

**GRADUATE COURSES – DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**2023-2024**

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**FALL 2023**

**RS 6Y06A / Introduction to Literary Chinese – Dr. James Benn**

*Asian*

**TBA**

**RS 701 / Issues in the Study of Religions – Dr. Celia Rothenberg**

*Departmental Course (required)*

**Tuesday 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. - University Hall Room 122**

This seminar provides the opportunity for all first year MA and PhD students to engage with key issues in the academic study of religion. Together, we will explore important historical debates that have shaped the field as well as current theoretical and methodological approaches. By the end of the course, students will have a broad appreciation for the interdisciplinary perspectives that come together in Religious Studies.

**RS 714 / Topics in Indian Buddhist Texts: Past Lives – Dr. Shayne Clarke**

*Buddhism*

**Friday 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. – University Hall Room 122**

This seminar will survey the corpus of extant Indian Buddhist literature on past life stories (jātakas and avadānas) of lay and religious figures including the Buddha. We will examine not only the life stories themselves but what modern scholars have made of them. All readings will be in English.

**RS 715 / Sanskrit: Medieval Manuscripts - Dr. Shayne Clarke**

*Buddhism*

**Friday 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. – University Hall Room 122**

This course will provide an introduction to reading and translating Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts. Completion of first-year Sanskrit is required. Elementary knowledge of Classical Tibetan or Chinese will be useful.

**RS 732 / Topics in the Theory of Interpretation - Constructing the “Other”: Identity and Difference in Antiquity and Beyond - Dr. Abigail Kulisz**

*Judaism in Antiquity, Christianity in Antiquity, Islamic Studies*

**Thursday 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. – University Hall Room 122**

This course will explore how Christians, Jews, and Muslims forged, imagined, and contested their relationship with each other in biblical, medieval, and contemporary contexts. Special attention will be paid to representations of race/ethnicity, gender, and methodological

approaches to the study of identity (e.g., interfaith relations, violence/conflict, and historical/philosophical understandings of the "other," "friend," and "enemy" more broadly).

**RS 774 / Topics in Religion and Literature: Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and Melville's *Moby Dick*: Poetic Philosophy on Land and Sea – Dr. Travis Kroeker**

***Religion and Politics***

**Monday 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. – University Hall Room 122**

In this seminar we undertake close readings of two literary philosophical works, with special attention to religious themes such as good and evil, love and justice, sickness and health—and above all, metamorphosis or transformation in a tragic world. We'll also pursue their complex dialectical relations with religious thinkers such as Plato, Paul and Augustine, and students are encouraged to draw upon other engagements of their own interest, both ancient and modern.

**RS 782 - Anthro 782 – Globalization Studies 782 – Diasporas, Transnationalism, and Religious Identities – Dr. Basit Iqbal**

***Religion and Culture, Islamic Studies***

**Thursday 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. – Chester New Hall Room 307**

This course focuses on religion among immigrant and diaspora communities in the contemporary globalized world. Yet a host of anthropological scholarship has put in question all the key terms of the previous sentence (religion, diaspora, transnational, contemporary, world...). This course develops a critical understanding of these topics while introducing students to a range of diasporic, transnational, and religious contexts. Themes to be covered include the connections between religion, race, and ethnicity; the relationships between religious and political commitments; the weight of history; logics of difference; the role of media and violence; the politics of secularism and multiculturalism; memory and the symbolic significance of "home"; and more. Although based in ethnographic studies, we will also engage a range of other genres, including fiction, criticism, and film.

The course will be conducted as a seminar. Before the fall break, students will have chosen one of two models for their evaluation. They may either prepare nine, 4-page (double-spaced, 1" margins) discussion papers over the course of the term, due in class each week; or, they may prepare four such discussion papers plus write a 20-page research paper. Discussion papers should summarize and critically evaluate the week's assigned readings and formulate questions to be raised during seminar discussion.

## **WINTER 2024**

**RS 6Y06B / Introduction to Literary Chinese – Dr. James Benn**

***Asian***

**TBA**

**RS 718 / Topics in Buddhist Studies: Recent Scholarship – Dr. James Benn**

***Buddhism***

**Wednesday 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. – University Hall Room 122**

In this seminar we shall read and discuss a selection of recent important works on and around Buddhism (in English). In addition, we shall survey trends in recent Buddhist Studies scholarship produced in other languages (Chinese, Japanese, French, German, etc.). Students will be required to write regular, short, critical responses to the readings in addition to a longer essay that reflects on the state of the field in Buddhist Studies.

**RS 751 / Readings in Gospel Literature I: Gospel of Matthew – Dr. Matthew Thiessen**  
***Christianity in Antiquity***

**Tuesday 2:30 – 4:30 p.m. – University Hall Room 122**

This course will examine the Gospel of Matthew in its historical and social context, with an eye to reception-historical work related to Christian supersessionism, feminism, and modern theological accounts of race.

**RS 773 – Pol. Sci. 754 / Critics of Modernity - Dr. Zdravko Planinc**  
***Religion and Politics***

**Tuesday 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. – University Hall Room 122**

In this course we will study the works of two Critical Theorists, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, in conversation with comparably radical works of political philosophy by Hannah Arendt. The texts selected for discussion will be based on student interests and preferences.

**RS 790 / Topics in Western Religious Thought – Dr. Dana Hollander**  
***Western Religious Thought***

**Thursday 2:30 – 4:30 p.m. University Hall Room 122**

Description: We will study a selection of works that analyze historic and ongoing interconnections between race/racism, whiteness, coloniality, notions of “religion” in the West, and Judaism/Jewishness. Check for updates at

<https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/danahol/790/>

**Globalization Studies 701 / Topics in Globalization Studies I: Qur’an and Hadith – Dr. Liyakat Takim**

***Western Religious Thought, Islamic Studies***

**Wednesday 11:30 – 2:30 – LRW Room 3001**

The precepts of the Qur’an, its moral imperatives and spiritual values have become the norms for the Muslim community. This course aims to introduce students to the collection, compilation and standardization of the Qur’an along with its main features, structure, and themes. We will examine the different interpretive processes and approaches employed by exegetes to yield meaning that is relevant to the lives of Muslims and their interaction with the non-Muslim other. The course will also include a discussion on the collection of the hadith literature and the role it plays in the lives of Muslims.

**Gender Studies 723 / Islam, Feminisms and Global Media – Dr. Dilyana Mincheva**  
***Islamic Studies***

**TBA**