FALL 2014 COURSES

RELIGION 101: Religion, Sexuality, and Celibacy
Sarah Jacoby, TTH 3:30-4:50pm, Fisk Hall 114

This course examines major developments, movements, controversies, and figures in American religious history from the end of the Civil War, as the nation struggled to make sense of the carnage of war and to apportion responsibility, to the 1930s, when economic crisis strained social bonds and intimate relations and challenged Americans to rethink the nature of public responsibility. Topics include urban religion; religion and changing technologies; African American religion; religion and politics; and the religious practices of immigrants and migrants.

RELIGION 170: Introduction to Religion
Richard Kieckhefer, MWF 11:00-11:50am, Fisk Hall 217

This course has three main goals: (1) It will provide an introduction to Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students should gain a basic "literacy" in each of these traditions; (2) It will encourage students to become comfortable thinking analytically about religion. The course will discuss how various scholars have understood what religion "is," and explore several lenses through which they analyze it (mythology; ritual, worship and sacred space; prayer and meditation; morality, ethics, and politics; and gender and sexuality); (3) Students will apply their religious literacy, along with their newfound analytic skills to identify similarities, but also differences between and among religious traditions.

RELIGION 210: Introduction to Buddhism
Sarah Jacoby, TTH 12:30-1:50pm, Harris Hall 107

This course provides an introduction to the Buddhist religious traditions of Asia and North America. Through careful examination of a variety of literature, we will consider the many ways in which Buddhists have understood human suffering, life after death, karma, the nature of the world and human’s place within it, and the path to enlightenment. Our emphasis will be on attempting to understand the moral values, philosophical insights, ritual practices, and social concerns that have shaped Buddhism over centuries of dynamic change in diverse cultural contexts. We will examine not only the history of Buddhism and its three-fold division into Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, but also facets of the contemporary practice of Buddhism around the globe.
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RELIGION 264: American Religion
Robert Orsi, TTH 9:30-10:50am, Swift Hall 107

This course examines major developments, movements, controversies, and figures in American religious history from the end of the Civil War, as the nation struggled to make sense of the carnage of war and to apportion responsibility, to the 1930s, when economic crisis strained social bonds and intimate relations and challenged Americans to rethink the nature of public responsibility. Topics include urban religion; religion and changing technologies; African American religion; religion and politics; and the religious practices of immigrants and migrants.

RELIGION 342: Christian Mythical Theology
Richard Kieckhefer, MWF 2:00-2:50pm, University Hall 121

This course will examine some of the classic writings of the medieval Christian mystical tradition, in both its orthodox and its "heretical" forms, focusing mainly on three themes: (1) the use of erotic imagery derived from the Song of Songs to portray mystical relationship as a spiritual love-affair, (2) disciplined attention to the divine through contemplation and the contemplative life, and (3) theological speculation about the relationship between the soul and God.

RELIGION 359/POLI_SCI 390-22: Islam in Europe
Robert Ferrari, W 9:00-12:00pm, Annenberg Hall G31

This course investigates the features of what might be described as "European Islam," analyzing its sociological and religious peculiarities and its relationship with autochthonous societies and state legal systems in Europe. The course will be divided into three parts: (1) Europe and Islam: a brief history of their relationship; (2) European Islam in the contemporary age: sociological and religious aspects; and (3) the legal status of European Islam: issues and debates.
RELIGION 369: Religion, Race, and Ethnicity
Sylvester Johnson, TTH 3:30:4:50pm, Locy Hall 106

Can religion be an ethnicity? What is the difference between race and ethnicity? How has the modern nation-state shaped the experience of religious identity? Of racial and ethnic identities? How has the historical construction of race and ethnicity shaped their function of contemporary American religion? In response to these questions, this course examines the linkage between religion, race, and ethnicity as historical and socially forceful identities. The course focuses on the reciprocating, mutually constitutive effects of these identities. We will also devote special attention to the role that religious, racial, and ethnic identities play in shaping American nationalism. Readings include critical social theory and historical studies of themes like the medieval concept of limpieza de sangre ("purity of blood"), Manifest Destiny, race and scriptures, the Aryanization of Jesus, and American religious movements like African American Islam, Reconstructionist Judaism, Mormonism, American Catholic identity, and contemporary representations of Muslim identity in the United States. This course of study will imbue a rich understanding of the historical construction of race and ethnicity and the continuing dependence of religious categories on racial and ethnic formations to shape the public meanings of American nationalism.

RELIGION 396A Honors Thesis Research
Sarah Taylor, T 2:00-4:00pm, Parkes Hall 224

This seminar is for advanced senior majors and some advanced juniors who meet our stated department requirements for honors consideration. In this seminar, students are guided through the honors thesis writing process while engaging with seminar mates in a workshop environment. We explore pieces of exemplary expository writing, discuss approaches to working with primary sources, learn advanced research strategies, and become skilled at editing and revising. More broadly, this seminar teaches project management skills applicable to most any career path (applying to graduate school, searching for a job, writing a grant, completing a project assigned by one's employer, starting a business, etc.). We will learn how to schedule a large project, how to break it down into smaller steps, and then how to make steady progress toward completion. Life/work balance skills will also be discussed, and students will learn strategies for prioritizing. Students will be encouraged to think about their life goals as they head toward graduation and what sorts of steps they can take toward achieving those goals. Attendance and active workshop participation is required. Instructor approval code is needed to register.
RELIGION 462: Empire, Modernity, and American Religions  
Sylvester Johnson, M 3:00-6:00pm, University Hall 121

This course focuses on the relationship between empire and American religions in order to constitute a study of modernity. Studies of modernity are generally more strictly concerned with natural rights, consumer capitalism, religious pluralism, and the emergence of revolutionary technologies like publishing and scientific innovation. This course, however, reckons with the linkage between the more benign aspects of modernity (e.g., religious toleration, popular sovereignty, and the democratization of spiritual power) and modernity's "underside" racialization, ethnic cleansing, and religious hatred. We will devote central attention to questions like the following: How did religious toleration function in the Americas to amplify the architecture of Christian supremacism? Why did racialization coincide with the birth of political orders based on popular sovereignty and freedom? What is the effect of democracies (like US America) on the experience of religious otherness? How have American religions participated in and resisted empire in the early and recent history of the Americas? How have histories of slavery, race, and settler colonialism shaped religion and modernity in the Americas?

RELIGION 471/HIST 405-21/GEND_ST 490-22: Embodiment and Materiality  
Michelle Molina, T 10:00-1:00pm, Harris Hall L40

This seminar explores theoretical approaches to the problem of body/embodiment/materiality. One aim of the course is to examine various methodological approaches to embodiment and materiality, making use of sociology and philosophy (Jane Bennett, Pierre Bourdieu, Maurice Merleau-Ponty). The second and closely related aim is to situate bodies in time and place, that is, in history. Here we look to the particular circumstances that shaped the manner in which historical actors experienced their bodies in the Christian west (Peter Brown, Caroline Bynum, Mary Carruthers, Michel Foucault). Ultimately, we will be examining theoretical tools while we put them to work. The goal: how to use these theorists to write more dynamic, creative, interesting scholarship?

RELIGION 481-1: Theory and Method  
Cristina Traina, T 3:00-6:00pm, Allison Residential Comm 1021

Generally describe the class here. Include assignment and project information, if desired. This course covers the emergence of the field of religious studies by exploring its early theorists and their impact. Authors covered include but are not limited to Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Emile Durkheim, William James, Rudolf Otto, Mircea Eliade, E.B. Tylor, and Ludwig Feuerbach. Students will give brief presentations on resources they have prepared for common use and will write a final paper on the reception history of one author.