

G. S. Religious Studies 201: Syllabus, Summer, 2012

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Major Goals of the Course:

This is a course about religion. It will be taught in an objective and scholarly manner. Although you will study other denominations and other religions, you will probably learn more about your own religion than ever before. If you are a Christian, we hope that this course will make you a better one. If you are an atheist, we hope the course will make you more intelligent about atheism. One of the best ways to understand what you believe is to be confronted with beliefs that are the opposite of yours. That is what this course will do. In order to challenge your thinking, I shall take the role of “Advocatus Diaboli,” the devil’s advocate. This approach will force you to think about what you believe, and not simply accept information blindly. This course will take you on a spiritual odyssey. Relax and enjoy the ride, realizing that we are not here to condemn or to criticize, but to ask critical questions that will make you think. As Southern ladies and gentlemen, we shall respectfully disagree on occasion, but we will not ridicule anyone’s beliefs.

MUSIC: We want to hear two religious songs you love the most. We’ll play one before class, and one afterwards.

UNIT I: Christianity: June 4-8

There are two billion Christians in the world.

There are approximately 33,000 Christian denominations.

92% of Christian churches are segregated, making Sunday morning the most segregated time of the week.

Assignments: 1. *Blackboard article on “Christianity,” from the book, Living Religions*

2. *The Bible*—read the Gospel of Matthew, Acts, and the Letters of Paul. There are two billion Christians on earth; one billion are Catholics. The rest are divided into 33,000 different denominations!

3. Video: “Who Wrote the Bible” (Tuesday, 6-9PM, Library Media Center).

UNIT II: Judaism

June 11-15 There are 14 million Jews in the world.
The essence of Judaism: tikkum olam, according to Joel Newman, our guest speaker.

Assignments:

1. Blackboard article on "Judaism"
2. Read all 50 chapters of Genesis & Job
3. Video: "The Big Bang"
4. Video: "The Near Death Experience"

UNIT III: Islam: June 18-22

There are 1.4 billion Muslims in the world.

The essence of Islam: 5 pillars

Assignments:

1. *The Holy Qu'ran* You will read the entire Qu'ran.
2. Video on Islam, "Islam: Empire of Faith, June 19th, 6-9PM, Library
3. Blackboard article on "Islam"

After this unit, you should be able to answer the questions below:

- A. Where did the text of the Qu'ran come from?
- B. How was the text transmitted?
- C. How pure is the text of the Qu'ran, as compared to the Bible?
- D. What is a "trance" state? In what ways can a trance be induced?
- E. Although you'll read the entire Qu'ran, please focus on the following subjects in it: A. WOMEN, B. ETHICS, C. HOMICIDE, D. THEFT, E. CRIMINAL CODE, F. FORGIVENESS, G. THEOLOGY, H. SUFFERING--PURPOSE OF CREATION OF MAN, I. WAR, J. JESUS, K. MARY,
- F. Know the daily prayer schedule of Moslems
- G. What passages in the Qu'ran do terrorists use to justify their actions?
- H. What passages in the Qu'ran do devout Muslims use to repudiate terrorist interpretations of the Qu'ran?
- I. How many Christian terrorist groups are there today?
- J. What passages in the Bible do Christian terrorists use to justify their beliefs and actions?

- K. How did modern Israel come to be a country?
- L. What is the status of women in various Muslim countries? Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Indonesia,

UNIT IV: June 25-June 29 Islam, cont'd, Hinduism

There are 950,000 Hindus worldwide.

The essence of Hinduism: sanatana dharma

Assignments:

1. Complete the Qu'ran
2. Blackboard article on, "Hinduism"
3. *The Bhagavad-Gita*

EXAM 1	June 11,	Multiple Choice, Christianity
EXAM 2	June 18,	Multiple Choice, Judaism
FINAL	June 29	Multiple Choice, Islam & Hinduism

Research Paper Topics: 25 points

You will write a research paper on a topic below. From this paper, please make a PowerPoint presentation to be presented to the class. It should also include a reference page citing books, articles, and no more than three internet articles. You should also have handouts, and YouTube excerpts, not to exceed 10 minutes.

IV. Report Topics:

1. Atheism/Agnosticism June 6
2. Religion in America June 7

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| 3. Catholicism | June 8 |
| 4. The Life of Paul—the real founder of Christianity
He wrote 48% of the New Testament. | June 11 & Exam 1 |
| 5. A Famous Heresy: Gnosticism | June 12 |
| 6. Summary of Exodus, Deuteronomy, June 16 | June 13 |
| 7. Summary of last two books of the Torah | June 14 |
| History of America’s Black Churches & Racism in Christianity: | June 15 |
| 8. God and Gays: include a gay speaker | June 18
June 19 |
| 9. The Fate of Palestinians When Israel was
Created in 1948 | June 20 |
| 10. The Devil | June 21 |
| 11. Speaker on Islam | June 22 |
| 11. History of the Baptist Church & SBC | June 25 |
| 12. Edgar Cayce, Greatest Psychic of the 20 th century | June 26 |
| 13. The End of the World: Latest prediction, May 2011 | June 27 |

Daily Schedule

Week 1: June 4-8 **Christianity:**

“Inside a Catholic Benedictine Monastery” (YouTube)

- I. Relax, you’ve already won.
 1. Getting College Credit
 2. Best in state, by being accepted here.
 3. Won because you’re going to be in a group of students just like you.
 4. You will create friendships that will last for a lifetime.

5. You will be able to use governor's school as a stepping stone to your future.
- II. Introduction of students.
Introduce yourself by giving your name, school, denomination, why you took this course, what questions you would like answered in this course, and what you would like to be when you grow up.
1. How religion shapes history.
- III. Invitation to student speakers:

Is there a Jewish student who would like to speak to the class, Gay, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist. Wiccan?

The subject of God is awesome in respect to:

- A. The age of the universe.
1. 12-20 billion years old. So God is at least 20 billion years old.
- B. The size and nature of the universe.
1. Light year- 5.88 trillion miles
 2. Star:
The universe contains billions of galaxies-clusters of stars
Each galaxy contains approximately 100 billion stars.
 3. Milky Way: a large spiral galaxy containing about 100 billion stars.
It is 100,000 light years in diameter.
- B. The subject of God is awesome in respect to the universe.
1. We can only see 10% of the universe because 90% is unknown.
 2. An easy way to understand the extensiveness of the universe is with this analogy: Count every grain of sand on every beach on the world. There are more stars than grains of sand.

Monday

G.S. as your spaceship to the stars
Prof. Parker the 17 year old Benedictine

A look at the earth from the farthest point in our solar system:
Carl Sagan, Youtube: "100 billion galaxies each with 100 billion stars"

Assign oral report topics
Select class typists

Assign readings: 1. Blackboard article on Christianity, under, “Library Reserve; 2. Gospel of Matthew; 3. Acts of the Apostles

Tuesday

1. The political scene in 1st century Judaea
2. The Magnificat: Jesus in the womb
3. Birth, appearance in synagogue, baptism, ministry, ethical teachings, miracles, betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection
4. 6-9 PM tonight, Media Center, film, Who wrote Bible

Wednesday

1. A History of the canon of the New Testament: 1^{to} 4th cen.
2. The accuracy of the texts of the New Testament
3. Bart Ehrmann—leading authority of text of N.T.

Thursday

Student report: Atheism/Agnosticism
1. Martin Luther & The Reformation

Friday

1. Student Report: Life of Paul
2. Student Report: Religion in America
3. Lecture: Christianity and Race –Prof. Parker

Week 2: June 11-15

Judaism: read all of Genesis; read summary of other books of Torah

Monday Exam 1

Tuesday:

A History of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible: 1100BCE to 90CE (over a thousand years)—Bb, “Judaism”

1. Student Report
2. The Story of Creation: Genesis & Science—Big Bang
2. Genesis: On the status of women, Gays, State of Israel

Wednesday

1. Jewish Speaker?
2. Creation of State of Israel: Articles on Bb

3. Main dates in Jewish History/Timeline of Jewish

History

4 Bibles: A. Hebrew Bible, B. Septuagint (Hebrew Bible translated into Greek), C. New Testament in Greek, D. Vulgate (N.T. & O.T. translated into Latin by St. Jerome, D. Wycliff & Tyndale's translation of Bible into English, E. King James translation, F. Luther's translation into German
Summary of contents of Genesis, & other books: main characters

Thursday

1. Student speaker: Arab-Israeli conflict—Israeli view
2. The Miracles of the O.T.
3. Notes on Judaism, cont'd
3. Video: Israel vs. Palestine—Palestinian view

Friday

1. Notes on Judaism, cont'd
2. Student Report

Week 3: June 18-22: Islam

Monday

Exam 2, Judaism

1. Instructions on doing daily Qu'ran homework
2. Introduction to Islam: from Bb lecture: Islam in Age of Terrorism
3. Student Report

Tuesday

1. 6-9PM, Video: Islam: Empire of Faith, Media Center
2. Discussion of Homework
3. Muslim Speaker
4. Student Report

Wednesday

1. Turn in homework on Qu'ran
2. Exam 2—Covers all materials since exam 1
3. Discussion of Homework
4. Discussion of Tuesday's film: Most important segments
5. Discussion of exam 2

- Thursday
1. Turn in homework
 2. Islam in the Age of Terrorism, cont'd
 3. The poetry of the Qu'ran—famous Muslim reciters
 4. Student report

- Friday
1. Visit Muslim Service on campus
 2. Student report
 3. Islam in the Age of Terrorism
 4. Discussion of homework

Week 4: June 25-June 29

- Monday
1. Student Report
 2. Discussion of homework
 3. Last lecture on Islam: Women in Islam

- Tuesday
- Hinduism: 3rd largest religion: 950 million people, 330,000,000 gods & goddesses; most tolerant religion
1. Introductory Remarks: Key terms
 2. Read Bb article on Hinduism, under, "Library Reserve"
 3. Hindu Scriptures: Shruti & Smiriti
 4. Student Report

- Wednesday
1. Student Report
 2. Reincarnation & The Gita

- Thursday
1. Hindu Speaker
 2. Hinduism as a way of life
 3. The Gita, cont'd

- Friday
- Final Exam

Exam Schedule:

Exam 1	June 11	Christianity
Exam 2	June 18	Judaism
Final	June 29	Islam & Hinduism

Curve:

292	A
260	B
227	C
195	D

Cheating/Plagiarism

The penalty for cheating or plagiarism is an F for the course.