



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI  
COLLEGE of  
ARTS & SCIENCES

# Department of Religious Studies Spring 2027 Course Guide

**CLASSES AVAILABLE ON CANELINK OCTOBER 12, 2026**

**REGISTRATION BEGINS NOVEMBER 2, 2026**

Department of Religious Studies  
Ashe Building Room 521  
1252 Memorial Drive  
Coral Gables, FL 33146  
305-284-1634

**STUDENTS, PLEASE NOTE:** Since you will want to attend to the matter of cognates when you enroll, we are providing you with the current active cognates linked to the **REL courses** that are listed below, as of the printing of this Course Guide. Please be sure to check all your other course cognates. If you have already declared a cognate that is now deactivated, you WILL be able to complete the requirements. You may search for active and deactivated cognates by course at <https://cognates.miami.edu/> or consult the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

### **REL 101: Introduction to Religion**

**Callender | On-line**

An introduction to the study of religion focusing on the texts, peoples, and events identified with the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course includes an examination of the analytical category “religion” and considers how these well-known Asian and Abrahamic texts and traditions address a range of human concerns from spiritual and emotional to social and political.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Islam and the Arab World
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

### **REL 105: Asian Religions: Transforming the Self**

**Ritzinger | M, W 10:10 am – 11:25 am**

The religions of Asia loom large in American popular consciousness yet are at best dimly understood. This course will peel back the platitudes of fortune cookies and “Eastern wisdom” to reveal the richness and diversity of Asian religious traditions. In this selective survey, students will encounter major figures, doctrines, and ethical precepts, with special attention to one key element: the goal of self-transformation and the techniques for achieving it.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Individualized Cognate in People & Society
- Contemporary Issues in Religions
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- China Studies

### **REL 111/JUS 301: Introduction to the Bible: Tanakh/Old Testament**

**Callender | TH 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.**

An exploration of the origins of the Tanakh/Old Testament within its ancient historical and cultural world and how it has been interpreted across Jewish, Christian, and other communities

from antiquity to the present. We will examine major social, cultural, and theological themes through close readings of biblical and related texts and consider how these texts continue to shape contemporary discussions.

Counts toward the following cognates for REL:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- The Evolution of the Jewish People in their Homeland and the Diaspora

### **REL 151: Religion and Moral Choices**

**Crocker Papadakis | F 11:15 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. (on-line)**

Using a narrative approach, this course introduces students to religious responses to dilemmas raised by issues such as capital punishment, biotechnology, abortion, euthanasia, and war. In this course, we will focus on formative narratives and biographies in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Because this course is part of the Religion and Health Care program, it will highlight issues related to health care. Key topics include reproductive planning/care, eugenics, abortion, gender vs. sex, vaccinations, mental health, end of life care, euthanasia, and organ donation. The course will be divided into two parts: 1. Formative religious narratives and 2. Health care topics in relation to religious ethics.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Individualized Cognate in People & Society
- Religious Traditions and Texts
- Contemporary Issues in Religion
- Politics and Religion
- Religion and Medicine

### **REL 281: Chinese Religions: Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist, and Popular Traditions**

**Ritzinger | M, W 2:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.**

What is Buddhism? What does it teach? How is it practiced? How has it grown and changed over time? And how does it inform the lives of ordinary practitioners? This course will attend to the ideas and practices for which Buddhism is famous, while situating Buddhists in their social contexts at key historical moments. Throughout we will give attention to the issue of our own perspective and what it means to think across the porous borders of culture in an interrelated world.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Individualized Cognate in People & Society
- China Studies
- Religious Traditions and Texts

**REL 311/JUS 301: Prophecy and Prophetic Literature in the Hebrew Bible****Callender | T, TH 3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.**

Prophecy in ancient Israel and Judah and the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible in relation to its ancient near-eastern historical, religious, and social context.

Counts toward the following cognates for REL:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Religious Traditions and Texts

**REL 334/AMS 324/JUS 360: The American Jewish Experience: Hollywood and Popular Culture****Green, H. | T 5:05 pm – 7:50 pm**

Analysis and interpretation of Hollywood and popular culture with a focus on the image of the Jew and the Jewish experience. The tension between maintaining an ethnic identity and assimilating in the face of modernity is examined from the roaring twenties to Gen Z. Using the documentary film, *The Tribe* (Barbie), the course as a window to the complex industry in which ownership, production, and marketing are intertwined with the film.

Counts toward the following cognates for REL:

- Individualized cognate in Arts & Humanities
- The Evolution of the Jewish People in their Homeland and the Diaspora
- American Studies: Politics and Religion
- Popular Culture
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

**REL 335: American Religion in Modern Film****Kern | W 2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

In this interactive, discussion-based course, you will explore American religious history through film and popular culture. Together, we will ask how movies and other new media shape the way Americans imagine religion, identity, community, and belonging. You will learn to analyze films in their historical contexts, think critically about audience reception, censorship, and representation, and develop the skills to discuss how cinematic depictions of religion influence wider cultural understandings of gender, race, and national life.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Individualized cognate in People & Society
- Popular Culture
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

**REL 350/PHI 337: Current Issues in Religion – Religion and the Environment**  
**Shockley | T 2:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. (On-line)**

In this livestream online course, we will delve into contemporary environmental and ethical issues through the multifaceted lens of various religious and philosophical worldviews. Topics will include but are not limited to animal rights, biodiversity, climate change, genetic modification, overpopulation, resource depletion, and the alarming loss of pollinators. Through the exploration of these perspectives, students will evaluate major environmental positions such as biocentrism, deep ecology, ecocentrism, ecofeminism, and ecospirituality. We will consider the bilateral relationship between religious traditions, nature, and responses to contemporary environmental problems. We will not only seek to understand how religious and philosophical traditions interpret nature but also how nature informs worldview beliefs, religious practices, and more (e.g., indigenous religions; nature deficit disorder; the integration of nature in urban landscapes, meditation and prayer gardens; the arts). We will also investigate the use of nature as religious symbols and teaching illustrations (e.g., blood; darkness/light; fire; fish; honey; lotus flower; pomegranate; soil; snakes; trees; water; white stag; wine).

Counts toward the following cognates for REL:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Belonging in a Diverse Society: Intersections of culture, identity, and social justice

**REL 352: Religion and Science**  
**Newell | T, Th 3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.**

This course is intended to facilitate a dialogue on how science and religion have, for the last 500 years, attempted to answer fundamental questions about our universe and humanities' place in it. While various religions, scientists, and disciplines have different answers, many of the central questions inherent in religion and science are similar in their objective. During the course of this semester, we will explore the search for answers through four key questions:

- Is the Earth a special or unique place?
- What unifies the Universe?
- What does it mean to be human?
- What is time?

Together, we will examine and discuss the many permutations of these four questions, the scientific figures who brought them to society's attention, and the cultural implications of the answers for both science and religion.

Counts toward the following cognates:

- Individualized cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Individualized cognate in People & Society
- Religion and Medicine

**REL 354/PHI 351: Religion and the Problem of Evil**

**Shockley TH 2:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.(on-line)**

Religion and the Problem of Evil explores one of humanity's most enduring and difficult questions: How do we understand evil, suffering, and injustice, particularly in relation to the existence and nature of G-d? Using a multidisciplinary approach, we will examine philosophical and religious perspectives from Western and Eastern traditions, engaging thinkers such as Augustine, Buddha, Maimonides, Confucius, Blaise Pascal, Albert Camus, C. S. Lewis, Alvin Plantinga, Desmond Tutu, and others. Through philosophy, religion, literature, sociology, and lived experience, we will consider moral and natural evil, human freedom, divine hiddenness, the European Holocaust, existentialism, and varied responses to suffering. While confronting what is broken in our world, we will also explore how individuals and communities have created meaning, practiced reconciliation, nurtured hope, and pursued lives characterized by wisdom, compassion, courage, and human flourishing.

Counts toward the following cognates for REL:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Contemporary Issues in Religion

**REL 372: Islam and the United States: The Politics of Race**

**Homayounvash | T, TH 8:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.**

Interested in learning about the legacy of Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party, and Muslims in the civil rights movement? This course examines the cultural and political history of the United States with a focus on the experience of Muslims in America. Major themes include xenophobia, racism, national security, law enforcement and violence. Check out this video trailer for more information: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=bhDFDxw3sFw&feature=youtu.be>

Counts toward the following cognate:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities
- Individualized Cognate in People & Society
- Islam and the Arab World

**REL 403: Supervised Reading in Religious Issues or Problems**

**Green, W. | Does Not Meet | By Instructor Permission**

**REL 406/JUS 401/POL 596/BSL 498/HIS 376/COM 406: Special Topics in Religious Issues or Problems: Law & Freedom**

**Green, W. & Bass, H | W 5:05 pm – 7:50 pm**

This discussion-based seminar examines how American law shapes and has shaped people's freedom. Together, we will explore, from varied perspectives, key legal decisions that have both enhanced and constrained the exercise of the "liberty" promised in the preambles to the Declaration of Independence

and the United States Constitution. The course will address topics such as speech, religion, privacy, and equal rights. Course members may suggest other topics as well.

Counts toward the following cognate for REL:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities

**REL 406/MCY 540/MCY 640: Special Topics in Religious Issues or Problems: Music and Religion**  
**Green, W. & Butler, M. | T, TH 2:00 pm - 3:15 pm**

Music and Religion are fundamental aspects of human existence, evidence of which goes back some 30,000 years. This seminar course will explore musical and religious experiences in human history and the use of music within major religious traditions. It will include specific study of some of the major monuments of sacred music from around the world.

Counts toward the following cognate for REL:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities

**REL 406/ARC 589/ARC 689/JUS 301: Sacred Space**  
**Myth, Place & Ritual in the Virtual World**  
**Green, W., Hector, D., Grinfeder, K. | TH 5:05 pm – 7:50 pm (on-line)**

The course explores how artificial intelligence and virtual reality will affect the future of religion in both practice and spatial experience. It involves student-designed collaborative projects.

Counts toward the following cognates for REL:

- Individualized Cognate in Arts & Humanities

**REL 409/JUS 401: Special Projects in Religious Issues or Problems: Ethnic Cleansing, Human Rights and Freedom of Religion**  
**Green, H. | M 2:30 pm – 5:15 pm**

Over the last 70 years, millions of people have been displaced from North Africa and the Middle East: Copts (Egypt), Jews (from North Africa and the Middle East), Kurds and Yazidis (Iraq), Palestinians (Israel), and Syrians. The course examines the reasons why these minorities and populations have been displaced. Highlighting the International Declaration of Human Rights in the wake of the Holocaust (1951), the course requires students to document the testimonies of these refugees. The narratives include life in their countries of origin, their story of leaving and their experience of resettling in a new country. Core themes such as racism, religion, human rights, transnational identity, exile, diaspora, migration and lack of inclusiveness and equity, are central to the course.

Counts toward the following cognates for REL:

- Community Engagement and Social Change
- Study of Aspects of the Holocaust