

Religions of the Western World
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Spring 2011
T F | 9:15-10:35
WAL-203

Dr. Joseph Williams
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Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00-4:00
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Course Description: This course surveys the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Several questions drive the organization of this course: What are the origins of these religious traditions? What key beliefs and practices characterized the main branches of these religions as they developed throughout history? How have these three monotheistic traditions shaped adherents' everyday experiences, such as their understanding of gender, or helped them navigate the transitions and unpredictability of life? How have themes originating in the formative and classical eras of these traditions been interpreted in contemporary societies shaped by modernizing and globalizing forces?

Course Objectives:

This course seeks to encourage critical thinking about the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. After taking this course, students should:

- become familiar with the diversity within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
- gain a broad outline of major historical developments that have shaped each of these religious traditions, including the influence of modernizing and secularizing forces
- appreciate the complexity of adherents' religious experiences as they incorporated religion in their daily lives
- be introduced to some basic theoretical approaches involved in the academic study of religion

Course Texts (other readings are available on the internet or through Sakai):

Esposito, John L., Darrell J. Fasching, and Todd Lewis *Religions of the West Today*.
Oxford University Press, 2008.
ISBN-10: 0195373618
ISBN-13: 978-0195373615

Course Requirements:

Visitation Response: Early on in the semester you will need to attend a Jewish, Christian, or Muslim house of worship (please select a house of worship that you are not very familiar with). You will then write a 5 page response (at least 1250 words) that 1) describes your experience and 2) explores connections between what you observed and specific themes that we have discussed in class. I will provide more specific guidelines in class, including specific questions for you to answer in your response.

Essay: You will be required to write one main 7-8 page essay (at least 1750 words) this semester. In your essay you will explore a specific topic related to either Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. There will be a research component to this essay. I will provide more specific guidelines in class.

Requirements for the visitation paper and essay: Papers turned in after class has started on the due date will be considered late and lose 5%. Papers also may be turned in for late credit (minus 15%) one class period after the due date. **No papers will be accepted if they are turned in more than one class period after the due date** unless arrangements have been made with the instructor *prior to the due date*. **In addition to the hard copy of your paper turned in during class, you should also submit your exam/paper to Turnitin.com via Sakai on the due date of the paper. You will lose 10% off your paper if you do not submit it electronically via Sakai on the due date. **Please note, your paper is not officially turned in until I have a hard copy of the paper.** Email submissions *will not* be accepted.

**Plagiarism and cheating will be handled in accordance with university policy. See <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml#plagiarism>

Mid-term and Final Exam: There will be a mid-term and final exam based on class lectures and readings. The final exam will be given during the scheduled final exam period.

Quizzes: There will be unannounced quizzes throughout the semester based on the course readings.

Readings should be read by the date they are listed on the syllabus. Anyone who has read the assigned pages should have no problem answering the questions. One quiz score may be dropped and will not count towards the final grade (this includes a missed quiz). Make-up quizzes will only be allowed for excused absences approved by me beforehand (for funerals, heart bypass surgeries, et cetera). ****It is your responsibility to make sure you have read the material by the due date.** Problems downloading the online readings will not excuse you from taking a quiz.

Attendance: Attendance is expected at all classes. A record of attendance will be kept throughout the semester. More than 4 missed classes will negatively impact your participation grade (you will lose 10% off your participation grade for each absence above the first four).

Grading System:

2 Exams: 40% (20% each)
1 Essay: 25%

Visitation Response: 15%
Quizzes: 10%

Participation: 10%

100-92 A, 91-87 B+, 86-80 B, 79-77 C+, 76-70 C, 69-60 D, 59-below F.

Course Schedule (**Fine Print:** I may make changes to the course readings, schedule, and policies as the course progresses. It is your responsibility, even if you miss classes, to keep yourself up-to-date on the course requirements.)

INTRODUCTION

1/18 Introduction

1/21 How is Religion Studied? The complexity of “lived religion.”

1/25 Religion in Modern Societies. Please read RWT, Introduction.

JUDAISM

1/28 Please read RWT, Ch. 3, Overview – the Formative Era.

2/1 Please read selections from the Hebrew scriptures, available on Sakai.

2/4 Please read RWT, Ch. 3, the Classical Era, and selections on “Jewish-Christian Relations,” available on Sakai.

2/8 Please read RWT, Ch. 3, the Modern Era – Conclusion, and selections on “Reform Judaism,” available on Sakai.

2/11 Please read an excerpt from Elie Wiesel, “Night,” and selections related to “Zionism,” available on Sakai.

CHRISTIANITY

2/15 Please read RWT, Ch. 4, Overview – the Formative Era

2/18 No class—in lieu of class, please visit a house of religious worship for your visitation assignment.

2/22 Visitation Assignment Due.

2/25 Please read selections from the Bible, available on Sakai.

3/1 Review for Exam

3/4 Exam #1

3/8 Create Your Own Monotheistic Religion Assignment.

3/11 Create Your Own Monotheistic Religion Presentations.

3/15 & 3/18 No class. Spring Break!

3/22 Please read RWT, Ch. 4, the Classical Era.

3/25 Please read RWT, Ch. 4, the Modern Era – Conclusion, and selections on the “Protestant Reformation,” available on Sakai.

3/29 Please read selections on “Vatican II,” and Rabateau, “Slave Religion,” available on Sakai.

ISLAM

4/1 Please read RWT, Ch. 5, Overview – the Formative Era.

4/5 Please read selections from the Qur’an, available on Sakai.

4/8 Please read RWT, Ch. 5, the Classical Era, and selections related to the use of the term “Jihad” in Islamic discourse.

4/12 *Inside Mecca.* Essay due.

4/15 Please read RWT, Ch. 5, the Modern Era – Conclusion.

4/19 Please read selections on the “Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” and an excerpt from Mir-Hosseini, “Islam and Gender,” available on Sakai.

JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM IN AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

4/22 No reading due.

4/26 Please read RWT, Ch. 6.

4/29 Review for final.

Final Exam Time: Tuesday, 5/10 8:00-11:00