

Graduate Division of Religion

Fall 2018 Course Atlas

(Please check back for changes and updates - last update 8.22.2018)

REL 472 - Islamic Extremism: Causes and Consequences

Vincent Cornell

Tuesday/Thursday, 10:00-11:15

This course will explore premodern and modern forms of Islamic extremism from the perspective of righteous violence theory. After studying social psychological and scriptural factors that promote righteous violence, students will examine Islamic extremism among the following groups: Kharijites, the Order of the Assassins, Wahhabism, Hizbollah, the Taliban, Diaspora Salifism, Al Qaeda, and ISIS.

RLE 700 - Engaging Moral Lifeworlds: A Cross-Disciplinary Exploration

Elizabeth Bounds

Tuesday, 2:30-5:30

Engaging Moral Lifeworlds: A Cross-Disciplinary Exploration DESCRIPTION: This course engages recent scholarship across several disciplines exploring ordinary human meaning-making or moral work, asking a set of crosscutting questions: What are the assumptions about the nature of morality, religion, subjectivity, and agency? What are the genealogies shaping the approach? What conceptual framework is used to engaged “lived-ness”—e.g., experience, story, practice, performance, etc. What are the relations of power and accountability at work, both acknowledged and unacknowledged (including the relations among scholar, audience, and subject)? What is the method of study? What is the rhetoric of representation enacted by the written scholarly text?

ASSIGNMENTS: seminar leadership/short paper, “self-location” reflection (at start and end of course) and project (mock exam, paper or portfolio)

POSSIBLE TEXTS Nancy Ammerman, Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life Dale Andrews, Practical Theology and the Black Church Molly Andrews, Narrative Imagination and Everyday Life Jo-Ann Archibald, Indigenous Story Work Arthur Frank, Letting Stories Breathe Marla Frederick, Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith Webb Keane, Ethical Life: Its Natural and Social Histories James Faubion, Anthropology of Ethics Arthur Kleinman, What Really Matters Charles Marsh, Lived Theology Cheryl Mattingly, Moral Laboratories: Family Peril and the Struggle for a Good Life Meredith McGuire, Lived Religion Bob Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth

Chris Scharen and Aana Vigen, *Ethnography and Christian Theology and Ethics*
John Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field*

RLHB 792 -Body, Self, Individual, and Person in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism

Carol Newsom

Friday, 9:00-12:00

Anthropologists often distinguish between the “person” as a social or legal status, the “individual” as a social agent, and the “self” as the locus and author of experiential states. In Israelite thought, as in early Greek sources, the various parts and organs of the body are a privileged means of articulating aspects of these categories. Only a limited amount of work has been carried out on Israelite and early Jewish sources, however, to identify whether and how these categories may help to map the anthropology of ancient Israel. Moreover, each of these categories is a social construct that changes over time. In this seminar we will attempt to explore a variety of issues about person, individual, and self, paying particular attention to changing models of the self, especially as they involve how the body is regarded and represented. An intermediate to advanced knowledge of Hebrew is required, as well as a reading knowledge of German.

Authors whose work will be read include Marcel Mauss, Charles Taylor, A. A. Long, Hans Walter Wolff, Bernd Janowski, Christian Frevel, Jan Dietrich, Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, Robert Di Vito, and others.

RLNT 745 - Greco-Roman Context of the New Testament

Thursday, 12:30-3:30

Susan Hulen

This course surveys the social, philosophical, and religious character of the Greco-Roman world in the first and second centuries. It familiarizes 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. Ability to read ancient Greek is required.

RLPC 710K – William James Seminar

John R Snarey

Thursday, 2:30-5:30

William James (1842-1910), a giant in American intellectual history, is the founding father of American psychology, the foremost American philosopher, and 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 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). We will give similar attention to James's philosophical pragmatism by reading essays from his classic volume "Pragmatism" (1907), as well as from "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), a classic in the psychological study of religion. Critiques of James will be discussed throughout the course, but we will conclude the semester by reviewing one of the latest books that evaluates James's work.

RLR 700 - Gaming with the Gods: Digital Approaches to the Study of Religion

Sandra Blakely

Tuesday, 3:00-6:00

Digital tools for the exploration of human behavior offer insights into group formation, individual agency, human landscapes and geospatial expansion; applied to historical contexts, they raise the potential to integrate the modeling of available data with simulations in real time. In this seminar we will explore the contemporary landscape and the heuristic potential of digital pathways in the investigation of religion, from gaming applications to network analysis and geographic information systems. Participants do not need prior experience in programming or digital systems; our weekly meetings will explore the state of the disciplines, case studies, and the history of spatial and network analysis of human systems, and the use of 'serious games' to respond to real-world crises. Each participant's semester project will consist of the identification of digital pathways appropriate for a specific question in the history of religions, and the initiation of training and development to enable its continuing development.

RLR 700 - Hindu Buddhist and Jain Tantra

Ellen Gough

Monday, 11:30 – 2:30

This course introduces texts – both primary and secondary – important to the study of Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu Tantra. The course will look at the history of the English terms "tantric" and "Tantra," assessing their usefulness as analytic categories of analysis. It will also look carefully at the history and present-day uses of two key components of Tantra: mantras and maṇḍalas.

Selected Readings: Primary:

Dominic Goodall, ed., *Niśvāsataṭṭvasaṃhitā: The Earliest Surviving Śaiva Tantra*

Stephen Hodge, trans., *Mahā-vairocana-abhisambodhi tantra*

Olle Qvarnström, trans., *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*

Secondary:

-David Gordon White, *Tantra in Practice*

- Dominic Goodall and Harunaaga Issacson, “Tantric Traditions,” and “On the Shared ‘Ritual Syntax’ of Early Tantric Systems”
- Ronald Davison, Indian Esoteric Buddhism
- Robert Sharf, “On Esoteric Buddhism in China”
- Ryuchi Abe, The Weaving of Mantra: Kukai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhism
- Jacob Dalton, “A Crisis of Doxography: How Tibetans Organized Tantra During the 8th-12th Centuries” ---Alexis Sanderson, “The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period” and “The Śaiva Literature”
- Douglas Renfrew Brooks, Auspicious Wisdom: The Texts and Traditions of Śrīvidyā Śākta Tantrism in South India
- Goudriaan Bühnemann, Maṇḍalas and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions
- André Padoux, Tantric Mantras

RLR 700 – Ethics and Narrative

Pamela M Hall

Thursday, 9:00-12:00

This seminar will ask how narrative helps us to imagine and to represent human experience, human vulnerabilities, and human connection to value. How does narrative work help to expand our sense of what it means to be a self? How too can it fail or fall short in the face of certain experiences and certain challenges to selfhood? We will read both philosophical and theological reflections on narrative in asking these questions, but we will not stop with theory. The seminar will also consider together a range of different sorts of narrative, across genres, in order to explore the challenges and dimensions of narrative work. We will read fiction, memoir, poetry, and film in thinking about stories and human lives. We will consider as well ethnographic work and narrative medicine as drawing on the resources of narrative and as amplifying its efficacies.

A tentative and partial list of texts includes: Essays by Stephen Crites, Alasdair MacIntyre, Susan Sontag, Rita Charon, Cheryl Mattingly Richard Kearney, On Stories Carol Shields, Unless Toni Morrison, Beloved Janisse Ray, Ecology of a Cracker Childhood Natasha Trethewey, Native Guard

Films TBD

RLR 700 – Ethnography of Religious Experience

Don Seeman

Wednesday, 11:00-2:00

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 - Themes and Approaches in Latin American History: Memory, Power, and the Archive in Latin American History

Javier Villa-Flores

Wednesday, 1:00-4:00

This iteration of Themes and Approaches in Latin American History will take as a point of departure Ann Stoler's characterization of archives as epistemological experiments rather than as repositories of sources in order to examine the role played by archival practices in the articulation and negotiation of state-imposed identities and individual and collective strategies of identity formation in Latin America. We will examine the relationship between regimes of classification, memory, and power from the early modern imperialist expansion to the postcolonial condition. Among the themes to be explored are: the relationship between states and archives, governmentality and state intelligence, legal administration and the rule system of law, the access to archives and the democratization of the past, and finally, the role of archives in contemporary utopias and dystopias.

NOTE: Although this course will focus on Latin America, students may choose to work on other regions for their final projects.

RLR 700 – The Gospel of Matthew

Walter Wilson

Friday, 2:30-5:30

An exegetically-guided investigation of the First Gospel with particular attention to [1] the narrative's literary forms, sources, and composition, [2] the evangelist's distinctive presentation of Jesus, [3] comparison with various modalities of ancient religious and moral discourse, [4] the socio-ethical dynamics of Matthew's community, including its relationship with formative Judaism.