With more than 900,000,000 adherents world wide, Hinduism is among the largest religious traditions in the world with the highest concentration in India, Nepal, and other areas of South Asia. By reading both primary sources and secondary literature, this course will examine Hinduism beginning with Vedic India, and then looking at scriptures, beliefs, practices, the three Hindu paths or margas, ritual, contemplative renunciation, and devotion as they have been lived and practiced down to the present day. Focusing on the key concepts of dharma or duty, karma, and bhakti or love for the Lord, students will look at the ways in which Hindus have attempted to make sense of their world and their lives within it from a variety of historical time periods, local traditions, and social backgrounds.

It is difficult to think of a book that has been as prominent in the history and culture of the Western world as the Hebrew Bible. For over two thousand years people have considered the Hebrew Bible - a rich assortment of stories, laws, hymns, prophesies, prayers, and more - to be a source of religious, artistic, and psychological inspiration. The Bible has profoundly shaped and still does shape the ways in which we think about the world, about ourselves, about the relations between humans and God, about literature, about history, and of course, about religion. Regardless of whether we are believers or not, and regardless of the religion with which we are affiliated or not, we all live in a world in which this book and the history of its interpretation are still one of the most formative powers.

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the richness and diversity of the Hebrew Bible, with special emphasis on the many different voices, genres, positions, opinions, and mindsets that we find in the various biblical texts. The orientation of the course is academic and not devotional, and our learning process will be guided by the assumption that the Hebrew Bible consists of many different works, composed at different times and in different historical circumstances, and which voice different ideas and concerns.

While the course is structured more or less according to the order of the books in the Bible, which itself more or less corresponds to the biblical history of the world, this course is not a simple survey of biblical books or biblical history, which can be found in multiple other sources. Rather, this course suggests different ways and strategies for reading and interpreting the Bible. Our focus will be on discovering the many angles and perspectives from which the Bible can be approached, and on developing our own skills and sensitivities as readers of the Bible.
RELIGION 319-0-20: Topics in Buddhism: East Asian Religious Classics
Antonio Terrone
TTH 12:30-1:50pm
University Hall 412

East Asian Religious Classics This course will examine a number of texts that represent some of the most important and influential philosophical traditions and religious systems in East Asia. Ranging from abridged and unabridged readings of the Analects by Confucius, the Mencius, the Chuang Tzu, and the Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu, to the Lotus Sutra, The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-chi, and the Life of Milarepa, students will be introduced to many facets of Asian religious and philosophical thought. With an eye to the socio-cultural and historical context in which these texts were composed, this course will be structured as a lecture and a discussion in order to encourage students to participate actively in analyzing the religious culture of East Asia through these great texts.

RELIGION 332-0–20: Modern Jewish Thought
Claire Sufrin
MW 9:30-10:50
Parkes Hall 222

This course examines significant developments in Jewish philosophy and theology from the Enlightenment through the late 20th century. We will consider several thinkers and their understandings of philosophical ideas such as authority, knowledge, and selfhood in relationship to their reinterpretations of Jewish concepts including God, revelation, and the Jewish people. Readings from Spinoza, Mendelssohn, Cohen, Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas.
The appellation "Jewish" does not signify only religion or ethnicity; it has ethical, performative, social and physical connotations as well. In this course we will attempt to investigate the meaning of the concept "Jewish" through a study of the Jewish "body" in the course of the 20th century, first in Europe and then in the State of Israel. The first part of the course will focus on changes in the status of Jews in Europe at the end of the 19th and especially the beginning of the 20th century. The Jew was understood then as a person without honor, who therefore could not be included in the elite of European society. The Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment movement) and Zionism attempted to restore Jews to the honor discourse (e.g. in Theodore Herzl's The New Ghetto). The Haskalah demanded that Jews be granted equal rights and status to others in Europe, while Zionism aspired to the creation of a new Jew, with honor, in Eretz Yisrael (the "Land of Israel"). For many, the perception of the Jewish body as insignificant was proof that Jews lacked honor. The attempt to create a Muskeljudentum ("muscular Judaism"), to use the term of Max Nordau, a Jew who was capable of working the land and bearing arms, was one of the responses to the prevalent perception.

Through readings from contemporary literary sources, this part of the course will examine this and other responses, and ask to what extent they succeeded. We will, inter alia, look at Ultra Orthodox (Haredi) Jewish stances concerning the formation of a new Jewish body. In the second part of the course we will move to Palestine of the 1930's, and to the State of Israel in the 50's. We will focus on the Zionist body in Eretz Yisrael (Berdyczewski, Brenner), and its encounter with the bodies of Jews who survived the horrors of the Holocaust (Aharon Appelfeld), the death camps and the extermination attempts, all of which had as their aim the annihilation of the Jewish body. The third part of the course will study images of the body in the State of Israel, from the middle of the 20th until the first decade of the 21st century, principally through investigations of the image of the body in Israeli cinema and law. We will examine the image of the "soldier body", the religious body, the female body, the homosexual body and the Palestinian body. This part of the course will pivot around the current critique in Israel concerning the normative Zionist narrative, and the ways in which - over time - the body in this narrative is deconstructed, as different bodies emerge to reconstruct narratives that are new and distinct.
RELIGION 349-0–20: Topics in Christianity: Christian Theology from the Other Side: Liberation and Contextual Theologies in the Americas, 1960-2012
Lynn Jencks
MW 11-12:20
Allison Residential Comm 1021

In this course, we will explore the viewpoints of diverse Christian theologians from underrepresented populations throughout the Americas. Beginning with a unit on Latin American liberation theology, subsequent topics will include the theological perspectives of African-American men and women, white feminists, indigenous men and women, and men and women with disabilities. Additional topics, based on student interest, may include the theological viewpoints of Latinas, Asian-American men and women, gay men, and lesbian women. Theological works, scholarly articles, and popular media will introduce students to the historical context and innovative content of these diverse theologies arising from struggles for justice. As the course progresses, students will apply the theologians' standpoint critiques to present-day theological issues. After taking this course, students will be able to: 1. Name key contextual and liberation theologians; identify the theological sources, historical contexts, and personal interests that influenced their work; and summarize their main arguments 2. Give examples of how contextual and liberation theologians' ideas were received amongst theologians and the broader society. 3. Evaluate theological works, including arguing in support of a given work's strengths and critiquing its weaknesses. 4. Apply the key critiques from each standpoint, predicting how various theologians might interpret, modify, or reject various scripture passages and theological assertions.

RELIGION 359-0 - 20 Topics in Islam
Alexander Thurston
TTH 9:30-10:50
Kresge 2-430

This seminar treats core issues relating to Islam and politics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including developments in Islamic political thought, the emergence of mass-based political organizations, debates over the relationship between Islam and politics, the meaning of Islamism and radicalism, and the position of women in Muslim societies. The course treats these issues through a study of three cases: Egypt, home of the world's most famous Muslim political organization, the Muslim Brotherhood; Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country and a successful democracy; and Nigeria, the world's largest country with a roughly equal population of Muslims and Christians. The final weeks of the course consider events that have had global significance for Islamic politics, including the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the attacks of September 11, 2001. The course aims to deepen students' knowledge of the histories and religious backgrounds of these important countries and trends while stimulating critical discussions of controversial topics.
RELIGION 369-0-20: Topics in American Religion: American Evangelicalism  
Stephanie Wolfe  
W 1-3:30  
Crowe Hall 4-138  
What is an evangelical? And why do scholars of American history and culture find evangelicals so fascinating? This course will provide a brief history of evangelicalism in early America, and then focus primarily upon evangelicalism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We will use the writings of historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and religious studies scholars to explore how evangelicals experience God in their everyday lives, to analyze their involvement in American politics, and to understand their attitudes toward gender roles, sexuality, race and social justice. Previous coursework in religious studies, sociology, anthropology or American history is recommended, though not required.

RELIGION 371-0-20: Religion and Film  
Sara Vaux  
T 3-6pm  
University Library Video Theater  
A few years after its 1987 release, the Danish film Babette's Feast became established as a classic food movie. Its rich textural body, which embraces the extremes of food representation, investigates the correlation of food to spiritual practice—willed or unwilled starvation; charity; commerce; abundance; communion; and celebration, the secular sacred. Entwined in the film's layered discourse on religion as hostile, indifferent, or friendly to human creatures lies a central question: in what ways does the presence of food in a film signal aspects of the social, cultural, historical, political, gendered, racially fraught fabric of our lives? In this course, we will explore extremes of food representation, beginning with Babette's Feast and Diary of a Country Priest (1951), where destruction wars with grace within a parish and its inhabitants. Expect rigorous dissection of the social and spiritual vectors of food in Mostly Martha (Germany); He Who Must Die (France); Siberia, Monamour (France; Russia); Gran Torino (U.S.); The Boy With a Bike (Belgium); Le Havre (Finland); A Separation (Iran); Elena (Russia); and others from film cultures around the world.
RELIGION 374-0–20: Contemporary Religious Thought: Science and Religion
Beverly Mortensen
MW 3:30-4:50
Kresge 2-410

This course examines the topic from many angles. It looks at the central issues in the conflict between science and religion: Deepak Chopra and Leonard Mlodinow battle it out. It examines the world of technology from a world philosopher's vantage point: the founder of Wired magazine tosses about his musings. It ponderes how the brain reacts to the varying ways of seeing reality: a spiritual scholar and doctor look at the latest brain science. Finally it will consider a fine scientist -philosopher's efforts to make peace between these seemingly impenetrable positions.

RELIGION 379-0-20: Topics in Comparative Religion: Problems in the Study of Religion: Body/Embodiment
J Michelle Molina
TH 2-3:20pm
University Library 3622

"The body" is a hot topic in academia, and scholars in the fields of religion, history, anthropology, gender and sexuality often use the term "embodiment." But what, precisely, are we talking about? In this course we will read about and discuss religious bodies in different cultural contexts, as well as study different theories about embodiment. Our starting point will be a founding "father" of religious studies, Emile Durkheim. Beginning with Durkheim's notion of collective effervescence as central to community formation and to religion, we will discuss bodies and embodiment in ways that push beyond "mind-body" dualism. Our task is greater than acknowledging the simple and indisputable reminder that humans have objectified bodies in many different ways. Rather, theories of embodiment complicate the very notion of an actor having a body in the first place. The sentence "I have a body" positions me as conscious subject reflecting on body as object. Although we will read some theoretical approaches to the study of bodies/embodiment, our primary task will be to attempt to sneak up on bodies in action by reading ethnographic and historical accounts of humans in motion.
The influential scholar of religion Max Müller famously declared that "he who knows one, knows none," thereby putting forth the premise that one religious tradition can only be understood in depth though comparison to another, a premise that has governed the academic study of religion until the last two decades. As of the 1990s, however, an approach that casts serious doubts on the value and viability of the comparative study of religion has become more and more prominent in the field, making the claim that the underlying premises of the comparative enterprise are essentialistic, ahistorical, simplistic, and reductive. Is there a way to employ a comparative perspective in religion without falling into traps of overarching claims about "human nature," "spiritual experience," or "psychic structures?" Can we derive important insights on the traditions in which we specialize from exposure to other traditions? How can we maintain a highly historical and contextual view of religious phenomena while still noting commonalities across times and cultures? These questions will stand at the center of this seminar, and will be explored though one particular theme - death and dying in religious traditions. The centrality of death in almost every form of religious culture - whether in practices of burial and mourning, in notions about mortality and after life, or in the presence of the dead in the sphere of the living - makes this theme a particularly fecund site through which to consider the potential value, as well as pitfalls, of a comparative perspective in the study of religion. Throughout the class we will read eminent studies of various death-related phenomena, from concepts of afterlife to the production and use of relics, from mourning ritual for aborted fetuses to cannibalistic practices, and venture to see how different studies of different religious cultures can illuminate each other, and edify our own engagement with the tradition in which each of us specialize.