

RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS I COURSES

RLST 101W World Religions in Dialogue (3)

How can learning about religion help us understand ourselves and others? This course will explore that question as we gain a sound basic understanding of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and the nature of religion. We'll take four main approaches. First, we'll use scholarly tools and critical-thinking skills that will help us understand religions, others, and ourselves better. Second, we'll learn some of the major concepts that make these religions distinctive, and perhaps make them similar as well. Third, we'll examine the diverse, changing ways these religions are lived today, including in case studies about how religions interact. Finally, each student will attend a service at a local religious congregation, either on one of our group trips (for instance, to the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of Michiana, Temple Beth-El, or the Islamic Society of Michiana) or on their own, and will use what we're learning in the course to reflect on their experience. **This course also allows students to earn their Basic Writing requirement.**

RLST 101 Religion, Religious Studies, and Theology (3)

This course will examine the nature of religion and the academic study of religion and theology. At the beginning of the first half of the semester we will consider ways of defining, studying, and understanding religion, with special attention to sacred action, sacred space, and sacred time. Then, we will explore religion as a human enterprise that is fundamentally embodied, physical, and material. In the next section of the course, we will learn important aspects of a few major world religions. In class we will study Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students will also have the opportunity to make site visits to area places of worship to enrich our sense of religious diversity. We will then consider ways in which people have experienced and conceived of God throughout various cultures and religious traditions. In the second half of the semester we will turn to theology. Through the use of modern Jewish, Christian, and Muslim narratives we will come to understand ways in which one's theological views impact one's life experiences and vice versa. Through the lens of stories, we will consider the relationship among religion, culture, and identity, paying particular attention to diversity within religions. This course will ask students to understand and critically evaluate a variety of interpretations of the nature of religion(s), ways of studying religion(s), and a range of theological models. Through attentive reading, critical reflection, thoughtful discussion, and creative writing, our notions of religion and theology will be both challenged and enriched.

RLST 104 FYS: Religions and the Good Life (3)

What makes a good life? How is our own search for happiness connected to the good of others? This course will explore answers to those questions from different religions and thinkers. As we study those answers in context, we'll learn more about the teachings and complexities of different religions. We'll also be attentive to the ways that learning about religion can help us better understand our world, ourselves, and others. We'll learn from readings and videos (including *The Book of Joy* by the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Doug Abrams), guest speakers, shared conversation, mindfulness practices, and visiting a local religious community. This course warmly welcomes students of all worldviews, whether religious or not, to join in the learning and be part of the conversation. **This course is a First Year Seminar.**

RLST 105 FYS: Can You Be Spiritual Without Being Religious? (3)

Over the years, the expression "I'm spiritual, but not religious" has been invoked by many as an identity and a description for an array of

reasons. Often it signals an individual's openness to the possibility of the transcendent, the divine, the mysterious, the numinous, but that this same individual may be disinterested in or even hostile to traditional religious institutions and traditions. This course explores the meaning of "spirituality" and its relationship to religion, viewed across diverse religious traditions including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Additionally, we will examine the emerging academic discipline of the study of spirituality, which is inherently interdisciplinary. In addition to religious contexts, we will also consider recent literature on non-theist and "secular" spiritualities. Throughout the semester, students will examine a range of perspectives from scholars and practitioners, discuss similarities and differences among traditions, consider the relationship between spirituality and justice, and develop their own understanding of spirituality and position as to whether a person must be religious adherent or affiliate with a traditional religious institution in order to be spiritual. **This course is a First Year Seminar.**