268.

Course Offerings

100fs Introduction to Religion

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.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
J. Crosthwaite, A. Steinfels
4 credits

109f First-Year Seminar: Muhammad: The Prophet of Islam

(First-year seminar; Same as Asian Studies)
This course introduces Muhammad as a historical and religious figure. The traditional Islamic account of Muhammad's life will be examined. Historical problems will be dis-

cussed and attention will be paid to the different views of Muhammad held by Muslims and non-Muslims. Finally, the veneration of the Prophet Muhammad within the Muslim community will be explored.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

A. Steinfels

Prereq. fy or permission of instructor; 4 credits

***201 Introduction to the Qur'an**

This course examines the history, structure, and themes of the Qur'an and analyzes the place of the Qur'an in Islamic religious thought. It emphasizes the contribution of the Qur'an to questions of universal import. Topics include Qur'anic doctrines of God, humanity, freedom and determinism, and the problem of evil.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

D. Brown

4 credits

202f Introduction to Islam

(Same as Asian Studies 202f) This course is intended to introduce students with little or no prior knowledge of Islam to basic Islamic texts, concepts, and practices. Starting with an introduction to the figure of the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an, we will survey some of the most important themes and issues in Islamic experience and belief: conversion/Islamization, law (shari'ah), mysticism, theology, political theory, and the experience of Muslims in non-Muslim countries.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

A. Steinfels

4 credits

***203f Introduction to the Hebrew Bible**

(Same as Jewish Studies 203) This course provides a critical introduction to the writings contained in the Hebrew Bible (also known as the Old Testament). It investigates the social and historical context of the ancient Israelites, examines a range of ancient Near Eastern literature, and introduces the principal methods of biblical studies. Participants will read much of the Hebrew Bible as well as select non-Israelite sources. Examples of recent biblical scholarship will provide additional information for better understanding these writings and will present different

methods for approaching and interpreting ancient texts.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Lyke

4 credits

204s Introduction to the New Testament

(Same as Jewish Studies 204) This course investigates the social and historical context of first and early second-century Christianity, examines New Testament and select non-canonical documents, and introduces participants to the principal methods of New Testament studies. Students will read the twenty-seven works that make up most modern collections of the New Testament, a number of early Christian documents that did not make the final cut, and several ancient non-Christian sources. Examples of recent New Testament scholarship will provide historical background for better understanding of Christian writings and will present different methods for approaching and interpreting ancient texts.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

M. Penn

4 credits

***206f Early Christianity in Conflict**

This course examines how conflicts between Christians and non-Christians, conflicts between different groups of Christians, and conflicts within given Christian communities shaped first- through fourth-century Christianity and influenced subsequent Christian history. We will pay particular attention to issues surrounding martyrdom, "heresy," anti-Judaism, the formation of a male-dominated clergy, and competing views regarding sexuality.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

M. Penn

4 credits

207s Women and Gender in Islam

(Same as Gender Studies, Asian Studies) 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.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets

*Humanities I-B requirement**A. Steinfels**4 credits****208f Texts and Readers: Introduction to the Religious Classics of Judaism**

(Same as Jewish Studies 208fs)

*Meets Humanities I-B requirement**4 credits***210f Religious Ethics**

This course explores the ethical implications of religious convictions, particularly implications relevant to personal decisions. It introduces ethical principles through an examination of scriptural sources, a selection of major moral thinkers, and illustrative moral dilemmas. Among the concerns of the course are the components and motives of personal decision, the values and liabilities of fixed norms and principles, and the nature of personal responsibility.

*Meets Humanities I-B requirement**J. Crosthwaite**Prereq. soph, jr, sr; 4 credits***212f Introduction to Judaism**

(Same as Jewish Studies 212) 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.

*Meets Humanities I-B requirement**L. Fine**4 credits****215f Jewish Spiritual Autobiographies**

(Same as Jewish Studies 215f)

*Meets Humanities I-B requirement**L. Fine**4 credits****218f Women in American Religious History**

(Same as Gender Studies 210) This course is a critical study of significant women (Anne

Hutchinson, Mother Ann Lee, Mary Baker Eddy, Ellen Gould White, Aimee Semple McPherson, Dorothy Day, and others) and their roles in the pluralistic character of American religion. It raises central questions concerning leadership, marginality, deviant behavior, and criticism of women. Students are expected to contribute to the course by their participation and individual research.

*Meets Humanities I-B requirement**J. Crosthwaite**Prereq. soph, jr, sr; 4 credits****220s Ethics and Public Policy**

This course focuses on ethics in the public sphere, on moral aspects of international, national, and institutional policy. It is concerned with evidence in policies and their formulation, of values with theological or religious roots. Emphasis is on thinkers who embody a double concern: religious/moral values and some area of public policy. Issues considered may include distribution of natural resources, national defense policy, health care distribution, gender, poverty, and the distribution of wealth.

*Meets Humanities I-B requirement**J. Crosthwaite**Prereq. soph, jr, sr; 4 credits****221f Religious Movements in America**

This course is a study of the historical and theological development of the religious traditions in America, an assessment of the influence of these traditions on American civil institutions, and an examination of selected contemporary religious movements.

*Meets Humanities I-B requirement**J. Crosthwaite**Prereq. soph, jr, sr; 4 credits****222s Engendering Judaism: Women and Jewish Tradition**

(Same as Jewish Studies-222-01 and Gender Studies-210-02)

*Meets Humanities I-B requirement**L. Fine**4 credits***226f Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion**

(Same as Philosophy 226fs) This course begins its survey of the discipline of the philosophy of religion with the work of Augustine.

We then proceed to an examination of the classical theistic arguments for knowledge of God's existence (those of Anselm, Aquinas, and Maimonides) that dominated Scholastic thought and consider the criticisms of these approaches by Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant. We trace the rise of experience as the central category of pietism and romanticism in the texts of Schleiermacher and Coleridge and in the poetry of Novalis. Finally, we focus on the pragmatic tradition in American philosophy of religion, especially in the work of William James, Josiah Royce, and Cornel West.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

*J. Grayson
4 credits*

228s On Human Freedom: Lordship and Bondage in Religion and Culture

This course offers a critical investigation of selected materials taken from Eastern, Western, and Third World religious and cultural texts and customs in order to appreciate their respective views on human freedom. Particular attention is given to the varied definitions and meanings of freedom; the master/slave relationship as a universal paradigm for reflecting on freedom; some moral and ethical implications associated with the idea of freedom; and the connections among freedom, will, and human identity.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

J. Grayson

Prereq. Religion 100 or 226, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

***230s Spirituals and the Blues**

This course examines and analyzes African American music as a primary textual source for understanding philosophical and religious language within that community. It addresses various questions: What are the central philosophical and religious themes expressed within the text? How are these themes reflected in the music? What is the intrinsic character of the spirituals and the blues? Is there such a thing as a "music of oppression"? In what way(s) does the black experience contribute to philosophical and religious understanding, as well as the use of language? What does this material suggest

about the connections among art, literature, and experience?

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

J. Grayson

Prereq. soph, jr, sr; 4 credits

232f Contemporary Jewish Ethics

(Same as Jewish Studies 232-01) This course will explore issues of contemporary ethics from the point of view of Jewish religious thought and tradition. Topics will include medical and genetic ethics, death and dying, family and sexual ethics, ethics of war, poverty, and the environment. The course will explore these issues in the context of the theoretical approaches to questions of religion and ethics.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Fine

Prereq. 8 credits in religion or Jewish studies, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

***235fs Introduction to Jewish Mysticism**

(Same as Jewish Studies 235f) Mysticism refers to a type of religious life in which individuals seek intimate and personal, direct and intense experience of the Divine. There exists a rich and fascinating Jewish mystical tradition with hundreds of books of diverse kinds. This course examines the Kabbalah of thirteenth-century Spain, focusing upon the seminal work of this period, the *Sohar*; the synthesis of mysticism and messianism that occurred in the city of Safed (in the Land of Israel) in the sixteenth century; and the popular pietistic movement of eastern Europe from the eighteenth century forward, Hasidism; and various expressions of mystical spirituality in our own time.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Fine

4 credits

241s Women and Buddhism

(Same as Gender Studies 210, Asian Studies) The course examines Buddhist representations of women and women's representations of Buddhism. We will study materials by and about Buddhist women from Thailand, India, China, Tibet, Japan, and the U.S. Some of the questions we will ask are: How are women portrayed in Buddhist literature? How do they portray themselves? How have Buddhist

women responded to sexism in their communities? How have Buddhist women contributed to the development of new Buddhist institutions?

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

S. Mrozik
4 credits

245s Judaism and the Body

(Same as Jewish Studies 245-01) This course explores Judaism's attitudes towards the body and the practices that follow from those attitudes, from ancient Israel through the contemporary period. These include, among others, notions of ritual purity, sexuality, ascetic tendencies, embodied rituals, song and dance, ecstatic prayer, food and eating, and proper care for the body.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
L. Fine
4 credits

*255s Dimensions of Contemporary Judaism in America

(Same as Jewish Studies 255) Contemporary Judaism in America is in a state of extraordinary ferment and creative transition. This course will explore significant aspects of this ferment, including ritual innovation and experimentation, theological creativity, Jewish feminism, the growing interest in Jewish spirituality, Jewish environmentalism, Zionism, and the religious repercussions of the Holocaust.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
L. Fine
4 credits

261f Hinduism

(Same as Asian Studies 261f) A major religious tradition of India, Hinduism is in practice a multiplicity of expressions. This course explores Hinduism's diverse traditions through its history, unifying themes, texts, and popular observances. We will read from the great texts (Ramayana, Mahabharata), learn about gods and goddesses (Krishna, the Great Goddess), and discuss art and ritual. Topics include: body techniques and the material universe (yoga, Tantra); philosophical traditions, concepts (karma, dharma); religious figures (Mirabai); movements (Bhakti). Hinduism's contemporary expressions in India and the West will be considered in so-

cial and historical context. Frequent illustration is provided through videos.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

S. Heim
4 credits

263f Buddhism

(Same as Asian Studies 263f) 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 the historically and culturally diverse expressions of Buddhism. We will ask ourselves what Buddhism has meant to different people in different times and places, with particular attention to changing conceptions of belief and practice. Among the traditions we will study are Theravada, Zen, Pure Land, and Tantra.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement
S. Mrozik
4 credits

*265 Holy Feast, Holy Fast: Sacred Food and Eating in Judaism

(Same as Jewish Studies 265) This course explores the role of food and eating in Jewish religious culture, but will also include a significant comparative religious dimension. Topics will include the ritual, religious, and social significance of the dietary laws in Judaism, the symbolic foods of Passover and other festivals, fasting and ascetic attitudes toward food, as well as food culture as a marker of Jewish identity.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
L. Fine
4 credits

*267f Buddhist Ethics

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, Viet-

nam, Japan, and the United States.
Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement
S. Mrozik
4 credits

268s Buddhist Literature from Ginsberg to Gautama

(Same as Asian Studies) This course is an introduction to Buddhist literature. We will read and discuss works from diverse cultures and historical periods, including contemporary North American Buddhist fiction, ancient Indian biographies of the Buddha, and medieval Japanese Buddhist poetry. We will ask how Buddhists, living in different times and places, have imagined the path to liberation.
Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement
S. Mrozik
4 credits

***275s The Ethics of Interpersonal Relations in Judaism**

(See Jewish Studies 275-01) As in other religious traditions, interpersonal relations are central to Judaism. Drawing upon both classical and modern textual sources, this course explores such themes as responsibility, compassion, humility, and honesty in interpersonal affairs. It also considers notions of love, friendship, and teacher-disciple relations, both between individuals and in the context of religious community.
Meets Humanities I-B requirement
L. Fine
4 credits

295fs Independent Study

Does not meet a distribution requirement
The department
Prereq. soph. permission of department; 1-4 credits

306f Sex and the Early Church

(Same as Gender Studies 333) This course examines the various ways first- through fifth-century Christians addressed questions regarding human sexuality. We will concentrate on the rise of sexual asceticism and pay particular attention to the relationship between sexuality and issues of gender, culture, power, and resistance. Primary readings will include letters, narrative accounts of female

and male ascetics, monastic rules, and “heretical” scriptures. These will be supplemented by modern scholarship in early Christian studies and the history of sexuality.
Meets Humanities I-B requirement
M. Penn
Prereq. previous course in religion or gender studies; 4 credits

***311f Sufism: The Mystic Path in Islam**

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 issues of orthodoxy, heresy, and antisocial behavior in the history of Sufism.
Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement
D. Brown
4 credits

322s Modern Theology

This course is a study of representative theologians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who have made significant contributions to religious thinking in the West. Thinkers include Kierkegaard, Schleiermacher, Bultmann, Barth, Tillich, and others. Emphasis is on the nineteenth century.
Meets Humanities I-B requirement
J. Grayson
Prereq. 8 credits in department, Religion 226 recommended, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

323fs Topics in Contemporary Theology

Fall 2009

323f(01) Modern Mythmaking and Religion
 The power of sacred myths to shape cultural worldviews is extraordinary. This course examines, compares, and critiques this phenomenon in an attempt to understand how it informs the spiritual journey. From *Siddhartha* to *The DaVinci Code*, chronicles on religious personalities have commanded rapt attention throughout history. Using the structural analysis of Geertz, Tillich, Eliade,

and Crites, texts such as *Life of Pi*, *The Alchemist*, *The Matrix*, and other prominent accounts will be placed against the great spiritual stories of major religious traditions in order to determine their status as contemporary sacred myths.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

J. Grayson

Prereq. 8 credits in department or permission of instructor; 4 credits

Spring 2010

***323s(01) Feminist Theologies**

(Same as Gender Studies 333) Mary Daly, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Phyllis Trible, and Judith Plaskow, among others, have argued that traditional Jewish and Christian theological systems have overlooked the needs, concerns, histories, and contributions of women. Their challenges range from the historical modification of a presumably unbiased religious system to the outright rejection of a so-called patriarchal establishment. Whatever their approach, feminist theologies offer diverse and incisive tools for understanding how a theological system operates, how transitory cultural assumptions become embedded in ongoing doctrines, and how apparently minor adjustments can have significant ripple effects. *Meets Humanities I-B requirement*

J. Crosthwaite

Prereq. 8 credits in department or permission of instructor; 4 credits

***323(06) The Women Who Shaped the Mind of Frederick Douglass**

Eight women - Harriet Bailey, Betsey Bailey, Sophia Auld, Anna Murray, Julia Crofts-Griffiths, Annie Douglass, Ottilia Assing, and Helen Pitts - occupied crucial roles in the formation of Frederick Douglass's mind. In this seminar we will read closely Douglass's three autobiographies and related primary sources in order to discern the theological significance these women had for him. Students also will be introduced to contemporary readings in theological hermeneutics in order to consider its implications for reading and interpreting autobiography.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

J. Grayson

Prereq. 8 credits in department or permission

of instructor; 4 credits

***325s Asian Religions: IV. Sacred Narratives in the Hindu Tradition**

This course provides the opportunity for intensive study in Asian religious traditions. One of the traditions listed here is considered each time the course is offered. The student may therefore receive credit more than once. I. The Islamic Tradition II. History of Chinese Thought III. Japanese Religious Traditions IV. Hinduism

(Same as Asian Studies 325) Telling, enacting, and listening to stories are essential modes of religious activity in the Hindu tradition. We will study the major types of sacred narrative in Hinduism, including creation myths, epic tales, stories of the gods, women's stories, and the lives of exemplary figures such as the saint-devotees of Shiva and Krishna. The tales will be examined from the perspectives of narrative structure and meaning in relation to forms of expression (e.g., the icon of the dancing Shiva, the Ramayana epic theater), and contexts (e.g., women's rites and the festival of the great Goddess).

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

I. Peterson

Prereq. Junior, Senior; Religion 261 (Hinduism) or per I; 4 credits

***326f Buddhism in the Pioneer Valley**

This course is a research seminar on Buddhism in the Pioneer Valley. We will begin by studying the history and development of Buddhism in North America, then turn our attention to local Buddhist communities. Students will design and execute individual research projects on some aspect of Buddhism in the Pioneer Valley.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

S. Mrozik

Prereq. soph, jr, sr; 4 credits in religion, Asian studies, or anthropology; 4 credits

332s Seminar in American Religious History: The Shakers

This course offers advanced students an opportunity to investigate with some sophistication a problem that requires careful attention to research methods, to critical literature, and to writing. Seminar topics include people, periods, or problems that have

a particular bearing on religion in America. (Same as Gender Studies, American Studies 301) This course will examine the historical and cultural creation of the Shaker society, the religious vision of an alternative society whose birth and development paralleled that of the new American nation. By contrast and by imitation, the separate Shaker route thus offers an intriguing critique of American society and its values and an unusual laboratory for examining a religious community based on a dual godhead.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

The department

Prereq. jr, sr, 8 credits in department, Religion 221 or permission of instructor; 4 credits

337s Topics in the Study of Christianity:

Early Muslim/Christian Encounters

This course explores a set of recently discovered texts that substantially changes our understanding of Christian/Muslim relations. We will read Christian/Muslim debates, a bishop's letter on how to bribe Muslim rulers, and an exorcism account concerning demon-possessed monks. Students will be among the first in a thousand years to read such works providing them with a strong knowledge of the history of Christianity, of Islam, and of their first interactions with each other.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

M. Penn

Prereq. 8 cr in Religion; 4 credits

*345fs Topics in the Study of Islam

This course offers advanced students an opportunity to investigate with some sophistication a problem that requires careful attention to research methods, to critical literature, and to writing. Topics will include issues that have a particular bearing on Islamic religious traditions.

Fall 2009

*345f(01) *Islam in South Asia*

This course will examine the spread and development of Islamic religious traditions in South Asia, i.e., India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Particular attention will be paid to different modes of interaction with the indigenous, largely Hindu, traditions, including conversion, accommodation, and conflict. The relationship between political and reli-

gious identities, the Partition of South Asia on religious lines, and the recent growth of fundamentalism and religious violence, will also be covered.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

A. Steinfels

Prereq. Religion 201, 202, 205, or 207 or permission of instructor; 4 credits

Spring 2010

*345s(01) *Islam in the Twenty-first Century: Readings in Islamic Fundamentalism and Liberalism*

This course will explore the history of the most important ideas and trends in contemporary Islamic thought, beginning with their roots in the great classics of the Islamic tradition by Ibn Khaldun, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Taymiyya. Close reading of the most important modern Muslim thinkers, including Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shariati, Fazlur Rahman, and Mohammed Arkoun.

Meets multicultural requirement; meets Humanities I-B requirement

D. Brown

Prereq. Religion 201, 202, 205, or 207 or permission of instructor; 4 credits

352f *Written on the Body: Body Images and Practices in Religious Traditions*

This course examines body images and practices in diverse religious traditions around the world. Working with different methodological and theoretical perspectives, we will ask the following questions: What are bodies? How do body images perpetuate or challenge religious and social norms? What roles do bodies play in religious experience? We will generate answers to these questions by investigating a wide range of religious phenomena including healing rituals, relics, saints, fasting, asceticism, and modest dress.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

S. Mrozik

4 credits

395fs *Independent Study*

Does not meet a distribution requirement

The department

Prereq. jr, sr, permission of department; 1-8 credits