

Graduate Division of Religion

Spring 2019 Course Atlas

(Please check back for changes and updates - last update 1.11.2019)

RLE 733/PHIL 789 - Love and Justice

Timothy P. Jackson

Wednesday, 6:45-9:45

Few concepts are more central to ethics than love and justice, but none is more subject to varying interpretation than these two. This course seeks to clarify several philosophical and theological accounts of love and justice, with emphasis on how they interrelate. Is love ideally indiscriminate and/or self-sacrificial and therefore antithetical to justice? Is justice a single virtue equally binding on all human beings, regardless of sex, race, creed, or ethnicity? Does God possess either moral attribute? Does the practice of charity or the upholding of justice require the denial of hard dilemmas or belief in an afterlife? How are we to conceive (and act on) such related values as eudaimonia, human equality, and civil liberty? How, more specifically, do love and justice bear on such issues as adoption, the right to death, and gay and lesbian rights?

Readings are selected from a broad range of perspectives, displaying both temporal and ideological diversity. Texts include works by Plato, St. Augustine, Søren Kierkegaard, John Rawls, Martha Nussbaum, and the instructor. This course is designed for doctoral students and presupposes some knowledge of ethical theory; it is, however, open to advanced Candler students, with permission of the professor.

RLE 736 - Contemporary Christian Ethics

Ellen Ott Marshall

Thursdays, 2:30-5:30

Drawing on the approach of Ernst Troeltsch and H. Richard Niebuhr, this seminar studies Christian ethics by exploring the relationship between faith and history. After an introduction to this triadic framework, we will use it as a lens to study the work of contemporary scholars in Christian ethics. (Figures may include: Walter Rauschenbusch, Reinhold Niebuhr, Jürgen Moltmann, James Gustafson, Wendy Farley, Anthony Pinn, Jennifer Harvey, Sallie McFague, and M. Shawn Copeland.) As we work through this material, we will focus on the ways in which the authors construe the relationship between faith and history in order to foster a particular ethical disposition. Thus, the central question of the course becomes: How should one negotiate between faith and history? In addition to exploring this central question in relationship to the work of some formative figures, students in this course will also pursue a three-step writing project in constructive theological ethics. Like the texts we are reading (though on a smaller scale), students' papers will (1) describe an ethical problem, (2) identify and critique theological matter related to this ethical problem, and (3) put forth a constructive theo-ethical response to the problem.

Requirements: preparation for and participation in class discussion, discussion leadership, 2-3 page essays responding to assigned readings, one 6- page essay, two 15-page papers.

RLHT 736C - Early Christianity: Second Century

Anthony Briggman

Thursday, 12:00-3:00

This seminar will consider the three major second century Christian authors writing outside of Alexandria: Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, and Irenaeus of Lyons. We will read the entire extant corpus of each author and pertinent scholarship. The objective of this seminar is for each participant to grasp the significant and distinctive aspects of each author's thought, as well as the scholarly conversation surrounding them.

RLPC 710K/PSYC 770R – William James Seminar

John Snarey

Wednesday, 2:30-5:30

“William James brought heart to the intellect and passion to the world of ideas in an unprecedented manner in American life. He is the most profound, adorable, and unpretentious public intellectual in American history.” --Cornel West, 2010

“In Western literature there are four great thinkers, whose services to civilized thought rest largely on their achievements in philosophical assemblage... These men are Plato, Aristotle, Leibniz, and William James.” --Alfred North Whitehead, 1936

COURSE DESCRIPTION: William James (1842-1910) is the founding father of American psychology, the foremost American philosopher, and a pioneer in the psychological study of religion in America. This course embraces all three faces of James. The seminar begins with a psychological biography of James's early life; then seminar members will become familiar with James's psychology by studying selected chapters from his classic volume, *Principles of Psychology* (1890). We will give similar attention to James's philosophical pragmatism by reading essays from his classic volume *Pragmatism* (1907), as well as selections from *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) and *Radical Empiricism* (1912). Building on this biographical-psychological-philosophical foundation, the seminar turns to a close reading of James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), a classic in religious studies. Critiques of James are discussed throughout the course, but we will conclude the semester by reviewing recent works that evaluate James's ideas in general or *The Varieties* in particular.

RLR 700 - Old Testament Theology

Ryan Bonfiglio

Monday, 1:30-4:30

This seminar examines approaches to and key topics in the study of Old Testament theology. Initial emphasis is placed on the history of Old Testament theology as a field of study, including its initial probes and relationship to broader methodological developments such as the rise of historical criticism and the biblical theology movement. Subsequent focus shifts to a representative selection of major works of Old Testament theology (von Rad, Childs, Brueggemann, Moberly, Levenson, Gerstenberger, Collins, Frymer-Kensky, etc.) with a view towards their orienting questions, organizing schemas, and diverse articulations. In each case, attention is given to how the study of Old Testament theology relates to and is informed by other interpretative interests and perspectives, such as Israelite religion, literary theory, and trends in post-modern hermeneutics. The seminar also includes a number of probes into specific topics / themes in Old Testament theology, including the Sabbath and divine violence. Foundational questions engaged throughout the seminar include: What do we mean by the term theological exegesis? How is Old Testament theology related to New Testament theology and/or biblical theology? What role does the theological interpretation of Scripture have to play in twenty-first century biblical scholarship? An intermediate knowledge of Hebrew is required, as well as some facility with Greek and German.

RLR 700 / ICIVS 770 - History of Religions

Vincent J. Cornell

Thursday, 1:00-4:00

This course critically examines the discipline of Religious Studies (Religionsgeschichte or Religionswissenschaft) as a product of Western intellectual history. Two key questions that will be asked in this course are: How was the study of religions conceived as a science? And why did Religious Studies first develop in the West? Topics to be covered in our attempt to answer these questions 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; primitivism and the quest for authenticity; nationalism and the History of Religions; phenomenology and the problem of comparison; the “mystery” of the academic study of mysticism; traditionalism and perennialism; the influence of the History of Religions on religious movements in the Non-Western world.

RLR 700 / ICIVS 770: Platonism, Neoplatonism: from the Ancient to the Medieval Worlds

Kevin Corrigan

Tuesdays 10am-12:45pm

This course will chart out a path from the study of Plato and Aristotle through the birth of Neoplatonism—with Plotinus [I shall also indicate the Christian dimension of this]—and the later Neoplatonic tradition both pagan and Christian, culminating in what I take to be some final logical developments of that tradition in the thought of Nicholas of Cusa.

Introduction

1. Heraclitus, Parmenides
2. Socrates, Plato: *Apology, Crito, Phaedo*
3. Plato: *Symposium, Phaedrus*
4. Aristotle: *Metaphysics*
5. Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics
6. From Middle Platonism [Alcinous, *Handbook of Platonism*] to Neoplatonism: Plotinus and Porphyry [Origen]
7. Plotinus: *Enneads* 1 6 [1]; VI 9 [9]
8. Understanding and discursive thought: *Enneads* III 8 [30]; V 8 [31]; V 5 [32]
9. Creation/production; soul-body: VI 7 [38]; IV 7 [7] 8⁵
10. Porphyry: *Sententiae*, etc. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*
11. Gregory of Nyssa: *De hominis opificio*
12. Proclus: *Elements of Theology, Liber de Causis*
13. Dionysius: *Divine Names*
14. Nicholas of Cusa: *De Docta Ignorantia, De Apice Mentis*

Plato: Complete Works

by Plato and John M. Cooper, Hackett, 1997.

RLR 700: Hindu Traditions through Ethnography

Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger

Monday 1-4 p.m.

This seminar will focus on what ethnography can teach us about central themes in the study of Hindu traditions, including: personhood, body, gender, caste, regional differences, class, ritual, materiality, and narrative. We will also address the question of how ethnography and performance studies have impacted the study of Hinduism and religious studies more broadly. The seminar may be helpful to students not familiar with Hindu traditions for comparative purposes; these students may write their final papers on the tradition/s with which they are working.

Texts may include:

Joyce Flueckiger, *When the World Becomes Female: Guises of a South Indian Goddess*

Ann Gold, *Fruitful Journeys: The Ways of Rajasthani Pilgrims*.

Diane Mines. *Fierce Gods: Inequality, Ritual, and the Politics of Dignity in a South Indian Village*.

Kirin Narayan, *Mondays on the Dark Night of the Moon: Himalayan Foothill Folktales*.

Jennifer Ortgren, *Gender, Aspiration, and the Making of Middle Class Hinduism*.

Leela Prasad, *Poetics of Conduct: Oral Narrative and Moral Being in a South Indian Town*.

William Sax, *Dancing the Self: Personhood and Performance in the Pandav Lila of Garhwal*.

Srinivas, Tulasi, *The Cow in the Elevator: An Anthropology of Wonder*.

RLR 700 - Ethnographies of Islam

James Hoesterey

Thursday, 9:00-12:00

In this seminar, we will learn about the development of “an idea of the anthropology of Islam” (cf. Asad 1984) through a careful reading of recent ethnographies about Islam as a lived religion. Beginning with Geertz and Gellner, and moving through Asad, Mahmood and their recent critics, we will examine the theoretical and epistemological fault lines within the study of Islam more broadly, thinking about where ethnography and anthropological theory fit within the wider field of Islamic studies (if at all). Through a careful reading of several recent ethnographies, we will think through issues such as religious authority, texts and traditions, contested practices, and embodied affects. We will discuss themes of ethical discipline and moral cultivation, while also attending to the roles of anxiety, doubt, and ambivalence – the pious as well as those who have “strayed from the straight path” (cf Beekers and Kloos).

RLR 700 -

Partnering Communities and Universities: Community-Engaged Research, Scholarship, and Teaching

Bobbi Patterson and Vialla Hartfield-Mendez

Monday, 1:00-4:00

Community-engaged research, scholarship, and teaching describe a constellation of activities emerging from partnerships that bring together university faculty, students and staff with community members beyond the academy. This work attempts to leverage the expertise of universities in partnership with local groups for community-identified concerns and projects. Much of this scholarship and teaching intends to be action-oriented. Welcoming students from all disciplines, this course design will contribute to positive change in complex university-community partnerships by better preparing young scholars for this intellectual work, reaching beyond simple technical explanations and solutions. Designed to develop researchers able to choose flexible means and appropriate theories for ethical, partnered, and evidence-based inquiry, this course prepares graduate students for excellent contributions to community-driven change

Letter of Completion: Each student completing this course will receive a letter of completion articulating their capacities to succeed in community-engaged scholarship, research, and pedagogies. Goals:

1. To prepare graduate students and faculty for research, scholarship and teaching that are responsive to community needs;
2. To enable graduate students and faculty members to meet together and build the necessary skills and support for community-based work;
3. To strengthen the diversity of research, scholarly, and pedagogical paradigms at the university;
4. To encourage the development of community/university partnerships and broaden our understanding of community-responsive scholarship.
5. To provide an arena where people interested in this approach can bond, share and enrich each other, exchanging theories and methods beyond the domain of any single discipline

RLR 700 / CPLT 751.2 - Sacrifice and Gift

Jill Robbins

Wednesday, 1:00-4:00

Content: In the tradition of the French sociology of religion of Durkheim, Mauss, and Hertz, the conceptual figures of sacrifice and gift have received remarkable immanent readings as “total social facts”. This course explores the pre-war sociological texts on sacrifice and gift with attention to their postwar French philosophical resonances in Bataille, Levinas, Derrida and Nancy.

Texts: Readings may include Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Mauss *The Gift*, Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, Bourdieu, "Structure and Genesis of the Religious Field," Nancy, "The Unsacrificeable," and selections from Bataille, Derrida, Levinas.

Particulars: One class presentation and one 15-20 page paper due at end of term.

RLR 700 – Critical Theory and Religion

Ted A. Smith

Wednesday, 9:00-12:00

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 two clusters of questions: one on language and texts, the other 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*
Amanda Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*
Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vols 1 and 4
Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*
Brian Britt, *Walter Benjamin and the Bible*
Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*
Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*
Colby Dickinson and Stephané Symons, *Walter Benjamin and Theology*
Raymond Geuss, *Reality and Its Dreams*
Jürgen Habermas, *An Awareness of What Is Missing*
Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*
Vincent Lloyd, *Religion of the Field Negro: On Black Secularism and Black Theology*
Eduardo Mendieta, *The Frankfurt School on Religion*
Johann Baptist Metz, "The Future in the Memory of Suffering"
Charles Mills, *Black Rights / White Wrongs*
Elizabeth Pritchard, "Bilderverbot Meets Body in Theodor W. Adorno's Inverse Theology"
Gillian Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*
Ted A. Smith, *Weird John Brown*
Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*