

RELIGION 200: RELIGION AND CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCE: SPRING, 2001

**Description:** Religion 200 is a course in theology, exploring religious perspectives on a number of contemporary social issues. The goals of the course are to develop informed awareness of the issues and to learn practices of theological reflection. This is a writing-intensive course. Reflective essays and a major term paper count for 55 percent of credit.

**The Oxford College Honor Code applies to all course work.**

**Instructor:** Hoyt Oliver. Office: Humanities 204. Tel. 784-8369.

**Texts:** Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (DOF); Christ & Plaskow, Womanspirit Rising (WR); Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (TOL); Armstrong, The Battle for God (BFG); McDaniel, With Roots and Wings (RAW).

**Requirements:** 3 tests (45%); 5 essays (25%); 1 term paper (30%)

**Attendance is expected. Each unexcused absence over 2 incurs 2-point penalty.**

**I. WHAT IS FAITH?**

Th, Jan 18      Introductory session; film, "Koyaanisqatsi"  
 Tu, Jan 23      DOF, chs I & II  
 Th, Jan 25      DOF, chs III & IV  
 Tu, Jan 30      DOF, chs V, VI, conclusion. **Essay 1 due.** Either: 1) Do an analysis of the faith you have been taught, using Tillich's framework; or 2) Write a story or poem about a person of faith you have known, incorporating Tillich's insights.

**II. WOMEN IN RELIGION**

Th, Feb 1      WR, I: Saiving, Ruether, Daly  
 Tu, Feb 6      WR, II: Collins, Tribble, Fiorenza, McLaughlin, Pagels  
 Th, Feb 8      WR, III: Fiorenza, Collins, Morton **Term paper theses/outlines due**  
 Tu, Feb 13      WR, IV: Plaskow, Daly, Washbourn, Starhawk  
 Th, Feb 15      **Essay 2 due.** Write about how one religious group (preferably your own) thinks about, and acts toward, women.  
 Tu, Feb. 20      **Test # 1**

**III. LIBERATION THEOLOGY**

Th, Feb 22      TOL, chs 1-5  
 Tu, Feb 27      TOL, chs 6-9  
 Th, Mar 1      TOL, chs 10-11  
 Tu, Mar 6      TOL, chs 12-13  
 Th, Mar 8      **Essay 3 due.** Write about a specific case study of social evil in the world today and what religious groups should do about it, using liberation theology approach.  
 Tu, Mar 13 – Th, Mar 15: spring recess – no classes

**IV. RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND SOCIETY**

Tu, Mar 20      BFG      **Term paper first drafts due – including reference page**  
 Th, Mar 22      BFG      (specific chapter assignments will be furnished)  
 Tu, Mar 27      BFG  
 Th, Mar 29      BFG      **Essay 4 due.** Write a news article about how fundamentalists play(ed) a role in either:  
                          a) the 2000 U.S. Presidential election, or  
                          b) the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and efforts at peace settlements.  
 Tu, Apr 3      **Test # 2**

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### V. ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY: Caring for Planet Earth

Th, Apr 5	RAW, Intro., chs 1,2,3
Tu, Apr 10	RAW, chs 4,5,6 <b>Term papers due;(2-point penalty for each day late)</b>
Th, Apr 12	RAW, chs 7,8
Tu, Apr 17	RAW, chs 9,10 <b>Essay 5 due.</b> You have just been appointed as U.S. Secretary of the Interior. What policies will you follow? Justify, from your own faith-tradition.

### VI. SHARING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

Th, Apr 19	class reports on term paper themes
Tu, Apr 24	class reports on term paper themes
Th, Apr 26	class reports on term paper themes
Tu, May 1	review, and May Day pagan orgy on quadrangle

**At time of scheduled final exam: Test # 3**

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### TERM PAPER GUIDELINES

- 1) Paper should be about a **specific contemporary social issue**. (i.e., not historical, not private, not trivial). There should be evidence that you have studied this issue in depth, using appropriate sources. Scholarly studies from library; internet sources; and general-public sources should all be considered.
- 2) Paper must reflect upon the social issue from a **theological** perspective. "Theology" here is used in a general sense: it need not be Christian, but may come from other world faith-traditions with which you are familiar (e.g. Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Native American, Wiccan, African, etc.)
- 3) Paper must have a **clear central thesis**, and be organized in a clear, flowing discussion. **Your own critical reflections** should be included, not just material from sources you consult.
- 4) Paper must follow accepted procedures of referencing. **Proper reference credit must be given every time you use others' ideas – not just for direct quotations.** Include page of "works cited."
- 5) Some compulsive (or lazy) student is sure to wonder, "**How long does the paper have to be?**" The answer is: "Long enough!" You probably can't do justice to any significant topic in fewer than 12 pages, and your instructor won't read more than 40 pages!
- 6) **You need not limit your choice** of topic to those covered in our course syllabus.

*If I'm uptight about my religion,  
it isn't faith, it's addiction.*