ALCOHOL, DRUGS, VISIONS and ALTERED STATES in RELIGIONS

REL 401 Seminar in Religious Studies:

James McHugh
MW 3:30 - 4:50

Are altered states of mind and mystical visions the root of all religions? Can neuroscience explain spiritual ecstasy? Why do some religions prohibit alcohol and various drugs, while some religions cultivate religious states of mind though drugs and meditation? This course examines the history and meaning of drugs, alcohol, and altered states of mind in world religions across history. Reading a wide variety of texts and also looking at some other media on such topics as alcohol in Islam, cannabis in tantric Hinduism, and experiments in the 1960s using drugs to induce mystical states, the course will explore how religions have controlled and manipulated psychoactive substances and technologies from the past to the present.