

## **Graduate Level Religion Department Course Descriptions**

### **REL 310/610 The Prophetic Literature**

**Prof. Høglund, MWF 10:00-10:50am**

An examination of the development and theological contents of the literary products of Israel's prophetic movement. Included in this study will be an assessment of the role of prophets and/or prophecy in ancient Israel, and the forms by which prophetic concepts were communicated. An effort will also be made to develop ways of reading the prophetic literature in order to appreciate its richness of religious thought and expression.

### **REL 332/632 Religion & Public Engagement**

**Prof. Boyd, Tuesdays 3:30-6:00pm**

This seminar introduces students to dynamics at work at the interface between religious communities and the public sphere. It will explore, through a wide range of readings, guest lectures, field trips, and films, the potential for social change—constructive and destructive—within and between communities in contemporary local, regional, national and global contexts. For Spring 2015, among the religions included will be Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Native traditions. Among the topics covered will be the US Civil Rights Movement, mass incarceration, Native American Land Rights, the relation of church and state, women's rights, religious intolerance, inter-faith collaboration, and skills in the conduct of public life. Students will conduct team research aimed at issues related to the semester's selected areas of inquiry (e.g., criminal justice (innocence, re-entry, reform); education and racial desegregation/resegregation; disaster relief; campus tolerance/intolerance; Native American land rights).

### **REL 335/635 Religious Ethics and The Problem of War & Peace**

**Prof. Ilesanmi, MW 5:00-6:15pm**

It is a common assumption that war is a "political" issue that is devoid of religious or moral implications. However, major religions of the world, notably, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have consistently rejected such an assumption. This course will examine the perennial issues that surround war and peace from a variety of religious and secular perspectives. Materials will be drawn from classical and contemporary authors. The objectives of the course include (1) familiarizing students with the rich deposit of religious and moral wisdom about the use of lethal force, and (2) enabling them to think critically about the urgent issues facing humanity in the contemporary world.

### **REL 388/688 South Asian Women: Religion, Culture, & Politics**

**Prof. Ramachandran, WF 2:00-3:15pm**

Grouped under the title South Asia, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka differ culturally but also share geographical proximity, languages, religions and most importantly a history of colonization that still looms large. It is from this point of convergence that we can connect the lives of men and women within the South Asian subcontinent. This course takes into account the histories, experiences and lives of South Asian Women. Using a feminist and postcolonial perspective, it examines the intersection of religion, race and gender from both a theoretical and a practical point of view. This course focuses on issues of representation and identity formation, recognizing how categories such as "South Asian" and "woman" become tools for a simultaneous understanding of both culture and gender

creating a place for both oppression and empowerment. It brings together the voices of South Asian women and men living in the subcontinent as well as the diaspora.

Course Objectives:

- 1) To outline the adequate theory and methodology necessary to understand and/or study the lives of South Asian Women
- 2) To analyze how religion, gender, race, sexuality, and class intersect to construct groups and individuals

### **REL 390A/690 Special Topics: Charisma, Capitalism, and Color**

**Prof. R. Neal, TR 12:30-1:45pm**

What is charisma? What is its nature and function? How does charisma play itself out in Black American culture? What is the relationship between charisma, Black American culture, and American capitalism? In light of the historical experience of Black Americans, why is charisma employed by some Black Americans to promote American capitalism? In light this experience, why is charisma employed by some Black Americans to challenge the American capitalist order? What role does religion play in fueling charisma with respect to Black American culture and the logic of American capitalism? Such are the kinds of questions that drive this course. In a word, this course examines charisma as a phenomenon among select charismatic figures in the past and contemporary experience of African Americans. It probes the allure, promises, paradoxes, and perils of American capitalism in the biographies and histories of Black charismatic individuals and organizations. It draws from the 20th and 21st century experiences of African Americans which include, the Depression era, the Civil Rights/Black Power era, and the Post-Soul era. Diverse charismatic personalities including, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Oprah Winfrey, will be considered. In treating such figures, specific attention will be given to the geographic contexts and social conditions that give rise to charismatic personalities and their relationship to the logic of capitalism.

### **REL 391: East Asian Meditation Practices**

**Prof. Arthur, TR 9:30-10:45am**

This course introduces and examines the theoretical and practical aspects of various forms of Asian meditation including Hindu concentration, Buddhist mindfulness, Buddhist Chan/Zen zazen, Tibetan Buddhist mandala and Daoist visualizations, as well as moving meditation and energy work. For each tradition, we will cover three dimensions: first, the historical, social, and cultural contexts of the meditation practice and the tradition's overall worldview, i.e., the views it holds of the body and mind, cosmos, humanity, self, and consciousness. Second, we will read practitioners' ideas about their practices and effects, and we will try them out for ourselves in class. Third, we will analyze a wide array of modern, scientific research to explore different perspectives about the physiological and psychological benefits and limitations of short- and long-term meditation practices.

### **REL 392: American Indian and Indigenous Philosophy and Cosmivision**

**Prof. Wiethaus, Tuesdays 3:30-6:15pm**

This upper level course explores the thought of leading American Indian and Indigenous philosophers through their writings and historical contexts. Special emphasis will be placed on gender, oral traditions, and the role of community. Cultural zones to be considered include pre- and post-Columbian Mesoamerica (Popol Vuh, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, Spiderwoman narratives), and the Great Plains (Lakota tellings, Vine Deloria, Jr, George Eastman, Sitkala-Za).