

**RELIGION DEPARTMENT
2008-2009 SPRING
COURSE OFFERINGS**

Graduate Program

REL 503

Studies in East Asian Religions : Issues in Premodern Japanese Religion

Transcript Topic Title: Issues in Premodern Japanese Religion **/aud*

Total Course Enrollment: 10

Professor(s): Jacqueline I. Stone

Description/Objective:

This seminar will explore major issues in recent scholarship on premodern Japanese religions in both English and Japanese (for seminar participants with sufficient Japanese reading capacity). Topics may include debates over understandings of "esoteric" Buddhism; new thinking about the origins of Shinto and the relation of kami and buddhas; religion and Japanese identity formation; religion and worldly authority; interactions of ritual, site, and image; and the rise of Buddhist mortuary practice and concepts of the afterlife. Topics and readings can to some extent be arranged to accommodate student interests.

REL 504

Studies in Greco-Roman Religions : Varieties of Early Christianity

Transcript Topic Title: Varieties of Early Christianity **/aud*

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Elaine H. Pagels

Description/Objective:

We will investigate classic sources for the "varieties of early Christianity," noting especially social history in the times of its formation, focusing on the writings of major figures including Justin Martyr and the "heretic" Valentinus (Rome, c. 150 CE); Irenaeus (Lyons, in Gaul, c. 160-170CE), Tertullian (north Africa, c. 180-200 CE) and his Egyptian contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen (c. 230-250 CE), along with "heretical" sources from Nag Hammadi and elsewhere, where they help illuminate the issues.

REL 505

Studies in the Religions of the Americas : Biography

Transcript Topic Title: Biography **/aud*

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Leigh E. Schmidt

Description/Objective:

The last decade has witnessed an efflorescence of accomplished and acclaimed biographies of major figures in American religious history. This seminar explores the place of biography in the field, the scope and limits of its impact, as well as the art of the genre. Biographers and their figures include, among others: George Marsden on Jonathan Edwards, Nell Painter on Sojourner Truth, Debby Applegate on Henry Ward Beecher, Kathi Kern on Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Robert Richardson on William James, and Michael Kazin on William Jennings Bryan.

REL 506

Studies in Theology : Recent Jewish and Christian Thought

Transcript Topic Title: Recent Jewish and Christian Thought **/aud*

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Leora F. Batnitzky, Eric S. Gregory

Description/Objective:

Much of recent Jewish and Christian thought has focused on arguments defending the respective particularity of the Jewish and Christian traditions. This seminar examines the historical reasons for, and philosophical contents of, these kinds of arguments as well as their philosophical, ethical, and political implications.

REL 509**Studies in the History of Islam : Social History of Mamluk Egypt, Syria & Hijaz****Transcript Topic Title:** Mamluk Egypt, Syria & Hijaz **/aud***Total Course Enrollment:** 15**Professor(s):** Shaun E. Marmon**Description/Objective:**

What can we, as historians, learn from late Mamluk sources about the identities, loyalties, networks and mentalities of different elite and non-elite peoples who lived during the Burji, or so-called "Circassian" period (late ninth/fourteenth to early tenth/sixteenth centuries), in and around urban centers like Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Mecca and Madina? Readings consist of Arabic texts from a wide variety of genres, including unpublished documents of waqf, as well as selections from the ever increasing and changing modern scholarship on the Mamluks. Two essays required in course of semester.

REL 511**Special Topics in the Study of Religion : Black Gods and Utopian Visions****Transcript Topic Title:** Black Gods and Utopian Visions **/aud***Total Course Enrollment:** 15**Professor(s):** Judith L. Weisenfeld**Description/Objective:**

This course will examine African American religious movements that emerged in the context of 20th century urbanization and migration, including Father Divine's Peace Mission Movement, the Nation of Islam, Black Hebrew Israelites, and Daddy Grace's United House of Prayer for All People. The course will pay particular attention to the theological frameworks, visions of religious leadership, narratives of race history, and understandings of religious community these movements presented. We will also consider literary and artistic renderings of black religious leaders and utopian visions.

REL 519**Religion and Critical Thought Workshop **/aud*****Total Course Enrollment:** 15**Professor(s):** Jeffrey L. Stout**Description/Objective:**

A weekly seminar focused on current student and faculty research in religion and critical thought, designed primarily for graduate students working on dissertations and general examination essays on the philosophy of religion, religious ethics, and the role of religion in politics.

REL 522**Religion and Culture Workshop **/aud*****Total Course Enrollment:** 20**Professor(s):** Stephen F. Teiser**Description/Objective:**

A weekly, year-long workshop devoted to the critical discussion of research in progress in the ethnographic, historical, and normative study of religion and culture. Designed for dissertation writers receiving fellowships from the Center for the Study of Religion and post-doctoral fellows.

REL 524**American Religious History Workshop **/aud*****Total Course Enrollment:** 15**Professor(s):** R. M. Griffith**Description/Objective:**

A weekly, year-long workshop focused on the current research of visiting presenters, current students, and faculty in American religious history. The workshop is designed primarily for Ph.D. students in the field, but is open as well to undergraduate concentrators with a strong background in the study of American religion and culture. Note: REL 523 (fall) and REL 524 (spring) constitute this year-long workshop. In order to receive credit and/or a grade, students must take the course both semesters.

REL 586 /NES 586

Religious Authority in Modern Islam **/aud*

Total Course Enrollment: 15

Professor(s): Muhammad Q. Zaman

Description/Objective:

How far reaching is the "fragmentation" of religious authority in modern Islam? How have traditional religious scholars sought to rearticulate their authority in conditions of radical change? On what basis do "new religious intellectuals" make their claims to authority? How has the state shaped structures of religious authority? What is peculiar to modern Islam so far as conceptions of and contestations over religious authority are concerned? These are among the questions this seminar seeks to examine.

For more detailed information on each course, please visit:

<http://registrar1.princeton.edu/course/course.cfm>