



# Texas State University Religion Course Descriptions Fall 2019

Texas State University  
Philosophy Department  
Comal 102  
601 University Drive  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
Phone: 512-245-2285  
[philosophy@txstate.edu](mailto:philosophy@txstate.edu)

If you have questions regarding the minor in religious studies program, please contact:

Dr. Rebecca Raphael  
512-245-1393  
Comal 107F  
rr23@txstate.edu

### **World Religions**

REL 1300 CRN #14287  
MW 11 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.  
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. 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 eight 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 # 14741  
TR 9:30 – 10:50 a.m.  
Comal 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. 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 eight 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?

## **Asian Religions**

REL 2360 CRN # 18160

TR 3:30 – 4:50 p.m.

Comal 114

Instructor: Binita Mehta, Ph.D.

Description: This course offers an introduction to the diverse religious traditions of South East and East Asia. We will focus on Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. On the basis of primary foundational texts and secondary scholarly literature, we will study the core ideas and concepts, myths, symbols and practices of these traditions. Students will also get acquainted with the manner in which religious perspectives have influenced social practices and arts in the South East/East Asian cultures. Images and video clips on various aspects of religion will be shown as an integral part of the course material. The course will include a viewing of the film 'The Hidden Fortress' by the renowned Japanese director Akira Kurosawa.

## **American Religion Controversy**

REL 3330 CRN#18161

MW 12:30 – 1:50 p.m.

Comal 114

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.

## **Religion & Film**

REL 3361A CRN #14577

TR 2 – 3:30 p.m.

Comal 114

Instructor: Joe Laycock, Ph.D.

Description: Religious traditions and films are both in the business of “world creating.” Religious traditions shape the way believers understand their place in the world. Films create temporary worlds and invite us to enter. This course will examine how religious ideas are reflected in film and how films have taken on some of the functions traditionally served by religion. As our culture passes from literacy to visuality, discerning how the various dimensions of religious belief and practice are reflected and refracted through film is an important element in understanding the nature of religion in late modern society. In particular, this course will focus on the themes of rituals, myths, and values as they relate to both religion and film.

## **Apocalypticism**

REL 3372 CRN#18163

TR 11 – 12:20 p.m.

Comal 114

Instructor: Rebecca Raphael, Ph.D.

Description: An historical-cultural survey of end-of-the-world literature, art, and thought in Western Civilization, from ancient Judaism and Christianity to the present. Historical and scientific methods provide the framework for this course. (WI).

## **Hell Across Cultures**

HON 3339D

MW 2 – 3:20 p.m.

Comal 114

Instructor: Natasha Mikles, Ph.D.

Description: “Hell” provides the setting for a variety of terrifying stories in many different societies—from Buddhist monks looking for their deceased mothers to modern-day Evangelical teenagers being evangelized on the evils of abortion, homosexuality, and paganism. Beyond detailing one’s potential future abode, “hell” also becomes a tool to make very real arguments about our current society and world. This dual nature—placed in an afterlife but talking always about the present—gives “hell,” therefore, incredible flexibility to transform social and religious identity, actions, and beliefs. In this course, we will explore the concept of “hell” within a variety of religious traditions, beginning by developing a working definition of “hell.” We will continually reexamine, scrutinize, and revise our definition as we examine the portrayal of “hell” in religious traditions as diverse as second-century Persian Zoroastrianism, seventh-century Chinese Buddhism, and nineteenth-century American Protestantism. By the end of the course, we will have built together an understanding of the variety of ways “hell” is used in religious, literary, and social discourse around the world, as well as the incredible diversity hidden within the singular concept of “hell.”