



THEO 107: INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES

John Felice Rome Center

Spring 2024

Tuesdays & Thursdays | 9:00-10:15am

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10.15-11.15am by appointment

Course Description

Religions continue to dominate the world stage, as they have down countless centuries. Today they appear every day in the news media as a backdrop to world events, often in conflict zones. To understand the world you live in requires you to understand religions, to recognize what are their commonalities, what are their differences, how they impact on people's lives, how they have effected and continue to affect the world around you.

In the first two weeks you'll be introduced to the subject of Religious Studies, identifying its methods of studying religions as distinct from theological approaches. Beginning with a broad perspective, you will examine the dissimilarities and similarities between traditions associated with the West (Judaism Christianity and Islam), and you'll be introduced to traditions of Asian origin.

As you begin to look more closely at different traditions, their distinctive beliefs and practices become more evident. Taking the three themes: Sacred Text, Ritual and Pilgrimage, you will have the opportunity to observe and analyse how these religious phenomena shape the identities of particular traditions and their faith communities. A recurring theme throughout the course will be to highlight how religions meet contemporary global challenges. In this way you will be studying religious belief as a living phenomenon, constantly evolving in the modern world.

A central feature of this course is the project. Each of you, with advice and supervision, will select a central feature of a religion, choosing from, for example, festivals, pilgrimages, rites of passage rituals.

Towards the end of the semester we'll bring together the project and classroom work. You will each present and discuss your research, identifying wider from your work, which we can integrate with the ideas we have been addressing during classes.

Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will have the ability to:

1. Identify and explain key aspects of diverse religions from a theological, historical and global perspective
2. Develop research skills to construct a project on a religious site and/or practice
3. Synthesize information from a variety of academic disciplines as it relates to understanding religious phenomena
4. Understand and evaluate secondary sources in relation to primary texts
5. Develop and practice their technical and presentation abilities

Required Text / Materials

All required readings are posted on **SAKAI**, to be read by all students in order to complete the reading logs and to prepare for each class.

Reading Logs

This exercise runs weekly for the duration of the course. By completing these reading log tasks you will be: 2



1. Well prepared for class each week and equipped to participate in group discussions
2. Developing your reading and comprehension skills
3. Steadily increasing your knowledge base
4. At the same time compiling a learning journal constructively and reflectively

Each week the reading log task will include questions based on the reading/s for that week which are posted on **SAKAI**. You can revise your answers/comments in the light of the class material and discussion up to the appropriate submission dates – Midterm and Finals.

The Project

Early in the semester you'll begin work on your project. In project workshops, during class time, we'll discuss developing a Project Plan and a schedule for completion. The project workshops continue through the semester to ensure your project is underway and progressing.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one absence.
- For all classes meeting twice a week, students cannot incur more than two absences.
- For all classes meeting three times a week, students cannot incur more than two absences.

This course meets ___ a week, thus a total of ___ absence(s) will be permitted. **Absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade.**

The collective health of the JFRC is everyone's responsibility. Do not attend class if you are ill.

Discussions, participation and project presentation

At the end of each class, **a set of questions will be sent by email to all the students-** or posted on Sakai- directly related to the previous class. **Thanking notes carefully taken during each class and a careful study (not only reading) of the texts assigned,** students should be able, when asked during each class, to answer the questions. This will be also a good occasion to put the instructor further questions or make comments on previous class

Midterm and Final Exams will be in the form of an essay composed in class on one or more questions.

Assesment Components

Group and class discussions, participation	25%
Midterm	20%
Project	25%
Final Exam	25%



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Grading

94-100: A
90-93: A-
87-89: B+
84-86: B
80-83: B-
77-79: C+
74-76: C
70-73: C-
67-69: D+
60-66: D
59 or lower: F

Academic Honesty

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Loyola University Chicago, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle.

Failing to meet the following academic integrity standards is a serious violation of personal honesty and the academic ideals that bind the University into a learning community. These standards apply to both individual and group assignments. Individuals working in a group may be held responsible if one of the group members has violated one or more of these standards.

1. Students may not plagiarize; the use of AI is considered plagiarism too and treated as such.
2. Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).
3. Students may not fabricate data.
4. Students may not collude.
5. Students may not cheat.
6. Student may not facilitate academic misconduct.

Follow this link for more details about these standards, sanctions, and academic misconduct procedures:
(https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml)

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. ***As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.***



Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Course Schedule

Part 1 Introduction to Studying Religions

Week One Introduction to Religious Studies Religions and global issues today

Week Two Our father Abraham - introducing Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Week Three Re-birth, release and devotion - introducing Asian religious traditions

Week Four Judaism – The chosen people and the land of promise

Islam – The many faces of Jihad

Part 2 Sacred Text – Scripture and interpretation shaping traditions

Week Five The Hebrew Bible - Jewish narrative and Law Torah, Talmud and Midrash

Week Six Bible and Tradition –understanding revelation Scripture alone vs the Magisterium

Week Seven Midterm Assignments – completion and submission

SPRING BREAK

Week Eight Friday Class - Project Workshop

Part 3 Ritual – Formation of identity and beliefs

Week Nine Rituals and their significance 1. Sacraments and Festivals

Week Ten Rituals and their significance 2. Birth and Death

Part 4 Pilgrimage

Week Eleven Introduction: spiritual/material experience - the river Ganges in Hindu myth, life and death

Week Twelve Mecca and Jerusalem – idealism and practice



Week Thirteen Ancient and new spiritual pathways - The Francigena: Canterbury to Rome - The Camino: Santiago de Compostella to Finisterre

Week Fourteen Project Presentations