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The mission of McKendree University is to provide a high-quality educational experience to outstanding students.

~Responsible Citizenship ~Engagement ~Academic Excellence ~Lifelong Learning~

REL 210 Living Religions of the East (3)

An introduction to the indigenous religions of India, China, and Japan, including the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. The course includes analysis of important beliefs, practices and historical developments within each tradition, readings of classic and contemporary literature from the traditions, and visiting of religious sites.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Understand the major beliefs, practices, and historical developments of the world religions of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto.
2. Gain an appreciation of the living character of the Eastern traditions and the way they shape the lives of billions of people today. This involves reading and discussing the texts of contemporary representatives of these religions, watching movies that portray these religions in their context, and visiting religious sites.
3. Understand the status of the Eastern religions we study in the US context.
4. Do independent in-depth research and gain a deeper understanding of an important Eastern religious figure, movement, belief, or practice.
5. Improve reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.



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REL 211 Living Religions of the West (3)

An introduction to the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course includes analysis of important beliefs, practices and historical developments within each tradition, readings from classic and contemporary literature from the traditions, and visiting of religious sites.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Understand the major beliefs, practices, and historical developments of the world religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
2. Understand the living character of each tradition and the way they shape the lives of billions of people today.
3. Gain a focused understanding of the nature and shape of the Western religions in the political and social life of the United States.
4. Gain in depth knowledge about an important Western religious figure, movement, belief, or practice.
5. Improve reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.



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REL 215/315 Religion in the United States (3)

An overview of the history, character, and variety of religions in the United States. Elements of the course include summarizing historical developments in religion, analyzing constitutional issues regarding the separation of church and state, and examining the distinctive characteristics of denominational and religious groups, including the way they respond to important contemporary issues.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Understand the main patterns of religious belief in US history, including the main developments in the type and character of religious belief from the colonial period to the present.
2. Understand the legal position regarding the relation between religion and the state in the US, and to analyze the various ways in which this position is interpreted historically and at present.
3. Understand the origins, and distinctive beliefs and practices of historically and numerically significant Christian denominations in the US.
4. Understand the differences between evangelical and mainline types of Protestantism in the US.
5. Understand the distinctive beliefs and practices of significant non-Christian and world religions, and to grasp their significance in US religious life historically and in the contemporary period.
6. Improve reading, writing, information literacy, and critical thinking skills.



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REL 230 Introduction to Christianity (3)

An overview of the Christian tradition, including its roots in Judaism and its growth and development through the centuries. Special attention is given to critical analysis of significant issues Christian churches face in the contemporary world.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Understand the main periods of Christian history and significant historical and intellectual developments within those periods.
2. Understand some of the major developments of modern thought and their impact on Christianity, including a variety of ways contemporary Christian groups and theologians have responded to modern thought.
3. Understand the development of important Christian doctrines and the way some contemporary theologians interpret those doctrines in the contemporary context.
4. Understand the way significant contemporary cultural issues impact Christianity, and the variety of responses of Christians and Christian groups to those issues.
5. Improve reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.



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REL 233/333 Religion and Science: Conflict or Compatibility? (3)

An examination of major issues in the relation between science and religion. The course focuses on the way different religious systems may or may not be compatible with contemporary scientific theories. Scientific theories examined may include big bang cosmology, relativity, quantum theory, and biological evolution by means of natural selection. Religious systems examined may include classical theism, process thought, pantheism, and forms of eastern mysticism. Students elect to take this course at one level, not both.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Understand major events in the history of the relation between religion and science for the past approximately 500 hundred years.
2. Understand major models for relating contemporary scientific understanding and religious belief, including the potential pitfalls and possibilities of various models.
3. Understand both the possibilities and potential differences in relating western monotheistic religious systems and eastern religious systems with the contemporary scientific method and major contemporary scientific theories.
4. Improve reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.



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REL 325 Philosophy of Religion (W, 325 only) (3)

This course explores traditional and recent, philosophical and theological thinking in areas such as arguments for the existence of God, the nature of religious knowledge, the problem of evil, the question of human destiny, and the nature of religious language, etc. Students taking this course as PHI 325 will be required to complete a process-oriented major writing project in addition to other required writings. Students may elect to take this course at one level, but not both. Same as REL 325.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Explain major themes, concepts, and theories in the philosophy of religion;
2. Evaluate various arguments for and against theism, miracles, and mystical experiences;
3. Explain the difference between pragmatic and epistemic justifications for religious beliefs; and,
4. Evaluate the arguments for and against the possibility of life after death.

Course Topics

1. The nature and methods of philosophy of religion
2. Religious Language and Belief
3. Concept of God
4. Faith and Reason: the existence of God
5. The Problem of Evil
6. Religious experience and mysticism
7. Death and Immortality



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REL 330 History of Christian Thought (W) (3)

An examination of key thinkers and issues that have shaped Christian theology over the last two thousand years, including extensive reading in primary sources. Prerequisite: REL 230 or instructor consent.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Understand the development of classic Christian theology in the Patristic period by studying major Patristic theologians.
2. Understand the development of major questions faced by Christian theology in the medieval period and read examples of responses to those questions by significant medieval theologians.
3. Understand the major theological positions taken by the main figures of the Protestant Reformation.
4. Understand the development of major questions faced by Christian theology in the modern period and read examples of responses to those questions by significant modern theologians.
5. Improve their reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.



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REL 332 Contemporary Christian Thought (W) (3)

An examination of key thinkers and issues in Christian thought. This may include but is not limited to feminist theologies, liberation theologies, environmental theologies, process theologies, theology and pluralism, theology and the natural sciences, and post-modern theologies.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Understand the fundamental debates, developments, and positions with regard to these items taken by select major twentieth century Christian theologians.
2. Understand and engage current representatives of constructive Christian theology of various kinds. This includes understanding the vital issues and relevant frameworks in the contemporary period that drive these thinkers.
3. Improve their ability to articulate verbally the positions of various thinkers by making class presentations on the readings and by asking questions in class over the readings.
4. Improve their critical thinking skills by learning to evaluate a variety of religious claims.
5. Improve their writing skills by writing chapter summaries, questions, and a major research paper.



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REL 340 Old Testament (3)

An introduction to the history, beliefs, and practices of the ancient Hebrew people, as expressed in the literature of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Understand the main elements of the history, beliefs, and practices of the ancient Hebrew people expressed in the Christian Old Testament.
2. Understand and critically evaluate various methods of interpreting the Christian Old Testament. Of special concern is understanding the historical-critical method of interpreting the Old Testament and the major proposals about the construction of the text made by historical-critical scholars.
3. Improve critical thinking skills by evaluating various ways of interpreting the text of the Old Testament and by engaging in a detailed interpretation of select passages.
4. Improve writing skills by engaging in a detailed interpretation of select passages and bringing a variety of sources to bear on that interpretation.



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REL 345 New Testament (3)

An introduction to the literature of early Christianity, with special attention to the authors' ideas about Jesus of Nazareth and the life and problems of the earliest Christian communities.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Understand the main elements of the history, beliefs, and practices of the early Christian movement expressed in the New Testament.
2. Understand and critically evaluate various methods of interpreting the New Testament. Of special concern is understanding the historical-critical method of interpreting the New Testament and the major proposals about the construction of the text made by historical-critical scholars.
3. Improve their critical thinking skills by evaluating various ways of interpreting the text of the New Testament and by engaging in a detailed interpretation of select passages.
4. Improve their writing skills by engaging in a detailed interpretation of select passages and bringing a variety of sources to bear on that interpretation.