

Religious Studies

Spring 2013 - Course Descriptions

saintmarys.edu/departments/religious-studies

First Course in Religious Studies

Reminder: RLST 101 is a pre-requisite for all 200-level RLST courses, including those taken abroad.

RLST 101.01, 02
3.0 credits

**Introducing Religious Studies –
Speaking of God**
9:30-10:45 TR
11:00-12:15 TR

Phyllis Kaminski

Why study religion? What does it mean to believe in God? How does personal faith relate to religion? Is religious faith a distinct part of life or does it permeate all of existence? Does religion matter? How does religion shape political life (in the United States, in the Middle East, in the world)? How can you as young women believers speak about God in a way that is credible to non-believers? Why should you as a first year college student at Saint Mary's College care?

This course will engage issues such as these as it introduces you to some of the basic sources and skills required for the academic study of religion and responsible theological inquiry. Using *The Faith Club* and inter-religious dialogue as a framework, we will study the dynamic historical nature of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as we examine various ways in which these faith communities and their members speak of God--in prayer, in history, in texts from sacred scriptures, in religious classics, in religious practice, and in contemporary events. By the end of the semester, you will understand better how religion shapes the way we as women view the world and find meaning in life. You will also have examined aspects common to all religion: prayer, story (sacred texts), symbol, ritual, creed (beliefs), doctrine (teaching), and ethics (decisions and actions that express a commitment to do good). There are tests, papers, oral presentations, and a final exam.

RLST 101.03.04
3.0 credits

**Introducing Religious Studies –
Religious Issues in Contemporary Society: God, Self and Other**
9:00-9:50 MWF
10:00-10:50 MWF

Kurt Buhring

What does it mean to be a religious person in modern society? How does one's religious identity impact the way in which one understands the world? What are religious responses to perennial questions of faith and doubt, love and suffering, and social justice and oppression in light of the contemporary cultural context? How do religious persons deal with practical issues such as religious pluralism, politics, and scientific developments? What is the status of women in religion? We will examine these questions and others in the pursuit of a greater understanding of the study of religion. This course will ask participants to critically evaluate their notions of both the nature and the role of religion in today's world through an exploration of the works of novelists, theologians, political philosophers, and scientists, among others.

RLST Spring 2013 Course Descriptions

RLST 101.05, 06
3.0 credits

Introducing Religious Studies – *Conversion*
3:00-4:15 MW
4:30-5:45 MW

Stacy Davis

This course is an introduction to the subject of conversion. It will focus on the following questions: Why does an individual leave one set of beliefs for another? How does this take place? What are the practical consequences for the new believer? How does a conversion change the convert's relationship to the world around him or her? With these questions in mind, we will begin by reading texts that define conversion in academic terms and then will apply those terms to fictional and non-fictional case studies, specifically the autobiography of Sara Miles, the biography of Malcolm X, and the literature of Zadie Smith and Tony D'Souza.

RLST 101W.07
4.0 credits

**Introducing Religious Studies –
*Encountering World Religions***
2:00-3:15 TR
also meets 3:00-3:50 W

Anita Houck

In this course, we'll work to gain a sound basic understanding of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and the nature of religion itself. Besides learning some of the major concepts of each religion, we'll study artistic texts representing each religion; consider how religions are lived in diverse and changing ways today; and practice scholarly approaches to help us understand religions, others, and ourselves better. In the end, we'll hope to answer several questions: What is religion, and how is it different from other ways of looking at human life? How can we come to understand others' ways of seeing and being in the world? Are all religious traditions really the same at their heart, or are the apparent differences important after all? Students will write several kinds of essays and prepare a portfolio as part of the Basic W program.

Second Course in Religious Studies

RLST 232.01,02
3.0 credits

Intro to the New Testament
9:30-10:45 TR
2:00-3:15 TR

John Fotopoulos

This course will acquaint students with the Christian biblical writings giving attention to their social-historical, literary, and theological characteristics. The New Testament texts will be situated within their respective Jewish Palestinian and Greco-Roman contexts of Jesus and his early followers. Attention will be given to compositional issues and to the subsequent transmission of these writings. To accomplish these aims, this course will introduce students to the academic study of scriptural writings and to the historical-critical tools employed by exegetes in contemporary biblical scholarship. Students will also consider how a small Jewish sect devoted to the messianic prophet Jesus spread throughout the Roman Empire and intersected with the Greco-Roman world. The New Testament writings will provide glimpses into the religious and practical issues that arose when Judaism, Christianity, and paganism intersected in the lives of diverse Christian assemblies

RLST Spring 2013 Course Descriptions

RLST 236.01,02
3.0 credits

Faith in Action
12:00-12:50 MWF
1:00-1:50 MWF

Kurt Buhring

This course examines the faith, practices and theories of influential modern activists and writers who exemplify a variety of approaches to the Christian quest for justice. Questions we will consider include: What is the theological basis for religious activism? How does this theological basis impact the practices of social justice activism? What is the role of violence in these practices? What particular concepts of justice are promoted by Christian activists, and why? This course is designed to provide an opportunity for students to explore issues such as these by integrating in-class readings and discussions with out-of-classroom experiences. We will not only read about activists such as Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thomas Merton, and Mohandas Gandhi, but we will also have the opportunity to apply class principles in a service learning project within the South Bend community.

RLST 240.01, 02, 03
3.0 credits

Catholic Social Thought
9:00-9:50 MWF
3:00-3:50 MWF
4:00-4:50 MWF

Margaret Gower

What is the Church's proper role in social and political life? What insight does the Roman Catholic tradition offer in the face of ever more difficult moral quandaries? This course examines the foundational elements of the Church's social tradition and their application to contemporary issues, including the impact of such issues on women inside and outside the Church, as well as on the relationship between one's role as believer and one's role as citizen.

Electives

RLST 304
3.0 credit

Historical Jesus: The Quest for Jesus of Nazareth
11:00-12:15 TR

John Fotopoulos

This course will examine the life, message, and mission of the historical Jesus. The course will consist of several components: 1) a survey of modern historical Jesus scholarship and its various difficulties; 2) a survey of primary, canonical, extracanonical, and non-Christian sources; 3) the acquisition of scholarly methods for isolating "authentic" Jesus material; and 4) a serious consideration of the leading scholarly reconstructions of the historical Jesus. This course is appropriate for all Saint Mary's students who have completed the core requirement in Religious Studies and satisfies the RLST Major for Biblical.

RLST 315
3.0 credit

Free and Responsible: Grace and the Human Condition
2:00-3:15 TR

Phyllis Kaminski

"Amazing grace!" Much more than a song, grace is a central theological doctrine. This seminar explores the mystery of human existence through classic and contemporary theological texts on sin, grace, nature, and freedom. What are the debates in the development of church teaching on the relationship of grace to sin, creation, salvation and human history? What happens when the voices of men and women of color and of the poor join the theological conversation? Given twenty-first century challenges to preserving the very life of our planet, how does grace speak to human responsibility for the multidimensional, diverse, and intricate collection of created life-forms? If you share any of the above questions, *Grace* has something to offer you.

