Religion and Politics

The John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics serves as an open 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 (http://rap.wustl.edu/events/) relating to issues at the many intersections of religion and U.S. public life
- New courses (http://rap.wustl.edu/courses-type/courses/) on American religion and politics that can contribute to an interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in religion and politics for Washington University students
- American Religion, Politics and Culture Colloquium for scholars and students to discuss cutting-edge research
- Religion & Politics, an award-winning online journal engaging a diverse array of scholars, journalists and public leaders

The Center offers a minor in religion and politics that provides an opportunity for sustained exploration of the ways in which religion and politics have intersected in American culture, in both historical and contemporary terms. As part of the minor, 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, and religion’s entwining with reform movements (from abolition to environmentalism). The Center’s interdisciplinary minor attracts students from many disciplines, including natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Whether students are pre-med, pre-law, or pursuing futures in education, business, or the arts, they report their studies are enriched by our curriculum.

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Faculty

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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 (p. 1) for more information.

Minors

The Minor in Religion and Politics

Total units required: 15 units of course work, including the following:
Major themes will include religious encounter and including the Americanization of global religions in the U.S. This course explores religious life in the United States. We will focus our study on groups and movements that highlight social history and case law, intellectual history and canonical texts, to a variety of scholarly methods related to the issue: legal expertise of the instructors, the course will expose students arguments underlying that story. Drawing from the respective course introduces students to the major texts and historical that frame them are interwoven in the American story. This includes religious encounter and and contemporary analyses. This course is for first-year (non-social history and narrative accounts, and political philosophy and music: Should a for-profit religious corporation have a right services for a gay wedding? Can a church hire and fire its leaders for any reason? These current debates and the issues of the junior year.

• 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 120A Religious Freedom in America
The intersection of religion and law in American society has sparked some of the fiercest cultural engagements in recent memory: Should a for-profit religious corporation have a right not to fund birth control for its employees? Can a public college expel campus religious groups whose membership is not open to all students? May a Muslim in prison grow a beard for religious reasons? Should a cake baker or a florist be permitted to refuse services for a gay wedding? Can a church hire and fire its ministers for any reason? These current debates and the issues that frame them are interwoven in the American story. This course introduces students to the major texts and historical arguments underlying that story. Drawing from the respective expertise of the instructors, the course will expose students to a variety of scholarly methods related to the issue: legal history and case law, intellectual history and canonical texts, social history and narrative accounts, and political philosophy and contemporary analyses. This course is for first-year (non-transfer) students only.
Same as 160 BEYOND 120
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

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 United States. Students will do the following: (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 United States and the world.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC, SD BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 203 Religions of St. Louis: The Intersection of Faith and Politics Across the Region
The St. Louis region is home to a diverse array of global religious communities, many with strong political leanings. This course directly introduces students to some of this religious and political variety by coordinating weekly fieldtrips to living institutions and interacting with religious leaders across traditions. In any given semester, our visits may include organizations that identify as Catholic, mainline Protestant, Evangelical, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Vedantist, Scientifically, progressive Baptist, or secular humanist, among others. We will also visit the International Institute of St. Louis and study the politics of immigration and refugee resettlement that have helped shape the city. Through our visits and conversations, the multiplicity of each religious community will become apparent as we encounter adherents across the political spectrum, embodying different ethnicities and committed to different degrees of "orthodoxy" or traditional belief and practice. Students should emerge from the course able to analyze the complex intersections of religion and politics in the St. Louis metropolitan area, illustrative of the United States as a whole. Note: All required site visits will take place during the regular class time.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 209 Scriptures and Cultural Traditions: Text and Traditions
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 exegeses 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 Arc: 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? Do we ask it as an "us" or as an individual? 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, either in community or on our own? We will discuss these questions and more through a 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's 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 been imagined, by turns, as 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. Are there shared national symbols and ideals that have held the country together? Is there a discernible "civil religion" in American public life—a shared faith in freedom, democratic citizenship, and patriotic sacrifice? Or, is there instead a set of competing, irreconcilable visions—say, a white Christian nationalism versus a pluralistic cosmopolitanism? This course examines such issues through a range of speeches and addresses by such generative figures as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson,Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, Elizabeth Cady Stanton,Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Ronald Reagan, Barack Obama, and John McCain. Through sustained discussion of their canonical speeches, as well as other monuments, rites, and declarations that have hallowed the nation, the class explores what ideals Americans have held sacred.
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, religion and class. Beginning with American anthropologist'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 BU: BA EN: H

L57 RelPol 235 Puritans and Revolutionaries: Religion and Politics in 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"; rather, it facilitates a series of observations of how different positions on the role of religion in early America made 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.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: BA EN: H

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 244 Religion and Music in American Culture

In this course, students will examine public discourse on popular music as a way of understanding questions of religious identity and community formation. Through case studies ranging from the Pueblo Indian dance controversy of the 1920s to post-9/11 disputes about the Islamic call to prayer, students will consider how debates over what “counts” as sacred or secular music reveal disputes over notions of religious authority and authenticity in American culture.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM

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 Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 248 Religion, Health, and Wellness in Modern America

Religion, Health, and Wellness in Modern America will examine changing conceptions of health and wellness in America from the late nineteenth-century to the present. With media, artifacts, and literature drawn from the histories of medicine, religion, and capitalism, this class will cover the proliferation of alternative health regimens, the rise of the medical establishment, claims of divine healing, and the impact of market forces on wellness cultures. Course topics include the raced and gendered dynamics of care, socioeconomic status, technological innovation and media, the role of nature, health activism and radical self-care, and New Age spirituality and mental health. Special attention will be paid to how the politics of the body and its regulation intersect with religious and consumer practices in the modern wellness industry.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM

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 254 Topics in AMCS: A Year in Review: Hindsight is 2020: Piety, Pandemic, and Politics

What was 2020? This course examines a year that will be remembered alongside 2001, 1968, 1945, 1929, 1865, 1800, and 1776 as one of the most consequential in American history and culture. We will consider how the COVID-19 global pandemic, the bitterly contested 2020 Presidential election, and a summer of renewed protest for social justice reverberated through spheres of American arts, culture, education, energy, health care, labor, religion, sports, the university, technology and more. A series of guest experts from Washington University and around the country will provide instruction via lecture once per week, with students sharing their own experiences and analysis in discussion sections during the other weekly course meeting. The course is open to all, but it is geared toward first-year students and sophomores. It fulfills the Intro course requirement in the AMCS major. This is a variable topics course for courses best suited to the reviewing of a significant year in American Culture Studies. Topics vary by semester, so please see the current course listing.

Same as L98 AMCS 254

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

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. This course attends to change 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 African diasporic 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," and how does the study of African-American religion differ from the study of other religious groups or traditions? The second part, the bulk of the course, moves chronologically and situates 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: creole 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 BU: BA, ETH, HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 285 Islam in America

Muslims have long been an embedded part of American culture since their forced arrival through the Transatlantic slave trade and later waves of immigration throughout the 18th-21st centuries from various regions. In this course, we attend to the history of Islam in the U.S. and analyze the heterogeneity of American Muslim experiences across race, ethnicity, and gender. We consider how American Muslims both shape and are shaped by U.S. society as autonomous religious actors and as a marginalized outgroup.

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

L57 RelPol 288 Muslims in the Media and Popular Culture

In the post 9/11 context of the United States, Muslims have been a constant presence in news media, typically cast in a negative light as political others who are backwards, threatening, and inherently prone to violence. This pattern has long been replicated in films in which Muslims serve as static and dehumanized perpetrators of violence and/or as symbols of a backwards and depraved culture, antithetical to U.S. values and interests. In recent years, however, Muslims have become increasingly visible in the entertainment industry as protagonists and producers of their own media, including G. Willow Wilson's "Ms. Marvel," Hulu's "Ramy," and Netflix's "Man Like Mobeen."

This course explores a selection of recent media projects created by Muslim writers, actors, musicians, and comedians. We will be pairing films, television shows, music, and comics with scholarship on Islam and religion in the media to analyze Muslim representation and storytelling in contemporary popular culture. We will evaluate these works on their own terms, noting the ways in which gender and racial hierarchies dictate who gets to represent American Muslims while also assessing how these new media both disrupt and further reify Muslims' construction as religious and political outsiders.

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

L57 RelPol 290 Islamophobia & U.S. Politics

The presence of Muslim minorities in the West is increasingly divisive as political leaders appeal to voters' fear of the 'Other' to promote Islamophobic agendas that reshape immigration and asylum policies and redefine Western identity as Christian. Politicians further exploit the rise of extremist groups like ISIS to justify anti-Muslim rhetoric and critique multiculturalism, claiming that Islam and the West are inherently antithetical.

In this course we examine the phenomenon of Islamophobia as a form of anti-Muslim racism that parallels hostility towards other religious and racial minorities in the US. We explore how while the post-9/11 context gave way to an increase in incidents of anti-Muslim violence, contemporary manifestations of Islamophobia are deeply rooted in state level anti-black racism from the early twentieth century, as well as in anti-Muslim attitudes that date back to the colonial period. By examining academic literature, political speeches, and news media sources, we situate Islamophobia within its historical context and also analyze how US anxieties about Islam and Muslims are not only gendered and racialized, but also exist across the political spectrum.

Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, 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 bear upon the freedom struggles of people of color in the United States 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 the 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; we will then 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 307 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 non-violent resistance. This course considers the role of religious thought and practice in such movements in the twentieth 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 formations in contemplative and mystical practices? Does the historical role of these practices in the political sphere complicate their portrayal in some scholarship as private, individual, and depoliticizing? With these questions animating our investigations, 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 Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH

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 3105 American Holidays: Civic and Religious Celebrations in American Culture
This seminar examines a variety of religious holidays and civic rituals in American history and culture. Topics include: public conflicts over Christmas, African-American emancipation celebrations, the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Roman Catholic street festivals dedicated to the Virgin Mary, modern renderings of Hanukkah, as well as the memorialization of the Union and the Confederacy. Various interpretive approaches are explored, and the intent is to broach a wide range of questions about history and tradition, gender and race, public memory and consumer culture, religion and nationalism, through this topical focus on holidays and holy days.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH

L57 RelPol 314 Global Circuits: Religion, Race, Empire
This seminar explores how American entanglements of race and religion shape and are part of larger global processes. Over the course of the semester, we will investigate these entanglements through conceptual, historical, and ethnographic questions about and insights into the remapping of religious traditions and communal experiences onto imperial terrain. We will examine this through a range of problem spaces, including colonial rule and racial hierarchies; religious difference and migration; the racialization of religion; diaspora and empire; persecution and power; and global geographies of the War on Terror. This course is not of the advancement of race and religion in the United States or globally. Rather, this course aims to critically unpack formations of religion and race and their contemporary mediation by American geopolitics.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, SSC Arch: SSC Art: SSC BU: BA, ETH

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. Yet "good" is a contested concept, especially in a diverse, multicultural society. Thus this class examines a) how state and non-state actors, including religious leaders, have attempted to regulate the lived experiences of Americans and b) the conflicts that emerge over what, exactly, is correct, or right, or good for individuals, society, and the state. To what degree does calling something moral or immoral articulate or obstruct policy solutions? What do political coalitions oriented around "values" accomplish? Is it possible to how to moral frames and remain inclusive and tolerant? Topics may include marriage, abortion, immigration, alcohol, incarceration, disease, money, and medical care.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SD BU: 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, and this is vividly evident in debates over such issues as birth control, pornography, funding for AIDS research, abstinence-only sex education, sexual harassment, same-sex marriage, abortion, 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 United States, emphasizing Christianity (both Protestant and Catholic forms) and its weighty social and political role regulating the behavior of adults and children as well as its uses in legal and judicial decisions. Alongside scholarly readings in gender and sexuality, we will discuss popular devotional texts on gender and sexuality 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 and the law.
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, LCD, SC, SD Arch: HUM Art: HUM: ETH: H

L57 RelPol 334 Religion, Race, and Migration: Borders of Difference?
This seminar is an experiment in studying the intersections of religion, race, and migration through the idea of difference. We discuss how particular understandings of religion, race, and migration inform contemporary scholarship and shape national and international legal and governmental practices. Specifically, this course explores how difference-of community, body, and place-produces conditions of possibility. Over the semester, we will investigate various borders of difference, using binaries to guide our analysis. We will examine this through a range of problem spaces including: religion/secularism; race/ethnicity/sect; terrorist/citizen; and refugee/migrant. Ultimately, this course aims to critically unpack the relations of power by which people, places, and ideas are differentially constructed, maintained, and transformed
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, SC Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH

L57 RelPol 340 Pilgrims and Seekers: American Spirituality from Transcendentalism to the Present
This seminar focuses on the formation of “spirituality” in American culture from the Transcendentalist world of Ralph Waldo Emerson on through more recent expressions of the “spiritual-but-not-religious” sensibility. How did “spirituality” come to be seen as something positively distinct from “organized religion”? What are the main contours of spiritual seeking in American culture, especially among those who claim no specific religious affiliation? The course also explores the social, political, and cultural consequences of this turn to the spiritual over the religious: for example, the consecration of liberal individualism, the relationship of religious exploration to both environmentalism and consumerism, the politics of cultural appropriation, the negotiation of religious pluralism, and the pursuit of the spiritual in art.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 345 Religion and Race in the United States
Race and ethnicity are central to how religious pluralism is worked out in America. How do the categories of race and religion intersect to produce unique American identity? In this course, we examine the construct of race across various American congregational communities in order to understand debates on American identity and belonging. We also explore the idea of an American civil religion, and we engage with the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of particular religious groups within this category based upon racialized criteria.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH, HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 347 Religion and Race in the United States
Race and ethnicity are central to how religious pluralism is worked out in America. How do the categories of race and religion intersect to produce unique American identity? In this course, we examine the construct of race across various American congregational communities in order to understand debates on American identity and belonging. We also explore the idea of an American civil religion, and we engage with the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of particular religious groups within this category based upon racialized criteria.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH, HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 355 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: counter-intelligence and surveillance, coordination and cooperation, censorship and publicity, and consultation.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: BA, ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 355 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: counter-intelligence and surveillance, coordination and cooperation, censorship and publicity, and consultation.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: BA, ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 357 God in the Courtroom
The U.S. Constitution holds a promise to secure freedom of religion through its First Amendment. Its two religion clauses declare unconstitutional any prohibition on the free exercise of religion and laws respecting the establishment of religion. The consequence is that, whenever a group demands to be recognized as religious and to be granted the right to exercise its religion, a court, a legislature, or an administrative official must determine whether the religious practice in question is legally religious. This means that law plays a uniquely important role in defining religion in the United States. In this seminar, we will explore the relation between law and religion in America.
will study the religion clauses in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, the histories of their interpretations by American courts in landmark cases, and the ways that religious studies scholars have understood and critiqued these cases. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 358 Conscience and Religion in American Politics
Conscience is as American as apple pie and baseball, but its meaning and implications are deeply contested in American religion and politics. What is conscience? To what extent is conscience laden with theological — and, more specifically, Christian — commitments? What role should conscience, whether religious or ethical, play in political life? By considering what conscience means and what vision of politics it implies, we will reflect on what it means to be American: how religion should relate to politics, how individuals should engage with democratic laws and norms, and how religious and political dissenters might oppose American politics. We will focus on key moments in the history of American religion and politics through the lens of conscience, from the Interwar Period, the perceived threat of communism during the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Vietnam War to the "culture wars" on abortion, marriage equality, LBGTQ rights, and the death penalty. This course draws on interdisciplinary sources from religious studies, political theory, law, and history in 20th- and 21st-century American politics. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, 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 modern 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 362 Islam, Gender, Sexuality
In this course, we examine major themes and debates around gender and sexuality in Islamic contexts, investigating how gender informs social, political, religious, and family life in Muslim cultures. We employ a chronological approach to these topics, beginning with the status of women in seventh century Arabia, to the period of Islamic expansion across Asia, North Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula, to the colonial period ending with the contemporary US contexts, wherein debates over the status of Muslim women in society have emerged with renewed vigor. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM, IS 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 an ideology and 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 dependent 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, 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 dispove 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 examines the relationship between religion and the development of a capitalist economy in Europe, England, and America from 1550 to 1800. It relies on intellectual, social, and economic histories. We cover major thinkers from the early mercantist thinkers such as William Petty to Adam Smith. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 385 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 385A Topics in Jewish Studies
Consult Course Listings for current topics. Please note: L75 385A is intended for graduate students only.
Same as L75 JIMES 395
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: IS EN: H

L57 RelPol 390 Mormon History in Global Context
The focus of this seminar is Mormonism, meaning, primarily, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 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., 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: ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 395 Topics in Religion and Politics: The Abuse Crisis in Modern Christianity
For over a quarter-century, journalists have broken story after story about sexually abusive clergy in the U.S., many of them serial abusers of children and adolescents. While most accounts have focused on Catholic priests, many have also emerged of abusive evangelical and other Protestant ministers. The stories have illuminated how church bureaucrats have consistently protected abusers and subverted the efforts of victims and their families to seek recompense, accountability, and justice. These protections have often succeeded because of churches' political connections to law enforcement and legislators who have helped hide perpetrators and stymie survivors. Together we will analyze this cautionary tale about religion and politics by contextualizing it within the broader history of Christianity in the United States and beyond. Is this a case simply of a few bad apples or of institutional corruption? How has the church's response been shaped by fear of scandal, antipathy toward secularism, and theological teachings on gender and homosexuality? How does sexual abuse fit into the history of the church as a hierarchical institution? What challenges has the crisis posed to people of faith who are committed to the church, and can trust be repaired? Readings include legal case studies, internal church correspondence, victims' statements and criminal justice reports, documentary films and memoirs, and both journalistic and scholarly analysis of the clergy sex abuse crisis in the U.S. church.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: 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 formations in contemplative and mystical practices? Does the historical role of these practices in the political sphere complicate their portrayal in some scholarship as private, individual and depoliticizing? With these questions animating our investigations, 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 activism.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM EN: H

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: counter-intelligence and surveillance, coordination and cooperation, censorship and publicity, and consultation.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 412 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

L57 RelPol 4121 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

L57 RelPol 425 Law, Religion, and Politics
What is the role of religious argument in politics and law? What kinds 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

What does it mean to claim to be "spiritual but not religious"?? What are the social and political consequences of foregrounding spiritual seeking and religious experimentation over the "organized religion" of churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples?? The seminar focuses on a series of debates that have arisen over this "new spirituality" in American culture: the religious blessing of consumer culture, the rise of therapeutic models of meditation and mindfulness, the politics of Euro-American appropriations of Native American and Buddhist religious practices, the negotiation of religious pluralism, and the relationship between spiritual seeking and social justice.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: BA, ETH EN: H

L57 RelPol 435 Sabbath Politics: Rest and Refusal in Religion and Politics
The Jewish Sabbath arrives every week to disrupt ordinary life with a wholly different way of living, abstaining from some activities in divinely commanded rest. Is this different way of life strictly a break from the ordinary, or also a guide to it—and to how it might require disruption, reformation, and repair? Sabbath traditions have inspired radical political action including movements against debt, income inequality, environmental destruction, and racial injustice. This course will consider the ways that 20th and 21st century American Jews have practiced Shabbat and thought about its significance in political life. Students will read a range of Jewish texts including Abraham Joshua Heschel's classic 1951 book The Sabbath, and consider them in relation to movements of contemporary radical politics that have been inspired by Sabbath traditions, including Strike Debt, reparations for African-Americans, and agonistic democratic politics.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM

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/seminar1/summaries/) to Professor John Inazu.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

L57 RelPol 4491 American Unbelief from the Enlightenment to the Present
This seminar examines American secularism, humanism, and atheism from the Enlightenment forward to the present. Topics to be explored include the tensions between secular and Christian conceptions of the republic, the civil liberties of atheists and nonbelievers, the battles over religion in the public schools, the culture wars over secular humanism and science, and the contemporary growth of the religiously disaffiliated or religious "nones." The course considers not only the intellectual dimensions of skeptical critiques of religion but also the underlying politics of secularism (and anti-secularism) in a nation routinely imagined as "under God."
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: SSP Art: SSP EN: H

L57 RelPol 4564 American Pragmatism
This course examines the history of American pragmatism through three of its prime founders, the philosophers Charles Peirce, William James and John Dewey. It considers pragmatism as a response to the experience of uncertainty brought on my 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 nationalist 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