

RSOC 9: Ways of Understanding Religion  
Syllabus submitted for Core Curriculum Approval

Core requirement: Religion, Theology, and Culture 1

Submitted Oct. 7, 2015 by:

Michelle Mueller, Religious Studies

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RSOC 9: Ways of Understanding Religion  
MW 3:30-5:15  
Location: TBD  
Prof. (Ms.) Michelle Mueller  
Email: mbmueller@scu.edu  
Religious Studies Department (Religion & Society)  
Santa Clara University  
Prof's Office Hours: TBD  
Winter 2016

Course Description: This course is an introduction to the many methodologies in the study of religion(s). Course covers anthropology of religion, sociology of religion, historical and ethical studies of religions, religion as literature, and others. In the course, we explore distinct perspectives or ways of thinking about religion, and consider a variety of religious data (e.g., symbols, myths, rituals, theologies, and modern communities around the world). Through class discussions, group presentation, and writing assignments, students articulate their own relationships to the study of world religions (meeting standards of reflexivity from the Core Curriculum). [This course fulfills Santa Clara's Core Requirement Religion, Theology, and Culture 1.](#)

Learning Objectives:

1. 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)
2. Use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence. (Critical Thinking; Complexity of Method; Reflection)

- Required Textbook: Robert S. Ellwood and Barbara A. McGraw, *Many People, Many Faiths: Women and Men in the World's Religions, Tenth Edition* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2013). ISBN 0-205-79711-3.
- Recommended Book: Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Comparing Religions* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2014). ISBN 978-1-4051-8458-8.

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Assignments:

- Participation - Includes timely completion of minor assignments, attendance, and thoughtful, respectful contributions during class discussions showing engagement with in-class material and assigned readings (Learning Objectives 1 and 2). (25%)
- Group Chapter Presentation - Each week a group of students will lead the class into discussion over the current assigned chapter. Over time, we will address religious practices of several geographic regions (Learning Objective 1). Students are encouraged to report on sections from the reading that impacted their knowledge on a personal level (Learning Objective 2). (25%)
- Midterm - There will be an in-class open book midterm exam with three short essays. Exam will cover chapters up to course midpoint. Two questions will test for knowledge of multiple traditions (Learning Objective 1). The third question will solicit personal reflection towards the study of religion (Learning Objective 2). (25%)
- Final Term Paper - For the final paper, students choose between “term paper” (414-415) and “religious visit paper” (416-417), as described in textbook. In the final paper, students will describe and explore a central religious idea in one or more traditions and will reflect on how the study of religion affects the individual (Learning Objectives 1 and 2). Paper should be 8-12 pages double-spaced in 12 point font. (25%)

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Chapter	Assigned Reading (due on day of class) <i>Pages from Ellwood and McGraw, unless noted otherwise.</i>
Week 1 (Jan. 4-6)		Chapter 1: Understanding the World’s Religious Heritage	
	Jan. 4		Welcome to class, overview of syllabus (no assignment for first day)
	Jan. 6		pp. 1-22
Week 2 (Jan. 11-13)		Chapter 2: The Sacred in Nature	

	Jan. 11		pp. 23-36
	Jan. 13		pp. 36-46
Week 3 (Jan. 18-20)		Chapter 3: Life Against Time	
	Jan. 18		MLK Holiday (no classes)
	Jan. 20		pp. 47-112
Week 4 (Jan. 25-27)		Chapter 4: Wisdom Embarked for the Farther Shore	
	Jan. 25		pp. 113-142
	Jan. 27		pp. 142-161
Week 5 (Feb. 1-3)		Chapter 5: Dragon and Sun	
	Feb. 1		pp. 162-198
	Feb. 3		pp. 198-228
Week 6 (Feb. 8-10)		Chapter 6: One God, Many Words and Wonders	
	Feb. 8		pp. 229-235
	Feb. 10		pp. 235-239 + Introduction from Matthew Bowman's <i>The Mormon People</i> (provided on Camino classroom page)
Week 7 (Feb. 15-17)		Chapter 7: Keeping Covenant with God in History + Appendix: Studying the World's Religions	
	Feb. 15		President's Day (no classes)
	Feb. 17		pp. 240-272, pp. 414-418
Week 8 (Feb. 22-24)		Chapter 8: Spreading the Word of God in the World	
	Feb. 22		pp. 273-312
	Feb. 24		pp. 312-343
Week 9 (Feb. 29-Mar. 2)		Chapter 9: Submitting to the Will of God	
	Feb. 29		pp. 344-370
	Mar. 2		pp. 370-396
Week 10 (Mar. 7-9)		Chapter 10: Spirits Rising + A Final Word	
	Mar. 7		pp. 397-404
	Mar. 9		pp. 404-413

## Grade Distribution

Letter Grade	Percentage Range	GPA
A	93-100%	4.0
A-	90-92%	3.7
B+	87-89%	3.3
B	83-86%	3.0
B-	80-82%	2.7
C+	77-79%	2.3
C	73-76%	2.0
C-	70-72%	1.7
D+	67-69%	1.3
D	63-66%	1.0
D-	60-62%	0.7
F	0-59%	0

### General Guidelines:

- Students are responsible for meeting deadlines and complying with all College policies.
- No plagiarism.
- Use proper footnote citations in Chicago or MLA style. Here is a website that explains Chicago citations:  
[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).
- If unspecified, assume assignment page length is in 12pt font on double-sided pages.
- Assignments are to be turned in to the Camino classroom page.

### Academic Honesty

Plagiarism or academic dishonesty in any form (as described in the Student Conduct Code) will result in a failed grade for the project, and possibly for the course. All allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported to the department chair and Office of Student Life. For a full presentation of University policies concerning plagiarism, see:

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<http://scu.edu/studentlife/resources/upload/Academic-Integrity-brochure-2014.pdf>

In order to avoid the sanctions applied to cases of academic dishonesty, please make sure that you properly cite all sources that you utilize in your writing, including works that are directly quoted or paraphrased, as well as works used as a source of information. This includes both print and online sources. Your paper submissions must consist of your own writing, and any direct quotations or paraphrasing from other works must be properly cited.

### Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, [www.scu.edu/disabilities](http://www.scu.edu/disabilities) as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy or parenting may be eligible for accommodations.

While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information you may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109.

### Title IX Syllabus Statement

Santa Clara University upholds a zero tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence or stalking, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to [www.scu.edu/studentlife](http://www.scu.edu/studentlife) and click on the link for the University's Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie at 408-

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554-3043, or by email at [bguthrie@scu.edu](mailto:bguthrie@scu.edu). Reports may be submitted online through [www.scu.edu/osl/report](http://www.scu.edu/osl/report) or anonymously through Ethicspoint: [www.ethicspoint.comhttp://stage-www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethics-point/](http://www.ethicspoint.comhttp://stage-www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethics-point/)

### Reporting Practices

While I want you to feel comfortable coming to me with issues you may be struggling with or concerns you may be having, please be aware that there are some reporting requirements that are part of my job at Santa Clara University.

For example, if you inform me of an issue of harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, I will keep the information as private as I can, but I am required to bring it to the attention of the institution's EEO and Title IX Coordinator. If you inform me that you are struggling with an issue that may be resulting in, or caused by, traumatic or unusual stress, I will likely inform the campus Student Care Team (SCU CARE).

If you would like to reach out directly to the Student Care Team for assistance, you can contact them at [www.scu.edu/osl/report](http://www.scu.edu/osl/report). If you would like to talk to the Office of EEO and Title IX directly, they can be reached at 408-554-3043, or by email at [bguthrie@scu.edu](mailto:bguthrie@scu.edu). Reports may be submitted online through [www.scu.edu/osl/report](http://www.scu.edu/osl/report) or anonymously through Ethicspoint: [www.ethicspoint.com](http://www.ethicspoint.com). Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Life (OSL), Campus Safety Services, and local law enforcement. For confidential support, contact the Counseling and Psychological Services office (CAPS), the YWCA, or a member of the clergy (for example, a priest or minister).

Finally, please be aware that if, for some reason, our interaction involves a disruptive behavior, a concern about your safety or the safety of others, or potential violation of University policy, I will inform the Office of Student Life. The purpose of this is to keep OSL apprised of incidents of concern, and to ensure that students can receive or stay connected to the academic support and student wellness services they need.

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