

GDR - Spring 2015 Course Atlas

RLAR 737 – Topics in Asian Religions (Philosophy & Practice in Late Indian Buddhism)

Tuesday, 10:00am – 1:00pm

Dr. Sara McClintock & Dr. John Dunne

This course will examine developments in Buddhist philosophy and practice in India in the 9th, 10th, and 11th centuries.

RLAR 737 – Topics in Asian Religions (The New Iconoclasm)

Thursday, 1:00-4:00

Dr. Eric Reinders

What is destruction—a tragedy? Outrage? But also history, performance, a *creative* act. What is created by destruction? What can a focus on damage and destruction tell us about material objects and about our relation to such objects? Religions have always been concerned with their own materiality, especially the material objects called *sacred*.

The topic of iconoclasm has traditionally been taken to refer to debates and events in Byzantine and Reformation Christendom, with a canonical basis in the Hebrew Bible. However, Biblical studies, Religious Studies, Art History, Theology, and the curatorial world, each deal with iconoclasm differently. Iconoclasm now refers to a wide range of phenomena, gravitating around the core sense: hostile attacks on meaningful objects; but also: the ways that attacks on objects become meaningful.

Strictly speaking, an icon is a sanctified image of a god. It is often treated as the location of a presence of a god. Buddha icons too were regarded as alive. Art History has adopted the term *iconoclasm* without much reference to the theological debates, in order to speak of attacks on art. (See Dario Gamboni's seminal *The Destruction of Art*.) Other approaches have investigated the agency of objects, so that damage becomes a kind of negotiation. There is also the iconoclasm of the museum itself: when we take an object out of its native context, isolate it, label it in curatorial terms, the object itself is preserved, but the meaning is changed. What is destroyed by the preservation of objects?

Is “iconoclasm” even a useful term? Other terms and variations have been suggested: sign transformation, semioclasm, iconomachy, destruction studies.

We are rarely speaking of an absolute obliteration, and in those partial destructions we see a range of powerful sign transformations. The Berlin Wall fell, and many people took pieces of it away, to display with new value. The icons of people are turned up-side-down, words are inscribed on them, acid thrown, moustaches added. A record of the daily interventions by the public on art objects at the Tate Modern, for example, reveals the pervasive violation of the physical integrity of objects. Indeed, there is a whole culture of violation. There are traditions of iconoclasm. Destruction is not necessarily the opposite of culture but another mode of its practice.

A related set of questions pursues the interactions of material destruction and destruction of the living body. What is the relation of iconoclasm and murder?

We will look at a variety of historical cases, including Buddhist and Christian discourses on iconoclasm, the “Vandalism” of the French Revolution and the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the destruction of art in museums, damage as an artistic effect, Romantic images of ruins, the toppling of statues (Saddam Hussein, George III, the Bamiyan Buddhas), and the exhumation of corpses. Much of the contemporary discourse on iconoclasm is outside of Religious Studies—this seminar is part of an effort to connect these new discourses on iconoclasm with the study of religion, including some of their traditional sources (Bible, Christian theology, Reformation history).

Since the subject matter is inherently inter-disciplinary, students in any field are welcome to bring their interests to bear on the topic.

Readings, in order, subject to change:

Qiao Dianyun, "The Blank Stele," in Joseph S. M. Lau & Howard Goldblatt, *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia UP, 1995), 285-295.

Leslie Brubaker, Richard Clay & Stacy Boldrick, eds., *Striking Images: Iconoclasm Past and Present*. Ashgate, 2013.

David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, 1989. (selections)

Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*. Yale University, 1997. (selections)

Bernard Faure, "The Buddhist Icon and the Modern Gaze," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Spring 1998), 768-813.

RLE 732 – History of Christian Theological Ethics

Wednesday, 2:30-5:30

Dr. Timothy Jackson

This course provides a critical look at a broad range of Christian moral theologies and theologians, from early in the fifth century to roughly the middle of the twentieth. It is meant to be a companion course to RLE 730, "Contemporary Theological Ethics," which looks exclusively at twentieth and twenty-first century figures. We begin with St. Augustine and read selectively from Thomas Aquinas, Julian of Norwich, Martin Luther, Jacob Arminius, Soren Kierkegaard, and Etty Hillesum. Additional diversity of perspective will be provided, in part, by secondary essays – feminist, pragmatist, liberationist, deconstructionist, or etc. – on these figures reported on by students. Some of the enduring questions that concern us are:

- How are we to understand human nature and its virtues and vices?
- What is the nature of sin and the place of Jesus Christ in overcoming it?
- What specifically is the relation between Christ-like love, personal prudence, and social justice?
- What is the relation between God's providence and human freedom?
- Is the Kingdom of God, a.k.a. "eternal life," open in principle to everyone or only to the elect few?
- Does the Kingdom, esp. love and sacrifice, look different for women and men? No claim is made to be comprehensive; the object is to hit a few influential high points in a very rich tradition, noting continuity and change, as well as insight and error, as we go along. The format is seminar, but I will lead off each new Part with an orienting lecture.

REQUIRED BOOKS, AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

- (1) *Treatise on the Virtues*, by Thomas Aquinas
- (2) *Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. by Anton Pegis
- (3) *The Works of James Arminius, Volume 2*, ed. by James Nichols
- (4) *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 1st Series, Volume V ("Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings")*, ed. by Philip Schaff
- (5) *Etty Hillesum: An Interrupted Life and Letters from Westerbork*, ed. by Eva Hoffman
- (6) *Revelations of Divine Love*, by Julian of Norwich
- (7) *The Concept of Anxiety*, by Soren Kierkegaard
- (8) *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*, ed. by John Dillenberger

**RLHT 735 – Topics: American Religious History
(American Religious Cultures: Global Histories)**

Thursday, 10:00 – 1:00

Dr. Gary Laderman

This history of religion in America has been and continues to be embedded in global networks of peoples and ideas crossing national boundaries, of experiences and aspirations creating transnational orientations, and of rituals and mythologies transcending local communities. This vision of religious activity and commitments embedded in worldwide patterns of social migration and cultural calibration is an important corrective to the conventional view of American religious history. In other words, religion in America is not simply a domestic matter, unfolding seamlessly through time after the creation of a Constitution which singled out religious freedom as a basic human right and in isolation from religious histories unfolding around the rest of the world.

This seminar will break through the narrow and parochial understanding of religion in contemporary society by exploring an alternative perspective. Instead of remaining blinded by national sentiments tied to notions of exceptionalism and chosenness, this seminar will illuminate the more ordinary international realities throughout history shaping religious life and diversity in the United States; and instead of simply segregating religion into discrete units (for example, Jews, Christian, Muslims, and so on) and charting their historical trajectories in America, students will be asked to consider a more complex picture of the historical and cultural forces that often blur the lines between religions, and create new religious amalgamations which can only be understood in a global context.

**RLHT 735 – Topics: American Religious History
(Placing American Religions: Geographies, Materials, Powers, and Memories)**

Tuesday, 1:00-4:00

Dr. Bobbi Patterson

What changes or shifts when histories and cultures of American and Trans-American Religions are examined through the lenses of place and space? From foundational to current theories and methods, this course will explore a range of approaches including: human and regional geography, socially and politically produced space, and topophilia, affective bonds, meaning making between people and place. Particular attention will be drawn to questions of materiality in places and feminist approaches to space and place. Putting these approaches in dialogue with historical and contemporary examples of American and Trans-American religious cultures, we will consider place as content of the human condition an evolving way of being in the world, and/or commoditized, material destination. We will consider how and why memory and imagination construct religious practices of place from home-making, to nation-crafting, to sacred searching. Studying forms of resistance to place-making that attempt to modify or deconstruct sacred meaning and power, our analysis will include dynamics of urban/suburban, race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation – ethical consequences and critiques of place and globalism

**RLL 702 – Ugaritic
(Ugaritic and Selected Topics in “Canaanite” Religion)**

Thursday, 9:30-12:30

Dr. Brent Strawn

The course introduces the language, literature, and culture of ancient Ugarit, giving special attention throughout the semester to the ways that Ugaritology affects the study of the Hebrew Bible.

RLNT 745 – Greco-Roman Background

Tuesday, 1:00-4:00

Dr. Susan Hulen

This course surveys the social, philosophical, and religious character of the Greco-Roman world in the first and second centuries. It is meant to familiarize students with the environment in which early Christianity emerged and within which the language of the NT may be interpreted. Although the subject of the course is the Greco-Roman world itself, the categories and questions studied are formulated with an eye to what is useful or important for the interpretation of the NT.

RLNT 770 – History of Interpretation I

Wednesday, 9:00-12:00

Dr. Luke Johnson

The seminar covers the entire spectrum of interpretation of the New Testament from the stage of composition and canonization to the Reformation, including a small taste of Luther and Calvin. Work focuses on primary sources. Certain important theoretical statements concerning interpretation will be included (*On First Things/ On Christian Doctrine*), but particular attention is devoted to specific examples of interpretation. Participants make presentations at every session and write a final research project.

RLR 700 – Topics in Religion

(Genesis in Paul, Luke-Acts, and John)

Thursday, 1:30-4:30

Dr. Vernon Robbins

The opening chapters and the chapters on Abraham in the biblical book of Genesis have played a substantive role in much Jewish and Christian literature. This seminar will analyze and explore their relation especially to Job 38, Proverbs 8, 1 Enoch 1-16, Jubilees, Wisdom of Solomon, and Philo of Alexandria as antecedents to first century Christian literature. Focusing especially on the LXX text in the antecedent literature (except 1 Enoch and Jubilees), we will investigate specific relationships of various chapters and verses to portions of 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, and Colossians in the Pauline literature, portions of Luke-Acts, and portions of the Gospel of John. Underlying the approach will be an awareness that Genesis 1-3 plays a special role in wisdom literature and discourse, Genesis 6 and the Abraham story a special role in apocalyptic literature and discourse, and Genesis 1-2 in precreation literature and discourse.

Students will write and post online weekly exercises of analysis and interpretation, distributing the load to make it workable for everyone. The goal by the end of the semester will be for each student to complete a research paper of 25-30 pages that contains substantive exegetical analysis and interpretation.

Books (either required or recommended, but also on reserve):

-Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*

-George A. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* (2 volumes)

-Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job*

-Various commentaries on Genesis, Job, Proverbs, Jubilees, Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, Pauline writings, Luke-Acts, and John

RLR 700 – Topics in Religion

(Introduction to the Study of Religious Practices)

Friday, 9:00-12:00

Dr. L. Edward Phillips

In recent decades talk of “practice” has swirled through multiple academic discourses: anthropology, sociology, philosophy, literature, history, and every discipline and field associated with studies in religion and theology. Emphasis on practice has brought new attention to the quotidian, the performed, and the material. It has illuminated embodied forms of knowing and reinvigorated language of virtue. It has helped subjugated discourses to find voices, and it has stressed the importance of culture and community. It has reoriented the field of practical theology and helped scholars, students, religious leaders and lay people rediscover faith as a way of life. Talk of practice has also produced much confusion. “Practice” has become a word to conjure with, and so a word that different people use in very different ways – often without awareness of the differences or the choices implicit in their own use. In this seminar we will parse some of the most important forms of talk about practice that currently circulate in the fields associated with theological and religious studies. We will trace their roots in sociology, anthropology, and moral philosophy. Tracing these genealogies will involve close reading. Reading will be a key part of individual preparation for each week. And reading together will be at the center of seminar meetings. Close reading is a necessary means to the goals of the seminar. But it is not only an instrumental good. Growing in the practice of close reading is one of the main outcomes of the course. The course is designed to cultivate skills for close reading that can serve other research projects. More than this, the seminar takes the practice of close reading to be a good in itself, a practice that is a constitutive part of a good academic life. The seminar will read texts together to construct genealogies of theories of practice. It will then provide opportunities to develop theories of practice in two different directions: in the study of the lived religion of some community, past or present, and in relation to important literature in each member’s field of study. Developing theories of practice in these directions involves more than simply applying them. It involves creating generative, reciprocal, and critical relationships in which the theories gain depth and rigor even as they illumine academic fields and concrete situations.

Note: This course is required for all Concentrators in Religious Practices and Practical Theology.

RLR 700 – Topics in Religion

(Levinas, Heidegger, and the Sacred)

Wednesday, 12:00-3:00

Dr. Jill Robbins

RLR 700 – Topics in Religion

(People's of the Book: Ethnography and Scripture in Judaism, Christianity and Islam)

Wednesday, 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm

Dr. Don Seeman

This new seminar explores the meaning of text and Scripture in ethnographic context for all three of the Abrahamic religions. We will read critical ethnographies exploring both the cultural grounds of textual practice and the ways in which textual practice helps to constitute the sacred. Special attention to recent works in the anthropology of ethics in Islam and anthropology of reading in Christianity. This course will

also include participation in a special conference on "Jews, Text and Ethnography" held this spring at Emory. We will consider theoretical and methodological issues in the ethnographic study of textual societies as an emerging field. Students from all disciplines and research interests are welcome.

RLR 700 – Topics in Religion

(Ritual Studies)

Wednesday, 4:00-7:00

Dr. Marko Geslani

RLR 700 – Topics in Religion

(Sources of the Self)

Thursday, 1:00-4:00

Dr. Vincent Cornell

This course is a comparative study of how the questions of self and selfhood have been approached by different philosophical and religious traditions. The course will examine notions of self and selfhood in 6 intellectual and religious traditions: (1) the self in the Greek philosophical schools of Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Neo-Platonism; (2) the self in the Islamic traditions of Sufism, Islamic Philosophy, and Kalam Theology; (3) the soul-self (atman) in Advaita (Non-Duality) Vedanta Hinduism; (4) the non-self (anatman) in Buddhism; (5) the self in Plains and Mexica Native American traditions; (6) modern Western notions of the self in the works of the philosophers Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger, and Charles Taylor.

RLR 700 – Topics in Religion

(Sufism Belief and Practice)

Monday, 2:00-5:00

Dr. Scott Kugle

This graduate seminar is an inter-disciplinary exploration of Sufism or Islamic Mysticism. The goal of the seminar is to give students in-depth experience interpreting Sufi phenomena from mystical theories to theological controversies to ritual practices. Theoretically, the seminar will be grounded in an "Islamic Civilization" approach that sees mysticism as an important component of Islamic religious discourse and Muslim society. The seminar will use disciplinary approaches from social history, literary analysis, religious studies, gender studies and ethnomusicology. The seminar draws upon recent scholarly analysis and readings of primary source texts in translation (from Persian primarily). Students will be given an opportunity to do primary data analysis with either an original language text or an interview related to Sufism. Students will gain familiarity with basic Sufi doctrines and beliefs, and will get experience in Sufi styles of interpretation and symbolism. Students will be exposed to various genres of literature important to Sufism: doctrinal works, spiritual letters, saintly biographies, poetic lyrics, and ritual manuals.

RLTS 710 – Theological Problems

(Phenomenology of the Body)

Tuesday, 9:00-12:00

Dr. Andrea White

The course takes on the problem of the body in philosophical and theological discourse with special attention given to the erotic, materiality, phenomenology of the flesh, power and representation. The course will study works by a range of thinkers, from Michel Henry, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Luc Marion to Catherine Keller, Audre Lorde, Anthony Pinn, and Nicholas Mirzoeff, among others.