

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (RL)

RL-210 Control of Life & Death (2 credits)

Students develop and reflect on multiple perspectives (moral/ethical, legal, scientific, and religious) dealing with issues concerning life and death that arise out of contemporary science, medicine, technology, and worldviews. Students are introduced to and engage perspectives of contemporary Religious Studies scholarship addressing life and death. Students analyze and respond to artistic and humanistic works that express the human experience of suffering and death; examine diverse moral and religious perspectives relating to life and death; and explore diverse religious beliefs and rituals related to death and dying. Through written assessments and discussion, students apply their learning and express their values and perspectives on life and death.

Prerequisite(s): FA-110 or LA 230; HUM-150; CM-125 Preference given to students required to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit.

RL-213 Spirituality in Action (2 credits)

The quest for the transcendent, the search for God, has set generation after generation on religious and spiritual journeys. The student explores personal accounts of religious experience for insight into the quest and its effect on living and acting in the world. The course integrates art, literature, and film with personal accounts to bring the humanistic tradition into dialogue with personal experience. The student has the opportunity to pursue their own understanding of religious experience.

Prerequisite(s): FA-110 series course or LA 230, HUM-150 series course, CM-125

RL-214 Images of Jesus: Past & Present (2 credits)

This course introduces the student to the life and times of Jesus of Nazareth and the myriad responses to him throughout history. Using frameworks of contemporary scholarship, the student analyzes biblical texts in order to obtain a clear picture of the earliest portraits of Jesus in his Jewish context. Using the Church Councils, Creeds, and traditional teachings as frameworks, along with course readings, presentations, and film, students trace the evolution of beliefs about Jesus and how diverse perspectives and contexts inform diverse perspectives and images of Jesus. Students explore artistic images of Jesus from a variety of historical and cultural settings. Through assignments and discussions, students make contemporary applications of their learning.

Prerequisite(s): FA-110 or LA 230; HUM-150; CM-125 Preference given to students req to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit.

RL-250 Judaism, Christianity, Islam (4 credits)

In this course students explore the three "Abrahamic" monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Using frameworks of contemporary religious studies scholarship, we will explore the historical development, sacred texts, rituals and traditions of each faith, their shared values and practices, and ongoing relevance in contemporary culture. Students will compare and contrast the similarities and differences of the three faith traditions, and explore the diversity within each tradition. Students will apply scholarly frameworks and interpretive insights learning about and analyzing the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament and the Quran. Through readings, presentations, film, and discussions, students will deepen their understanding and appreciation of these three interrelated faiths. Assessments will enable students to apply their learning creatively and make contemporary applications.

Prerequisite(s): FA-110 series, HUM-150 series & CM-125 Preference given to students required to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit. HFA-210/HFA-310 course.

RL-251 Asian Religions (4 credits)

You will have the opportunity to explore religious scriptures, rituals, art expressions, tenants and philosophies of Asian countries, including China, Japan, Korea and Southeast Asia in order to gain some familiarity with the Asian world of religious meaning. Among the religions and cultures you will explore are the following: Chinese-Buddhism, Marxism; Japan-Shinto and various forms of Buddhism; Southeast Asia-Buddhism and Shamanism, with special emphasis on Hmong and Laotian cultures. An important component of the course will be some exploration of the ways that people of the above name countries carry out their religious practices in the American context.

Prerequisite(s): FA-110 Series, HUM-150 Series; CM-125 Preference given to students req to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit.

RL-252 Medical Ethics (4 credits)

Being human includes our biological-physical selves as living organisms, and our rational selves, which includes our thoughts, emotions, spirituality and philosophic outlook on life and its meaning. As individuals and societies, we face medical decisions and situations that impact or are impacted by diverse social, cultural, religious, and personal contexts reflecting a variety of different values and ethical points of view. Conflicting viewpoints on medical-ethical decision-making raise important and enduring questions: When does life begin and end? What does science tell us about these questions? What does one think about end of life care and physician-assisted suicide? What are the diverse perspectives on abortion, the death penalty, and war? How do we address issues surrounding access to medical care, and how do wealth and poverty affect illness? What is the responsibility of government and corporate interests toward health and medical ethics? What values do we associate with life and death? How do philosophical and religious traditions impact decisions with regard to health care? In this course we will take a holistic approach to addressing medical-ethical questions from the perspectives of biology, philosophy, and religious studies. We will engage the diverse global perspectives impacting medical ethics in varied social, ethnic, and religious contexts. Students will clarify and demonstrate their own ethical perspectives through reading, writing, listening and speaking. The course will be jointly taught by faculty from Biological Sciences and Philosophy, or Biology and Religious Studies.

Prerequisite(s): FA-110 Series, HUM-150 Series; CM-125 Preference given to students req to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit.

RL-310 Religious Experience/Myth & Symbol (2 credits)

Symbols are understood by some people as a shadow of reality; myth as the really unreal - "It's only a myth." We, however, look upon symbol as containing aspects of the reality to which it points. We approach the process of story-telling and myth-making as the way we deal with the mysteries and ambiguities of human life. Since religion deals with these same mysteries, religion functions in symbolical form. Its stories and rituals dramatically express who we are and help make us who we are. They offer us a way of sharing with others the abiding mysteries of life and death which are part of everyday experience. This course examines the concepts of myth, symbol, and ritual in both theory and practice. We will explore the nature and function of myth, symbol, and ritual, and their relationship to each other. We will work with both ancient and contemporary texts to investigate how myth, symbol, and ritual function in human society, reflect cosmic ideas, and give meaning and structure to everyday life.

Prerequisite(s): LA 221 LA 222 or LA 223, Level 3 ICM

RL-311 The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (2 credits)

Using frameworks of contemporary biblical scholarship, we will explore the four distinctive yet related New Testament Gospels, the "Good News" about Jesus of Nazareth, foundational to Christian faith and practice. We will address the central question, "Who Was Jesus?" by exploring the Jewish faith and context of Jesus and the origins of the Gospel tradition, including how these texts draw upon and reinterpret the Hebrew Bible. Using primary sources, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and contemporary scholarly resources—texts, presentations, and film—students will engage the diverse portraits of Jesus' life and mission in each Gospel. Through individual and group work, written assignments and presentations, students will creatively apply their learning and make contemporary applications.

Prerequisite(s): One Communication Level 3 ICM & one HFA-210 elective. Preference given to students required to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit.

RL-313 Moral Theology (2 credits)

This course explores situations that call for solid moral decision making and the ways that Christians (and non-Christians) have attempted to respond to them. We are faced with making moral decisions about medical practices, treatment of the environment, business practices, sexuality, military intervention, and economic justice. But what constitutes right decision-making in these situations? What factors are involved in each moral situation and how can we effectively articulate and act on them? What norms can guide people to make the right decisions? Throughout the course, class participants will address these questions and become familiar with a variety of ways to approach moral reasoning. We will explore and critically analyze fundamental concepts in moral theology. You will have the opportunity to reflect on your approach to moral reasoning and to explore moral issue that arise in your personal life and professional area. Together, we will have the opportunity to clarify our own and others' values and to critically assess them. These experiences will help you gain tools and insights for effective moral reasoning.

Prerequisite(s): LA 221 IN 130 LA 223 or LA 222, 1-3ICM

RL-350 Biblical World View (4 credits)

Using the frameworks of contemporary biblical scholarship, the student examines the rich diversity of the Bible, exploring its development, linguistic and cultural contexts, canonization, diverse images of God, literary forms, and moral-ethical perspectives. Students explore the diverse worldviews within this diverse library of sacred books, and in ongoing theological interpretation. Students gain a broad understanding of biblical history, develop interpretative skills, appreciation of aesthetic imagery and characterization, and the biblical foundations of sacred rituals in Judaism and Christianity. Using a variety of scholarly resources, presentations, and film, students will explore the Biblical texts and make creative applications of their learning.

Prerequisite(s): One Communication Level 4 ICM

RL-375 Religion in America (4 credits)

America is the most religiously diverse country in the world. We are a nation that prides itself on religious freedom and religious tolerance, yet we have and do experience violence and discrimination against religious communities. Religion reaches into all aspects of our society, yet most people do not know much about religions other than their own. This class gives the student the opportunity to reflect on their own spiritual journey as well as engage with religious traditions with which they may not be familiar. We will explore together what makes religions unique and what religions have in common. We will try to understand how religion divides us and how it can unite us. This class gives each student the opportunity to increase their religious literacy. They will also articulate their developing understanding of the reciprocal relationship between the values and beliefs of faith traditions and how they impact individual perspectives and positions on social issues. We will come to see how spiritual paths influence life choices, politics, and our ability to work together for the common good.

Prerequisite(s): 1-4 ICM

RL-399 Formal Introduction to Advanced Work (0 credits)

The Advanced-Level Event marks a significant accomplishment for each student as they proceed into the work of her major department. When a department determines that a student is ready for advanced work within a discipline, the student is invited to participate in a ceremony that is both a celebration and an explanation of future requirements of the major and support areas. They register for this experience at a point determined by their major department: for most majors the registration is connected to the taking of a particular course. Students and faculty gather for an afternoon during Mid-semester Assessment Days. Following a general program, students meet in departmental sessions with their faculty to discuss advanced outcomes, department courses, advising procedures, and so on.

RL-410 Sr Religious Studies Seminar: Spirituality (4 credits)

This course is for the Religious Studies major to articulate a personal theology based on core concepts, theories, and methods of the discipline by exploring a topic of her choice and interest through an individual capstone project.

Prerequisite(s): 1-4ICM

RL-413 Religion External Assessment (0 credits)

This assessment provides the major in religious studies the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the outcomes of the major. The student engages in a simulation requiring aesthetic discernment, analytic understanding of basic religious concepts, moral sensitivity and responsibility, and application of religious themes to a particular profession. They relate their support areas to their studies in religion by giving a final oral presentation to a designated audience. Finally, they do a written analysis of their thinking and decision making through the course of the assessment. This activity is scheduled during the mid-semester assessment week of the student's final semester.

Prerequisite(s): Senior RL Majors in their final semester.

RL-475 Religious Studies Design: Ministry (4 credits)

The student develops a theology of ministry, based on the sacred texts, theological, and ethical heritage of a faith tradition. The student engages in theological and historical reflection on an area of ministry related to personal and professional goals by working with the instructor to develop a semester-long project, including scholarly research and practical work in a ministerial setting. Through research, discussions, and reflection, the student analyzes and applies modes of leadership while integrating learning and personal theology with professional practice.

Prerequisite(s): For RL Majors: HUM-350 series, RL-350 and RL-375 completed. For other majors or ELS option students: Contact instructor if interested. Offered as an independent study.