

INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

COURSE INFORMATION

Number: RS 115
Semester: Spring 2011
School: Marymount Manhattan College
Room: MAN 505
Days: Tuesday and Thursday
Time: 11:30AM-12:50PM

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Dr. Elizabeth (Betsy) Barre
Position: Assistant Professor of Religious Studies
Office: MAN 106
Office Phone: 212.774.0783
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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 4:00-5:00pm; Tuesday, 3:00-5:00PM; and By Appointment

COURSE MATERIALS* †

[Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths](#)

Bruce Feiler
Harper Perennial (2005)
ISBN: 978-0060838669; New Listing Price:\$12.99

[The Sacred Paths of the West \(Third Edition\)](#)

Theodore M. Ludwig
Pearson Prentice Hall (2005)
ISBN: 978-0131539068; New Listing Price:\$73.80

*These texts have been ordered at [Shakespeare & Co. Booksellers](#) on Lexington Avenue. You are welcome to purchase them elsewhere, but you are required to have copies of each book by the end of the first week of classes.

†Readings from additional texts will be available on-line via <http://marymount.blackboard.com>. Students must have a valid MMC-ID to log into Blackboard, and are required to do so daily to participate in this course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

GOAL/RATIONALE

This course is an introduction to the study of three religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) that are often classified as “Abrahamic” and/or “Western” within the field of Religious Studies. Its companion course within the department, Introduction to the Religions of Asia, introduces students to the so-called “Eastern” traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (among others). In both courses, students explore the historical development, foundational

beliefs, and dominant practices of each tradition. Comparative by design, these courses encourage students to understand and appreciate the common lineages of these traditions, as well as their radical divergences. Perhaps more importantly, students will be introduced to the diversity that inevitably arises *within* each tradition.

The course is also an introduction, more generally, to studying and thinking about religion in an academic setting. We will approach the subject matter self-consciously, analytically, and reflectively, just as you would in a course on history, literature, sociology, etc. We aim to describe, compare, and interpret religious phenomena, on our way towards understanding them better. This will likely require that you set aside your own views and background—at least at the beginning—to allow the data to shine through, and to enable an empathetic approach. But the course is not designed to make you more religious—or less religious. Rather, for everyone, believers and non-believers alike, religious literacy is a necessary feature of global citizenship. Studying religion in a theoretically sophisticated manner allows us to make more informed judgments, and we are also provided with a unique perspective on the fundamental questions that all human beings face.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the semester you will be able to:

1. Outline the most significant moments in the historical development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
2. Summarize each tradition's foundational doctrines and/or theological beliefs.
3. Describe the dominant practices of Jews, Christians, and Muslims throughout the world.
4. Explain the way history, doctrine, and practice are interrelated in each tradition.
5. Identify similarities and differences both across and within various forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
6. Practice the academic study of religion by thinking critically and creatively about religious traditions and ideas.

Insofar as this course meets the "Studies in Psychology, Philosophy, and Religious Studies" general education requirement, you should also be able to:

1. Identify, describe and explain key terms, concepts and distinctions central to the discipline of religious studies.
2. Reconstruct and explain (in speaking and writing) various arguments concerning the foundations and applications of theories of human nature, knowledge and/or value.
3. Critically evaluate (in speaking and writing) various arguments (including one's own) concerning the foundations and applications of theories of human nature, knowledge and/or value.

ASSIGNMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

READING

Assigned readings are to be completed by the date indicated on the syllabus. If I call on you or ask you to participate in an activity in class, I will expect that you have read the assignment for the day. You don't have to "get" everything the first time you read it, but you should be fairly familiar with the material. If you don't understand something, feel free to e-mail me with a question, or to come to class with a knowledgeable question about what we've read for that day.

READING QUIZZES

To ensure that you complete the daily reading assignments, you will also be asked to complete 10 reading quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes will be given within the first 5 minutes of class on a random "pop-quiz" basis, and

will consist of questions designed to test whether you have read the material (NOT your comprehension). You are free to use any notes you have taken while reading, but these notes must be *hand written.* These quizzes, worth 10 points each, are the basis of 10% of your final grade (100 points).

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Thoughtful participation in class discussions is the basis of 15% of your final grade (150 points). During class, there will be frequent opportunities to contribute to class discussion. If you make a contribution that is both *reflective of the readings* and relevant to the discussion, I will award you 10 points. To receive full credit for participation in the course, you must participate at least 15 times throughout the semester (to secure the required 150 points).

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

You will be required to write three essays in this course, which combine to form the basis of 30% of your final grade (300 points). These essays, each worth 125 points, will be 1,000-word (3-4 page) reports on visits to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sites in New York City. Detailed information on these assignments (including the rubric I will use to grade the essays) will be distributed within the first two weeks of the course.

EXAMS

You will take three exams in this course, each worth 150 points. These exams combine to make up 45% of your final grade, and will assess how well you have retained the factual information (names, terms, history, etc.) presented in the units on each of the three religious traditions.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

GRADING SCALE*

100%-93%: A	89%-87%: B+	82%-80%: B-	76%-73%: C	69%-60%: D
92%-90%: A-	86%-83%: B	79%-77%: C+	72%-70%: C-	60% and below: F

*Grades will be rounded to the nearest integer.

GRADE COMPONENTS (OUT OF 1,000 TOTAL POINTS)

Writing Assignments, 300 total points (30%)

- Three 1,000-Word “Religion in New York” Reports, 100 points each

Exams, 450 total points (45%)

- Three Exams, 150 points each

Reading and Participation, 250 total points (25%)

- Ten Reading Quizzes, 10 points each
- Fifteen Substantive Comments, 10 points each

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

While much of your learning will occur while you read, write, and study for the exams, being present in class is the best way to ensure that you truly learn and understand the course material. As a result, class attendance is required. One incentive for meeting this requirement will be to receive credit for class participation and the ten reading quizzes, neither of which can be made up. Yet, I will also take attendance on a regular basis. You will be allowed **two** unexcused absences throughout the semester, but *each additional unexcused absence will result in the deduction of 10 points (1%) from your final course average*. All judgments about excused and unexcused absences will be at my discretion. However, if you wish to receive an excused absence, you must receive approval from me *before* the missed class period. The only exceptions to this rule are medical emergencies affecting yourself or your family. In all cases, I may or may not ask for supporting documentation for excused absences.

LATE WORK

Essays must be submitted in both hard copy *and* electronic form (e-mail an attachment to: ebarre@mmm.edu) by 5:00PM on the due date. As long as you have submitted your paper in one form by 5:00pm, your paper will not be counted late. However, I expect the additional copy to arrive in my office by the end of the following day. When an essay is turned in after 5:00PM, I will deduct 20% for each day the paper is late. This includes Saturday and Sunday. *No other late assignments will be accepted*. Please note: if any of your electronic submissions are “lost in cyber space,” it is not my responsibility! The only way to ensure your submissions are received is to *turn them in by hand*.

MAKE-UP WORK

In the interest of fairness, students must be present for exams and quizzes on the dates given. Quizzes cannot be made up under any circumstances and the only circumstances under which make-up exams will be administered are: (1) death in the family, (2) unforeseeable medical emergencies affecting you or your family, or (3) participation in an official Marymount Manhattan College-sponsored event. In the case of (1) or (3), you must give me at least 24 hours advance notice that you will miss the exam or it may not be made up. Documentation will be required in each of these cases. Complete disasters that require extended periods away from school should be referred immediately to the office of Student Services/Academic Advising so I can work out the best plan of action in conjunction with the MMC staff.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

At the most general level, I will uphold the stipulations of the Marymount Manhattan College Academic Honesty Policy—a policy with which you should become familiar. This policy outlines the College’s expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. The full policy can be found in the Student Handbook/Griffin Guide on pages 113-117 or at <http://www.mmm.edu/study/academicpolicies/mmccademiconestypolicy.pdf>.

Beyond this college wide policy, my own policy is the following: All work submitted in this course must be your own. If I detect plagiarism in an essay, you will be given a 0 on the assignment and be reported to the college. Unintentional errors in citation will also be penalized. In these cases (to be determined at my discretion), students will be required to revise their essays and their grades on that assignment will be lowered by 10%.

COURTESY

To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn without undue distraction, please turn off your cell phone (or put it into silent mode). Also, do not talk during class, read newspapers, magazines, text, or listen to Ipods/MP3 players. If you bring a laptop to class, I expect you to be taking notes and only taking notes (you can give up facebook, twitter, jcrew.com, etc. for at least an hour!). If I discover you doing anything else, I reserve the right to bar your individual laptop use for the remainder of the semester. Most importantly, **do not enter class late or leave early** unless it's an emergency and/or you've cleared it with me in advance. If you're consistently late (i.e., noticeably, more than twice or so) or regularly moving in and out of class while it's in session, I will stop marking you present. Quizzes will be conducted within the first five minutes of class. If you are late, the quiz cannot be made up.

It is also important to lay down some ground rules about the discussions we will be having in this course. Insofar as this course will require us to discuss sensitive issues about religion, we must work hard to keep our conversations civil and to respect the opinions of our classmates. You are certainly free to express any view you want (if it's on-topic), so long as you support your claim and are willing to hear counter-arguments from others. You are free to question the claims of others and to engage them in scholarly discussion, as long as you don't interrupt them and wait to be recognized by me before speaking (please note: you are free, and in fact encouraged, to interrupt **me**). You may also comment on recent news events of interest to our class, but only if they are relevant. You are not free to engage in name-calling, taunting, harassment, or otherwise non-productive talk. If you violate these rules, I may ask you to leave the classroom.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations or academic adjustments for this course must either register with the Office of Disability Services or be enrolled in the Program for Academic Access. For any accommodation, the instructor must be presented with a letter signed by the Director for Academic Access & Disability Services during the first week of classes.

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Jan 31-Feb 4		Syllabus; Intro to Course		The Study of Religion
Feb 7-11		The Study of Religion		Judaism: History
Feb 14-18		Judaism: History		Judaism: History
Feb 21-25		Judaism: Doctrine		Judaism: Practice
Feb 28-Mar 4	ESSAY 1 DUE	Judaism: Practice		Judaism: Practice
Mar 7-11		EXAM 1		Christianity: History
Mar 14-18		Christianity: History		Christianity: History
Mar 21-25		Christianity: Doctrine		Christianity: Practice
Mar 28-Apr 1	SPRING BREAK			
Apr 4-8		Christianity: Practice		Christianity: Practice
Apr 11-15	ESSAY 2 DUE	NO CLASS		EXAM 2

Apr 18-22		Islam: History		Islam: History
Apr 25-29		Islam: History		Islam: Doctrine
May 2-6		Islam: Practice		Islam: Practice
May 9-13		Islam: Practice		Abraham
May 16-20	ESSAY 3 DUE	Abraham		FINAL EXAM

READING SCHEDULE (READINGS MARKED WITH AN ASTERISK [*] ARE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD)

INTRODUCTION

2/3: "Chapter 1," *Beginner's Guide to the Study of Religion*, 1-20.*

2/8: "Chapter 2," *Beginner's Guide to the Study of Religion*, 23-45.*

JUDAISM

HISTORY

2/10: *Sacred Paths*, 95-101.

2/15: *Sacred Paths*, 102-106.

2/17: *Sacred Paths*, 106-114.

DOCTRINE

2/22: *Sacred Paths*, 115-125.

PRACTICE

2/24: *Sacred Paths*, 127-132.

3/1: *Sacred Paths*, 132-136.

3/3: *Sacred Paths*, 136-141.

CHRISTIANITY

HISTORY

3/10: *Sacred Paths*, 143-150.

3/15: *Sacred Paths*, 150-157.

3/17: *Sacred Paths*, 157-166.

DOCTRINE

3/22: *Sacred Paths*, 167-178.

PRACTICE

3/24: *Sacred Paths*, 179-184.

4/5: *Sacred Paths*, 184-189.

4/7: *Sacred Paths*, 189-193.

ISLAM

HISTORY

4/19: *Sacred Paths*, 196-204.

4/21: *Sacred Paths*, 204-212.

4/26: *Sacred Paths*, 212-219.

DOCTRINE

4/28: *Sacred Paths*, 220-229.

PRACTICE

5/3: *Sacred Paths*, 230-234.

5/5: *Sacred Paths*, 234-238.

5/10: *Sacred Paths*, 238-245.

COMPARATIVE REFLECTIONS

5/12: *Abraham*, 3-81.

5/17: *Abraham*, 82-110; 189-218.