

Religions of the “Western” World

Instructor: Diane Fruchtman (dsf79@religion.rutgers.edu)

Course: 01:840:212:01, Spring 2024

Time: Hybrid (weekly meetings on Wednesdays, 10.20am-11.40am in Scott Hall 221)

Office Hours:

Mondays and Thursdays 2.00-3.00pm (Zoom link [here](#))
and by appointment.

Course Overview:

The study of religion is the study of history, of philosophy, of people, places, and cultures, of texts, of art, of economics, society, and politics, of relationships between people and relationships between ideas. This course familiarizes students with three major religious traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—as well as with various methods for studying them.

After exploring several theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of Religion, we will use (some of) these approaches to examine Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (also known as the “Western” traditions—a category we will discuss and problematize).

Within each of these tradition units, we will use first-person practitioner narratives to offer insight into the diverse realities of experience and life within that tradition. From this starting point we will dive into the background and history of the tradition, after which we will look at texts and authorities considered to be sacred or influential by that tradition. To close each tradition unit we will discuss issues that each tradition is currently grappling with.

The aim of this course is not to be comprehensive, but to give students the framework, background, topical knowledge, and analytical tools to understand these diverse traditions wherever and in whatever form they might encounter them.

Grade Breakdown:

1. **Participation (40%)**—Every week of class is structured according to a similar pattern, with slight variations in deadlines and activities based on the requirements of the material we are covering. But every week there will be readings for you to do, videos for you to watch, questions for you to answer, and class meetings for you to attend (either in real time or by watching the recordings after the fact). The questions you

will answer on the readings and videos, along with your attendance at class meetings, will constitute the largest single chunk of your grade.

- i. **20% of your grade** will come from your responses to readings, your completion of video quizzes, and other small participation-centered assignments. Some of these will occur in the in-person classes, some of them will be online. These will be graded either on a complete/incomplete metric or on a 2-point scale that allows for extra credit. The lowest ten percent of your grades in each of these categories will be dropped (approximately 10 total). For more details, see “Assignment Instructions” below.
 - ii. **20% of your grade** will come from your timely and attentive attendance of the in-person classes. For more details, see “Assignment Instructions” below. This includes a Syllabus Quiz that is worth 1% of your overall grade.
2. **Worldview Exercises (15%)**—In the first week of each of the three Tradition Units, you will submit via Canvas a page-long “mini-essay” (no thesis, no intro, no conclusion) that applies the theoretical framework of “worldview analysis” to *one* of the first-person practitioner narratives assigned for that week. For more information, see “Assignment Instructions” below.
3. **Document-Based Questions (15%)**—There are six of these during the semester (two for each unit), and you must do three (one per unit). For more information, see “Assignment Instructions” below.
4. **Tradition Unit Quizzes (15%)**—These Unit Quizzes, due via Canvas in Weeks 6, 10, and 14, will consist of 20 multiple choice questions. You may take the quiz as many times as you like to get the grade you want, but the questions will change every time. For more information, see “Assignment Instructions” below.
5. **Final Exam (15%)**—The Final Exam will consist of a cumulative 20 question multiple choice section (exactly like the Tradition Unit Quizzes), one DBQ, and one mini-essay. There will be a study guide and a review session. The exam is take-home, open book, & untimed.

Objectives:

- Students will:
 - Become familiar with the general contours of three major world religious traditions—their practices, their histories, their texts, and their contemporary concerns.
 - Cultivate an awareness of the complexities of the traditions as well as the diversity of practice and belief within each tradition.
 - Acquire and exercise methodological tools for analyzing religious traditions.
 - Refine their reading skills to appreciate the nuances, preoccupations, and assumptions of religious literature and expression.
 - Gain an appreciation for the variety of human experiences and worldviews.

- As this course satisfies the AHo and HST or SCL Core requirements, students will also:
 - Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production (AHo)
 - Be able to explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time (HST)
 - Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments (HST)
 - Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization (SCL)
 - Employ tools of social scientific reasoning to study particular questions or situations, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments (SCL)

Readings:

- Hussain and Amore, eds., *World Religions: Western Traditions*. 5th Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. (WRWT)
 - NB: **You do not have to buy this textbook:** It is available in full as a PDF linked via the Home Page.
- All other readings will be linked on Canvas in the module(s) for which they are assigned.

Schedule of Readings, Videos, Meetings, and Assignments	
Week 1: Introduction	
	<p>By Wednesday @ 10:20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take Quiz (“Introduce Yourself!”) ● Read the Syllabus and take the Syllabus Quiz <p>Wednesday, 10:20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attend Class
Week 2: Methodology	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kessler, “Tylor, Frazer, and Durkheim” • Kessler, “Freud and Boyer” • Kessler, “Marx and Eliade” • Kessler, “Smart” • Smart, “Dimensions of a Worldview” 	<p>By Tuesday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Kessler on “Tylor, Frazer, and Durkheim” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Watch Video (“Tylor, Frazer, and Durkheim”) • Read Kessler on “Freud and Boyer” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Watch Video (“Freud and Boyer”) • Read Kessler on “Marx and Eliade” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Watch Video (“Marx and Eliade”) • Assignment: “Toolkit” <p>By Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Kessler on “Smart” • Read Smart, “Dimensions of a Worldview” • Watch Video (“Smart”) <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Class <p>By Saturday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Syllabus Quiz • Take the “Introduce Yourself” Survey
<p>Week 3: Judaism—Diverse Worldviews</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook “Practicing Judaism” • Kurshan, “If all the Seas were Ink” • Donella, “Avoiding Temple on the High Holy Days” • Moskowitz, “Seder Story” 	<p>By Monday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Textbook on Practicing Judaism” • Read “Kurshan, Donella, and Moskowitz” • Watch Video #9 (“Jewish Worldviews”) <p>By Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Draft of Judaism Worldview Exercise <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Class <p>By Saturday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Final Judaism Worldview Exercise
<p>Week 4: Judaism—Historical Background</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook, "Judaism Historical Background" 	<p>By Monday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read "Textbook on Judaism Historical Background, Part 1" Watch Video #10 ("Origins to Exile") Watch Video #11 ("From one Babylon to the next...") Watch Video #12 ("The Rise of the Rabbis") Assignment: Submit a Question, TIL, or Take-away <p>By Tuesday @ 8pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read "Textbook on Judaism Historical Background, Part 2" Watch Video #13 ("The Medieval and the Mystical") Watch Video #14 ("To Haskalah") Watch Video #15 ("19th Century to Now") Assignment: Submit a Question, TIL, or Take-Away Assignment: Answer a Warm-Up Question <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Class
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Week 5: Judaism—Texts and Authorities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook on Tanakh Genesis (selection) Exodus (selection) Psalms (selection) Talmud (selection) Zohar ("After the Flood") Elie Wiesel ("To be A Jew") 	<p>By Monday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read "Textbook on Tanakh" Watch Video #16 ("Tanakh") Read selections from Genesis, Exodus, and Psalms <p>By Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read selections from Talmud, Zohar, and Elie Wiesel Watch Video #17 ("Talmud, Zohar, Wiesel") Assignment: Submit EITHER DBQ 1A or DBQ 1B <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Class
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Week 6: Judaism—Contemporary Concerns

<p>No at-home reading</p>	<p>By Tuesday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch and Respond to Video #18: Feminism and Judaism Watch and Respond to Video #19: Racism, Antisemitism, and Judaism Watch and Respond to Video #20: Zionism and Judaism <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Class <p>By Saturday @ 11:59pm:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Unit #1 Quiz
Week 7: Christianity—Diverse Worldviews	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook “Practicing Christianity” • Evans, “Searching for Sunday” • Brown, “How to Fix a Broken Record” • Oakes, “Radical Reinvention” 	<p>By Monday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Textbook on Practicing Christianity” • Read “Evans, Brown, and Oakes” • Watch Video #21 (“Christian Worldviews”) <p>By Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Draft of Christianity Worldview Exercise <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Class <p>By Saturday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Final Christianity Worldview Exercise
Week 8: Christianity—Historical Background	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, “Christianity Historical Background” 	<p>By Monday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Textbook on Christianity Historical Background, Part 1” • Watch Video #22 (“Jesus and the Early Church”) • Watch Video #23 (“Conflict and Persecution”) • Watch Video #24 (“Establishment and Schism”) • Assignment: Submit a Question, TIL, or Take-away <p>By Tuesday @ 8pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Textbook on Christianity Historical Background, Part 2” • Watch Videos #25 (“To the High Middle Ages”) • Watch Video #26 (“Crusaders and Reformers”) • Watch Video #27 (“45,000 Denominations”) • Assignment: Submit a Question, TIL, or Take-Away • Assignment: Answer a Warm-Up Question <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Class
Week 9: Christianity—Texts and Authorities	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook on the New Testament • Paul (Selections) • Gospels (Selections) • Nicene Creed • Luther, “On Christian Freedom” • Charles Wesley, “Hymns” (selection) 	<p>By Monday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Textbook on New Testament” • Read selections from Paul and the Gospels • Watch Video #28 (“New Testament”) <p>By Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read selections from Nicene Creed, Luther On Christian Freedom, and the Methodist Hymns • Watch Video #29 (“Nicene Creed, Luther, Methodist Hymns”) • Assignment: Submit EITHER DBQ 2A or DBQ 2B <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Class
<p>Week 10: Christianity–Contemporary Concerns</p>	
<p>No at-home reading</p>	<p>By Tuesday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch and Respond to Video #30: Feminism and Christianity • Watch and Respond to Video #31: Racism and Christianity • Watch and Respond to Video #32: LGBTQIA+ Rights and Christianity <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Class <p>By Saturday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Unit #2 Quiz
<p>Week 11: Islam–Diverse Worldviews</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, “Practicing Islam” • Kahf, “The Muslim in the Mirror” • Al-Khatahtbeh, “Muslim Girl” • Wilson, “The Butterfly Mosque” 	<p>By Monday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read “Textbook on Practicing Islam” • Read “Kahf, Al-Khatahtbeh, and Wilson” • Watch Video #33 (“Muslim Worldviews”) <p>By Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Draft of Islam Worldview Exercise <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Class <p>By Saturday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Final Islam Worldview Exercise
<p>Week 12: Islam–Historical Background</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook, "Islam Historical Background" 	<p>By Monday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read "Textbook on Islam Historical Background, Part 1" Watch Video #34 ("Muhammad and his World") Watch Video #35 ("Islam and the Early Caliphs") Watch Video #36 ("Sunni and Shi'a") Assignment: Submit a Question, TIL, or Take-away <p>By Tuesday @ 8pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read "Textbook on Islam Historical Background, Part 2" Watch Video #37 ("Fiqh") Watch Video #38 ("Sufism") Watch Video #39 ("Geographic and Cultural Diversity") Watch Video #40 ("Modern Islam") Assignment: Submit a Question, TIL, or Take-Away Assignment: Answer a Warm-Up Question <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Class
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Week #13: Islam—Texts and Authorities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qur'an (selections) Hadith (Selections) Sufi texts (selections) Fiqh (selections) 	<p>By Monday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Qur'an (selections) and Hadith (Selections) Watch Video #41 ("Qur'an and Hadith") <p>By Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read selections from Sufi Texts and Legal Texts Watch Video #42 ("Sufi Texts and Legal Texts") Assignment: Submit EITHER DBQ 3A or DBQ 3B <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Class
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Week 14: Islam—Contemporary Concerns

<p>No at-home reading</p>	<p>By Tuesday @ 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch and Respond to Video #43: Feminism and Islam Watch and Respond to Video #44: Racism, Islamophobia, and Islam Watch and Respond to Video #45: Extremism and Islam <p>Wednesday @ 10.20am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend Class
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By Saturday @ 11:59pm:

- Take Unit #3 Quiz

FINAL EXAM OPENS THURSDAY, APRIL 25; DUE BY FRIDAY, MAY 5

ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS

1. Participation:

- a. Syllabus Quiz (1%):
 - i. Take the Syllabus Quiz on Canvas before the end of the second week of class. You can take it as many times as you want to get the grade you want, and the questions will not change (though the ordering of the answers will).
- b. In-person Attendance (19%):
 - i. Physical and attentive attendance at our in-person sessions.
 - ii. Do not come to class sick, please. Zoom is an option for partial credit IF you let me know the night before so I can bring the right equipment to class, and there are ways to make up attendance by attending extra credit lectures.
- c. Participation (20%): This category includes the various assignments (video responses, questions, TIL's, and takeaways, etc.) due via Canvas and in-person that afford students the opportunity to contribute to class discussion.

2. Worldview Exercises:

- a. For weeks 3, 7, and 11 you must submit by class-time a full draft of a two-paragraph mini-essay that identifies TWO worldview dimensions that are prominent in ONE of the first-person practitioner narratives assigned for that week.
 - i. There will be three first-person-practitioner narratives to choose from: please skim all of them, but read one closely to analyze it for your mini-essay.

- b. Mini-Essay Format:
- i. There should be no introductory or concluding paragraphs: the “mini-essay” format means body paragraphs only.
 - ii. Your title should be the only thesis you need, and should follow this model: “The Experiential/Emotional and Practical/Ritual Worldview Dimensions in Faye Moskowitz’s ‘Seder Story.’”
 - iii. In each paragraph, please offer 2-4 examples, with textual evidence supporting each, of the worldview dimension you’ve chosen to focus on and how it plays out in the text. The number of examples you use should be determined by how thoroughly you unpack and analyze the examples you’ve chosen. Three brief, easy-to-show examples would be roughly equivalent to two longer examples that require more explanation.
- c. We will discuss these assignments in class on Wednesday.
- d. You have the opportunity, then, to submit your FINAL version of your worldview exercise via Canvas, via the assignment whose title ends with: “Worldview Exercise, Final Submission”
- i. This is the only submission that will be analytically graded; your other submission is simply a prerequisite to this. In other words, I want to encourage you to revise your work.
- e. These mini-essays will be graded according to the following rubric (please note that text usage is double-weighted):

	Worldview Dimension #1	Worldview Dimension #2
Clarity (Writing)	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Clarity (Concepts)	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Accuracy	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Use of Textual Evidence	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 x2	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 x2
Insufficient	2 = Poor	3 = Satisfactory
		4 = Good
		5 = Excellent

3. Unit Quizzes:

- a. These quizzes will be available on Canvas roughly a week before they are due.
- b. They are open book.

- c. You can re-take the quiz as often as you like to get the grade you want, but the questions will change every time.
- d. They will test you on your reading of the textbook and your familiarity with class material.
- e. Please note questions that you are confused by and send them to me—screenshots ok.

4. Warm-Up Questions:

- a. In weeks 4, 8, and 12, you will be asked to answer a subjective question as if you were a historical figure. You'll be graded on thoughtfulness and comprehension of the material. These will be graded on a 2-point scale, which is effectively a “✓-/✓/✓+” system (Please note the “extra credit” built into this rubric):

2.2	✓+ (Superb)
2	✓ (Shows thoughtful engagement)
1	✓- (Shows serious confusion or a lack of effort)
0	No assignment submitted

5. Document-Based Questions:

- a. In weeks 5, 9, and 13, you will need to answer a set of Document-Based Questions (DBQs). You will have two choices of DBQs to answer. Each will give you a text and ask you four questions about that text.
- b. Your answers must include a minimum of three sentences. The first sentence should give your answer. The second sentence should give the quote that inspired your answer. The third sentence should explain how your quote gave you your answer. Further discussion is welcome, but these three sentences are necessary.
- c. Your answers will be graded according to the rubric below. Note that text usage is doubly weighted:

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
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Clarity (Writing)	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Clarity (Concepts)	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Accuracy	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
Use of Textual Evidence	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 2x	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 2x	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 2x	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 2x
1 = Insufficient 2 = Poor 3 = Satisfactory 4 = Good 5 = Excellent				

Classroom Policies:

- A. **Civility:** This semester we will at times be discussing most of the things you are not supposed to discuss in polite company. In order to ensure that everyone feels comfortable participating in these discussions, we must all show respect to one another, to one another's ideas, and to the material we are discussing. Dismissive or abusive comments will not be tolerated. Any offensive posts to the discussion boards (or other spaces visible to the whole class) will be deleted and the student will be alerted and asked to revise.
- B. **Academic Honesty:** Do not represent someone else's work as your own. Give credit where credit is due, even if that is to an AI-assistant. Plagiarism will result in your being asked to redo the assignment in question, and repeated offenses will result in official action per Rutgers' Academic Integrity policy: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.
- C. **Revision Policy:** All writing in this class may be revised for full credit. You may revise all your work as many times as you wish to get the grade you want.
 - a. You may only revise work that I have seen and commented on.
 - b. This policy is only possible if you hand in your work in a timely fashion. If you do not hand in your work on or near the due date, I will not be able to comment and grade your initial submission in time for you to revise it effectively. Late work is fine, but if you submit work more than one week (seven days) past its deadline, I will not be able to grade it until the reading days at the end of the semester.

- c. If you submit your work more than a week late and you want feedback before the end of the semester, please set up a meeting with me.
- d. There is no deadline for any revision, other than your own graduation. I am happy to re-grade items after the end of the semester if you would like to change your grade.
- e. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** *By far the least labor-intensive and most efficient way to do well in this class is to do all the work as well as you can the first time around, on the same schedule as everyone else.* The full truth: For whatever reason, students rarely submit work/revisions after the end of the semester, even when they have expressed (to me) the intention of doing so. Life happens, the semester ends, new classes begin, students move on. If you are at all able to do the work according to the class schedule, I highly recommend that you do that.

If you are at all concerned about your performance in the class, please talk with me as soon as possible!