



**PROFESSOR: Roberto Mata**

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**OFFICE HOURS: 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:

Kendra G. Hotz et. al, *What Do Our Neighbors Believe? Questions and Answers about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2006.

Brown, Brian A. *Three Testaments: Torah, Gospel, and Quran*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012.

John Hinnells (ed), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. Routledge Religion Companions. 2, revised, annotated ed. Routledge, 2009.

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 ASSESMENT METHODS:

- **Quizzes (20%):** Students will achieve 25 points of their course grade through completion of 5 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 (25%):** 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 papers (25%):** Students are required to post 5 papers on how they would develop their own religion in conversation with the readings and key aspects of each of the Abrahamic religions (1-2 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].
- **Final Integration Paper (25%):** 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:**

95-100 pts	A	75-79	B-	55-59	D+
90-94	A-	70-74	C+	50-54	D
85-89	B+	65-69	C	45-49	D-
80-84	B	60-64	C-	40-44 & below	F

**OTHER INFORMATION:**

**Participation Policy**

Students must complete all the modules in a successive manner. In fact, they will not be able to start the next module until the first one has been complete. The weekly postings, quizzes, and constructive papers count as participation. Failure to complete each of the modules will negatively affect overall grade and may result in a suggestion to withdraw from the course.

## **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. Special accommodations will of course be made for those who have already completed the request process.

## **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.

<b>Week &amp; Date</b>	<b>Please note:</b> <b>All modules are due on Friday at 12:00pm</b>
<b>June 22-24</b>	<b>Complete Before You Begin Module</b>

Week 1:  
June 26-30

## Module 1: The God of Abraham

I. VIEW:

1. Module overview
2. Introductory lecture

II. READ:

1. Primary Source:
  - Exodus 3:13-15
  - Gospel of John 1:1-10
  - Surah 7:11-25
2. Secondary Sources:
  - Hotz, "How is the nature of God understood in the religion?" 73-78.
  - What is the human condition? 79-83.
  - "How is the relationship between God and humanity understood?" 101-118.
  - Hinnells, "Why Study Religion?" 5-20.

III. ASSESS: Quiz # 1

1. Part A: God
2. Part B: Origins of the Abrahamic Traditions

IV. DISCUSS:

- How is the nature of God and His attributes understood and interpreted by the community of believers?

V. CREATE:

- Who is your main deity and what is his/her name?
- What are "its" attributes (e.g. omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent)?
- How do you articulate God's relationship to the people (e.g. the Abrahamic covenant the 10 commandments)?

Week 2:  
July 3-7

## Module 2: Prophets, Messiahs, and Apostles

I. VIEW:

1. Module overview
2. Introductory lecture

II. READ:

1. Primary Source:
  - Numbers 1:21
  - Matthew 7:29
  - Surah 3:144
2. Secondary Sources:
  - Hotz, et al., "Origins and Composition," 7-25,
  - Hotz, Key Figures, 23-30.
  - Hotz, et al., "How is the human condition understood?" 68-73.

- Gifford, "Religious Authority", 397-410 (in Hinnells);

III. ASSESS: Quiz # 1

3. Part A: Prophets
4. Part B: Charismatic Authority

IV. DISCUSS:

- Who are the key founding figures in the tradition? How do the leaders legitimate their authority? Why are these figures central for the religion?

V. CREATE:

- Who is your founding figure?
- How does she or he receive the revelation of God's will?
- What kind of authority would he/she exercise?

Week 3:  
July 10-14

**Module 3:**  
**Sacred Texts and Their Interpretation**

I. VIEW:

1. Module overview
2. Introductory lecture

II. READ:

1. Primary Source:
  - Exodus 20:1-19;
  - Galatians 1:6-10
  - Surah 3:144
2. Secondary Sources:
  - Hotz, et al., "What is the religion's sacred text?", How is it studied? What are other authoritative texts for the community? 35-45.
  - Garret Green, "Hermeneutics," 411-424 (in Hinnells)

III. ASSESS: Quiz # 1

1. Part A: Understanding the Hebrew Bible, The Quran, The Christian Bible
2. Part B: Interpretation

IV. DISCUSS:

- 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?

V. CREATE:

1. What type of sacred text will you have—how many books?
2. How was it revealed or handed down?
3. What does it show about human nature, death, judgment day, or eternal life, or how humans can connect with the divine?

Week 4:  
July 17-21

**Module 4:**  
**Community: Synagogue, Ekklesia, and Umma**

I. VIEW:

1. Module overview
2. Introductory lecture

II. READ:

1. Primary Source:
  - Exodus 12:47
  - Acts 2:47
  - Surah 3:104
2. Secondary Sources:
  - Hotz, et al, "Leadership and Authority," 51-62;
  - Hotz, et al, "What are the primary rituals and practices of the religion?" 84-89.
  - Hotz, et al, "What are the important days and celebrations...?" 84-89
  - Mircea Eliade, "Sacred Time and Myths," 68-115.
  - Catherine "Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice," 1-10, 19-30.

III. ASSESS: Quiz # 1

1. Part A: Ritual
2. Part B: Charismatic Authority

IV. DISCUSS:

- 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?

V. CREATE:

1. What will your community be called and what would be its structural organization?
2. Who gets to occupy leadership roles and what are the requirements?
3. How would you decide who belongs and who does not?

**Week 5:**

July 24-26

**Module 5:**

**Key Teachings on Social Issues:**

I. VIEW:

1. Module overview
2. Introductory lecture

II. READ:

1. Primary Source:
  - Deuteronomy 34:6
  - Surah 26: 181-183
  - Matthew 25:31-46
2. Secondary Sources:
  - Hotz, et al, "What is the view of the relationship between religion and politics?" 101-123
  - Hotz, et al, what is the view of the relationship between religion and science?" 124-128;
  - Hotz et al, what are some of the religions' teachings on the area of human sexuality? 128-134.
  - Hotz, et al, What issues are the most hotly debated by followers of the religion?" 134-139.
  - New, *Holy War: The Rise of Militant Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Fundamentalism*, 16-23.

III. ASSESS: Quiz # 1

3. Part A: Fundamentalism

4. Part B: Sexuality

IV. DISCUSS:

- What is interreligious dialogue? How can the Abrahamic faiths work together towards building a more peaceful society?

V. CREATE:

1. Poverty
2. Fundamentalism
3. Sexuality
4. Science

Finals  
27-29

FINAL PAPER