

SCTR 19-01 (18962): Religions of the Book (RTC 1)
Santa Clara University
Religious Studies Department



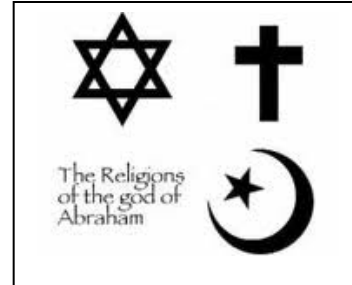
Spring 2015

MW 3:30-5:15 PM; Kenna 310



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**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, 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.

Peters, F.E. The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

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, field education experience 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.

Assessment and Grading

- **Class attendance, promptness and participation:** involves on-time attendance, engagement in class activities, small and large group discussions, and online (Camino) activities and discussions. N.B. It is also the student's responsibility to be on time for class. Should you arrive to class after roll is taken, it is your responsibility to inform the professor at the end of class. Also, should an absence occur, it is necessary to inform the professor before or immediately after the specific missed class. For each unexcused absence there will be a drop in your final participation grade. Absences are excused only with written verification. (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:** This will be a subjective, short essay format. A study guide will be posted on Camino one week prior to the mid-term examination. (4/29/15 tentative) (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:** This will be subjective, short essay format. A study guide will be distributed one week prior to this final examination. (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.]

- **Co-curricular Options (3 options – students required to choose only one):** **1) Religion in Practice:** Students visit the worship spaces of Judaism, Christianity or Islam (site visit of one religion) during a ritual which employs the sacred writings of that tradition (guidance and input will be provided before the visit). An analysis and reflection in essay format of that visit should be submitted to Canvas. **2) Various Events on Campus:** Throughout the quarter there are usually a number of activities on campus that relate in some way to one or all of the Religions of the Book. Students attend one of these events and submit an analysis and reflection in essay format on the event and its relation with the Religions of the Book. **3) Film that represents your selected religion:** A list of films that represent each of the Religions of the Book in some way will be provided. Students choose one film from their selected religion and after viewing discuss, reflect and analyze how that religion is represented in the film. (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 6/1 and 6/3. [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. No late assignments will be accepted. These are individual assignments to be completed by each student alone. (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:

Disability Accommodation Policy:

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahmman 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.