Religion and Politics

The John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics serves as an ideologically neutral venue for fostering rigorous scholarship and informing broad academic and public communities about the intersections of religion and U.S. politics.

The Center's programs include the following:

• Public lectures, conferences and symposia relating to issues at the intersection of religion and U.S. politics
• Research colloquia on American religion, politics and culture, in which scholars and students discuss cutting-edge research
• Religion & Politics, an online journal engaging a diverse array of scholars, journalists and public leaders
• New courses on American religion and politics that contribute to an interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in religion and politics for Washington University students

The Center offers a religion and politics minor. This interdisciplinary program combines resources from the Danforth Center on Religion and Politics with relevant offerings from other academic programs, including Religious Studies, Political Science, History, American Culture Studies, African-American Studies, English, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Designed to complement and contribute to students' major fields of study, the minor also aims to augment the undergraduate education of those considering postgraduate professional programs in public policy, education, law, medicine or social work. The religion and politics minor provides an opportunity for exploring in sustained ways how religion and politics have intersected with American culture, both in historical and contemporary terms.

As part of the program, students may examine any number of issues, including church-state relations, religion's role in shaping gender and sexuality debates, religion and electoral politics, public conflicts over the nexus of religion and science, religion's entwining with reform movements (from abolition to environmentalism), and the confluences of religion and politics in national vocabularies, media and imagination.

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Majors

The Center does not offer a major. Interested students are encouraged to explore the minor in religion and politics. Please refer to the Minors section for more information.
Minors

The Minor in Religion and Politics

Required units: 15

15 units of course work, including the following:

• One required course: Select one course from the following list. This should be completed prior to the second semester of the junior year.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
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<tr>
<td>RelPol 201</td>
<td>Religion and American Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>RelPol 210</td>
<td>The Good Life Between Religion and Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>RelPol 225</td>
<td>Religion and Politics in American History</td>
<td>3</td>
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• 12 additional units, 9 of which must be at the 300 or 400 level and 9 of which, at any level, must be taught by Center faculty.

Required activities:

Attendance at five events sponsored by the Center on Religion and Politics (e.g., lectures, colloquia, lunch discussions, film screenings) is required. Students must inform the director of undergraduate studies of the events they attend so that this information can be recorded.

Courses


L57 RelPol 102 Thinking About Religion

Nearly everyone has had some experience with something they would call "religion," from at least a passing familiarity through the media to a lifetime of active participation in religious communities. But what do we actually mean when we use the word? What is a religion? What does it mean to call something a religion, or "religious"? And what does it mean to study religion, given the slipperiness of the concept itself? This course offers an introduction to the academic study of religion through a consideration of these questions: What is religion, and how can we study it? Do we need an answer to the first question to pursue the second? Why, and toward what ends, might we undertake such study? We will also consider what is at stake in our investigation and inquiry into religion — for the inquirers, for the subjects of inquiry, and for society more broadly — and what kind of lens the study of religion offers us on ourselves, our neighbors, and society, in turn. To these ends, we will discuss major theoretical approaches to the study of religion and significant work on religions and religious phenomena, toward a better understanding of what "religion" might be and how it might be studied today. No prior knowledge or experience of religion, religions, or anything religious is expected or required. This course is required for religious studies majors and minors. Same as L23 Re St 102

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 130 First-Year Seminar: The Ritual Landscape of Cahokia: Perspectives on the Politics of Religion & Chiefly Power

The purpose of this class is to engage and challenge freshman students in an open discussion about the prehistoric Mississippian community of Cahokia. The focus of this course is twofold. The first is to study the way in which the archaeological evidence has been interpreted. The second is to examine other perspectives on Cahokia, especially from the Native American descendants who consecrated this landscape nearly a millennium ago. An underlying tenet of this seminar in understanding Cahokia can also be achieved through the traditions and literature of Native Americans. In the end we want to understand the basis for Cahokia's organization as a prehistoric Native American community, and the role that ritual and religion played in the rather dramatic and dynamic history of this community and the surrounding region.

Same as L48 Anthro 130
Credit 3 units. A&S: FYS A&S IQ: LCD, SSC Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: HUM EN: S

L57 RelPol 1711 First-Year Seminar: Literature, Spirituality, and Religion

Reading courses, each limited to 15 students. Topics: selected writers, varieties of approaches to literature, e.g., Southern fiction, the modern American short story, the mystery; consult course listings. Prerequisite: first-year standing.

Same as L14 E Lit 171

L57 RelPol 201 Religion and American Society

This course explores religious life in the United States. We will focus our study on groups and movements that highlight distinctive ways of being both "religious" and "American," including the Americanization of global religions in the U.S. context. Major themes will include religious encounter and conflict; secularization, resurgent traditionalism, and new religious establishments; experimentalism, eclecticism, and so-called "spiritual" countercultures; the relationship between religious change and broader social and political currents (including clashes over race, class, gender and sexuality); and the challenges of religious multiplicity in the U.S. Students will: 1) acquire knowledge of the disparate religions practiced in North America during the 20th century and beyond; 2) examine some of the chief conflicts as well as alliances between religion and the American social order in a global context; and 3) develop interpretive tools for understanding religion's present and enduring role in the U.S. and the world.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM SC, SD BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 203 Religions of St. Louis: Communities of Faith and Action Across the Region

The St. Louis region is home to a diverse array of global religious communities. This course directly introduces students to some of that diversity by revolving around field trips to living institutions and meetings with religious leaders across traditions. In any given semester, our visits may include organizations that identify as Catholic, Pentecostal, evangelical, Jewish
This class will introduce students to key academic approaches to the question of how we should live. Through our visits and conversations, the variety within each religious community will also become apparent as we encounter adherents across the political spectrum who embody different ethnicities and who are committed to different degrees of "orthodoxy" or traditional belief and practice. Students should emerge from the course with a fresh sense of the cultural and religious vitality of the St. Louis metropolitan area, which is illustrative of the United States as a whole. (All required site visits will take place during the regular class time.)

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA EN: H

**L57 RelPol 209 Scriptures and Cultural Traditions: America's Bible**

When we think of the word "scripture" in antiquity, we might think of the texts that have been compiled in the different holy books that we currently have today. Yet the function of "scriptures" within a community, and the status given to different texts treated as "scriptural," has changed in different times and places. In this course, we will consider texts that would eventually come to be part of the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and the Qur'an as well as several of the exegetes and reading communities that shaped their various interpretations. We will explore how non-canonical sources played a role in the formation of the various canons we have today, comparing the authoritative status given to these texts to that given to other works from antiquity, such as the epics of Homer. Special attention will be played to the role of the receiving community in the development of "scripture," and the variety of the contexts in which scripture can function in the construction of and opposition to religious authority.

Same as L93 IPH 209

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH EN: H

**L57 RelPol 210 The Good Life Between Religion and Politics**

What constitutes a life well lived? How do we imagine answers to that question? Who gets to answer that question for us? And do we ask it as an "us" or as individuals? This course considers the way religious and political thought has shaped considerations of the classical ethical question of how we should live and the way that ethics has often served to connect religion and politics in thought and practice. Do we need a religious basis to answer ethical questions, or can we determine how to live without religious sources of authority? Is ethics a project of an individual or of communities? If the latter, are these political communities, religious ones, or something else? On what basis or with what capacities can we imagine new answers to ethical questions, whether in community or on our own? We will discuss these questions and more through the consideration of a range of answers to the question of how we should live.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH EN: H

**L57 RelPol 215 Performing Religion, Ritualizing Gender**

What is the difference between a wink and a blink? What the difference between graduation, a sacrament, and the electric slide? We make fine-grained distinctions every day in our own enactment and interpretation of these different kinds of practices. This class will introduce students to key academic approaches to "ritual," "practice" and "performance," and will ask whether these distinctions are important or arbitrary. Ritual studies (based in religious studies) also happens to center around the very same questions that gave birth to gender and queer studies (is gender a performance?), thus a parallel examination of ritual and performance studies necessarily brings religious identity into conversation with broader questions of identity (gender, race, class).

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA EN: H

**L57 RelPol 225 Religion and Politics in American History**

The United States has often been imagined as both a deeply Christian nation and a thoroughly secular republic. These competing visions of the nation have created conflict throughout American history and have made the relationship between religion and politics quite contentious. This course surveys the complex entanglements of religion and public life from the colonial era through the contemporary landscape. Topics covered include: religious liberty and toleration, secularization, the rise of African-American churches, the Civil War, national identity and the Protestant establishment, the religious politics of women's rights, religion and the presidency, the Cold War, the religious left and right, and debates over church-state separation.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA EN: H

**L57 RelPol 230 Black-Jewish Relations in the United States**

The relationship of blacks and Jews in the United States is at once intimate and strained, mutually beneficial and antagonistic. This course examines this uneasy alliance from a number of perspectives including anthropology, politics and identity politics, history, religion and class. Beginning with American anthropology's Jewish founding father, Franz Boas, challenging the concept of race, the course traces the relations of blacks and Jews throughout the 20th century and in our contemporary moment. We will pay particular attention to the civil rights era, which is commonly upheld as the golden age of black-Jewish relations, as well as to this alliance's unraveling in the post-civil rights era. The course then moves to a unit focused on more recent ruptures and collaborations including the 1991 Crown Heights race riots, during which Orthodox Jews clashed with their black neighbors, and Jewish involvement in the Black Lives Matter movement. The course concludes with a unit on identity and identity politics focused on the complexity and fluidity of the categories "white," "black" and "Jewish."

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD Arch: HUM BU: BA EN: H

**L57 RelPol 235 Puritans and Revolutionaries: Religion and the Making of America**

This course introduces students to the history of religion and politics in America from the English settlements of Virginia and Massachusetts Bay during the early 17th century through the constitutional debates of the 1780s. It pays attention to both formal legal issues regarding religious establishments and wider matters concerning political sentiments and their relationship to religious ideas or values. The course does not advocate a defining argument or single ideological "point," but, rather, it facilitates a series of observations of how different positions on the role of religion in early America make sense in their respective historical contexts. Social, political, and intellectual variables made for shifting understandings of what religious ideas mattered to public life in America and how those ideas ought to shape civil affairs.
L57 RelPol 240 Jewish Political Thought
This course uses the concepts of political theory to explore the diverse Jewish political tradition. While this tradition includes writing from and about the three historical periods of Jewish self-rule (including the modern state of Israel), most of the Jewish political tradition comes from the understanding of politics as viewed from outsiders to mainstream communities. Additionally, Jewish political thought can be found through a Jewish community’s self-understanding based on its interpretation of Jewish text and law by which it bound itself. Because we span over 2,000 years of recorded history, we will not attempt to discern a single “Jewish political thought” but rather look at JPT through the lens of familiar concepts of political theory. The fundamental questions we will explore are the relationship of the Jewish tradition to concepts such as authority, law, consent, sovereignty and justice. We will ask how the Jewish tradition views government and the relationship between the authority of God and the authority of temporal powers. We will explore these questions through a range of materials that include both primary and secondary literature.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: BA EN: H

L57 RelPol 245 Love and Reason
Love often seems dramatically unreasonable, and reason can seem coldly rational in a way that excludes any emotion, passion, or affiliation even akin to love. The supposed opposition between love and reason has been used by Christian and secular thinkers throughout modernity to organize ways of knowing and judging, and to criticize claims of faith, belief, and desire. But are love and reason really so distinct? What does it mean to say so, and why might someone make this claim? Can love be reasoned, and even reasonable? Can reason be aided by love, and even driven by it? How might different answers to these questions affect our understanding of other possibly unreasoned categories like faith, belief, and piety? This course offers an introduction to modern Christian thought and Western philosophy through these questions and themes.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 250 Zionism
Zionism is often thought of as a commitment to the principle that the Jewish People, as a distinct “people,” has a right to self-determination in its own historical land of the biblical Palestine. Yet the history of the term and the set of ideologies show a much more complex understanding. In this course we trace the emergence of a number of different “Zionisms” that would lead to the creation of the modern state of Israel. And we explore how the political principles at the core of these ideologies have fared in the 65 years since the founding of the modern Jewish state. The course is at its heart applied political theory: a case study of the way that ideas emerge from historical events, take on a life of their own, and then shape real outcomes in the world. The readings will weave together history, philosophy, literature and government.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, SSC Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA EN: S

L57 RelPol 255 Religion, Environmentalism, and Politics
This course explores the intersections of anthropology, theology, economic interests, and activism. We will draw on a range of sources including social-scientific theories about religion and ritual, discussions of disenchantment and re-enchantment, and indigenous claims to land. These theoretical frameworks will provide context for discussing contemporary religious responses to ecological disaster, including both environmentalist and anti-environmentalist movements.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA EN: H

This course introduces students to important themes in the history of African-American, and thus in American, religious history, among them slavery, emancipation, urbanization, migration, consumer culture, sexuality, politics and media technologies. Primary attention is given to Afro-Protestantism in North America and the cultural, social and religious practices and traditions of these black communities. However, students will also be introduced to specific expressions of religious diversity and varying religious traditions and practices in African-American communities.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 280 African-American Religions
This course is an introduction to African-American religions that attends to the changes wrought in indigenous African religions by enslavement, the adoption of Christianity (and severe critiques of it) by slaves themselves, the building of African-American denominations, the rise of new black religious movements, and the role of religion in contemporary African-American life. At every stage of the course, religion is discussed with reference to key political developments in broader African-American history. The course proceeds in three parts. The course begins with a brief introduction to key themes and problems in the study of African-American religions. For example, is there such thing as a “black church”? How does the study of African-American religion differ from the study of other religious groups or traditions? The second part, which is the bulk of the course, moves chronologically and historically through African and African-American religions in their shifting cultural and political contexts from the beginning of the European slave trade to the present. We will discuss African-Americans’ practice of several religious traditions: indigenous African religions, Islam, Protestant and Catholic Christianity, and new religious movements. The final part of the course focuses on several key issues and debates that are informed by the study of African-American religions and that have important connections with contemporary American life.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 305 Between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Freedom
This course focuses on the political and spiritual lives of Martin and Malcolm. We will examine their personal biographies, speeches, writings, representations, FBI Files, and legacies as a way to better understand how the intersections of religion, race and politics came to bare upon the freedom struggles of people of color in the U.S. and abroad. The course also takes seriously the evolutions in both Martin and Malcolm’s political approaches and intellectual development, focusing especially on the last years of their respective lives. We will also examine the critical literature that takes on the leadership styles and political philosophies of these communal leaders, as well as the very real opposition and surveillance they faced from state forces like the police and FBI. Students will gain an understanding of what social conditions, religious structures and
institutions, and personal experiences led to first the emergence and then the assassinations of these two figures. We will discuss the subtleties of their political analyses, pinpointing the key differences and similarities of their philosophies, approaches and legacies, and we will apply these debates of the mid-20th century to contemporary events and social movements in terms of how their legacies are articulated and what we can learn from them in struggles for justice and recognition in 21st-century America and beyond.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA EN: H

L57 RelPol 3081 City on a Hill: The Concept and Culture of American Exceptionalism
This course examines the concept, history, and culture of American exceptionalism — the idea that America has been specially chosen, or has a special mission to the world. First, we examine the Puritan sermon that politicians quote when they describe America as a "city on a hill." This sermon has been called the "ur-text" of American literature, the foundational document of American culture; learning and drawing from multiple literary methodologies, we will re-investigate what that sermon means and how it came to tell a story about the Puritan origins of American culture — a thesis our class will reassess with the help of modern critics. In the second part of this class, we will broaden our discussion to consider the wider (and newer) meanings of American exceptionalism, theorizing the concept while looking at the way it has been revitalized, redefined and redeployed in recent years. Finally, the course ends with a careful study of American exceptionalism in modern political rhetoric, starting with JFK and proceeding through Reagan to the current day, ending with an analysis of Donald Trump and the rise of "America First." In the end, students will gain a firm grasp of the long history and continuing significance — the pervasive impact — of this concept in American culture.

Same as L98 AMCS 3081
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 310 Religion and Violence
Is religion intrinsically connected with violence or merely manipulated to justify political positions and incite supporters? How has religion been the motivation and justification behind violent conflict, aggression and persecution? Does religion have a greater power to make war or peace? People have debated these questions for centuries as believers waged war in the name of their god(s). We'll study several critical theories about religion and violence and test them on historical and recent "religious" conflicts. Our investigation will be organized around five types of violence: 1) martyrdom and redemptive suffering, 2) claims on sacred space, 3) the violence of social stratification and "othering," 4) war and 5) apocalyptic and spiritual warfare. Case studies ranging from early Christian martyrs and crusades to attacks on abortion clinics and Tokyo subways will help clarify patterns and types of religious violence.

Same as L23 Re St 3100
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: FAAM, HUM BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 315 Virtues, Vices, Values: Regulating Morality in Modern America
This course takes morality and the question of "what's right" seriously as a lens through which to understand and assess modern American history. "Morality" is, of course, a devilishly flexible rhetoric, a language invoked to tell people how to act and how to be good, or, conversely, to criticize and to shame. When the state or a community wants its citizens or members to be "good," it crafts laws and creates customs to encourage or inhibit behaviors. This class examines how state and non-state actors have attempted to regulate the lived experiences of Americans and the conflicts that emerge over what, exactly, is correct, or right, or good for individuals, society and the state. It interrogates what values the state impresses upon its citizens and what values citizens want the state to uphold.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SD BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 320 Religious Freedom in America
This interdisciplinary course, co-taught by a law school professor and an American historian, concerns the intersection of religion, liberty and law in American culture. It introduces students to the major texts and historical issues concerning religious liberty, using legal history and case law, intellectual and social history, and political philosophy. It will address the history of religious liberty and contemporary debate — from the role of religious groups on college campuses to bakers and gay weddings — along with the deep historical background, from English settlement of North America and the making of the Constitution, through the Civil War, to the Cold War and the recent political developments.

Same as I50 INTER D 320
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD BU: BA, ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 321 American Religion, Gender, and Sexuality
Religious beliefs about gender and sexuality have long played a vital role in American politics, vividly evident in debates over such issues as birth control, censorship, pornography, funding for AIDS research, abortion, contraceptive access, abstinence-only sex education, sexual harassment, same-sex marriage, and more. Educated citizens need to understand the impact of these religiously inflected debates on our political culture. This course explores the centrality of sex to religion and politics in the U.S., emphasizing Christianity (both Protestant and Catholic forms) and its weighty social and political role regulating the behavior of women and men, children and teens, as well as its uses in legal and judicial decisions. Alongside scholarly readings in gender and sexuality, we will discuss popular devotional texts — on chastity, marriage, and homosexuality — with a political bent. Students will leave the course able to analyze how religious beliefs about sex shape specific gender norms central to U.S. politics.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 330 Native American/Euro-American Encounters: Confrontations of Bodies and Beliefs
This course surveys the history and historiography of how Native Americans, Europeans and Euro-Americans reacted and adapted to one another's presence in North America from the 1600s to the mid-1800s, focusing on themes of religion and gender. We will examine the cultural and social implications of encounters between Native peoples, missionaries and other European and Euro-American Protestants and Catholics. We will pay particular attention to how bodies were a venue for encounter — through sexual contact, through the policing of gendered social and economic behaviors, and through religiously-based understandings of women's and men's duties and functions. We will also study how historians know what they know about these encounters, and what materials enable them to answer their historical questions.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH EN: H
L57 RelPol 360 Religion and the Modern Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1968
The modern Civil Rights Movement is a landmark event in the nation’s political, civic, cultural and social history. In many contexts, this movement for and against civil and legal equality took on a religious ethos, with activists, opponents and observers believing that the net result of the marches, demonstrations and legislative rulings would redeem and/or destroy “The Soul of the Nation.” This seminar examines the modern Civil Rights Movement and its strategies and goals, with an emphasis on the prominent religious ideologies and activities that were visible and utilized in the movement. The course pays particular attention to the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic traditions, figures and communities that were indifferent, combative, instrumental and/or supportive of Civil Rights legislation throughout the mid-20th century.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD BU: BA EN: H

L57 RelPol 365 Slavery, Sovereignty, Security: American Religions and the Problem of Freedom
The goal of this course is to think critically about freedom as both an ideology and an institution. What does it mean to be free? What are the relationships among individual liberties, national sovereignty, and civil rights? In what ways has freedom been defined in relation to and materially depended on unfreedom? At the same time, this course will treat American “religions” in a similar critical fashion: as a historically contingent category that has been forged and inflected within the same context of White Christian settler empire. Religion and freedom have intertwined throughout American history, including in the ideal of religious freedom. Our critical interrogation of freedom should help us think carefully about power by working with but also beyond tropes of domination and resistance.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 368 Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion
What is religion, and how can we study it? Do we need an answer to the first question to pursue the second? Why, and toward what ends, might we undertake such study? This course considers these questions through the investigation of significant attempts to study religion over the past century, paying particular attention to the methods, motivations, and aims of these works. Is the study of religion an effort to disprove or debunk it, or perhaps to support it? What would each mean? Is it an effort to describe the indescribable, or perhaps to translate complex beliefs and practices into a language in which they can be discussed by others? Why would such a translation be helpful, and to whom? Is the study of religion an investigation of a social phenomenon, an organization of communities, a specific formation of individuals, or perhaps a psychosis or illusion, evidence of the workings of power on our lives and the difficulty of bearing it? What is at stake in defining religion in these ways, and then in undertaking its study?
Same as L23 Re St 368
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 370 Religion and the Origins of Capitalism
This course explores the economic, cultural and social history of the origins of Anglo-American capitalism from 1500 to 1800. Throughout we will discuss the worldviews and day-to-day business decisions of the merchants who created England’s transatlantic market order and empire. Rather than treat early capitalism only in terms of material or purely economic dynamics, it probes the intellectual constructs that combined with commercial innovations to form capitalism into a social system.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 375 Jesus, Jazz, and Gin: The 1920s and the History of Our Current Times
This course is a historical survey of the dynamic relationship between religion and politics during the 1920s. The 1920s were a tipping point for a great deal of the fundamental issues that shaped the 20th century in the U.S. This course seeks to investigate how religious activism, evangelism, discourse, practice and reinvention contributed to and was shaped by such change.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA EN: H

L57 RelPol 390 Mormonism and the American Experience
The focus of this seminar is Mormonism, meaning, primarily, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or LDS Church), which is the largest Mormon body. Mormons in the United States have gone from being one of the most intensely persecuted religious groups in the country’s history to the fourth largest religious body in the U.S. (by one count), with a reputation for patriotism and conservative family values. In addition to introducing who the Mormons are, their beliefs and religious practices, this seminar will explore issues raised by Mormonism’s move toward the religious mainstream alongside its continuing distinctiveness. These issues include: What is the religious “mainstream” in the U.S.? How did conflicts over Mormonism during the 19th century, especially the conflict over polygamy, help define the limits of religious tolerance in this country? How have LDS teachings about gender and race, or controversies about whether or not Mormons are Christian, positioned and repositioned Mormons within U.S. society?
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA EN: H

L57 RelPol 395 Topics in Religion and Politics
This course explores various topics in Religion and Politics.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 407 Solidarity and Silence: Religious Strategies in the Political Sphere
Although political action is often considered a problem of making oneself heard, religious practices of silence, self-effacement and withdrawal from certain worldly struggles have guided many significant political and social movements, particularly forms of nonviolent resistance. This course considers the role of religious thought and practice in such movements in the 20th century. The history of these movements presents an apparent paradox: How can political action emerge from the supposedly “private” realm of religion in the modern era, particularly its most individualistic forms? Is there a role for religious mysticism and mystical practices? Do the historical role of these practices in the political sphere complicate their portrayal in some scholarship as private, individual and depoliticizing? With these questions, this seminar will take a critical turn toward understanding the role of religion in the public sphere.
we will consider the work of authors and activists including Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King Jr., Simone Weil, and William Barber, as well as the
history of movements associated with their work. Toward the
end of the semester, we will turn to contemporary movements
against economic inequality, intimate violence, racially motivated
violence, and discrimination toward transgender persons to
discuss the use of religious strategies or religiously-derived
strategies in current political and social activism.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM EN: H

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**L57 RelPol 410 The FBI and Religion**
This seminar examines the relationship between the Federal
Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and religion (i.e., faith communities,
clerics, and religious professionals) as a way to study and
understand 20th-century religion and politics. The course will
investigate the history of the FBI as well as the various ways in
which the FBI and religious groups have interacted. The
course will pay particular attention to what the professor calls
the four interrelated “modes” of FBI/religious engagement:
counterintelligence and surveillance, coordination and
cooperation, censorship and publicity, and consultation.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

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**L57 RelPol 4121 American Religion, Politics, and Culture: Historical Foundations**
This seminar offers a wide-ranging overview of the leading
historical scholarship concerning the busy intersections of
American religion and politics. Topics include: church-state
relations, religion and foreign policy, religion and social justice,
religion and the science wars, the rise of the Religious Right,
and the role of religion in public life. Prerequisites: advanced
undergraduate or graduate standing in a related field or
permission of instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

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**L57 RelPol 4122 American Religion, Politics & Culture: Commentary from Alexis de Tocqueville to Contemporary Pundits**
This research-oriented seminar involves in-depth
historiographical investigation of leading scholarship at the
busy intersections of American religion, politics and culture.
The second semester focuses on classic and contemporary
commentaries on the American religious and political scene from
Alexis de Tocqueville through today’s leading pundits. Some
sessions will include a visiting scholar engaged in cutting-edge
research—a feature that will allow seminar members to work
with important scholars from beyond the university. Possible
topics include: church-state relations, religion and foreign
policy, religion and civil rights, religion and the science wars, the
rise of the Religious Right, and the role of religion in national
elections. The seminar is taught under the auspices of the John
C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics and is offered in two
complementary parts (though enrollment in either one of the
two is certainly possible). Its ambition is to build up a community
of inquirers engaged in the core questions that animate the
Danforth Center. Prerequisites: advanced undergraduate or
graduate standing in AMOS, History, or Religious Studies or
permission of instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM

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**L57 RelPol 425 Law, Religion, and Politics**
What is the role of religious argument in politics and law? What
types of arguments are advanced, and how do they differ from
one another? Are some of these arguments more acceptable
than others in a liberal democracy? This course will explore
these questions through the work of legal scholars, theologians
and political theorists. Our topics include the nature of violence
and coercion in the law, constraints on public reason, the
relationship between religion and government, and the nature of
religious practice and tradition.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM EN: H

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**L57 RelPol 420 Law, Religion, and Politics**
This seminar examines the relationship between the Federal
Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and religion (i.e., faith communities,
clerics, and religious professionals) as a way to study and
understand 20th-century religion and politics. The course will
investigate the history of the FBI as well as the various ways in
which the FBI and religious groups have interacted. The
course will pay particular attention to what the professor calls
the four interrelated “modes” of FBI/religious engagement:
counterintelligence and surveillance, coordination and
cooperation, censorship and publicity, and consultation.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

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**L57 RelPol 430 Pilgrims and Seekers: American Spirituality from Transcendentalism to the New Age**
This seminar focuses on the formation of "spirituality" in
American culture, from the transcendentalist world of Ralph
Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman on through more recent
expressions of the "spiritual-but-not-religious" sensibility. For
the purposes of this course, "spirituality" is usefully placed in
quotation marks in order to emphasize its peculiar construction
as something positively distinct from "religion"; this is a
reordering of American religious thought and experience that
we will explore in historical and contemporaneous terms. The
social and political consequences of this turn to the spiritual over
the religious will also be explored: for example, the consecration
of liberal individualism, the environmental vision of nature
mysticism, the blessing of a "bourgeois bohemian" consumerism,
and the negotiation of cultural pluralism.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM EN: H

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**L57 RelPol 440 Religion, Politics, and the University**
This course explores in depth current issues related to pluralism,
difference, and belonging in matters pertaining to religion and
other important issues, with a particular focus on how these
play out in the university context. The instructors, John Inazu
and Eboo Patel, are two of the leading national commentators
on these issues. Prerequisite: Students enrolling in this class
must submit a brief statement of interest (http://law.wustl.edu/
COURSES/INAZU/semiara1/summaries) to Professor John
Inazu.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

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**L57 RelPol 441 American Unbelief from the Enlightenment to the New Atheism**
This seminar examines American secularism, humanism and
atheism from the Enlightenment forward to the present. Topics
emphasized include: the relationship between believers and
nonbelievers, the civil liberties of atheists, religion in the public
schools, social radicalism and women’s rights, and the more
recent growth of religious disaffiliation and public atheism.
The course considers not only the intellectual dimensions of
freethinking unbelief but also the broader politics of secularism in
a nation routinely imagined as “under God.”
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

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**L57 RelPol 4564 American Pragmatism**
This course examines the history of American pragmatism
through three of its primary founders, the philosophers
Charles Peirce, William James and John Dewey. It considers
pragmatism as a response to the experience of uncertainty
brought on by modernity and contextualizes it amid late 19th-
and early 20th-century thought and politics, namely, scientific
methodology, evolutionary theory, the probabilistic revolution, Transcendentalism, the rise of secularism, slavery, Abolitionism and the Civil War. Major essays by each thinker are read as well as three intellectual biographies and one critical survey. Same as L22 History 4564 Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 480 Readings in African-American Religious History
This course is an introduction to the history and variety of African-American religions in the New World diaspora. The approach will be chronological, from the earliest years to the New World to contemporary expressions. We will also explore some of the major historiographical themes that have catalyzed current scholarship, the purpose and effectiveness of black nationalistic movements, issues of class and gender, the persistence of African elements of New World religious practice, performance and popular culture. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 485 Christian Nation, Secular Republic
The United States has often been imagined as both a deeply Christian nation and a thoroughly secular republic, and those conjoined framings have created recurrent conflict throughout American history. This seminar is designed to introduce advanced undergraduates and graduate students to current discussions of religion, secularism, and unbelief in American religious and political history. The course also places a complementary emphasis on close readings of crucial primary works, say, about the rise of deistic toleration or the persisting political power of Christianity-in textual particularities. The course takes as its starting point Charles Taylor's monumental account A Secular Age and works from there through various episodes of the Enlightenment and its long aftermath. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 495 Religion and the State: Global Mission, Global Empire
This course explores the complex intersections among U.S. political power on a global stage, and religious institutions and identities. Readings and discussions are organized around two very broad questions. First: How has this nation's history been shaped by religious "others" both inside and outside its borders? Second: How have perceptions of those others in turn affected U.S. responses to circumstances of global consequence — including, for example, foreign policy and diplomacy, missionary activity, and economic practices? Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H