

**COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:
RELIGION DEPARTMENT, FALL 2020**

Relg. 105a, Food and Religion, Molly Farneth and Ken Koltun-Fromm, T F 11 am-12:30 pm

"Food & Religion" explores the role of food and eating in diverse religious traditions. We will consider how religious food practices -- including dietary laws, feast days, and fasts -- construct religious identities, social bodies, and ethical ideals.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Think through the complex relationships among food, ritual, memory, ethics, and identity;
- Analyze religious foods and foodways as *material culture* and *social practices*;
- Critically engage theories and texts about religion in light of religious foods and foodways, allowing these objects and practices to "speak back" to the study of religion.

This course will be conducted remotely, with a mix of weekly course activities that will include small group discussions (synchronous), drop-in office hours (synchronous), videos from your professors (asynchronous), and weekly food-related activities to be completed on your own time. Enrollment limit: 50.

Relg. 110a, Sacred Texts and Religious Traditions, Anne McGuire, Section 001, M Th 11 am-12:30 pm;
Section 002, T F 9:30-11:00 am

Sacred Texts offers an introduction to the study of religion through close reading and analysis of sacred texts from four religious traditions. In our section on Hinduism, we'll focus on the Vedic hymns and the Bhagavad Gita; for Buddhism, our main text will be The Dhammapada; from Judaism, we'll read selected texts from the Hebrew Bible ("Old Testament"); and for Christianity, selected writings of the "New Testament." In all 4 sections, we'll attend not only to the historical contexts in which the texts were written, but to later contexts of interpretation, appropriation, resistance, and adaptation.

The major goals of the course are:

- 1) to develop skills in the critical analysis and interpretation of religious texts;
- 2) to explore the conceptual and literary features of each text, particularly their perspectives on humanity and Reality/Divinity, and their uses of imagery, metaphor, and symbolism;
- 3) to show that religious traditions change and develop over time, just as the interpretations of texts change in differing social and cultural contexts;
- 4) to perceive more clearly the relation of sacred texts to religious communities and their conceptions of self and others, especially in terms of race, class, and gender.

The course will be taught initially as a hybrid course, with interactive teaching and learning through in-person classes, as the public health situation allows, and in synchronous and asynchronous remote activities on Zoom and Moodle. The course will be offered in two sections, with a limit of 15 students in each. Please feel free to contact me by email at amcguire@haverford.edu if you have any questions.

Hist./Relg. 240a, History and Principles of Quakerism, Emma Lapsansky, T F 9:30-11:00 am

In this course, which will mostly be taught remotely (punctuated by several face-to-face-class meetings), we will try to detach stereotypical images of Quakers, and assumptions about Friends' religious and political beliefs, from Quakers' own realities and statements, ideas, and beliefs. To do this, we will focus a portion of the semester on the history and theology of Friends. When we look at Quakers' theology, we will include such things as the evolution of Friends' interpretations and uses of the Bible, methods of prayer, and religious ritual. We also will pay some attention to modern Friends' involvement in social action, as well as to unique aspects of Quakers' family, community, economic and political life, and on the ways that these aspects are seated in Friends' theology. We will examine what Friends have said about themselves, what others have said about Quakers, and we will explore some of the myriad topics that Friends have thought of as "religious topics." Several oral presentations, one short written assignment, and an in-depth bibliographic review essay, as well as active

participation in the weekly discussions of reading assignments (+/- 1,000 pages spaced across the semester), will constitute the course grade.

Relg. 242a, Topics in Religion and Intellectual History: The Religious Writings of James Baldwin, Terrance Wiley, T F 8:00-9:30 am

EALC/Hist./Relg. 256a, Zen Thought, Zen Culture, Zen History, Hank Glassman, M Th 2:30-4:00 pm

Zen is an East Asian school of Mahāyāna Buddhism famous for promising a special sort of insight that provides sudden and astounding liberation from psychological and spiritual suffering or doubt -- an enlightenment on par with that of the Buddha, unmediated by texts or teachers or images and unencumbered by rules or by any notion of progress along a path. While the name of the sect literally means “meditation,” we will see that the simple act of sitting in meditation is repeatedly problematized and called into question within its own writings. This course seeks to place the tradition in historical and intellectual context and to unpack these rhetorical claims towards a deeper understanding of Zen, of Buddhism, and of the religious mind.

Course Learning Goals

To become familiar with the Zen Buddhist tradition and examine aspects of its practice, theory, and soteriology. To gain a sense of religious ideas and practices in historical and intellectual context. To learn about working with sources, incorporating them into arguments, and citing them accurately. To practice expressing ideas succinctly and clearly in front of other people. To learn the basics of Zen meditation, sitting for at least five twenty-minute sessions during the term. To participate in a classroom community and feel the support and care of the group. To take joy in learning.

The enrollment cap of twenty-five students has been lifted for this semester of Fall 2020. We will meet remotely twice a week with additional meditation sessions held weekly with five or six students - in person live on both Bryn Mawr and Haverford campuses and also online. If you have any questions at all, please feel free to contact me at hglassma@haverford.edu.

Relg. 259a, Gender and Sexuality in Islamic Texts and Practices, Guangtian Ha, M Th 5:30-6:30 pm

This course introduces students to debates over gender and sexuality in Islam. We will draw on primary sources, philosophy, historiographical work, and ethnographies of Islam; we will also read Muslim discussions of gender and sexuality against key texts in second- and third-wave feminism. We will identify the key issues at stake, and how these issues have been addressed; we will also investigate the drawbacks and limitations of each approach — from textual analysis, to political economic analysis, to cultural critique. We will explore the intersection of religion, race, and gender, and ask to what extent what we learn in this class can speak to the BLM protests.

Relg. 268a, Anarchism: Religion, Ethics, and Political Obligation, Terrance Wiley, M 7:00-9:30 pm

Relg. 299a, Theoretical Perspectives in the Study of Religion, Molly Farneth, M Th 2:30-4:00 pm

Theoretical Perspectives considers two questions: what *is* religion, and how should we study it? To think through these questions, we consider the history of the term "religion," debates over its meaning and use, and how people have deployed the term as a tool of domination and, conversely, of liberation. We'll consider how scholars of religion, along with activists, artists, and others, have situated themselves in relation to this history, and ask how we might, as well.

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Understand diverse theories about what “religion” is and how we should study it;
- Evaluate the methods, motivations, and biases embedded in these theories, in light of their historical and political contexts;
- Analyze passages of theoretical text, and present an argument about their meaning and significance;
- and
- Draw on theoretical texts to think through problems in the study of religion.

This will be a remote course. The modes of learning, and the mix of synchronous and asynchronous activities, will be determined in consultation with students and with the principles of equity and inclusion in mind. Enrollment limit: 15, with preference to Religion majors and minors.

Relg. 303a, Religion, Literature and Representation: Images of Krishna, Pika Ghosh, S 1:00-3:30 pm

This seminar explores the career of the beloved Hindu god Krishna, who has been the focus of intense devotion for many centuries in South Asia and diasporic communities from Singapore to Seattle. Architecture, sculpture, paintings, textiles, landscape design, poetry, music, dance, and drama have animated his presence by elaborating on his special characteristics and reenacting his life story. We will examine the history, theology, iconography, and aesthetics that articulate and also inform these diverse artistic productions. We will also attend to the particular ways in which these material practices were harnessed to gain proximity to the deity, and to structure the lives of individuals and communities.

Our goals include an exploration of approaches to visual and material culture (such as the feel of sculpted metal icons or the feel of the soil in walking a pilgrimage path to understand the bodily transformations and emotional resonances of touch); an examination of the relationships between text and image, poetry and painting with particular focus on their lived dimensions as sung devotion and processes of visualization. We will look closely at the construction of images from the creation of shrines to painted illustrations of medieval manuscript folios to understand what compositional choices in elements such as color, texture and line might suggest about acts of devotion that may now be museum exhibits. Through such methods of visual analysis, we will also ask what our interpretation of a painting might suggest about the choices made by an artist in particular historical junctures to grapple with the political issues of that moment. In doing so, we will probe the relationships between our present as it nuances our understanding of the past.

This course will be conducted entirely online, synchronously via zoom, to savor the pleasures of poetry, paintings, music and dance together as Sunday afternoon gatherings.

Relg. 317a, Religion, Society, and the Ethnographic Method, Guangtian Ha, W 5:30-7:00 pm

*** This course is about MAGIC. Its alternative title is Ethnographies of Magic & the Magic of Ethnography.

Is there an intrinsic affinity between magic as a topic for anthropological study, and ethnography as anthropology's definitive genre of writing? Do ethnographies of magic exude their own magical qualities, to the extent that they are enfolded into the very thing they purport to explain? At what point does writing 'catch' the (sympathetic?) magic which cannot be contained within what is considered 'realist' representation, and what is 'realist' representation after all? How do writings about magic become magical writings in their own right? In this course you are to think with me about what constitutes 'good' ethnographic writing, and in what manner ethnography, as some would claim, may be considered a type of modernist literature that crosses over into the science of social investigation.

EALC/Relg. 370a, Pure Land Buddhist Visual Culture, Hank Glassman, T 7:00-10:00 pm

This is a course on the place of visuality and materiality in the Pure Land Buddhist tradition. Although it is an "advanced topics" course, there are no pre-requisites. All required readings are in English. The course is a reflection on the interplay and relationship between text, image, and practice in East Asian Pure Land. It is not our intent to cover all forms of Buddhist art or all forms of Buddhism, but rather to go deep into this one vein. We will be particularly interested in the role of images in this religious tradition, which will lead us to discuss the nature of religious icons more generally.

The course begins with the appearance of the first images of Śākyamuni Buddha in India, centuries after the death of the founder. From there it moves into the further development of the belief in celestial, non-historical savior figures in Central Asia and China. The Pure Land tradition is centered upon the worship of Amitābha Buddha (Amituo fo in Chinese; Amida butsu in Japanese), who is said to preside over a paradise to the west of our own

world system. The Pure Land, called “Ultimate Bliss,” is a place where devotees can be born after death and thus escape the cycle of suffering in samsara.

Course Learning Goals:

Students will become conversant with the central themes in the visual culture of Pure Land Buddhism, specifically, and will more generally learn the vocabulary and conceptual approaches of the scholarly approach to religious art and representation. Students will hone their skills in looking, observation, visual analysis, and reading images while supporting these learnings with relevant primary and secondary source readings.

The course will be live and in person on Haverford campus as long as conditions permit. Students who are not able to attend in person will be able to participate online and depending upon circumstances, we may all retreat to an online classroom at some point in the semester. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at hglassma@haveford.edu

Relg. 398a, Senior Thesis Seminar Part I, Naomi Koltun-Fromm, MWF 1:00-2:00 pm

The overall goal of this first semester of the thesis project is to prepare students to write their senior thesis by beginning the process through the following steps: personal intellectual narrative, thesis topic, thesis proposal, annotated bibliography and a 20-page paper. We will meet in a hybrid manner, with small tutorial groupings, individual meetings, and student-focused workshop meetings, as well as conducting some of our business remotely as needed. See longer description on our Moodle page.

Summary of Religion Department Courses, Fall 2020

Course Number, Title	Instructor	Teaching Mode	Enrollment Limit	Meeting Time
Relg. 105a Food and Religion	Molly Farneth, Ken Koltun-Fromm	Remote	50	T F 11:00 am-12:30 pm
Relg. 110a Sacred Texts and Religious Traditions, Section 001	Anne McGuire	Hybrid	15	M Th 11:00 am-12:30 pm
Relg. 110a Sacred Texts and Religious Traditions, Section 002	Anne McGuire	Hybrid	15	T F 9:30-11:00 am
Hist/Relg. 240a History and Principles of Quakerism	Emma Lapsansky-Werner	Hybrid	35	T F 9:30-11:00 am
Relg. 242a Topics in Religion and Intellectual History: The Religious Writings of James Baldwin	Terrance Wiley	Hybrid	20	T F 8:00-9:30 am
EALC/Hist/Relg. 256a Zen Thought, Zen Culture, Zen History	Hank Glassman	Remote	25	M Th 2:30-4:00 pm
Relg. 259a Gender and Sexuality in Islamic Texts and Practices	Guangtian Ha	Remote	20	M Th 5:30-6:30 pm
Relg. 268a Anarchism: Religion, Ethics, and Political Obligation	Terrance Wiley	Hybrid	20	M 7:00-9:30 pm
Relg. 299a Theoretical Perspectives in the Study of Religion	Molly Farneth	Remote	15	M Th 2:30-4:00 pm
Relg. 303a Religion, Literature and Representation: Images of Krishna	Pika Ghosh	Remote	15	Sun 1:00-3:30 pm
Relg. 317a Religion, Society, and the Ethnographic Method	Guangtian Ha	Remote	15	W 5:30-7:00 pm
EALC/Relg. 370a Pure Land Buddhist Visual Culture	Hank Glassman	Hybrid		T 7:00-10:00 pm
Relg. 398a Senior Thesis Seminar Part I	Naomi Koltun-Fromm	Hybrid		MWF 1:00-2:00 pm