REL 201. The Hebrew Bible. 3 Hours.
The life and thought of ancient Israel as seen in a literary, historical, and
theological analysis of the Hebrew Bible and the Apocrypha.

The emergence of Christianity in the world as seen from an analysis of

REL 210. Archeology of Religion. 3 Hours.
Students will become familiar with basic concepts in the archaeology of
religion. Theoretical and methodological readings will include
ritual studies, symbols and semiotics, and the archaeology of sacred
space and landscapes. The course will emphasize the archaeology of
Middle Eastern, African, Pacific Island, and New World religions
alongside Mediterranean, European, East Asian, and contemporary
American evidence by means of case studies ranging from prehistoric
practices through religiously-charged twentieth century sites. Successful
completion of this course satisfies the Cultures and Peoples requirement
for graduation.

REL 220. The Christian Faith. 3 Hours.
The major convictions of the Christian faith examined historically and in
relation to their relevancy for modern life.

REL 221. Introduction to Islam. 3 Hours.
This course will introduce students to the religion of Islam through an
introduction to the foundational elements of Islamic religious tradition,
history, and practice. It will also maintain a focus on developing the
skills necessary to use this knowledge in approaching and interpreting
current events and media coverage of Muslim societies today. Successful
completion of this course satisfies the Cultures and Peoples requirement
for graduation.

REL 222. Introduction to Confucianism. 3 Hours.
Roughly 2500 years after his death, Confucius still has significant,
widespread influence in contemporary society. This course will focus on the
nature of Confucian thought and practice, and look to understand the
variety of ways Confucianism impacts modern Asian societies. It will
do this by first studying early Confucian thinking, as well as the
development of Neo-Confucianism. Then the course will turn to highlight
the presence of Confucianism in the modern world, both as it appears
in contemporary Asian literature, and in the political and social lives
of countries such as South Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, and Taiwan.
Successful completion of this course satisfies the Cultures and Peoples requirement for graduation.

REL 240. Religions of the World. 3 Hours.
An introduction to the major living religions found throughout the world,
including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
Successful completion of this course satisfies the Cultures and Peoples requirement for graduation.

REL 241. Religions of the World II: The Newer Traditions. 3 Hours.
An introduction to some of the religions founded during the last two
centuries that now have a sizeable global following. Religions to be
covered may include several of the following: Mormonism, the Adventist
tradition, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, The Unification
Church, Scientology, Falun Gong, Soka Gakkai, the Baha'i Faith, and
Wicca.

REL 260. Introduction to Religion. 3 Hours.
This course is an introductory study of typical religious beliefs and
practices. Characteristic forms of religion will be explored, specific rituals
will be investigated, and particular problems in religion will be analyzed.
Students will identify some religious aspects of contemporary cultures
and will become familiar with methods used in the academic study of
religion. Successful completion of this course satisfies the Cultures and
Peoples requirement for graduation.

REL 261. Religious Pilgrimage. 3 Hours.
This course examines religious thought and practice through the lens
of ritual theory. Students explore what various scholars in the field of
religious studies and related fields (anthropology and sociology, for
example) have said about rites and rituals. Primary topics of focus include
the structure and role of initiation rites, the functions of communities, and
the lives of religious virtuosos such as mendicants and shamans. Also
considered are various types of quest and the roles these journeys play
in the formation of identity. Successful completion of this course satisfies
the Cultures and Peoples requirement for graduation.

REL 263. Ethnography of Religion in the Middle East & North Africa. 3 Hours.
Students will learn about religion in the Middle East and North Africa
by way of ethnographic research. Students will learn the step-by-step
process of ethnographic fieldwork by coming up with interview questions,
trying participant observation and gathering secondary research on the
ethnographic method. Successful completion of this course satisfies the
Cultures and Peoples requirement for graduation.

REL 264. Religion & Medicine. 3 Hours.
A survey of the approaches to medicine and health found in a variety of
the globe's religious traditions. In addition, the class will give attention to
religious perspectives on key ethical questions that emerge in healthcare,
as well as to the question of what roles religion may or may not play in
the health of individuals. Successful completion of this course satisfies
the Cultures and Peoples requirement for graduation.

REL 301. The Historical Jesus. 3 Hours.
An historical examination of Jesus of Nazareth, with special attention
to the problems posed by the literary sources. Current historical and
archaeological scholarship will be explored in order to identify what can
and cannot be affirmed about Jesus with historical confidence.

REL 304. Gods of the Biblical World: Polytheism, Magic, and
Israelite Religion. 3 Hours.
This course will situate Israelite religion, both as portrayed in the biblical
texts and as reconstructed based on archaeological evidence and in its
wider Levantine and Near Eastern religious contexts. This will be done
through a comparative religions approach, examining the gods, rituals,
and beliefs of Israel's neighbors Ammon, Moab, Phoenicia, Philistia, etc.
Ultimately, consideration will be given as to how monotheism arose in
Israel and survived through the biblical texts. Successful completion of
this course satisfies the Cultures and Peoples requirement for graduation.
REL 305. Death & Sacrifice in the Ancient World. 3 Hours.
This course will explore ways that ancient peoples from across the Greek, Roman, and Near Eastern worlds thought about death and the afterlife, including religiously-sanctioned deaths in the form of animal and human sacrifice. Evaluation of archaeological evidence (from tombs and inscriptions) will be coupled with the study of ancient literature in translation. This work will offer context for biblical tropes, like the loss of immortality in the Garden of Eden, poetry surrounding souls in 'sheol' or Hades, and the ideological significance of Jesus’ conquest of death. Successful completion of this course satisfies the Cultures and Peoples requirement for graduation.

REL 310. Lost Christianities. 3 Hours.
An exploration of orthodoxy and heresy in early Christianity, with special focus on alternative forms of Christianity that did not survive. Particular attention will be devoted to Gnosticism, Arianism, Donatism, and Pelagianism, as well as non-orthodox scriptures and the selection of the New Testament canon.

REL 311. Prophecy and Apocalyptic. 3 Hours.
A study of messengers from God in ancient Israel, early Judaism, and early Christianity, with particular attention to the contributions of these messengers to society, culture, ethics, and theology. The persistence of apocalyptic eschatology in global culture will be a topic of particular interest.

REL 312. Israel's Poetry and Wisdom Literature. 3 Hours.
The religious and philosophical thought of Israel's Wisdom Movement as found in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, and portions of the Apocrypha. Also, a study of the forms of Hebrew poetry analyzed with reference to the Psalter as the vehicle of ancient Israel's devotional life in a community of worship.

REL 315. Archeology and the Bible. 3 Hours.
A field course in archaeological excavation of a site related to the Bible. Students will learn techniques of field excavation, archaeological interpretation, and biblical interpretation by participating in the excavation of a site from the biblical world. Offered Summer only.

REL 323. Belief Amidst Bombshells: Western Public Religious Thought, 1900-1965. 3 Hours.
Beginning with the events which preceded the aftermath of the first World War, a study of the key Western theological positions that emerged during the next half-century. Attention is given to different Christian responses to the Nazi regime, particular writers’ viewpoints on the relationship between Christianity and culture, theology in the United States, and major shifts in Catholic thinking which helped lead to the Second Vatican Council.

REL 325. Religion, Literature & the Environment. 3 Hours.
Covering writers from Henry David Thoreau to Rachel Carson, Wendell Berry to Annie Dillard, students discuss religion and ecology, including ecospirituality, ecotheology, and environmental ethics. Written from a spectrum of religious views are presented, and recent popular religiously based environmental movements are surveyed.

REL 328. To Hell with Dante. 3 Hours.
This course will attempt to provide students with detailed understanding of Dante's Divine Comedy through a careful reading of the poem itself, in connection with the study of works by major literary influences on Dante (such as Virgil and Guido Cavalcanti), of the Florentine political context, and of major developments in Christian history and theology during the 12th and 13th centuries. Special emphasis will be placed on questions raised by Dante's work regarding better and lesser ways to live one’s life.
REL 361. Fieldwork on Religion. 4 Hours.
This course has a simple objective: for students to learn how to document religious experience from the ground up. Course participants learn fieldwork techniques - including participant observation, interviews, and ethnographic writing - and put them into practice as they interact with practitioners in Spartanburg religious communities.

REL 362. Ritualized Space in the Middle East. 3 Hours.
In this course students will learn about Christianity, Judaism and Islam and their histories from the visual rhetoric of ruins, art objects and architecture in the Middle East and North Africa. Through visual culture this course will trace the history, politics and social transformations and hybridizations of the Abrahamic traditions in the MENA region. Further, students will apply Victor Turner’s theory of ritualized space and liminality to the MENA region’s sacred spaces. Successful completion of this course satisfies the Cultures & Peoples requirement for graduation.

REL 363. Islam in the Media. 3 Hours.
Viewing Islam from the lens of media studies, this course will provide a very brief overview of Islam with the primary focus on analyzing how Islam is portrayed in various forms of media (internet, newspapers, film, novels, television, social media, etc.) in the Muslim world and in the United States. Successful completion of this course satisfies the Cultures and Peoples requirements for graduation.

REL 365. Religion & Pop Culture. 3 Hours.
This course examines the relationship between religion and pop culture. Possible course topics include the depiction of religion in popular culture, the use of popular culture in religion; and the religious function of popular culture.

REL 370. Religious Extremism. 3 Hours.
A study of religious groups associated with established religious traditions (e.g., Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, etc.) that support and/or commit violent acts in the accomplishment of their theological and social agendas. Particular emphasis will be placed on why these groups understand violence as a religiously acceptable and oftentimes necessary course of action.

REL 373. Religion & Law. 3 Hours.
This course explores the ways in which religion and law are understood as concepts. It examines the presuppositions that impact the ways these terms are defined, and the ways in which these definitions get mapped onto institutional contexts. In addition, the course also examines how a particular group’s understanding of religion and law, as well as its understanding of the proper interface between the two, plays into its understanding of what the state is (or should be). The course focuses primarily on the interplay among these concepts in the United States, though it also might consider the relationship and tensions between religion and law in other countries.

Prerequisite: REL 201 with a minimum grade of D or REL 202 with a minimum grade of D or REL 220 with a minimum grade of D or REL 221 with a minimum grade of D or REL 240 with a minimum grade of D or REL 241 with a minimum grade of D or REL 260 with a minimum grade of D or REL 261 with a minimum grade of D or REL 263 with a minimum grade of D.

REL 375. Cults, Sects, and New Religious Movements. 3 Hours.
This course examines the formation, social organizations, and religious identities of new religious movements (popularly called “cults”). Some questions that may be examined include: What causes new religious movements to form? Who joins them? Why do some thrive while others die out? What role do gender differences play in new religious movements? How do new religious movements relate to the more “established” religions (Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, etc.)?

REL 379. American Evangelicalism. 3 Hours.
This course examines many of the key historical moments and distinguishing features of American Evangelicalism, a movement of conservative Christians from the Fundamentalist, Holiness, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and the Neo-Evangelical traditions.

REL 380. Special Topics in Religion. 1 to 4 Hours.
Seminars on selected topics in Religion offered on an occasional basis.

REL 470. Independent Study. 1 to 3 Hours.
Extensive investigation of an approved topic culminating in a full-length essay. Credit hours to be determined by the instructor. Normally restricted to students completing the major in Religion.

REL 474. Theories of Religion. 3 Hours.
An intensive exploration of critical theories currently employed by scholars in the academic study of religion, based upon readings of the classic works in which those theories have been expounded. Required of majors in the spring of the junior year. At the conclusion of the junior seminar, students will identify the topic for their senior directed study.

REL 475. Senior Directed Study in Religion. 3 Hours.
A course of individualized directed study in which the student researches, writes, and presents a paper on a topic of current interest in the academic study of religion. Required of all majors in the fall of the senior year.

REL 480. Advanced Topics in Religion. 1 to 4 Hours.
A seminar in which a selected theme or problem is thoroughly studied. Emphasis on bibliography and methodology in research.

REL 500. Honors Course. 3 Hours.
At the discretion of the faculty, students may undertake a six-hour independent course of study in the senior year in order to broaden their educational experience within their major area of study. Students must meet specific GPA standards and arrange a faculty sponsor. The honors course criteria are outlined in the Academic Honors portion of the catalog.