

## Religions of the Western World

01:840:212

MW 2.15-3.35 Art History Hall 100 (Douglass Campus)

Instructor: Prof. Diane Fruchtman

[dsf79@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:dsf79@rci.rutgers.edu)

Office Hours: MTh 4.00-5.00 and by appointment

Loree Classroom Building 110

### **Course Overview:**

The study of religion is the study of history, of philosophy, of people, places, and cultures, of texts, of art, of economics, society, and politics, of relationships between people and relationships between ideas. This course familiarizes students with three major religious traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—as well as with various methods for studying them.

After exploring several theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of Religion, we will use (some of) these approaches to examine Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (also known as the “Western” traditions—a category we will discuss and problematize).

Within each of these tradition units, we will use first-person practitioner narratives to offer insight into the diverse realities of experience and life within that tradition. From this starting point we will dive into the background and history of the tradition, after which we will look at texts considered to be sacred or influential by that tradition. To close each tradition unit we will discuss issues that each tradition is currently grappling with.

The aim of this course is not to be comprehensive, but to give students the framework, background, topical knowledge, and analytical tools to understand these diverse traditions wherever and in whatever form they might encounter them.

### **Grade Breakdown:**

1. **Participation (20%)**—You are expected to prepare for, attend, and participate in every class period. Failure to prepare, attend, or participate will negatively affect your grade. Preparation includes having all readings accessible either in print or downloaded on an electronic device so that they are accessible offline at the very beginning of class. For more information, see “Assignment Instructions” below.
2. **Reading Quizzes (10%)**—On the days indicated on the syllabus (the first day of each of the three Tradition Units), you will come to class with a page-long “mini-essay” that applies the theoretical framework of “worldview analysis” to one of the first-person practitioner narratives for that day. You will be graded on your grasp of the reading and your application of concepts. For more information, see “Assignment Instructions” below.
3. **Tradition Unit Quizzes (20%)**—These Unit quizzes will consist of 10 multiple choice questions for which you are allowed to argue that you have chosen the best answer. We

will go over these quizzes in class and all persuasive arguments will be honored for all students. For more information, see “Assignment Instructions” below.

4. **Document-Based Questions (30%)**—These will appear after class under the “Assignments” tab on Sakai, and will be due before the following class period begins. There are 6, and you must do 3—one per Tradition Unit. For more information, see “Assignment Instructions” below.
5. **Final Exam (20%)**—The Final will include 10 multiple choice questions (with arguments), one DBQ, 10 of 15 short answer identifications, and one mini-essay. There will be a study guide and a review session.

**Objectives:**

Students will:

- Become familiar with the general contours of three major world religious traditions—their practices, their histories, their texts, and their contemporary concerns.
- Cultivate an awareness of the complexities of the traditions as well as the diversity of practice and belief within each tradition.
- Acquire and exercise methodological tools for analyzing religious traditions.
- Refine their reading skills to appreciate the nuances, preoccupations, and assumptions of religious literature and expression.
- Gain an appreciation for the variety of human experiences and worldviews.

**Readings:**

- Oxtoby, Hussain, and Amore, eds., *World Religions: Western Traditions*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. (WRWT)
- All other readings will be on Sakai, under “Resources.” These are numbered in the “Schedule of Readings and Assignments” below.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments		
Week 1: Introduction		
1/18	“Religions of the Western World”?	1. Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious” (in class)
Week 2: Theory and Method in the Study of Religion		
1/23	Origins; Society	2. Kessler on Tylor, Frazer, Freud, and Boyer. 3. Kessler on Durkheim, Marx, and Eliade.
1/25	Experiences	4. Kessler on Geertz and Smart. 5. Ninian Smart, “Worldviews”
Week 3: Judaism—Worldviews and Historical Background		
1/30	Worldviews: First-Person Practitioner Narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT “Traditions at a Glance” and Main Text 76-77, 120-125, and 134-140</li> <li>• WRWT Focus Boxes 84, 86, 88, 89, 94, 96, 118, 119, 121, 139, 140 (Holidays and Rituals)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> 6. Hasse Halley, from <i>Growing Up Jewish</i>

		<p>OR</p> <p>7. Joyce Wadler, from <i>Growing Up Jewish</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p>8. Faye Moskowitz, "Seder Story"</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Reading Quiz #1 Due In Class</i></p>
2/1	Historical Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Main Text 78-98.</li> <li>• WRWT Focus Boxes 90, 94, 98.</li> <li>• WRWT Document Box 95.</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4: Judaism—Historical Background and Important Texts</b>		
2/6	Historical Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Main Text 98-120 (ending at "The Modern Synagogue")</li> <li>• WRWT Focus Boxes 103, 105, 107, 119.</li> </ul>
2/8	Texts	<p>9. Genesis 1-3; 17-19; 22</p> <p>10. Exodus 12:29-42; 14; 19-20</p> <p>11. Leviticus 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Document Box 79 (Tanakh)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>DBQ #1A due by class time</i> <i>(each student must complete either DBQ #1A or DBQ #1B)</i></p>
<b>Week 5: Judaism—Sacred Texts</b>		
2/13	Texts	<p>12. Psalms 8, 23, 51, 137</p> <p>13. <i>Mishnah Avot</i> 1</p> <p>14. <i>Talmud Bava Metzia</i> 56a-b</p> <p>15. <i>Zohar</i>, "After the Flood"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Document Boxes 82 (<i>Alphabet of Ben Sira</i>), 108 (Maimonides), 112 (Alkabez).</li> </ul>
2/15	Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Main Text 125-134</li> <li>• WRWT Document Boxes 122 (Shema) and 136 (Kaddish)</li> </ul> <p>16. Eli Wiesel, "To Be a Jew"</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>DBQ #1B due by class time</i> <i>(each student must complete either DBQ #1A or DBQ #1B)</i></p>
<b>Week 6: Judaism—Contemporary Concerns</b>		
2/20	Contemporary Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Main Text 140-142</li> </ul> <p>17. Judith Plaskow, "Wife/Sister Stories"</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Unit Quiz for first 20 minutes of class</i></p>
2/22	Contemporary Concerns	18. "Religion Dispatches" (articles TBD)
<b>Week 7: Christianity—Worldviews and Historical Background</b>		
2/27	Worldviews: First-Person Practitioner Narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT "Traditions at a Glance" and Main Text 150-151 (stop at "The main sources..."), 169-172 (from</li> </ul>

		<p>“Practice” to “Early Christian Art”), 215-217.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Focus Boxes, 156, 165, 208, 210, 211, 215.</li> </ul> <p>AND</p> <p>19. Dorothy Day</p> <p>OR</p> <p>20. Sue Fitzgerald, “The Call Does Not Stop”</p> <p>OR</p> <p>21. Elaine Light, Blog Posts (selection)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Reading Quiz #2 Due In Class</i></p>
3/1	Historical Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Main Text 156-169, 172-178 (end with “Medieval Christianity”)</li> <li>• WRWT Sites 161</li> </ul>
<b>Week 8: Christianity—Historical Background and Sacred Texts</b>		
3/6	Historical Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Main Text 178-206</li> </ul>
3/8	Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Main Text 151-156</li> <li>• WRWT Document Box 154 (Excerpts from Paul)</li> </ul> <p>22. Gospel Parallels</p> <p>23. 1 Corinthians 15</p> <p>24. Galatians (selections)</p> <p>25. Revelation (selections)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>DBQ #2A due by class time</i> <i>(each student must complete either DBQ #2A or DBQ #2B)</i></p>
<b>Spring Recess</b>		
<b>Week 9: Christianity—Sacred Texts</b>		
3/20	Texts	<p>26. Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons</p> <p>27. Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed</p> <p>28. Augustine, <i>City of God</i> (selections)</p> <p>29. Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> (selections)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Document Boxes 173 (Desert Fathers), 184 (Julian of Norwich), 188 (Mechthild)</li> </ul>
3/22	Texts	<p>30. Martin Luther, <i>On Christian Freedom</i> (selection)</p> <p>31. Charles Wesley, Methodist Hymns (selection)</p> <p>32. Malone, “Scopes Trial” (selection)</p> <p>33. Thomas Merton, <i>New Seeds of Contemplation</i> (selections)</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>DBQ #2B due by class time</i> <i>(each student must complete either DBQ #2A or DBQ #2B)</i></p>
<b>Week 10: Christianity—Contemporary Concerns</b>		
3/27	Contemporary Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Main Text 206-215</li> </ul> <p>34. Martin Luther King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (selections)</p> <p>35. Natasha Sistrunk Robinson, “Dear White Brothers</p>

		and Sisters...” 36. Shanell T. Smith, “A Christian Band-Aid”  <i>Unit Quiz for first 20 minutes of class</i>
3/29	Contemporary Concerns	37. “Religion Dispatches” (articles TBD)
Week 11: Islam—Worldviews and Historical Background		
4/3	Worldviews: First-Person Practitioner Narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT “Traditions at a Glance” and Main Text 230-231, 244-249, 285-292.</li> <li>• WRWT Focus Boxes 236, 246, 247, 277</li> <li>• WRWT Sites Boxes 233, 236, 260, 278</li> </ul> AND 38. Chadhury OR 39. Kronemer OR 40. Al-Sharraf  <i>Reading Quiz #3 Due In Class</i>
4/5	Historical Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Main Text 232-244, 249-260</li> </ul>
Week 12: Islam—Historical Background and Sacred Texts		
4/10	Historical Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT Main Text 260-285</li> </ul>
4/12	Texts	41. Quran (selections) 42. Hadith (selections)  <i>DBQ #3A due by class time</i> <i>(each student must complete either DBQ #3A or DBQ #3B)</i>
Week 13: Islam—Sacred Texts		
4/17	Texts	43. Legal texts
4/19	Texts	44. Sufi Texts (Rabi’a, Ibn Arabi, Al Ghazali, Rumi) 45. Al Afghani  <i>DBQ #3B due by class time</i> <i>(each student must complete either DBQ #3A or DBQ #3B)</i>
Week 14: Islam—Contemporary Concerns		
4/24	Contemporary Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WRWT 285-292</li> </ul> 46. Islamic Feminisms  <i>Unit Quiz for first 20 minutes</i>
4/26	Contemporary Concerns	47. “Religion Dispatches” (articles TBD)
Week 15: Reflections, Review, and Synthesis		
5/1	Reflections, Review, and Synthesis	<i>No reading due</i>
<b>FINAL EXAM</b> Tuesday, May 9 12.00-3.00pm Art History Hall 100		

**Assignment Instructions:**

1. Participation:
  - a. Your participation in each class will be graded on a 4-point scale.
  - b. Showing up after attendance has been taken will result in a 1-point deduction from that day’s participation grade.
  - c. Not having your texts ready to go when class begins, evincing unpreparedness when asked a question in class, or being inattentive in class (dozing, reading a newspaper, doing work for another class, etc.) will result in a 2-point deduction from that day’s participation grade.
  - d. Distracting other students from the class discussion will result in a 4-point deduction from that day’s participation grade.
  - e. Three class will be excused without documentation (i.e. your three lowest participation grades will be dropped).
  - f. If you miss class due to a documented difficulty, you can get 2 points for classes that you have missed if you show me documentation.
2. Reading Quizzes:
  - a. On 1/30, 2/27, and 4/3 you must bring to class, printed out, a one-page mini-essay addressing the following question:
    - i. Choose one first-person practitioner narrative assigned for that day.  
What two worldview dimensions are most prominent in this narrative?
  - b. These essays must be single-spaced, 11- or 12-point font, with 1-inch margins and no spaces between paragraphs.
  - c. During class, you are allowed to annotate your answer and amend your answer in pen or in pencil.
  - d. You will hand in the annotated essays at the end of class.
  - e. These mini-essays will be graded according to the following rubric:

	Worldview Dimension #1	Worldview Dimension #2			
Clarity (Writing)	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5			
Clarity (Concepts)	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5			
Accuracy	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5			
Use of Textual Evidence	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5			
1 = Insufficient		2 = Poor	3 = Satisfactory	4 = Good	5 = Excellent

3. Unit Quizzes:

- a. These quizzes are closed-book and will test you on your reading of the textbook and your absorption of class material.
- b. They will take up the first 20 minutes of class; we will take the next 20 minutes to go over them and discuss them.
- c. You can argue for your answers. If you persuasively argue that your answer is, contrary to my evaluation, the best answer, you will not only get credit for that answer, but everyone else in the class who chose that answer will also get credit for it.

4. Document-Based Questions:

- a. At the end of class on the Mondays of the weeks we are discussing Sacred Texts, a Document-Based Question will appear under “Assignments” in Sakai. This question will give you a text and ask you four questions about the text. You must answer those questions, using the text, and submit your answers via Sakai before the start of that Wednesday’s class.
- b. Your answers can be longer, but must include a minimum of three sentences. The first sentence should give your answer. The second sentence should give the quote that inspired your answer. The third sentence should explain how your quote gave you your answer.
- c. Your answers will be graded according to the rubric below. Note that quote usage is weighted:

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Clarity (Writing)	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Clarity (Concepts)	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Accuracy	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Use of Textual Evidence	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 x2	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 x2	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 x2	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 x2
1 = Insufficient    2 = Poor    3 = Satisfactory    4 = Good    5 = Excellent				