

Religion 104: Questions of Christianity
Illinois College ~ Fall 2014

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Office Hours: normally MW 2:45-3:45; Tu/Th 1:30-3:30 (and appointments as needed)

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Course Description:

“Who is God? How is Jesus the Christ? What is sin? Where did we come from? This course examines questions like these to introduce the student to foundational concepts of Christianity and their development in the life of the church. It situates Christianity in the global religious context, considering it in historical relationship to Abrahamic faith traditions, and contemporary eastern religious traditions. Through this, students are introduced to the academic study of religion and expected to develop critical thinking skills necessary for engagement in the discipline.”

Course Objectives & General Education:

- *This course fulfills the BLUEprint general education category of Social, Spiritual, and Philosophical Issues, and a Global Awareness Embedded Experience. It fulfills the Legacy general education (pre-2012) category of Religious & Philosophical Issues, &/ or Humanities.*
- A student successfully completing this course will be learned and practiced in these skills:
 - *Inquiry & Analysis:* knowing when information is needed, being able to identify, locate, evaluate, and responsibly use and share that information. Accomplished through two research assignments.
 - *Critical Thinking:* exploring issues, ideas, artifacts and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion. Accomplished through reading and class discussions.
 - *Written Communication:* developing and expressing ideas in writing. Accomplished through two paper assignments.
 - *Collaboration:* group tasks, interacting with others, quantity and quality of contributions to group discussions. Accomplished through table talks and large group class discussion.

Responsibilities of student:

- *In order to help you learn to **read well***, you are expected to complete all reading as assigned. You must have all texts in your possession. **BRING THE ASSIGNED TEXT TO CLASS.**
- *In order to help you **think well***, attendance and active participation at each class session is mandatory (50 points). Points are earned both for **attending** class regularly and for **actively participating**. The conditions for thinking and learning well in class include the following **behaviors**:
 - Active participation in every class period includes things like bring the assigned book to class, taking notes, looking at references in the texts, asking questions, responding to questions, and engaging in group discussion when prompted. This type of activity is regularly observed by the professor and points are earned for these behaviors. Mere attendance is not sufficient.
 - Excessive absences could lead to failure in the course, and *every absence is detrimental to learning*. More than two weeks, or six classes, is considered excessive. You are fully responsible for all work, notes, reading, and information if/when you miss class. Notes are available via Moodle (after class) and from classmates. The professor is available to answer questions whenever needed.

- Cell phones must be **silenced, out of sight, and may not be used during class at any time for calls, texting, or anything else. In case of dire emergency, speak to the professor. You will be penalized for texting or using your phone during class.**
- Unless you have a documented reason necessitating the use of one, laptops, iPads, and other electronic devices should not be used in class so that you may be fully engaged in our discussion and class work.
- *In order to help you **write well***, a variety of opportunities to demonstrate learning are given via different methods of in-class and out-of-class writing.
- Points are assigned to many different components of the course to assess the level of your learning and engagement in class:

		<i>Your opportunity to show:</i>
• Quizzes	80 points	<i>[basic comprehension of material]</i>
• Reader Response assignments	50 points	<i>[comprehension & critical thinking]</i>
• Table Talk Group reports	50 points	<i>[oral communication, collaboration, analysis]</i>
• Bible Methods paper	60 points	<i>[inquiry, analysis, written communication]</i>
• Midterm Exam	75 points	<i>[comprehension & historical knowledge]</i>
• Comparative Analysis paper	75 points	<i>[inquiry, written communication, analysis]</i>
• Final Exam	85 points	<i>[comprehension & synthesis of material]</i>

Total Points Possible in Semester 525 points (above + 50 points for participation)

Intellectual Integrity: Illinois College Honor Code

The Illinois College Faculty approved the Honor Code proposed by the Illinois College Student Forum in 2005, revised in 2007. The Honor Code, available in full at <http://www.ic.edu/academics/academichonesty.asp> states the following:

- Illinois College is a community founded upon trust. It acknowledges its students' diligence and assumes a general adherence to honesty. Cheating and plagiarism violate trust, honor and integrity. To maintain the cohesion of the Illinois College community, all students shall adhere to an academic Honor Code, (Article 1, section 1)
- The institution has no tolerance for breach of academic honor and integrity. (Article 3, section 1)
- **When a professor encounters a student in violation of the Honor Code and is able to determine that the transgression is intentional, he or she will contact the Dean's office to determine whether this is the student's first offense. The instructor will then execute, from those listed under the section entitled Student Violation, at least one of the punishments that seems most appropriate. Then the professor shall, within five "class days," advise the Chair of the Judicial Board and the Dean of the College, in writing, of the offense and his or her dispensation of a punishment.** (Article 3, section 2)

Blatant and flagrant offenses, discussed in the College's Honor Code statement, will result in failure in and withdrawal from this course. A Second Violation of the Honor Code may result in more serious penalties, as detailed in the Honor Code. Any questions about unauthorized aid or plagiarism should be directed to the instructor.

The following academic integrity pledge should be included on work submitted for a grade:

- *As a member of the Illinois College academic community, I hereby confirm that this assignment is entirely my own work, except where I have cited other sources. (signed and dated)*

This statement should be included with signature and date on all papers. In the case of email submissions, the statement should be included at the end of the paper, and receipt of it from the student's email address will constitute a signature. Students are also expected to adhere to the Honor Code on all quizzes and exams. For more information on departmental policies and intellectual integrity, please see <http://www2.ic.edu/philrel/honorcode.htm>

Required Texts:

- Sally Bruyneel and Alan G. Padgett. Introducing Christianity (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003). [BP]
- Diana L. Eck. Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras. (Boston: Beacon, 2003).
- Thich Nhat Hanh. Living Buddha, Living Christ. (New York: Riverhead Books, 2007).
- Assigned articles from the web. Full detailed links available here & on course Moodle site.
- A Bible. [recommended version is HarperCollins Study Bible – NRSV. Harold Attridge and Wayne Meeks, editors. (Harper San Francisco, 1997, 2006)]

Written Requirements: *(see below for student disabilities statement)*

All written work is due on the date specified. ***No extensions. No exceptions.*** *All late work is penalized by 5% per calendar day late.* **Plan ahead.** Details for assignments will be discussed in class. All questions clarifying assignments must be directed to the instructor well in advance of the due date. Technology problems can always be expected, so *do not work, print, or research at the last minute.* **Failure to complete any one major assignment (exam, paper, project) could result in course failure on the basis of points lost for the assignment and participation.**

• *Quizzes*

- There are a total of 9 weekly quizzes during the semester on announced dates at the end of class. These provide regular accountability for student learning from all reading and class lecture material that “week” (defined as: since the last weekly quiz). 10 points each. **There are no make-up quizzes ~ before, during, or after.** *If you miss the in-class quiz, you miss it.*
- Because there are only 80 points needed for this portion of your overall course grade (and 90 opportunities to earn points), every student is able to miss a quiz for any reason and still have the opportunity to earn all points. Or, if you take all the quizzes, you have the opportunity to earn points to make up for lower scores.
- **If you will miss a weekly quiz:**
 - ✓ because of **institutionally approved travel** for an athletic event, field trip, or other similar event, you must appear on a *roster* distributed by an employee of the college, and must speak to the instructor *in advance* that week. You have the opportunity to earn the quiz points by **submitting a reader response assignment** that defines and uses at least five terms or concepts from class material that week to me **via email before departure.** The standard prompt for this is: *Write at least 300 words in which you explain five main concepts that you learned about and found interesting in the reading for this week.*
 - ✓ because of your **own emergency medical treatment** (at an emergency room) or because of *extraordinary or emergency* medical circumstances like your *own* hospitalization, *you must notify the Dean of the College* and request extraordinary arrangements. Notes from Illinois College Health Services are **not** in themselves **automatic** reason for quiz accommodation. All **appointments** should be scheduled for times when you are not in class, and as such are also **not automatically** reason for quiz accommodation.
 - ✓ because of **any other reason**, see bullet points above. *There are no make-up quizzes.*

• *Reader Response Assignments*

due as noted on schedule

- This assignment is used instead of weekly quizzes from time to time, when the subject and/or the schedule calls for it. Specific writing prompts will give you the opportunity to show your understanding and critical analysis of the week’s assigned reading. These assignments will also allow you to begin applying concepts and making connections among class material.

- Each response page must be at least 300 words long, address specific questions as assigned, and must be submitted via Moodle; that is where they are graded. (*Submit via email only if Moodle is down, as a temporary last resort, to ensure that you meet the deadline.*) Each is worth 10 points each.

- *Table Talk Group reports* *... unannounced dates throughout semester ...*
 - To facilitate your engagement with and application of complex material, a regular in-class activity is prompted small group discussions and tasks on a particular topic or question related to the reading, lecture material, or current events. This is normally unannounced ahead of class time. Groups are formed in class around the tables. Specific instructions for collaboration are given at the time of the activity.
 - At the conclusion of each activity, members of a group will collaborate to submit one brief written report, consisting of responses, questions, and other things as requested.
 - The reports are assessed on a basic “check-plus” (excellent, A/B, 4/3 points) “check” (completed, B/C, 3/2 points) “check-minus” (insufficient, incorrect, and/or absent, D/F, 1 or 0 points) system. The points apply to everyone in the group. The observed quality of your individual participation (talking, writing, listening) will affect your overall course grade.
 - If you miss one of these, you may have the opportunity to earn the points with a brief written report **only if** you are absent because of institutionally approved travel for an athletic event, field trip, conference, or other similar obligation verified by a distributed roster. This is why you must let the professor know when you will be absent for these reasons, and then the make-up report is due before the next class.

- *Bible Methods Paper* *due Mon., 10/6, in class*
 - Goals of this course include introducing you to skills required for the academic study religion. In this assignment you have the opportunity to show that you understand that **there are many methods** of studying the bible, and to show that **you can apply more than one of those methods** to an assigned biblical text. This also gives you the chance to make connection between things read in class and work outside of class. In this **short (1,500 word minimum) paper**, you will gather basic scholarly information about one biblical text, then define and apply two methods of interpretation to it.
 - **Sources:** The paper should use and cite
 1. basic information from the *HarperCollins Study Bible* introductory material where helpful
 2. definitions and descriptions of at least two methods of interpretation from RT articles
 3. at least two scholarly bible commentaries found in Schewe Library. These may be books or articles. The library catalog and stacks, along with the ATLA Religion journal database, will be your main sources for material. General research tips & suggestions can be found on “Researching the Bible and Religion” document available on the course Moodle site.)

NOTE: All information in the paper must be from cited academic sources. **NO WEB SOURCES ALLOWED** (i.e., Wikipedia, answers.com) other than assigned RT articles.
 - First, fill out a **worksheet** with basic **information** for your text: canonical context, historical information, authorship, and genre, using information from the scholarly library sources. This worksheet will be **submitted as the cover sheet of the paper.** The purpose of this is to become familiar with basic library research as a method to find academic information about one text.
 - Second, write a **short paper.** In it, you should:
 - First, critically consider the information you gathered for the worksheet. Now that you have located information, *evaluate* it: What *two pieces* of information from your research are most

interesting and important? {do not discuss everything} Spend no more than one double-spaced page on this question.

- Then, apply two of the methods of biblical study learned about in class to the text, and *show* how they might lead to *different readings* of parts of this text. For this, you will need to define the two methods, and show with examples of cited textual evidence how they can be used to interpret parts of your text. Do **not** summarize the entire text. Read through it, select portions that help you **show** how different methods might lead to different conclusions.
 - *Because this paper is a scholarly exercise in inquiry, analysis, and method application, the assignment does not ask for your opinion or belief about the biblical text itself (“this text is wonderful” or “this text makes no sense” or “this text shows God’s love” or “this text shows how dumb religion is”) and the paper should not contain it.*
 - This assignment is worth **60 points**, and will be graded on the basis of: specific and complete answers about the four topics on the worksheet (14 points), quality of paper’s discussion of the worksheet information (10 points), appropriate application of the two methods of biblical study to the biblical text (16 points), clear writing and organization of paper (12 points), appropriate use of quality research including in-text citations and complete works cited page (8 points).
- *Midterm Exam* *Mon. 10/20, in class*
 - This exam will cover **everything** read and discussed in class **up to this point** in the semester. It will consist of vocabulary words, short answers about major concepts, and a timeline. It must be taken as scheduled in class, unless you appear on an official roster for an institutionally approved event *and* make arrangements to take it in advance. Further details and format to be discussed in class.
 - *Comparative Analysis Paper* *Mon. 12/15, midnight, via email*
 - In this short (**1,500 word minimum**) paper, you will **compare** the work of Eck, Hanh, and one contemporary Christian theologian **on a particular topic/question** (i.e., service, prayer, community, ritual, sacred being/God, salvation, spirit, sin, etc.). Your specific topic will provide a focus for comparison of three contemporary religious traditions. The **guiding questions** for this paper are: *What does Christianity have in common with Hinduism and Buddhism [in terms of this topic]? And, what is unique about these religious traditions [on this topic]?*
 - After determining your topic/question, review the relevant material from Eck and Hanh to remind yourself of their perspectives. Review the basic material on Hinduism and Buddhism we have read on this topic via online articles. Then, use Schewe Library resources to find **one additional scholarly source** from a Christian theologian on the same topic/question. ATLA Religion Database will be your best resource, and class time will be spent on research instruction and individual conferencing with the professor.
 - This assignment is worth **75 points**. It will be graded on the basis of: clearly articulated focus (7 points), effective use of Eck (10 points), effective use of Hanh (10 points), effective use of scholarly resources beyond class material (15 points), demonstrated understanding of the similarities and differences between Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity on one topic (15 points), clarity and organization in writing (10 points), works cited page and honor code (8 points).
 - *Final Exam* *Friday, December 19, 12:30-2:30pm*
 - This exam will cover **everything** read and discussed in class *since the midterm* exam. Specific format and details to be discussed in class.

All grades for assignments and for the class are earned according to the following scale of percentages and points:

97-100 = A+ (509-525)	74 - 76 = C (388-403)
94 - 96 = A (493-508)	70 - 73 = C- (367-387)
90 - 93 = A- (472-492)	67 - 69 = D+ (351-366)
87 - 89 = B+ (456-471)	64 - 66 = D (336-350)
84 - 86 = B (441-455)	60 - 63 = D- (315-335)
80 - 83 = B- (420-440)	59 - 0 = F (000-314)
77 - 79 = C+ (404-419)	

Notes to self here:

Student Disability Services

It is the policy and practice of Illinois College to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are eligible and would like to request them for this course, please let me know ASAP. If you have questions or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Services Coordinator at (217) 245-3774 located on the 2nd floor of the Caine Student Center.

Schedule of Reading and Assignments

R: = text(s) which you are to have read prior to this class meeting, **T:** = topics for which you should be prepared

Basics: What is Christianity?

W 9/3 Introductions ... the course, the texts, the participants, the expectations

F 9/5 **R:** BP ch. 1, 1-9 **T:** basic concepts, basic timeline in class – italicized words, glossary

M 9/8 **R:** BP ch. 2, 10-21 **T:** sacred time, historical time, seasons, space, symbols
R: “Sacred Time” by Beth Davies-Stofka, under “Christianity” in the *Patheos.com* Library
<http://www.patheos.com/Library/Christianity/Ritual-Worship-Devotion-Symbolism/Sacred-Time>

W 9/10 **R:** Eck, preface 2003 & preface 1993, p.ix-xxiii
Write Reader Response One & submit via Moodle by midnight Wed., 9/10. Prompt given in class/online.

F 9/12 **R:** “The Main Founders of the Jesus Movement” **T:** origins & current data
http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_brief1.htm
R: “Current Status of Christianity” http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_brief4.htm
Weekly Quiz #1

The Bible: Who wrote it? How do scholars study it?

M 9/15 **R:** BP ch. 5, 52-69 **T:** Hebrew Bible, New Testament, canons, translations

W 9/17 **R:** Bart Ehrman, “Introduction” from *Misquoting Jesus*
... BRING BIBLE ... work with Genesis 1-3 in class **T:** structure, style, authors

F 9/19 **R:** RT “Four Methods Used to Interpret the Bible” ... click through on “biblical interpretation,” & on each of the four methods, & “a brief history of these methods”
http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_inte.htm
Weekly Quiz #2

History of the Christian Tradition

M 9/22 **R:** BP ch. 6, 70-91 **T:** Eras overview: NT, patristic, medieval, & modern periods
Write Reader Response Two & submit via Moodle by midnight Wed., 9/24. Prompt given in class.
No Class ~ Professor attending conference in Washington, D.C.

W 9/24 *Library research day for Bible Methods Paper; complete worksheet, email questions to criswold@mail.ic.edu*
No Class ~ Professor attending conference in New Orleans

F 9/26 *Individual writing & work time on Bible Methods Paper*
No Class ~ Professor attending conference in New Orleans

Early History: How and when did Christianity begin?

- M 9/29** **R:** Galatians **T:** early Christian issues, Christianity and Judaism
- W 10/1** **R:** RT “Early Christian History as Seen by Religious Liberals and Historians”
http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_chov.htm
Weekly Quiz #3
- F 10/3** **FALL BREAK**

Modern History: Why are there denominations?

- M 10/6** **R:** BP ch. 7, 93-114 **T:** Reformations, denominations, modern & contemporary
Bible Methods Paper due in class
- W 10/8** **R:** Martin Luther, “(The 95 Theses) Disputation on ...” **T:** The Reformation begins
<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/web/ninetyfive.html>
- F 10/10** **R:** RT “Christian Meta-Groups: One Method of Sorting ...”
http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_meta.htm
Weekly Quiz #4

Beliefs: What does Christianity teach? What are the types of Christianity?

- M 10/13** **R:** BP ch. 8, 115-137; Apostles Creed & Nicene Creed **T:** creeds, beliefs, types
- W 10/15** **R:** “Ultimate Reality and Divine Beings” by Beth Davies-Stofka, under “Christianity” in the
Patheos.com Library: <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Christianity/Beliefs/Ultimate-Reality-and-Divine-Beings?offset=0&max=1>
R: “Atheism” and click to “About Atheism” <http://www.religioustolerance.org/atheist.htm>
Video clip: 30 Days: Atheism & Christianity **T:** The nature of belief itself
- F 10/17** **R:** “How Christians View Non-Christian Religions” **T:** Christianity and _____
http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_othe1.htm
Video clip: 30 Days: Islam & Christianity
Write Reader Response Three & submit via Moodle by midnight Fri., 10/17. Prompt given in class.

M 10/20 **MIDTERM EXAM in class**

Religious Pluralism Narratives

- W 10/22** **R:** Eck ch.1, p.1-21; **Plus:** explore *The Pluralism Project* website: <http://pluralism.org/>
- F 10/24** **R:** Eck ch.2, p.22-44 **T:** Religious diversity in American history
Write Reader Response Four & submit via Moodle by midnight Friday 10/24. Prompt given in class.

God-talk & Hinduism

- M 10/27** **R:** Eck ch.3, p.45-80 **T:** Names of God
- W 10/29** **R:** “Hinduism 101” at *Patheos.com*:
<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/whitehindu/2013/09/hinduism-101-what-do-hindus-believe/>
R: “Nine Beliefs of Hinduism” at *Hinduism Today*:
http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/wfchannel/index.php?wfc_cid=19
- F 10/31** **R:** James Cone, “God is Black” **T:** Images of God
Weekly Quiz #5

Incarnations

- M 11/3** **R:** Eck ch.4, p.81-117 **T:** Faces of God
- W 11/5** **R:** BP 4 **T:** Jesus in history
- F 11/7** **R:** “Who is Krishna?” *Patheos*: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/whitehindu/2013/08/who-is-krishna/>
R: Gospel of Mark
Weekly Quiz #6

Spirit & Community

- M 11/10** **R:** Eck ch.5, p.118-143 **T:** The Breath of God
- W 11/12** *Mindfulness practice & reflection* ~ <http://hafsite.org/media/pr/yoga-hindu-origins>
No Class ~ Professor attending conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico
Write Reader Response Five & submit via Moodle by midnight Wed., 11/12. Prompt given in class/online.
- F 11/14** **No Class ~ Professor attending conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico**

Spirit & Diversity

- M 11/17** **R:** Eck 6, p.144-165, & Acts 1-15 **T:** Spirit, community & religious practices
- W 11/19** **R:** Eck ch.7, p.166-199 **T:** Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism
- F 11/21** *In-class group work on applying theories of religion*
Weekly Quiz #7

Introducing Buddhism

- M 11/24** **R:** “Buddhism” articles at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/index.shtml>
+ click through on “Buddhism at a glance” and “Beliefs (Four Noble Truths & Karma)”

W 11/26 No Class ~ Thanksgiving Break

F 11/28 No Class ~ Thanksgiving Break

Living Buddha/Living Christ

M 12/1 R: Hanh foreword, introduction, ch.1, xiii-24

W 12/3 R: Hanh ch.3-4, p.25-59

F 12/5 R: Hanh ch.5-6, p.60-86
R: Martin Luther King, Jr., “Love in Action” and “Loving Your Enemies”
Weekly Quiz #8

Engaged Buddhism

M 12/8 R: Hanh ch.7-8, p.87-130

W 12/10 R: Hanh ch.9-10, p.131-198

F 12/12 *Mindfulness practice in Buddhism & in-class reflection; See: <http://plumvillage.org/>*
Weekly Quiz #9

Faiths in Practice

M 12/15 R: World Council of Churches website: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en>
“About Us” & “What We Do” ... plus select *two issues* about which to read & *report* in class
Comparative Analysis Paper due via email to criswold@mail.ic.edu by 11:59pm/midnight

Friday, December 19, 12:30 – 2:30pm ~ Final Exam ~

*(no exceptions, no exams given at other times ... you must take the final exam at this time scheduled by the Dean
... PLAN YOUR TRAVEL & SCHEDULE ACCORDINGLY !)*