

RELIGIONS OF THE WESTERN WORLD
840:212:05
Spring 2014

Instructor: Hilit Surowitz-Israel

Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30-12:30 or by appointment
Miller Hall #107 (behind the Bildner Center, 12 College Ave.)

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Course Description:

This course examines the beliefs, practices, and sacred writings of Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and indigenous traditions.

Objectives: By the conclusion of the course participants should be able to:

- Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.
- Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time, including the history of ideas or history of science.
- Demonstrate familiarity with major themes, practices, and sacred writings of major western religious traditions,
- Demonstrate familiarity with the various methodologies and approaches in the study of religions, and
- Demonstrate familiarity with major trends and themes in the development and intersection of western religious traditions.

The **Required Text** for the course:

Textbooks are available at the Rutgers Bookstore, a Barnes & Noble College Bookstore.

❖ Willard G. Oxtoby and Amir Hussain, *World Religions: Western Traditions*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2011).

❖ Articles and primary sources will be available on SAKAI.

❖ Other readings or media may be assigned during the course of the semester.

Attendance & Participation

Students are expected to attend each class on time. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. You are permitted three unexcused absences. Following the third unexcused absence 1/3 of a letter grade will be deducted for each unexcused absence. Students who encounter any extended problem with absences, for example, for medical or family emergencies, or religious reasons, must inform me in writing about the reason and duration of the absence. Decisions on excused absences will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Short quizzes may be given. There will be no make-ups for in-class quizzes or exams.

Student participation is an integral component for the success of this class. Course participants will be expected to arrive to class on time, and prepared to discuss the assigned readings. **Please bring assigned readings to class as we will frequently consult the text, particularly the primary sources.** Participation not only means asking questions and involving oneself in the classroom discussion, it also means actively listening to others.

Requirements:

- ❖ Participation, attendance, in-class assignments (5%)
- ❖ Exam I (25%)
- ❖ Exam II (25%)
- ❖ Exam III (Final Exam, not cumulative) (25%)
- ❖ Essay (20%)
- ❖ All students must come to office hours at least once during the semester.

*** Students must complete all course requirements in order to receive a passing grade

Written work will be graded on the basis of content, clarity of argument, quality of writing, and how well it analyzes the material and answers the questions. Written work, except for that which is a classroom assignment, must be typed (double-spaced, 12 pt. font), and spell-checked. One letter grade per day will be deducted for late papers unless you have a written medical excuse.

Classroom Policies:

❖ Plagiarism and cheating will be penalized according to the full extent of University policy. Please consult Rutgers University's *Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students*:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml#plagiarism>

❖ Students with disabilities who require accommodations should provide me with their "accommodation letter" from the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Please consult the website of the Office of Disability Services for further information:

http://sas.rutgers.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=135&Itemid=117

❖ Note that I do not accept assignments submitted by email. All assignments must be submitted in hard-copy on the day that they are due.

❖ Evaluations will cover all course material, even if it is not specifically covered in class.

•Schedule•

Week 1

Wednesday 1/22

- Introduction and review syllabus

Week 2

Monday 1/27

- Chapter 1, About Religion, pp. 4-26

Wednesday 1/29

- Chapter 2, Religions of the Ancient World, pp.30-45

Week 3

Monday 2/3

- Chapter 2, Religions of the Ancient World, pp. 45-62

Wednesday 2/5

Guest Speaker: Professor Gary Rendsburg

- Chapter 3, Jewish Traditions, pp. 66-90
- Genesis 13-21 (on SAKAI)

Week 4

Monday 2/10

Guest Speaker: Professor Azzan Yadin-Israel

- Chapter 3, Jewish Traditions, pp. 90-113
- Mishnah Avot 1:1 (SAKAI)

Wednesday 2/12

- Chapter 3, Jewish Traditions, pp. 113-127
- Maimonides *Principles of Faith* (SAKAI)

Week 5

Monday 2/17

- Chapter 3, Jewish Traditions, pp. 127-141
- primary source TBA

Wednesday 2/19

- In-class film

Week 6

Monday 2/24

- Chapter 3, Jewish Traditions, pp. 141-159

Wednesday 2/26

- EXAM I (in-class)

Week 7

Monday 3/3

- Chapter 4, Christian Traditions, pp. 165-185
- Matthew 1
- Matthew 5-7
- Romans 5
- Luke 21-24

Wednesday 3/5

- Chapter 4, Christian Traditions, pp. 185-209

Week 8

Monday 3/10

- Chapter 4, Christian Traditions, pp. 209-219
- Martin Luther 95 Theses

Wednesday 3/12

- Chapter 4, Christian Traditions, pp. 219-227
- Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes*

Week 9- SPRING BREAK (3/15-3/23)

Week 10

Monday 3/24

- Chapter 4, Christian Traditions, pp. 227-243

Wednesday 3/26

- In-class film TBA

Week 11**Monday 3/31**

- Chapter 4, Christian Traditions, pp. 243-262
- Vatican II primary Sources
- excerpts from *The Book of Mormon* including First Vision

Wednesday 4/2

- Chapter 5, Muslim Traditions, pp. 268-283
- Koran, Suras 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 87
- suggested reading Sura 22

Week 12**Monday 4/7**

- Chapter 5, Muslim Traditions, pp. 283-302
- excerpts from *The Essential Rumi*

Wednesday 4/9

- Chapter 5, Muslim Traditions, pp. 302-312
- in-class short film: *Women in Islam*

Week 13**Monday 4/14**

- Chapter 5, Muslim Traditions, pp. 312-319
- in-class film: *The Koran and the American Dream*

Wednesday 4/16

Exam II (in-class)

Week 14

Monday 4/21

- Chapter 6, Indigenous Traditions, pp. 324-358
- excerpts from *Black Elk Speaks*
- excerpts from *Watunna*

Wednesday 4/23

- Chapter 6, Indigenous Traditions, pp. 358-381
- *Spirits for Sale* (you must watch this at home prior to class-it will be available to you electronically)

Week 15

Monday 4/28

- Chapter 7, New Religions and Movements, pp. 388-404
- Primary sources TBA

Wednesday 4/30

- Chapter 7, New Religions and Movements, pp. 404-419
- Primary Sources TBA

Week 16

Monday 5/5

- Chapter 8, Current Issues, 424-438
- final discussion

*** FINAL EXAM PERIOD: EXAM III (Tues. May 13th, 12-3pm)