

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Bible and Western Culture

Bible & Western Culture studies the primary biblical narratives about the relationship between God and humanity. In particular, it investigates Israelite and early Christian conceptions of covenant. Through a close reading of the Tanakh, the course examines the origin and development of God's covenant with human beings—from Adam to Solomon—and the promise of its renewal—in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Then, through a close reading of the New Testament, the course examines the Christian understanding of that renewed covenant.

The principal goals of Bible & Western Culture are for students to become familiar with some of the core concepts and principles, histories and theologies, on which Judaism and Christianity are founded, and for them to learn to interpret religious texts in the light of modern scholarship.

Grade Level: 10

Classification: Required elective

Credit: .33

Prerequisite: None

World Religions

World Religions is a comparative study of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The central theme of the course is that, despite their significant differences, these religions share a basic conception of the divinity and of humanity, namely, that God—whether Allah, Brahman, or the Dharmakaya of Buddha—is the one infinite source of everything: absolute, transcendent, eternal, and uncaused; and that human beings are finite replicas of the divine reality. Of special importance are the related ideas of God as perfect love and of humans—in their interpersonal relationships—as reflections of that love.

The principal goals of World Religions are for students to develop a deeper understanding of both their own religion and those of their neighbors, and for them to come to appreciate how much the different religions have in common.

Grade Level: 11

Classification: Required elective

Credit: .33

Prerequisite: None

Contemporary Religious Issues

Contemporary Religious Issues (CRI): Religion and Technology takes a critical look at recent and emerging technologies from a generic religious perspective, namely, the view that human beings, as the likeness of God, are meant to be in loving relationship with each other. The course begins with a detailed exposition of the three aspects of love—romantic (eros), filial (storge), and friendly (philia)—and then proceeds to examine and evaluate various technological developments in the light of these aspects. Specifically, students are asked to consider whether (1) human enhancement technologies (genetic engineering, bionic prosthetics, psychotropic drugs), (2) automation technologies (robotics, artificial intelligence), and (3) technologies that mediate or replace human relationships (social media, smart devices, virtual and augmented reality, artificially intelligent companions) threaten our ability to enter into, strengthen, and preserve loving relationships.

The principal goals of Contemporary Religious Issues are for students to learn to judge technology according to an ethical standard, in this case, a religious ethical standard, and for them to begin to think about the potentially dangerous changes that new technologies will bring about in their lifetimes.

Grade Level: 12

Classification: Required elective

Credit: .33

Prerequisite: None