

Religions of the Near East

Religion 211-002

Robinson A 248 MWF 1:30-2:20 PM

Spring 2008 Syllabus

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Meetings: By appointment, or before and after class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The course is an in-depth look at the monotheistic religious traditions originating in the Near East: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The focus is historical context, scripture, and significant developments within each tradition such as divisions and mystical sects. The course is designed to give the student a solid historical background in each tradition, tools for understanding the respective scriptures, and insight into the dynamic developments that have shaped each tradition.

REQUIRED BOOKS

The History of the World's Religions, 12th ed., Noss.

Islam: Straight Path, Esposito.

The Economy Bible NRSV, Hendrickson Publishers.

The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an, trans., Pickthall

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Jewish People, Jewish Thought, Seltzer.

READINGS ON E-RES

Readings from the recommended books and other sources will be posted on E-reserves.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

3 Tests-on Judaism, Christianity, Islam-given at the end of each section.

Research Paper-10 pages with bibliography and notes. Due by 4:00 PM, May 7. Submit topic proposal with a thesis statement by February 29. Paper format: 12 point font, double-spaced, Microsoft Word or equivalent. Use an academic stylesheet like MLA, APA, or CMS; research *at least* three written sources—journal articles located via E-journals search are accepted but Internet Web sites are not accepted as sources for the research paper. Quoted material from any source should be limited to a *maximum* of one page of material. The GMU library is a part of the Washington Consortium of Theological Schools so religious studies books from other schools in the Washington, DC area are available via the library's WRLC catalog search.

In-Class Writing Assignments

Class Participation- show familiarity with readings, do in-class writing assignments, participate in class discussion, and attend classes regularly. Habitual absence lowers your grade. **Absences for any reason:** turn in a one-page summary of the readings for the class missed—due the next class you attend. Papers copied from the book do not receive credit.

GRADING POLICY

3 Tests 20% each
 Research Paper 20%
 Class Participation 20 %

All plagiarized work receives an "F." Plagiarism includes cutting and pasting from the Internet, turning in papers written by your roommate, your spouse, your grandmother, etc., copying the textbook or any source, and quoting sources without quotation marks. In short, all academic papers submitted under your name must be your work. Academic rules for quoting sources are strictly observed. See the GMU Writing Center for detailed information: writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources/plagiarism.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Dates		Readings
January	23	Class Introduction/Near East Trade Routes, Armies, Empires
	25	Mesopotamia Noss 38-45; Enuma Elish handout
	28	Judaism-Early History Noss 380-390
	30	Images of the Bible Lands slides in class
February	1	Symbols, Rituals, Festivals Noss 389; 441-443
	4	<i>Ushpizin</i> / Sukkoth video/ on festival
	6	The Pentateuch/ Torah Noss 384-394
	8	Creation NRSV Genesis 1-2 <i>Bring Bible</i>
	11	The Prophets/ Neviim Noss 394-408
	13	Prophet of Righteousness NRSV Amos 4: 1-5; 5: 6-9 <i>Bible</i>
	15	The Writings/ Kethuvim Noss 408-414; 416-426
	18	The Problem of Suffering NRSV Job 2:1-9; 38:1-41; 40: 6-24
	20	Rabbinic Judaism/ Talmud Noss 426-436
	22	Medieval Mysticism: Kabbalah Seltzer 425-443
	25	Holocaust and Israel Seltzer 665-683
27	Judaism Exam	
29	Christianity-Early History Noss 452-472	
March	3	Paul's Missions Noss 473-476
	5	New Testament Noss 478-480; Ehrman handout
	7	Formation of the Canon ABD 1 853-858 handout <i>Bible</i>
Spring Break 10-16		

	17	Constantine/ Two Councils	Noss 485-489; Kee: 103-5; 117-9
	19	Eastern Orthodox/ Roman Catholic	Noss 494-498
	21	Monasticism	Noss 490-91/Kee 125-128; 170-5 Jolly 130-133
	24	Seven Sacraments	Noss 505-506; Kee 230-33
		Orders: Franciscans/ Dominicans	Jolly 405-407
	26	Mystics: Julian of Norwich	Noss 506-508; Jolly 498-500
	28	The Protestant Reformation	Noss 508-518; Kee 258-265
	31	The Christian Year	
		New Testament: The Baptism of Christ	NRSV: Mt 3: 13-17 <i>Bible</i> Mark 1: 9-11 Luke 3:21-22 John 1: 29-34
April	2	<i>Where Jesus Walked</i>	video/ on archeology
	4	Christianity Exam	
	7	Islam-Early History	Esposito 1-17; Noss 543-553
	9	Articles of Faith/ Quran	Esposito 17-31; Noss 553-559
	11	Reading the Quran	Surah 2: 1-41 <i>Bring Quran</i>
	14	Practice: The Five Pillars	Noss 559-562
	16	The Four Caliphs/ Women of Islam	Noss 562-565
	18	The Shiah	Noss 578-584; Nasr 31-61
	21	Umayyads, Fatimids and Abbasids	Esposito 40-43; 51-57
	23	Mystics: Sufis	Noss 572-577; 585-587 Rumi handout
	25	Mosques/ Art/ Festivals	Noss 587-591
	28	Sharia/ Hadiths	Noss 566; 567-572
	30	Mughals, Ottomans, and Safavids	Esposito 60-67
May	2	<i>Le Grand Voyage/ the Hajj</i>	video in class
	5	Islam Exam	
	7	Research Paper Due	4:00 PM Robinson B 465