

# RELIGION

haverford.edu/religion

A central mission of the Religion Department is to enable students to become critically informed, independent, and creative interpreters of some of the religious movements, sacred texts, ideas, and practices that have decisively shaped human experience. In their coursework, students develop skills in the critical analysis of the sacred texts, images, beliefs, and performances of various religions, including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. The department's programs are designed to help students understand how religions develop and change and how religious texts, symbols, and rituals help constitute communities and cultures. Thus, the major in religion seeks to help students develop a coherent set of academic skills in the study of religion, while at the same time encouraging interdisciplinary work in the humanities and social sciences.

## LEARNING GOALS

The Haverford religion major is unique in that it provides students with a comprehensive curriculum that includes carefully designed areas of concentrations, specialized coursework, supervised research, a lengthy written research product, and a departmental oral conversation with the entire department as the minimum requirements for fulfilling the major. Through coursework, senior thesis research, and the Tri-College Senior Colloquium with Swarthmore and Bryn Mawr Colleges, the department seeks to fulfill the following learning goals:

- Expose students to the central ideas, debates, scholars, methods, historiography, and approaches to the academic study of religion.
  - Analyze key terms and categories in the study of religion, and utilize the diverse vocabularies deployed among a range of scholars in religion and related fields.
  - Develop critical thinking, analytical writing, and sustained engagement in theory and method, together with the critical competence to engage sacred texts, images, ideas and practices.
  - Cultivate the learning environment as an integrative and collaborative process.
  - Expand intellectual opportunities for students to broaden and critically assess their worldviews.
- Encourage students to supplement their work in religion with elective languages (Arabic, Chinese, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi/Urdu, Japanese, Latin, Sanskrit, Yoruba).
  - Foster interdisciplinary methods and perspectives in the study of religion, while continuing to model this through the curriculum.
  - Prepare students for professional careers, for graduate studies in religion or related fields, and for leadership roles as reflective, critically-aware human beings.

Like other liberal arts majors, the religion major is meant to prepare students for a broad array of vocational possibilities. Religion majors typically find careers in law, public service (including both religious and secular organizations), medicine, business, ministry, and education. Religion majors have also pursued advanced graduate degrees in anthropology, history, political science, biology, Near Eastern studies, and religious studies.

## MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

The major in religion is designed to help students develop a coherent set of academic skills and expertise in the study of religion, while at the same time encouraging interdisciplinary work in the humanities and social sciences. The major consists of 11 courses with the following requirements:

- Five courses within an area of concentration: each major is expected to fashion a coherent major program focused around work in one of three designated areas of concentration:
  - **Religious Traditions in Cultural Context.** The study of religious traditions and the textual, historical, sociological and cultural contexts in which they develop. Critical analysis of formative texts and issues that advance our notions of religious identities, origins, and ideas.
  - **Religion, Literature, and Representation.** The study of religion in relation to literary expressions and other forms of representation, such as performance, music, film, and the plastic arts.

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- **Religion, Ethics, and Society.** The exploration of larger social issues such as race, gender, and identity as they relate to religion and religious traditions. Examines how moral principles, cultural values, and ethical conduct help to shape human societies.

The five courses within the area of concentration must include at least one department seminar at the 300 level. Where appropriate and relevant to the major's program, up to two courses for the major may be drawn from outside the field of religion, subject to departmental approval.

- RELG 299 (Theoretical Perspectives in the Study of Religion).
- RELG 398A and 399B, a two-semester senior seminar and thesis program.
- Three additional half-year courses drawn from outside the major's area of concentration.
- Junior Colloquium: an informal required gathering of the junior majors once each semester. Students should complete the Religion Major Worksheet in advance in consultation with their major advisor and bring copies of the completed worksheet to the meeting.

At least six of each major's 11 courses must be taken in the Haverford Religion Department. In some rare cases, students may petition the department for exceptions to the major requirements. Such petitions must be presented to the department for approval in advance.

Final evaluation of the major program will consist of written work, including a thesis, and an oral conversation completed in the context of the Senior Seminar (RELG 398A and 399B).

Advising for the major takes place in individual meetings between majors and faculty advisors and in a departmental Junior Colloquium held once each semester. At this colloquium, majors will present their proposed programs of study with particular attention to their work in the area of concentration. All majors should fill out and bring the Religion Major Worksheet, which can be found on the Religion Department website, to the colloquium.

## MINOR REQUIREMENTS

The minor in religion, like the major, is designed to help students develop a coherent set of

academic skills and expertise in the study of religion, while at the same time encouraging interdisciplinary work in the humanities and social sciences. The minor consists of six courses with the following requirements:

- Five courses within an area of concentration, with at least one at the 300 level:
  - **Religious Traditions in Cultural Context.** The study of religious traditions and the textual, historical, sociological and cultural contexts in which they develop. Critical analysis of formative texts and issues that advance our notions of religious identities, origins, and ideas.
  - **Religion, Literature, and Representation.** The study of religion in relation to literary expressions and other forms of representation, such as performance, music, film, and the plastic arts.
  - **Religion, Ethics, and Society.** The exploration of larger social issues such as race, gender, and identity as they relate to religion and religious traditions. Examines how moral principles, cultural values, and ethical conduct help to shape human societies.
- RELG 299 (Theoretical Perspectives in the Study of Religion).
- Junior Colloquium: an informal required gathering of the junior majors once each semester. Students should complete the Religion Minor Worksheet, available on the Religion Department website, in advance in consultation with their major advisor and bring copies of the completed worksheet to the meeting.

All six courses must be taken in the Haverford Religion Department. In some rare cases, students may petition the department for exceptions to the minor requirements. Such petitions must be presented to the department for approval in advance.

## SENIOR PROJECT

The senior thesis research project in the Department of Religion serves as a capstone experience for our majors. The work of RELG 398A and 399B, the required courses related to the senior research project in religion, consists of five stages: the formulation of a thesis proposal; presentation of the proposal; presentation of a portion of work in progress; the writing and

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submission of first and final drafts; oral discussion with department faculty.

process of the final evaluation and grading of your work.

### Senior Project Learning Goals

The goals of the senior thesis process are to:

- further develop research skills and obtain a mastery of academic citation practices.
- provide students with an opportunity to pursue original research questions and to sharpen scholarly interests as one masters a particular field/argument.
- enhance written and verbal analysis through participation in the yearlong senior seminar with department faculty and students, weekly meetings with individual advisors, and the final oral presentation of the thesis to the department.
- nurture group cohesion as a department, through collaborative participation with fellow majors during the course of RELG 398a and 399b, concretely expressed by way of critical feedback to shared writing.
- build student confidence in the ability to see to fruition a rigorous project requiring prolonged periods of thought, writing, revising, and research.

### Senior Project Assessment

You will receive a regular course grade for RELG 399b, which will appear on your transcript. This overall grade is comprised of three separate grades that evaluate:

- Your participation in the seminar process outlined above.
  - Participation in the seminar means: punctual attendance at all seminar events; careful preparation, especially the reading of your colleagues' work in progress; and regular meetings with your advisor and submission of writing, according to the schedule mutually agreed upon.
- The quality of your thesis.
- Your thesis will be read by all members of the department, who will mutually agree upon a grade for the written thesis. This grade will be factored into your final grade for the seminar.
- The effectiveness of your oral exam.
  - The effectiveness of your oral discussion will be factored into the final grade for the thesis and for the seminar as a whole. All members of the department will participate in your oral discussion, but your advisor will not participate in the

## REQUIREMENTS FOR HONORS

The department awards honors and high honors in religion on the basis of the quality of work in the major and on the completed thesis.

## STUDY ABROAD

Students planning to study abroad must construct their programs in advance with the department. Students seeking religion credit for abroad courses must write a formal petition to the department upon their return and submit all relevant course materials. We advise students to petition courses that are within the designated area of concentration.

## FACULTY

### Elaine Beretz

Visiting Assistant Professor

### Molly Farneth (*on leave Fall 2017*)

Assistant Professor

### Pika Ghosh

Visiting Associate Professor

### Nicholas Harris

Visiting Instructor

### Kenneth Koltun-Fromm

Chair and Professor

### Naomi Koltun-Fromm

Associate Professor

### Brett Krutzsch

Visiting Assistant Professor

### Anne McGuire (*on leave 2017-2018*)

Kies Family Associate Professor in the Humanities

### Terrance Wiley

Assistant Professor

## COURSES

### RELG H101 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION

*Kenneth Koltun-Fromm*  
Humanities (HU)

## RELIGION

An introduction to the study of religion from multiple perspectives: overviews of several religions with classroom discussion of primary sources; cross-cultural features common to many religions; theories of religion and approaches to its study and interpretation. (Typically offered every other year)

### **RELG H104 RELIGION AND SOCIAL ETHICS**

*Staff*

Humanities (HU)

Introduces students to debates in social ethics, with a focus on Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic perspectives on the theological and ethical significance of race, class, and gender in contemporary society. Topics may include racism, incarceration, poverty, gender-based domination, and same-sex marriage. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **RELG H105 FOOD & RELIGION**

*Molly Farneth, Kenneth Koltun-Fromm*

Humanities (HU)

An exploration of the role of food in religious beliefs and practices. Topics include the role of food in religious rituals, the connection between religious foodways and religious identities, and the ethics of food production and consumption. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **RELG H107 VOCABULARIES OF ISLAM**

*Staff*

Humanities (HU)

Provides students with an introduction to the foundational concepts of Islam, its religious institutions, and the diverse ways in which Muslims understand and practice their religion. We explore the vocabularies surrounding core issues of scripture, prophethood, law, ritual, theology, mysticism, literature, and art from the early period to the present. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **RELG H110 SACRED TEXTS AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS**

*Anne McGuire*

Humanities (HU)

An introduction to Religion through the close reading of selected sacred texts of various religious traditions in their historical, literary, philosophical, and religious contexts. (Typically offered every other fall)

### **RELG H111 INTRODUCTION TO HINDUISM**

*Pika Ghosh*

Humanities (HU)

An introduction to the diverse and fluid tradition known as Hinduism, which we will examine through the many streams that feed into it: theological and philosophical beliefs, ritual and devotional practices, literature, visual art, music and drama. (Typically offered every other year)

### **RELG H113 ANIMALS AND RELIGION**

*Staff*

Humanities (HU)

The course explores central themes in the study of religion – such as myth and ritual – through a focus on animals. To do so we will engage a selection of primary sources and scholarly articles that examine the place of animals in the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Chinese traditions, as well as American indigenous traditions. (Not offered 2017-18)

### **RELG H122 INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT**

*Anne McGuire*

Humanities (HU)

An introduction to the New Testament and early Christian literature. Special attention will be given to the Jewish origins of the Jesus movement, the development of traditions about Jesus in the earliest Christian communities, and the social contexts and functions of various texts. Readings will include non-canonical writings, in addition to the writings of the New Testament canon. (Typically offered every spring)

### **RELG H124 INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN THOUGHT**

*Elaine Beretz*

Humanities (HU)

An examination of some central concepts of the Christian faith, approached within the context of contemporary theological discussion. Basic Christian ideas will be considered in relation to one another and with attention to their classic formulations, major historical transformations, and recent reformulations under the pressures of modernity and postmodernity. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **RELG H150 SOUTH ASIAN RELIGIOUS CULTURES**

*Pika Ghosh*

Humanities (HU)

An introductory course covering the variegated expressions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism,

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Islam, and Sikhism in South Asia. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **RELG H201 INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM**

*Hank Glassman*

Humanities (HU)

Focusing on the East Asian Buddhist tradition, the course examines Buddhist philosophy, doctrine and practice as textual traditions and as lived religion. Crosslisted: East Asian Languages & Cultures, Religion (Typically offered every other year)

### **RELG H202 THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT**

*Naomi Koltun-Fromm*

Humanities (HU)

Why are people always predicting the coming endtime? This course will explore the genre of apocalypse, looking for common themes that characterize this form of literature. Our primary source readings will be drawn from the Bible and non-canonical documents from the early Jewish and Christian traditions. We will use an analytical perspective to explore the social functions of apocalyptic, and ask why this form has been so persistent and influential. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **RELG H208 POETICS OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN SOUTH ASIA**

*Pika Ghosh*

Humanities (HU)

An examination of religious poetry from three South Asian traditions: Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism. Topics may include poetry and religious experience, poetry as locus of inter-religious dialogue, and poetry as religious critique. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **RELG H212 JERUSALEM: CITY, HISTORY AND REPRESENTATION**

*Naomi Koltun-Fromm*

Humanities (HU)

An examination of the history of Jerusalem as well as a study of Jerusalem as religious symbol and how the two interact over the centuries. Readings from ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary sources as well as material culture and art. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **RELG H221 WOMEN AND GENDER IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY**

*Anne McGuire*

Humanities (HU)

An examination of the representations of women and gender in early Christian texts and their significance for contemporary Christianity. Topics include interpretations of Genesis 1-3, images of women and sexuality in early Christian literature, and the roles of women in various Christian communities. (Typically offered every year)

### **RELG H222 GNOSTICISM**

*Anne McGuire*

Humanities (HU)

The phenomenon of Gnosticism examined through close reading of primary sources, including the recently discovered texts of Nag Hammadi. Topics include the relation of Gnosticism to Greek, Jewish, and Christian thought; the variety of Gnostic schools and sects; gender imagery, mythology and other issues in the interpretation of Gnostic texts. (Not offered 2017-18)

### **RELG H223 BODY, SEXUALITY AND CHRISTIANITY**

*Elaine Beretz*

Humanities (HU)

Christianity's deeply-ingrained discomfort with the human body and sexuality has had a disproportionate impact on women, making rules about proper behavior that confined women's roles in church and society. At the same time, Christianity has always inspired a powerful feminism, prompting women to break all the rules. This course will explore Western Christianity during the medieval period, when the tension between misogyny and feminism was particularly powerful and when many of the tensions still felt in Western society were formed. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **RELG H230 RELIGION AND BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE**

*Terrance Wiley*

Humanities (HU)

This course will examine the background for and the key events, figures, philosophies, tactics, and consequences of the modern black freedom struggle in United States. The period from 1955-1965 will receive special attention, but the roots of the freedom struggle and the effect on recent American political, social, and cultural history will also be considered. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **RELG H240 HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES OF QUAKERISM**

*Emma Lapsansky*

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Social Science (SO)

The development of Quakerism and its relationship to other religious movements and to political and social life, especially in America. The roots of the Society of Friends in 17th-century Britain, and the expansion of Quaker influences among Third World populations, particularly the Native American, Hispanic, east African, and Asian populations. Crosslisted: Religion, History (Offered Spring 2018)

### **RELG H248 THE QURAN**

*Staff*

Humanities (HU)

Overview of the Qur'an, the scripture of Islam. Major themes include: orality, textuality, sanctity and material culture; revelation, translation, and inimitability; calligraphy, bookmaking and architecture; along with modes of scriptural exegesis as practiced over time by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Crosslisted: Religion, Comparative Literature (Not offered 2017-18)

### **RELG H254 RAP AND RELIGION: RHYMES ABOUT GOD AND THE GOOD**

*Terrance Wiley*

Humanities (HU)

We will explore the origins, existential, and ethical dimensions of Rhythm and Poetry (RAP) music. Giving attention to RAP songs written and produced by African American artists, including Tupac, Nas, Jay-Z, The Roots, Lauryn Hill, and Kanye West, we will analyze their work with an interest in understanding a) the conceptions of God and the good reflected in them, b) how these conceptions connect to and reflect African American social and cultural practices, and c) how the conceptions under consideration change over time. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **RELG H257 THE YOGA TRADITION IN SOUTH ASIA AND BEYOND**

*Pika Ghosh*

Humanities (HU)

Examines strands in the history of yoga practice and thought from the earliest textual discussions of yoga until the present day. Topics include the shifting meanings attributed to the term yoga across a range of communities, Islam and yoga, and the impact of colonialism and nationalism on shaping modern perceptions. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **RELG H258 GENDER AND POWER IN RECENT JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT**

*Molly Farneth*

Humanities (HU)

An exploration of gender in Judaism and Christianity through a study of feminist and queer thinkers who critique and contribute to these traditions. Topics include sex/gender difference, the gender of God, and the nature of divine authority. Prerequisite(s): Familiarity with philosophical and/or theoretical inquiry is recommended. (Typically offered every other year)

### **RELG H259 GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN ISLAMIC TEXTS AND PRACTICES**

*Staff*

Humanities (HU)

This course explores competing notions of gender and sexuality in Islamic societies from the time of Muhammad to the contemporary period. Readings include primary sources in translation as well as scholarly articles, works of fiction and nonfiction. (Not offered 2017-18)

### **RELG H268 ANARCHISM: RELIGION, ETHICS, POLITICAL OBLIGATION**

*Terrance Wiley*

Humanities (HU)

Anarchism emerged in the nineteenth century as an important transnational sociopolitical philosophy and religious movement. Course participants will analyze anarchism as a political philosophy and as a social movement, from the nineteenth century labor movement to the ongoing global justice movement. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **RELG H273 GRAPHIC RELIGION: THE ETHICS OF REPRESENTATION**

*Kenneth Koltun-Fromm*

Humanities (HU)

An examination of multiple visual "texts"—film, photography, graphic novels, and other plastic arts—to uncover the ethical obligations, moral commitments, theological convictions, individual attachments, and communal duties that arise in seeing religion. (Typically offered every other year)

### **RELG H276 RELIGION AND U.S. POLITICS: SEXUALITY, RACE, AND GENDER**

*Brett Krutzsch*

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### Humanities (HU)

This course examines why religion is commonly invoked in political debates about sexuality and gender even though the United States promotes itself as a secular democracy. The class will question if the United States has a secular government, explore what the separation of church and state means, and analyze if American citizens have religious freedom. The class will also explore the role religion has played in political movements centered on race, gender, and sexuality, and question why women's reproductive rights and LGBTQ issues have been a common focus for government regulations and religious lobbying. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **RELG H280 ETHICS AND THE GOOD LIFE**

*Molly Farneth*

Humanities (HU)

This course examines influential accounts of the "good life" in Western religious and philosophical traditions, and the ways that contemporary ethicists draw on those accounts to think about religion, ethics, and politics today. We pay particular attention to the social and political dimensions of these accounts of the good life, to consider how we can live well together in spite of our differences. (Typically offered every other year)

### **RELG H299 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION**

*Kenneth Koltun-Fromm*

Humanities (HU)

An introduction to theories of the nature and function of religion from theological, philosophical, psychological, anthropological, and sociological perspectives. Readings may include: Schleiermacher, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Tylor, Durkheim, Weber, James, Otto, Benjamin, Eliade, Geertz, Foucault, Douglas, Smith, Berger, Haraway. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **RELG H303 RELIGION, LITERATURE AND REPRESENTATION: IMAGES OF KRISHNA**

*Pika Ghosh*

Humanities (HU)

This course approaches the Hindu god Krishna through varied expressions in architecture, sculpture, paintings, textiles, landscape design, poetry, music, dance, and drama. We will ask how these practices were employed to visualize the

divine, to nurture faith and passion, and to gain proximity to the transcendent deity. Class work will include field trips to local temples and museums. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **RELG H305 SEMINAR IN RELIGION, ETHICS, AND SOCIETY: MONOGAMY AND MARRIAGE IN AMERICA**

*Brett Krutzsch*

Humanities (HU)

This course will explore how coupled, monogamous marriage became the sexual and romantic ideal in the United States, and, in particular, how that ideal is connected to religion, race, gender, and sexuality. The class will question why politicians, religious leaders, and average citizens have promoted monogamy as the only legitimate sexual relationship. We will study queer theoretical arguments about monogamy and polyamory, anti-miscegenation laws, religious alternatives to monogamy, and the role religion has played in shaping social norms about acceptable sexual citizens. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **RELG H308 MYSTICAL LITERATURES OF ISLAM**

*Staff*

Humanities (HU)

Overview of the literary expressions of Islamic mysticism through the study of poetry, philosophy, hagiographies, and anecdotes. Topics include: unio mystica; symbol and structure; love and the erotic; body / gender; language and experience. (Offered occasionally)

### **RELG H312 RITUAL AND THE BODY**

*Molly Farneth*

Humanities (HU)

An exploration of the meaning and function of ritual, and of the ways that rituals shape bodies, habits, and identities. Special attention will be given to the relationship between ritual and gender. Readings include Durkheim, Mauss, Bourdieu, Butler, and Mahmood. Prerequisite(s): At least one 200-level course in the department, or instructor consent. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **RELG H316 HEGEL'S SOCIAL ETHICS**

*Molly Farneth*

Humanities (HU)

An examination of religion, ethics, and politics in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (in translation). As we work through Hegel's monumental text, we will consider its influence over modern and contemporary discussions of gender, domination,

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ethical conflict and religious pluralism.

Prerequisite(s): At least one 200-level course in philosophy, political theory, or religious thought, or instructor consent. (Typically offered every other year)

### **RELG H319 BLACK QUEER SAINTS: SEX, GENDER, RACE, CLASS AND THE QUEST FOR LIBERATION**

*Terrance Wiley*

Humanities (HU)

Drawing on fiction, biography, critical theory, film, essays, and memoirs, participants will explore how certain African American artists, activists, and religionists have resisted, represented, and reinterpreted sex, sexuality, and gender norms in the context of capitalist, white supremacist, male supremacist, and heteronormative cultures. Crosslisted: Africana Studies, Religion; Prerequisite(s): 200-level humanities course or instructor consent. (Typically offered every other year)

### **RELG H398 SENIOR THESIS SEMINAR PART 1**

*Terrance Wiley*

Humanities (HU)

A practical methodology course which prepares senior Religion majors to write their senior theses. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **RELG H399 SENIOR SEMINAR AND THESIS**

*Staff*

Humanities (HU)

Senior Thesis (Offered Spring 2018)