

Rutgers University Department of Religion

Fall 2012

840:212 Religions of the Western World

Tuesday and Friday

Instructor: Dr. Kathleen Bishop

Email: Kbish87@aol.com or kathbish@rutgers.edu

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

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 10%

COURSE SCHEDULE

September 4	Tuesday	Introduction to the Course Perspectives on the Religious Path Read: Ludwig chap. 1
September 7	Friday	Film: The Devil’s Playground (first half) Read: Ludwig chap. 2
September 11	Tuesday	Religions of the Mediterranean World Read: Ludwig chap. 4 (we will not be reading chapter 3)
September 14	Friday	Film: The Devil’s Playground (conclusion)
September 18	Tuesday	Religions of the Book Van Voorst chap. 1
September 21	Friday	Zoroastrian Tradition Read: Ludwig chap. 5

September 25	Tuesday	Zoroastrian Scripture Read: Van Voorst chap. 2
September 28	Friday	NO CLASS
October 2	Tuesday	Exam #1 Film: A Life Apart (1 st half)
October 5	Friday	Jewish Sacred Story and Historical Context Read: Ludwig chap. 6
October 9	Tuesday	Film: A Life Apart (conclusion) Read: Ludwig chap. 7
October 12	Friday	NO CLASS Read: Van Voorst chap. 3
October 16	Tuesday	Jewish Ritual and Ethical Practice Read: Ludwig chap. 8
October 19	Friday	Exam #2 Judaism Film: The Long Search (Protestantism) Christian Sacred Story Read: Ludwig chap. 9
October 23	Tuesday	Christian Scripture and Worlds of Meaning Read: Ludwig chap. 10, Van Voorst chap. 4
October 26	Friday	Christian Ritual and Ethical Practice Ludwig chap. 11 Short film: "Father Matthew Presents the Sacraments"
October 30	Tuesday	Film: Catholicism
November 2	Friday	Exam # 3 Film: The Muslims (1 st half)
November 6	Tuesday	Film: The Muslims (conclusion) Read: Ludwig chap. 12
November 9	Friday	Muslim Worlds of Meaning Reading: Ludwig chapter 13

November 13 Tuesday

November 16 Friday Muslim Scripture
Read: Van Voorst chap. 5

November 19 Tuesday Muslim Ritual and Ethical Practice
Read: Ludwig chap. 14

November 23 Friday THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 26 Tuesday

November 30 Friday Exam #4 Islam
Film: The Mormons (1st half)

December 3 Tuesday Film: The Mormons (continued)
Read: Ludwig chap. 15

December 7 Friday New Religious Movements: Ba'hai Faith
Read: Ludwig chap.

December 10 Tuesday Scripture of New Religious Movements
Read: Van Voorst chap. 6

December 18 Exam # 5
[FINAL EXAM PERIOD] 8:00 – 11:00am