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Spring 2012
SC 105 (43 College Ave)
Tues/Thurs 2:50-4:10

REL 353: HEAVEN AND HELL IN THE WESTERN TRADITION

Course Learning Goals

This course will examine the many ideas of heaven, hell, purgatory, and other post-mortem geographies, as they have developed throughout Western history. We will survey a range of texts, artifacts, and works of art from the ancient Mediterranean and Medieval Europe, to the Christian Reformation and early 21st century America. Among our historical readings, we will include theoretical questions regarding cognitive science and the imagining of invisible worlds, the socio-political uses of post-mortem damnation and/or reward, as well as the historical struggle to address human mortality. The aim will be to provide the student with the critical methods for understanding the texts, artifacts, or works of art in their relevant historical, political, and religious contexts. Students will learn to:

1. Identify and understand the social, political, and religious assumptions of ancient, Medieval, and modern writers.
2. Engage in careful, critical reading of the primary source material and learn to ask critical historical questions about the texts, their writers, and their contexts.
3. Appreciate the diversity of the literature and understand why historians speak about Western traditions in the plural rather than a single, totally unified Greek, Jewish, Christian, American, or European tradition.

Required Texts Available for Purchase

There is no textbook which covers the scope of this class. A large portion of our readings will be on Sakai. However, the following books are required, and have been ordered by the bookstore:

Alan Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds*
Jacques LeGoff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Translated by Arthur Goldhammer)
Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*

Requirements for the Course:

1. Attendance: Regular attendance is a significant part of your grade. If you have more than 3 unexcused absences, your attendance grade drop to a zero. In the case of more long-term illnesses or other issues, please provide a note from a health-care provider, or, if appropriate, from a dean. When you miss a class, please 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.
2. Exams: 2 exams, scheduled for February 16 and March 27. Missed exams cannot be made up without a note from a medical professional or dean.
3. Final Response Paper: In lieu of a final exam, students will write a 7-8 page response paper (12-pt Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, double-spaced) which addresses class materials from the last third of the class (March 29-April 19). Your response paper will analyze readings from one OR two different class meetings (of your choice). We will discuss the details of this paper later in the semester.

4. Participation: It is crucial that you do the readings and come to class prepared to discuss the readings. If I never hear your voice and you do not bring meaningful questions and observations to the class, you are not participating. HOWEVER- some people are shy. Therefore, your participation grade requires that you post observations/comments/questions on our Sakai website, under “blogs.” Out of 27 class meetings, you must post 15 times. Your comments/questions must be between three sentences and two paragraphs in length, and demonstrate that you are engaging with the readings. **Comments must be posted by 12 noon on the day of the class. Late postings will not be counted.**

Course Grading Rubric:

Exam 1: 25%
Exam 2: 25%
Final Response Paper: 25%
Participation: 15%
Attendance: 10%

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS (27 Class Meetings)

1/17 Tuesday Class canceled: Professor away for professional reasons

Part I: The Ancient Mediterranean

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| 1/19 | Thursday | Greek Ideas of the Afterlife
Bernstein pp.19-49; On Sakai: Homer’s <i>Odyssey</i> (Book 11); Homeric <i>Hymn to Demeter</i> ; excerpts from Hesiod’s <i>Theogony</i> (lines 207-225, 453-458, 676-813, 835-852) |
| 1/24 | Tuesday | Greek & Roman Ideas of the Afterlife
Bernstein pp. 84-130; On Sakai: Orphic gold tablets (from Fritz Graf and Sarah Iles Johnston, <i>Ritual Texts for the Afterlife</i>); Excerpts from Plato’s <i>Phaedrus</i> and <i>Timeaus</i> ; Cicero’s <i>Dream of Scipio</i> ; Aeneas’s descent in Vergil’s <i>Aeneid</i> |
| 1/36 | Thursday | Ancient Israelite Ideas of the Afterlife
On Sakai: pp. 1-22 from Colleen McDannell’s <i>Heaven: A History</i> ; pp. 69-97 from Philip Johnston’s <i>Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament</i> |
| 1/31 | Tuesday | Ancient Judean Ideas of Afterlife
Bernstein pp. 131- 177; On Sakai: pp. 9-28 from Martha Himmelfarb, <i>Ascent to Heaven in Jewish & Christian Apocalypses</i> ; Genesis 5.1–24; <i>Book of the Watchers</i> (Book 1 of 1 Enoch) |
| 2/2 | Thursday | Ancient Judean and Early Christian Ideas of Heaven
Bernstein 205-227; on Sakai: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10; <i>Ascension of Isaiah</i> |

- 2/7 Tuesday Early Christian Ideas of Afterlife
Bernstein pp. 282-291; On Sakai: *Apocalypse of Peter*; pp. 68-121 from Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic form in Jewish and Christian Literature*
- 2/9 Thursday Early Christian Ideas of Afterlife
On Sakai: *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*
- 2/14 Tuesday Augustine
Bernstein pp. 314-333; on Sakai: Excerpts from *Confessions* and *City of God* ; From Colleen McDannell pp. 47-68
- 2/16 Thursday **EXAM #1**

Part II: Late Antiquity and Medieval Europe

- 2/21 Tuesday Early Disputes on Post-Mortem Existence
On Sakai: Alexander Alexakis, “Was There Life beyond the Life Beyond? Byzantine Ideas on Reincarnation and Final Restoration” pp. 155-177
- 2/23 Thursday Visual Representations of Heaven
On Sakai: Karl Lehman, “Dome of Heaven” pp. 1-27; slides also available online
- 2/28 Tuesday Invention of Purgatory
LeGoff pp. 1-16, 52-95; Dante *Inferno*, Canto 3; on Sakai: “A Revelation of Purgatory by an Unknown Fifteenth Century Woman” (in Eileen Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell*);
- 3/1 Thursday Invention of Purgatory
LeGoff pp. 133-176; *Inferno* Canto 1, 4, 5, 11 ; On Sakai: Barbara Newman, “Hildegard von Bingen and ‘The Birth of Purgatory’”, 2 Maccabees 12:42-46
- 3/6 Tuesday Invention of Purgatory
LeGoff pp. 209-234, 289-333; *Inferno* Canto 12, 13, 18, 19, 20
- 3/8 Thursday Visual Representations of Hell
Inferno Canto 24, 25, 30, 34. On Sakai: Hieronymus Bosch *Garden of Earthly Delights* and other Bosch paintings. Elena Calas, “Bosch’s Garden of Delights: A Theological Rebus” pp. 184-199.

SPRING BREAK 3/12 & 3/15: NO CLASS

- 3/20 Tuesday On Sakai: excerpts from Dante’s *Paradiso*; Joan Ferrante, “Hell as the Mirror Image of Paradise” (in *Dante’s Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition*); John Casey *After Lives* pp. 281-292
- 3/22 Thursday Renaissance and Reform
from John Casey, *After Lives* pp. 167- 192; 293-336

3/27 Tuesday EXAM #2

Part III: 18th Century to the 21st Century

- 3/29 Thursday Emmanuel Swedenborg
On Sakai: *Heaven: A History* (McDannell & Lang,) pp. 181-227;
Excerpts from Emmanuel Swedenborg's *Heaven and its Wonders and Hell (From Things Heard and Seen)*, sections on Heaven: 4, 5, 6, 22, 24; sections on Hell: 56, 58, 61, 62
- 4/3 Tuesday Heaven in Colonization and Utopianism
On Sakai: excerpts from Thomas Moore's *Utopia*; excerpts from the diary of Christopher Columbus; "A True and Sincere declaration of the purpose and ends of the Plantation begun in Virginia" (from 1610)
- 4/5 Thursday Mormon Afterlives: Spirit Heaven, Spirit Prison
On Sakai: 1 Peter 3:18-21; *Doctrine and Covenants*, Sections 76, 138; Celestial, Terrestrial, and Telestial Kingdoms; Gustav Niebuhr, "Mormons to End Holocaust Victim Baptism" (NYT 4/29/95); Alexander Baugh, "'For This Ordinance Belongeth to my House': The Practice of Baptism of the Dead Outside the Nauvoo Temple"
- 4/10 Tuesday Afterlives in Emergent Religious Dispositions and Cult Groups
On Sakai: Walter & Waterhouse, "Lives-Long Learning: The Effects of Reincarnation Belief on Everyday Life in England" pp. 85-101; Hugh Urban, "The Devil at Heaven's Gate: Rethinking the Study of Religion in the Age of Cyber-Space" pp. 268-302
- 4/12 Thursday Hellfire in America
In-class clips from documentary film *Hell House*; On Sakai: Ann Pellegrini, "'Signaling through the Flames': Hell House Performance and Structures of Religious Feeling" pp. 911-935; Brian Jackson, "Jonathan Edwards Goes to Hell (House): Fear Appeals in American Evangelism" pp.42-58
- 4/19 Tuesday Cognitive Science and Imagined Worlds
On Sakai: Jesse Bering, "Intuitive Conceptions of Dead Agents' Minds: The Natural Foundations of Afterlife Beliefs as Phenomenological Boundary" pp.263-308; Shaun Nichols, "Imagination and Immortality: Thinking of Me" pp.1-33
- 4/19 Thursday Retribution and Justice
On Sakai: Charles Seymour, "Hell, Justice and Freedom"; Dominic Johnson and Jesse Bering, "Hand of God, Mind of Man: Punishment and Cognition in the Evolution of Cooperation." pp. 219-233
- 4/24 Tuesday Film: *The Lovely Bones* (and Chapter 3 of *The Lovely Bones*, on Sakai)
- 4/26 Thursday Finish watching *The Lovely Bones*. Final class discussion. **Response Papers Due.**

EXPECTATIONS REGARDING CLASS CONDUCT

What I Expect from You:

1. That you be punctual for every class.
2. That you maintain communication with me about any illnesses or emergencies that arise.
3. That you do not receive or make telephone calls, text messages, or use any electronic device during class (including laptops).
4. That you will listen to and engage with the lecture and class discussion in a way that is respectful towards other students and the instructor.
5. That you read the assigned readings **before** coming to class.
6. That you will bring assigned readings to class.
7. That you come to class ready to ask and answer questions of substance on the day's readings.
8. That you will concentrate exclusively on this course during class hours.

What You Can Expect from Me:

1. That I will be clear about what I am looking for on exams and written/creative work.
2. That I will make myself accessible outside of class to address questions and concerns you may have about the lectures, readings, or your performance in the course.
3. That I will listen to your questions and comments and work to integrate them into the class discussion.
4. That I will encourage you to work on note-taking and study skills.
5. That I will push you to retain knowledge rather than simply retrieve it.

Signature

Date