INTRODUCTION TO THE HEBREW BIBLE  
Professor Anne Merideth  
RELC 101; M/W/F 1025-1115

Examination of the texts of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament for Christians) in their religious, historical, and literary contexts. In this course, students will learn the history of the Ancient Israelite people from their origins down through the post-Exilic period. Study of the texts of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) enable us to explore what we can know about Ancient Israelite society and culture, the rise and fall of Israel as a nation-state, religious and theological debates about the role of God in shaping history and the problem of suffering, as well as the writing of the biblical texts and the development of the canon. Cross Listed as JWST 106.

ASIAN SEARCH FOR SELF  
Professor Douglas Brooks  
RELC 105; T/R 0940-1055

The basic teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism as to human nature and the paths to liberation. We shall investigate particularly the ways in which early Vedism, classical Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism conceive of the cosmos, meaningful human existence, and life’s ultimate goals. Readings include original sources in translation, such as the Upanisads, the Bhagavadgita, and Buddhist scriptures in both Mahayana and Nikaya-based traditions.

MYSTICISM AND MEMOIR  
Professor Jennifer Hall  
RELC 163; M/W 1230-1345

This course will examine texts written by Jewish, Muslim, and Christian mystics in different historical and geographic locales. We will begin by developing an understanding of mysticism within each Abrahamic religion before focusing on the mystical expressions of practitioners in testimonies and poetry. One of the main questions that we will explore will be the nature of the relationship between the mystic, their purported experience, and their textual report (i.e. the memoir). The role of gender in mysticism will be foregrounded, whether via texts written by women, by men “thinking with” women, or men that imagine themselves as “feminine.”

HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY  
Professor Jack Downey  
RELC 104; M/W 1525-1640

The purpose of this course is to explore the general development of Christianity throughout its twenty centuries of existence, paying special attention to the religious presuppositions behind Christianity and its complex relationship to its socio-cultural matrix. The course will focus on important moments in Christian history, including its inception as a Jewish religious movement set in motion by Jesus, its dissemination in the Greco-Roman world by Paul of Tarsus, its growth and triumph in the Roman Empire, the split between the Greek- and Latin-speaking churches, medieval Catholicism, the Reformation and rise of Protestantism, Christianity and the modern world, and contemporary movements and tendencies within the Christian churches. Cross Listed as JWST 106.

RELIGION AND VIOLENCE  
Professor Anne Merideth  
RELC 229; M/W 1400-1515

Drawing up on historical and contemporary examples, students will read a range of classic and contemporary theories that attempt to explain the complex relationship between religion and violence. Topics include sacrifice, scapegoating, war, terrorism, domination, sanctified violence, violent religious fantasy, martyrdom, end times, etc. Is religion inherently violent? What is the relationship between religion and nationality? Religion and constructions of alterity? How can a religion claim to be concerned with peace and non-violence yet promote violence? Coursework consists of significant reading, seminar discussions, several response papers, and one major book review.
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

ADVICE FOR FRESHMAN

The Rochester Curriculum is based on the idea that students learn best when they are allowed to study what excites and interests them. In the Department of Religion we couldn’t agree more! Which is why we place such a high value on providing personalized guidance for each student who enters our classroom and office. We want students to take courses in areas that fascinate them, and, thus, there are no prerequisite courses that students need to take as they begin their journey to majoring in Religion.

We do encourage our Freshman to begin with a 100-level course, but there are many such classes covering a wide range of interests. Some students may want to begin with REL 100: Introduction to the Study of Religion which introduces students to the field of Religion and challenges students to think about the many ways to approach the study of religion and to reflect upon the ways in which religion intersects with many other aspects of culture and society.

Many students initially take courses in Religion in order to fulfill their cluster requirement in the humanities and then go on to declare a minor or major in Religion, as evidenced by the fact that majority of our students graduate with a double major! Freshman are encouraged to contact our Director of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Anne Merideth, with any questions.

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