Religious Studies

Spring 2027 Courses



Hugo Simberg, The Garden of Death

The Bible at the Movies

Death & Dying
(AIHS, IFPE)

Law & Order in China: Ancient Roots, Modern Impact
(AILT, IFWC)

Satan
(AILT, IFWC)

Sex & Salvation in Nineteenth-Century America
(AIHS, IFWC)

Zen

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Electives & General Education

Law & Order in China: Ancient Roots, Modern Impact (RELG 206, AILT, IFWC)
TR: 12:00 - 1:15 PM (01); 1:30 - 2:45 PM (02)
Jane Geaney

The concept of the Rule of Law invites comparison across cultures, and "Law & Order in China" approaches the development of law in Early China through this lens. Distinct from morality and custom, the idea of law emerged as a consistent impersonal standard for governance. Though later associated with authoritarianism and anti-intellectualism, Chinese legal thinking arose in response to historical change, challenging the notion of an idealized past and divine mandates. This course encourages students to critically examine the foundations, advantages, and limitations of the Rule of Law, while exploring how early Chinese legal ideas might shape global issues today.

Sex & Salvation in Nineteenth-Century America (RELG 210, AIHS, IFWC)
TR: 3:00 - 4:15 PM (01); 4:30 - 5:45 PM (02)
Douglas Winiarski

Why are contemporary American evangelicals fascinated with promoting family values and policing the boundaries of human sexuality? This course looks back to a period in which the most radical Protestants in the young United States questioned everything: family structures, gender roles, sexual identities, and marital arrangements. Topics include the innovative and often controversial sexual and marital practices of the Shakers, Mormons, and Oneida Community. We'll also pay close attention to the fascinating life and career of the Publick Universal Friend, the first nonbinary religious leader in American history.

Satan (RELG 221, AILT, IFWC)
TR: 12:00 - 1:15 PM (01); 1:30 - 2:45 PM (02)
Stephanie Cobb

Who is Satan? The answer depends on who you ask. Satan has been a messenger from God, a prosecutor in God's court, an adversary of humans, and an enemy to God. What is consistent is that he has remained useful throughout history—and that is what this course explores, from his earliest appearances in the Bible to his role in medieval literature; from the "Satanic Panic" of the 1980s to conspiracy theories about COVID. Throughout our study, we will focus on why Satan has remained such a powerful and adaptable cultural symbol for people to explain personal, social, and cosmic disorder.

The Bible at the Movies (RELG 265)
MW: 10:30 - 11:45 AM
Rhiannon Graybill

This class explores film adaptations of the Bible, and how they reflect – or change – the original biblical text. Biblical films must negotiate history, religion, and representation. They face special demands from their audiences, who may love the Bible, hate the Bible, or know nothing about it. And they provide excellent case studies for thinking about how categories like ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are represented, both in the text and on screen. We will read a selection of biblical texts and then consider how they are adapted on screen in major motion pictures, with a focus on contemporary cinema. We will also read scholarship on the Bible and film.

Death and Dying (RELG 270, AIHS, IFPE)
MW: 9:00 - 10:15 AM
Mimi Hanaoka

This course explores death and dying within the framework of religious traditions across time and place. We will study how different religions approach death and dying, including theological beliefs, rituals, and community practices. We will study concepts of the afterlife, heaven, and hell across a range of religious traditions. We will also examine hospice, hospital, palliative, and end-of-life care. We will consider whether current practices around death and dying intersect or diverge with religious practices and the implications of these intersections and divergences.

Religious Studies Seminars

Zen (RELG 308)
M: 3:00 - 5:40 PM
Jane Geaney

This course introduces the texts, histories, and practices of Zen Buddhism, from its beginnings as Chan Buddhism in China to its development in Japan. Through close engagement with primary sources, students will encounter central Zen ideas and practices while considering how Zen looks different when approached through religious studies, philosophy, and psychology.