

Graduate Division of Religion

Fall 2017 Course Atlas

(Please check back for changes and updates - last update 8.7.2017)

RLHT 735 – Healing Politics in Global American Religious Cultures

Wednesday, 1:00-4:00

Gary Laderman

Today health care is a flash point of political contention and ideological struggle of the highest order. The very concept "health care" is enmeshed in a matrix of competing, volatile social interests and currents tied to insurance companies, economics and class division, partisanship, race and prejudice, calls for equality and justice, medical technologies and advancements, professionalization and cultures of expertise, and religious attitudes and sensibilities, to name a few. How did the pursuit of good health become so political? When did healing become such a highly charged, contentious expectation?

This graduate seminar seeks to explore the historical and multicultural dimensions of these questions through the prism of religious studies and cultural history, primarily. Through a series of case studies, and broader, more theoretical discussions about the possible meanings of "health," "healing," and "religion," we will raise questions about and tease out the potential political and religious dynamics that surround caring for bodies. Some texts and the research interests of students will guide the seminar through the semester, and our general area of study will be North America, though with special attention to the global elements and intersections of these intellectual concerns and questions in this vast territorial space. We will be concerned with the well-trodden history of western medicine, but spend much of our time on what is referred to as "alternative" health and healing contexts and practices.

Some possible readings include:

Pamela Klassen, *Spirits of Protestantism: Medicine, Healing and Liberal Christianity* (UC Press, 2011)

Holly Folk, *The Religion of Chiropractic: Populist Healing from the American Heartland* (UNC Press, 2017)

Sharla Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (UNC Press, 2002)

Hans Baer, *Biomedicine and Alternative Healing Systems in America* (U of Wisconsin Press, 2001)

Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997)

Claire Hoertz Badaracco, *Prescribing Faith: Medicine, Media, and Religion in American Culture* (Baylor U, 2007)

Barbra Mann Wall, *American Catholic Hospitals: A Century of Changing Markets and Missions* (Rutgers U Press, 2011)

RLNT 740 – Jewish Milieu of the New Testament

Tuesday 2:30-5:30

Carl Holladay

The seminar introduces NT graduate students to aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman world that are relevant to understanding the NT and Christian origins. Besides providing a broad historical framework for understanding Judaism from the time of Alexander the Great to Hadrian, it examines a broad range of topics, e.g., Jewish groups and movements, Jewish apocalyptic, Qumran, Septuagint, Hellenization and Judaism, Rabbinic traditions, Philo, and Josephus. The aim is to read representative primary texts and secondary literature relating to each topic with a view to identifying current issues of scholarly debate, especially as they relate to the NT.

RLNT 760 – New Testament Theology

Friday 9:00-12:00

Steve Kraftchick

This seminar will focus on the issues and problems that arise when the question of a New Testament Theology (NTT) and methods used for developing one is posed. New Testament theology in a non-technical sense occurs in numerous materials: commentaries, exegetical articles, and introductions to the New Testament, sermons, and other applications. In many, perhaps most of these cases the theology is implicit and the author may not even acknowledge its presence. That is to say, rather than receiving direct attention, the theology remains at the suppositional or convictional level. When however, the explicit goal of an essay or writing is to develop the specific theological claims and to suggest what the coherence of the New Testament entails, then the term NT Theology is used in its technical sense. It is this technical sense and the particular type of analytical approach, which explores the theological relationship between and among the literature of early Christianity. In this regard, NTT is both a historical and hermeneutical discipline. It is not simply a matter of determining what the NT materials say, but asking how such materials might be considered as expressions of theological claims. The seminar explores these questions, the major approaches to answering them, and the question of how NTT is related to other theological disciplines.

RLPC 710K – William James Seminar

Tuesday 2:30-5:30

John Snarey

William James (1842-1910), a giant in American intellectual history, is variously considered to be the founding father of American psychology, the foremost American philosopher, a pioneer in the psychological study of religion in America. This course embraces all three faces of James.

The seminar begins with a psychological biography; then seminar members will become familiar first-hand with James's psychology by studying selected chapters from his classic volume, *Psychology: The Briefer Course* (1892), as well as *Talks to Teachers on Psychology* (1899) and *The Will to Believe* (1897). Similar attention will be given to James's philosophical pragmatism by reading essays from his classic volume *Pragmatism* (1907), as well as *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) and *Radical Empiricism* (1912). Building on this biographical-psychological-philosophical foundation, the primary section of the seminar involves a close reading of James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), which is a classic in the psychological study of religion. Critiques of James will be discussed throughout the course, but we will conclude the semester with reviews of critical books that evaluate James's work.

RLR 700 - Ethnographic Methods and Writing
Thursday 1:00-4:00
Joyce Flueckiger and Jim Hoesterey

This seminar will introduce students to a range of ethnographic fieldwork methodologies and analyze modes of ethnographic writing (with the assumption that modes of writing are, in part, dependent on particular fieldwork methods and help to shape theoretical arguments). We will read one ethnography every other week. On the alternate week, we will participate in an ethnographic writing exercise and read 1-3 supporting articles.

Requirements: 1) one 5-page ethnographic observation or performance analysis (also based on ethnographic observation). 2) a final research project (20 pages) OR research fellowship proposal.

Book List:

Ann G. Gold. *Shiptown: Between Rural and Urban North India*. University of Pennsylvania Press, June 30, 2017. [e-book will be available through Woodruff Library]

James B. Hoesterey. *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru*. Stanford University Press, 2016.

Samuli Schielke. *Egypt in the Future Tense: Hope, Frustration, and Ambivalence before and after 2011*. Indiana University Press, 2015.

Joyce B. Flueckiger. *When the World Becomes Female: Guises of a South Indian Goddess*. Indiana University Press, 2013.

Nathaniel Roberts. *To be Cared For: The Power of Conversion and Foreignness of Belonging in an Indian Slum*. University of California Press, 2016.

Additional ethnography dependent on student interests.

RLR 700 – Methods in Hebrew Bible
Monday 3:00-6:00
William Gilders

Course Description: This seminar, primarily for students in the Hebrew Bible course-of-study (but open to other doctoral students in the Graduate Division of Religion), will focus on analysis of selected Hebrew Bible texts in order to establish familiarity with and competence in the use of diverse methods and perspectives (e.g., textual criticism, redaction criticism, literary criticism, social scientific perspectives) within the field of biblical studies. The work of the seminar will be guided by several basic questions: What is “method”? Is “method” different from “perspective”? What obligation or responsibility do scholars have to define or make explicit their methodological and other perspectives? Can we (or should we) evaluate the relative merits and value of various methods and perspectives? If so, how should such evaluation be conducted?

Particulars: The course is a seminar in which students will be expected to complete assigned readings prior to each session and to participate actively and productively in class discussions. Each student will write a research paper focused on comparative application of two clearly articulated methods or perspectives to a particular case-example in biblical studies. Half of the course grade will be based on preparation and participation (including discussion introduction and leadership); the other half will be based on the paper. All students in the seminar must be enrolled in the Graduate Division of Religion (or have permission of the instructor), and must have a solid reading knowledge of biblical Hebrew.

Texts: The following two items should be purchased for the course:

Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards (eds.), Method Matters

Brennan W. Breed, Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History

Other readings will be drawn from monographs, commentaries, and journal articles.

RLR 700 – Recent Virtue Ethics
Thursday 9:00-12:00
Pam Hall

What does ethics gain when it draws upon the language of the virtues? We will explore together significant work within the recent revival of “virtue ethics.” Thinkers in this revival have considered the nature of the virtues and their connections to human flourishing; how communities shape, or mis-shape, people in relation to the good; how the language of the virtues helps us to name important features of human emotional and ethical life.

In this seminar, we will read and discuss together a range of work from recent and contemporary reflection on the virtues bearing on these questions. This will include:

- Essays by Elizabeth Anscombe and Simone Weil, who were catalysts in the revival of virtue ethics.

- Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* and selections from her *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* .
- Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (in part) and *Dependent Rational Animals*
- Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge* (sections)
- Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*
- Essays by Simone Weil, Bernard Williams, Thomas Nagel, Lisa Tessman
- We will also use film to feed our explorations of moral psychology and of the virtues. Films may include *Weapons of the Spirit*, *Trouble the Water*, *Winter's Bone*, and *Of Gods and Men*.

Requirements include several short reflection papers, one 10-12 page paper, and one oral presentation.

Please, no audits.

RLR 700 / SOC 534 - Religion and Public Health

Tuesday 9:00-12:00

Ellen Idler

This course will provide masters and doctoral level students with an interdisciplinary survey of research and writing on the public health implications of religious practices, beliefs, and institutions. The course will emphasize evidence from quantitative social science and epidemiology and the role of religion in the historical development of public health institutions to identify religion's role as a social determinant of health.

Required text:

ISBN: 9780199362219 *Religion as a Social Determinant of Public Health*, Ellen Idler, Editor. 2014. (New York: Oxford University Press)

RLR 700 – Sufism Belief and Practice

Wednesday 10:00-1:00

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.

RLR 700 - Contemporary Christian Systematic Theology

Tuesday 2:30-5:30

Joy McDougall

One of the common misperceptions of the Anglican tradition is that it is theologically anemic. There are good warrants for such a claim not least of which is its historical compromise—the so-called *via media* between Catholic and Reformed beliefs that the Church of England struck early on—and its subsequent eschewal of becoming a confessional tradition. Of late the Anglican “big tent” approach inclusive of broad (liberal), evangelical and Anglo-Catholic viewpoints have been at the fraying point as questions of church order, Scriptural authority and sexual ethics, and post-colonial critiques have tested the viability of a global Anglican communion. Against this backdrop it is perhaps surprising that Anglican theologians are among the leading voices in Christian systematic theology today. And yet, major new proposals are streaming forth from the Reformed, Anglo-Catholic and liberal traditions across the global Anglican communion. Anglican theologians are engaging substantive theological questions such as the nature of God, the meaning of the Incarnation, feminist theologies of sin and grace, and significant social and political issues such as the global ecological crisis, finance capitalism, terrorism and interfaith dialogue to name just a few key issues.

This seminar offers in-depth study of three leading Anglican theologians: Kathryn Tanner, Rowan Williams and Kwok Pui Lan. Despite significant differences among their theological agendas, these theologians utilize a doctrinal compass to create a robust vision of Christian discipleship in the world. This seminar will pay careful attention to how these theologians’ views of God, Incarnation, and the sacraments provide the warrants for their socio-political vision for the church’s responsibilities in the world. Beyond the common readings, PhD students will be expected to develop their own independent research topic on an additional Anglican theologian/ethicist of their own choice.

Required Books:

Kwok Pui Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*

Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology*

Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace*

Samuel Wells, *What Anglicans Believe?*

Rowan Williams, *Resurrection, Interpreting the Easter Gospel* (must order independently)

RLR 700 / WGS 730R – Moral Agency under Constraint

Friday 9:30-12:30

Ellen Ott Marshall

This course takes as its starting point Katie Cannon’s observation that the dominant tradition of western philosophical ethics assumes a moral agent with freedom and a wide range of choices. Cannon turns to the literature of African American women to study female protagonists who

demonstrate moral agency under constraint. This seminar employs this womanist methodology of drawing on protagonists in contemporary novels and films in order to re-consider assumptions about moral agency. Readings include classical descriptions of central features of moral agency, feminist and womanist analysis of marginality and constraint, and novels and films that offer different models of moral agency for us to consider. The contemporary materials do not constitute a simplistic corrective to classical assumptions; rather the interaction among these resources provides an appropriately complex portrayal of the meaning, possibilities, and challenges of moral agency under constraint.

RLR 700 - Kierkegaard: The Pseudonymous Authorship

Wednesday, 9:00-12:00

David Pacini

This seminar will explore both the pseudonymous authorship and the "Up-building" discourses of Soren Kierkegaard, with aim of arriving at some idea of what Kierkegaard means by "Governance" and its significance for philosophical and theological interpretation

RLR 700 - Ethnography, Everyday Ethics and Moral Thought

Wednesday 12:00-3:00

Don Seeman

The question of ethics has long been central to ethnographic practice. Early anthropological works by Herskovitz, Boas and others developed the contested notion of cultural relativism as a corrective to Western moral arrogance or misunderstanding of various societies. But cultural relativism led to many problems of its own, including a failure to recognize the ways in which anthropologists and their subjects share a common moral world or face common moral dilemmas. Recently, the "Anthropology of Everyday Ethics" has generated a plethora of new ethnographic works by Michael Lambeck, James Laidlaw, Jarret Zigon, Veena Das and others devoted to the notion of "everyday ethics" grounded in social practice rather than consideration of abstract rules--often in conversation with Wittgenstein, Levinas or Aristotle.

Joel Robbins has recently critiqued some of these works for neglecting the "transcendent" domain associated with religious institutions and practices. The anthropology of religion, meanwhile, has been oriented for some time around questions of habituation and local moral experience that ought to be better integrated with the anthropology of ethics literature and moral thinking more broadly.

This new seminar is devoted to a critical reading of the anthropology of ethics genre, with special attention to the anthropology of religion. How can undeniable diversity of cultures be reconciled with the perception of transcendent ethical rules or natural law? Can a renewed engagement with moral philosophy enrich ethnography by alerting it to problems in everyday experience that may have been neglected in recent decades? And how can ethnography humanize fields like bioethics that have had difficulty accommodating the diversity of moral intuitions represented by different cultures and religious traditions?

Required Texts Include:

Webb Keane, *Ethical Life: Its Natural and Social Histories*

James Laidlaw, *The Subject of Virtue: An Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom*

Cheryl Mattingly, *Moral Laboratories: Family Peril and the Struggle for a Good Life*

Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*

Omri Elisha, *Moral Ambition*

Michael Lambeck, *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language and Action*

RLR 700 – Theology of Ancient Near Eastern Religions

Tuesday, 9:30-12:30

Brent Strawn

This reading course in ancient Near Eastern religions will focus on comparative theological analysis. We will begin with definition of key terms, esp. "theology," "comparison," and "comparative theology" before moving to studies of the theology of discrete regions/people groups with special attention to Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, Phoenicia, Ugarit, and the Transjordan. Ancient Israel will only be treated obliquely.

RLR 700 - Ezra-Nehemiah, with Aramaic Instruction

Wednesday, 10:00-1:00

Jacob Wright

This course is first and foremost an exegetical exploration of Ezra-Nehemiah, with a discussion of the relevant historical issues for the postexilic period. In addition, we will learn Aramaic along the way, reading Ezra-Nehemiah, Daniel, and parabiblical writings.

RLTS 740 - Theologies of Resistance: Martin Luther King, Jr. & Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Wednesday, 2:30-5:30

Noel Erskine

Theologians Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dietrich Bonhoeffer understood that there was an inseparable relationship between political engagement and theological reflection. Both theologians viewed, as central, Christ's sacrifice for humanity as well as the importance of action in the public square, inspired and motivated by love of God, and neighbor. King and Bonhoeffer place before us a central question: How may we live responsibly in the modern world? In their own lives they conjoined faith and praxis as a model for Christian discipleship.

We will begin with the biographical and historical context of their lives, giving particular attention to the political and ecclesial contexts in which they worked – the formation of their theologies, and what they teach us concerning the ethics of responsible action in a world come of age. The class will investigate whether or not there is an epistemological shift in the Christologies of King and Bonhoeffer in the latter portion of their lives. It is important to examine the claim made by Reggie Williams that Bonhoeffer met a Black Jesus in Harlem during his study at Union Theological Seminary and worship at Abyssinia Baptist Church. We will also probe Reinhold Niebuhr's influence on King's theology.

What then may we learn from these theologians concerning their confrontation with Nazism and racism in Germany and the United States of America?

Goals of the Course

- (a) Students are expected to attain advanced knowledge of biographical and theological tenets of King's and Bonhoeffer's lives. Members of the class are encouraged to probe the relationship of biography, theology and the intersection of theological and political discourse.
- (b) Advanced skills in critical and analytical thinking, responsible interpretation of texts, and effective communication.
- (c) Become more aware of the intercultural and religiously diverse world and to note the relation between theological reflection and the socio-political location of theologians

Requirements

- (a) Each student will give an oral presentation that supplements readings under discussion. Presentation should be about thirty minutes followed by Q & A.
- (b) Write a critical review essay of Reggie L. Williams' *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus* and Martin Luther King's, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* This should be a comparative exposition and analysis of texts and should be about 15 pages.
- (c) A final project that investigates an epistemological shift in the Christologies of King and Bonhoeffer toward the end of their lives. Students should draw from both primary and secondary sources as they tease out King's and Bonhoeffer's engagement of political thought and theological discourse. This essay should be about 20 pages.

Required Texts

Martin Luther King, Jr. *Stride Toward Freedom*
Martin Luther King, Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*
A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr. editor, James M. Washington.
Noel Leo Erskine, *King Among the Theologians*
Richard Lisher, *The Preacher King*
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters & Papers from Prison*
J. Deotis Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King*
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, A Testament to Freedom. Editors, Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson
Reggie L. Williams, *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance.*
Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*

RLTS 753G – Phenomenology of Black Religion
Thursday 9:00-12:00
Thee Smith

This graduate seminar introduces phenomenology of religion as a discipline, relates it to theology and other fields of religious studies, and applies it to salient features of black North American religion and culture, specifically:

- (1) ritual-transformative dynamics, such as ecstatic worship and spirit possession; conjuration or folk magical and healing practices;
- (2) ritual-aesthetic dynamics, in music, speech, literature and drama; and
- (3) ritual-political dynamics, for example social change and freedom movements based on biblical figures like Exodus and Diaspora, the ritual leadership of black women, Afro-Islam vs. Afro-Christianity, etc.

A phenomenologist describes religion in terms of its distinctive manifestations, performances, and forms of expression, as found in such phenomena as rituals and myths, prayers and liturgies, narratives and prophecies, symbols and beliefs, leadership roles, traditional practices and other characteristic features of religious life.

While Afro-Christian experience in the United States predominates among our sources, we will also treat phenomena common to the folk religions of black peoples throughout the Americas and therefore encompass data characteristic of extra-Christian traditions as well. In addition the course will not neglect explanatory, interpretive (hermeneutic), or theological approaches, for which phenomenological description is preparatory to such tasks.

The course divides naturally into the following topic areas extending from the three areas outlined above: (1) history and phenomenology of religions, with a focus on ritual transformations; (2) ritual-political dynamics; (3) ritual-aesthetic dynamics; and (4) theology and cultural criticism. An additional component of the course involves an ethnographic report or media presentation based on students' fieldwork or related research projects