

Graduate Division of Religion

Spring 2023 Course Atlas

(Please check back for changes and updates - last update 11.16.2022)

RLNT 745 - Social History of the New Testament

Friday, 1:00-4:00

Susan Hulen

This course surveys the social history of the world that shaped the New Testament. It familiarizes students with the social, philosophical, and religious 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.

RLR 700 - Early Christian Narratives: The Holy Spirit in Early Christianity

Thursday, 1:00-4:00

Anthony Briggman

As late as the first quarter of the 5th century Christians affirmed accounts of the Holy Spirit which maintained that the Spirit's divinity was not equal to that of the Father and the Son. According to one standard narrative, this state of affairs came to pass because the development of Christological and Trinitarian accounts took precedence. This course will advance an alternative narrative: the development of early Christian pneumatology from ca. 130-430 may be best understood by considering its appropriation and repudiation of Jewish traditions and forms of thought.

This narrative locates early Christian pneumatologies in the context of Jewish traditions regarding the spirit. We will, therefore, begin by considering those Jewish pneumatologies, which identify or associate the spirit with angels, the figure of Wisdom, female consorts, and the activities of creation, inspiration, and prophecy. We will then proceed to New Testament accounts of the Spirit, and finally the pneumatologies of early Christian writers. Readings will come from a broad spectrum of sources, including: the Hebrew scriptures, Jewish intertestamental literature, the Targums, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Plutarch, Josephus, the New Testament writings, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, Marius Victorinus, the Cappadocians, and Augustine.

RLR 700/CPLT 751R - Reading Religious Texts Comparatively

Wednesday, 1:00-4:00

María Carrión

****This course satisfies one of the Theories and Methods requirements***

This seminar explores theoretical and practical methods to read religious texts comparatively. The course weaves analyses of narrative and performative elements, units, structure, forms, and formats of

meaning and reference in religious texts with readings in comparative theology, intercultural and transnational studies, textuality, and narrative and performance theories. Readings, class discussion, and exercises in comparative readings are designed for students to become more cognizant of the units, structures, and superstructures that support the design, creation, publication, dissemination, and canonization of religious texts, as well as their relationality with texts from various religious traditions.

Class discussions and comparative reading exercises will be informed by readings by Francis Clooney, Walter Benjamin, Georges Bataille, Jean-Luc Nancy, José Muñoz, Paulo Freire, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, Franz Fanon, Édouard Glissant, Mayra Rivera Rivera, and Calvin Warren, among others.

Attendance and participation: 30%. Blogposts: 20%. Discussion lead/class presentations: 10%. Final research project: 40%

RLR 700 - Ethics and Narrative

Thursday, 9:00-12:00

Pam Hall

This seminar will pursue 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 human? How too can it fail or fall short in expressing certain experiences, certain challenges to selfhood and to human community? How might it be essential to survival? It may be no accident that narrative art has been deployed to imagine, and to understand more fully, central human experiences—and perhaps to develop the capacities we need to live most fully.

We will read both philosophical and literary reflections on narrative form in asking these questions, but we will not stop with these genres. The seminar will also consider together a range of different sorts of actual narrative, across genres, in order to explore the challenges and dimensions of narrative work. We will consider works of fiction, memoir, ethnography, history, and film in thinking about stories and lives. We will consider how each genre deploys the resources of narrative and how each may amplify its efficacies.

We will use some of the insights of recent ethics for ways to connect narrative to ethical life; some of these insights will draw from reflections on the virtues, and on the contributions of the humanities to ethical formation. We will discuss the concepts of moral imagination, vulnerability, tragedy, and flourishing in relation to narrative. We will also consider the nature of narrative memory, narrative identity, and narrative repair.

We will engage with alternative ways of approaching narrative and the work of ethics in the work of Judith Butler among others.

One primary goal of the seminar will be to build a “toolkit” of analytical and interpretive skills for approaching narrative in a range of contexts and disciplines.

Texts:

- Selected essays on the uses of narrative by: Toni Morrison, Susan Sontag, Martha Nussbaum, Iris

Murdoch, Zadie Smith, Alasdair MacIntyre, Saidiya Hartman, Susan Brison, Margaret Urban Walker, and Paul Ricoeur. These will be made available on electronic reserve via our class Canvas site.

- Judith Butler, *Giving An Account of Oneself*
- Cheryl Mattingly, *Healing Dramas and Clinical Plots: The Narrative Structure of Experience*
- Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. Novel.
- Natasha Trethewey, *Memorial Drive*. Memoir.
- Films: *Wit* (2010)
Trouble the Water (2008)
Manchester By the Sea (2016)

(Please note that this is a tentative list of texts.)

RLR 700/ICIVS 714 - Sufism in South Asia

Thursday, 10:00-1:00

Scott Kugle

This seminar is on Sufism in the Mughal Context. It is an inter-disciplinary exploration of Sufism (Islamic Mysticism) in South Asia, focusing on its diverse manifestations in the Mughal period (1526-1857). It teaches students how to interpret Sufi phenomena, including mystical theories, theological concepts, ritual practices, political involvements and dialogue with Hindu, Jain and Christian others. The seminar ends with a study of the present ethnographic as a Sufi community confronts colonial and post-colonial realities.

In addition to the Mughal heartland of North India (including Delhi, Agra, and Ajmer), the seminar will highlight regional case studies from the Western regions of South Asia, including Gujarat and Maharashtra (now in India), Sindh and Punjab (now in Pakistan, partly in the case of Punjab).

The seminar will use disciplinary approaches from social history, religious studies, literary studies, and ethnography. The seminar draws upon scholarly analysis of primary source texts in translation (from Persian and Arabic). Students learn about textual genres important to Sufism: doctrinal works, saintly biographies, poetic lyrics, and oral parables.

RLR 700 - Postcolonial Trajectories in Practical Theology

Tuesday, 2:00-5:00

Emmanuel Lartey

****This course satisfies one of the Theories and Methods requirements***

The course is designed to enable participants explore postcolonial developments in the disciplines of Practical Theology with a particular focus on issues of methodology. By means of an examination of a variety of approaches, texts and practices the course seeks to assist students develop their own practical theological method. Attention will be paid to the following:

- (a) Models of Practical Theology, including discussions of the changing historical identity of the discipline with an emphasis on postcolonial developments
- (b) The Interdisciplinary nature of Practical Theology including its historic relationships with the human

sciences and postcolonial understandings of the human condition.

(c) The interactions between theology and practice, faith and action, praxis as theory and practice in reflective dialog

(d) Practical theological methodology and the logic of theological construction; methods of theological reflection upon pastoral practice and human circumstances employed in a variety of cultural settings

(e) Inter-religious interaction as practical theological engagement.

RLR 700 - Critical Theory in Religion

Wednesday, 9:00-12:00

Ted Smith

This seminar will read texts in critical theory with an eye to questions of religion. It will consider not only authors' explicit theoretical accounts of religion, but also the use authors make of religious texts and concepts. It will also consider the potential of texts in critical theory for work in religious studies, theology, religious ethics, and the scholarly study of sacred texts. The seminar will begin with sustained close readings of key texts by Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. It will spiral out from that center, considering a range of texts in conversation with these starting points. Particular attention will be given to three clusters of questions: one on language and texts, another on the philosophy or theology of history, and another on political theology. The course is specifically designed to facilitate conversation across multiple disciplines. The latter part of the course will give participants time to draft, present, and revise article-length papers in their home disciplines.

Sample texts

This list is meant to be suggestive of some directions of the seminar, not a precise list of actual texts on the syllabus. Texts are listed in English translations. Students are encouraged to make use of other languages with which they have facility.

Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*

Amy Allen, *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*

Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*

Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*

Keri Day, *Azusa Reimagined: A Radical Vision of Religious and Democratic Belonging*

Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique*

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?"

Vincent Lloyd, *Black Dignity: The Struggle Against Domination*

Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*

Eduardo Mendieta, *The Frankfurt School on Religion*

Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*

Joseph R. Winters, *Hope Draped in Black*

RLR 700 - Literature and Culture in South Asia

Tuesday, 2:00-5:00

Shiv Subramaniam

If literature is more than a pastime—if it constitutes a serious object of scholarly inquiry—this is largely because it is supposed to have a special relationship with culture. But what is the nature of this relationship? How and when does literature instruct, express, or shape a culture? In this course, we will raise these questions specifically in relation to the literatures and cultures of South Asia (though students working on other arts and regions will be encouraged to share their expertise and pursue their particular interests in their final papers). We will survey a number of conceptions of literature, asking how they came about, what they presuppose about the relationship between culture and the art of writing, and how they have influenced scholarship on South Asia. The conceptions we will explore include classical Tamil and Sanskrit understandings of poetry; ideas of popular literature which feature in scholarly accounts of *bhakti* (religious devotion); the influential conceptions of literature developed by German idealists and romantics (some of which came to underwrite British colonialism); and ideas which shaped South Asian literary production in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

RLR 700 - Religions in the Modern World

Monday, 10:00-1:00

Wei Wu

This course introduces the topics and critiques about religions and their transformation in the modern time. The course will examine the patterns of interactions between the religious traditions and intellectual dynamics in the modern period. Our themes will include: Enlightenment critiques of religion, religion and modernity, religion and secularism, religion and gender, religion and healing, etc. We will also discuss the religious life in contemporary society under the impact of modernization and globalization.

In the first part of the course, students will not only get familiar with the contemporary approaches and methodologies in the field of religion, but also develop interpretative and critical skills. They will increase awareness of the different perspectives in understanding the role of religions in the modern society. In the last part of the course, using Buddhism as an example, the students will also discuss the important aspects of religious life and the interplay of religion and culture in Europe, America, and Asia.

Students are welcome to contact the instructor (wei.wu@emory.edu) for the syllabus.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (in the order of weekly reading)

Richard King. *Religion, Theory, Critique: Classic and Contemporary Approaches and Methodologies* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2017). [Library Ebook]

Wilfred Cantwell Smith. *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 1996). [Ebook]

Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels. Edited by Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx Engels Reader* (W. W. Norton & Company; 2nd Revised & enlarged edition; 1978).

Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). [Ebook]

José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)

Peter van der Veer, Hartmut Lehmann, ed. *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). [Ebook]

José Ignacio Cabezón, ed. *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992). [Ebook]

Jeff Levin, *Religion and Medicine: A History of the Encounter Between Humanity's Two Greatest Institutions* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1979) [Ebook]

Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). [Ebook]

Ann Sun, *Confucianism as A World Religion: Contested Histories and Contemporary Realities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013). [Ebook]

Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002)

Kate Crosby, *Esoteric Theravada: The Story of the Forgotten Meditation Tradition of Southeast Asia* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 2020).

David McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Ann Gleig. *American Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019). [Ebook]

Duncan Ryūken Williams, *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War* (Belknap Press, 2020).

Rima Vesely-Flad, *Black Buddhists and the Black Radical Tradition* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2022).

Allison Truitt, *Pure Land in the Making: Vietnamese Buddhism in the US Gulf South* (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 2021). [Ebook]