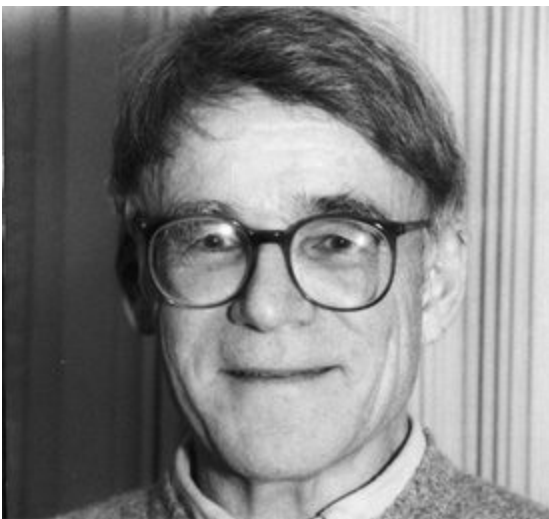


# Summer 2023 NumeNews

NEWSLETTER OF THE CARLETON COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

Co-edited by Maya Donovan '23 and Religion Staff

## In Memoriam: Bardwell Smith



**Bardwell Smith**, age 97, died in Northfield on November 28. Bardwell was hired in 1960 to join Carleton's recently formed Religion Department. He retired as the John W. Nason Professor of Religion and Asian Studies, Emeritus, in 1996. He also served as the Dean of the College during a time of great change from 1967–1972 and then as the Director of Asian Studies from 1973–1977. Bardwell profoundly influenced generations of students and was a generous colleague to many who benefitted from his wise counsel, quick wit, and compassionate spirit.

Bardwell taught courses in East and South Asian religions and philosophies, with special interests in Sri Lanka and Japan. He came to Carleton as a specialist in Christian Ethics, but an assignment to teach the department's then only course in non-Western religions launched his career in Asian Studies. Bardwell steadily trained himself in Asian religions and learned Chinese, Sanskrit, and Japanese along the way. Students in his classes not only learned deeply but were inspired by his integration of the heart and mind — and kept on their toes by his playful puns. Graffiti in the Carleton tunnels proclaimed his students' views: "Bardwell Smith is a bodhisattva."

In many important ways, Bardwell shaped the college culturally. During his time as Dean, the college made some dorms "co-ed" and, true to his sense of humor, the moves across campus happened on Valentine's Day weekend. Spurred in part by Bardwell, the college also committed to doubling the number of African American students. Responding to a journalist, Bardwell said, "If by integration you mean accepting black students and forcing them into the mold of white values, then no, we are not integrating Carleton. ... We are trying to be part of the process in this country which is forming a new culture." ("Faculty Legends", *Voice*, Fall 2016)

Bardwell was also influential in promoting the growth of Buddhist studies as a field in the U.S. and globally. He was a respected scholar, editing and writing numerous volumes, including his essays about Buddhism and

society in Sri Lanka which were published this past summer. He also initiated the building and maintenance of Carleton's renowned Japanese Garden.

Bardwell was predeceased by his beloved wife, Charlotte; father, Winthrop H. Smith and mother, Gertrude Behanna. He is survived by his brother Winthrop H. Smith Jr of Warren, VT, and five children, Peter Smith of Sedgwick, ME, Susan Moeller of Jupiter, FL, Laura Goodwin of Belfast, ME, Brooks Smith of Minneapolis, MN, and Sam Smith of Pacifica, CA., and by 7 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. A celebration of Bardwell's life was held at the Skinner Memorial Chapel at Carleton College on April 15th, 2023, at 2 pm, with a reception at Great Hall immediately following.

## **Emeritus Professor Roger Jackson's Eulogy of Bardwell Smith**

*Delivered at the Celebration of Bardwell's Life, April 15, 2023*

I first met Bardwell in the early winter of 1982, when we got into the same ride-share cab at LaGuardia airport. Still working on my PhD dissertation, I had flown to New York for my first American Academy of Religion annual meeting – primarily to be interviewed for a one-year job at Carleton substituting for Bardwell, who would be in Japan with Charlotte. It struck me as very auspicious that we should end up in the same taxi, and when I reported this later to my mother, she said, "It's meant to be."

Indeed, I got the job, and Pam and I spent a happy year living in Bardwell and Charlotte's house on Maple Street, walking their golden retriever Liza, caring for an aging feline named – how Bardwellian! – Magnifi-Cat, and observing the comings and goings of Brooks and Sam, who were both college-aged at the time. After that year, I wandered in the academic wilderness for five years but was fortunate to return to Carleton on a tenure-track basis in the fall of 1989. I could go on about my personal connection to Bardwell – for one thing, he was born the same year as my father, and was indeed a benevolent, paternal mentor, both as a teacher and a scholar – but my principal charge here is to celebrate him as a teacher and scholar of Asian religions.

Bardwell's interest in Asian religion and society dates to his travels in East Asia after his harrowing military service in World War II. Although his subsequent graduate training was mostly in the field of Christian social ethics, he was increasingly drawn to the study of Asian texts and traditions, teaching himself the basics of Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese, and visiting various Asian countries – especially India, Sri Lanka, and Japan – with increasing frequency.

At Carleton, of course, Bardwell was a legendary teacher who instructed and inspired generations of students, encouraging them to explore the implications of Asian texts for their own lives just as he had, and sometimes – long before it was fashionable – making meditation a part of the syllabus. He almost single-handedly established Carleton's outstanding program in Asian Studies, generating endowments that allowed the college to hire more Asian Studies faculty (including yours truly), bring in visiting professors (and the occasional

Buddhist master), sponsor Asian-related cultural events (from sitarists to Tibetan monks to Noh plays), and construct a world-renowned Japanese garden on campus. In town, he helped found the still thriving Northfield Buddhist Meditation Center.

As a scholar of Asia, Bardwell was a prolific and influential social and religious historian. In 1973, he co-authored, with Eshin Nishimura, a delightful book on Zen monastic life, *Unsui*. And in the 1970s and 1980s, he edited seminal volumes on religion, society, and politics in, respectively, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, India, China, and Japan, as well as a transnational study of Asian sacred cities. In the face of the largely doctrinal approach to Asian religions prevalent at the time, these collections helped to initiate a social and political turn in the field that remains vital today. In 2013, after decades of work, he published his definitive scholarly monograph, *Narratives of Sorrow and Dignity: Japanese Women, Pregnancy Loss, and Modern Rituals of Grieving* (Oxford University Press, 2013). And, in 2022, just months before his passing, he brought out a collection of his essays on Sri Lankan religion and society, *Precarious Balance: Sinhala Buddhism and the Forces of Pluralism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2022).

Bardwell was equally influential in promoting the growth of Buddhist studies as an academic field, both in the U.S. and globally. He was among the pioneers in teaching Buddhism and other Asian religions in American small liberal arts colleges, supporting such education not only in the stateside classroom but also through his involvement in such study-abroad programs as the AKP Program in Kyoto, the ISLE program in Kandy, Sri Lanka, and the ACM India program in Pune. He was a founding member of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, serving on the editorial board, the board of directors, and, in 1980–81, as General Secretary. Further, Bardwell’s efforts were vital to securing a foothold for Buddhist studies at the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion – which have become the main venue for scholarly communication about Buddhism in North America, if not the world.

All of us who knew and loved Bardwell – whether in Northfield or the wider scholarly world – miss him deeply, but we will continue to celebrate his love of baseball and the PBS NewsHour, his pun-gent wit, his lightly-worn erudition, his rigor as a scholar, his clarity as a writer, his lifelong love of both academic and experiential learning, and, far from least, his genuine, exemplary human kindness. As the graffiti in the Carleton tunnels tells us: “Bardwell Smith is” – or was – “a Bodhisattva.”

## **Emeritus Professor Richard Cruter’s Eulogy of Bardwell Smith**

*Delivered at the Celebration of Bardwell's Life, April 15, 2023*

It’s an honor to be with you today as we celebrate the remarkable life of Bardwell Smith in this historic chapel where he spent so much time. Bard, as he was then known, was the first person I met when I arrived on a snowy day in February 1967. I speak as a long-time colleague in the Religion Department who also knew him as Dean of the College and watched him create the legacy that we are celebrating today.

Presumably all academics are supposed to grow beyond the confines of their PhD dissertation. But no one could have predicted the case at hand. Bard's Yale doctorate had zero to do with Asia. It was in the field of Christian Ethics, with a dissertation on 19th-century Anglican social reformers. But his keen interest in Asia had not gone unnoticed when he was hired. Like other new hires who taught in Religion programs in the early 1960s, he was assigned to teach the obligatory one-semester survey called "Religions of the East." He went on to study Chinese and Japanese in the 1960s and 70s, deepening his love of those cultures. Each time he reached out to a visiting Buddhist or Hindu scholar, our curriculum gained a new dimension. He did not do it alone. But he was a major force in pluralizing our all-white male, Protestant enclave of a Religion department!

So how did Bardwell's decisive turn to Asia come about? Years ago I heard that he had discovered Asia in the military. His papers in the Carleton archives speak about this youthful trauma that changed his life. In his senior year at Andover in 1943 at age 17 he enrolled at Yale to await his draft call and learn how to socialize, not yet to become a scholar. The draft call came midyear, and he was soon serving in a Marine corps battalion, sent to Tianjin China in 1945 to help expatriate the Japanese who remained in that country. While there he was exposed to the extreme deprivation of the Chinese people—suffering made even worse by the abuse and racial epithets that his fellow marines heaped upon them. The experience of wartime suffering exposed the young New Englander "to more evil than he had ever seen or knew existed." The formative power of a draft call that took him to Asia thus opened the way to the vocation of a lifetime—his deep respect for, and eagerness to learn from cultures beyond the West.

Like each of us, Bardwell was more complex than meets the eye. Yes, he was well-born and bred. But he was raised early on with a conscience that opened his life to persons with fewer advantages, and to issues of social justice. His lifework teaches us that individual character and decisions can shape institutions, a lesson badly needed today. To my mind, his graduate training with the Christian Ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr was also never lost in the turn to Asia. Niebuhr knew that, despite its stereotypes, Christianity was itself not monolithic. Bardwell extended the analysis to show how the diverse pathways and practices of the great Asian traditions speak to and enrich the human condition.

Regarding his Deanship I only have time to remind all of us that he helped to keep the college afloat amid the upheavals of Vietnam and the 1968 assassinations. For a lucid account of those years I refer you to Bruce Colwell's recent biography of President John Nason—a book both inspired by and dedicated to Bardwell.

Looking back, I feel as if our relationship deepened in his retirement years, especially when we got to chatting about friends and family, the current Religion Department, the Niebuhrs, or the Episcopal Church. Up until the end he retained a gift for finding out what was going on in other people's lives, while sharing similar experiences of his own.

## Dr. Anthea Butler Gives Ian Barbour Lecture on Religion and Modernity

By Chris O'Mara '24

On January 25th, 2023, Professor Anthea Butler, Geraldine R. Segal Professor in American Social Thought at the University of Pennsylvania, delivered this year's Ian Barbour Lecture to an audience that filled Great Hall. The lecture series is held every few years in honor of Barbour's founding of Carleton's Religion Department and his passion for opening discourse between religion and science that deepens our understanding of the modern world. Butler is one of the most prominent historians of African American and American religion today. Her research and writing spans African American religion and history, race, politics, Evangelicalism, gender and sexuality, media, and popular culture. It was inspiring and stimulating to have Professor Butler visit Carleton, and we are very grateful for her illuminating contributions to discussions of religion on campus.

While Butler's lecture, titled *Which Nation, and Which God: Democracy and Religion in the 21st Century*, focused primarily on the present state of the American Evangelical movement's connection to the Republican Party and the January 6th Capitol insurrection, she began with a step back: In order to understand Southern, conservative Christianity's current sway over our country, we must first understand how these groups developed their power. Thus, Butler began with the "Religion of the Lost Cause," an interdenominational form of religion and culture in which groups of mostly southern Christians felt that their conception of democracy had been completely lost in post-antebellum America. This disillusionment with America laid the groundwork for the modern feeling of "declension" experienced by conservative and evangelical groups over the last 70 years—the feeling that the U.S. as a whole is (and has been) headed downhill and needs saving from a particular, conservative God.

Beginning with a discussion of Billy Graham in 1952, Butler explained the recurring theme of evangelical leaders, aligned with conservative political candidates, of repeatedly "calling the nation back" to the Church and to the Bible. These leaders fully embraced the idea of America as a savior-nation, simultaneously favored and chosen by God to spread Christian democracy, yet also lacking in political leaders willing and dedicated to making this God's values (the same values preached in Evangelical congregations across the nation) the law of the land. As we followed Graham's rise to power, we heard Butler explain how he and other leaders of evangelical movements came to have the ear of politicians and presidents in the 70's and 80's, steadily strengthening the connection between American Evangelicals and the Republican Party. With the advent of the Christian Coalition, the relationship grew further: Churches across the country



resumed handing out voting pamphlets to parishioners, who in turn voted with a newfound fervor; Fox News came onto the scene in the '90's; Tea-Party Evangelicals, or "Teavangelicals," as Prof. Butler quipped, became a major political force.

When Donald Trump was elected president in 2016, he became an almost messianic figure for Teavangelicals. Here was a leader who embraced them as a group, took real political action to meet their demands, and spoke to their anxieties. The union of the Republican Party and American evangelicals created a unified religio-political front, and the insurrection of January 6th, 2021 was nothing less than a religious event. Events rife with explicit religious meaning occurred beforehand, and the actual takeover was imbued with religious imagery and ritual.

As we move forward from the January 6th of two years ago, its legacy remains: religion is playing a central role in our country's politics, democracy has indeed reached a certain instability, and the Teavangelical movement is showing few signs of stopping. So yes, in reference to the lecture's title, it does indeed seem that some Americans are engaging with a different God, the God of the Teavangelical movement. They feel He has chosen America as his City on the Hill, that His "White Light of Love" will bring America back to a nostalgic understanding of America as it "used to be" (before the Civil Rights Movement, among other "progressive victories"), and that He will soon install a theocracy to enact policy in His will.

While the content of Prof. Butler's talk was not easy to hear, it encouraged us all to take seriously the effect of religion on our own and on others' lives today. As Butler said herself, "Religion...play[s] a very big role in what is going on in our country," and understanding how religion intersects with politics in our modern world is more important than ever.

## Asuka Sango's Endowed Chair Lecture

On September 21, 2022, Asuka Sango gave her endowed chair lecture about her current book project, "*Living Thought: Practices of Scholarly Learning in Medieval Japanese Buddhism*," a study of Buddhist scholasticism in medieval Japan. In attendance were President Alison Byerly, Provost Michelle Mattson, faculty from the Religion, Art History, Asian Languages and Literatures, History, Music, and Philosophy Departments, as well as staff from the Academic Technology, Grants Office, and Library. Many of her students also attended the talk, providing insightful reflections. The house was packed!

Yanmiao Wang '25 from Sango's "Religions in Japanese Culture" course finds it particularly interesting that "the scholarly practices of writing, reading, and debating Buddhist doctrinal texts were a significant part of monastic life, as exemplified by the thirteenth-century Tōdaiji monk Sōshō, one of the scholar monks Professor Sango examines. While extremely prolific (he produced 264 titles in his life), he mostly copied and excerpted the texts written by other scholar monks rather than authoring his own, leading some scholars today to dismiss Sōshō as unoriginal. But I marveled at Sōshō's graceful calligraphy. By writing the sacred text with one's elegant calligraphy, one would be pacified, purified, forgiven, and thus begin one's self-reflection to reach

enlightenment. These hand-written manuscripts take you back in time to communicate with scholar monks from medieval Japan.”

Erin Mattingly '26 from Sango's A&I Seminar, “Buddhism, Society, Science” reflects on what she learned: “The main takeaway from this talk was the conclusion. In the beginning of the presentation, Asuka described her personal experience of coming to America to go to school, feeling completely alienated, and not understanding the new culture. She reflects on this experience, arguing that these moments of unfamiliarity, confusion, and fear are the moments that lead one to cross an intellectual boundary and grow. Now she takes this same approach in her book, crossing a boundary from the modern academic world to the world of Buddhist scholar monks in medieval Japan. This lecture was very powerful and beneficial for me, as a student in Asuka's A&I Seminar with a research project, to see how we can take a focused research topic and make insights about the larger world, human nature, and life as a whole.”

## Religion Outside the Classroom

By Chris O'Mara '24

On January 11, at a luncheon event entitled, “Religion Outside the Classroom,” we heard from senior religion majors as well as officers from Carleton's Off-Campus Studies (OCS), Career Center, and Fellowships offices. As we enjoyed yummy sandwiches from Hogan Brothers, two students shared their experiences studying abroad in Paris, and another about his time on the Religion Department's OCS program in Bodh Gaya, India. We learned about all the different ways Carleton students can secure funding for research and experiences that interest them, as well as the important resources offered by the Career Center for students who may be looking for a job or externship related to their major.

There was a great turnout, with not an empty seat in the house – Sonja's dog Jake was also present, doing social rounds and scrounging for sandwich crumbs along the way. Everyone really *does* love Hogan Brothers. We had lots of professors, current religion majors, and sophomore and first-year students interested in the religion major and minor. Keep an eye out for more events about ways the Religion Department provides a variety of opportunities to students interested in taking their interests outside the classroom!

## Religion Faculty Recent Publications

**Sonja Anderson, Assistant Professor**

“Idol/Idolatry—New Testament.” In *Oxford Bibliographies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.

“Seeing Who's Not There: Velázquez's *Kitchen Maid with Supper at Emmaus*.” In *Race and Biblical Studies*:

*Antiracism Pedagogy for the Classroom*. Edited by Tat-Siong Liew and Shelly Mathews. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2022, pp. 205-221.

Review of Meghan Henning, *Hell Hath No Fury: Gender, Disability, and the Invention of Damned Bodies in Early Christianity*, Yale University Press, 2021). In *Early Christianity* 3:13 (2022): pp. 367–372.

“Natural Law—Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism.” In *The Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, vol. 20. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022, pp. 983–1012.

### **Kristin Bloomer, Associate Professor and Chair**

“‘Religion’ and Hindu-Christian Relations after the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Hindu-Christian Relations*. Eds. Chad Bauman and Michelle Voss Roberts. New York: Routledge, 2021, pp. 230–42.

“Phantasms, Dreams, and Other Realities: Gender and Marian Performativity in South India.” In “*Gender Trouble’s Thirties*.” Special issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. In press.

### **Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, Professor**

“The *Masjid* in the Qur’an.” In *Non Sola Scripture: Essays on the Qur’an and Islam in Honor of William A. Graham*. Edited by Bruce Fudge, Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, Christian Lange, and Sarah Bowen Savant. London: Routledge, 2022.

*Material Islam*, a special issue of *Material and Visual Cultures of Religions Journal*, guest-edited with Anna Bigelow, v. 6, no. 2 (2022).

“Ablution Socks: The Logic of Market Capitalism and Its Limits.” In *MAVCOR Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2022): <https://mavcor.yale.edu/mavcor-journal/ablution-socks>.

“Islam in America: The Beginnings.” Revised for the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West*. Edited by Roberto Tottoli. London: Routledge, 2022, pp. 105-118.

### **Roger Jackson, John W. Nason Professor of Asian Studies and Religion, Emeritus**

“Saraha: The Anti-Philosopher as Philosopher.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Buddhist Philosophy*. New York: Routledge, 2022, pp.124-137.

“Rebirth without a Self.” In *Watkins Mind Body Spirit* magazine. Issue 73, Spring 2023.

### **Michael McNally, Professor**

“The Sacred and the Profaned: Protecting Native American Sacred Places that have been Desecrated.” *California Law Review*. April 2023.

### **Asuka Sango, Professor**

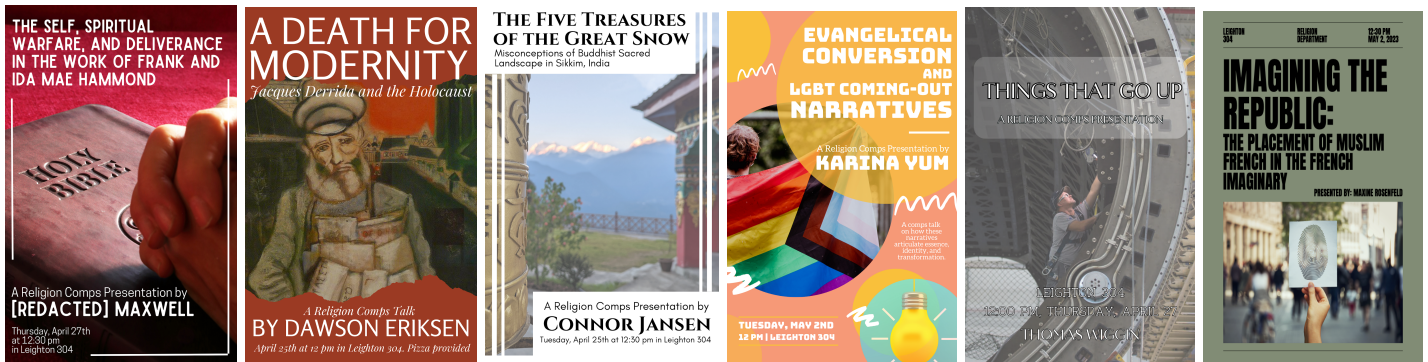
“The Recent Studies of Premodern Japanese Buddhist Debate in the United States” (“Amerika ni okeru



zenkindai Nihon no Bukkyō rōngi no kenkyū”), in *Nihon Bukkyō sōgō kenkyū* 20 (2022): 141–49 (written in Japanese).

“Debate Traditions in Premodern Japan.” In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. Oxford University Press, 2015- (began 2015). Article published July 18, 2022.

## Religion Department Comps Presentation Titles Spring 2023



❖ = Distinction in comps ➤ = Bardwell Smith Prize for Excellence in the Study of Religion

➤ **A Death for Modernity: Jacques Derrida and the Holocaust** || Dawson Eriksen

❖ **The Five Treasures of the Great Snow: Misconceptions of Buddhist Sacred Landscape in Sikkim, India** || Connor Jansen

**The Self, Spiritual Warfare, and Deliverance in the Work of Frank and Ida Mae Hammond** || [Redacted] Maxwell

**Evangelical Conversion and LGBT Coming-Out Narratives** || Karina Yum

**Things That Go Up** || Thomas Wiggin

❖ **Imagining the Republic: The Placement of Muslim French in the French Imaginary** || Maxine Rosenfeld

## Fall 2023 Religion Courses

### ❖ RELG 100.01: Reimagining God

How have religious thinkers re-imagined the concept "God" in response to challenges to traditional faith? We'll consider how secularization, social justice, oppression, and religious pluralism have prompted theologians to re-define the very meaning of the word "God" and the nature of God's power, agency, and relation to human communities. *Lori Pearson*

### ❖ RELG 100.02: Christianity and Colonialism

From its beginnings, Christianity has been concerned with the making of new persons and worlds: the creation of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. It has also maintained a tight relationship to power, empire, and the making of modernity. In

this course we will investigate this relationship within the context of colonial projects in the Americas, Africa, India, and the Pacific. *Kristin Bloomer*

❖ **RELG 110: Understanding Religion**

How can we best understand the role of religion in the world today, and how should we interpret the meaning of religious traditions—their texts and practices—in history and culture? This class takes an exciting tour through selected themes and puzzles related to the fascinating and diverse expressions of religion throughout the world. From politics and pop culture, to religious philosophies and spiritual practices, to rituals, scriptures, gender, religious authority, and more, students will explore how these issues emerge in a variety of religions, places, and historical moments in the U.S. and across the globe. *Lori Pearson*

❖ **RELG 122: Introduction to Islam**

This course is a general introduction to Islam as a prophetic religious tradition. It explores the different ways Muslims have interpreted and put into practice the prophetic message of Muhammad through analyses of varying theological, legal, political, mystical, and literary writings as well as through Muslims' lived histories. These analyses aim for students to develop a framework for explaining the sources and vocabularies through which historically specific human experiences and understandings of the world have been signified as Islamic. The course will focus primarily on the early and modern periods of Islamic history. *Kambiz GhaneaBassiri*

❖ **RELG 212: Black Religious Thought**

Although Black thinkers are well-known for discussing religion, the relationship between Blackness and religious thought is ambiguous. Much like religion can be understood in numerous ways, so does “Black” carry several meanings. In this course, we will investigate this ambiguity by unpacking how Black thinkers have expanded upon, reimagined, and rejected various forms of religious practices, beliefs, and institutions. Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which these engagements are shaped by thinkers' identification with, definition of, and politics surrounding Blackness and the African diaspora. The syllabus may include Baldwin, Hurston, Malcolm X, and Cone. *Paul Cato*

❖ **RELG 239: Religion and the American Landscape**

The American landscape is rich in sacred places. The religious imaginations, practices, and beliefs of its diverse inhabitants have shaped that landscape and been shaped by it. This course explores ways of imagining relationships between land, community, and the sacred, the mapping of religious traditions onto American land and cityscapes, and theories of sacred space and spatial practices. Topics include religious place-making practices of Indigenous, Latinx, and African Americans, as well as those of Euro-American communities from Puritans, Mormons, immigrant farmers. *Michael McNally*

❖ **RELG 266: Modern Islamic Thought**

This course examines how 19th and 20th-century Muslim thinkers in the Middle East and South Asia conceptualized God and the ideal God-human relationship to address pressing questions as: How should religion relate to modern technology and science? Can Islam counter European colonialism? Can Islam be lived in a nation-state or does it demand a transnational political collectivity of its own? What would a modern Islamic economy look like? *Kambiz GhaneaBassiri*

❖ **RELG 289: Global Religions in Minnesota**

Somali Muslims in Rice County? Hindus in Maple Grove? Hmong shamans in St. Paul hospitals? Sun Dances in Pipestone? In light of globalization, the religious landscape of Minnesota, like America more broadly, has become more visibly diverse. Lake Wobegon stereotypes aside, Minnesota has always been characterized by some diversity but the realities of immigration, dispossession, dislocation, economics, and technology have made religious diversity more pressing in its implications for every arena of civic and cultural life. This course bridges theoretical knowledge with engaged field research focused on how Midwestern contexts shape global religious communities and how these communities challenge and transform Minnesota. *Michael McNally*

❖ **RELG 322: Apocalypse How?**

When will the world end, and how? What's wrong with the world—morally, politically, naturally—such that people have seen its destruction as necessary or inevitable? Are visions of “The End” a form of sophisticated resistance literature, aimed at oppressive systems of power? Or are they evidence of a disturbed mind disconnected from reality? This seminar takes a deep dive into the contours of apocalyptic thought, which in its most basic form is about unmasking the deceptions of the given world by revealing the secret workings of the universe. We will begin with the earliest apocalypses, found in ancient Jewish and Christian texts, and move into modern religious and “secular” visions of cosmic collapse. Our approach will be historical and comparative, and we will explore topics ranging from doomsday cults to climate catastrophe, visions of heaven to tours of hell, malevolent angels to meddling UFOs, all the while asking how the apocalyptic imagination creates, as one thinker put it, “another world to live in.” *Sonja Anderson*