

LIBERAL STUDIES 130: INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGION

North Island College, Fall 2017

Meeting Times: M, W 2:30 -3:50 pm

Meeting Place: DIS 203

Instructor: Dan Hinman-Smith

Office: Village G6

Office Hours: T-Th 1:00 - 2:00 pm (or by appointment)

Office Phone: 250-334-5000, Extension 4024

Home Phone: 250-336-0238

Web-Site: <http://www.misterdann.com/>

E-Mail: dan.hinmansmith@nic.bc.ca



Course Description

This course is designed as an introduction to the world's major religions, with an emphasis upon those of the Abrahamic tradition: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It combines an in-depth focus upon these three individual living faiths with study of the different scholarly approaches to understanding religion. Instruction will combine intensive reading, seminar discussion and lecture presentation.

Books

Crumb, Robert. *Book of Genesis*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009.

DK Publishing. *Illustrated Bible Story By Story*. New York: 2012.

Power, Carla. *If Oceans Were Ink: An Unlikely Friendship And A Journey To The Heart Of The Qur'an*. New York: Holt, 2015.

Khalidi, Tarif, trans. *Qur'an*. New York: Penguin, 2009.



"I'm Jewish and Don is Catholic, but we're raising the kids as wolves."

Optional Textbook: I have decided not to have a required textbook in LIB 130. We will be using a concise basic introductory BBC web-site as one substitute. However, if you would like a printed volume for your own reference, I would recommend any of the following as possibilities:

Oxtoby, Willard G. and Hussain, Amir, eds. [**World Religions: Western Traditions.**](#) New York: Oxford, 2010.

Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. [**Illustrated Guide To Judaism.**](#) New York: Lorenz Books, 2013.

Jordan, Michael. [**Islam: An Illustrated History.**](#) London: Carlton, 2002.

Bokhari, Raana, et al. [**Illustrated Encyclopedia Of Islam.**](#) New York: Lorenz Books. 2009.

Isbouts, Jean-Pierre. [**Story Of Christianity.**](#) New York: National Geographic, 2014.

The Teaching Company has a 30-hour Great Courses lecture series, "The Great World Religions," that is available from the North Island College library. It features superb six-hour introductions to five major faiths, including the three featured in this course.

Tentative Class Schedule

WEEK1

Wednesday, September 6

- a) Course Introduction
- b) Video: "Jerusalem" (National Geographic, 2013, 44 mins.)

WEEK 2

Monday, September 11

- a) Discussion: Of God And Abraham
- b) Slide Show: Of God And Abraham

Reading Assignment:

Listening Assignment:

Bruce Feiler, "[Children Of Abraham](#)," **On Being**, APR, April 4, 2003. To listen to the broadcast click on the Play Episode or Download Episode icons in the right margin.

Wednesday, September 13

- a) Course-Check-In
- b) Introduce Comparing Buddha, Jesus, And Muhammad Assignment
- c) Discussion: Entering Sacred Space -- Jerusalem
- d) Slide Show: Entering Sacred Space -- Jerusalem

Reading Assignment:

Browse extensively in [Entering Sacred Space -- Jerusalem](#) Discussion Topic.



WEEK 3

Monday, September 18

- a) Video: "A History of God" (100 mins.) [2001]

Wednesday, September 20

- a) Discussion: [Book Of Genesis](#)
- b) [If Time] Finish Video: "A History of God"

Reading Assignment:

Robert Crumb, *Book Of Genesis*

WEEK 4: On-Line Text: [Judaism](#)

Monday, September 25

- a) Discussion: Why Study Religion?
- b) Lecture: The Essence of Judaism (1)

Reading Assignment:

Read the materials on the introductory web-site of the American Academy of Religion: [Why Study Religion?](#)



Wednesday, September 27

- a) Discussion: The Mourner's Kaddish
- b) Continue Lecture: The Essence of Judaism (2)

Listening Assignment:

"[The Mourner's Kaddish](#)," Heart And Soul, BBC World Service, March 14, 2010.

WEEK 5

Monday, October 2

- a) ***Judaism Mini-Quiz (All questions for the quiz will be taken from the following web-site: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/>). See the [Judaism Study Guide](#) for a basic list of questions designed to help you prepare for this small quiz.
- b) Video: "Story Of The Jews" (60 mins.) [2013]

Wednesday, October 4

- a) Discussion: Judaism In The News
- b) Lecture: The Essence Of Judaism (3)

Reading Assignment:

Browse extensively in [Judaism In The News](#).

Listening Assignment:

Listen to at least one audio file and/or view at least one video file at [Judaism: Audio Links](#) and [Judaism: Video Links](#)



WEEK 6

Monday, October 9: NO CLASS -- THANKSGIVING

Wednesday, October 11

- a) Discussion: "[The History Of The Bible and Old Testament](#)," in *Illustrated Bible Story By Story*
- b) Finish Lecture: The Essence Of Judaism

Reading Assignment:

DK Publishing, *Illustrated Bible Story By Story* (Read Part 1 and 2: "The History Of The Bible and Old Testament," pp. 14-269).

WEEK 7

Monday, October 16: **On-Line Text:** [Christianity](#)

- a) Discussion: Comparing Buddha, Jesus And Muhammad
- b) Video: "The Face: Jesus In Art," 2008



Wednesday, October 18

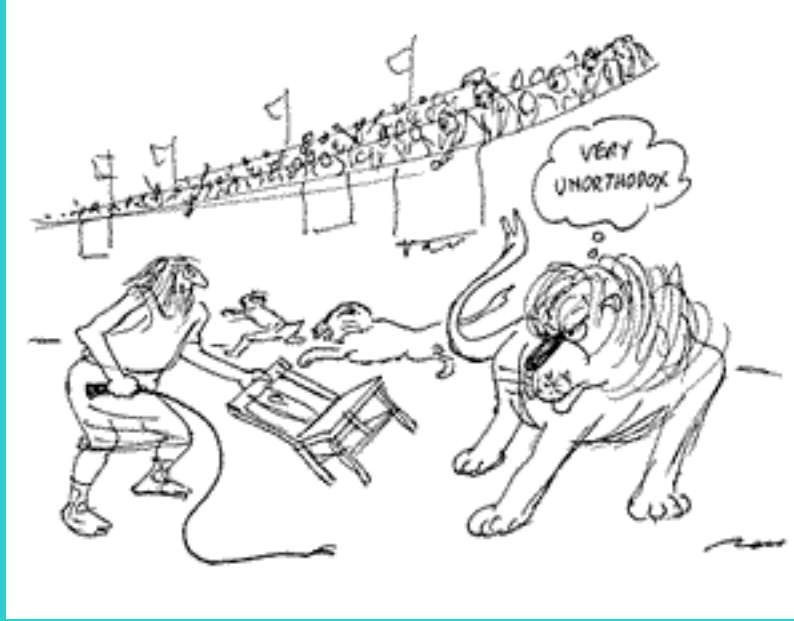
- a) Lecture: The Jesus Of History; The Christ Of Faith
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WEEK 8

Monday, October 23

- a) Video: "From Jesus To Christ: The First Christians" (60 mins.)

*****First Half Journal Due*****



Wednesday, October 25

- a) Discussion: Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, And James, The Brother Of Jesus
- b) Lecture: The Two Marys

Reading Assignment:

Browse extensively in [Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, And James, The Brother Of Jesus](#) Discussion Topic.

WEEK 9

Monday, October 30

- a) Lecture: Essence Of Christianity

Wednesday, November 1

NO CLASS



WEEK 10

Monday, November 6

- a) Discussion: "[The New Testament](#)," in *Illustrated Bible Story By Story*
- b) Discussion: The Lost Gospels
- c) Continue Lecture: Essence Of Christianity

Reading Assignment:

DK Publishing, *Illustrated Bible Story By Story* (Read Part 3: "The New Testament," pp.

Viewing Assignment:

Watch Pete Owen Jones's BBC documentary "[The Lost Gospels](#)".

Wednesday, November 8

- a) ***Christianity Mini-Quiz (All questions for the quiz will be taken from the following web-site: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/>). See the [Christianity Study Guide](#) for a basic list of questions designed to help you prepare for this very small quiz.
- b) Discussion: Christianity In The News
- c) Discussion: Christianity Audio Links And Video Links
- d) Finish Lecture: Essence Of Christianity

Reading Assignment:

Browse extensively in [Christianity In The News](#).

Listening Assignment:

Listen to at least one audio file and/or view at least one video file at [Christianity: Audio Links](#) and [Christianity: Video Links](#)

WEEK 11: On-Line Text: [Islam](#)

Monday, November 13: NO CLASS -- REMEMBRANCE DAY



Wednesday, November 15

- a) Discussion: The Black Cube
- b) Video: "Inside Mecca" (60 mins.)

Listening Assignment:



Listen to "[The Black Cube](#)," Heart And Soul, BBC World Service

(December 25, 2009).

WEEK 12:

Monday, November 20

- a) Video: The Life Of A Muhammad

Wednesday, November 22

CLASS CANCELLED

Viewing Assignment:

Watch either "[Muhammad: Legacy Of A Prophet](#)," 2005 (116 minutes) and/or



"The Life Of Prophet Muhammad," BBC.

[Episode 1, The Seeker:](#)

[Episode 2, Holy Wars:](#)

[Episode 3, Holy Peace:](#)

WEEK 13

Monday, November 27

- a) Lecture: "Recite In The Name Of Your Lord" -- The Essence Of Islam

Wednesday, November 29

- a) Discussion: [If Oceans Were Ink](#)
- b) Discussion: Islam In The News

Reading Assignment:

Carla Power, *If Oceans Were Ink: An Unlikely Friendship And A Journey To The Heart Of The Qur'an*

Browse extensively in [Islam In The News](#) and [Sacred Festivals In The News -- Islam](#).

Listening Assignment:

Listen to at least one audio file and/or view at least one video file at [Islam: Audio Links](#) and [Islam: Video Links](#).



WEEK 14

Monday, December 4

- a) ***Islam Mini-Quiz (All questions for the quiz will be taken from the following web-site: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/>). See the [Islam Study Guide](#) for a basic list of questions designed to help you prepare for this very small quiz.
- b) Discussion: Banning The Burqa
- c) Finish Lecture: "Recite In The Name Of Your Lord" -- The Essence Of Islam

Reading Assignment:

Wednesday, December 6

- a) Discussion: [The Qur'an](#)
- b) Discussion: Islam In The News
- c) Wrapping Up And Looking Ahead

Reading Assignment:

M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans., *Qur'an*

Reading Assignment:

Browse extensively in [Islam In The News](#) and [Sacred Festivals In The News -- Islam](#).

Listening Assignment:

Listen to at least one audio file and/or view at least one video file at [Islam: Audio Links](#) and [Islam: Video Links](#).

****Second Half Journal Due Wednesday, December 13**



Evaluation

Reflections On Entering The Course	1%
Mini-Quizzes	6% (2% x 3)
First-Half Journal	25%
Second-Half Journal	25%
Overall Journal (Not an extra assignment and typically just the average of the First-Half and Second-Half Journals)	23%
Class Participation	20%

a) Reflections On Entering The Course (1%)

Who are you? Where are you from? What are your interests? Why are you taking this course? How would you begin to make sense of your own thoughts about religion and religious studies? Do you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions as we start the course? Write two or three informal paragraphs for the second class of the semester to introduce yourself to me.

b) Mini-Quizzes (6%)

There will be three miniature short-answer ten-minute quizzes spaced throughout the semester.

c) The Journal (73%)

The student journal is the main assignment in this class. The purpose of the journal is to provide you the opportunity for frequent thoughtful, analytical and personal commentary upon course—related material. The advantages of the journal, to my mind, are that it breaks work down into regular and manageable chunks, and that it enables you to seize hold of the curriculum in a way which reflects your own interests and style.

The journal will be graded in two installments. It will be due at the mid-point of the semester. This installment will count for 25% of the course grade. The journal will then again be due at the end of the semester. This installment will include both a 25% grade for the second installment and a 23% grade for the journal in its entirety (most likely an average of the first and second installment grades).

The journal is premised upon the assumption that you will not just be regularly reflecting upon the course material but regularly writing about it as well as part of that reflective practice. I recommend that you write at least one journal entry per week. Each journal installment thus might include 7+ entries. The individual entries can vary in style, format, and length.

In order to give you a basic structure and to clearly communicate my expectations, I will specify certain mandated entries and suggest a format for reading responses. However, while it is required that all work in the journal be your own original writing, you are encouraged to be imaginative in your own investigation and analysis of World Religion. I myself will be learning much about religion as the course proceeds and part of the logic of the Journal is that it provides you with some space to pursue topics of particular interest.

The excellent journal will:

- be 30+ pages long.**

- include the Thoughts On Entering The Course and Reflections Upon Leaving The Course entries.**

- include Comparing Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad mini-project.**

- include analytical reviews of the 4 books.**

- include at least 3 Discussion Topic commentaries.**

- include at least 4 reading, audio responses and or video responses to such items as the required or supplementary articles and audio/video features, or Religion in the News readings.**

- include other entries that draw upon class material and/or your independent research.**

- demonstrate that you are approaching the readings and the course with care and effort.**

The above list of entries is meant as a firm guide rather than as an absolutely-everything-here must be completed. The embedded tension within the assignment between structure and flexibility is deliberate. It is possible to excel in the course either by closely following my guidelines or by diverging from these significantly. Do not hesitate to take risks and to express your own opinions. It's fine if some entries read more like summary than analysis; it can be useful to put what you have learned from an article or a video into your own words. Try, however, not to succumb to the temptation to write in an easy, stream—of—consciousness style. There is no inherent tension between analytical rigour and personal insight. This is an assignment designed to encourage and to reward extensive student effort and learning. The work-load is heavy but my expectation is that a good-faith approach to the course will lead to strong success. You can include print-outs from the internet in the journal or quote passages but are expected to identify that which is not your own original work. Formal footnoting is not required but plagiarized/cut-and-pasted material will likely lead to a failing grade for the course. Likewise, you should not recycle any writings from other classes.

d) Class Participation (20%)

The class participation grade will be based upon attendance; pre-class preparation; and the willingness to contribute thoughtfully to full-class and small-group discussion. Although attendance is not required, I will take roll, and those who are not in class regularly will receive a poor grade for this component of the course. I would like to encourage a classroom environment in which all are eager to share their ideas. Particularly shy students will not be penalized for class participation so long that they attend faithfully.

A Note On Plagiarism

Everything that you hand in should be your original work unless otherwise indicated. Violations of this policy may result in failing an assignment or the course in its entirety. Please talk to me if you have any uncertainty about what is permitted here.

Welcome To The Course



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