

## **Graduate Division of Religion**

### **Fall 2019 Course Atlas**

**(Please check back for changes and updates - last update 8.01.2019)**

#### **RLHT 712R – Theology of Augustine**

**Anthony Briggman**

**Thursday, 1:00-4:00**

This seminar will consider the life and thought of Augustine of Hippo. Our aim will be to grasp the fundamentals of Augustine's theology by examining his writings leading up to and following the turn of the fifth century. The working assumption of the seminar is that if you understand the developments that take place in Augustine's thought between 387 and 406, you will be prepared to understand his later thought as well.

We will use Confessions as the spine of the course, thereby enabling us to approach Augustine's thought chronologically for as long as a chronological approach works (that is, through Confessions 8). Using Confessions also permits us to encounter 'organically' many of the key features of his theology. Among the topics we will explore are the following: the importance of Stoic moral psychology to his conception of the will, Manichaeism, the problem of evil, grace and conversion, the freedom of the will, his response to Pelagianism, his Trinitarian theology, and his Christology & response to Arianism.

#### **RLHT 736 – History of Religions**

**Vincent J. Cornell**

**Thursday, 4:00-7:00**

A critical examination of the field of Religious Studies as a product of Western intellectual history. The key questions asked in this course are: Why was the study of religions first conceived as a science? Why did Religious Studies develop in the West? Topics to be covered will include: historicism and the philosophy of religion; linguistics, philology, and the History of Religions; imperialism, Orientalism and Religious Studies; ideologies of origin and race; nationalism and the History of Religions; phenomenology and the problem of comparison; the "mystery" of the study of mysticism; the influence of the History of Religions on religio-political movements in the Non-Western world.

#### **RLL 702 - Ugaritic**

**Joel LeMon**

**Thursday, 9:30-12:30**

The course introduces the language, literature, and culture of Ugarit, giving special attention throughout the semester to the ways that Ugaritology affects the study of the Hebrew Bible. At the end of the course, the student will:

- Attain a working knowledge of the Ugaritic language and demonstrate proficiency in the elementary principles of comparative Semitic philology (especially comparing Ugaritic with other Northwest Semitic languages);
- Become familiar with the scope of the Ugaritic corpus in translation and demonstrate ability to submit selected texts to various forms of analysis.
- Articulate the significant contributions of Ugaritology as its own self-contained field within ancient Near Eastern studies and as it informs the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Israelite religion.

Prior knowledge of Biblical Hebrew is required. Knowledge of German, French, and Spanish is useful, but one need not have all three. Approximately two-thirds of the course will be devoted to Ugaritic grammar and reading selected texts in the original cuneiform, a process that includes transcribing the texts (i.e., transliterating) and normalizing (i.e., vocalizing) them via comparative Semitic evidence. The goal of this part of the course is to achieve basic competency in reading Ugaritic texts as well as to gain insight into historical Hebrew grammar via the data from other Northwest Semitic languages.

The latter third of the course will take the form of a readings seminar where students will be assigned written reports on particular topics (e.g., the archaeology of Ras Shamra and Ras Ibn Hani) or issue/text (ritual texts, the goddess Anat). These reports will be distributed to all members of the class. The primary goal for this portion of the course is to gain an overview of the field of Ugaritic studies and to reflect on the pertinence of this data to Hebrew Bible scholarship and, especially, ancient Israelite religion. The secondary goal for this portion of the course is to refine one's pedagogical practices. The student will learn how to teach fresh material in concise and compelling ways.

## **RLNT 740 – Literature of the Second Temple Period**

**Walter Wilson**

**Thursday, 1:00-4:00**

This course is an investigation of Judaism in the Second Temple period intended especially for graduate students in Hebrew Bible and New Testament. It is not organized according to the social history (e.g., the Jewish-Roman war), social movements (e.g., the Pharisees), social institutions (e.g., the synagogue), or social practices (e.g., Sabbath observance) of Judaism during this era. Instead, it consists of a survey of relevant literature. Even with this focus, our purview will be far from comprehensive. Nevertheless, by the end of the semester, participants should have a good sense for both the major trends and significant diversity evident in this material. Special attention will be paid throughout to understanding Second Temple Judaism as a religion and the different categories that can be employed when studying it as such.

## **RLR 700 – Recent Virtue Ethics**

**Pam Hall**

**Thursdays 9:00-12:00**

What does ethics gain when it draws upon the language of the virtues? We will explore together significant work within the revival of “virtue ethics” within the late 20th and the 21st centuries. Thinkers in this revival considered the nature of the virtues and their connections to human flourishing; how communities can morally shape, or mis-shape, people in relation to the human good; how the descriptive language of the virtues helps us to name important features of human emotional and ethical life.

In this seminar, we will read and discuss together a range of work from recent and contemporary reflection on the virtues bearing on these questions. This work will include:

- Essays by Elizabeth Anscombe and Simone Weil, who were catalysts in the revival of virtue ethics.
- Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* and selections from her *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*.
- Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* (in part) and *Dependent Rational Animals*
- Martha Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge* (sections)
- Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*
- Essays by Bernard Williams, Thomas Nagel, Lisa Tessman
- We will also use film to feed our explorations of moral psychology and of the virtues. Films may include *Weapons of the Spirit*, *Trouble the Water*, *Winter’s Bone*, and *Of Gods and Men*.

Requirements include several short reflection papers, one 10-11 page paper, and one oral presentation. Please, no audits.

## **RLR 700 – World Christianity Methodologies**

**Jehu J. Hanciles**

**Tuesday, 1:00-4:00**

This seminar examines major texts, conceptual frameworks or theories, models, and approaches central to the study of world Christianity with a focus on three major disciplinary areas (history, theology, and intercultural studies). The study of the Christian movement as a global phenomenon not only requires serious consideration of non-Western realities or dimensions but also calls for new models or conceptual tools (“fresh navigational aids”) that facilitate critical appraisal of the wealth of data from contexts around the world. The most common approaches emphasize the intersection of global and local, the inherently multicultural and multidirectional nature of global Christianity, and the multiplicity of experiences and representations (over time and space) needed to provide a full account of the Christian story.

This seminar is one of the requirements for all students enrolled in the World Christianity track or interested in the study of World Christianity as a concentration.

### **RLR 700/ICIVS 770 - Gender Theory and Religion**

**Harshita Mruthinti Kamath**

**Monday, 1:00-4:00**

This seminar draws on gender and feminist theory and postcolonial theory, including the works of Ayesha Chaudhry, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Jasbir Puar, Judith Butler, and Michel Foucault, among others, to explore and interrogate the categories of gender and sexuality in the study of religion. The course itself is broken into four main units: 1) Sexuality; 2) Gender; 3) Subaltern Discourse; and 4) Men and Masculinities. As the primary course material, we will analyze textual and ethnographic case studies from Hindu, Islamic, Sikh, and Jewish religious traditions. When examining these case studies, we will consider not only what theory can reveal about religious texts and practices, but also what these vernacular texts and practices can contribute to theoretical discourses. The primary objective of this seminar is to provide students with a grounding in scholarship on gender, sexuality, and post-colonial theory, while also modeling how students can apply these theoretical frameworks to read case studies from transnational religious contexts.

### **RLR 700 - What is Biblical Theology?**

**Steve Kraftchick**

**Wednesday 1:00-4:00**

This seminar will focus on the issues and problems that arise when the question of developing a (if not *the*) Biblical Theology arises. These include, why someone would wish to construct such a treatise, the methods and approaches used for developing one, and the relationship between critical historical analysis and contemporary use of ancient texts considered authoritative. In this sense, Biblical Theology affects those who argue for and those who argue against its possible construction. The course follows from considering major attempts to create “biblical theologies” including “OT Theology,” “NT Theology,” and those which attempt the more inclusive Biblical theology.

In a non-technical sense “biblical theology” occurs in numerous types of materials: commentaries, exegetical articles, and introductions to both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, as well as in sermons and other applications of biblical texts in the disciplines of ethics, history, and theology writ large. In many, perhaps most of these cases, the theology is implicit, and the author may not even acknowledge its presence. That is to say, rather than receiving direct attention, the theology remains at the suppositional or convictional level, and usually is a response to questions like, “What does the Bible say about \_\_\_\_\_?”.

When however, one recognizes that the Bible rarely has one thing to say about most interesting topics, then the explicit goal of an essay or writing is to develop specific theological claims and

to suggest what discovering coherence of the biblical materials entails. In these instances, the term Biblical Theology is used in its technical sense. It is this technical sense and the particular type of analytical approaches, which explores the theological relationship between and among the literature of Jewish and early Christian communities.

By necessity Biblical Theology in the technical sense must be both a historical and hermeneutical discipline. It is not simply a matter of determining what the biblical materials say or might have said to various audiences, but also a matter of asking how such materials might be considered as expressions of theological claims in relationship to one another and the historical conditions which shaped those expressions. The seminar explores these questions, the major approaches to answering them, and the question of how biblical theology is related (both implicitly and explicitly) to other theological, historical and philosophical disciplines.

In the course we will read selected portions from major theological and disciplinary treatments such as those by: Barr, Baur, Brueggemann, Blomberg, Bultmann, Childs, Collins, Fishbane, Fretheim, Hahn, Käsemann, Noth, Morgan, Moore and Sherwood, Sanders, Sheehan, Strecker, Schnelle, Ollenburger, Perdue, Räisänen, Seitz, Von Rad, and Wright.

### **RLR 700 – The Oneness of Being**

**Scott Kugle**

**Wednesday 1:00-4:00**

This graduate seminar explores the Islamic mystical tradition known as The Oneness of Being (wahdat al-wujud). It is largely associated with the Sufi theologian Ibn Arabi (died 1240) and his followers. Informed by Neo-Platonism and sharing features with Christian and Jewish mystical writing and also with Hindu Vedanta, the Oneness of Being tradition was hugely influential in the Islamic world after the Mongol conquest. The ideas of Ibn Arabi permeated mystical theology, poetry, architecture, painting and music from Morocco to Malucca.

This seminar will investigate the persona and ideas of Ibn Arabi, and also consider opposition to him in the later middle ages. We read his masterpiece, *The Bezels of Wisdom* (Fusus al-Hikam). In it, Ibn Arabi treats 27 Prophets—from Adam to Muhammad—as facets of divine wisdom revealing how the cosmos and the creator are united in being through humanity's coming to completion in self-awareness. More than any other text, the *Bezels of Wisdom* has been commented upon generation after generation to perpetuate and deepen Ibn Arabi's influence, in a tradition that came to be called theoretical or speculative Sufism (al-tasawwuf al-nazari). The seminar then explores how Ibn Arabi's ideas were spread through Persian poetry, focusing on Fakhr al-Din `Iraqi, Awhad al-Din Kirmani and Abd al-Rahman Jami. The seminar will conclude by examining how Ibn Arabi's ideas inform controversial debates in Islamic civilization. These controversies include: medieval social ethics, modern religious pluralism, and contemporary depth ecology.

### **RLR 700 – Moral Agency under Constraint**

**Ellen Ott Marshall**  
**Friday 9:30-12:30**

This course takes as its starting point Katie Cannon's observation that the dominant tradition of western philosophical ethics assumes a moral agent with freedom and a wide range of choices. Cannon turns to the literature of African American women to study female protagonists who demonstrate moral agency under constraint. 'Moral Agency under Constraint' employs this womanist methodology of drawing on protagonists in contemporary novels and films in order to re-consider assumptions about moral agency. Readings include classical descriptions of central features of moral agency, feminist and womanist analysis of marginality and constraint, and novels and films that offer different models of moral agency for us to consider. The contemporary materials do not constitute a simplistic corrective to classical assumptions; rather the interaction among these resources provides an appropriately complex portrayal of the meaning, possibilities, and challenges of moral agency under constraint.

In addition to standard assignments for doctoral seminars (weekly reading, participation and leadership in discussion, seminar paper), this class involves the creation of a digital exhibit on moral agency under constraint. Students will be led through the steps throughout the semester, culminating in a digital contribution based on their seminar paper.

**RLR 700 - Peoples of the Book: On Sacred Text and Ethnography**  
**Don Seeman**  
**Tuesday, 12:00-3:00**

Ethnography has come relatively late to the critical study of the world's most highly textual religious traditions. This course investigates issues related to the intersection of social and textual practice as well as new media and lived experience primarily (but not exclusively) in the Abrahamic (Jewish, Christian, Muslim) context but with some Hindu and Buddhist readings. We will ask whether there is something about these socio-textual settings that justifies comparison and we will explore the cultural politics of representation of these traditions within academic scholarship (particularly within religious studies and anthropology). Primary focus will be on contemporary ethnographies of textual practice rather than the application of ethnographic method to purely literary-historical scholarship (as in Biblical or Koranic studies), but students from both sides of the methodological divide are welcome! This course requires the reading of ethnography but does not require any previous background in the anthropology of religion. Topics include (but are not limited to): James Bielo on contemporary American Bible Studies groups, Talal Asad, Judith Butler and Saba Mahmood on "Is Critique Secular," Matthew Engelke on ambivalence towards the Bible in an African church, Jonathan Boyarin on the Ethnography of Reading, Leela Prasad on the Shastras and ethics in a Tamil village, Charles Hirschkind on the "Ethical Soundscape" of Islamic sermons in Egypt, Samuel Heilman on Talmud study in an American synagogue and Todd Whitmore on the intersection of theology and anthropology in a study of Nigerian Catholicism.

**RLR 700 – The Study of Religious Practices**  
**Devaka Premawardhana**  
**Wednesday, 9:00-12:00**

This seminar will explore critical issues in the conception and study of religious practices. Particular attention will be paid to questions about movement between descriptive studies of practice and more normative or theological claims. The seminar is interdisciplinary in both sources and outcomes. Readings come from thinkers identified with anthropology, sociology, religious studies, theological studies, and critical theory. And members will develop ideas from the seminar in relation to a variety of home disciplines. Readings include texts from thinkers such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marla Frederick, Clifford Geertz, Kathryn Lofton, Saba Mahmood, Sherry Ortner, Kathryn Tanner, Lauren Winner, and Loïc Wacquant.

Offered every other year, this seminar is required for the concentration in Religious Practices and Practical Theology.

**RLTS 710P - Sin as Social Diagnostic? Classical and Contemporary Approaches**  
**Joy McDougall**  
**Friday, 10:00-1:00**

This seminar investigates classical and contemporary theologies of sin and salvation with a focus on how the category of sin might serve as a “social diagnostic” in the public square. The first part of the seminar addresses the historical foundations of the doctrine of sin, focusing on the central metaphors that are used to describe the nature and the root causes of sin, e.g. pride, ignorance, deception, idolatry and defilement. In the second part, we turn to re-interpretations of the doctrine of sin in light of contemporary issues, such as gender injustice, ecological destruction, and the interplay of structural injustice and human responsibility. The authors on the reading list include: Athanasius, Augustine, Barth, Calvin, Serene Jones, David Kelsey, Marilyn McCord Adams, Ian McFarland and Ana Pineda-Madrid. Students are welcome to work on religious traditions other than Christianity for their final projects.

Registration limited to PhD students or by special permission of the instructor.