



Texas State University
Religion Course Descriptions
Spring 2018

Texas State University
Philosophy Department
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MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

World Religions
REL 1300 CRN #33189
MW 11 – 12:20
DERR 326

Instructor: Binita Metha, Ph.D.

Description: This course offers an introduction to the major religions of the world. On the basis of primary foundational texts and secondary scholarly literature, the course will provide an overview of the historical development of these religious traditions and will examine the core ideas and concepts, myths, symbols and practices within a tradition. The lectures will also include a discussion of religious expression in arts, music and culture. Images and video clips on various aspects of religion will be shown as an integral part of the course material.

World Religions
REL 1300 CRN # 36597
TR 12:30 – 1:50 pm
CMAL 114

Instructor: Natasha Mikles, Ph.D.

Description: Studying religious traditions—both your own and those of others—is some of the most important work you will do in your college career. Religious ideas and practices have had a profound impact on world history, global development, and their effect continues to be seen and felt today. To be an educated citizen, it is imperative that we both understand the basics of a variety of religious traditions and appreciate the vast diversity within a religious tradition. In this course, we'll cover a sampling of seven religious traditions that have had a profound impact on the world with two goals in mind: developing our own religious literacy and learning how to think about religions critically and with nuance. Beyond learning the basic practices and beliefs of these religions, we'll also ask what can we learned by comparing religions to each other? Are religions actually “all the same,” or do differences between them matter? Who even gets to define what is and is not a religion?

World Religions
REL 1300 CRN # 38582
MW 12:30 – 1:50 pm
CMAL 114

Instructor: Natasha Mikles, Ph.D.

Description: Studying religious traditions—both your own and those of others—is some of the most important work you will do in your college career. Religious ideas and practices have had a profound impact on world history, global development, and their effect continues to be seen and felt today. To be an educated citizen, it is imperative that we both understand the basics of a variety of religious traditions and appreciate the vast diversity within a religious tradition. In this course, we'll cover a sampling of seven religious traditions that have had a profound impact on the world with two goals in mind: developing our own religious literacy and learning how to think about religions critically and with nuance. Beyond learning the basic practices and beliefs of these religions, we'll also ask what can we learned by comparing religions to each other? Are religions actually “all the same,” or do differences between them matter? Who even gets to define what is and is not a religion?

Founders, Prophets and Saints

REL 2321 CRN# 38583

TR 11 – 12:20 pm

TBA

Instructor: Joe Laycock, Ph.D.

Description: Throughout history, extraordinary men and women have appeared to reveal sacred truths, model values to others, and deliver warnings about the future. Some of these people are dismissed as lunatics and frauds. Others go on to become prophets, founders, and saints and their ideas change the course of history. In this course, we will explore the lives of extraordinary men and women from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions. We will also use the tools of psychology and sociology to examine their experiences and the influence they have on society.

American Religious Controversy

REL 3330 CRN# 36599

TTH 2 – 3:20 p.m.

DERR 111

Instructor: Joe Laycock, Ph.D

Description: American culture has always been shaped by controversies over religion manifesting in culture wars, legal battles, and religious violence. These controversies point to unique aspects of the American experiment: How does religion shape the way Americans think about themselves as a people? How should “the will of the people” be balanced against the rights of minorities? How should Americans respond to religious groups we find frightening or dangerous? Perhaps more than ever, Americans are reminded daily of these arguments. This course will prepare students to think critically about these controversies and locate them within a historical context.

Indian Philosophy and Religion

REL 3381 CRN # 38584

MW 3:30 – 4:50 p.m.

CMAL 103

Instructor: Binita Metha, Ph.D.

Description: This course offers an introduction to the rich religious and philosophical traditions of India. Indian philosophers predominantly present a spiritual, multi-dimensional outlook on the nature of human life and the world; they combine reason, experience, yoga and meditation as methods of inquiry. On the basis of primary foundational texts and secondary scholarly literature, the course will explore various facets of Indian thought from the time of the Vedas (around 1st millennium BCE) to the contribution of modern figures. Notion of transformation, both spiritual and bodily, is inherent in almost all Hindu and Buddhist philosophical inquiries. We shall pay special attention to this “transformative” feature. Over and above receiving exposure to Indian philosophy, this course will acquaint students to the distinctive manner in which human self is understood and enacted in the Indian culture.

Philosophy of Buddhism

REL 3385 CRN #38585

TR 11 – 12:20 p.m.

CMAL 103

Instructor: Natasha Mikles, Ph.D.

Description: Who are you? What is the core of your “self”? What does “you” from ten years ago have to do with “you” now? What is the relationship between the beliefs and thoughts of one man 2,500 years ago and those of a 500 million-person religious community today? Originating in 5th-century BCE India and Nepal, Buddhism has wrestled with these questions and their implications. Together we’ll explore the world of Buddhist thought to consider what answers Buddhists have provided throughout historical time and geographical space. We’ll examine how this tradition of Buddhist thought has formed religious institutions and practices. Understanding the religious world Buddhists inhabit will also us to explore the controversies Buddhism encountered as it spread out of India and throughout Asia—eventually appearing in America. Framing the specific historical, social, and philosophical situations Buddhism inhabits will ultimately allow us to understand the unique answers Buddhism provides to what are, ultimately, universal questions.