

# LEARNING SPACES, LEARNED BODIES

## Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses



REL 101-7-20

First Year Seminar

TTH 2-3:20pm

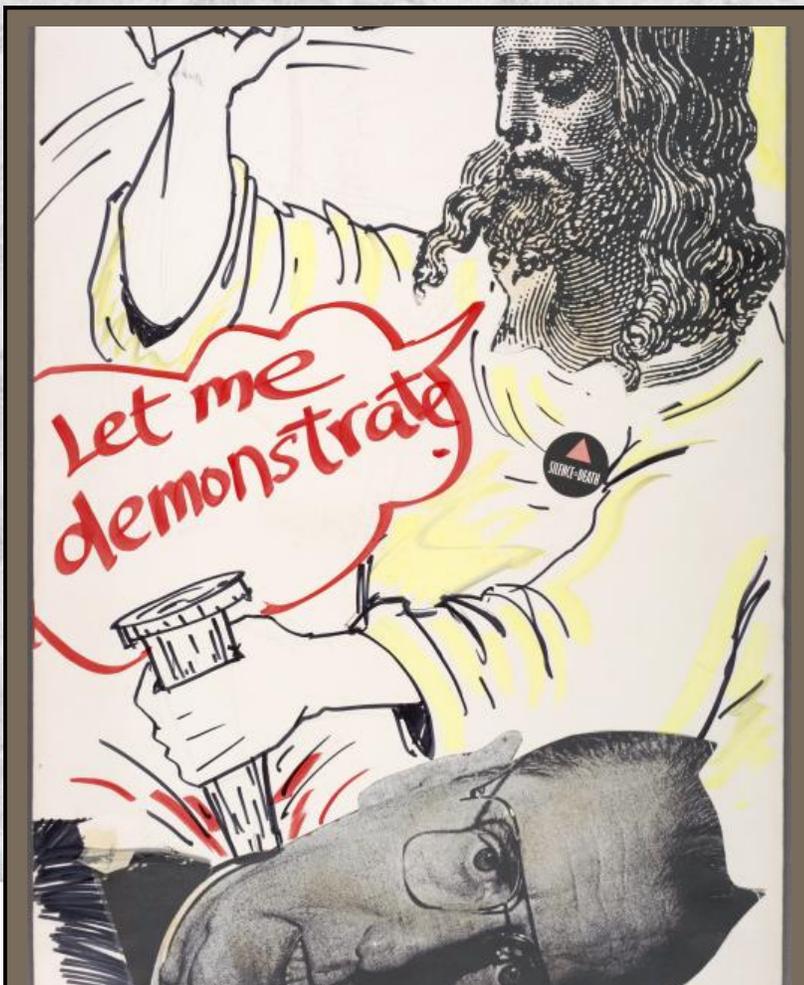
Shira Schwartz

This is a College Seminar on the relationship between the body, space, and learning. While education and college are often presented as primarily intellectual activities, we will pay attention to the spatial and bodily dynamics that shape how we create, share and access knowledge. Using a range of creative assignments and multi-modal interdisciplinary sources, we will approach the body and space as places where learning happens, and therefore as categories through which we can analyze how learning happens, including in our very own classroom and on campus. Students will learn to ask how the body shapes and is shaped by its learning environment through categories like gender/sex and sexuality, race/ethnicity and religion, ability and access, and how fields like architecture, design, technology and media influence the enterprise of learning. Students will learn to re-examine their most basic assumptions about learning in a variety of expected and unexpected settings, like libraries and maker spaces, rabbinic bathrooms and football fields, science labs and ancient Greek life, in order to prepare for a range of learning experiences that they may encounter at Northwestern, and beyond. The course will guide students to be more attuned to the social and material dynamics that may otherwise go unrecognized in these experiences, teaching critical skills that will prepare them to be more conscious learners.

# QUEER RELIGION

## Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses

Is religion homophobic and transphobic? Does it have to be? This course explores how queer religious people in America, past and present, have made sense of their lives as queer and religious. We will ask how religion has shaped queer people's self-understanding as queer, and how queerness has shaped their understanding of faith through their stories of coming out, conversion, transition, diaspora, desire, loss, and healing from spiritual trauma. We will identify the many contributions queer people have made to American religious history—sometimes while hiding their rainbow under a bushel. Course materials comprise multiple genres of academic writing and popular media, drawn from Native American religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Haitian Vodou, and New Age spiritualities like tarot and astrology. Instruction will focus on developing critical thinking, reading, and writing skills through familiarizing first year students with basic research methods and strategies designed to prepare them for college-level research in any humanities field.



REL 101-7-21  
FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

MW 2-3:20pm  
Ashley King

# INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

## Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses

This course offers an introduction to Buddhist history, culture, philosophy, and practice. We explore the major doctrinal varieties of Buddhism, from its inception through the rise of the Mahayana and Tantric or Vajrayana traditions. At the same time, we also investigate Buddhist visual, material, and ritual cultures—which offer windows onto aspects of Buddhism as a lived religion not always visible in scriptural sources. In the process we engage themes like the meaning of suffering, the cosmology of cyclical rebirth, the social role of monasticism and its intervention in traditional family structures, the place of women and gender in Buddhism, the relationship between religious ideals and everyday life, the question of self-reliance versus divine assistance, and the power of images and icons.



MW 12:30-1:50pm

Kevin Buckelew

REL 210-20

# INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW BIBLE

**Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses**



This introductory course is an immersive journey into the world of the Hebrew Bible (also known as the "Old Testament" in Christian tradition). Throughout this class, we will explore the historical, cultural, and literary contexts of the Hebrew Bible, examining the diverse genres and themes within the biblical text and discovering how they have influenced and shaped modern views about God, humans, and society. You will have the opportunity to delve deeply into the diverse literatures of the Hebrew Bible and to examine their relevance to contemporary issues and ideas. You will also learn about the various scholarly approaches to the academic study of the Hebrew Bible and how they have contributed to our understanding of this ancient and complex text.

TTH 9:30-10:50am

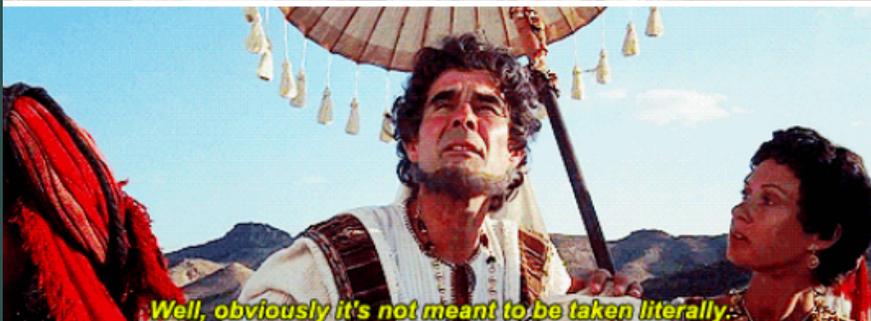
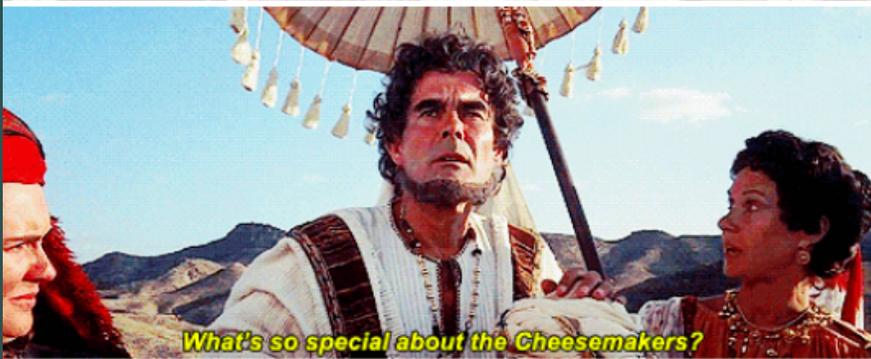
Allison Hurst

REL 220-20

# INTRODUCTION TO NEW TESTAMENT

## Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses

The New Testament has influenced the lives and experiences of individuals and communities across the globe for thousands of years. It has served as a source of structure, meaning, and hope for many while also influencing ideologies and practices of bigotry and violence. But what do we really know about the world in which the New Testament was produced? What was the project of Jesus and his followers and why was it so polarizing? What authors composed the New Testament's texts and what can we glean about their audiences and motivations? Why were some texts chosen for the canon of the New Testament and others left out? This course will consider the New Testament from a range of vantage points and methodologies, allowing students to explore the complex networks of religious practices, cultural ideologies, and political actors that influenced its production and global reception.



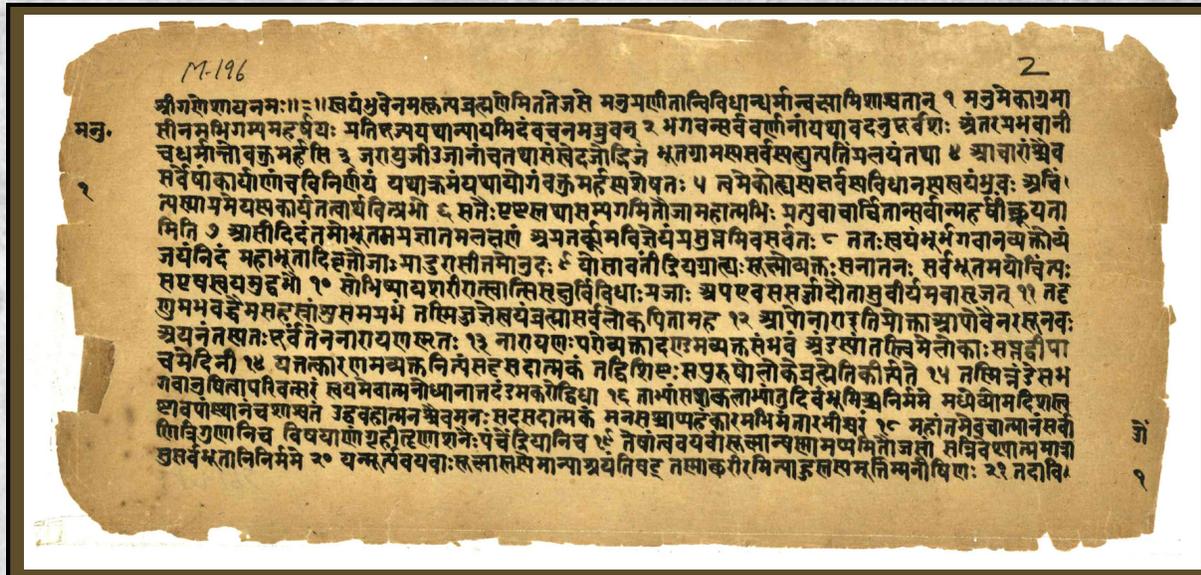
TTh 11-12:20pm

Lily Stewart

REL 221-20

# HINDU LAW AND STATECRAFT

## Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses



Although not often recognized, law has played as important a role in the development of Hinduism as it has in Judaism or Islam. One scholar has recently argued that we can understand “Hinduism” best if we see it as a legal tradition. This course will be a survey of the tradition of Hindu law (dharmaśāstra) in India from the 6th c. BCE to its demise in the modern period. We will explore the beginnings of the scholarly legal tradition, its relationship with Hindu statecraft (arthaśāstra), its interaction with other legal systems of South Asia, its role in colonial administration, and its ultimate replacement by modern Indian law. Our investigation will focus on the formal features of Hindu law while placing it in a broader historical and cultural perspective. To this end, we will explore the relationship between the scholarly tradition and law in practice, the relationship between Brahmanism, law, and politics, and the role of caste and gender in the formation of Hindu law. This seminar will also provide us with the opportunity to think about Hindu law in the context of comparative law and legal anthropology.

TTH 2:00-3:20pm  
Mark McClish

REL 309-20



# RELIGION AND THE BODY IN CHINA

## Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses

The fragility of the human body, its susceptibility to illness and death, provoked a wide array of responses among religious practitioners in pre-modern China. Some pursued supernatural longevity and even immortality through various regimes of self-cultivation. Others, by contrast, renounced the body in part or whole through dramatic acts of self-immolation. Even in death, however, many aspired to rebirth in heavenly realms where bodies do not grow old and die, but rather live forever in bliss. This course examines these various attempts to overcome death in Chinese religion—including Buddhism, Daoism, and traditions that fall between these large categories—seeking to understand how the mortality of the body was used to authorize particular modes of embodied living. In the process, we will explore how these modes of religious life shaped attitudes toward food, medicine, gender, sexuality, and family.

MW 3:30-4:50pm  
Kevin Buckelew

REL 316-20

RSG/RHM



# SAINTHOOD AND THE BODY

## Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses

What kinds of bodies can be saintly? How do saintly people interact with their bodies? What do modern celebrities like Beyonce and Tupac Shakur have in common with the saints? Why is there a patron saint of stomachaches? This course explores the complex relationship between saints and their bodies in Christian history. Saints have long represented the extremes of Christian excellence, in large part because their lives and bodies interrogate the boundaries between heaven and earth, spirit and flesh, masculine and feminine, holy and transgressive, life and death. Saints facilitate incredible miracles, perform painful and sometimes disgusting acts of asceticism, and experience mystically erotic relationships with the divine. Even as saints live to deny their bodies, their bodies are nevertheless foundational to their sanctity, both before and after death.



TTH 3:30-4:50pm

Lily Stewart

REL 345-20

RSG/RHM



# BLACK RELIGION AND THE DIGITAL HUMANITIES

## Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses



MW 9:30-10:50am

KB Dennis Meade

REL 360-20

RLP

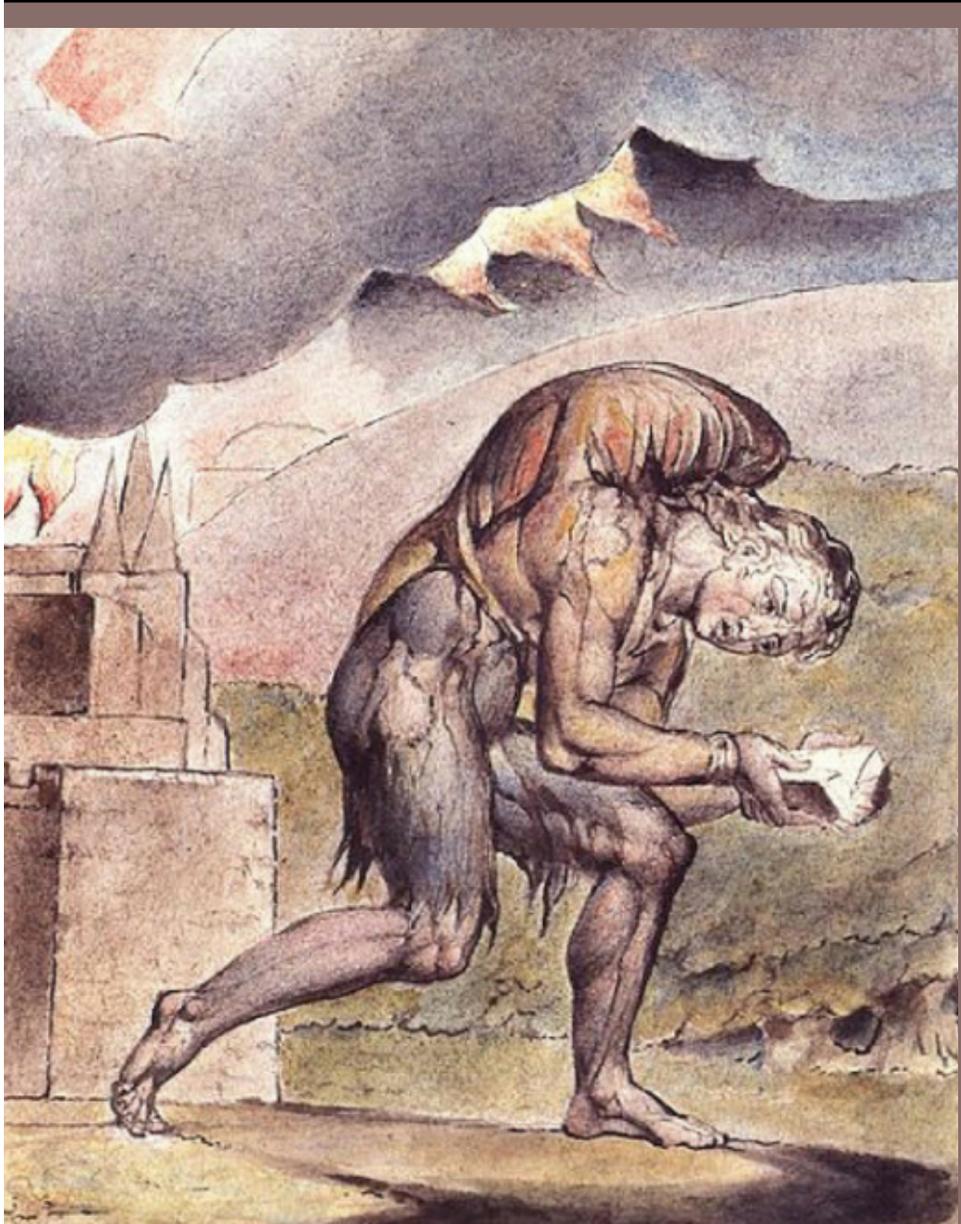


Black and Caribbean Studies are vibrant fields in the digital humanities. The study of religion in the digital humanities, however, remains an emergent field. This course centers religion as the primary lens to excavate and recover representations of Black Religion using archival sources, fiction, film, and art. Religion will serve as the framework to interrogate what counts as data, the sources in which we can locate this data, its deployment and (re)presentation. The course will provide students the opportunity to explore current digital projects and learn digital tools to generate their own inquiries.

# RELIGION AND LITERATURE

## Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses

Come study the long history of interaction and influence between literature and religion. Along the way, we will study biblical stories; literary portrayals and critiques of what it's like to live a religious life; and reflections on theological themes woven into contemporary novels and poetry.



MW 11:00-12:20pm

Claire Sufrin

REL 374-20

# RELIGION AND CULTURE IN THE CARIBBEAN

## Religious Studies Fall 2023 Courses

The Caribbean constitutes a unique space to understand the history of resistance and social change in the Black Atlantic world. Going beyond the tropes of reggae, Rastafari, and tourism--this course provides an introduction to the diversity of religious traditions in the region, with particular focus on Afro-Caribbean religious practices and spiritual technologies. Students will explore the cosmological features and embodied expressions that characterize these traditions. Through presentations, discussions, and writing assignments students will reflect on concepts such as belonging, migration, colonialism, race, class, and gender to understand the political and cultural implications of religion in the region.

REL 379-20 /  
AF\_AM\_315-20

MW 12:30-1:50pm  
KB Dennis Meade



RLP

