

Religions of the Western World

01:840:212:02

M-Th 11:30-12:50, Room FH-A3

Spring 2015

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Office Hours: Th 1:30-2:30 pm (by appointment)

This course offers an introduction to the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, often called “Western” religions because of their common origins in the God of Abraham. We will be concerned with their historical development, rituals, beliefs, ethics, and their interaction (both directly and indirectly) with contemporary society and politics and with each other. Our goal is to understand and appreciate the various world-views of diverse cultures **on their own terms**, without making judgments about the truth-claims of any religious tradition. We will try to gain an effective knowledge base from which to think critically about the many pressing issues which have arisen in the post-9/11/01 world with regard to these religions.

The course load involves writing three short papers, plus one longer paper based upon your visit to a worship service of a religion other than your own (broadly defined). There are also two tests and a final exam. If you are not comfortable with any of these requirements (for whatever reasons), you may wish to reconsider your enrollment.

This course fulfills the following core curriculum learning goals of Rutgers University.

Students will:

- * 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.
- * Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors.
- * Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
- * Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations.
- * Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.

Required Texts Available at the Bookstore:

Religions of the West Today, 3rd Edition, ed. by John Esposito, Darrell Fasching and Todd Lewis. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-999963-7

Anthology of World Scriptures: Western Religions, by Robert E. Van Voorst. Thomson Wadsworth. ISBN: 0-495-17059-3

A Note about Grading: A's are supposed to be exceptional grades. In order to earn an A(-) in this course, you must complete all assignments **really well**. Your work should not only be flawless, but also above and beyond expectations. Doing all assignments **well** fits more appropriately in the B range of grades. When work is flawed, late, or incomplete, it fits into the C and D range.

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance. Good attendance demonstrates a solid commitment and typically influences your grades on all other aspects of the course. Some of the material covered in lectures and class discussion is not found in the textbooks; additional details may be given in class regarding particular assignments; and exams will draw from both text and class material – so it is vital to be present. If you are sick or have an emergency, it is wise to let me know. Use the University absence reporting website (<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. You will be allowed two absences (beginning January 22) before your grade is officially penalized; each absence beyond that (or the equivalent in tardies or leaving early) will lower your “Attendance and Participation” grade one notch. No “incomplete” grades will be given for falling behind or sporadic/poor attendance.
2. Participation in class. This requires completing the assignments before each class, arriving on time, taking notes, and being actively engaged in any class discussion. This also includes leading one sacred text discussion and explicitly contributing to all sacred text discussions (in both written and oral form), in addition to your performance on occasional “pop” quizzes on the reading material. Note: while late written assignments will be penalized, you will be allowed one late paper (one class period) without a penalty. *Use of electronic devices such as cell phones, laptops and tablets in class must only be for purposes related to this course (such as note-taking). The burden of proof is on you to demonstrate that you are not using such devices for other purposes. Otherwise, my assumption will be that you are not participating in class and your grade will be lowered.*
3. Reflection Papers, due as indicated on the syllabus. These are critical reflections (NOT summaries) on your reading of the assigned sacred texts of each tradition. You should do your best to address thoughtful reactions, concerns, questions and insights, especially in light of material covered in class or in the textbook. The point is to engage in a deeper, more critically-thought way with the formative texts of these religions. In a sense, you will “interrogate” the text in order to reveal multiple levels of meaning and interpretation, to expose problems for today’s world, to uncover “hidden” contradictions, and to challenge your own preconceived notions and assumptions about what these sacred texts have to say. See more detailed suggestions on separate assignment sheet.

You will need to complete a total of **three** (3) of these papers, one for each of the religious traditions studied (on the syllabus: #'s J1 or J2; C1 or C2; I1 or I2). These should be two-pages **minimum**, typed double-spaced in 12-point (no larger) Times New Roman font with 1" margins (or less) all around. Do NOT waste space for a heading; you may write your name and the date in the top margin and begin your text on the first typed line. Each paper is graded on a 1-10 numbered scale and will drop a half-number for each class period the paper is late.

10 = A (An extraordinary paper. Thorough. Effective critical thinking. Rare but possible)
9.5 = A- (An excellent paper – well above and beyond expectations)
9 = B+ (Insightfully completed paper as expected and written very well)
8.5 = B (**This is the typical grade for completing the paper as assigned**)
8 = B- (Not quite up to expectations)
7.5 = C+ (Falls short in length or critical thinking)
7 = C (Falls short as above and/or too much summary without analysis)
6.5 = C- (Falls short as above and/or poor writing skills)
6 = D+ (These grades and below are compounding the problems mentioned above)
5.5 = D
5 = D-

4. Service Critique, due no later than May 4. **See and follow separate instructions given in class.** A late Service Critique will drop a **full grade** (example A- to B-) for each week it is late. You should be prepared to discuss your experience with the class.
5. Two Tests, on Judaism and Christianity, February 26 and April 6. Absence from the tests without **prior** notification and arrangements will result in a **zero** grade.
6. Final Exam, on Islam and inter-religious issues, Thursday, May 7, 8:00-11:00 am. Again, absence will result in a **zero** grade.

Criteria for Evaluation:

- accuracy and precision of scholarship
- clarity of oral and written expression
- progress in critical thinking skills
- completion of assignments and readings on due dates
- thoroughness, creativity, originality and contribution to field of inquiry

Grades will be based on the following formula:

Attendance and Participation	20%
Sacred Text Reflection Papers	20%
Service Critique	20%
Two Tests	20%
Final Exam	20%

All assignments should be turned in as a hard copy. If you need to email an assignment in order to hand it in on time (by the beginning of class), please feel free to do so. You should send it to duganmcg@rci.rutgers.edu BOTH as an attachment and as text in the message, **then follow it up with a hard copy.** An Attachment alone does not guarantee the paper has been received. You may also leave papers in the mailbox or under the office door as long as they are clearly marked to the attention of Dr. McGinley. Remember that if you EVER consult an outside source for something you are writing, you MUST acknowledge it through an appropriate citation. Portraying someone else's ideas or work as your own is **plagiarism** and any student found plagiarizing will receive an F for the entire course.

Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignments:

Readings and papers are DUE on the date for which they are listed.

Jan 22	Course Introduction	
Jan 26	“Religion” and other critical terms Importance of Historical Eras Introduction to Abrahamic Religions Oxford Text: pp. 3-26	
Jan 29	JUDAISM Oxford Text: pp. 26-36; 77-84	
Feb 2	JUDAISM Oxford Text: pp. 84-91	
Feb 5	JUDAISM Sacred Texts <i>Scriptures</i> : The Call of Moses; Crossing the Red Sea; The Covenant with Israel; Ezra’s Enforcement of <i>Torah</i> Observance; The Ten Commandments; Laws on Slaves, Violence, and Property; God’s Call to an Unfaithful People; The Establishment of Circumcision; The Establishment of Passover	Reflection Paper #J1
Feb 9	JUDAISM Oxford Text: pp. 91-100	
Feb 12	JUDAISM Oxford Text: pp. 100-114	
Feb 16	JUDAISM Oxford Text: pp. 114-128	
Feb 19	JUDAISM Sacred Texts <i>Scriptures</i> : The Oneness of God; Prayer for Divine Deliverance; Justice for All; Holy War; The Observance of the Sabbath; Kosher and Nonkosher Foods; The Chain of Rabbinic Tradition: “The Sayings of the Fathers;” The Replacement of Sacrifice by Study; The Duty to Marry and Have Children; Why Judaism Survives Under Persecution	Reflection Paper #J2
Feb 23	JUDAISM Oxford Text: pp. 129-144	
Feb 26	TEST on JUDAISM	

Mar 2	CHRISTIANITY Oxford Text: pp. 147-156	
Mar 5	CHRISTIANITY Oxford Text: pp. 156-170	
Mar 9	CHRISTIANITY Oxford Text: pp. 170-175	
Mar 12	CHRISTIANITY Sacred Texts <i>Scriptures</i> : Jesus' Miracles; The Coming of the Holy Spirit; The Council at Jerusalem; The Parables of Jesus; The Sermon on the Mount; <i>Matthew's</i> Church Order; Baptism	Reflection Paper #C1
Mar 16, 19	Spring Break – No Classes	
Mar 23	CHRISTIANITY Oxford Text: pp. 175-184	
Mar 26	CHRISTIANITY Oxford Text: pp. 184-201	
Mar 30	CHRISTIANITY Sacred Texts <i>Scriptures</i> : Nicodemus Visits Jesus; Results of Justification; Directions Concerning Marriage; Ethics in the Christian Household; Peter as the Rock; Women in the Early Church; The Eucharist; Early Noncanonical Jesus Tradition; Women and Gnosticism; Papal Primacy Derived from Petrine Primacy	Reflection Paper #C2
Apr 2	CHRISTIANITY Oxford Text: pp. 201-215; 311-313	
Apr 6	TEST on CHRISTIANITY	
Apr 9	ISLAM Oxford Text: pp. 219-228	
Apr 13	ISLAM Oxford Text: pp. 228-242	
Apr 16	ISLAM Sacred Texts <i>Scriptures</i> : God's Absolute Oneness; God's Names; God's Power; God's Predestination; The Holy <i>Qur'an</i> ; On Unbelievers, Jews, and Christians; The Conduct of Believers; Women	Reflection Paper #I1

Apr 20	ISLAM Oxford Text: pp. 243-257	
Apr 23	ISLAM Oxford Text: pp. 257-269	
Apr 27	ISLAM Sacred Texts <i>Scriptures: The Different Dimensions of Struggle (Jihad); All Selections from the Hadith; A Sunni Creed; A Shi'ite Creed</i>	Reflection Paper #I2
Apr 30	ISLAM Oxford Text: pp. 269-287	
May 4	Conclusion: Issues in Inter-religious Dialogue Oxford Text: pp. 287-303	Service Critique
Thursday, May 7	FINAL EXAMINATION: 8:00-11:00 am	

NOTE: If you have any special needs or a disability that requires any special accommodation to fulfill any course requirements, you need to provide acceptable documentation to the Office of Disability Services. That office will then make arrangements as needed with Dr. McGinley.