SCTR 19: Religions of the Book: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

MWF 1:00pm

PROFESSOR: Roberto Mata
EMAIL: rmata@scu.edu
OFFICE HOURS: MW 12-1:00pm & By Appointment
OFFICE: Kenna 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, Max Weber 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:

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:

- Quizzes (20%): Students will achieve 20% of their course grade through completion of 10 quizzes (1 x module). Each quiz is worth 5 points. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1.]**
Students will describe and compare the central texts, practices, and religious ideas of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

- **Discussion Forums (20%)**: Students must engage their peers in online discussions of course topics by posting responses to prompt questions as well as by responding to at least two other posts. [Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.2. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs, religious experiences, or faith journeys through online discussions.]

- **Creative Responses (20%)**: Students are required to post 10 creative responses on how they would develop their own religion in conversation with the readings and key aspects of each of the Abrahamic religions (1 page each, single spaced) on Camino throughout the quarter. Each response must address the targeted building block of the tradition (e.g. God, Prophets, Sacred Texts, Community, and Key teachings). [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].

- **Mid-term Examination (20%)**: Comparative essay that explores a theme, issue, or practice of interest involving all three religious traditions (5 pages). The essay must engage at least one major thinker from the study of religion. Alternatively, students may opt to do an oral exam. The oral exam will offer students the opportunity to discuss key terms from the readings, to place these within the broader context of the weekly theme and broader course objectives, and to articulate its importance for our understanding of the JCI traditions. See rubric and sample key terms on Camino. [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.]

- **Final Integration Paper (20%)**: These final integration paper is the summation of your work in the creative papers and describes your newly developed tradition in interaction with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. You simply need to add the following parts: (1) a title page; (2) an Introduction, (3) a Conclusion, (4) a Works Cited Page, and (5) a ONE-page reflection discussion of how your social location shaped the creation of your own religious tradition. The paper must employ analytical frameworks from the study of religion and engage the designated contemporary issues, or problems. [1.2. Students also employ critical tools to reflect on their own faith journeys and to articulate constructive solutions to the issues they identify.]

**GRADING SCALE:**

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<th>Grade</th>
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OTHER INFORMATION:

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend class every day. Students should bring documentation that justifies or corroborates any need to be absent. They should not miss more than 3 sessions. Furthermore, students may not leave the class after attendance has been taken, otherwise they will be marked as absent. Failure to regularly attend class will negatively affect overall grade and may result in a suggestion to withdraw from the course. Special accommodations will of course be made for those who have already completed the request process.

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 because 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:

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.

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<tr>
<th>Week &amp; Date</th>
<th>LECTURE TOPICS and READING ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1:</td>
<td>PART I. The God of Abraham</td>
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<td>Origins, Diversity, and Composition</td>
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<td>Sep. 18-22</td>
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Key Questions: What are the historical origins of JCI? Who are the key figures and texts? How do our sources articulate the similarities and differences between the Abrahamic traditions?

Required Readings: (Please read all the primary sources and secondary sources (in black).

[Complete: Module 1 on Camino]

Monday: Introduction to Abrahamic Traditions
- No reading assignments

Wednesday: Origins
- Genesis 1-2; Gospel of John 1:1-10;
- Fiorenza & Kauffman, “God,” 53-72

Friday: Diversity & Scope
- Gospel of Matthew 5:1-12; Surah 7:11-25;

Recommended Readings:
- Cohen, *From the Maccabees to The Mishnah*, 142-158.
- Elias et al., “God,” 53-72

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<th>Week 2:</th>
<th>Prophets, Messiah, and Apostles</th>
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Key Questions: Who are the sacred figures in JCI? What notions of sacred time and space prevail in JCI? How are notions of sacred experiences articulated?

[Complete: Module 2 on Camino]

Required Readings:

Monday: Sacred Time
- Genesis 17:1-27
- Hotz, et al., Significant Events, 18-23

Wednesday: Experiencing the Sacred
- John 20:30; Isaiah 11:1-16
- Hotz, et al., Key Figures, 23-30

Friday: Sacred Space
Surah 3:144
Hotz, et al., Important Places, 30-35.

Recommended Readings:

Week 3: Oct. 2-6
Authority & Community:
Synagogue, Ekklēsia, and Umma

Key Questions: What keeps JCI communities together? Why do they gather to worship God, read scripture and interact with one another? What are the various types of authority at work in JCI communities? How may the sociology of Religion help us understand internal group dynamics?

[Complete: Module 3 on Camino]

Required Readings:
Monday: Synagogue
- Exodus 12:47
- Peters, The Children of Abraham, 41-66

Wednesday: Ekklēsia
- Acts 2:47
- Gifford, “Religious Authority”, 397-410 (in Hinnells);

Friday: Umma
- Surah 3:104
- Mandaville, Reimagining the Umma, 53-84.

Recommended Readings:

Week 4: Oct. 9-13
PART II: Sacred Texts:
Interpreting the Torah, The Christian Bible, and The Qur’an

Key Questions: What are the sacred texts of the JCI? Why are certain texts authoritative and who decided that? And, how should followers interpret these texts? What are the hermeneutical tools that JCI traditions use to read and interpret their sacred texts?
Required Readings:
Monday: Sacred Texts
- Exodus 20:1-19; Galatians 1:6-10

Wednesday: Interpretation
- James 2:7-26
- Hotz, et al., “How is the Sacred Text studied and used?” 40-45.
- Garret Green, “Hermeneutics,” 411-424 (in Hinnells)

Friday: Scripturalizing
- Surah 3:32
- Hotz, et al., “What other texts are authoritative for the community?” 40-45

Recommended Readings:
- Cohen, *From the Maccabees to The Mishnah*, 202-205

Key Questions: What is the nature of God in JCI? Why are notions of monotheism central to these traditions? How are humans supposed to relate to the divine? What is at stake in our understanding of the Divine?

Recommended Readings:
Key Questions: What is religious RITUAL and how is it expressed in the JCI traditions? Why do people worship, pray or engage in long pilgrimages? How do the various religious rituals function within JCI? Where do people worship and why does that matter?

[Complete: Module 6 on Camino]

Required Readings:
Monday: Places of Worship and Pilgrimage
- Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- Hotz, et al., “Where is the main place of worship?” 84-88.
- Catherine “Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice,” 1-10, 19-30.

Wednesday: Ritual Practice
- Philippians 2:6-11
- Hotz, et al., “What are the primary rituals and practices of the religion?” 84-89.
- Ghazali, Principles of Islamic Spirituality, 43-51; 59-63.

Friday: Holiday and Celebrations
- Surah 8:35
- Hotz, et al., “What are the important days and celebrations…?” 84-89
- Mircea Eliade, “Sacred Time and Myths,” 68-115

Recommended Readings:

Week 7:
Oct 30-Nov 3

Religious Experience

Key Questions: What is religious experience and its function in JCI? How do people articulate their encounters with the Divine? Why does believers in JCI seek or have such experiences? How may the phenomenology of religion help us understand such events/practices?

[Complete: Module 7 on Camino]

Required Readings:
Monday: Mysticism
- Soltes, Mysticism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, 73-105
- King, “Mysticism and Spirituality,” 323-338 (in Hinnells)

Wednesday: Conversion
- Acts 2:1-13
- Gelpi, Donald L. The Conversion Experience, (PDF).
- Peters, The Children of Abraham, 116-137

Friday: Martyrdom
- Surah 53, 13-18; 55: 1-34
Hüseyin Cicek, *Martyrdom in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (PDF).

**Recommended Readings:**

**Week 8**

**Nov. 6-10**

**Social Issues:**

**Poverty, Sexuality, and Science**

Key Questions: What are the teachings on social justice in JCI? How does each religious tradition articulate their mission to serve others? Why is it important to turn their beliefs into actions? What are the tensions between religion and politics?

[Complete: Module 8 on Camino]

**Required Reading:**

**Monday: Religion, Politics, and the Other**

- Deuteronomy 34:6; Surah 26: 181-183
- Hotz, et al., “What is the view of the relationship between religion and politics?” 101, 117; 118-123.
- Van Gorder, “Islamic Response to Poverty,” 60-76.

**Wednesday: Religion and Science**

- Matthew 25:31-46
- Hotz et al., “What is the view of the relationship between religion and science?” 123-128.

**Friday: Sexuality**

- Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9, Surah 29:28-29
- Hotz, et al., “What are some of the religions’ teachings on the area of human sexuality?” 128-134.

**Recommend Reading:**


**Week 9**

**Nov. 13-17**

**Part IV. THE RISE OF FUNDAMENTALISM:**

**Holy War, Modern Terror, and Fundamentalism**

Key Questions: What is religious fundamentalism? Why is religious violence associated with such movements? How is religious fundamentalism and terrorism expressed in JCI?

[Complete: Module 9 on Camino]

**Required Readings:**

**Monday: Fundamentalism**

- Deuteronomy 21:1-20
- Hotz, et al., “What issues are the most hotly debated by followers of the religion?” 134-139.
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<th>Wednesday: Terrorism</th>
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<td>Revelation 19:1-21</td>
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Friday: Future Prospects

- Surah 5:33; 8:15-17

Recommended Readings:


Nov. 20-24 | AAR/SBL Meeting/Thanksgiving
---|---
| No Class |

Week 10
Nov. 27-Dec 1 | PART V. BUILDING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY: Interreligious Dialogue, Peace, and Collaboration
---|---

Key Questions: What is interreligious dialogue? How can JCI work together towards building a more peaceful society? Why do these traditions struggle to engage in dialogue?

[Complete: Module 10 on Camino]

Required Readings:

Monday: Relating to one another

- Jeremiah 29
- Hotz, et al., “What does the religion teach about how members of the community should treat one another?” 101-105.

Wednesday: Gender Roles

- Matthew 5:7, 9, 21, 22
- Hotz, et al., “What does the religion teach about how men and women should relate to each other?” 106-110.

Friday: Interreligious Dialogue

- Surah 2:91, 109, 135, 145

Recommended Readings:

Thanks for all your Hard Work

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Yong, Amos. *Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh, the Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology.* Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2005.