

RSOC 9: Ways of Understanding Religion
Spring Quarter, 2015 (18946)
Alumni Science, 220 (1:00-2:05)

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Office Hours: W, F, 2:15-3:00 and by appointment

Core Learning Objectives at Play in this Course

Two SCU Core Curriculum learning objectives identified by the University for RTC 1 courses informed the design of this course.

- “Describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and from at least two globally distinct regions.”
- “Use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence.” (2013-14 Core Curriculum Guide, p. 10)

Our experience with these objectives will take various forms: in-class discussions and lectures; exams; work outside class on readings, reflections, quizzes; and the course project.

Texts Used in this Course

Recent editions of five texts have been ordered for the bookstore:

- Gregory Boyle, S.J., *Tattoos on the Heart* (Free Press, 2010)
- Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, edited by R. Dufresne and translated by G.R. Richter (Broadview Press, 2012)
- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Begins Here: Palestinians and Israelis Listening to Each Other* (Parallax Press, 2004)
- Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith* (Beacon Press, 2010)
- Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006)

Students purchasing books in venues other than the campus store should be sure to obtain the correct edition of Wiesel and Freud. Most of the readings for the first two weeks of the course are taken from on-line sources; put together, they are the equivalent of a short book.

These texts are suitable for general audiences, or better, for people who enjoy wandering around the world of ideas. Most of the texts reward multiple readings; so if you have read one before (e.g. *Night*), I hope you read it again and will reflect on the experience. While they do contain information, our readings are not textbooks, and so require a particular kind of engagement. Indeed, much of our time this quarter will be devoted to learning how to both critically engage texts like these and use them as springboards for our own independent reflections.

Silicon Valley Community Focus

Students will need to leave campus and travel to sites in the local community in order to complete a community-based course project. Students unable or not inclined to do this should not take this course.

Themes Raised in this Course

While each text stands on its own, at least three themes tie them together.

- Autobiography and Narrative: with the possible exception of Freud, each author makes a case by drawing on his life’s story and, to an extent, invites readers to do the same.
- Religion and Public Life: each author, explicitly or implicitly, is interested in how religious commitments and beliefs should (or should not) inform and even transform public life.
- Solidarity: the authors in various ways are interested in how humans relate to other humans, particularly those relationships defined by differences (of class, faith, race, national boundaries, etc.).

Our readings do not present a survey of world religions, but they are written from within five different faith traditions: Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and what is sometimes called Secularism. They therefore provide opportunities to engage central “tenants” in those traditions—or perhaps better, what Prof. Stephen Prothero suggests are the “problems” religious traditions address in significantly different ways; for instance, suffering, the scope of rationality, how to cultivate compassion, how claims to ultimate truth come alive in experience, revenge and forgiveness with respect to violence, obligations we have to others, etc. (*God is Not One* [2010]). While no one book does much by way of comparative religions or comparative theology, taken collectively they invite us to make modest comparisons across the traditions reflected in these books.

Requirements and Grade Weighting

Student work will be evaluated and graded under five headings.

- *Class Engagement*: Informed participation in class is expected and highly valued. In addition to class discussions, this can include reflecting on co-curricular programs, drafting responses to preparation notes and category worksheets, meeting outside of class, and completion of online quizzes. 10% of final grade
- *Midterm Exams*: (two, weeks 4 and 9). Students demonstrate comprehension of the assigned readings and their mastery of the categories introduced in the preparation notes and in class. Midterms are drawn from quizzes, category worksheets, and class lectures and discussions. 40% of final grade
- *Final Exam*: Students demonstrate mastery of categories introduced in the course (with a particular focus on the final week of the quarter) and at least one of the course themes. 5-20% of final grade (weight will vary depending on degree to which students pursue the course project)
- *Monday Reflections* (ten+one). Students demonstrate they can analyze readings, identify salient issues, think critically and independently about them, and write clearly, succinctly and carefully—in short reflections (approximately 250 words) due prior to each Monday class and in one reflection due in the 11th week. 15% of final grade
- *Course Project*: A community-based independent project related to religion (or solidarity) in Silicon Valley begun early in the quarter and completed in stages, due during finals week. 15-30% of final grade (weight will vary depending on degree to which students pursue this project). Further information on the project will be provided in the first two weeks of the quarter.

Students who wish to do so during the quarter can use this rough guide (based on the section on grades in the 2014-15 Undergraduate Bulletin, pp. 412) to transpose percentages to a letter grade: A range grades=90-100% (excellent); B range grades=80-89% (good); C range grades=70-79% (adequate), D range grades=60-69% (barely passing). (Earning a grade of F in this class is difficult but not impossible.) A letter grade for the course will be assigned at the end of the quarter based on weighted scores on the requirements students complete. I typically do not use (much of) a curve in RSOC 9 classes.

Categories

In addition to texts and themes, another way to approach the design of this class will be introduced in the first week: categories. These are terms we will develop and use to analyze readings and think about the issues and questions they raise for us. The categories are available for each section of the course in the form of worksheets. A list of all the categories for the course (subject to revision) will be posted on Camino.

Outside the Classroom Course Resources

There are five resources outside of class that are available to students—to prepare for class sessions, complete readings, study for exams and quizzes, work on reflections, and to approach the course project. Each section (and week, more or less) will include:

- “Preparation Notes” introduce themes and problems for the section, introduce new categories, and pose detailed questions to help students analyze the readings.
- “Category Worksheets” are word document tables to help students track their understanding of these terms. Students should complete them as we proceed through the section
- “Quizzes” are detail- and comprehension-oriented weekly (Thursdays) online tests that help students gauge on their own how well they are doing with the assigned readings. They cover readings assigned for class on Mondays and Wednesdays, and new readings assigned for Fridays.
- “PowerPoint Notes,” posted at the end of our coverage of each section, correspond to the three items above; they walk students through key material in each section of the course, focusing primarily on the readings.
- “Cases,” discussed at the beginning of each week and posted online at some point, introduce one or more issues that will be discussed that week.

These resources will all be available in the module for each section of the course on Camino. We will cover portions of them in our class sessions, often as springboards for discussions. Students are expected to use these resources regularly and actively on their own, and take the initiative to let the instructor know if they are having problems with them. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor outside of class to go over any of these materials (individually or in groups).

Classroom Expectations: an Invitation

We will be together in the classroom for approximately 30 hours this quarter. Expectations for how we will conduct ourselves include some baseline items: we should come to class on time and be ready to work; we should not need to disrupt class by getting up to use the restroom; we should complete the readings as assigned; we should use the preparation notes, category worksheets, quizzes and PowerPoint notes as means to deepen our learning in this course; we should try not to fall asleep during class; we should let one another know if we have to miss a class. Since this class uses discussion, it is important that we treat one another with respect—e.g., listen with an open mind, argue by appeals to what we have in common (our readings, previous class discussions, experiences we can share) in a way that advances inquiry and conversation. Students should take notes on our discussions and my lectures—if nothing else, to help them be active learners. Students should complete and submit work on the due dates indicated on the schedule; late submissions will be accepted, but could be marked down for each day late. Reasonable and timely requests for extensions will be considered by the professor.

My position on student use of electronic devices in the classroom is... not very clear. I used to think that the value they added to class meetings was less than the downsides their use introduced—the latter largely in the form of students descending into one (or more) virtual worlds instead of engaging in our real-time discussions, which among other things results in my consternation at being distracted from my goal of creating a learning environment in our classroom. My hesitation stems from a suspicion that the excuse we usually give ourselves, that we are multi-tasking, over-estimates our ability to be present in two very different contexts. But I have to admit, I am offended when students exit a class in this way and/or inadvertently turn me into an authority charged with monitoring their behavior. What do do? Recent discussions and studies of how humans learn and read suggest this is a complicated issue with more than civility and decorum at stake. (See, for instance, Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains* [This was a selection for Silicon Valley Reads, 2014; <http://www.siliconvalleyreads.org>]. Carr’s website has links to several articles on the topic, for instance a 2010 contribution to the *Wall Street Journal*, “Does the Internet Make You Dumber?”

[<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704025304575284981644790098.html>].) So this quarter let’s contend with this issue as best we can, and be willing to address problems if/when they come up.

Bottom line: I invite all students in this class to be present for the roughly thirty hours we are together in our classroom, and to use all the resources available, including your time and your electronic devices, to serve that end.

Feedback to Students and Writing (and the Hub)

Students receive feedback on the work they submit (e.g. scores on quizzes, midterms, weekly reflections), and in observations and suggestions from fellow students and me during class discussions. Students are encouraged to discuss this feedback and solicit more from me at any time during the course.

Students should work on their writing through the weekly reflections. I encourage students to use the Hub, SCU's writing center, as one way to do this (www.scu.edu/provost/writingcenter/).

Course Evaluation by Students

Students will be asked to evaluate the course formally at the end of the quarter by completing surveys. In addition, students are encouraged to give the instructor feedback on what is and is not working for them throughout the quarter. Communication is an important responsibility we share; this is our course.

Disability Accommodation Policy

Students with DR approved academic accommodations should meet with the instructor during the first week of classes to discuss questions or concerns so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must register with and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources, located in Benson 216 (408 554 4109). For further information, consult www.scu.edu/studentlife/disabilities/.

Academic Integrity Expectations

We should all conduct ourselves in accordance with the academic integrity standards and policies Santa Clara articulates in numerous places, including the 2014-15 Undergraduate Bulletin (pp. 422-423) and the protocol available on the University website. www.scu.edu/provost/facultydevelopment/teaching-advising/academic-integrity/

Camino (Canvas) Course Management System

This course draws heavily on the University's course management system, Camino. Each section in the course will include the resources referenced above. Students will complete quizzes and submit weekly reflections on Camino. (Note, not all functions in Camino are used in this class, including Grades.) Patience and communication are needed as we work on our course on this course management throughout the quarter—so please, send me an e-mail whenever things appear not to be working on Camino. The people who are trying to support faculty in using this new system are in Media Services, ITRS (www.scu.edu/mediaservices/itrs/), and can assist students as well.

SCU E-Portfolio

The instructor may pilot using e-portfolio as the course gets underway for the Monday reflections and portions of the course project. It is recommended that students investigate this feature through the links on the SCU Login page if they have not yet used it.

Schedule

The schedule below is divided according to 1) the weeks in the quarter and 2) the sections of the course. For each class session students should have access to the preparation notes, category worksheets and the assigned readings for the week, along with any notes, questions or reflections they have prepared. This is

a very detailed schedule. Work students are asked to submit (via Assignments on Camino usually), and due dates, are in **Bold Red font**. Quizzes, which cover the reading for the entire week, M-F, are completed online (between Thursday, starting at approximately 5:30 p.m. and Friday, before class); midterms and the final exam are completed in class on the dates specified. Monday reflections are due on Camino by Monday before class; and the course project is due in stages, from week two through finals week. Students should be able to access online readings through the links in the schedule; in addition, word or pdf versions of them, most with annotations, will also be posted on Camino (especially useful if a link has died). The schedule is subject to change by the instructor; should that happen, students will be notified in class and/or on Camino.

Introductions

WEEK 1

M, 3_30

- Syllabus, Roster, Survey, Categories, Memorials related to UCA Jesuits

T, 3_31

- **Informal Reflection for Introduction: Location/Background and How I think about Religion (“Me and Religion”) (submit on Camino, Assignments, Informal Reflection)**

W, 4_1

- Immanuel Kant, “What Is Enlightenment?”
<http://www.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/KantOnElightenment.htm>
- McCutcheon, Russell, “Case Study: ‘Religion’ and the Politics of Classification” (excerpts; see Camino) from *Studying Religion: An Introduction*, Religious Studies Dept., University of Alabama
<http://www.as.ua.edu/rel/studyingreligion.html>

TR, 4_2

- **Quiz**

F, 4_3

- **HOLIDAY**

WEEK 2

M, 4_6

Monday Reflection

Solidarity and SCU’s Relationship with El Salvador

- Ignacio Ellacuria, 1982 Commencement Address, SCU
<http://www.scu.edu/Jesuits/ellacuria.html>
- Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “True Solidarity,” *America*, February 5, 2001
http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=1906
- Michael Eng, S.J., “The El Salvador Martyrs: Crosses To Liberate the Poor,” *Mission* (Spring 2010), p. 24
<http://www.jesuitcalifornia.org/Document.Doc?id=424>
- U.S. Catholic Bishops, “Call to Solidarity” in “Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity: A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops,” includes three “calls”: to communion, to conversion, and to solidarity. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/pastoral-care-of-migrants-refugees-and-travelers/resources/welcoming-the-stranger-among-us-unity-in-diversity.cfm>

Silicon Valley Angle on the Solidarity Discussion

- Jon Pedigo and Dana Magat: Clergy have a role to play in combating income inequality
http://www.mercurynews.com/opinion/ci_26411273/jon-pedigo-and-dana-magat-clergy-have-role

Martin Luther King (and President Obama) on Religion in Public Life

T, 4_7

- **Course Project, Stage 1 due**

W, 4_8

- Martin Luther King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (April 16, 1963)
http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/resources/article/annotated_letter_from_birmingham/

TR, 4_9

- **Quiz**

F, 4_10

- Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream Speech," Washington, D.C. (August 28, 1963) http://mlkpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_august_28_1963_i_have_a_dream/
- Martin Luther King, "I've Been to the Mountaintop," Memphis, Tennessee, (April 3, 1968) http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/ive_been_to_the_mountaintop/

Civil Religion in America: Categories as Heuristics

- Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus*, vol. 96, no. 1 (1967), excerpts on Camino; full text at http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_5.htm

WEEK 3

M, 4_13

- **Monday Reflection for Obama's 2006 Speech**
- Barak Obama, 2009 (1st) Presidential Inaugural address <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/us/politics/20text-obama.html?pagewanted=all>
- Barak Obama, Keynote at the Call to Renewal's Building a Covenant for a New America Conference in Washington, D.C. (aka, "Speech on Faith and Politics") (2006) <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/28/us/politics/2006obamaspeech.html> (also available on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tdoQr3BQ1g>)
- Barak Obama, Remarks at National Prayer Breakfast, 2/5/15, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/05/remarks-president-national-prayer-breakfast>

Greg Boyle's *Tattoos*

T, 4_14

- **Course Project, stage 2 due**

W, 4_15

- Boyle, *Tattoos*, Preface, Introduction, Ch. 1-2 (xi-60)

TR, 4_16

- **Quiz**

F, 4_17

- Boyle, *Tattoos*, Chs. 3-5 (61-128)
- MLK, "The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr," (April 1953-June, 1954) <http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Vol2/540600TheologyReinholdNiebuhr.pdf> (selections on Camino)

WEEK 4

M, 4_20

- **Monday Reflection for Greg Boyle's Tattoos**
- Boyle, *Tattoos*, Chs. 6-7 (129-165)

W, 4_22

- Boyle, *Tattoos*, Chs. 8-9 (167-212)

TR, 4_23

- **Quiz**

- **Midterm Review Session, 5:15 p.m., Religious Studies Department Office (tentative)**

F, 4_24

MIDTERM ONE (essay question (tentative): Obama and Boyle)

Sigmund Freud's *Future*

WEEK 5

M, 4_27

- **Monday Reflection for Freud's Criticism of Religion**
- Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, Chs. 1-2

T, 4_28

- **Course Project Stage 3**

W, 4_29

- Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, Ch. 3 (4 optional)

TR, 4_30

- **Quiz**

F, 5_1

- Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, Chs. 5-6, 8 (7 optional)

WEEK 6

M, 5_4

- **Monday Reflection for Freud's Future**

- Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, Chs. 9-10

W, 5_6

- Freud, *Future of an Illusion*, appendix A, "The Illusion of a Future," selections
- Contemporary Atheist Illustrations (DeBotton, Zuckerman, Stedman, Mehta), tbd

TR, 5_7

- **Quiz**

Thich Nhat Hanh's Peace

F, 5_8

- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Begins Here*, Foreword, Introduction, Chs. 1-2
- Martin Luther King, Nobel Prize Nomination letter for Thich Nhat Hanh (January 25, 1967)
- <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/025.html>

WEEK 7

M, 5_11

- **Monday Reflection for Thich Nhat Hanh's Peace**

- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Begins Here*, Chs. 3-4
- Thich Nhat Hanh. "In Search of the Enemy of Man (addressed to (the Rev.) Martin Luther King)." In Nhat Hanh, Ho Huu Tuong, Tam Ich, Bui Giang, Pham Cong Thien. Dialogue. Saigon: La Boi, 1965. P. 11-20. http://www.aavw.org/special_features/letters_thich_abstract02.html

W, 5_13

- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Begins Here*, Chs. 5-6

TR, 5_14

- **Quiz**

F, 5_15

- Catherine Cornille, "Double Religious Belonging: Aspects and Questions," *Christian Buddhist Studies* 23 (2003), pp. 43-49 (Camino) https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/buddhist-christian_studies/v023/23.1cornille01.html

Eboo Patel's Identity

WEEK 8

M, 5_18

- **Monday Reflection for Eboo Patel's Identity**

- Patel, *Acts of Faith*, Introduction and Chs 1-2

W, 5_20

- Patel, *Acts of Faith*, Chs. 3-4

TR, 5_21

- **Quiz**

F, 5_22

- Patel, *Acts of Faith*, chs 5-6

WEEK 9

M, 5_25

- **HOLIDAY**

T, 5_26

- **“Monday” Reflection for Eboo Patel’s Identity**

- Patel, *Acts of Faith*, ch 7

W, 5_27

- Patel, *Acts of Faith*, ch 8

TR, 5_28

- **Quiz**

- **Midterm Review Session, 5:15 p.m., Religious Studies Department Office (tentative)**

F, 5_29

- **MIDTERM TWO (essay question: Freud, TNH and Patel)**

Elie Wiesel’s Memory as Message

WEEK 10

M, 6_1

- **Monday’s Reflection for Wiesel**

- Elie Wiesel, *Night*, (*in its entirety*) (*do not read foreword, preface, Nobel speech yet*)

W, 6_3

- Elie Wiesel, *Night*, Preface

- Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, included in *Night*, pp. 117-120

- Francois Mauriac, *Night*, Foreword

- Elie Wiesel, Congressional Gold Medal Award and Acceptance Speech (April 19, 1985)

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/US-Israel/RR4_19_85.html

TR, 6_4

- **Quiz**

F, 6_5

- Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell* (2002) (excerpts) <http://www.amnestyusa.org/amnesty-magazine/summer-2002/a-problem-from-hell-america-and-the-age-of-genocide/page.do?id=1105427>

- Albert Camus, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1957/camus-speech.html (annotated version on Camino)

- Elie Wiesel, Remarks at the Dedication of Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum (March 15 2005, Jerusalem, Israel) <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/eliewieselyadvashemdedication.htm>

Finals Week

WEEK 11

See http://www.scu.edu/studentrecords/upload/2014-2015-Final-Exam-template-10_22_13.pdf

M, 6_8

- **Final Exam**

T, 6_9

- **Reflection on Reflections due**

TR, 6_11

- **Course Project (remaining stages) (due before 5:00 p.m.)**