Vocabulary

*Introduction to Religious Services*

Fall 2020

# Intro, 1-4

allegory

a story, usually fictitional, that makes an instructive point. Every character and incident in the story stands for or represents a reality outside the story itself.

canon

originally, “measuring reed”; the list of authoritative scriptures in a particular tradition.

cosmology

cosmology ways of thinking that attempt to relate the various aspects of the universe.

cyclical time

cyclical views of time; emphasizes the eternal repetition of time, as in samsara or, in some traditions, in the repetition of the change of seasons.

exegesis

the process of drawing out or interpreting the meaning of texts.

hierophany

hierophany the appearance of the sacred in human experience. Hinduism the predominant religious tradition in India.

immanence

describes those notions of the sacred that stress its inherence in the world.

kami

sacred beings and powers in **Shinto**

linear time

linear views of time; depiction of time as having a beginning, middle, and end.

logos

Greek, “word”; signifying absolute reason or mind; according to **Christian** doctrine, the **Christ** is the **incarnation** of the logos.

midrash

is biblical exegesis by ancient Judaic authorities, using a mode of interpretation prominent in the Talmud. The word itself means “textual interpretation”, “study”

moksha

release or liberation from the world, especially in **Hinduism**

mystical

mystical aspects of religious traditions that focus on the appearance of the sacred to persons achieving a certain “enlightened” state of mind.

myth

a narrative that focuses on sacred reality and its relationship to humanity

non-verbal religious language

religious language that uses painting, sculpture, architecture and other means to convey the **sacred**

oral culture

transmission of sacred stories involving myth and various stories transmitted without writing

parable

a story, usually fictional, in which the thrust of the story is to make a particular point, but in which (by comparison with **allegory**) the characters do *not* “stand” for realities outside the story itself.

prophet

prophet religious specialist associated with prophetic traditions. prophetic aspects of religious traditions that focus on the appearance of the sacred through words; see revelation,

Sabbath

from the Hebrew *shabbat* (seventh day); the day set apart for rest and remembrance of the sacred in **Judaism**

sacrament

sacramental elements of religious traditions that focus on the appearance of the sacred through the medium of material reality. sacrifice from Latin sacrum facere, that is, “to make holy”; for example, by dedicating something to the sacred.

sacred as “really real”

(p. 27) Eliade described “sacred” as “distinct” but also the most **real**, providing absolute and objective authority to an otherwise relative and subjective existence

scriptures

“writings,” especially those writings that are considered authoritative or sacred by a particular religious community

shaman

a person regarded as having access to, and influence in, the world of good and evil spirits, especially among some peoples of northern Asia and North America.

shekhinah

the glory of the divine presence, conventionally represented as light or interpreted symbolically (in Kabbalism as a divine feminine aspect

stupa

burial mound for a holy person; a sacred site in Buddhism

tradition

from Latin *tradere*, to “hand down”; the collection of **symbols**, **rituals**, **scriptures**, and **customs** associated with a particular group transcendence :: transcendent that which “goes beyond” or “stands over,” as in religious traditions that present a notion of the sacred as transcending ordinary experience.

Aryans

The term was used by the Indo-Aryan people of the Vedic period in Ancient India as a religious label for themselves

bar/bat mitzvah

the ceremony by which a young person becomes a “son” (bar) or “daughter” (bat) of the covenant and commands (of Judaism).

burial rites

temporal rite & celebration (76); many symbolize the relationship of human beings to the natural world.

Eucharist

originally “giving thanks” (Greek); Holy Communion or the Lord’s Supper in Christianity.

initiation rite

rite of passage, focusing on passage of a person from childhood into adulthood

Liminality

the condition of being in an intermediate state.

liturgy

derived from a Greek work meaning “a public work”; in religion, refers to the form of public worship of a particular group.

Rites of Passage

describe those ceremonies associated with the transitional moments in a person’s life

ritual

a ceremonial act or repeated stylized gesture used for specific occasions.

seder

a ritual meal, part of the **Passover** celebration

anti-semitic

a story, usually fictitional, that makes an instructive point. Every character and incident in the story stands for or represents a reality outside the story itself.

beit din

is a rabbinical court of Judaism. In ancient times, it was the building block of the legal system in the Biblical Land of Israel.

blockalteste

A concentration camp inmate appointed to be the leader of a barrack

Dualism

dualism a way of thought, especially with respect to theodicy, that stresses the opposition of good and evil powers in the universe. See Zoroastrianism.

Kabbalah

the ancient Jewish tradition of mystical interpretation of the Bible, first transmitted orally and using esoteric methods (including ciphers). It reached the height of its influence in the later Middle Ages and remains significant in Hasidism.

karma

in Hinduism and Buddhism, the inexorable law of cause and effect.

Shoah

term used to refer to the Nazi destruction of European Jews; does not have religious connotations as the word “holocaust” does

theodicy

theodicy discussions of divine justice; the attempt to answer questions about the sacred arising from the experience of evil

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism religious tradition originating in the seventh century B.C.E. in Persia; see dualism.

Bhagavad Gita

the “song of the Lord”; one of the scriptures of **Hinduism**

bodhisattva

in Mahayana Buddhism, one who achieves enlightenment but postpones Nirvana in the interest of bringing truth to the world.

Brahman

impersonal spirit, the Absolute, the Eternal; the Universal essence from which all created things emanate

Brahmin

member of the highest ranking social class, a class of priests

Confucianism

Confucianism the great religious-political tradition of China founded by Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.).

dharma

“law,” “duty,” or “teaching”; in **Hinduism**, especially associated with duties of one’s caste; in **Buddhism**, the teaching of the **Buddha**.

Krishna

one of the most notable avatars of Vishnu, the divine charioteer in the *Bhagavad Gita*

nirvana

Nirvana the sacred reality in Buddhism; signifies the extinguishing of all desire and release from the cycle of time (see samsara).

samsara

the cycle of time (**Hinduism**, **Buddhism**) governed by **karma**. Taoism :: Taoism a system or practice for following the Tao.

Siddhartha Gautama

the Buddha

Tao

Tao the “way” or “power” of harmony and balance among all things.

Upanishads

writings of Hindu sages, ca. 700-200 BCE

# Judaism

Ashkenazic vs. Sephardic

a Jewish diaspora population who coalesced in the Holy Roman Empire around the end of the first millennium

Sephardic

:: the term Sephardim has today also come sometimes to refer to traditionally Eastern Jewish communities of West Asia

ghetto

a part of a city, especially a slum area, occupied by a minority group or groups; the Jewish quarter in a city; first used in 16th c. in Christian Venice.

haggadah

“narrative”; sacred stories in the Jewish tradition.

halakhah

in Judaism, the totality of laws and ordinances that have evolved since biblical times to regulate religious observances and the daily life and conduct of the Jewish people. Quite distinct from the Law, or the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible

hasidism

an influential mystical Jewish movement founded in Poland in the 18th century in reaction to the rigid academicism of rabbinical Judaism. The movement declined sharply in the 19th century, but fundamentalist communities developed from it, and Hasidism is still a force in Jewish life, particularly in Israel and New York.

Mashiach

The Hebrew word “Mashiach,” meaning Messiah, means “the one anointed with oil.” The custom of anointing with oil is a ritual act designed to elevate those designated for priestly, royal or sometimes even prophetic roles (such as the prophet Elisha).

Messiah

God’s anointed or chosen servant;

mitzvoth

any of the collection of 613 commandments or precepts in the Bible and additional ones of rabbinic origin that relate chiefly to the religious and moral conduct of Jews.

Passover

spring holiday and their rituals in Jewish tradition; celebrates the **Exodus**

phylactery

a small leather box containing Hebrew texts on vellum, worn by Jewish men at morning prayer as a reminder to keep the law.

Talmud

the body of Jewish civil and ceremonial law and legend comprising the Mishnah and the Gemara. There are two versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian Talmud (which dates from the 5th century AD but includes earlier material) and the earlier Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud.

Torah

the “instruction” of God in Judaism; the first five books of the Bible

tshuvah

Repentance (*Hebrew*) literally, “return” - tefillin :: is a set of small black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the Torah. Tefillin is worn by observant adult Jews during weekday morning prayers.

YHWH

, four-letter Hebrew word, the name of the biblical God of Israel

# Islam

Allah

Arabic word for God

caliph

The civil and religious ruler of a Muslim state

hadith

a collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad which, with accounts of his daily practice (the Sunna), constitute the major source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Koran.

Hagar

an Ancient Egyptian servant of Sarah, who gave her to Abraham to bear a child.

Hajj

an annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the holiest city for Muslims.

Hegira

Muhammad’s departure from Mecca to Medina in AD 622, prompted by the opposition of the merchants of Mecca and marking the consolidation of the first Muslim community

Ishmael

is the figure known in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as Abraham’s (Ibrahim) son, born to Hagar (Hajar). In Islam, Ishmael is regarded as a prophet (nabi) and an ancestor to Muhammad

Islam

A religion based on the teachings of the prophet Muhammad

Kaaba

Square building in Mecca believed by Muslims to be the house Ibrahim erected for God and the - focus of Muslim worship

mosque

A place of Muslim worship

muezzin

a man who calls Muslims to prayer from the minaret of a mosque

Muhammad

Muhammad the great prophet and founder of Islam.

Muslim

A believer in Islam

nafs

Arabic word occurring in the Quran, literally meaning “self”, and has been translated as “psyche”, “ego” or “soul”

pilgrimage

A journey to a sacred place or shrine - Zakat :: is a form of alms-giving treated in Islam as a religious obligation or tax, which, by Quranic ranking, is next after prayer (salat) in importance

Salah

meaning “prayer”, “supplicationj”, “blessing” and “commendation”

Sawm

fasting from dawn until dusk during Ramadan, one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

Shiite

adherent of one of the two main branches of Islam, followed especially in Iran, that rejects the first three Sunni caliphs and regards Ali, the fourth caliph, as Muhammad’s first true successor

Sufi

a form of Islamic mysticism that emphasizes introspection and spiritual closeness with God

Sunna

Customary procedures of living, specifically the ways and customs of Muhammad

Sunni

the larger of the two main branches of Islam, which differs from Shia in its understanding of the Sunna, its conception of religious leadership, and its acceptance of the first three caliphs.