Course Descriptions
Concentration in Religious Studies

CMIN 260 Intro to Christian Theology: 3 Credits
Pre-requisite RELI 110, EN 131
This introductory course takes a look at Jesus and his teachings in an historical context and provides a general overview of the major doctrines of Christianity and concepts of Christian Theology. The course examines the creeds of the early church, taking into account the major reasons that necessitated their formulations. The course also builds on a platform to demonstrate how Christianity has helped to forge theologies of liberation that have sparked societal change and have been instrumental and necessary in bringing about social justice.

CMIN 333 Biblical Prophets and Social Justice: 3 Credits
Pre-requisites: RELI 110, EN 132, Co-requisite: RPCM 390.
This course will focus on the Prophets of Israel and their understanding of Social justice with major attention directed to Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Amos, and Hosea. Students will be introduced to God’s covenant with Israel in order to lay the foundation for a critical analysis of justice. This course must be taken concurrently with RPCM 390.

CMIN 344 Liberation Theologies: 3 Credits
Pre-requisite EN 132, CMIN 260
This course explains and examines various liberation theologies (Latin American, Black, Mujerista, Feminist, etc.) in conceptual and practical terms. The course elaborates the theological frameworks that are the basis for these theologies. It outlines how they relate to larger theological issues such as sin and salvation, incarnation and redemption, and the relationship between love and justice. Finally it examines the relationship between praxis (thoughtful reflection on action), social analysis and liberation.

CMIN 410 Religious and Social Thought of Howard Thurman: 3 Credits
Pre-requisite: CMIN 260, CMIN 335, RELI 365
This course is a critical examination of Howard Thurman’s history, theology, meditations, and mysticism with special attention given to his perspective regarding race relations and social justice.

RELI 110 Understanding Faith: 3 Credits
Pre-requisites: None
Through the lens of Christian traditions and values, this course will introduce the discipline of Religious Studies through basic concepts such as Scripture, deity, authority, worship and ritual, ethics, the nature of religious experience, and faith. Students will apply this knowledge to analyze faith commitments in other traditions.

RELI 205 Intro to African Traditional Religion and Culture: 3 Credits
Pre-requisite RELI 110
This course introduces the student to African Traditional Religion and to the culture and civilization of Africa before the coming of Arab and European colonialism and religions.
Students will learn why African Traditional Religion is still practiced today amid Western and Eastern religions.

**RELI 210 Religion and Popular Culture:** 3 Credits  
Pre-requisite: EN 131, RELI 110  
This course uses a range of disciplinary perspectives to examine the ways religious themes, symbols, icons and language are used in expressions of popular culture and to understand how religion itself is influenced in return. The course will explore these interactions between religion and popular culture from diverse cultural and religious traditions and across multiple media platforms.

**RELI 241 Religions of the World:** 3 Credits  
Pre-requisite: EN 131, RELI 110  
A brief look at the religious beliefs and practices of Hinduism and Buddhism as well as the Near-Eastern traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The cultural background of each religion will be discussed as well as the ways that religion affects culture and society around the world today.

**RELI 250 African American Religious History:** 3 Credits  
Pre-requisite HI 130, EN 132  
This course is a survey of African American religious experiences. The course introduce students to the history and culture of African American Religion and try to determine the manner in which it relates to contemporary society. Special attention will be given to Black religious practices, institutions and thought in the African American quest for freedom, justice, and equality through the lens of: African Traditional Religions, the African Diaspora, Religion of the Slave, Black Church and Abolitionist Movements, and Civil Rights; Race, Class, and Gender; Black Catholicism; Black Power Movements, Black Muslims; Alternative Black Religious Practices; Crisis in the Black Church, and Mega Churches.

**RELI 321 Hermeneutics:** 3 Credits  
Pre-requisite EN 132, RELI 210  
Hermeneutics introduces the student to the fundamental categories of the theory of interpretation. In keeping with the historical trajectory of hermeneutics, its scope expands beyond questions about the rules for textual/biblical interpretation, towards the question of the nature of meaning and understanding as such. The course will engage a number of hermeneutical emphases including: the world behind the text (history, authorial intention, allegory), the world in the text (structuralism, narrative theory, poetics), and the world in front of the text (reader-response, community response, deconstruction, liberationist, feminist, queer, postcolonial).

**RELI 340 Religion in America:** 3 Credits  
Pre-requisite EN 132, RELI 241  
This course examines major religious groups and denominations in the United States, their histories, beliefs, and practices. In addition, attention is given to current religious trends and controversies. **Local field trips are a major component of the course.**

**RELI 350 Comparative Religious Ethics:** 3 Credits  
Pre-requisite EN 132, PHIL 230, RELI 241  
This course explores what different religious traditions have to say about important ethical and moral questions. This course aims to provide students with the tools and knowledge to
understand, comparatively analyze, and evaluate the ethical teachings and moral prescriptions of
the religious traditions of Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

**RELI 361 World Scriptures:** 3 credits
Pre-requisite EN 132, RELI 241.
This course seeks to provide a comparative study of scriptures of the World Religions-Hinduism,
Buddhism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It will cover teachings, ethics,
organization, and ritual as well as examining basic doctrines, practices, and religious institutions
that developed as a result of scriptural mandates. We will utilize primary sources available in
English translations.

**RELI 365 Theories of Justice:** 3 Credits
Pre-requisite: EN132, PHIL230; Co-requisite RPCM 391
This course examines different understandings/formulations/theories of justice in reference to
real world problems. Doing justice emerges as a central way to provide leadership in society and
to appreciate the ethics of such leadership. The course accomplishes this by addressing a specific
moral/social/environmental issue selected by students. In reference to this issue, the course
examines the ways in which understandings of justice are shaped by society while also being
transformative of society. Moreover, the course addresses two interrelated questions relating to
the issue selected by students: What should we do to resolve the issue/being about meaningful
social change? Are our responses to it (and to those involved) just? This course must be taken
concurrently with RPCM 391.

**RELI 370 Theories and Methods for Religious Studies:** 3 Credits
Pre-requisites: EN 132, RELI 241
This course explores seminal thinkers and primary texts necessary for the academic study of
religion. Students will gain a deeper understanding of the development of formative theories in
the field and of contemporary approaches relevant for the religious studies.

**RELI 420 Religion and Science:** 3 Credits
Pre-requisites: EN 132, RELI 350
This class examines the relationship between religion, and science, from the perspective of
different religious traditions, particularly Western traditions. The class will survey a range of
issues, thinkers, and approaches to some of the most important ways in which religion and
science interact. This class does not require any previous training in religious studies or in the
specific scientific topics addressed.

**RELI 425 Islam:** 3 Credits
Pre-requisite EN 132, RELI 241
This course seeks to provide a comprehensive look at Islamic doctrine, practice, and religious
institutions in diverse geographical settings from the rise of Islam in the seventh century to the
present time. We will utilize the translated source material from the Qur’an, sayings (hadith) of
the Prophet, legal texts (sharia), and some of the mystical work which will provide an overview
of literary expressions of the religion of Islam.

**RELI 430 The Sacred Event: Ritual Space and Time:** 3 Credits
Pre-requisites: EN 132, RELI 241
This course explores theories of religious ritual, space and time, and reflects on what constitutes, constructs, and configures the sacred event. The course will apply these theories to survey a diversity of sacred rituals, spaces and times within various religious contexts. Themes to be covered during the semester include pilgrimage, shared and contested sacred events, sacred space and civil religion, gender and the sacred event, and the construction of new sacred spaces.

**RELI 435 Theodicy:** 3 Credits  
Pre-requisites CMIN 260; PHIL 235  
The problem of evil can be put rather succinctly: If the world was created by an all good, all powerful and all-knowing God, then why does evil exist? This course will examine attempted solutions to the problems of evil in the world. In doing so, we will discuss concepts such as the freedom of the will, the nature of justice, the nature of suffering, original sin, eternal damnation, pre-established harmony, and possible worlds.

**RELI 434 Death and Immortality:** 3 Credits  
Pre-requisites: EN 132  
An interdisciplinary, cross-cultural study of death and dying, including discussions of transcendence and immortality, health care, suicide, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, the right to die, and other relevant topics. The course uses materials from philosophy, psychology, sociology, and religion.

**PHIL 230 Ethics:** 2 Credits  
Pre-requisite EN 131  
This course examines moral standards and applications of moral reasoning to some of the social and personal complexities of our time from a multicultural perspective. The course emphasizes values and ethics commensurate with those values (perspectives) and the role both play in our lives, socially and personally. The course examines the ways in which ethics and a sense of morality are shaped by society while also transforming society. Finally, the course explores different classical and contemporary moral theories and introduces various ways to consider justice.

**PHIL 235 Intro to Philosophy:** 3 Credits  
Pre-requisite EN 131  
This course introduces students to the study of philosophy and philosophical methods through a survey of key themes, thinkers, and problems in their historical settings. The course distinguishes between philosophy, religion, psychology, and anthropology. Philosophic approaches to be introduced may include: materialism, idealism, pragmatism, phenomenology, and existentialism. Themes to be introduced may include the reliability of knowledge, make up of ultimate reality, free will, determinism, the problem of evil, race, class, and gender.

**RPCM 390 Field Experience I:** 3 Credits  
Pre-requisite RELI 241; Co-requisite CMIN 333  
Placement at a local service organization to work at least nine volunteer hours per week or acceptance into an unpaid internship program in a position related to the student's career goals. The placement or internship must be approved by the instructor and service organization coordinator or internship director before the student begins work. A minimum of 135/270 hours must be completed for the course, as well as a series of reflective written assignments in
conjunction with CMIN 333 Biblical Prophets and Social Justice.

**RPCM 391 Field Experience II: 3 Credits**  
Prerequisite: RPCM 390, Co-requisite RELI 365  
Continuation of placement at a local service organization to work at least nine volunteer hours per week or acceptance into an unpaid internship program in a position related to the student's career goals. A minimum of 270 hours must be completed for the course, as well as a series of reflective written assignments in conjunction with RELI 365. This course must be taken concurrently with RELI 365 Theories of Justice.

**RPCM 498 Senior Research: 3 Credits**  
Pre-requisites: Junior/senior standing with a minimum of 30 credit hours in the major  
This is the first half of a two-semester course sequence (RPCM 498-499). In this Part I students will be introduced to scholarly research methodology in Religion, Philosophy, and Christian Ministry and students will develop and present a thesis proposal, begin the draft of their research paper, and complete one half of their exit exam requirements.

**RPCM 499 Senior Seminar: 3 Credits**  
Pre-requisite: RPCM 498  
This is the second half of a two-semester course sequence (RPCM 498-499). In this Part II of the course students will complete and defend their research paper and will complete the second half of their exit exam requirements.