

# Faculty of Religious Studies

**MAY 1–June 1**

## **RELG 280 Elementary New Testament Greek**

(6) (Section 001)

Open to students in the Honours and Major programs in Religious Studies. Other Arts and Science students may take the course as an elective outside their faculty, in accordance with Arts and Science regulations. An introduction to the grammar and syntax of the Greek New Testament. Click here for [course flyer](#).

## **RELG 313 Topics in Biblical Studies: Early Jewish and Christian Apocalypses**

(3) (Section 001)

This course provides an introductory survey of the apocalyptic literature produced by Jews and the earliest Christians in the Second Temple period. The bulk of the course emphasizes a close study of both biblical and extra-biblical texts. Placing these texts within the larger narrative of Early Judaism and Early Christianity, we will discuss function, social setting, and defining features of the genre 'apocalypse'. While the course will emphasize apocalypses from the early Jewish period, we will periodically explore the modern concept of apocalypse and apocalypticism in order to see the influence of the primary source materials we will be studying.

## **RELG 336 Contemporary Theological Issues: Another (A)Theism**

(3) (Section 001)

Slavoj Žižek asserts that both the emergence of “new Atheism” and “fundamentalism” are two sides to the same coin. When discussing the issue of atheism vs. religion we do not have to choose one over the other. Our concern should be directed rather at the junction where these two terms breakdown, merge or are created. When we move *beyond* the dogmatic debates of the “new” Atheism (Dawkins, Dennett, Hitchens, Harris) and its ‘traditional’ religious defenders, religious understanding, in the spirit of Walter Benjamin, becomes a *question* for the modern world. Instead of attempting to reduce and dismiss religion, our concern should be reframed: what potency is there in these theological concepts that have been running through the base of Western thought up until the radical secularism of the present era? This question can be answered affirmatively or negatively, but either way requires some thinking and questioning. There is much emancipatory material in religion, and it is by recognizing the importance (for both theists and atheists) of theological concepts that we can bravely address today’s distressing issues in politics, economics, society and culture. This course will examine works of those critical of religion and who are not ready to dismiss it entirely nor by reductionist simplifications. Click here for [course flyer](#).

## **RELG 337 Themes in Buddhist Studies: Tibetan Mind Training—Compassion and Enlightenment**

(3) (Section 001)

One of the great contributions of Tibetan culture to Buddhism was the development of mind training (Tib: blo sbyong), a comprehensive system of transformative development centred on the practice of compassion. Since its inception during the 11th-13th centuries, it has become a principal spiritual exercise of all Tibetan Buddhists, and has continually informed the Tibetan understanding of Mahāyāna. Students in this course, through critical reading and discussion of the earliest sources (in translation), will critically examine the Tibetan Buddhist conception of the basis, path, and goal of Buddhist practice, and place Tibetan meditative cultivation within its doctrinal context. Students are also encouraged to compare this Tibetan practice of compassion with contemporary ideas and ethics. Click here for [course flyer](#).

### **RELG 471 Christian Social Ethics: Vulnerability and Moral Order**

(3) (Section 001)

Political philosophy has recently been pushed to consider the ideal political subject in terms of vulnerability rather than autonomy. Vulnerability, at its most basic, is the simple openness to wounding that is a defining feature of human being. If this vulnerable subject is the ideal, then childhood, gender and disability represent important perspectives from which to consider both the just ordering of society and the moral agency of the political subject. This course is intended to help students explore diverse theories of doing justice considered from various perspectives on vulnerability. Our chief concern will be to consider how these perspectives help us think about public order in light of difficult moral issues like child sexual abuse, debates over the institution of the family, or issues of discrimination based on gender or disability. Recent scholarly work in Christian ethics, particularly work in the fields of gender, childhood, family and disability studies as well as developments in political theology and human rights, will form the academic foundation upon which this course will be based.

### **MAY 14–25**

#### **RELG 317 Special Topics in Religion: Interfaith Seminar: Feasting and Fasting**

(3) (Section 001) (Intensive)

Students who do not have the prerequisite must have the permission of the instructor. This is a special, two-week intensive interfaith program taught by seven scholars together. The program will run all day, every day, from May 14-25. Lectures will run during the day by our team of scholars and in the afternoons we will take field trips together. Meals will also be provided at least twice a day, and at times three times a day, for the duration of the program. Given all of these extra expenses, we ask participants to pay an additional \$395.00 to help cover the costs. Approximately two weeks before the program begins, you will receive an email from Dr. Vanessa Sasson with information about the when, where and how of the program.

### **JUNE 4–JULY 5**

#### **RELG 203 Bible and Western Culture**

(3) (Section 001)

To provide students of the humanities with knowledge of the Bible as a tool for interpreting religious references in Western literature, art and music. Biblical stories (e.g. Creation, Exodus), key figures (e.g. David, Job, Mary), and common motifs (e.g. Holy City, Pilgrimage, Bride) are explored, then illustrated by later cultural forms.

#### **RELG 315 Special Topics in Religion – Hindu Nationalism**

(3) (Section 001)

The interface of religion and politics, and the tensions they present, are found in India just as they are in the West. For this reason, Hindu nationalism offers an interesting scenario in which to explore discourses of religious identity and observe the politicisation of religious narratives. These points of discussion are further complicated by the influences of globalisation and secularism. This course will offer an in-depth look at Hindu nationalism, the histories that inform the ideologies, religious and communal tensions, and the contestation between two interpretations of 'secularism'. In this course, we will be exploring theories of nationalism and identity, attempting to reconcile 'Hindu' as a religious category, reading writings by the fathers of Hindu nationalist movements, and engage scholarly articles which chart the rise of Hindu nationalism since 1980. No prerequisites are necessary.

#### **RELG 318 Special Topics in Religion: The Culture of Modern Yoga**

(3) (Section 001)

This course is a study of the development of modern postural yoga practices. It begins with an introduction to the outlook of Hindu yoga, the classical literature of yoga philosophy, and historical

perspectives on Indian ascetic practices in pre-modern India. Then we will look at the work of the early scholars of yoga, who were influential interpreters of the yoga traditions to the west. In these presentations and in traveler's accounts, Indian yogis and their practices are variously demonized, feared, glorified, and imitated. For early Indian modernists like Vivekananda and Gandhi, yoga was styled as one of the hallmarks of the neo-Hindu tradition; the strength of the physical body as attained through the practice of yoga was also seen as a precursor to and a reflection of the strength of the emergent Hindu nation. Yoga was presented as a historically authentic spiritual system of cultivation; meanwhile, its advocates infused yoga with western ideas of physiology, health and athleticism. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, yoga practices both in India and spreading abroad were reinvented and transformed to a remarkable degree, which we will examine in detailed case-studies of the influential teachings of Kuvalayananda, Krishnamacarya, Swami Sivananda, Swami Satchidananda, Pattabhi Jois, and Bikram Choudhury. What is revealed in a study of these cross-cultural appropriations and transformations are conflicting notions of what constitutes the body, the self, and its freedoms. Yoga was advocated in India as an indigenous system of spiritual and physical training, and to the west as an exotic practice with intimations of health, extraordinary abilities, and communion with the divine.

### **RELG 340 Religion and the Sciences**

(3) (Section 001)

Philosophies of science and of religion have created a more positive dialogue on questions of method, symbolism and rationality. Examines key issues (e.g. creation and evolution; objectivity and involvement; determinism and freedom) raised by natural and social sciences, and various possible solutions.

### **RELG 399 Art and Sacred Space in Early Christianity**

(3) (Section 001)

The artistic and architectural remnants of early Christians provide a rich source of information about their theological beliefs, interpretation of sacred texts, and ritual practice. Material culture provides a helpfully counterbalancing source to the history that we learn from texts, most of which were written by and for an elite, educated, predominantly male subgroup of the early Christian community. Studying the images and spaces created by early Christians enriches the study of the origins of one of the world's major religions, providing a valuable glimpse into early Christianity as a lived religion. Click here for [course flyer](#).

## **JUNE 4–JULY 5**

### **RELG 337: Themes in Buddhist Studies: Engaged Buddhism**

(3) (Section 001)

This course focuses on engaged movements in various Buddhist traditions. It introduces students to the scriptural antecedents of Buddhist ethical ideals and the key thinkers and activists in contemporary engaged Buddhist movements. Also, by working through specific ethical issues such as poverty, sexuality, equality, and violence in a global prospective, students will come to understand the application and effects of Buddhist teachings on these important social issues.

## **JULY 9–20**

### **RELG 550 Comparative Religion: Human Rights and Religious Minorities**

(3) (Section 001) (Intensive)

Registration by permission only.