SCTR 19: RELIGIONS OF THE BOOK: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

Fall 2015 - MWF 11:45-12:50pm
Sobrato 19

PROFESSOR: Roberto Mata
EMAIL: rmata@scu.edu
OFFICE HOURS: MWF 1-2:00pm
OFFICE: (300j)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course offers a critical introduction to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In view of the proliferation of revival movements, the rise of fundamentalism and religious violence, and the overall influence of religion on popular culture, this course seeks to prepare students to develop a more capacious and constructive understanding of the roles that religion plays in contemporary societies throughout the world. In order to do so, the course includes: (1) a comparative exploration of the history, sacred texts (e.g. the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Qur’an), institutions, devotional practices (e.g. prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage), and politics of the aforementioned religious traditions; (2) a basic introduction to interpretative approaches from the academic study of religion and their proponents, such as Rudolf Otto, Emile Durkheim, Mircea Eliade, Victor Turner, and W.C. Smith; (3) visits to local mosques, churches, and synagogues to learn and to observe the various ways in which these communities express their faiths; and (4) a robust exploration of fundamentalism, notions of holy war, and Apocalypticism. We conclude the course by reflecting on the role of religion in our own lives, the importance of interreligious dialogue, and ways to build a more just, peaceful, and welcoming global community.

CORE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES:

Students taking this course will:

1.1 Describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and from at least two globally distinct regions. (Students will fulfill this core objective through group presentations, worship site visits, as well as through midterm and final examinations).

1.2 Use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence. (Students will fulfill this core objective through class discussions, reading responses, and both the midterm and final exams).

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Introduce the central texts, religious ideas and practices of Judaism, Christianity and Islam with a special focus on their sacred writings (Hebrew Bible, New Testament and Qur’an).
2. Explore these religions in their local, national, and global contexts, as well as their socio-political and cultural influence on contemporary societies, as expressed in art, literature, music, poetry and film.

3. Provide various tools/frameworks/approaches from the theories and methods in the study of religion to help students interpret the various dimensions of religious experience, and practice.

4. Offer students an opportunity to reflect on their own religious beliefs, traditions, and experiences, as well as the ways it shapes how they see the world, and how they relate to people from different religious backgrounds.

5. Equip students to engage in the global interreligious dialogue, constructively engage issues affecting Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and build bridges of collaboration to create more welcoming, just, and peaceful societies.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


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

Additional reading material will be posted on Camino Course Site. There you should also other course related materials including: reading response questions, field education experience response, drop boxes, online discussion, exam study guides, and other guideline handouts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT METHODS:

- **Class attendance, Preparation, and Critical Engagement (20%).** Students will achieve 20% of their course grade through: (1) on-time attendance; (2) preparation (i.e. completion of readings assignments, reflection papers, and/or discussion questions); and (3) thoughtful participation in course activities (e.g. small and large group discussions, and online discussions, and site visits). [Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. Students will describe...]

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and compare the central texts, practices, and religious ideas of Judaism, Christianity and Islam].

- **Reading Responses (20%)**: Students are required to post 4 critical readings responses (5 pages each) on Camino throughout the quarter. Each response must address an issue/theme/question that emerges on each of the four sections sections of the course and that is common to all three religious traditions. Students must post all readings response on Camino by the assigned date and by 8:00pm on the day before class. [Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.2. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs, religious experiences, or faith journeys through reading responses, as well as through class and online discussions.]

- **Mid-term Examination (20%)**: Comparative essay that explores a theme, issue, or practice of interest involving all three religious traditions (15 pages). The essay must engage at least one major thinker from the study of religion. [Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. and 1.2. The midterm exam challenges students to identify, describe and interpret scriptural texts, issues, or practices of Judaism, Christianity and Islam using the tools provided in the course. Students must also articulate the ways in which their own social location impinges on their interpretative process.]

- **Site Visits (10%)**: Students visit a religious gathering of Jews, Christians and Muslims to respectfully study the ways these traditions express their devotion (guidance and input will be provided before the visit). After the visit, students will write a 5-page reflection paper and submitted it to Canvas. [Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. and 1.2. Students will visit local mosques, churches, and synagogues to describe and compare the religious practices of these communities. Subsequently, students will write a response paper reflecting on their visits and use analytical tools to describe the religious practices they witnessed.]

- **Group Project and Presentation (10%)**: 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 must also integrate the scriptures of these three religious traditions to address the issue or topic under study, and map the implications for interreligious dialogue. [Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. and 1.2. This collaborative efforts entails both description and comparison of the two globally distinct religious traditions, as well as serious engagement with the theory and methods from the study of religion. Students are also expected to reflect on the ways in which the project has shaped their study of religion, or altered the ways they view the religions of others.]

- **Final Examination (20%)**: This examination constitutes a 15-page paper requiring description and comparison of select scriptural texts from Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The paper must employ analytical frameworks from the study of religion and engage contemporary issues, problems or common to all three traditions. Students must also reflect upon the ways in which their socio-religious location shaped their approach to the paper. [Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. and 1.2. The essay format requires description and comparison of select scriptural texts from Judaism, Christianity and Islam]
around contemporary issues, problems or developments common to all three. Students also employ critical tools to reflect on their own faith journeys and to articulate constructive solutions to the issues they identify.]

GRADING SCALE

<table>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>94%-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90%-93%</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>87%-89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>83%-86%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80%-82%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77%-79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>73%-76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>60%-62%</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<td>59% &amp; below</td>
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The instruction will provide written feedback on reading responses, examinations and religion in practice assignments. Group project feedback will be communicated via email.

OTHER INFORMATION:

Disability Accommodation Policy

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahmann Center in Kenna 101, (408) 554-4318; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

Academic Integrity Policy

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. For more information on the university's policy on academic integrity see the following: http://www.scu.edu/provost/policies/upload/Academic%20Integrity%20Protocol.pdf

PEDAGOGY:

In order to create a collaborative, democratic, and empowering learning environment, this course will implement a form of Border Pedagogy. Such a pedagogical approach acknowledges the shifting borders of power and knowledge, and links the educational enterprise with the struggle for a more just and democratic society. The instructor’s version of this approach entails five interrelated stages: Critical Awakening, Journeying, Crossing, Negotiating, and Transforming. Such an approach will translate into the following practical dimensions of our learning practices/experiences: (1) students
and the instructor will reflect on their own socio-religious location and the ways it shapes their understanding of the three monotheistic religions; (2) students will collaborate with one another and engage in critical and constructive dialogue for class projects and discussions; (3) students will identify and address key issues/themes/ritual practices in the three religious traditions; (4) students will learn traditional and non-traditional paradigms for understanding religion, as well as methods of interpretation; (5) students will be prepared to articulate the implications of course content and methodologies for the struggle towards a more egalitarian society.

### LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week &amp; Date</th>
<th>LECTURE TOPICS and READING ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sep 21, 23, 25</strong></td>
<td><strong>PART I. FOUNDATIONS:</strong> Origins, Socio-historical contexts, and Diversity</td>
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**Required Readings:**

- **Study of Religion (Mon):** Hinnells, “Why Study Religions?,” 5-20.
- **Comparative Perspective (Mon):** Peters, *The Children of Abraham*, ix-20
- **Judaism (Mon):** Genesis 1-2; Cohen, *From The Maccabees to The Mishnah*, 142-158.
- **Christianity (Wed):** John 1:1-10; Matthew 5:1-12
- **Islam (Fri):** Elias et al., “God,” 53-72; Surah 7:11-25

**Recommended Readings:**


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<th>Sep 28, 30, Oct 2</th>
<th>Prophets, Messiahs, and Apostles</th>
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**Required Readings:**

- **Comparative Perspective (Mon):** Peters, *The Children of Abraham*, 21-40;
- **Judaism (Mon):** Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 20-40; Isaiah 11:1-16; Jeremiah 1:4-19;
- **Christianity (Wed):** Acts 2:14-36; Revelation 1:9-20
- **Islam (Fri):** Surah 3:144; 33-40; 48:29; Elias et al., “Prophecy,” 281-304.

**Recommended Readings:**


Oct. 5, 7, 9

**Synagogue, Ekklesiа, and Umа**

**Required Readings:**
- **Study of Religion (Mon):** Riesebrodt, “Sociology of Religion,” 145-164. (in Hinnell’s)
- **Comparative Perspective (Mon):** Peters, *The Children of Abraham*, 41-66 (Mon).
- **Judaism (Mon):** Exodus 12:47; Cohen, *From The Maccabees to The Mishnah*, 103-121.
- **Islam (Fri):** Surah 3:104; Mandaville, *Reimagining the Umma*, 53-84.

**Recommended Readings:**

Oct. 12, 14, 16

**PART II: AUTHORITY & INTERPRETATION:**

**The Torah, Canon Law, and Sharia Law**

**Required Readings:**
- **Study of Religion (Mon):** Gifford, “Religious Authority”, 397-410 (in Hinnell’s)
- **Comparative Perspective (Mon):** Peters, *The Children of Abraham*, 67-84.
- **Judaism (Mon):** Exodus 19–24; Cohen, *From The Maccabees to The Mishnah*, 173-189.
- **Christianity (Wed):** Galatians 3; James 2:7-26; Weaver, *Introduction to Christianity*, 55-58.

**Recommended Readings:**

Oct. 19, 21, 23

**Midrash, Allegorical Interpretation, and Quranic Exegesis**

**Required Readings:**
- **Study of Religion (Mon):** Garret Green, “Hermeneutics,” 411-424 (in Hinnell’s).
**Judaism (Mon):** Psalms 78, 105; Cohen, *From The Maccabees to The Mishnah*, 202-205.

**Christianity (Wed):** Matthew 20:22; Hall, *A. Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, 132-156.

**Islam (Fri):** Gätje, *The Qur’ān and its Exegesis*, 1-35.

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### MIDTERM

**Recommended Readings:**

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### Oct. 26, 28, 30

**PART III. RELIGIOUS PRACTICE, EXPERIENCE, AND SERVICE:**
Worship, Prayer, and Pilgrimage

**Required Readings:**
- **Study of Religion (Mon):** Allen, “Phenomenology of Religion,” 203-224 in (Hinnell’s)
- **Judaism (Mon):** Deuteronomy 6:4-9;
- **Christianity (Wed):** Philippians 2:6-11; Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit*, 71-91.

**Recommended Readings:**

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### Nov 2, 4, 6

**Religious Experience:**
Ascetism, Mysticism and Conversion

**Required Readings:**
- **Study of Religion (Mon):** King, “Mysticism and Spirituality,” 323-338 (in Hinnells)
- **Judaism (Mon):** Ezekiel 1:1-28;
- **Islam (Fri):** Surah 53, 13-18; 55: 1-34;

**Recommended Readings:**
- Sells, Michael Anthony. *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Quran, Miraj, Poetic and Theological Writings.*


### Required Reading:

- **Study of Religion (Mon):** George Moyser, “Religion and Politics,” 445 (in Hinnell’s)
- **Islam (Fri):** Surah 26: 181-183; Van Gorder, “Islamic Response to Poverty,” 60-76.

### Recommend Reading:


### Part IV. THE RISE OF FUNDAMENTALISM: Political Activism, Theocracy, and Revolution

### Required Readings:

- **Study of Religion (Mon):** Munson, “Fundamentalism,” 354-371 (in Hinnell’s)
- **Comparative Perspective (Mon):** New, *Holy War: The Rise of Militant Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Fundamentalism*, 16-23;
- **Judaism (Mon):** Weisburd, *Jewish Settler Violence*, 50-64;
- **Islam (Fri):** Gohari, *The Taliban*, 26-44.

### Recommended Readings:


### November 16, 18, 20 | Militant Apocalypticism, Holy War, and 9/11

### Required Readings:
- **Comparative Perspective (Mon):** New, *Holy War*, 43-49,
- **Judaism (Mon):** Deuteronomy 21:1-20; Antoun, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 133-164;
- **Islam (Fri):** Surah 5:33; 8:15-17; Fine, *From Holy War to Modern Terror*, 123-213.

**Recommended Readings:**

**Nov.23,25,27** | **CLASS CANCELLED**

**Annual Meeting of Society for Biblical Literature**
**&**
**Thanksgiving Holiday**

**Nov. 30, 2, 4** | **PART V. BUILDING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY:**
**Interreligious Dialogue, Peace, and Collaboration**

**Required Readings:**
- **Comparative Perspective (Mon):** Liepert, *Finding a Path to Peace Our Faiths Can Share*. 157-175.
- **Christianity (Wed):** Matthew 5:7, 9, 21, 22.
- **Islam (Fri):** Surah 2:91, 109, 135, 145

**Recommended Readings:**

**Dec 7-11** | **FINAL EXAM WEEK**
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Hall, Christopher A. *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers.* InterVarsity Press, 2009.


