

Philosophy & Religious Studies

Fall 2016 Courses

Dr. Thompson (MCM265)

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RSTD 212: Religions of the West

If you have ever wondered about “religion” and why there are so many different “religions” around the world, then you should find this a fascinating experience. This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion, focusing mainly on the major religious traditions of the “Western” world (Judaism, Islam, Christianity). We will also, however, look briefly at evidence of Prehistoric religion, as well as religious practices and beliefs among indigenous peoples and in ancient civilizations (Egypt, Mesopotamia). All in all, this is a wonderful opportunity for people interested in learning about different ways of understanding reality and our place within it.

RSTD 310: Myth, Symbol, and Ritual

Everyone knows that myths are false, symbols are arbitrary, and rituals are meaningless gestures, right? WRONG! Myths are actually important articulations of truths, symbols deeply resonate with many people regardless of their personal background, and rituals define our ways of interacting with each other. In this course we will examine various dimensions of myth, symbol and ritual, noting similarities as well as differences across religious and cultural boundaries. Our main concern will be to understand how these factors shape our ways of thinking and living, both within and beyond what we might ordinarily think of as “religion.” This will be a great class for anyone interested in critical and creative reflection on what it means to be “human.”

Dr. Timani (MCM258)

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IDST 264: Introduction to Middle Eastern/North African Studies

This course focuses on the Middle East and North Africa as a complex cultural area. It explores the major intellectual, political, social and cultural issues and practices, concentrating on the Fertile Crescent, Egypt, Turkey, the Arabian Peninsula, Iran, and North Africa. Some of the themes this course covers will include the rise of religious fundamentalism, regional conflicts, and women and gender, while placing them in the broader framework of the modern Middle East. The course concludes by addressing recent developments in the region and its outlook for the future. The objective of this class is for students to acquire a broad understanding of Middle Eastern society, culture and history.

RSTD 270: The Vision of Islam

This course introduces the students to the faith, beliefs, and practices of Islam. Emphasis will be on Qur’anic and *hadith* studies (the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad), Islamic law (*Shari’a*), Islamic theology, philosophy, and mysticism. This course will also discuss the role and status of women in Muslim societies, the historical development of the Sunni and Shi‘i sects, modern Islamist thought, and the rise and role of political Islam.

Dr. Homan (MCM259B)

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Phil 307: Current Trends in Modern Thought: Philosophy of Mind

What is the mind? Can the mind be understood in terms of the brain? If not, why not? What is the relation between the mind and the body? Can the mind-body problem be solved? In this course students will gain an understanding of the 20th and 21st century landscape in contemporary philosophy of mind and use it to investigate and critically evaluate current interdisciplinary attempts to answer the above questions.

Dr. Elizabeth Jelinek (MCM252)

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PHIL320: Scientific Reasoning

What do we mean when we claim that a scientific theory is true? Do we mean capital-t-True? Is it possible to reach capital-t-Truth? Can science claim to be 100% objective, given that it is necessarily a human endeavor? Explore these fascinating *questions and many more in PHIL320*.