

THEO 107: Introduction to Religious Studies

John Felice Rome Center

Spring 2023

Tue – Thu, 9:00-10:15

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Office Hours: Tue – Thu, 10:15-11:15

Course Description

As a foundational core course, Theo 107 will examine scripture, belief and practices in the historical and social context of religion. We will examine doctrine, ritual, scripture, mysticism, pilgrimage, and myth in the local religions of Greece and Rome and in the religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Zen, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In comparing and contrasting the worldviews of these religions, we will have an opportunity to appreciate the wide variety of methods used by Religious Studies scholars that make this kind of dialogue possible and worthwhile. Special attention will be paid to the history and philosophy of religion as crucial standpoints that help us to grasp the archetypes or models of religion embedded in these traditions.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
 - a. Know the basic history of each religion: important names, dates, places, and how one religion may have influenced the origin and/or development of another.
 - b. Know the worldview of each religion as expressed in philosophical and/or theological language.
 - c. Compare and contrast the religious worldviews of the religions treated in the course.
2. Identify the basic beliefs of the Catholic Church.
3. Compare and contrast different religious systems and philosophical worldviews.

Required Text / Materials

Moleski, *Judging Religions Justly: A Catholic Introduction to Religious Studies*

JRJ is available to rent or purchase through the [Cognella online store](#). I do not receive any royalties on the sale of this book to my students. It costs \$30 to rent for six months, \$36 to own permanently. Printed copies of the book are available, but at an absurd price (1 used for € 81,00 on Amazon). I strongly recommend that the bookstore not stock them.

Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*. Any edition will do. I will make a [pdf version available](#) by Gia Fu Feng & Jane English, with comments and layout by Thomas Knierim.

C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. There are many editions available. My notes will be keyed to the Signature Classics edition, which is available in Kindle format. Digital Edition March 2021. ISBN: 978-0-06-194743-8 Version 03082021. Print ISBN: 978-0-06-065288-3.

A modern, annotated edition of the Bible (*New American Bible* highly recommended)
I will provide links to the online edition of the NAB.

Assigned notes and readings posted on Sakai.

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 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 twice a week, thus a total of two unexcused absence(s) will be permitted. **Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the “approved limit”.**

The collective health of the JFRC is everyone’s responsibility. DO NOT ATTEND CLASS IF YOU ARE ILL.

Assessment Components

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| • Participation | 10% |
| • Midterm Exams (2, each worth 10%) | 20% |
| • Reaction Papers (3, each worth 5%) | 15% |
| • Formal Essays (3: 7%, 8%, 10%) | 25% |
| • Final Exam (cumulative) | 25% |

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 to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor.

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.

Office hours

As a general rule, I plan to be available for an hour after each class. I will feel free to leave earlier if no one has indicated an interest in seeing me that day. We can meet by Zoom at other times by appointment.

**Non-academic Goals**

I hope and expect that students will think about the great questions that face us all in life. Reflective awareness cannot be imposed as an academic task, but perhaps the course will plant seeds that may bear fruit sooner or later.

Who am I?

Where did I come from?

Where am I going?

What is the meaning of my life?

What will make me happy?

How shall I deal with suffering in my life?

What will become of me when I die?

What is the nature of ultimate reality?

Is there a God? If so, what kind of God? If not, then what?

Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.

The Agnostic's Prayer

Oh, God, if there is a God, save me, if there is a me.

Course Schedule — the sequence of assignments is correct, but dates may need to be revised.

Week	Date	Focus	reading	writing
January				
1	Tue 17	Intro / Newman	Syllabus, JRJ vii-19.	
	Thu 19	Greco-Roman mythology	JRJ 60-62; mythology handout.	
2	Tue 24	Hinduism	JRJ 23-30.	Reaction Paper #1
	Thu 26			
	Tue 31	Buddhism	JRJ 31-36.	
February				
3		Confucianism	JRJ 37-43.	
	Thu 2			
4	Tue 7	Taoism	JRJ 45-51. <i>Tao Te Ching</i> .	
	Thu 9	Zen	JRJ 51-53.	
5	Tue 14			
	Thu 16	Mid-Term #1 (10% of grade)		
6	Tue 21	Judaism	Genesis 1 and 2	Essay #1 (AW rule)
	Thu 23	History of Israel	JRJ 57-64.	
	Tue 28	Ps 2, 89, 137	JRJ 65-81.	
March			JRJ 81-97.	
7				
	Thu 2			
— spring break —				
8	Tue 14			Reaction Paper #2
	Thu 16			
9	Tue 21	Mid-Term #2 (10% of grade; cumulative)		
	Thu 23	Christianity — Infancy Narratives	Mt 1–2, Lk 1–2; JRJ 99-102.	Essay #2 (AW rule)
10	Tue 28			
	Thu 30	Resurrection Narratives	Mt 28, Mk 16, Lk 24, Jn 20–21	
April				
11	Tue 4	Acts 2, 10, 15	JRJ 102-120.	
	Thu 6		JRJ 121-154. <i>Mere Christianity</i> .	
12	Tue 11			Reaction Paper #3
13	Tue 18	Islam	JRJ 165-176.	
	Thu 20			
14	Tue 25			
	Thu 27	Judgment Day	JRJ 181-205.	Essay #3 (no AW rule) ¹
		Final Exam (25% of grade; cumulative)		

Alan Weinblatt Memorial Paper Policy

If you get the paper to me before I hand the other papers back, it will count for full credit; otherwise, you get nothing. If you like this policy, pray for Alan Weinblatt; if you don't like it, then get your papers in on time!

<NB: Many teachers do not like this policy. Don't try to play the Alan Weinblatt game with them!>

¹ Because there are no more classes, we cannot play the Alan Weinblatt game. The actual due date for the third essay will be 12 hours before I have to submit the final grades. I note the assignment here as a reminder that it is something you *must* complete.

Reaction Papers: *personal religious reflection*

A reaction paper is an informal writing assignment.

Required length: **500 words** as counted by Microsoft Word. This page contains about 434 words as I finish this draft.

Format: your choice. You must submit the RP as a Microsoft document.

You will receive 5 points if you hand in the full assignment.

The reaction papers are not graded on spelling, grammar, syntax, organization, coherence, or writing style. The goal is that you spend time doing some thinking and writing about what matters most to you. The content must be **your own personal reflections**, and the paper must deal in some way with **religious issues**. Other than that, there is no assigned topic.

I value reaction papers very highly. They have a profound effect on the way I approach the courses. Your reflections teach me about your questions, concerns, and values. Each set of papers gives me a chance to see what matters to the class. I hope you enjoy writing them as much as I enjoy reading them.

You may, of course, react to assigned readings, classes, or other aspects of the course. You are not obliged to do so. You may take your inspiration from any source that interests you.

All three reaction papers have the same assignment. Students never need to ask me what I want them to address in their next reaction paper. Think about religious issues and tell me what you think, in any style you wish.

Formal Essays:

The three formal essays are graded primarily on the criteria spelled out in the **Essay Criteria** handout on the next page. In these assignments, my goal is to promote your skills at reading, reporting research, and producing a completely edited, final draft of an academic paper. These skills are useful for any career that requires a college education. Students who graduate from Loyola University of Chicago need to be able to read, write, and reason at a professional level regardless of whether they intend to seek advanced degrees or immediately enter the work force.

Required length: **500-700 words** as counted by Microsoft Word.

Format:

- Times New Roman, 12 point
- Meaningful title (not just a paraphrase of the *topic*)
- Paragraphs required
- No introduction and no conclusion
 - Do not tell me what you are going to write.
 - Do not tell me what you have just written.
 - This is a tiny sample of your writing skills.
 - Develop an idea. Eliminate the packaging as much as possible.
 - The first paragraph must be specific and detailed, not stuffing.

I will provide more materials on how to write the formal essays.

I will assign the topic *areas* for the three essays.

-- **Format:**

- [] assigned length, 8.5" x 11" paper [] number each page
- [] typed (11 or 12 *point*) or "C" at most [] 26 lines per page
- [] double-spacing between lines *and paragraphs*
- [] 1" margins all around [] please do not use a plastic cover
- [] include teacher's name and section ID (e.g., RST 101 K, RST 357 B)

-- **Content, argument, style:**

- [] helpful title--shows insight [] good content, poor form
- [] first paragraph detailed, effective [] well-written, but content weak
- [] well-focused [] repetition is not development
- [] consistent development [] balanced parallels
- [] formal tone [] avoid glittering generalities (GG)
- [] don't use "you" (2nd person) [] avoid rhetorical questions (RQ)
- [] well-organized [] illogical--"doesn't follow" (*non seq.*)
- [] argues for a viewpoint [] not just a list of facts
- [] provides analysis, not reactions (RP) [] not just a summary of others' ideas
- [] judicious use of examples, quotes [] not just plot summary w/o analysis (PS)
- [] shows understanding of readings [] understand others before criticizing
- [] deals with assigned topic / readings

-- **Mechanics:**

- [] syntax (clearly understands the meaning of words)
 - [] Never misuse "hopefully"--If you mean "I hope," say "I hope."
 - [] Don't say "that" when you mean "who."
 - [] "novel" = a work of *fiction* vs. "book" = fiction or non-fiction
- [] spelling
 - [] capitalization [] hyphenization
 - [] accept/except, affect/effect, [] correct use of apostrophe
cannot, its/it's, there/their, its = it is; its = belongs to it
to/too/two, you're/your (his, hers, theirs, ours, its)
- [] punctuation (, : ; . ? ! ") [] dash (--) vs. hyphen (-)
hyphens connect -- dashes separate
- [] underline or *italicize* book titles [] titles of articles in "quotation marks"
- [] complete sentences (inc)
- [] no run-on sentences (r-o) or [] no contractions (don't use "don't!")
comma-splices (CS)
- [] agreement in number [] use gender-neutral language (GNL)
- [] agreement in tense [] PROOFREAD YOUR PAPER! (PYP!)
- [] paragraph
 - [] one idea [] develops theme of the paper
 - [] more than one sentence [] double, not triple space between paragraphs
 - [] indented [] single space & indent long quotations
without quotation marks (ss+i)
- [] Please take this essay to the writing lab for help with mechanics.

-- **References** (originality):

- [] the overall work must be demonstrably your own
- [] use evidence, authority, or argument to support your conclusions (EV)
- [] give credit where credit is due (REF) [] page refs for paraphrases (PR)
- [] cite chapter and verse of scripture references (CH:VV): "He wept" (Lk 19:41).
- [] a space precedes left quotation marks (") and left paren -- (. For example:
Supply the source of paraphrases (RS, 123). Employ "quotation" (HS, 64).
Ask "questions?" (MW, 23). Retain their "exclamation!" (WO, 76).
- [] See me or else you will receive a zero on this paper

*You may break all these rules **AFTER** you learn them.*