COMPARATIVE RELIGION & CULTURE PROGRAM (GCRC) COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

GCRC 300 - Religions, Culture, and Modernity in Taiwan (4 required units, fall semester)

This course is an introduction to the religions and culture of the Republic of China and its peoples. In the area of culture, topics considered will include the idea of Chinese identity in domestic and international politics; the self and its relations to others; cultural tradition and innovation. In the area of religion, this course introduces students to religion in the Republic of China (principally Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and popular religion). Special attention is given to the experience of practitioners as influencing and influenced by modernity and globalization. Examples include the use of Confucian ritual in civil religion, the internationalization of Buddhist monastic and lay organizations, efforts to revive Daoist institutions, and the regular appearance of new religious movements.

GCRC 310 - Methods in Research and Experiential Learning I (4 required units, fall semester)

This course will develop student skills in research and experiential learning methods such as field notes, interviews, organizational analysis, online research, building bibliographies, budgeting for independent projects, and introductory language acquisition. Assignments will include presentation and peer review and critique of assignments. The course will culminate in a two-week independent study project in Thailand.

GCRC 320 - Comparison: Theory and Reflection I (4 required units, fall semester)

This course is an introduction to comparative and cross-cultural study in a globalizing world. Students are introduced to theoretical tools with which to begin learning about others' – and their own – ways of making sense of the world. Yet, comparison is not a neutral act. The person who compares necessarily reduces the reality of the things compared, but also adds to his/her reality with the product of that comparison. What are we looking for when we compare? How might we recognize "it"? Students develop answers to these questions through seminar discussions of readings drawn from such fields as cultural anthropology, philosophy of religion, and social criticism. Learning is documented through short response papers to readings and a final essay identifying and extending key insights from the semester.

GCRC 330 - Religions, Culture, and Modernity in Thailand (4 required units, fall semester)

This course introduces students to religions and culture in Thailand. In the area of culture, topics considered will include the idea of Thai identity in domestic and international politics; the self and its relations to others; cultural tradition and innovation. In the area of religion, topics considered will include Theravada Buddhism and popular animism. Special attention is given to the experience of practitioners as influencing and influenced by modernity and globalization. Examples include the engagement of the *sangha* in health and environmental issues, *vipassana* as spiritual and as touristic practice, and the coexistence of spirit worship, Buddhist devotion, and consumerism.

GCRC 340 - Religions, Culture, and Modernity in India (4 required units, spring semester)

This course introduces students to religions and culture in India. In the area of culture, topics considered will include over the idea of Indian identity in domestic and international politics; the self and its relations to others; cultural tradition and innovation. In the area of religion, topics will include Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Dalit religions. Special attention is given to the experience of practitioners as influencing and influenced by modernity and globalization. Examples include India's distinctive experiment in multi-religious "secularism," and the globalization of *bhakti* movements.

GCRC 350 - Methods in Research and Experiential Learning II (4 required units, spring semester)

This course will continue to develop student skills in research and experiential learning methods such as field notes, interviews, organizational analysis, online research, building bibliographies, budgeting for independent projects, and introductory language acquisition. Assignments will include presentation and peer review and critique of assignments. The course will include two weeks for an independent study project or for an Independent Study Semester proposal.

GCRC 360 - Comparison: Theory and Reflection II (4 required units, spring semester)

This course is a companion to "Comparison: Theory and Reflection I," offered in the fall semester. How can we track the process of comparing, and what might we do to make our comparisons better, in a variety of senses? This seminar-format class deepens students' critical reflection on the limits of the "tools" acquired in the fall, as well as their use of them. The course includes a long capstone essay in which students revisit their crucial learning events, analyzing them to disclose the (stable and/or changing) ways they make sense of others and, finally, speculating on practical lessons to be drawn from this analysis as they prepare to return home.

GCRC 370 - Religions, Culture, and Modernity in Turkey (4 required units, spring semester)

This course introduces students to religions and culture in Turkey. In the area of religion, principal focus will lie on Sunni Islam, Sufism, and Alevism. In the area of culture, topics considered will include the idea of Turkish identity in domestic and international politics; the self and its relations to others; cultural tradition and innovation. Special attention is given to the experience of practitioners as influencing and influenced by modernity and globalization. Examples include the role(s) of women in the modern Turkish Republic, Islamism and secularism, and Turkish candidacy for membership in the European Union.

Independent Study GCRC 381-384 (variable units)
Independent Study can only be taken with permission of Program Director and Advisor.

Students have the opportunity to conduct an independent study with guidance from their faculty advisor which must be approved to make sure it meets academic, health and safety criteria. The advisor and the student develop a learning plan for the semester and regular meetings take place to discuss the student's project. Students are expected to hand in written work on a regular basis. Students may not repeat the same course number for credit either in the same or in a different semester. Expected total course hours (activities and individual study and documentation): 45 hours per credit.