

**Harvard's Concentration in the Comparative Study of Religion**  
**SPRING 2022 COURSES**

("#" indicates a course that counts for Comparative Course credit)

**#RELIGION 16 Religious Dimensions in Human Experience: Apocalypse, Sports, Music, Home, Sacrifice**

Carrasco, David L.

M/W 10:30 - 11:45

What is Religion? Why does it show up everywhere? Using archaeology, religious studies and social thought, this course will study the major themes in the history of religions including 'encountering the holy', sports and ritual', 'crossing borders', 'sacrifice as creation', pilgrimage and sacred place', 'suffering and quest for wisdom', music and social change, 'violence and cosmic law. Readings from Native American, African American, Latinx/+, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu traditions. Focus on the tension between individual encounters with the holy and the social construction of religion. Readings from Gloria Anzaldua, Toni Morrison, Judith Sherman, Arthur Kleinman, Popul Vui, Mircea Eliade, and Michael Jackson.

**RELIGION 47 Christian Ethics and Modern Society**

Lockwood, Charles

R 09:45 AM-11:45 AM Enrollment Capacity: 12

This course provides an introduction to Christian conceptions of conduct, character, and community, as well as contemporary disputes over their interpretation and application. What do Christian ideals imply for issues related to race, gender, religious pluralism, and secularism? How are Christian principles related to the ethos of liberal democracy and modern ideals of rights, equality, and autonomy? Readings and discussions will highlight a variety of contemporary perspectives and approaches to Christian ethics, and special emphasis will be given to moral and political concerns including race and racism; love, sexuality, and marriage; the environment; capitalism and consumption; abortion and euthanasia; and war and peace.

**RELIGION 60 Topics in Religion & Literature: Narratives of Religious Conversion**

Lamberth, Courtney Bickel

W 03:00 PM-05:00 PM Enrollment Capacity: 15

Narratives of grace, lament, and conversion appear in multiple forms of American literature rooted in Christianity including fiction, sermons, first-person accounts, poetry, autobiography, and essays. Violence and suffering are often central to depicting, describing, and imagining experiences of divine grace and conversion. Through close reading of text in several genres, this course addresses these issues and considers, among other questions, the ambivalent and often paradoxical relationship between freedom and slavery in relation to divine agency and community in accounts of religious transformation. Authors will include Jonathan Edwards, Emily Dickinson, Herman Melville, William James, W. E. B. DuBois,

Howard Thurman, Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Day, Toni Morrison, and Annie Dillard, as well as selected ancient and secondary sources.

### **#NEW SEMINAR! Asian American Religion**

Eck, Diana

R 03:00 to 5:30 pm

How "Asian" is America today? This seminar explores the Asian dimensions of American history, immigration, religion, and culture as immigrants have come from India, China, Southeast Asia, Korea, and Japan. When and why did they come to the U.S.? What forms of religious and cultural life did they bring to the U.S. in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries? What opportunities and obstacles did they find here? How do Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, Buddhists of many lineages, as well as Asian Christian communities contribute to the religious landscape of American cities and towns today? How has Asia reshaped the collective identity of the United States from the first encounters of Thoreau and Emerson with texts and ideas of the "Orient" to the saturation of modern America with the holistic cultures of yoga, tai chi, and mind-body medicine?

### **#RELIGION 97 Tutorial - Sophomore Year**

Lamberth, David

R 03:00 PM-05:45 PM Enrollment Capacity: 15

The course introduces students to theories and methods in the academic study of religion, including significant themes and arguments that have defined the field over time. Students will examine some key works that helped to shape the discipline as it emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and also consider recent work drawing on various disciplines that scholars have used in the study of religion, including philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and history. The course will take up questions such as these: What does it mean to call something religious? Is the category of religion a universal feature in human life, or more historically specific? What is at stake in defining this category in one way or another? How do claims about religion relate to claims about politics, economics, culture, and society? The course will also enable students to evaluate the choices that scholars make about what to privilege in their investigations. The course emphasizes critical reading and thinking skills, as well as thoughtful participation in discussion and the refinement of students' academic writing. *Required of all Concentrators, and open to all Secondary Field students. Course open to non-concentrators with the permission of the instructor.*

### **GEN ED 1087 Multisensory Religion: Rethinking Islam**

Asani, Ali

One need only walk into a church, a mosque, a temple, a synagogue or any place of worship to experience the beauty and aesthetic power of religion. For millions of people around the world, understanding of religion is forged through personal experiences, often embedded in the sound, visual, and literary arts. What does it mean to call some art "religious"? How can interpreting an individual believer's engagement with the arts help us see "religion" in a new light? Using Islam as a case study, this course explores the multifaceted relationship between

religion and the arts. We will learn to listen, see, and experience Islam by studying Muslims' engagement with the literary arts (scriptures, panegyrics, love lyrics, epic romances, folk songs, and folk tales), as well as sound and visual arts (Quran and poetic recitations, music, dance, drama, architecture, calligraphy, and miniature painting). Weaving the voices of poets, writers, and musicians with those of clerics, mystics and politicians, we will consider how the arts create a religious tradition and shape the worldviews of Muslim communities around the world. Given the cultural diversity of Muslim societies, the course draws on material from regions beyond the Middle East, particularly sub-Saharan Africa and South and Southeast Asia. This course assumes no prior knowledge of Islam.

### **GENED 1161 If There is No God, All is Permitted: Theism and Moral Reasoning**

Jay Harris

For centuries in the West, Jewish and Christian thinkers (among others) have asserted that moral judgment is impossible without some concept of the deity. So convincing were they that one important character created by a Russian author of the nineteenth century was led to express the idea (if not exactly the words), "if there is no God, all is permitted." In more recent times some thinkers have challenged this assumption, and insisted that removing (or reducing) the role of God is indispensable to proper moral discourse. This course will examine the ways in which a concept of God has informed Western moral discourse, trying to help students engage the literature as they confront the basic question, why might one think "if there is no God, all is permitted?" and why might one think if there is a God human moral achievement is diminished or impossible. Further, we will examine ways in which the differing paradigms actually affect the moral conclusions we might generate.

Belief in God and denial of God's existence have each figured prominently in Western moral discourse. Arguments have been advanced that: autonomous human reasoning is incapable of arriving at moral truths without a supreme principle to ground the system (which is sometimes invested with "personality" and called God); that autonomous human reasoning can have no impact on moral behavior due to human failure that only God can "correct"; that autonomous moral reasoning is impossible, and morality can only be understood as the submission to the will of a superior moral being; that a concept of God is necessary to direct and regulate moral reasoning, but the actual confessional versions of theism are metaphysically implausible or impossible; that autonomous human moral reasoning is impossible with God, and thus only a-theism can lead to moral conclusions. This course will engage all these different themes.

### **#RELIGION 1027 Weeping in the Religious Imagination: Seminar**

Patton, Kimberley

Enrollment Capacity: 15

A comparative course on the theme of weeping and lamentation in religious experience. One of the earliest human expressions of distress, tears remain a profound existential signifier at all stages of life, especially in response to fear, loss, frustration, or despair, as well to joy, triumph, or relief. Ritual often centers collective tears as a response to what has impacted a religious community in the distant past; myth shows how tears of surrender to what seems

inexorable can effect its transformation. Emblems of powerlessness, tears paradoxically conjure power, productive fertility, and wholeness, softening the harsh decrees of God or the gods by watering them. Traditions studied will include ancient and modern Greek, classical Aztec, Islamic, Yoruba, early and medieval Japanese, Hindu, Hassidic, and Eastern Christian. We will also read selected theological and theoretical works on weeping. Limited to 15 students, by application and with permission of the instructor.

### **#RELIGION 1028B Icon or Idol? Attitudes to the Sacred Image**

Patton, Kimberley

Enrollment Capacity: 30

The study of iconography, literally writing in images, is a revealing lens through which to view the religious traditions of the world. Through a historically informed, comparative approach, this course considers the challenge of representing the sacred. We will consider differing attitudes toward the physical embodiment of divinity, the question of symbolic versus real presence in religious art, as well as negative attitudes towards images iconoclastic movements, the transcendence of physical and verbal images, and abstract or aniconic views of the divine. It is not necessary to have taken the fall semester of the course to enroll in the second.

### **RELIGION 1556 Pragmatism and Religion**

Lamberth, David C.

Th 09:00 AM - 11:45 AM

This course surveys the American pragmatic tradition, attending in particular to views of religion. The first part takes up the classical pragmatic period, reading Emerson, then Peirce, James, Dewey, Jane Addams and Alain Locke. Topics include belief, experience, truth, pluralism, ethics, society, and the nature and role of religion. The latter half considers late 20th century neo-pragmatism, reading Rorty, Putnam, West, Chopp and Glaude. Prior work in theology or philosophy is recommended. Jointly offered in the Harvard Divinity School as HDS 2671. Enrollment is limited to 15. Applications for enrollment will be available on the Canvas site, and should be completed at least one week before the first class meeting; petitions should also be registered in my.harvard. Course Notes: Offered jointly with the Divinity School as 2671. Prior work in theology or philosophy recommended but not required.

### **RELIGION 1083 Religion and Family**

Thomas, Todne

W 03:00 PM-05:00 PM Enrollment Capacity: 12

Religion and family are contested concepts that become politicized as they are mobilized and debated in the public sphere. Religion and family are also often depicted as separate forms of social organization. This course explores the ways in which religious and familial concepts, institutions, and relationships intersect to shape the lived experiences of religious participants who create and imbue their relationships with social and sacred significance. In particular, we will examine how rituals, practices, and meanings surrounding sexuality,

marriage, parenthood, siblinghood, and genealogy become important signifiers of religious identity and membership. Our discussion of these case studies will also open up broader conversations about the politics ethnicity/race, gender, sexuality, fundamentalism, and trans/nationalism and their imprint on modes of religious and spiritual belonging. Jointly offered with the Divinity School as HDS 2126.

### **RELIGION 1232 Ancient Jewish Wisdom Literature**

Levenson, Jon

TR 10:30 AM-11:45 AM Enrollment Capacity: 999

A close critical reading and interpretation of works thought to derive from the Wisdom tradition of ancient Israel, principally in the Second Temple period. The workings of the world and the ways of God as they appear in works such as Proverbs, Job, Qohelet, Ben Sira, some Psalms, the Wisdom of Solomon, Fourth Maccabees, Pseudo-Phocylides, and the Syriac Menander as well as narratives such as the Joseph story, Esther, and Daniel. Concludes with the early rabbinic Pirq&eacute; Avot. Egyptian and Mesopotamian antecedents and parallels briefly considered. Emphasis on matters of worldview and literary form. Jointly offered with the Divinity School as HDS 1416.

### **RELIGION 1581 Black Church Burning**

Thomas, Todne

T 12:00 PM-02:00 PM Enrollment Capacity: 20

Black churches are vital institutions that have contributed to the spiritual and physical survival of African-descended communities in North America. Nonetheless, the very centrality of black churches to black survival, refuge, development, and flourishing has made them targets for white supremacist and other modalities of violence. This course compels us to turn our attention to the troubling archive of anti-black religious violence manifested in black church bombings, burnings, and shootings in the United States from the antebellum period to the present. More than a survey of the ravages of anti-black religious violence, this course also challenges us to consider the spiritual, experiential, and prophetic significance of fire within the Black Christian tradition. Black Church Burning, then, references the spiritual, symbolic, and material destruction of fire and how it is wielded by black Christian practitioners in relation to regenerative rebukes and potentialities. Course participants will survey foundational texts about the significance of African American churches. They will also contemplate the offerings and shortcomings of historical, social scientific, theological, and artistic depictions of black church arson and black Christian pneumatic concepts, as well as their moral and material implications. Jointly offered in the Divinity School as HDS 2475.

### **RELIGION 1448 Mystical Theology**

Hollywood, Amy

W 03:00 PM-05:00 PM Enrollment Capacity: 999

This course will examine the history of mystical theology in early and medieval traditions of Christianity. Through a close reading of primary texts in translation students will engage questions of divine mystery, transcendence, and hiddenness; the practice of affirmation

(kataphasis) and negation (apophasis); mystical union; and the limits of language. Jointly offered in the Divinity School as HDS 2003.

**RELIGION 1472 The Ethical and Religious Thought of Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Williams, Preston

M 03:00 PM-05:00 PM Enrollment Capacity: 999

A study of the life, thought, and actions of Martin Luther King, Jr. An ethical analysis of his primary concepts, ideas, and strategies based upon a reading and discussion of his writings and their sources.

**RELIGION 1529 The Holocaust and the Churches, 1933-45**

Madigan, Kevin

M 03:00 PM-05:00 PM Enrollment Capacity: 12

This seminar will approach the Nazi persecution of European Jewry from several disciplinary perspectives. Initially the seminar will explore the topic historically. In these weeks, the seminar will use a variety of historical materials dealing with the history of European anti-semitism, German history from Bismarck to the accession of Hitler, the evolution of anti-Jewish persecution in the Third Reich, and the history of the Holocaust itself. Sources to be used will include primary sources produced by the German government 1933-1945, by Jewish victims-to-be or survivors, documentary films, and secondary interpretations. The aims of this part of the seminar will be to understand the basic background to and narrative of the Holocaust, to introduce students to the critical use of primary historical sources, and to familiarize them with some of the major historiographical debates. Then the members of the seminar will ponder religious and theological reactions to the Holocaust. The seminar will also consider the historical question of the role played by the Protestant and Catholic churches and theologies in the Holocaust. The seminar will conclude with an assessment of the role played by the Holocaust in today's world, specifically in the United States. Throughout the seminar, participants will use various literary and cinematographic sources and test their limits in helping to understand and to represent the Holocaust.

**RELIGION 1572 Sex, Gender and Sexuality I**

Hollywood, Amy

M 03:00 PM-05:00 PM Enrollment Capacity: 999

The course will explore the theoretical articulation of sex, gender, and sexuality in twentieth-century theory, particularly in psychoanalysis, philosophy, and feminist and queer theory. Readings will include texts by Sigmund Freud, Simone de Beauvoir, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Gayle Rubin, Julia Kristeva, Monique Wittig, Judith Butler, Moira Gatens, and others. Jointly offered in the Divinity School as HDS 2692.

**#RELIGION 1604 Finding God in a Lovely Place: Comparative Theology in a South Indian Context**

Clooney, Francis

MW 10:30 AM-11:45 AM Enrollment Capacity: 999

This course in Hindu-Christian comparative theology is situated in India, with a difference. It steers away from Sanskrit philosophical, theological texts, learning instead from a vernacular tradition, the 2000-year-old literary archive of Tamil south India, so rich in lovely poems, dramas, proverbs, epics and devotional hymns, Jain and Hindu and more, vividly alive in an ancient land blessed with a non-Indo-European language and culture that flourish even today. This experimental course is guided by two questions: How can 21st century spiritual and religious people in the West learn from a culture that is brilliant not because it is universal, but because it is local, particular, immediate? How might Tamil literature change how we think of God, the human, the world? After a first look at ancient Tamil love poetry, we turn to selections from several premodern classics: The Ankle Bracelet (Cilappatikaram), a drama in which a tragic heroine suffers, then takes revenge and becomes a goddess; the proverbial wisdom of the Tiru Kural; the Civakacintamani (Splendor of Jivaka), a Jain hero's epic journey through pleasure to renunciation; the Ramayanatale of the forest exile of the princely and divine Rama and Sita and her kidnapping, retold by Kampan; mystical poetry for the beloved Krsna in the Holy Vow (Tiruppavai) of Antal, the famed woman poet of Vaisnava Hinduism. Each will be paired with a short excerpt from a Biblical or Christian classic, to showcase similarities and differences. The course is in translation and has no prerequisites, but some knowledge of south India, Tamil, theology, or comparative studies would of course be useful.

### **RELIGION 1660 The Brhadaranyaka Upanisad with Sankara's Commentary in Translation**

Clooney, Francis

T 03:00 PM-05:30 PM Enrollment Capacity: 999

This seminar offers a close reading of just one big book, the Brhadaranyaka (Great Forest) Upanisad, possibly the oldest (c 700 BCE) and greatest of Vedic Hinduism's Upanisads that is, ancient Vedic and Hindu teachings grounded in ritual and debate, philosophy and mysticism. The Brhadaranyaka offers a powerful exposition of sacrifice and creation; the identity of self and Self; Brahman as the Reality beyond words yet powerfully hinted at in words; world renunciation as ideal and temptation. At its core is the drama, rhetoric and teachings of Yajnavalkya, one of the most intriguing sages of ancient India. We read it on its own, then with the classic commentary of Sankara, the 8th century Nondualist Vedanta theologian. Though meant for students interested in learning Indian/Hindu classics, all serious readers can benefit. We read in translation, but Sanskrit can be helpful.

### **RELIGION 1705 Tibetan Buddhism**

Gyatso, Janet

TR 01:00 PM-02:15 PM Enrollment Capacity: 999

This course will explore a diversity of perspectives on Buddhism in Tibet, primarily through the reading of autobiographies written by women and men from various classes, social positions, and historical contexts. Through these and other writings, we will explore some of the distinctive Buddhist meditative practices and experiences, rituals, monasticisms, teacher-

student relationships, life styles, religion and state issues, lay-monastic relationships, aesthetics, human-animal-spirit relationships, human values, and reckonings with death as these have evolved under the umbrella of Tibetan Buddhism. This will include a look at Tibetan Buddhism today too, both inside Chinese Tibet and in exile, as well as in convert communities. No previous background in Buddhism is required; both advanced and introductory students will be accommodated. Jointly offered in the Divinity School as HDS 3563.

### **RELIGION 1742 Introduction to Buddhist Narrative and Story Literature**

Hallisey, Charles

T 12:00 PM-03:00 PM Enrollment Capacity: 30

An introduction to the study of narrative and story literature in the Buddhist world. A primary focus will be on the narrative and story literature found in Buddhist scriptures and commentaries, but there will also be consideration of examples of narrative and story literature that circulated independently. Examples will be drawn from across the Buddhist world.

### **RELIGION 2470 The Body in American Religious History**

Holland, David

09:00 AM-11:00 AM Enrollment Capacity: 999

Three decades ago, Ramon Gutierrez studied the embodied ceremonies of the sixteenth-century Pueblo to identify crucial cosmological distinctions between their culture and that of the Spanish colonialists. For Gutierrez, differing conceptions of the body held the key to understanding so much else. Twenty years later, Judith Weisenfeld looked to the religious lives of African American women to construct a compelling set of questions about the body as a site of religious experience and expression that would open up avenues for scholarship beyond the traditional focus on institutions. Today, studies of the body--both as object and agent--form a central pillar in the field of American religious history. This course seeks to chart that historiographical development, engage the most recent conversations on the theme, and consider its protentional future developments. Students will both consider the fields existing treatments of the body within the field and chart new possibilities for engagement. Jointly offered in Harvard Divinity School as HDS3085.

### **RELIGION 2519 Coloniality, Race and Catastrophe**

Rivera, Mayra

Enrollment Capacity: 999

This course explores the relationship between coloniality, race and ecology through the lens of catastrophe. We will examine a variety of theoretical sources that deploy or refute tropes of the end of the world. We will study different uses of catastrophe to denounce the destruction of a particular world, re-imagine the past, or proclaim the impossibilities of the present. Through the readings and discussions, we will analyze the aims, effectiveness and limitations of talk of catastrophe in the contemporary context.



**RELIGION 2521 Decolonial Theory**

Rivera, Mayra

W 09:00 AM-11:00 AM Enrollment Capacity: 18

This course is an exploration of key texts in decolonial theory, including its relationship with postcolonial theory, main themes and debates and its relevance for the study of religion. Readings include Eduard Said, Gayatri Spivak, Walter Mignolo, María Lugones, and others. Jointly offered in Harvard Divinity School as HDS2543.

**RELIGION 2563 Writing about Revelation: Scholarly Approaches to Religious Experience**

Holland, David

T 09:00 AM-11:00 AM Enrollment Capacity: 999

When someone says they have spoken with God, what is a scholar to do? This course considers a range of scholarly approaches to such claims, from the sympathetic to the skeptically reductive. Focusing primarily on American religious history--and covering a diverse array of figures and time periods, including Anne Hutchinson, Handsome Lake, Nat Turner, Ellen White and Sojourner Truth--the course will give students a chance to grapple with the words of these remarkable figures and analyze the ways that scholars have sought to make sense of them. The first half of the course will review the secondary literature and critically engage the theories and methods that have been brought to bear on these accounts; the second half of the course will give students a chance to develop their own informed approaches as they write about revelation. Jointly offered in Harvard Divinity School as HDS2321.

**RELIGION 2800 The Emergence of Islam: Contours and Controversies**

Goudarzi, Mohsen

W 03:00 PM-05:00 PM Enrollment Capacity: 999

The birth of Islam in the seventh century C.E. was a momentous historical turning point, but many aspects of this crucial process remain vigorously contested in modern scholarship. Was the Prophet Muhammad a local preacher of righteousness or the conscious creator of a religion with global ambitions? Is the Quranic text a record of Muhammads own preaching or the result of a collective effort that continued after Muhammad (and perhaps had begun before him)? Did the early Muslims believe in the imminent end of the world or not? Was Islam originally an ecumenical monotheistic movement open to Jews and Christians, or did Islams earliest adherents consider it a new and exclusive religion separate from Judaism and Christianity? Did Arabian tribes have a shared sense of belonging to a unified Arab ethnos before Islam, or did this sense of identity grow after disparate Arabian peoples conquered the Near East together? This course is dedicated to an in-depth discussion of such fundamental historiographic questions. In the process, we will delve into some of the earliest literary and documentary witnesses to early Islamic history and read from seminal works of scholarship on Islams origins.