

University of Calgary
Faculty of Arts
Department of Religious Studies
Summer 2010

RELS 201 L60 - WORLD RELIGIONS – WESTERN
Class Time: Mondays & Wednesdays 11:00 am to 1:45 pm

Location: ST 139

Instructor: Carmen Webb

Email: cwebb@ucalgary.ca

Office Location and Hours: SS 1330; Wednesdays 9:45 am to 10:45 am

Required Texts

Bruce Lincoln's "Theses on Method" – posted on Blackboard.

World Religions Today Canadian Edition. Edited by J. L. Esposito, T. Lewis, D. Fasching, and P. Bowlby. Published by Oxford University Press, 2009.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the scholarly study of three Western religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. An introduction to some of the terms and methods employed in the study of religions will be covered and applied to our own consideration of the three Abrahamic traditions. Students will be introduced to these religious traditions through readings, lectures, films, field trips, and discussions. We will explore the histories, contexts, belief systems, myths, symbols, rituals, and scriptures of each tradition and consider how they interact with one another. An appreciation for the intersection of religion and culture will be fostered as well as an acknowledgement of the diversity that exists among and within the religious traditions.

Course Goals

By the end of this course the student should:

- have developed a rudimentary understanding of some aspects of the field of religious studies.
- have developed a greater awareness of religion as a component of past and contemporary cultures.
- have developed a general knowledge of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Student Responsibilities

It should go without saying that you are expected to do all the assigned readings, attend class, and participate respectfully in class discussions.

- **Film reflections:** (10% of overall mark) - Each student will be required to submit 2 reflection papers on their choice of 2 of the course films from two different religions (for example you could do one from Judaism and one from Islam OR one from Judaism and one from Christianity, etc.). Each assignment is worth 5% of the final grade. These reflections should be between 250 and 500 words in length (sized 12 Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1" margins). The reflections should demonstrate an engaged and critical assessment of the material and will be marked according to the level of thought, insight, sophistication, and clarity that they display. **The first of these reflections must be handed in no later than July 28, 2010. The second must be handed in no later than the last day of class, August 16, 2010** (NO extensions will be available).
- **News Article Assignment** (20% of overall mark) – Each student will find and analyze two recent (past 3 years) newspaper articles or mainstream magazine articles (not religious publications) that present a current event related to one of the three Abrahamic traditions and its encounter with modernity. One piece should be an article you consider to show religion as making some sort of positive contribution to society and one should present a perspective that portrays religion as something generally considered to have negative consequences for society. Your analysis will compare and contrast the presentation of these articles, the issues engaged, and the assessment of certain religious behaviours and beliefs according to contemporary Canadian society. More detailed information will be given in class. This paper should be 750 to 1000 words in length. **This assignment is due on August 9, 2010. Late penalties of 10% per day will be incurred (e.g. one day late is a 10% reduction in mark so a 70% paper becomes a 60% paper; two days late is a 20% reduction in mark so a 70% paper becomes a 50% paper, etc. After 5 days of being late the paper defaults to a 0% on the assignment).**
- **Exams** (70% of overall mark) – There will be 2 midterm exams and one final exam. The two midterm exams will each be worth 20% of your overall grade. The first midterm exam will cover the material up to the end of the section on Judaism; the second midterm exam will cover the section on Christianity. The final exam is worth 30% of the overall grade and will include the material on Islam plus an essay question that will ask you to integrate what you have learned about all three traditions covered in the course. Exams cover all material presented in class, including films, and the assigned readings. You are expected to write your exams on the dates specified in this course outline and alternate dates will only be considered in extreme cases supported by documentation. The Registrar scheduled final exam must be written on the date scheduled.
- **Field trips** (up to 6 bonus marks) – We will be going on 1-3 field trips for this course. Each field trip will consist of going as a group to one of the worship spaces of each of the religions covered in this course (synagogue-Judaism, church-Christianity, and mosque-Islam). At these places you will be expected to observe the worship service, participate in a tour and question and answer period, and behave in a professional manner. This will

take several hours, so be prepared. You will attend these sites as scholars of religion and not as worshippers, so no one is expecting you to participate in the service beyond what is respectful and reasonable for a scholar to do. We will discuss proper behavior expectations for each institution before going. While these trips are not mandatory, they can be a very interesting and worthwhile experience and you will receive 2 bonus marks for each field trip that you attend and observe in a professional and respectful manner. Note that these trips will not take place during class time and are in addition to class time. Note that you are responsible for arranging your own transportation to and from the sites. Note that this is a very easy way to earn 6 extra points towards your final grade (almost an entire letter grade) and students generally report that this is a very interesting experience for them.

Grading:

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. Following the final examination, a letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme:

Mark (%)	96-100	90-95	89-85	80-84	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	55-59	53-54	50-52	<49
Grade	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
GPA	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.3	1.0	0

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content.

Academic Accommodation:

If you are a student with a disability who requires academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation.

Intellectual Honesty:

Students should be familiar with University regulations regarding academic integrity (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>). I take plagiarism and cheating VERY seriously and will vigorously pursue all incidents. Be sure you know what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it! If you are not sure, ask me.

Safewalk Program:

"You don't have to walk alone...." Call 403-220-5333 and a member of the Safewalk Team will walk you to your car, the LRT, or any destination on campus. Safewalk is available to all students, staff and faculty any time of the day or night. Look for the Campus Security Help Phones located throughout the University. Please don't hesitate to call!

Withdrawing from courses:

Please note the information regarding withdrawals and fee refunds in the Academic Schedule of the 2009/2010 university calendar (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-schedule.html>).

Gnosis:

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: gnosis@ucalgary.ca or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.

Course Outline

Reading: Note that you will be tested on the reading material. We will cover Lincoln in class but you will be asked to read sections of his “Theses” prior to each class. With regard to your textbook, I will assign readings for the next class at the class prior.

Note that we do not have class on Monday, July 26 or Monday, August 2.

The schedule below may shift here and there although the exam dates are firm.

July 5 – Introduction to the Study of Religion and Introduction to the Abrahamic link.

July 7, 12, 14 – Judaism

July 19 – **Midterm Exam on Judaism**

- Begin Christianity

July 21, 28, Aug 4 – Christianity

First reflection paper due by July 28th.

Aug 9 – **Midterm #2 on Christianity**

Begin Islam

News Article Assignment due August 9th.

Aug 11, 16 – Islam

Second reflection paper due by August 16th.

Final exam – registrar scheduled between August 18th and 20th.