



## Western Religious Traditions REL 150 d & e Fall 2015

**Prof. Shayna Sheinfeld**

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**Course information:**

150d: 11:30–12:30 MWF, Young 138

150e: 9:10–10:10 MWF, Crouse 301

**Office:** Crouse 438

**Office hours:**

MW 1:30–3pm

Th 9–11am

Or by appointment (e-mail for appt.)

### **Course Descriptions and Goals:**

This course is an introduction to the western religious traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In order to study these religions in a comparative manner, we will first build a foundation of each religion separately. For the first several weeks of the course we will examine each of these religions on its own, setting up a foundation on which to build a basis of comparison. In the next section of the course we will undertake comparative work, learning first some methodology of comparative religion, and then focusing on case studies from the three traditions. The last three weeks of the class will be a focused study on the city of Jerusalem as a shared theme in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. By considering the ways that each tradition understands Jerusalem as a holy city, you will be exposed to a close examination of the methodology of comparison in practice: focusing on key themes in the study of religion such as scripture and interpretation, ritual, pilgrimage, sanctuary and sacred space, and worship.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

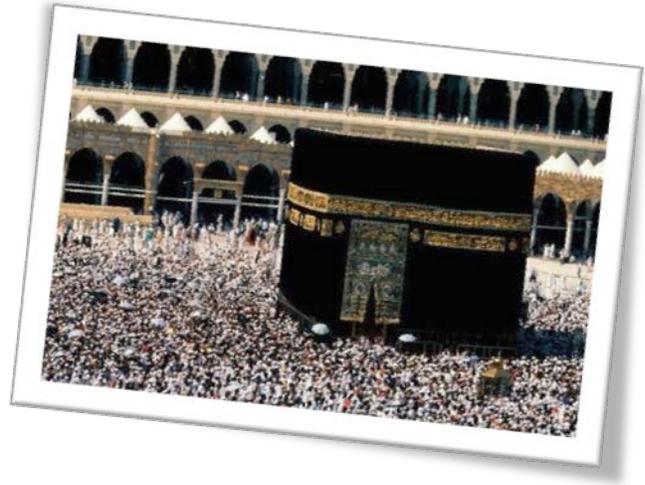
By the end of the course, a diligent student will:

1. Understand the history and theology of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as individual faith traditions
2. Develop skills for close and critical reading of primary source texts from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
3. Be familiar with major historical figures and events in the Abrahamic traditions
4. Describe the interactions and influences of these three faith traditions with one another

5. Describe how each tradition understands Jerusalem as a holy city, and to be able to describe aspects of the contentious role that the city plays in religious interaction
6. Gain experience and understanding of how western religious traditions are *lived religions*

### **Required Texts:**

- *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction* by Norman Solomon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)
- *Christianity: A Very Short Introduction* by Linda Woodhead (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)
- *Islam: A Very Short Introduction* by Malise Ruthven (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- *Jerusalem: City of Longing*, by Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).
- Other texts will be posted on moodle—listed as (m) in the syllabus. Students should have access to a printer.
- All students should have access to a Bible and Qur'an, either in book form or online, in a translation approved by the instructor. Primary sources will be listed with each class session and should be brought to class ***via hard/paper copy***. On the syllabus Hebrew Bible/Old Testament will be listed as (HB), New Testament will be listed as (NT), and Qur'an will be listed as (Q).



If you plan to purchase a Bible and/or a Qur'an, the following versions *are recommended*:

\* *The HarperCollins Study Bible Student Edition* **or** *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha* ed. Michael Coogan

\* *The Qur'an* by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem. Oxford University Press.

Note that you can access a digital version of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament online at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/>. Be aware of which translation you choose (NRSV and RSV are both options, but they are not the default). *Remember you need to have access to a **hard copy** in class.*

The Qur'an can be accessed online at: <http://islamawakened.com/index.php/qur-an>. *Remember you need to have access to a **hard copy** in class.*

### **Evaluation:**

Attendance and Participation:

10%

### *Assignments*

Religious Service Visit & Observation Paper (2x 7.5% each)	15%
Jerusalem Project oral report	10%
Jerusalem Project “guide book”	15%

### *Quizzes and Exams*

Quizzes (10% each for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)	30%
Final Exam	20%

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation are a necessary component of learning in this course. You are expected to attend each class session. *Since this course will be discussion-based, absence from class will count against you.* You may miss up to 2 classes without penalty; three or more missed classes unless excused (with missed work completed) will result in a letter grade reduction in the final grade. Participation will be marked on active engagement during class (including clear engagement with the readings), short assignments outside of class in addition to the readings, and two required convocations with short (1 page) write-ups.

Mark your calendars now for the required convocations:

- Dr. Megan Goodwin, "Females Are Strong As Hell: Gender, Abuse, and American Minority Religions." October 1, Weisiger Theater, 7–8:30pm
- Dr. Todd Green, “The Fear of Islam.” November 10, Weisiger Theatre, 7–8:30pm



two

Other recommended events will be announced throughout the semester.

**Religious Service Visit and Observation Paper (2):** Part of gaining a comparative perspective on western religious traditions is to experience them as lived religions, not just as something you may read about in books or articles or hear about in class. In order to meet this requirement, and as part of our learning outcomes for the class (#7), you will be required to visit *two distinct religious services of traditions with which you are not familiar*. During the course of the semester each student is required to visit a religious service from two of the traditions covered in this class: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. A list of locations in the area will be made available on moodle. At least one visit must be made before fall break (Wednesday Oct 14), the other must be made *before* the last week of class. Guidelines for the observation papers are available on moodle. *However, both visits may be made early in the semester.*

**Note:** If you identify with a particular denomination in Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, you *may not attend* a service in that denomination (e.g. if you are Baptist, you may not attend a Baptist service).

**Jerusalem Project:**

In small groups, you will choose a site/topic related to Jerusalem. A list of possibilities will be provided, or groups may propose their own for approval from me. Each group will be responsible for researching thoroughly the history, architecture, religious significance, contemporary situation, etc. of this site/topic. You will then produce an engaging and informative **oral presentation**, leading the class on a virtual tour of the topic, as well as a **guide book** (i.e. informative paper). Further instructions will be provided in class and on moodle.

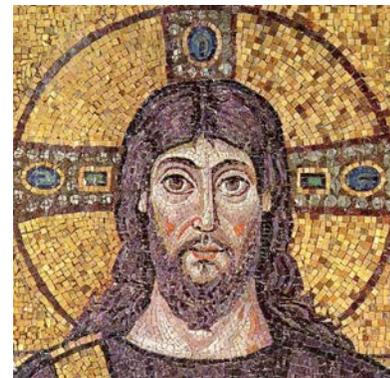
**Quizzes:** There will be one quiz each on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These quizzes will consist of short answers and essay questions. More information will be available closer to the date of the first quiz.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will focus on the comparative component of the class, but also assuming a basic understanding of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the final exam will thus be cumulative and comprehensive. More information on the exam will be made available closer to the final exam date.

**Late Work:** Due to the nature of the assignments above, late work will not be accepted. If there is an emergency, please contact me as soon as possible *before* missing a deadline. Note that the Jerusalem oral presentation may not be made up.

**Electronics Policy:**

Laptops and tablets are not allowed in class. If you need accommodations, please speak with me. There will be times when you may use your laptops and/or tablets—I will do my best to alert you ahead of time if you can use them. Cell phones are not permitted for any purpose. When electronics are permitted, I ask that you respect your fellow classmates as well as your professor and any guests by *not* using them to access materials unrelated to the class. Even if I cannot see it, it is a distraction for those sitting around you. *Please use good judgment and be respectful.*



Note that the course lectures *may not be recorded* unless you have arranged it with me prior to the lecture.

**Additional Information:**

**Academic Honesty:** Students are required to observe the honor code. Plagiarism—any attempt by a student to represent the work of another as one’s own—will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, all of the following: copying the answers of another student on an examination, copying or substantially restating the work of another person or persons in any oral or written work without citing the appropriate source, and collaboration with someone else in an

academic endeavor without acknowledging his or her contribution. All instances of plagiarism will be dealt with according to university policy, no matter how minor.

**Learning Challenges:** Students who may need additional assistance due to learning differences or learning challenges are expected to see me as early as possible in the semester. I am willing to make accommodations whenever possible, but only if proper documentation has been provided *and you see me at least one week in advance of any deadlines/tests*. If you need accommodations but are not certain how to find them, I can assist you by helping you reach the College’s coordinators for disabilities, Dr. Mary Gulley (x5223) who will prepare a signed Accommodation Notice. Note that in any course the instructor must sign the back of the Accommodation Notice before any necessary accommodations can take effect.

**I am committed to making our classroom an inclusive and supportive learning environment for people of all ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.**

<b>Schedule of Classes</b>		
Date	Topic	Assignment <sup>1</sup>
<b>Getting Started</b>		
M 31 August	Introduction; Syllabus; How to Read a Text; Genesis 22	
W 2 September	Comparative Exercise: Gen 22	“What do We Mean by “Religion” and “Western Civilization,” William Scott Green (m)
F 4 September	Comparative Exercise: Gen 22	In addition to finalizing your presentations, be sure to read the other texts your group was not assigned using our three-step process (m)
<b>Judaism</b>		
M 7 September	Foundations of Judaism: Hebrew Bible	Solomon, Introduction & Chapter 1; Genesis 17:1–27 (HB); Exodus 1–20 (read chapters 1–3, skim 4–15, read 19–20; HB); Nehemiah 9:1–37 (HB)
W 9 September	Formative Judaism: Diversity in Judaism	Solomon, Chapter 2; Flavius Josephus, <i>The Jewish War</i> (excerpts; m)
F 11 September	Formative Judaism: Diaspora	Excerpts from the Letter of Aristeas (m); Ezekiel the Tragedian (m)

<sup>1</sup> Note that the Assignment is due on the day for which it is listed.

M 14 September	No class; Rosh Hashana	(See make-up #1)
W 16 September	Rabbinic & Medieval Judaism	Solomon, Chapter 3 Mishnah Avot 1:1–2:1 (m); Babylonian Talmud <i>Sabbath</i> 49b, 73a–b, 74a–74b (m); Maimonides, Laws of the Sabbath (m)
F 18 September	Modern Judaism	Solomon, Chapter 7 & 8 Solomon, Appendices A & B Abraham Joshua Heschel, <i>The Sabbath</i> (excerpts; m)
M 21 September	Judaism: Beliefs and Practices I: Jewish Calendar, Liturgy, Prayer, synagogue	Solomon, Chapters 4 & 5 Leviticus 23:1–44 Aleinu (moodle) *Additional <i>brief</i> readings may be posted (m)
W 23 September	No class; Yom Kippur	(see make-up #2)
F 25 September	Judaism: Beliefs and Practices II: Lifecycle, Kosher, Family Purity Laws, Contemporary Issues	Solomon, Chapters 6 & 9 Mourner’s Kaddish (m) *Additional <i>brief</i> readings may be posted to moodle
M 28 September	No class; Sukkot	Make-up class #1: Judaism Quiz (m)
<b>Christianity</b>		
W 30 September	Early Jesus Movement	Woodhead, chapters 1 & 2 Gospel of Mark (NT); you can also listen to it (it takes less time than you think): <a href="http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/">http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/</a>
F 2 October	Early Christianity; Variant forms of Christianity; Council of Nicea	Woodhead, chapter 3 Excerpt from Martyrdom of Polycarp (m) Texts on Marcion (m) Nicene Creed (m)
M October 5	No class; Shemini Atzeret	Make-up class #2: Watch: Monty Python and the Life of Brian (Ensemble)  Submit participation assignment via moodle
W October 7	Medieval Christianity and the Protestant Reformation	Woodhead, chapter 4 & 5 Martin Luther, selection from “The Freedom of a Christian” (m); Letter from “The Mirror of Martyrs” (m)
F October 9	Second Great Awakening; Early Modern Christianity	Woodhead, chapter 6 & conclusion Joseph Smith, “Pearl of Great Price” (m); Jarena Lee, “My Call to Preach the Gospel” (m)

M October 12	Modern Christianity	Bertrand Russell, “Why I am not a Christian” (m); Reinhold Niebuhr, “Why the Christian Church is not Pacifist” (m)
W October 14	Christianity: Beliefs and Practices	“Christianity and Ethics,” Keith Ward (m); “Nostra Aetate” (m); “Common Declaration on Environmental Ethics” (m)
F October 16 <i>No class; Fall Break</i>	No class; Fall Break	
Sunday Oct 18 <i>No class</i>	(no class)	*make-up class #3: Christianity Quiz (moodle)

## Islam

M October 19	History, context, pre-Muhammad (Arabian clans of Ishamel)	Ruthven, chapter 1
W October 21	Muhammad	Ibn Hisham, ibn Shaq’s “The Life of Muhammad” (m)
F October 23	Quran and Hadith	Ruthven, chapter 2; Suras 1, 4, 12, 55 (Q) Al-Bukhari, “The Story of the Night Journey” (m);
M October 26	Guest Speaker, Judaism <sup>+</sup>	Ruthven, chapter 3
W October 28	Fracturing of Sects; Shari’a	Ruthven, chapter 4; Ibn Babawayh, “The Beliefs of the Shi’is” (m);
F October 30	Islam and Modernity	Ruthven, chapters 5 & 6; Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" (m)
Sunday October 29	(no class)	Make-up class #4: Islam Quiz (moodle)

## Comparative Topics

M November 2	Guest Speaker, Christianity	TBD*
W November 4	Student-selected topics	TBD*
F November 6	Student-selected topics	TBD*
M November 9	Guest Speaker, Islam	TBD*
W November 11	Student-selected topics	TBD*

+ Tentatively scheduled. I will adjust as necessary with the availability of our guests. *You will still be responsible for the readings assigned on these dates.* If these tentative dates need to be adjusted, readings will be adjusted as well and a new syllabus will be handed out so there is no confusion.

**\* A new syllabus for these dates will be passed out no later than Monday November 2. You, the students, will select the topics that we cover in our comparative section. Readings will be assigned for these classes once the topics are chosen. This will be discussed in detail in class.**

## Comparative Topics: Jerusalem

F November 13	Welcome to Jerusalem	Goldhill: Chapter 1
M November 16	Jerusalem	Goldhill: Chapter 2
W November 18	Jerusalem	Goldhill: Chapter 3
F November 20	No class—Groups will meet with the librarian	Goldhill: Chapter 4
M November 23 <i>No class; SBL/AAR</i>	No class—Groups will meet with the librarian	Goldhill: Chapter 5 Submit via moodle: Outline of your project (see moodle for details)
W/F November 25/27 <i>No class, Thanksgiving Break</i>	No classes; Thanksgiving Break	
M November 30	Jerusalem	Goldhill: Chapter 6
W December 2	Jerusalem Presentations	Goldhill: Chapter 7
F December 4 <i>Last Class</i>	Jerusalem Presentations	

### Final Exams:

**REL 150d** (MWF 11:30–12:30): Final Exam, Wednesday Dec 9, 8:30–11:30am

**REL 150e** (MWF 9:10–10:10): Final Exam, Thursday December 10, 8:30–11:30am

### Grading Rubric:

100–93	A	<i>Excellent. “A” grades exceed the requirements and show a high level of originality and creativity in the implementation of the assignment. There are very few or no grammatical/spelling errors, and the assignment is well organized.</i>
92–90	A-	<i>Very good. “A-” grades exceed the requirements and show a high level of originality and creativity in the implementation of the assignment. There are few or no grammatical/spelling errors, and the assignment is well organized.</i>
89–88	B+	<i>Good. “B” grades exceed the requirements and show a careful attention to detail. Some level of originality or creativity is present. There are few grammatical/spelling errors, and the assignment is well organized.</i>
87–83	B	<i>Good. “B” grades exceed the requirements and show a careful attention to detail. Some level of originality or creativity is present. There are few grammatical/spelling errors, and the assignment is well organized.</i>
82–80	B-	<i>Good. “B-” grades exceed the requirements and show a careful attention to detail. Some level of originality or creativity is present. There are few grammatical/spelling errors, and the assignment is well organized.</i>
79–78	C+	<i>Adequate/Average. “C” grades meet the requirements of the assignment but do not go beyond the requirements. There are few or some grammatical/spelling errors, and the assignment organization could use improvement.</i>
77–73	C	<i>Adequate/Average. “C” grades meet the requirements of the assignment but do not go beyond the requirements. There are few or some grammatical/spelling errors, and the assignment organization could use improvement.</i>
72–70	C-	<i>Adequate/Average. “C-” grades meet the requirements of the assignment but do not go beyond the requirements. There are few or some grammatical/spelling errors, and the assignment organization could use improvement.</i>
69–60	D	<i>Poor. “D” grades mean the assignment does not meet the requirements as assigned. There are many grammatical/spelling errors, and/or the assignment is disorganized.</i>
59–0	F	<i>Fail</i>