

Upper Level BIC Course Offerings: Summer and Fall 2023

Summer 2023

BIC 3358: Biblical Heritage: Special Interest Session—see course description

Dr. Mike Whinton

This course is a special interest section of BIC 3358, which explores the potential contributions of biblical heritage (broadly conceived) for navigating our religiously diverse global society. This course starts with the assumption that religious difference is a rich (yet frequently untapped) resource for the common good—that we are better human beings and better citizens of a better society if we have authentic encounters across religious differences. Sometimes called “interfaith engagement,” these encounters focus on story-sharing and cultivating relationships, rather than winning a debate or sorting out who is “right.” According to social scientific research, such interactions spark authentic relationships, leading to positive attitudes towards, and appreciative knowledge of, religious traditions other than your own. The result is what Diana Eck calls “pluralism,” by which she means “[a]n ethic for living together in a diverse society: not mere tolerance or relativism, but the real encounter of commitments.”

Drawing upon the lives of Moses (and Pharaoh’s daughter), Abraham, Joseph, Ruth, Jesus, Paul and others, this section of BIC 3358 will focus on exploring scriptural texts and paradigms that can inform a Christian approach to interfaith cooperation. In addition, students will develop their religious literacy as a means of bridge-building, work through real-life case studies of (a lack of) interfaith cooperation, develop tools for engaging in story-sharing on the basis of shared values, and articulate their own theology/ethic of interfaith cooperation.

Priority will be given to students who are pursuing the minor in Civic Interfaith Studies. If you are in the minor, you may request a permit for this section, but this MUST be done before April 5. Contact Katelyn Jaynes for a registration permit BEFORE registration begins.

BIC 4374: World Cultures V: Russia, Eastern Europe, and Africa

Dr. Ivo Novakovic

This section of WC V will study and compare the sociocultural transformations in two different regions of the world, post-socialist Eastern Europe and postcolonial Africa. In the first part, you will focus on Eastern Europe, Russia, and the former Soviet Republics and analyze their developments after the collapse of socialism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In the second part, you will study social and cultural history of Africa and examine the impact of colonialism on African developments in the postcolonial conditions. In the third part, you will compare these two geopolitical regions in terms of their post-socialist/postcolonial experiences and their prospects in the contemporary world.

Fall 2023

BIC 4374: World Cultures V

Dr. George Njung

Dr. Njung's small group will broadly survey Islamic and Christian cultures in Africa, and the important roles that these two religions have played in relation to the vexing questions of modernity and progress in the continent. We will also specifically situate Islam within African cultural and traditional matrix and ask whether 'African Islam' isn't proper Islam, a notion that has permeated western discourses, to which we have become accustomed.

BIC 4374: World Cultures V:

Dr. Lynn Tatum

Dr. Lynn Tatum's small group concentrates on Middle Eastern culture with a particular view towards religion and the role it has played, and is playing, in the region's history and development. The course will look particularly at the Israeli-Arab dispute and America's role in that struggle. It will also look at the ISIS phenomenon and the roots of this violent jihadist movement.

AST 4388/BIC 4374: Contemporary China:

Dr. Xin Wang

AST 4388 Contemporary China will examine contemporary Chinese society and culture. The course will study various aspects of Chinese contemporary society and culture, including business, economy, art, cinema, environment, religions, youth, education, and social changes. The course will use a variety of readings, online materials, films, documentaries, to study China, including Harvard Business School cases on TikTok and Huawei. The course will end with a discussion on China's role in the world, and the US-China business relations and political tensions in recent years.

BIC 4389: Capstone: Memoir and Meaning

Dr. Darren Middleton

"And so we reach out to each other, stumbling along, telling our stories. We long to be known and loved, to be understood and embraced. There are different words to describe this, but the Christian word for it is *grace*. I wonder, when we talk about the religious element to memoirs, and the form's enduring appeal, how much we are talking about that: the hope that our lives, failures and all, are not beyond the reach of mercy." – Matthew Sittman

Narrative is the art form of our hard-wired desire for meaning. We live by the tales we tell; and memoir helps us find significance, as well as develop empathy, as we move through our world's sorrows and joys. In this course, we will read a variety of sacred-haunted memoirs, or parables of the remembered past. Our primary purpose is to assess the genre and to better understand how this form of writing assists select Christian authors, who represent wide-ranging backgrounds, experiences, and cultures, as they encounter life's deepest mysteries and struggle with its unknowns. Memoir is also an invitation to thoughtfulness. Thus, in the process of reading, we too will pose our own questions of identity, belonging, and meaning, participating in the genre's exploration of "who am I" in relation to God and others, and wrestling with "what really matters" in life.

Updated 3/17/2023

BIC 4389: Capstone: The Once and Future King

Dr. Ann McGlashan, Dr. Lynn Tatum

We tell stories in order to know who we are, who God is, and how the cosmos is ordered. Join Dr. McGlashan and Dr. Tatum as we delve into three of the most iconic stories of the Western world under the rubric of the “Once and Future King.” We will read, watch, experience, and discuss together several retellings of the stories of King David, King Jesus, and King Arthur, in literature, art, poetry, music, and movies. Through these, along with the wisdom of some wise story-tellers of the 20th and 21st centuries, we will learn to understand how we as individuals see ourselves and our place in the world.