



Religious Worlds and Worldviews

Instructor

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Institution

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Description

This course invites you to enhance and extend your learning about life and culture by considering "religion," here understood as amalgams of culturally embedded stories, beliefs and practices manifesting realities perceived as ultimate or sacred. This ultimacy or sacrality is experienced in its capacity to provide order and meaning, as well as to challenge and transform individuals and societies.

Our explorations will be selective and hardly comprehensive. We will consider religion in three stages:

1. We will investigate Paul Tillich's contemporary analysis of religion, which argues that "faith" is "the state of being ultimately concerned." This hypothesis then relates faith to the intellect, will and emotions; to symbol, myth and ritual; to core components of personal and communal existence; and to significant aspects of the modern worldview, especially regarding science, justice, historical consciousness and religious pluralism.
2. We will explore Christianity, studying the Gospel of Mark and St. Augustine's *Confessions*, classic texts that have shaped the development of the Christian tradition. We will consider these writings in their own contexts and in light of Tillich's book. Then we will read Rita Nakashima Brock's *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*, a contemporary feminist revisioning of Christianity. We will consider Brock in terms of her own context and concerns, as well as in dialogue with Tillich, Mark and Augustine.
3. We will explore Buddhism, studying the *Buddha-karita* of Asvaghosha and the *Vagrakkhedika* or "Diamond Cutter," classic texts that have shaped the development of the Buddhist tradition. Then we will read Sulak Sivaraksa's *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*, a contemporary socially engaged revisioning of Buddhism. We will consider each of these readings in terms of their own contexts and concerns, as well as in dialogue with our course's earlier readings.

Learning Goals

One of my convictions (which is stated in the Department of Religious Studies program brochure) is that "intellectual and social maturity requires *understanding* the unique contributions, both positive and negative, of the religious traditions of the world to culture and consciousness. It also requires *coming to terms with* questions of ultimacy [emphasis added]." Therefore, throughout the quarter, you will be asked to demonstrate:

1. **accurate knowledge** about the important themes and figures we have considered, so that you are able to present and support significant facts correctly, clearly and thoroughly;
2. **plausible analyses and comparisons**, so that you can explain how complex realities are constructed and fit together, and suggest viable connections, applications and patterns;
3. **articulate assessment** of the substance of this course, so that you can develop and support your own reasoned evaluations and creative responses, based on clearly formulated criteria.

Requirements

1. **Assignment preparation.** Come to class having done the readings, taken careful notes, and having tried your best to find out the meanings of terms and concepts in the readings that are unfamiliar to you before you come to class.
2. **Class discussions.** Asking questions, raising concerns, offering your own ideas is a crucial component of the learning process. Be an active learner.
3. **Logbook.** You will be asked to keep a logbook throughout the quarter. According to Webster, the standard definition of a "logbook" is

a daily record of a ship's speed or progress or the full record of a ship's voyage including notes on the ship's position at various times and including notes on the weather and on any important incidents occurring during the voyage.

Think of the ship as yourself, of this course as the voyage, then set sail with the metaphor. Purchase a notebook and make it your own. Your logbook is an extraordinary place for you to think critically and creatively, ask hard questions, and explore your perceptions imaginatively in writing. Here's how Anne McCrary Sullivan describes it:

*Your [logbook] is like a little box where you stick all sorts of odds and ends, bits and pieces of your thinking and your daily life. You keep them there so they won't get lost, trash and treasure all jumbled together. Then, from time to time, you go back, pick and sort through what you've put in the box, see what catches your attention and shines. Those bits that shine, you can take out of the box and examine. These become the basis of future writing. The more you translate experience into language, the better you will be at it. Why? I don't know. I only know that if you let it, it will happen. So write, write, write about anything and everything. Write in the morning. Write in the afternoon. Write at night. If you do it enough, it will become so natural and spontaneous that it will almost be a reflex. And you may be surprised at how good some of that writing is ("Liberating the Urge to Write," *English Journal*, November 1989, p. 57).*

Some of what you write will be private, some more public, shared with me and/or others in the class. Always, you will decide what is to be shared.

While the **papers** (see #4 below) you write for this course will be the primary public *product* of your work, it will be the culmination of an ongoing writing *process* that begins and evolves in your logbook. What you write there will be influenced by discussions, films, and readings. And the relationship works both ways: your

participation in discussions will be shaped by previous logbook entries. Often I will guide you in the writing, asking you to make particular sorts of entries during class time and outside of class.

You should be making at least two entries per week outside of class. Be sure to date all logbook entries and indicate the location where each one is written. Bring the logbook with you to every class session. I will collect it several times throughout the quarter.

4. **Papers.** You will be asked to write three papers, each approximately 5 pages, typed and double spaced. These papers will allow you to focus on particular themes and issues of the course, again demonstrating your knowledge, analysis, comparison, and assessment of the materials considered.

Paper 1 assigned: April 10 Due in class: April 17

Paper 2 assigned: May 6 Due in my office: By noon, May 14 (Wednesday)

Paper 3 assigned: June 5 Due in my office: By noon, June 13 (Friday)

Faculty / Student Commitments

I promise to give you my best self: to use whatever talent, energy and knowledge I have to help awaken your intellectual curiosity; to encourage and respect you; and to help you to extend your capacities for careful and trenchant thinking, reading, writing and speaking. I promise to meet with you whenever necessary, and to respond to your work as honestly and promptly as possible.

If you remain registered for this course I will take that as your promise to strive to be open to new ways of seeing the world; to respect the learning process by your timely attendance and careful preparation of readings, using your logbook as a principal and continuous means of discovering for yourself ways in which you can vigorously participate in and stimulate discussion; and to respect the experiences, beliefs and informed opinions of others in the class even as you challenge us to think more carefully and trenchantly.

Grading

· 15% of your final grade will be based on my assessment of your overall **course preparedness and involvement**, including regular and prompt attendance, and informed participation in class discussions.

· 25% of your grade will be based on my assessment of your **logbook**, taking into account the number of entries made, the number of dates when entries were made, the places where entries were made (i.e. in and outside of class), and the degree of engagement shown.

· Each of your three **papers** will count for 20% of your final grade.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and cheating, like other forms of academic dishonesty, are always serious matters. This course adheres to the University's policies on plagiarism and cheating as stated in the current *Student Handbook*. Consult the manual, "Writing in the Liberal Studies," for instructions about proper citation or acknowledgment of the work of others in class assignments.

Required Texts

1. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*. HarperCollins, 1958.

2. *The Gospel According to Mark* (with notes), photocopied material. A small fee will be collected.
3. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding. New City Press, 1997.
4. Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*. Crossroad NY, 1994.
5. *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, ed. E. B. Cowell. Dover Publications, 1987.
6. Sulak Sivaraksa, *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*. Parallax Press, 1992.

These texts are available at the Lincoln Park Campus Bookstore. They have also been placed on reserve in the Richardson Library (LPC).

Schedule of Topics, Readings and Due Dates

TUES APRIL 1: Introduction and syllabus.

I. Considering Religion: A Contemporary Hypothesis

THURS APRIL 3: Tillich, pages 1-40 (I. What Faith Is; II. What Faith Is Not).

TUES APRIL 8: Tillich, pages 41-98 (III. Symbols of Faith; IV. Types of Faith; V. The Truth of Faith).

THURS APRIL 10: Tillich, pages 99-127 (VI. The Life of Faith; Conclusion: The Possibility and Necessity of Faith Today). *Paper One assigned.*

II. A. Considering Christianity: Classic Texts

TUES APRIL 15: The Gospel According to Mark (photocopied material).

THURS APRIL 17: *Paper One due in class. Discussion of papers.*

TUES APRIL 22: Augustine, pages 9-91 (Introduction; Book I. Infancy and Boyhood; Book II. Adolescence; Book III. Student Years at Carthage).

THURS APRIL 24: Augustine, pages 92-157 (Book IV. Augustine the Manichee; Book V. Faustus at Carthage, Augustine to Rome and Milan; Book VI. Milan, 385: Progress, Friends, Perplexities).

TUES APRIL 29: Augustine, pages 158-236 (Book VII. Neo-Platonism Frees Augustine's Mind; Book VIII. Conversion; Book IX. Death and Rebirth).

THURS MAY 1: Augustine, pages 237-311 (Book X. Memory; Book XI. Time and Eternity).

TUES MAY 6: Augustine, pages 312-380 (Book XII. Heaven and Earth; Book XIII. The Days of Creation, Prophecy of the Church). *Paper 2 assigned.*

II. B. Considering Christianity: A Contemporary Revision

THURS MAY 8: Brock, pages xi-49 (Introduction; 1. The Character of Being Human and the Making of Human Character; 2. The Heart of Erotic Power: The Incarnation of Divine Love).

TUES MAY 13: Brock, pages 50-108 (3. The Feminist Redemption of Christ; 4. The Gospel of Mark: Erotic Power at Work; 5. The Gospel of Mark: Erotic Power in the Shadows; Epilogue: Journeying by Heart).

WED MAY 14: *Paper 2 due by noon in my office, SAC 430.*

III. A. Considering Buddhism: Classic Texts

THURS MAY 15: Cowell Part I, pages vi-48 (Introduction; *Buddha-karita* Books I-IV).

TUES MAY 20: Cowell Part I, pages 49-136 (*Buddha-karita* Books V-XII).

THURS MAY 22: Cowell Part I, pages 137-201 (*Buddha-karita* Books XIII-XVII).

TUES MAY 27: Cowell Part II, pages 111-144 (*Vagrakkhedika* or "Diamond Cutter").

III. B. Considering Buddhism: A Contemporary Revision

THURS MAY 29: Sivaraksa, pages vii-54 (Preface/Forward/Introduction; 1. The Religion of Consumerism; 2. A Thai Monologue with Japan; 3. The "Think-Big" Strategy of Development; 4. Quantifying Development; 5. Development as if People Mattered).

TUES JUNE 3: Sivaraksa, pages 57-129 (6. Religion and Social Change; 7. Buddhism with a Small "b"; 8. The Five Moral Precepts; 9. Buddhism and Nonviolence; 10. Buddhist Women--Past and Present; 11. A Buddhist Model of Society; Appendix 1. Regression of Democracy in Siam; Appendix 2. Why I Chose to Resist the NPKC).

IV. Considering Religion: Concluding Reflections

THURS JUNE 5: Discussion. *Paper 3 assigned. Paper 3 is due in my office, SAC 430, by noon, June 13 (Friday).*

Additional Requirements

1. Films.

You are required to view *at least four* films during the quarter, according to the following guidelines:

a. View at least one of the following films between April 1 and April 17 and **write a logbook entry** on the film(s). These can be checked out from DePaul's Richardson Library (LPC), or viewed inside the library.

Frontiers of Peace: Jainism in India, VIDEOCAS.294.4F935. Explores Jainism's radical teachings on nonviolence, its adaptations with the modern world, and its continuing appeal. 40 minutes.

Reflections on The Long search: Loose Ends, VIDEOCAS.291L849SV.13. Theater director Ronald Eyre presents some personal reflections on his pilgrimage throughout the world in which he explored the religious beliefs and experiences of various peoples. 52 minutes.

Hopi, Songs of the Fourth World, MEDIA.979.1H792F. An in-depth look at the meaning of the Hopi way, a philosophy of living in balance with nature. Describes the Hopi philosophy of life, death, and renewal as revealed in the interweaving life cycle of humans and corn plants. 58 minutes.

Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth, Part One, "The Hero's Adventure," VIDEOCAS.808.8J83M. Explores symbol, myth and ritual in classical mythology and

contemporary society. 60 minutes.

The Sea of Faith, MEDIA.200S438C. pt. 1. Mechanical Universe. Explores faith in the light of aspects of the modern scientific worldview. 45 minutes.

b. View at least one of the following films between April 18 and May 1 and **write a logbook entry** on the film(s).

Born Again, VIDEOCAS.286B736A. Documentary about life in a Fundamentalist Baptist church. 87 minutes.

Chartres Cathedral, MEDIA.726.09C486. An in-depth study of this famous cathedral. "What is the special character of Chartres Cathedral that we should call it the greatest of the medieval churches?" Narrated by John Canaday, Chartres becomes a visible fusion of faith, engineering. . . . 50 minutes.

Cathedral, VIDEOCAS.726C363U. Takes viewers back to the 12th century in order to understand why and how the great cathedrals of Europe were built. Alternates between modern footage and animation. 59 minutes.

Joy Unspeakable, VIDEOCAS.289.9J88. Focuses on the faith and spirit of the Oneness Pentecostals in southern Indiana, showing worshippers at a regular Sunday service, a gospel rock concert, and a camp meeting revival. 59 minutes.

Protestant Spirit USA, VIDEOCAS.291L849SV.1. Visits various Protestant churches in Indianapolis and observes how services are conducted. Examines the reasons for the vigor of religious expression among both Black and white American Protestants. 52 minutes.

c. View at least one of the following films between May 2 and May 15 and **write a logbook entry** on the film(s) .

All that I Am, VIDEOCAS.270.1A416M1994. An examination of women's roles and self-identity in the context of Christianity. 55 minutes.

Facing Evil, VIDEOCAS.306W975F. Bill Moyers joins a three-day Symposium on "Understanding evil" held at the Institute for the Humanities, in Salado, Texas. The video shows how people cope with evil by sharing their experiences. 88 minutes.

My Soul Proclaims: the Voices of Catholic Women., VIDEOCAS.271.90022M995C. Captures the historical and contemporary contributions of Catholic women in the Church and society. 60 minutes.

Jesus of Montreal. Feature film. A troupe of underemployed actors joins a charismatic young man to help a church update its annual Passion play, which attracts a city full of hope, praise, temptation and condemnation. 119 minutes. Not available at DePaul's library. Check a video store or public library.

The Last Temptation of Christ. Feature film. In this controversial movie, Jesus, as both fully human and fully divine, is viewed as free of sin but subject to all temptations, including sexual ones. 163 minutes. Not available at DePaul's library. Check a video store or public library.

d. View at least one of the following films between May 16 and May 29 and **write a logbook entry** on

the film(s).

Little Buddha, VIDEOCAS.791.43L779B1994. Feature film. In a big American city, a boy and his family discover a story about a prince in a land of miracles. But the miracle becomes real when Tibetan monks appear, searching for their leader's reincarnation -- who they believe has been reborn in the boy. . . . 123 minutes.

Requiem for a Faith, MEDIA.915.15R427H1986. Describes the religion of the people of Tibet. Discusses the doctrines and the role of the lamas in the religious culture of the people of Tibet. 30 minutes.

Footprint of the Buddha, VIDEOCAS.291L849SV.3. Visits Sri Lanka and India to discover the type of Buddhism practiced throughout Southeast Asia. Includes talks with monks, school children, novices, and housewives who describe their own religious experiences and discuss the high moral standards demanded by Buddhism. 52 minutes.

The Land of the Disappearing Buddha, VIDEOCAS.291L849SV.9. Visits Japan to investigate the Japanese experience of Buddhist worship and the complexities of Zen. 52 minutes.

The Palace of Supreme Bliss: the Kalachakra Mandala in Tibetan Buddhism, VIDEOCAS.294.3438P153R1994. In June of 1991 a group of Tibetan Buddhist monks from the Namgyal monastery in India came to the Field Museum of Chicago to create the Kalachakra, or "wheel of time," sand mandala. For three weeks the monks worked, chanted, meditated, and talked. . . . 32 minutes.

2. Visakha Festival.

On **Saturday, May 24**, attend *at least two hours* of the Buddhist Council of the Midwest Visakha Festival at the Buddhadharma Meditation Center, 8910 S. Kingery Highway, Hinsdale, IL. This is a festival marking the day of the birth, enlightenment and passing away of the Gautama Buddha. **Write a logbook entry** afterwards.

Schedule:

9:30 a.m. Religious service in English

9:30 a.m.-9:00 p.m. Exhibits

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Food available for purchase

5:00-6:00 p.m. Food available for purchase

1:30-5:00 p.m. Meditation instruction

7:00-9:00 p.m. Cultural performances

Select a location 

http://www.wlu.ca/~wwwaar/syllabi/religious_worlds_worldviews-carlson.html

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