

SCTR 19-02 (43263): Religions of the Book (RTC 1)
Santa Clara University
Religious Studies Department

■

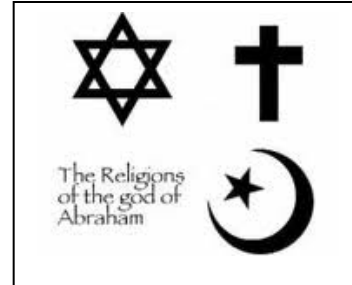
Fall 2016

MWF 1:00-2:05 PM; Kenna 111

■

Joseph A. Morris, Ph.D., (jamorris@scu.edu)

Office: Kenna 315; Office Hours: MW 2:30-3:30 PM or
after class or by appointment.



Course Description

This course offers an introduction to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam with a study of their central texts, traditions and practices. We begin the course with a paradox: religion, that which in its literal sense, "binds" or "fastens together," is also that which often violently divides our world. As we examine the sacred texts of Jews, Christians, and Muslims (Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Qur'an) and various methods of interpreting them, our focus will remain on what is shared and what characteristically distinguishes between the monotheistic faiths.

Core Curriculum Learning Objectives and Goals

- 1a. Students will be able to describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and from at least two globally distinct regions. (Knowledge of Global Cultures; Complexity of content as well as method; Ambiguity)
- 2a. Be able to use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence. (Critical Thinking; Complexity of Method; Reflection)

Course Objectives

This course

- Provides an **introduction of the basic approaches to the study of religion** through an examination of the central texts, traditions and practices of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
- Seeks to provide **critical reflection on religious belief and practice** and what it discloses about humanity in its quest for the Ultimate. This will also offer students an opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs and religious experiences and to probe how religion functions in their lives and the lives of others.
- Explores the **central religious ideas and practices of Judaism, Christianity and Islam** with a special focus on their **sacred writings** (Hebrew Bible, Bible: Hebrew Scriptures & New Testament and Qur'an) and provides comparison with their diverse manifestations as well as introduction to methods and approaches for their interpretation.
- Studies these religions in both their **local and global manifold expressions**.
- Examines the relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam and their various **"cultures"** by exploring historical, scriptural and theological texts as well as their art, literature, music, poetry and film.

Required Texts

Armstrong, Karen, *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New York: Random House Press, 1993.

Greenstein, Howard R., Hotz, Kendra G., Kaltner, John. *What do our neighbors believe? Questions and Answers on Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.

Online: The Hebrew Scriptures [TANAK]: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm> OR <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/index.shtml>

Online: The Christian Scriptures: <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/index.shtml>

Online: The Qur'an in English Translation with Arabic: <http://www.mysticletters.com/quran-viewer/arabic-yusuf-ali/>

Camino Course Site: The Camino site will be an important place to find course requirements and procedures, reading response questions and drop boxes, co-curricular experience/religion in practice response drop boxes, online discussion, exam study guides, dates for assignments, any changes to the syllabus, etc. In hopes of reducing the amount of paper, all course materials and communications will be posted on Camino. All updates to the course and syllabus can be found on the Camino site.

Assessment and Grading

- **Class attendance and participation:** involves on-time attendance, engagement in class activities, small and large group discussions, and online (Camino) activities and discussions. There are three things included in class participation: attendance and contributing qualitatively and quantitatively to discussions. Therefore, all students are expected to be present, on time, prepared and active participants at each class for presentations and discussions. Should an absence be necessary it can be excused only with written notification which must be submitted at the first class after the absence. No late notifications will be accepted. Points are lost for lateness and please make sure you check with the instructor after the class you arrived late to assure that you get marked present. No participation points are given for the use of computers for other purposes than class, nor for texting – even if you participate during that specific class. (25% divided as follows: 10% attendance; 10% participation; 5% group work) [*Learning Objective 1a: through a series of activities and assignments students will describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices emerging out of the sacred writings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Learning Objective 1b: Class and on-line discussions are designed to assist students to reflect on their own beliefs and religious experiences and to probe how religion functions in their lives and the lives of others.*]
- **Mid-term Examination:** A study guide will be posted on Camino one week prior to the mid-term examination. (Tentative date: 10/24/16) (15%) [*Learning Objective 1a: The examination is designed to have students identify, describe and interpret select scriptural texts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and compare their similarities and differences in the light of their socio-historical and literary context.*]

- **Final Examination:** A study guide will be distributed one week prior to this final examination. Tentative date: 12/9/16 (15%) [*Learning Objectives 1a and 1b: This examination has two parts: It includes short essay format requiring description and comparison of select scriptural texts from Judaism, Christianity and Islam around contemporary issues, problems or developments common to all three. In the other part of this examination, students are required to read and respond online in an essay format to an article discussing the diversity and similarities between the varied spiritual traditions of the Abrahamic religion.*]
- **Religion in Practice:** Students can choose from three “Religion in Practice” options. Fulfilling one is required. The options and evaluation guidelines can be found on the Camino website. (5%) [*Learning Objective 1b: The writing requirement in response to this experience is geared to assist students in reflecting on their own beliefs in light of those of the specific religion celebrated at the worship space. In addition, it seeks to provide students with an experience of these sacred writings celebrated in their ritual spaces. This field education experience is also discussed formally in class.*]
- **Group Project and Presentation:** In class multi-media group presentation on a contemporary issue, problem or aspect of all three of the Abrahamic religions in our contemporary world in two globally distinct areas. The group’s work is designed to use the scriptures of these three religious traditions to address the issue or topic under study. Due in class 2 groups per class on these dates: 11/14; 11/16; 11/28; 11/30. [15%] [*Learning Objective 1a and 1b: Students work together on this project throughout the course. It focuses on both description and comparison of the two globally distinct regions, but also encourages reflection and discussion of their group’s selected issue, problem or development in light of their own beliefs and those they have encountered among their group and throughout the quarter.*]
- **Reading Responses:** These will be written response(s) to question(s) focusing on the readings and discussion for the specific day. These questions are posted throughout the quarter on Camino. The student is required to submit a response by the assigned date in the designated submission box on Camino ½ hour before the beginning of the class it is due for – thus assignments should be submitted by 12:30 PM. (25%) [*Learning Objectives 1a and 1 b: These assignments both focus on the employment of methods introduced in the course for studying and interpreting the scriptures of these three religions in their socio-historical and literary contexts (description and comparison), as well as those that focus on an issue, experience, writing or problem and require reflection and reaction in the light of select texts under study.*]

Grading Scale

| | |
|-------------|----|
| 94%-100% | A |
| 90%-93% | A- |
| 87%-89% | B+ |
| 83%-86% | B |
| 80%-82% | B- |
| 77%-79% | C+ |
| 73%-76% | C |
| 70%-72% | C- |
| 67%-69% | D+ |
| 63%-66% | D |
| 60%-62% | D- |
| 59% & below | F |

Feedback on Reading Responses, Examinations and Religion in Practice assignments will be provided in writing; Group project feedback will be communicated through consultation.

OTHER INFORMATION:

Disabilities Syllabus Statement

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, www.scu.edu/disabilities as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy or parenting may be eligible for accommodations.

While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information, you may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109.

In alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and with the California Education Code, Section 66281.7, Santa Clara University provides reasonable accommodations to students who are pregnant, have recently experienced childbirth, and/or have medically related needs. Pregnant and parenting students can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Alternatively, a pregnant or parenting student experiencing related medical conditions may request accommodations through Disability Resources.

Title IX Syllabus Statement

Santa Clara University upholds a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence or stalking, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to www.scu.edu/studentlife and click on the link for the University's [Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie at 408-554-3043 or by email at bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online through www.scu.edu/osl/report or anonymously through Ethicspoint: www.ethicspoint.com

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Integrity Pledge

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of -- and commitment to -- a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University.

*The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:
I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.
Students are expected to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class*

The University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for a course, or who assists others in such an act, may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a grade of F for the course. In addition, a student found guilty of a dishonest act may be subject to sanctions up to and including dismissal from the University as a result of the student judicial process as described in the Community Handbook. A student who violates copyright laws, including those covering the copying of software programs, or who knowingly alters official academic records from this or any other institution is subject to similar disciplinary action.