

**2. Analytical Reasoning (making connections)**

BMG 322	Change Management - Prereq: BHR 221
BMG 323	Interpersonal Skills - Prereq: BHR 221
ENG 205	The Art of Rhetoric
ENG 255	Legal Bodies: Crime & Culture in Victorian England
ENG 352	Canadian Literature and Theories of Globalization
FIH 314	Colonial and Postcolonial Issues in the Visual Arts
HIS 234	The Italian Renaissance
HIS 269	First Nations/Settler Relations
LIB 212	In Search of Justice
LIB 214	Environmental Justice and Ecological Crisis
LIB 222	Citizenship and Democratic Practice I
LIB 223	Citizenship and Democratic Practice II
RSC 232	Philosophy of Religion
ECO 322	Real Estate Economics
SOC 208	Criminology
SOC 230	Deviance 1
SOC 233	Carceral Studies and Justice Clinic
SOC 298	Social Problems
SOC 304	Experiential Learning in Sociology II <i>(Note: SOC 233 may be a pre-requisite and this course could be substituted for the capstone course)</i>
SOC 309	Advanced Seminar in Global Colonization and Decolonization
SOC 331	Deviance 2: Selected Topics
SOC 340	Women: Theory and Ideology
ESG 266	Environmental Policy
ESG 350	Environmental Justice
POL 334	Public Policy Analysis
POL 338	International Law and Human Rights

**3. Logical Reasoning (problem solving)**

BHR 316	Organizational Conflict and Negotiation
LAT 101F	Beginners' Latin I
LAT 200	Intensive Intermediate Latin (or LAT 201a, 202b)
PHI1xx	Any Philosophy Introductory Course
MAT 100	Excursions in Modern Mathematics
MAT 200	Introduction to Discrete Mathematics
SOC 315	Political Sociology in the Digital Era
SOC 311	Quantitative Tools for Social Research
PSY 330	Psychology and Ethics

**4. Reading Comprehension and Writing Proficiency**

Any 200 or 300 level courses in Classical Studies, English, History and Global Studies, Liberal Arts, Philosophy or Religion, Society and Culture.\*

*\*There are some exceptions, so consultation with the pre-law chair is strongly recommended.*

# Religion, Society and Culture

## Faculty

**Michele Murray,**  
B.A. (Trinity Western), M.A.  
(Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Ph.D. (Toronto); Professor  
*Chair of the Department*

**Daniel Miller,**  
B.A., M.A. (Toronto), M.A.,  
Ph.D. (Michigan); Associate Professor

## Program Overview

The study of religion has been a foundational part of Bishop's University's mission since the institution's establishment in the mid-19th century. At that time, the focus was primarily on Christianity. Today, as a department in the Humanities division, we offer a broad range of courses covering the major global religions of the modern world; investigating the cultic expressions and mythological underpinnings of ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean civilizations; and examining religion thematically from a number of different perspectives. **Our approach is not theological in any way.** Our objective is instead to further the understanding of religion in an overall sense, and explore how it has informed human existence.

Religion does not exist in a vacuum. It is linked to myriad aspects of society and culture, including philosophical thought, psychological, social, political and economic dimensions, fine arts, literature and sports, and the issue of human mortality. Thus, the academic study of religion is an interdisciplinary pursuit. Students taking an Religion, Society and Culture Honours or Major are encouraged to take courses in other, related fields and, conversely, students in other disciplines are welcomed in Religion, Society and Culture courses in order to round out their understanding of their areas of concentration.

Students planning on entering professions such as education, social work, law, clinical psychology, theatre, music, business, etc., may pursue courses in Religion, Society and Culture in order to enhance their vocational and personal lives. (The study of religion may also, of course, be in preparation for some form of ministry.)

## Programs

### Religion, Society and Culture Honours (60 credits)

HONRSC

Students must maintain an average of at least 70% as calculated from the best 60 credits in the program (including cognates). They have the option of writing an Honours thesis in their final year. Students usually take the Honours program if they plan to pursue graduate work. See the Religion, Society and Culture Major below for specific course requirements.

### Religion, Society and Culture Major (42 credits)

MAJRSC

Religion, Society and Culture Honours and Majors must take the following courses:

RSC 100	Middle Eastern Matrix: Religions of the West
RSC 101	Asian Origins: Religions of the East
<i>Any 2 of:</i>	
RSC 124	Hinduism: The Many Faces of the Divine
RSC 125	Buddhism: The Middle Way
RSC 126	Judaism: A Covenant with God
RSC 127	Islam: Submission to Allah
<i>Any 2 of:</i>	
RSC 112	From Mythology to History: Biblical Israel and its World
RSC 120	Ancient Greek Mythology
RSC 135	Jesus and His World
RSC 203	Early Christian Art and Architecture
RSC 206	Apocalypse
RSC 214	Israelite Mythology and Cultic Practice
RSC 215	Fake News? History vs. Legend in the Narrative of Early Biblical Israel
RSC 236	Death and Dying in the Ancient World
RSC 280	Roman Religion
<i>Any 2 of:</i>	
RSC 148	Psychology of Religion
RSC 149	Sociology of Religion
RSC 200	Politics and Religion
RSC 204	Women in Religion
RSC 207	Sex and Religion
RSC 232	Philosophy of Religion
RSC 237	Religion at the Movies
RSC 248	Death and Dying in the Modern World
<i>Any 2 of:</i>	
RSC 302	Of Latter-day Saints and Modern-day Prophets: New Religious Movements
RSC 303	On the Road Again: Pilgrimage in Theory and Practice
RSC 310	Christian Nationalism in America
RSC 328	Christian Origins
RSC 332	Magic and Divination in the Ancient Near East
RSC 335	Sacred Space in the Ancient World
RSC 350	The Goddess: History, Cult and Myth

## Religion, Society and Culture Minor (24 credits)

MINRSC

Any 24 credits in Religion, Society and Culture

### List of Courses

<b>RSC 100</b>	<b>Middle Eastern Matrix: Religions of the West</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
An introduction to the "Western" religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and the ancient Zoroastrian faith, which all began in the Middle East. In addition to addressing the historical evolution, religious practices, writings, fundamental concepts, beliefs and cultural expressions of each of these traditions, the course will also consider methodological issues pertaining to the study of religion as an academic discipline.		
<b>RSC 101</b>	<b>Asian Origins: Religions of the East</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
An introduction to Asian religious traditions, historically called "Eastern" (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Shinto). In addition to concepts, beliefs and cultural expressions of each of these traditions, the course will also consider methodological issues pertaining to the study of religion as an academic discipline.		
<b>RSC 112</b>	<b>From Mythology to History: Biblical Israel and its World</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
An exploration of the world of the ancient Israelites, the forerunners of the Jewish people. Material from selected books of the Hebrew Bible (also called the Old Testament) will be combined with archaeological data and evidence from inscriptions to situate Israelite civilization within the socio-cultural context of the wider ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean worlds.		
<b>RSC 114</b>	<b>Biblical Hebrew I</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
Introduction to Biblical Hebrew grammar, and reading of simple texts.		
<b>RSC 115</b>	<b>Biblical Hebrew II</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
More advanced Biblical Hebrew grammatical concepts, and study of more challenging texts.		
<b>RSC 120 / CLA 112</b>	<b>Ancient Greek Mythology</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
The origin and development of Greek mythology, and the importance of myths in understanding ancient literature and religion: theories of myth, cult and ritual, mystery religions, the epic tradition. Greek sources are read in translation.		
<b>RSC 124</b>	<b>Hinduism: The Many Faces of the Divine</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
A study of Hinduism in its infinite variety from earliest times to the present. Topics include: the Indus Valley Civilization; early Vedic religion, its myths and gods; the Upanishads; Brahmanism; the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; the caste system; Vaishnavism, Saivism and goddess worship.		
<b>RSC 125</b>	<b>Buddhism: The Middle Way</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
The origins of Buddhism in its native India and its spread throughout many countries of the East. Topics include: the relationship of Buddhism to Hinduism and Jainism; the development of the monastic order, principal teachings and practices; meditation; ritual; study of major writings and modern developments.		
<b>RSC 126</b>	<b>Judaism: A Covenant with God</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
An introduction to the history, literature, ideas and practices of Judaism from its biblical origins to the present. Topics include: the major festivals and High Holidays; Torah and Talmud, mitzvah and midrash; philosophers of Judaism; Kabbalah and the mystical tradition; temples and synagogues; Rabbinic Judaism; Orthodox, Conservative and Reform; dietary and religious practices; women and the rabbinate; rites of passage; the Holocaust; the modern state of Israel and messianism.		
<b>RSC 127</b>	<b>Islam: Submission to Allah</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
The history, literature, ideas and practices of Islam from its origins to the present. Topics include: pre-Islamic Arabia; the life, example and practices of the Prophet Muhammad; the Qur'an; the caliphate and the <i>ummah</i> ; <i>sunnah</i> and <i>Hadith</i> ; the Five Pillars and worship; <i>Shari'ah</i> ; Sufism and the mystical tradition; Sunni and Shiite; women in Islam; art and architecture in Islam; Islam and modernity.		
<b>RSC 135</b>	<b>Jesus and His World</b>	<b>3-3-0</b>
How did Jesus the Jew come to be known as Jesus Christ? What was the Graeco-Roman world that birthed the first-century Jewish sect that became Christianity like? Through an analysis of various New Testament documents and other early Christian writings, this course will focus on the social, historical and political context of the Graeco-Roman world that gave rise to Christianity.		

- RSC 148 Psychology of Religion 3-3-0**  
An introduction to major theoretical approaches to the psychological understanding of religion: pragmatism (William James), Psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Erik Erikson) and Humanism (Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow).
- RSC 149 Sociology of Religion 3-3-0**  
An introduction to the understanding of religion as a social phenomenon: a discussion of the views of Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Peter Berger and Robert Bellah.
- RSC 200 Politics and Religion 3-3-0**  
This course examines the intersection between extremist religious beliefs and political power, predominantly but not exclusively those cases in which violence and serious conflict have arisen. Topics include: radical Zionist settlers in the West Bank; Islamic theocracy in Iran; Christian nationalism in the United States; radical Islamist groups (e.g., the Taliban, the Islamic State [ISIS] and Al Qaeda).
- RSC 203 / CLA 206 Early Christian Art and Architecture 3-3-0**  
This course examines the ways in which the Christians adapted elements from Greek, Roman and Near Eastern art and architecture to their religious beliefs and requirements and also studies the development of this new Christian art in the Byzantine Empire. Major topics include: Catacomb art, early Christian and Byzantine architecture, mosaic and painting, manuscript illuminations, textiles and the minor arts.
- RSC 204 / CLA 204 Women in Religion 3-3-0**  
An investigation of the religious lives of early pagan, Jewish and Christian women in the context of the Graeco-Roman world. Literary and epigraphical sources from the fourth century BCE to the third century CE are analyzed in order to determine women's roles, rites and practices, with special attention to constructions of gender in the Graeco-Roman world.
- RSC 206 Apocalypse 3-3-0**  
Whereas cosmic time in Asian religious traditions is generally seen as cyclical, with recurring phases of creation and destruction, in the "Western" religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam it is viewed as linear, with a single creation and a final destruction of this present world: the apocalypse. This course will look at the sacred texts that underpin apocalyptic concepts in established Western religions (e.g., the biblical Books of Daniel and Revelation), and examine how apocalyptic beliefs have been given expression in these traditions. Consideration will also be given to End Times beliefs in more recent "apocalyptic" movements (e.g., Heaven's Gate, The Branch Davidians).
- RSC 207 Sex and Religion 3-3-0**  
This course provides an overview of topics in which issues of sex and sexuality intersect with particular Eastern and Western religious traditions. The course is selective rather than comprehensive. Topics that could be covered include: menstruation and early sexuality; heterosexuality; contraception; LGBTQ+; same-sex marriage; celibacy; asexuality; sex and the sacred. Attitudes, traditions and regulations pertaining to these topics will be explored from various religious perspectives through readings and films/movies.
- RSC 208 / LIB 216 The Divine and Ultimate Concern 3-3-0**  
The divine is that about which we are "ultimately concerned"—so said theologian Paul Tillich of Union Seminary in New York. Is this just a last-ditch attempt to salvage faith and spirituality in the midst of charges that religion is, at best, an "opiate of the masses" (Marx) and, at worst, "patently infantile" (Freud)? Or again, is the role of religion being taken over by its longtime sister in spirit—art? This course will explore the troubled and passionate place of religious experience and the aesthetic in Western civilization.
- RSC 209 Sports and Religion 3-3-0**  
This course examines the intersection between sports and religious mentality and expression. Topics will include the rituals associated with athletics, supposed sports curses, prayer in sports, the possible transcendent experience of the athlete ("flow") and the euphoria of fandom ("collective effervescence").
- RSC 214 Israelite Mythology and Cultic Practice 3-3-0**  
An examination of mythology and cultic practices within Israelite society, as reflected in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Extra-biblical texts and archaeological evidence will be used to contextualize the biblical material. Topics include: the origins of the Israelite deity Yahweh; monotheism and polytheism; goddess worship; child sacrifice.
- RSC 215 Fake News? History vs. Legend in the Narrative of Early Biblical Israel 3-3-0**  
An examination of historical accounts concerning the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), with a view to assessing their historical authenticity. Extra-biblical texts and archaeological evidence will be used to contextualize the biblical material and to evaluate its claims. Topics include: the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob); Joseph in Egypt; the Exodus; the Israelite settlement in Canaan; the supposed "United Monarchy" under David and Solomon; David and Goliath.
- RSC 232 Philosophy of Religion 3-3-0**  
Does the intelligibility of the universe require a notion of the divine? Does philosophy point in the direction of mysticism? Is there a close link between the metaphysics of religious experience and moral commitments such as love, faith and courage? In this course, we will explore the ongoing and lively debate about these issues by drawing on authors from the ancient, medieval and contemporary contexts.
- RSC 234 / POL 236 Introduction to Middle Eastern Politics 3-3-0**  
The course will focus on the forces that have shaped current Middle Eastern politics: particularly the growing influence of Islam and Islamic fundamentalism on political life and thought; the enduring legacies of westernization, colonialism and secular nationalism; and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Arriving at an understanding of Middle Eastern politics in this course will also entail study of the challenges modernizing states, parties and leaders are confronting today, and the profound impact of Western interests and policies on the region.
- RSC 236 / CLA 236 Death and Dying in the Ancient World 3-3-0**  
This course explores the myths, rituals and beliefs associated with death and dying in antiquity. Topics include: myths associated with the afterlife; books of the dead; magic and death rituals; understandings of heaven and hell; final judgment.
- RSC 237 Religion at the Movies 3-3-0**  
This course employs movies to study religion, and religion to study movies. Different movie genres will be used to explore various issues, dimensions and expressions of religion, while images, metaphors and teachings found in religion will be employed to illuminate the religious material portrayed in movies.
- RSC 248 Death and Dying in the Modern World 3-3-0**  
This course explores the myths, rituals and beliefs associated with death and dying in the modern world. Topics include how death and dying are dealt with by contemporary cultures and societies, in particular within the contexts of various religious traditions.
- RSC 280 / CLA 280 Roman Religion 3-3-0**  
This course examines the religion of the ancient Roman people, following the traditions and changes from the 8th century BCE to the Imperial period. Roman religion was very different from the monotheistic religions with which many of us are familiar today, but it was also significantly different from the mythology of the ancient Greeks, despite the Romans' willingness to absorb and adapt the Greek myths. Topics to be studied in this course will include the Roman concept of divinity, beliefs about the dead, religious and cult ritual, senatorial and imperial control of religion, emperor worship, divination and prophecy, festivals, and Roman responses to the introduction of foreign religions.
- RSC 302 Of Latter-day Saints and Modern-day Prophets: New Religious Movements 3-3-0**  
In the past two centuries, a number of new religious groups claiming a significant number of adherents have emerged, joining long-established religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism in the global religious tapestry. Some of these groups are recognizably offshoots of much older religious traditions while others are entirely new entities, with only a tangential connection to what has gone before. This course will examine the roots and development of some of these groups, which scholars have generally called "New Religious Movements" (NRMs). Possible movements studied will include: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (i.e., Mormonism), Rastafari, Scientology, Bahá'í, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science and QAnon.

**RSC 303 /****CLA 303 /****LIB 303 On the Road Again: Pilgrimage in Theory and Practice 3-3-0**

This course will examine pilgrimage as embodied experience, with a special focus on contemporary pilgrimage. Cross-cultural approaches and historical context will be key to understanding the current fascination with walking as transformative practice. Theories of identity, community, and belonging will also be discussed. Students will have an opportunity to participate in a short pilgrimage.

**RSC 310 Christian Nationalism in America 3-3-0**

Christian nationalism is a fusion of political activism and a particular strand of Christianity: nativist, white-supremacist, militaristic, patriarchal, heteronormative. Anti-democratic at its core, it currently represents a serious challenge to the functioning of long-established American institutions of governance, having been embraced by a significant segment of the Republican Party. This course will trace the roots and rise of Christian nationalism in the United States and assess how it is shaping the present American political, religious and cultural landscape.

**RSC 328 Christian Origins 3-3-0**

This course explores a variety of early Christian and Jewish texts to understand the existence of different Christianities in the first four centuries of the Common Era and the complex relationship between Jews and Christians within the broader historical context of the Roman Empire. Possible topics to be discussed include: How did Christianity become its own religion, separate from Judaism? What did Christians believe about Jesus and about their own identity in the formative period of Christianity? What social and cultural forces forged the earliest images of Jesus? *Prerequisite: RSC 135 or permission of the instructor*

**RSC 332 /****CLA 332 Magic and Divination in the Ancient Near East 3-3-0**

Since the 19th century, magic and divination have been subjects of great scholarly interest. This course will examine how these phenomena were manifested in the region of what is today called the Middle East. We will also look at the supposed polemic against magic and divination in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), where calling someone a magician or diviner was a strategy for social control and definition, serving as an element in the construction of views about legitimate and illegitimate religious authority.

**RSC 335 /****CLA 335 Sacred Space in the Ancient World 3-3-0**

How did the ancients experience their surroundings? How did their conceptions of space and place affect their relationships with their deities, their ancestors, and each other? From lofty temples to humble shrines, sacred mountains to grottoes, we will explore the intimate connection between sacred places and the development of ancient identity. Archaeological and literary data, as well as modern theories of space and place, will be examined.

*Prerequisites: at least two Classics courses or permission of the instructor***RSC 350 /****CLA 350 The Goddess: History, Cult and Myth 3-3-0**

From Diana's bow to Athena's shield, from the fearsome wail of the Erinyes to the dulcet tones of the Muses, the sacred feminine in all its manifestations has fueled the imagination. How we in the modern world perceive the female divine, however, also reflects our own changing attitudes towards women. In this seminar course, we will examine the sacred feminine in art, archaeology, and literature, from Paleolithic Europe to contemporary America, with a view to understanding the construction of tropes of femininity both in ancient cultures and our own. Topics may include Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman goddesses, Hindu goddesses, gendered archaeology, the virgin Mary, modern goddess movements, and more!

*Prerequisite: at least two Classics courses or permission of the instructor*

## Independent Studies, Honours Thesis

**RSC 300 Independent Studies I 3-3-0****RSC 301 Independent Studies II 3-3-0****RSC 402F Honours Thesis 6-3-0**

A full-year (two-semester) course in which the student does guided research into a subject, produces a written thesis and, ultimately, gives an oral defence of the thesis.

*Prerequisite: departmental acceptance of the thesis proposal*

## Cognate Courses

The following courses in other departments are recognized as Religion, Society and Culture cognates:

CLA 110 The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Egypt

CLA 113 Classical Mythology:  
The Greek Influence on Rome

DRA 211 Ritual and Theatre

HIS 253 A History of Medieval Europe

HIS 279 The Middle East in the Twentieth Century

HIS 291 Women in the Islamic World

HIS 393 Inquisitions, Law and Society

LIB 384 Dante's Divine Comedy

*Some courses offered in the College of Liberal Arts**Some courses offered in the Philosophy Department*

PSY 298 Zen and the Brain

This is not an exhaustive list. Religion, Society and Culture students should consult the chair of the Department regarding any other courses offered by other departments or programs that they wish to take for Religion, Society and Culture credit.