

Religions of the Western World

01:840:212:02

T-Th 4:30-5:50, Room CA-A4

Spring 2010

Professor: Dr. Dugan McGinley

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Office Hours: Th 2:30-3:30 (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 want to reconsider your enrollment.

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.

Required Text Available at the Bookstore:

COURSE CUSTOM TEXTBOOK (McGinley) includes parts of

Experiencing the World’s Religions: Tradition, Challenge, and Change by Michael

Molloy (4th Edition) ISBN# 978-0-07-353564-7 and *Scriptures of the World’s Religions*,

ed. by James Fieser and John Powers (3rd Edition) ISBN# 978-0-07-338665-2

Course Requirements:

* Attendance. Good attendance demonstrates a solid commitment to the course 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 textbook; 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 send an email. You will be allowed two absences (beginning January 19) 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.

* 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. While late written assignments will be penalized, you will be allowed one late paper (one class period) without a penalty.

* 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. 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-

* Service Critique, due no later than April 29. See separate instructions. 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.

* Two Tests, on Judaism and Christianity, February 23 and April 1. Absence from the tests without **prior** notification and arrangements will result in a **zero** grade.

* Final Exam, on Islam and inter-religious issues, Wednesday, May 12, 4:00-7:00 pm. 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 19	Course Introduction
Jan 21	"Religion" and other critical terms Introduction to Abrahamic Religions Text (for all assignments, follow the page numbering in dark circles at the top of each page of the text): pp. 3-25 (numbers given on the syllabus within parentheses correspond to the original page numbers of the texts)(1-23)
Jan 26	JUDAISM Text: pp. 33-45 (293-305)
Jan 28	JUDAISM Text: pp. 45-56 (305-316)

Feb 2	JUDAISM Sacred Texts (<i>Scriptures</i>) Selections from the Hebrew Bible: Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:1-22); Passover and Exodus (Exodus 12:29-41; 14:5-29); Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19, 20:1-17); Holiness Code (Leviticus 19:1-37); Entry into Canaan (Joshua 1, 3); Isaiah's Warning to Judah (Isaiah 1:1-9, 18-21; 6); Babylonian Conquest and Exile (2 Kings 24:8-20; 25:1-17); Remembering Zion (Psalm 137); Ezra and the Law (Nehemiah 8)	Reflection Paper #J1
Feb 4	JUDAISM Text: pp. 56-60 (316-320)	
Feb 9	JUDAISM Text: pp. 61-65; 69-77 (321-325; 329-337)	
Feb 11	JUDAISM Text: pp. 77-82 (337-342)	
Feb 16	JUDAISM Sacred Texts (<i>Scriptures</i>) Post-Biblical and Rabbinic Sources: Wisdom of the Fathers; Rabbinic Authority; Resurrection of the Dead; Coming of the Messiah; Thirteen Principles of Faith: Maimonides; Kabbala: Creation; Hasidism: The Seven Beggars; Reform Judaism: Declaration of Principles; Zionism: Theodor Herzl	Reflection Paper #J2
Feb 18	JUDAISM Text: pp. 65-69; 82-86 (325-329; 342-346)	
Feb 23	TEST on JUDAISM	
Feb 25	CHRISTIANITY Text: pp. 91-101 (351-361)	
Mar 2	CHRISTIANITY Text: pp. 101-113 (361- 373)	
Mar 4	CHRISTIANITY Text: pp. 113-118; 149-157 (373-378; 409-417)	
Mar 9	CHRISTIANITY Sacred Texts (<i>Scriptures</i>) Selections from the New Testament: Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7); Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son (Luke 10: 25-37; 15:1-3, 11-32); Peter Receives the Keys (Matthew 16: 13-28); Father, Son, Holy Spirit (John 14: 1-26); Paul on the Distinction between Christianity and Judaism (Galations 1: 6-23; 2:1-21); Paul: Life after Death (1 Corinthians 15:12-28, 35-57)	Reflection Paper #C1
Mar 11	CHRISTIANITY Text: pp. 118-134 (378-394)	
Mar 16	Spring Break	
Mar 18		

Mar 23	CHRISTIANITY Text: pp. 134-149 (394-409)	
Mar 25	CHRISTIANITY Sacred Texts (<i>Scriptures</i>) Non-Canonical Scripture and Writings: Infancy Gospel of Thomas; Gnostic Gospel of Thomas; Gnostic Gospel of Mary; Baptism, Prayer, and the Eucharist: Didache; Apostles' Creed; Nicene Creed; Augustine's Confessions; Teresa of Avila on the Prayer of Union	Reflection Paper #C2
Mar 30	CHRISTIANITY Text: pp. 157-171 (417-431)	
Apr 1	TEST on CHRISTIANITY	
Apr 6	ISLAM Text: pp. 177-185 (437-445)	
Apr 8	ISLAM Text: pp. 185-196 (445-456)	
Apr 13	ISLAM Sacred Texts (<i>Scriptures</i>) Selections from the Qur'an: Night of Power (Surahs 96, 97); Divine Judgment (Surahs 101-104); Opening (Surah 1); Evils of Idolatry (Surah 10: 26-37); Resurrection of the Dead (Surahs 22: 5-10; 23: 12-22); Revealed Qur'an (Surah 10: 2-4, 16-18, 38-41); Laws (Surah 2: 219-241); Treatment of Women (Surah 4: 11-25, 34-35, 127-130); Unbelieving People of the Book (Surah 5: 44-48, 51, 65-78); Jihad (Surah 4: 94-105); Final Revelation (Surah 5:1-5)	Reflection Paper #I1
Apr 15	ISLAM Text: pp. 196-215 (456-475)	
Apr 20	ISLAM Text: pp. 215-225 (475-485)	
Apr 22	ISLAM Sacred Texts (<i>Scriptures</i>) Hadith & Later Writings: Call to Prophethood; Night Journey; Jihad; Charity; Reciting the Qur'an; Death of Muhammad; First Compilation of the Qur'an; Definitive Compilation of the Qur'an; Sunni Islamic Law; Shi'i Creed; Love: Rabi'a	Reflection Paper #I2
Apr 27	ISLAM Text: pp. 225-236 (485-496)	
Apr 29	Conclusion: Issues in Inter-religious Dialogue Text: pp. 241-267 (537-563)	Service Critique
Weds., May 12	FINAL EXAMINATION: 4:00-7:00 pm	

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