

Introduction to Religion: Ways of Inquiry

Oxford College of Emory University

Rel 100Q, Spring 2015: REL_OX 100Q

01J, #5667

TuTh 1.40-3.20p

Language 202

03J, #5668

TuTh 3.30-5.10p

Language 202

Dr. Jill Petersen Adams, jill.adams@emory.edu

Office Hours: Tu/Th 10am-11.45pm, Wed 4.30pm-5.30pm,
& by appt. **Location:** Seney 115E ("The Thinkery")



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 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, worldview, and ways of understanding “religion” and religious questions. Because this course also carries “Ways of Inquiry” credit, students explicitly examine the assumptions, methods, goals, and the way knowledge is created in religious studies and have the opportunity to practice and evaluate those methods.

Course Goals

After completing the course, students should be able to:

- Address (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—and what approaches or methods are best suited for engaging this issue

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
- Recommended: Kenzaburō Ōe, *The Crazy Iris: And Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath*: 9780802151841

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 or e-reserves 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 **560 total points**, broken down as follows:

Participation and attendance: 90 points

Class Opening Panel: 60 points

Micro-Inquiry Assignments: 60 points

3 required @ 20 pts each.

Unit Exams: 120 points (2 @ 60 points each)

Religious Practices Report Presentation: Site Visit/ Interview: 150 points

- Plan and Framing Questions: 20 pts
- Annotated Bibliography: 40 pts
- Presentation: 60 pts
- Participation in peer evaluation (requires presence during presentations): 20 pts
- Proof of visit/interview required (see instructions): 10 additional pts

Synthetic Exam: 80 points

Specifics

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 and have texts in-hand**. For electronic documents, students may bring hard copies or use laptops/tablets/e-readers to bring electronic copies of documents to class: phones are **not acceptable devices for working with required texts and are prohibited**.

The instructor reserves the right to require hard copies of electronic documents and prohibit laptop/tablet/reader use if this privilege is abused.

Engaged, critical reading is expected and essential. 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 and/or text checks** (applied to participation grade points) at any time, so come prepared!

Class Opening Panel

NOTE: Each student will be assigned a day to open class discussion collaboratively as part of a small group. The exact configurations of this assignment will depend on enrollment and texts assigned for panel opening days. Dates will be assigned at random, but trading, on the student's initiative, is allowed as long as the instructor is notified and approves.

The purpose of this assignment is for each student to open class discussion by connecting previous class discussion to the material 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) *Introduce* – give a brief outline of your section of the assigned reading [DO NOT SUMMARIZE THE READING]
- (2) *Connect* – highlight connections between your reading and the previous class' discussion/lecture
- (3) *Focus* - 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 (if the reading is confusing, it can be very good practice to raise a question or point of confusion and then try to offer possible answer[s] to your own question[s])
- (4) *Conclude* – close by offering a question or set of questions for discussion. Each individual has 5-10 minutes for her/his portion of the opening.

Micro-Inquiry Assignments

You will complete **3** (please see additional handout) intensely concentrated inquiry assignments during the course of the semester. For these assignments, each student is assigned to one group (A-C), and each group is assigned specific due dates for these assignments—check the due dates for your group carefully!

Inquiry assignments are focused, one-paragraph reading-response writing assignments that hone your process of inquiry as you engage with texts, develop your critical writing skills, and challenge you.

The three assignments cover **three different modes of critical inquiry**—strategies for engaging your readings—and are applied to the reading assigned for a given class day (though you may relate the assigned reading[s] to others). These assignments give you the opportunity to experience diverse modes of inquiry, test out what best works for you, and hone your skills in approaching texts in different ways.

Inquiry assignments are **due in hard copy (with name!)** at the *start of the class on which the specific assigned reading is due*. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS will be accepted for any reason.**

*Religious Practices Report Presentation: Site Visit **or** Interview*

One of the “ways of inquiry” of scholars of religion is fieldwork. You will have the opportunity to go “into the field” as part of this course. Furthermore, 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) or to interview a practitioner of a tradition different from your own or that of your immediate family. With these goals in mind, you will **visit one religious site** to participate in such an experience **OR conduct an interview** with at least one religious practitioner.

This experience culminates in your presenting your experience and analysis to the class. In addition to submitting a plan for your visit or interview that details the questions that guide your *fieldwork* research, you will be required to do *preparatory* research and compile an annotated bibliography as you go. More instructions about these required assignments will be made available. Be aware from the outset that this is an assignment completed in **stages with multiple deadlines** (see course schedule).

Basic Requirements:

- Stretch yourself to select a tradition very unfamiliar to you.
 - **Interview:** subject(s) cannot be members of your immediate family or guardianship, and they must adhere to a tradition different from the one(s) in which you were raised. For special permissions, see me.
 - **Site visit:** site must be for a tradition different from the one(s) in which you were raised and cannot be one attended/visited by members of your immediate family/guardianship. For special permissions, see me.
- You may undertake **site visits** in small collaborative groups, or you may attend with a friend who is more familiar with your chosen tradition; **interviews** must be conducted one-on-one (but if you have help from someone to set up the meeting, the *interviewee* can decide whether to allow that person to be present for the interview). *Regardless, each student must do all preparatory work and present individually.*
- For your visit or interview, remember that you are a representative of our class and are a guest of the site you visit or person you interview (whether you interview in person or by phone/skype). 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.
- Proof of visit/interview required.
 - **For site visit**, provide two of the following: picture of you in front of the site, hard copy pamphlet or other hand-out from site, business card of faith leader or related person from the site, follow-up email exchange with representative of site that clearly references your visit
 - **For interview**, contact information of interviewee(s) is required *in advance of interview* and must be submitted with your plan or your first annotated bibliography submission (due dates on class schedule).
 - Please note that for the purposes of this assignment, your interviewee cannot be anonymous to me; however, you may provide a pseudonym (or use first name only) for your interviewee during your presentation—be sure to ask your interviewee’s preference and permission!

Unit Exams and Synthetic Exam

There are two 60-point in-class written unit exams for the course. These utilize a range of responses to aid and assess (a) your retention of facts about a tradition’s/traditions’ history, tenets, figures, practices, and sacred texts, and (b) your ability to synthesize and analyze course information. More details will be released prior to the first test. The third exam, an 80-point synthetic exam, builds on the first two exams to focus more on analysis, synthesis, and connections across course material. This exam features both an in-class portion and a take-home essay portion due during the final exam period.

Participation

- This course focuses on class discussion as part of our developing ways of inquiry appropriate to the academic study of religion. 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 and reflect, and make connections between classes.
- Complete class reading and other assignments and come prepared for discussion even if you have not prepared an assignment for that day or if it is not your day to open discussion.
- Come to class ready to respond to the classmates who open discussion for the day, to panelists and responders, and to other classmates’ ideas.

- Remain engaged and on-task in class—alertness, eye contact, upright posture, and other engaged body language go a long way to indicate even nonverbal participation and “presentness.”
- 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 all absences—illness, emergencies, religious holidays not observed by the university, and travel (personal or university-related, such as for athletics). Extenuating circumstances may be excused at the instructor’s discretion if discussed in advance, but simply *informing* the instructor of an upcoming absence or the reasons for an absence does not suffice to *excuse* the absence. Plan ahead!
- 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 be recorded as 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, email, check social media, surf the web, etc.** Such actions are truly distracting and disrespectful and are **grounds for dismissal from class or prohibition of electronic devices**.

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 (or office hours) 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/academics/student-services/student-honor-code/>

Please note that material submitted may 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.

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/life-at-oxford/disability-services/>] Accommodations are not provided retroactively, and the process of receiving accommodations takes time and planning among multiple persons and offices; 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 (and changes almost certainly will be made).

Note: *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.*

Print and Return this Page (only this page!) by Tuesday, January 20

I have read this Rel 100Q Spring 2015 syllabus in its entirety and have asked any questions verbally or by email in order to clarify any points about which I am uncertain. I understand that I will be held to the terms of this syllabus, other instructional handouts, and to those announcements made verbally in class or on Blackboard.

Signed: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

COURSE SCHEDULE

Important Dates

Tu Jan 13: Classes Begin
M Jan 19: MLK, Jr. Holiday
Tu Jan 20: End of course changes
W Mar 4: Midterm Deficiency Reports
F Mar 6: Last day for dropping courses without academic penalty
M-F Mar 9-13: Spring Break!
F Apr 3: Last day to petition for one-time course withdrawal for freshmen
Th Apr 23: Last day of **this class**
M Apr 27: Last day of classes for semester
Tu Apr 28: Reading Day
W May 6: End of Final Exam Period

Introduction

Tu Jan 13: Introduction to class: brief overview of syllabus, etc.
Th Jan 15: Problem of catastrophic suffering, context of WWII, why these religions
Tu Jan 20: In-depth review of syllabus, introductions, introduction to study of religions

Judaism

Th Jan 22: Intro to Judaism: History, Tenets, Figures, Practice
Read for today: *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction (VSI)*, **Terms** on p.2, **Ch 1** (read all; focus closely on pp.10-15), **Ch. 2** (only pp.18-23)

Tu Jan 27: Group A Inquiry Due | Class Opening 1
Read for today: *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction (VSI)*, **Ch. 3** (read pp.31-36 [through end of Stammim], and sections on Rashi, Maimonides, Nasi, Baal Shem Tov, Mendelssohn), **Ch. 4** (read all), **Appendix A** (p.136)

Th Jan 29: Class Opening 2
Read for today: *Judaism VSI*, **Ch. 5** (pp.70-76; find literal definition of “Hasidim” and know why Torah study is important), **Ch. 6** (pp. 84-86, 89-91, 97), **Ch. 7** (pp. 100-108)

Tu Feb 3: Intro to Judaism: Sacred Texts – **Group B Inquiry Due | Class Opening 3**
Read for today: Exodus and Job selections
⚙ Exam 1 Study Guide available on BB

Th Feb 5: NO CLASS: Review independently for exam

Tu Feb 10: **EXAM 1**

Th Feb 12: Testimony as Religious Practice – **Class Opening 4**
Read for today: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, Author's preface through end of “Initiation”
⚙ *RELIGIOUS PRACTICES Plan Due*

Tu Feb 17: Group C Inquiry Due | Class Opening 5

Read for today: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, "This Side of Good and Evil" and "The Drowned and the Saved," PLUS your chosen **TWO** of #1-4 below

(1) "Ka-Be" and "Our Nights," (2) "The Work" and "A Good Day," (3) "Chemical Examination" and "The Canto of Ulysses," (4) "The Events of the Summer" and "October 1944"

Th Feb 19:

Read for today: Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, "Kraus" through "The Story of Ten Days"

✧ Screen Resnais' *Night and Fog* in class

Tu Feb 24: Religious Responses – Group A Inquiry Due | Class Opening 6

Read for today: Introduction, conclusion, and sections on Rubenstein and Fackenheim in Steven Katz, "Jewish Faith After the Holocaust: Four Approaches," *Post-Holocaust Dialogues* (141-155, 168-end) (BB)

Buddhism and Shinto

Th Feb 26: Intro to Buddhism: History, Tenets, Figures, Practice, Sacred Text – Class Opening 7

Screen Independently: *Spirited Away*

Read for today: Sacred Text readings bundle, "Death of Gotama Buddha" (see BB) and *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (VSI), see below:

Ch. 2, "The Buddha," all; **Ch. 5**, "The Mahayana," sections on "New Emphasis," "Mahayana Sutras;" **Ch. 6**, "Buddhism in Asia," Read sections on "Ashoka," "Buddhism in India," "Sri Lanka," "China," [skim "Japan"], "Tibet"

✧ *RELIGIOUS PRACTICES Annotated Bibliography Due*

Tu Mar 3: Group B Inquiry Due | Class Opening 8

Screen Independently: *Spirited Away*

Read for today: Sacred Text readings bundle, "Four Noble Truths" and "Admonition to Laity" (see BB) and *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (VSI), see below:

Ch. 3, Opening, "Six Realms of Rebirth," "Karma," "Merit," last page; **Ch. 4**, all; **Ch. 7**, Opening through "Nature of Meditation," "Insight Meditation;" **Ch. 8**, "Dharma," "Ahimsa"

Th Mar 5: Intro to Japanese Religions – Group C Inquiry Due

Read for today: Introduction, pp.13-26, in *Religion in Japanese Culture* (BB) and Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home*, start by reading pronunciation guide and pp. 9-23 (BB)

✧ *Spirited Away* Quiz

✧ Exam 2 Study Guide available on BB

Tu Mar 10: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Th Mar 12: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Tu Mar 17: Group A Inquiry Due

Read for today: Finish readings in Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home* (BB)

Th Mar 19: **EXAM 2**

Tu Mar 24: Testimony as Religious Practice – Hara/ Barefoot Gen – **Group B Inquiry Due**

Read for Today: In *The Crazy Iris*, read Oda's "Human Ashes" (63-84) and Hara's "The Land of Heart's Desire" (55-62)

⚙ Screen *Barefoot Gen* in class

Th Mar 26: Ōta / Barefoot Gen

Read for Today: In *The Crazy Iris*, read Ōta's "Fireflies" (85-111)

⚙ Screen *Barefoot Gen* in class

Tu Mar 31: Toge/ Koji – **Group C Inquiry Due; Class Opening 9**

Read for today: Miyamoto, "Beyond Good and Evil," pp. 81-91, 96-110; On BB, Toge's poem selections (TBA)

⚙ * ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY REVISION Due (if applicable) *

Conclusion

Th Apr 2: Presentations and Peer Evaluation (5-6)

Tu Apr 7: Presentations and Peer Evaluation (5-6)

Th Apr 9: Presentations and Peer Evaluation (5-6)

Tu Apr 14: Presentations and Peer Evaluation (5-6)

⚙ * INQUIRY REVISION Due (if applicable) *

Th Apr 16: Presentations and Peer Evaluation (5); Brief review discussion for exam

Tu Apr 21: Presentations and Peer Evaluation: Wrap up (5-6)

Th Apr 23: Last Day of Class: Synthetic Exam, in-class portion. Take home essay question submitted online during finals period.