

# Religious Studies

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# Religious Studies

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## Assistant Professors:

Jeffrey S. Bennett (sociology), Theresa Torres (sociology)

## Description of Program

The Center for Religious Studies offers an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural and socio-historical approach to the study of religion. The Center is a consortium of several area institutions of higher education that have pooled their resources to participate in the UMKC Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program. Students in religious studies are introduced to the many dimensions of religious belief, practice and expression found in human cultures across time and space. In addition to graduate courses, the Center offers a number of undergraduate courses. Related courses relevant to the study of religion will be found under the listings of other departments and programs.

## Doctoral Program

See the Religious Studies discipline in the School of Graduate Studies section of this catalog.

## Religious Studies Courses

**5500 Special Topics In Religious Studies (1-3).** Special topics in religious studies. The focus of the course will vary by semester and instructor.

**5505 Religion In America (3).** An in-depth examination of selected aspects of the history of religions in America from the colonial period to the present. Special emphasis will be given to methodological issues in the study of American religious history. Offered: On Demand

**5510 Religions Of The World (3).** This course is designed to introduce graduate students to the major religions of the world, as well as to selected small-group religions. Our goal will be to learn to appreciate the similarities and differences in the structure and history of these religions. A primary focus will be on using the categories of the history of religions to examine and analyze the various dimensions of religion (e.g., historical, sociological, ritual, mythological, aesthetic). In addition, methodological issues of comparison will be addressed.

**5567 Myth and Ritual (3).** "Myth" and "ritual" have long been fundamental categories in the study of religion. This course will briefly survey some of the major theories and approaches to the study of myth and ritual from the Enlightenment to the present. Will not only trace the shifting meanings of "myth" and "ritual," but will critically evaluate the utility of diverse approaches to the study of religious phenomena designated by these terms. Reading will include theoretical works, as well as selected case studies.

**5584RS Sacred Narratives And Texts (3).** This course will study the "social lives" of sacred narratives and texts as they circulate within religious communities. Among the topics to be studied are methods of exegesis in different religious traditions, orality and literacy (including the reoralization of written texts), the canonization process, the emergence of interpretive specialists, text as amulets, reading and meditative practices and techniques, and narratives and the arts. The course is comparative, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary in nature.

**5586RS Methodological Approaches To The Study Of Religion (3).** This course examines the various disciplines that undertook the critical, objective study of religion beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century and continuing into the present. The course examines how the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities emerged in the last century and how the study of religion emerged from its roots in Jewish scholarship and Christian theology to be included under the umbrella of the humanities and social sciences. The historical development of religious studies as a historical and intellectual contexts.

**5587RS Research Seminar (3).** Students in this course will produce a major research paper under the direction of the instructor: a self-contained thesis chapter, an article for publication or the equivalent.

**5592 Cults Sects, And New Religious Movements (3).** In this course, students will experience: (a) a variety of methods for analyzing and understanding new religious movements in society: sociological, historical, and textual; (b) an introduction to the broad spectrum of religious beliefs which exist (and flourish) outside the cultural mainstream; and (c) an introduction to some of the means by which dominant religious and secular culture has confronted the presence of NRMs-e.g., deprogramming exit counseling, and theologically oriented counter-movement. Offered: On demand

**5593 Sex And Religion (3).** The course is designed to highlight issues related to the various ways in which religions of the world have integrated, embraced, or repressed one of the basic human experiences: sexual expression. This is an elective course designed for graduate students with Religious Studies either as their coordinating or co-discipline. This is an advanced seminar, and as such does assume a certain measure of theoretical familiarity and background of study. Offered: On demand

**5594RS Death In The History Of Religions (3).** As a biological "fact," death would appear to be a human universal. Yet, human beings have imagined—and, thus experienced—the meaning of death in many diverse ways in different cultures and over time. This course explores the conceptualization and representation of death and dying, as well as the ritual activities surrounding death, found in selected religious communities. The goal is to gain insight into how people have sought to (re) create a world of meaning in the face of death and to gain a critical perspective on our own contemporary situation.

**5595RS Time And Space In The History Of Religions (3).** Time and space are essential components of the lived worlds of human beings, yet the cultural and historical constructions of these are remarkably diverse and, moreover, are subject to change. This course is a cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and comparative exploration of the constructions and experiences of time and space found in selected religious communities and historical periods. In addition, it investigates the pivotal role the categories of "sacred and profane time and space" have played in theorizing religion and in the study of religious myths and rituals in the modern period. Time and space are essential components of the lived worlds of human beings, yet the cultural and historical constructions of these are remarkably diverse and, moreover, are subject to change. This course is a cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, and comparative exploration of the constructions and experiences of time and space found in selected religious communities and historical periods. In addition, it investigates the pivotal role the categories of "sacred and profane time and space" have played in theorizing religion and in the study of religious myths and rituals in the modern period.

**5596RS Body In The History Of Religions (3).** The human body is the site of extensive imaginal and ritual activities in all religious traditions. This course explores some of the diverse ways religious communities have imagined and experienced the human body, as well as how the body had been manipulated and worked on in an effort to transform the human situation in the world.

**5597RS Non-Thesis Research/Reading (1-6).** Individual direction of student reading or research by selected, consenting faculty. This course can be taken only when faculty supervision is unavailable in colloquia or seminars.

**5598RS Seminar In The History Of Religions (3).** Advanced graduate seminar on a selected topic or problem in the History of Religion. Topic varies, but the seminar will have a methodical or theoretical focus. May be repeated for credit when topic is different.

**5680RS Doctoral Colloquium (3).** This course will examine the writings and theories of major scholars in a particular area of Religious Studies. The authors, works and intellectual currents which form the basis of the colloquium will vary from semester to semester depending upon the professor's expertise and design for the course.

**5687RS Doctoral Research Seminar (3).** Students in this course will produce a major research paper under the direction of the instructor. This shall consist of a self-contained chapter of the dissertation or a work of publishable quality. May be repeated for credit.

**5697RS Doctoral-Level Independent Readings (1-6).** Individual reading under the supervision of members of the Religious Studies Doctoral faculty and adjuncts in preparation for the Comprehensive Examination for the Ph.D.

**5699RS Dissertation (1-15).** Course credits in dissertation.

**5899 Required Graduate Enrollment (1).**