Theo 107: Introduction to Religious Studies
Spring Semester 2018
Wednesdays | 10:00am-12:30pm
Dr. Deborah F. Sawyer
Email: dsawyer2@luc.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00-3:00pm, or by appointment

Course Description
In the first two weeks of this course you will be introduced to the subject of Religious Studies, identifying its methods of studying religions as distinct from theological approaches. Taking a broad perspective, you will also begin to examine the dissimilarities and similarities between traditions associated with the West, along with their historical colonial impact, and those 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.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of this class, students should be able to:

- Understand the complexities involved in studying the origins and contemporary beliefs and practices of diverse religious traditions
- Determine the appropriate methods and approaches to studying religions
- Apply their research skills to construct a well-informed argument in writing and orally

Required Text / Materials
- There will be a Class Reader for assigned material, including extracts from World Religions Today, Sixth Edition, John L. Esposito, Darrell J. Fasching, and Todd T. Lewis, Oxford University Press, 2017
- Materials posted on Sakai

Weekly sections of the Reader and/or materials posted on Sakai will be allocated and read by all students in preparation for the class. Each week one or two students will offer a paper to introduce the seminar discussion.

Attendance Policy
In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy:

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

This course meets once a week, thus a total of one unexcused absence will be permitted. Unexcused absences beyond these will result in a lowering of your final grade.

**Evaluation**
- Participation: 15%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Paper: 20%
- Presentation: 15%
- Final Exam: 30%

**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**
Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago’s guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola’s standards here: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism according to the LUC Student Handbook.

**Disabilities**
Students with documented disabilities who wish to discuss academic accommodations should contact me the first week of class, as well as the Senior Academic Services Advisor.

**Written assignment**
There will be one written paper, topics will be given out in class and posted on Sakai, to be submitted during Week 9. Late submission without permission will result in grade reduction.

**Class presentations**
The presentation should last 15 minutes and:
- Briefly summarise the set reading for the topic
- Include comment based on further reading if recommended
- Identify any material that needs clarification
- Provide questions for the class to discuss and facilitate the discussion

Students should come and see me to discuss their presentation prior to the week they are presenting.

**Exams**
The midterm and the final exams will combine essay writing with short questions.

**Proposed Schedule**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Text/ Assignment</th>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Introduction to Studying Religions</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week One</strong></td>
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<td>Introduction to Religious Studies</td>
<td>Case study: Malala Yousafzai</td>
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<td>Religions and global issues today</td>
<td>Sakai/Reader</td>
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<td><strong>Week Two</strong></td>
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<td>Our father Abraham</td>
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<td>- introducing Judaism, Islam and Christianity</td>
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<td>Re-birth, release and devotion</td>
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<td>- introducing Asian religious traditions</td>
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<td><strong>Week Three</strong></td>
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<td>Judaism – The people and land of promise</td>
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<td>Islam – The many faces of Jihad</td>
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<td>Catholic Christianity – identity, faith and global outlook</td>
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<td><strong>Sacred Text – Scripture and interpretation shaping traditions</strong></td>
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<td>Torah, Talmud and Midrash - Jewish narrative and Law</td>
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<td>Scripture and Tradition – Catholic understanding of revelation</td>
<td>Dei verbum Sakai/Reader</td>
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<td>Midterm Review and Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td><strong>Ritual – Formation of identity and beliefs</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week Nine</strong></td>
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<td>Circumcision – ‘covenant’ for Jews and Muslims</td>
<td>Sakai/Reader</td>
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<td>- contemporary critique voiced by Jewish and Muslim women</td>
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Week Ten
Baptism and the meaning of ‘sacrament’, Sakai/Reader
- individuals/communities, inclusion/exclusion

Pilgrimage – Faith as a journey

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

Week Twelve
Mecca and Jerusalem
– idealism and practice Sakai/Reader

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

Week Fourteen
Review of class presentations and course review
Final Exams