

Introduction to Religion

Rel 100, Fall 2012
Oxford College of Emory University
Jill Petersen Adams, jill.adams@emory.edu
Tu/Th 10.00am-11.40am
Branham East

Office Hours: Tu/Th, 12.30pm-1.30pm,
Branham/East Annex #4



Course Description

An introduction to *engaging* religion, this course provides an exploration of diverse ways of being religious in thought, action, community, and experience. The course is not a survey of religious traditions, nor is it simply an overview of how to study religion. Instead, we focus on three religious traditions—Judaism, Buddhism, and Shinto—using a range of methods and perspectives to give breadth and depth to our study. For each tradition, the course introduces students to key history, tenets, figures, practices, and sacred texts. Then, we use a case study approach to hone in on a particular context and set of religious questions concerning all of the traditions. These cases present religious responses to catastrophic suffering during and in the wake of the Second World War/Pacific War. Such a focus highlights the complexities of religious experience and worldview and explores various ways of understanding “religion.”

Course Goals

After completing the course, students should be able to:

- Understand (and generate!) questions and concerns relevant to the study of world religions, demonstrating an awareness of the breadth and depth of these questions and concerns
- Be familiar with a variety of approaches to understanding religion(s) and engaging religious questions, using these skills to interpret texts and cultural phenomena that have religious resonances or import
- Think and reflect critically on methods and categories in the study of religions
- Articulate the relationship between the category of “religion” and lived experiences or worldviews
- Convey a basic factual understanding of key history, tenets, figures, practices, and sacred texts in the traditions discussed in this course
- Explain why and how the problem of catastrophic suffering is an important “religious” issue for these traditions

Course Materials

The following full-length texts are required (unless indicated):

- Norman Solomon, *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction*: 978-0192853905
 - Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*: 978-0192853868
 - Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*: 978-0684826806
 - Richard H. Minear, *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*: 978-0691008370
 - Art Spiegelman, *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*: 978-0590477024
- Recommended:** *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*: 978-0394747231

In *addition* to these texts, numerous other materials are required for this course. If not one of the required texts above, readings are available in .pdf form on the Blackboard site for our course (indicated by “BB” in the course schedule). Other digital materials will also be made available via Blackboard when possible.

Assignments/Assessment

Your final grade is comprised of **500 total points**, broken down as follows:

Unit Tests: 30% of final grade, 150 points (3 @ 50 points each)

Synthetic Essays: 35% of final grade, 175 points

Essay 1: 75 points

Essay 2: 100 points

Site Visit Report: 10% of final grade, 50 points

Opening Class Discussion: 10% of final grade, 50 points

Participation and attendance: 15% of final grade, 75 points

Required Readings

The syllabus lists the readings we will discuss on a given date. Therefore, students must **complete designated readings before class on that date**. For the required hard copy texts, students must bring their books to class on the day they will be discussed. For electronic documents, students may use laptops to bring electronic copies of documents to class. The instructor reserves the right to require hard copies of electronic documents and prohibit laptop use if this privilege is abused.

Engaged, critical reading is expected. Occasionally we will discuss texts that are difficult to read and understand. Write down questions and comments as you read; think critically about all texts before coming to class; take notes and underline compelling passages. These practices will help with discussion and writing assignments. You may face **unannounced reading quizzes** at any time, so come prepared!

Unit Tests (30%)

There are three 50-point in-class written tests for the course: one after each “factual” section of each tradition on the syllabus. These utilize a range of responses to aid and test your retention of facts about a tradition’s history, tenets, figures, practices, and sacred texts: short answer, fill-in-the-blank, timelines, identification, matching, etc. More details will be released prior to the first test.

Synthetic Essays (35%)

You will write two synthetic essays for the course. Each essay will have multiple set topics from which you can choose. These topic questions will require familiarity with readings, material presented in class, and films (if applicable) and the ability to synthesize connections between material and across traditions.

Essay 1: 3-5 pages, 75 points, due Th Oct 18

Essay 2: 4-6 pages, 100 points, due Tu Dec 11

Essay Format: Essays must be typed and double-spaced in a standard 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Pages should be **numbered** but should *not* include your name. You must cite author/editor and page number when referring to class materials but are not required to include a bibliography unless you use additional sources (with permission) or a different edition of a class text. More detailed instructions and a grading rubric will be handed out prior to the first essay assignment.

Submission: Essays (and your site visit report—see below) must be **submitted electronically using the Blackboard SafeAssign** feature. *Do not email* your assignments to the instructor. It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand how to use SafeAssign in order to submit your assignments properly and on time. Please consult with Oxford IT if you are unfamiliar with this feature or unsure about using it. Essays are **due by 9.50am (i.e., submit before class time) on the date due**. Plan ahead so that technical and other emergencies will not prevent on-time submission!

Please note that material submitted will be screened by Blackboard's SafeAssign feature against a variety of databases. The purpose of this feature is to minimize plagiarism and to help educate students about the proper citation of any borrowed content. The submission of another's work as one's own without adequate attribution is a violation of the Honor Code and may result in disciplinary action.

Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford College and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.

Late Policy and Grace Period on First Essay: There is a one-class grace period for the first essay **only**: if your first essay is submitted *after the start of class on the due date and until the end of one class following the due date*, it will be accepted for one full letter grade deduction. Any essay submitted thereafter will receive an automatic F (which is different from a zero). **There are no exceptions to this rule, no excuses allowed, and no questions asked.**

Site Visit Report (10%)

An overarching goal of this course is for you to cultivate an understanding and appreciation of religious traditions (and approaches to religion) different from your own. An excellent way to solidify this understanding and appreciation is to visit an unfamiliar religious site (generally for worship or another ritual experience). You will **visit one religious site** to participate in such an experience and then **write a 3-5 page paper** about the site and your experiences. Stretch yourself to select a tradition very unfamiliar to you. You may undertake these site visits in small collaborative groups, or you may attend with a friend who is more familiar with your chosen tradition. Each student, however, must write an individual paper. For your visit, remember that you are a representative of our class and are a guest of the site you visit. You are expected to behave politely, respectfully and appropriately; be careful to avoid disrespect to and intimidation of the community members of whom you are a guest. We will discuss proper behavior and assignment specifics more in class. Your site visit report is **due to SafeAssign on Blackboard at 5:00pm on Monday, December 17.**

Opening Class Discussion (10%)

NOTE: The exact configuration of this assignment will depend on enrollment. Each student will be assigned one or two days to open class discussion, either alone or in pairs. Dates will be assigned at random, but trading, on the student's initiative, is allowed as long as the instructor is notified.

The purpose of this assignment is for each student to open class discussion by connecting the previous class discussion to the reading for the new class and providing ideas for fresh discussion. Take good notes each class period (and while reading!) so that you can draw on your notes to **(1)** give a brief summary of the main points discussed in the previous class and remind the class of any unresolved issues worthy of further discussion. Then, **(2)** cite one passage from a text assigned for the day and explain its significance—as it relates to the reading(s) overall, previous class discussion, and other readings. **DO NOT SUMMARIZE** the reading. If the reading is confusing, it can be very good practice to raise a question (or point of confusion) and then try to offer a possible answer or answers to your own question. **(3)** Conclude your opening with a question or set of questions for discussion. You have 5-10 minutes for your opening.

Participation (15%)

- This course focuses on class discussion. Class discussion allows us to share our ideas and work out questions from the readings and other issues brought up in class. It also helps us meet our course goals, prepare for tests and quizzes, write essays and reflections, make connections between classes, and prepare for exams.
- Complete class reading and writing assignments and come prepared to discuss them even if it is not your day to open discussion. Come to class ready to respond to the classmate who opens discussion for the day.
- Remember that participation is about quality more than quantity, but be intellectually brave and do your best to contribute frequently to the discussion to the best of your ability.

- If you are profoundly uncomfortable participating verbally in class, email exchange or office hour meetings with the instructor regarding questions, concerns, and ideas about class material also can count toward your participation grade.

Attendance

- Attendance is an integral part of participation. It is impossible to duplicate what happens in class in any other format, and you must be present to receive vital information and announcements. Be in class regularly, be on time, and be prepared and ready for discussion. Attendance will be recorded.
- While you are required to be in class every period, *you will be granted three flex days—absences that will not affect your final grade*. If, however, you **miss more than three classes for any reason, your final grade will be lowered by one-third of a letter grade** (i.e., from an A to A-) for *each* extra day missed.
- Your flex days cover illness, emergencies, religious holidays not observed by the university, and travel (personal or university-related). Discuss any absences in advance with the instructor when possible. Extenuating circumstances may be excused at the instructor's discretion, but simply *informing* the instructor of an upcoming absence or the reasons for an absence does not suffice to *excuse* the absence.
- Arriving late is rude and distracting to your classmates and instructor; it also detracts from your ability to contribute to discussion. Make every effort to be in class on time. **If you arrive more than 10 minutes late more than once, you will be counted as present but receive no credit for participation for that day.** Excessive lateness will count as an absence.
- If you must miss class, you are responsible for completing any assignments due on the missed day as well as getting notes from your classmates, etc. You may consult with me about what you missed, but I will not necessarily replicate notes or announcements—find a reliable classmate to help keep you on track.

The Grading System is as Follows:

A: 93-100	B+: 88-89	C+: 78-79	D+: 68-69	F: <60
A-: 90-92	B: 83-87	C: 73-77	D: 60-67	
	B-: 80-82	C-: 70-72		

Expectations

What I expect from you:

- Thorough awareness of and adherence to course policies, assignments, and expectations as outlined in this syllabus, in the student handbook, and described in class.
- **Respectful participation:** You are not asked to leave your religious views (or lack of them) at the door, but I urge respect and consideration while reflecting on or challenging your own beliefs, practices, and values and those that you learn about throughout the course. Remember that your classmates may have connections to many of the religions, practices, or texts we discuss. Treat your classmates, instructor, and any guests with respect. **Do not talk, text message, email, surf the web, etc.** Such actions are truly distracting and disrespectful.

What you can expect from me

- I will make every effort to cultivate a learning environment in which students are able and encouraged to express their questions and ideas respectfully.
- I will keep regular office hours, and I encourage you to come to office hours with any questions, concerns, or ideas you may have. I will respond to emails as quickly and attentively as possible. I will provide notice as early as possible via blackboard email list if class is canceled for any emergency.
- I will support, be aware of, and hold you accountable for your work, attendance, and participation.
- I will offer feedback on your submitted work in a timely manner and be available to discuss your work both before it is submitted and after you receive feedback on it. I aim to evaluate your work fairly and thoroughly.

Academic Integrity Statement

The Oxford College Student Honor Code holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/

Statement Regarding Disability-Related Accommodations and Serious Illness

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Access, Disability, Services and Resources (ADSR)—formerly (and still, in some places) known as the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Oxford College's program functions as a seamless extension of services offered to students at the Emory campus location, with staff located in the Student Health/Counseling Center. Students are responsible for initiating the accommodation request process by self-disclosing their disability and/or chronic medical condition directly to ADSR. More detailed information is available on the website at www.ods.emory.edu. A student can also make requests directly to the Office of Disability Services, Emory University, 201 Dowman Drive, University Administration Building, Suite 110, Atlanta, GA 30322. [Policy cited from <http://oxford.emory.edu/academics/catalog/educational-resources/disability-services/>] Accommodations are not provided retroactively; therefore, plan for accommodations as early as possible.

Changes to the Syllabus

The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus (or the course in general) during the course of the semester. If changes are made, you will receive advance notice.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Introduction

Weeks 1-2: Getting Started

Th Aug 30: Introduction to class: syllabus, etc.

Tu Sep 4: Problem of catastrophic suffering, context of WWII, why these religions

W Sep 5: Last day for schedule adjustment

Th Sep 6: Intro to Judaism: History, Tenets, Figures, Practice

Read for today: *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction (VSI)*, Ch 1-3 (pp.6-51)

Judaism

Weeks 3-4: Intro to Judaism and the Problem of Suffering

Tu Sep 11: Intro to Judaism: History, Tenets, Figures, Practice

Read for today: *Judaism VSI*, Ch 4-7 (pp.52-107), plus appendix A

Th Sep 13: Sacred text

Read for today: Deuteronomy 1, 4-6, 23-end (BB)

Tu Sep 18: Sacred text

Read for today: Job selections TBA (BB)

Th Sep 20: *TEST 1*

Weeks 5-6: Testimony as Religious Practice: Judaism

Tu Sep 25

Read for today: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, Author's preface through "Our Nights" (p. 9-64)

Th Sep 27

Read for today: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, "The Work" through "The Canto of Ulysses" (p. 65-115)

☼ View Resnais' *Night and Fog*

Tu Oct 2

Read for today: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, "The Events of the Summer" through "The Story of Ten Days" (p. 116-173).

☼ Introduce Spiegelman and read selections from *Maus I* in class: Ch. 1, "The Sheik," pp. 11-12, 23; Ch. 6, "Mouse Trap," pp. 153-159

Th Oct 4

Read for today: Art Spiegelman, *Maus II* selections:

- Ch. 1, "Mauschwitz," 9-16, 24-36
- Ch. 2, "Auschwitz (Time Flies)," 39-57, 67-74
- Ch. 3, "And Here My Troubles Began," 79-97
- Ch. 4, "Saved," 104-117
- Ch. 5, "Second Honeymoon," 131-136

☼ Hand out Essay 1 topic

Week 7: Religious Responses

Tu Oct 9

Read for today: Read Steven Katz, "Jewish Faith After the Holocaust: Four Approaches," *Post-Holocaust Dialogues* (141-73) [BB]

Th Oct 11

Read for today: Selections from Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz*, pp. 171-176, 293-298, 305-306; AND Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History*, 3-16, 20-21, 78-79, 84. [All BB]

Buddhism and Shinto

Weeks 8-10: Buddhism

Tu Oct 16: No class—Fall Break

W Oct 17: Midterm Reports Due

Th Oct 18: *ESSAY 1 DUE*

Intro to Buddhism: History, Tenets, Figures, Practice

Read for today: *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (VSI): Chs. 2, 5, 6, and 9 (pp.116-119 only).

Tu Oct 23: Buddhism History, Tenets, Figures, Practice cont'd

Read for today: *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (VSI) TBA: Chs. 3, 4, 7, and 8 (pp. 97-101, 101-104, 107-109 only)

Th Oct 25: Sacred Text

Read for today: Selections from *Anthology of World Scriptures* (BB)

Tu Oct 30: *TEST 2*

Weeks 10-12: Shinto

Th Nov 1: Intro to Japanese Religions: Shinto and Japanese Religious History, Tenets, Figures, Practice

Read for today: *Religion in Japanese Culture* pp.13-26; *Living Religions*, "Shinto" (All BB)

Tu Nov 6: Shinto History, Tenets, Figures, Practice cont'd

Read for today: Ueda, "Shinto," in *Religion in Japanese Culture* (pp.27-42); Continue *Living Religions*, "Shinto" (All BB)

Th Nov 8: Sacred Text

Read for today: Selections from *Kojiki/Nihon Shoki* TBA (BB/Online)

☼ View Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*

Tu Nov 13: *TEST 3*

Weeks 12-14: Testimony as Religious Practice: Buddhism and Shinto

Th Nov 15

Read for today: In *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, read Hara Tamiki's *Summer Flowers*, "Summer Flowers" and "From the Ruins" (pp.45-78). **AND:** In *Widows of Hiroshima* (on BB), read account 19 and Editor's Afterword, then choose either account 3 or account 5.

☼ Hand out Essay 2 topic

Tu Nov 20: NO CLASS: AAR

Th Nov 22: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving

Tu Nov 27

Read for today: In *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses*, read the following sections on the poems of Tôge Sankichi: pp.277-292, 304-312, and 5 other poems of your choice.

Th Nov 29:

Read for today: Nakazawa Keiji, *Barefoot Gen* excerpts (BB)

☼ View film TBA

Weeks 15-16: Religious Responses

Tu Dec 4: Post-War Buddhism in Japan and the Issue of Mizuko Kuyô

Read for today: William LaFleur, "Death and Beyond: Memorializing One's Mizuko" in *The Life of Buddhism*, 195-206 (BB)

Th Dec 6: Post-War State Shinto and the Issue of Yasukuni Jinja

Read for today: John Nelson, "Social Memory as Ritual Practice;" Gardner, "Nationalistic Shinto: A Child's Guide to Yasukuni Shrine," in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, pp. 334-339 (All BB)

Tu Dec 11: *ESSAY 2 DUE*

☼ Last Day of Class

FINAL EXAMS: Your SITE VISIT REPORT IS DUE via **SafeAssign** by 5pm on Monday, December 17. There is no other final exam.