

Rutgers University Department of Religion

Fall 2010

840:212 Religions of the Western World

Monday & Thursday 9:50 – 11:10

Instructor: Dr. Kathleen Bishop

Murray Hall room 211

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Office Hours: Thursday 1:00 – 3:00 (with appointment)

Course Description

This course will begin with the “how” and “why” of religion as the text explores the origin, history and philosophy of religion in the West. We will then begin with one of the earliest monotheistic religions—Zoroastrianism--and move from there to the most well known monotheistic religions still extant today: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These traditions, known collectively as “Religions of the Book” and “The Abrahamic Traditions,” will be studied in dialogue with the sacred texts of each religion. Students will emerge from this class with a general knowledge of these great traditions and how they relate to one another. The course will conclude with the study of new religious movements such as Ba’hai and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and examine their link to the Abrahamic Traditions.

Required texts:

Ludwig, Theodore M. *The Sacred Paths of the West*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc., 2006

Van Voorst, Robert E. *Anthology of World Scriptures*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007

Photocopied handouts will also be distributed periodically which are also required reading

Course requirements:

Attendance: Attendance at all class sessions is crucial to the student’s success in the course. Only excused absences are acceptable. Class participation grade will be adversely affected due to absence.

Participation: The course schedule is designed to permit the opportunity for extended discussion and I will expect it. This means DO THE READING assigned for that day, otherwise you will not be able to make a contribution. I *will* notice and your grade will be adjusted accordingly. Exceptional participation will result in a maximum of 5 extra points toward your final grade. Failure to participate will subtract points. No “A” is possible without participation.

Examinations

There will be a total of 5 exams, one of which will take place during final exam period (tba). If (and only if) all exams are taken, I will drop the lowest grade. On Mondays when exams are scheduled, the first half of class will be devoted to the exam. You must arrive promptly or you will not have sufficient time to take the test. **These exams will cover the concepts and vocabulary at the end of each chapter as well as lecture material and film content.** 90% of your grade will come from your performance on these exams.

Short presentation: Religion in the News

As the course progresses I will refer frequently to religious news “ripped from the headlines.” As a class we will apply our knowledge of Western religion in order to read between the lines and interpret the events in light of what we know about religion’s impact on the philosophy (what the textbook calls “Worlds of Meaning”), ritual practices, ethics and social life of the people who practice it.

Each student will be assigned a date when they are responsible for bringing a news item to class, summarizing it, and explaining their choice by pointing out the religious content and its significance. What makes this newsworthy? What impact will this news have on the religious people that are quoted or mentioned? What do you understand about this piece of news that you might *not* have understood before the course?

How it all adds up:

5 exams:	90 %
Short presentation	5%
Class Participation	5%

COURSE SCHEDULE

September 2	Thursday	Introduction to the Course Perspectives on the Religious Path Read: Ludwig chap. 1
September 6	Monday	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS
September 9	Thursday	Film: The Devil’s Playground (first half) Read: Ludwig chap. 2
September 13	Monday	Religions of the Mediterranean World Read: Ludwig chap. 4 (we will not be reading chapter 3)
September 16	Thursday	Film: The Devil’s Playground (conclusion)

September 20	Monday	Religions of the Book Van Voorst chap. 1
September 23	Thursday	Zoroastrian Tradition Read: Ludwig chap. 5
September 27	Monday	Zoroastrian Scripture Read: Van Voorst chap. 2
September 30	Thursday	Exam #1 Film: A Life Apart (1 st half)
October 4	Monday	Jewish Sacred Story and Historical Context Read: Ludwig chap. 6
October 7	Thursday	Film: A Life Apart (conclusion) Read: Ludwig chap. 7
October 11	Monday	Jewish Scripture Read: Van Voorst chap. 3
October 14	Thursday	Jewish Ritual and Ethical Practice Read: Ludwig chap. 8
October 18	Monday	Exam #2 Judaism Film: The Long Search (Protestantism) Christian Sacred Story Read: Ludwig chap. 9
October 21	Thursday	Christian Worlds of Meaning Read: Ludwig chap. 10, Van Voorst chap. 4
October 25	Monday	Christian Scripture
October 28	Thursday	Christian Ritual and Ethical Practice Ludwig chap. 11 Short film: "Father Matthew Presents the Sacraments"
November 1	Monday	No class
November 4	Thursday	Film: Catholicism

November 8	Monday	Exam # 3 Christianity Film: The Muslims (1 st half)
November 11	Thursday	Muslim Worlds of Meaning Reading: Ludwig chapter 12
November 15	Monday	Film: The Muslims (conclusion) Read: Ludwig chap. 13
November 18	Thursday	Muslim Scripture Read: Van Voorst chap. 5
November 22	Monday	Muslim Ritual and Ethical Practice Read: Ludwig chap. 14
November 25	Thursday	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING DAY
November 29	Monday	Exam #4 Islam Film: The Mormons (1 st half)
December 1	Thursday	Film: The Mormons (continued) Read: Ludwig chap. 15
December 6	Monday	New Religious Movements: Ba’hai Faith Read: Ludwig chap. 16
December 9	Thursday	Scripture of New Religious Movements Read: Van Voorst chap. 6
December 13	Monday	
*December 23 [FINAL EXAM PERIOD]	Thursday	Exam # 5 New Religious Movements 8:00 – 11:00
*Non-negotiable!		
If you are not available for this exam time, do not continue in this class! No makeups.		