

***Religions of the Near East--Religion 211-003***

Thompson Hall 138, 4:30-7:10pm

Spring 2008

Instructor: David Dakake

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**Course Description and Objectives:**

This course is designed to familiarize students with the basic history, theology and practices that have come to traditionally define the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In addition to dealing with each religion in terms of these general categories, we will also look at some of the contemporary issues confronting the "faithful" within these traditions, issues that have been raised by the development and application of modern technology in society and social and political developments, here and abroad, that have had an impact upon how one lives as a member of one of these faith communities. The objectives of the course are, to familiarize students with the basic concepts and practices of these faiths, as well as to make students aware of the fundamental religious history that informs each of these traditions. By the end of the class students should be aware, not only of the various formal/structural and historical elements that distinguish these traditions from one another, but they should also be able to articulate something of the internal unity of their various doctrines that can be said to lie beyond the "formal plane." Students will also be expected to understand some of the basic challenges posed to each of these religious traditions by modernity.

**Course Requirements:**

Attendance at lectures and class discussions is left to the discretion of each student, although students are responsible for all materials presented at these times, as well as any announcements (which could include changes to the course requirements and assignments) made in class. Each student is expected to complete two exams (a midterm and a final) and a 4 page research paper. The paper is to be an examination of any story and/or figure that appears in **both** the Quran and the Bible. You will compare and contrast how that story/figure is told/portrayed in the two scriptures. You may not write on ideas, like comparing doctrines of "freewill" in the Quran and the Bible or views of "salvation" in the two texts, only specific people who appear in both texts, like Noah, Moses, King David, etc. or specific stories, like the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Paradise, the story of Joseph in Egypt, the story of the birth of Jesus, etc. Papers must include standard academic citations, be they footnotes, endnotes, etc., if sources are used other than the actual texts of the Scriptures themselves. The citations within the paper must contain all the academically relevant information such that a particular reference may be traced back to its place within a published text, journal, etc. The paper is due in class on April 22th by 7:10pm. Papers will not be accepted through email. A student must present a hard copy of the paper to the instructor by the date noted above. Any paper received after that time will be considered "late."

**Grading:**

Late papers are lowered one full letter grade per 24 hour period that they are late. Final grades are determined on the basis of the midterm (30%), the final (40%) and the paper (30%). The instructor reserves the right, in borderline cases, to take into consideration a student's attendance and participation in class in assigning the final grade.

**Course Outline and Reading Assignments:**

Jan. 22 Intro to the Study of Religion and Monotheism

***-Judaism-***

Early History

Later Developments

- Jan. 29 (e-reserve selection from *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp.7-43)  
 (e-reserve selection from *Our Religions*, pp. 319-341)  
 Scripture: *JCM*, pp. 3-25.  
 Practices: *JCM*, pp. 215-234
- Feb. 5 Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism: *JCM*, pp. 77-104.  
 Modern Movements: *JCM*, pp. 421-440.
- Feb. 12 Film: "Roots and Wings: A Jewish Congregation": *JCM*, pp. 343-367.  
 Film: "A Life Apart": *JCM*, pp. 279-296.
- Feb. 19 Ethical Issues: *EISRT*, pp. 135-170.
- Christianity-**
- Early History: e-reserve selection from *Introduction to Christianity*, pp. 21-38.  
 Later Developments: handout
- Feb. 26 Scripture: *JCM*, pp. 26-51.
- Mar. 4 **Midterm Exam**  
 Practices: *JCM*, pp. 235-255.
- Mar. 11 NO CLASS
- Mar. 18 Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism: *JCM*, pp. 105-133.  
 Modern Movements: *JCM*, pp. 441-462.
- Mar. 25 Film: "Chartes" and "Julian of Norwich": *JCM*, pp. 368-396.  
 Ethical Issues: *JCM*, pp. 296-322, *EISRT*, pp. 175-214.
- Apr. 1 **-Islam-**  
 Early History: e-reserve selection from *The Eternal Message of Muhammad*, pp. 1-29.  
 Later Developments: e-reserve selections from *Islam: The Straight Path*, pp.37-48 and 50-68.
- Apr. 8 Scripture: *JCM*, pp. 52-72.  
 Practices: *JCM*, pp. 256-273.
- Apr. 15 Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism: *JCM*, pp. 134-151.  
 Modern Movements: *JCM*, pp. 463-479.
- Apr. 22 **Paper Due**; Film: "Pattern of Beauty," "The Inner Life" and "Salat": *JCM*, pp. 323-338 and 397-416.
- Apr. 29 Ethical Issues: *EISRT*, pp. 220-258.
- May 13 **Final Exam** 4:30-7:15pm.

### **Texts**

*Ethical Issues in Six Religious Traditions*, eds. Peggy Morgan and Clive Lawton, Edinburgh University Press, 1996. **Library call #: BJ1188.E82 1996eb**

{In the category "Linked Resources" toward the bottom left of the page, click on, "[Electronic book available to GMU students, faculty and staff.](#)" then follow prompts to view the text on your computer screen.}

*Jews, Christians, Muslims: A Comparative Introduction to Monotheistic Religion*, eds. John Corrigan, Frederick M. Denny, Carlos M.N. Eire and Martin S. Jaffee, Prentice Hall, 1998.

### **Electronic Reserve Materials:**

Go to: <http://oscr.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/ers/OSCRgen.cgi>

In the "select a course" box, use the pull down menu and choose "RELI 211 section 003" or in the "select an instructor" box, use the pull down menu to choose, "Dakake, David."

Next, in the "password" box type: prayer

Then click on the "Submit" button.

Once the new page comes up click on the "PDF Adobe" icon next to the particular reading assignment.

This will bring up the article on your computer screen.