

History/Religious Studies 208:

FOUNDATIONS OF WESTERN RELIGIOUS AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

Fall 2010
MW, 2:30-3:45 p.m., 1111 Mosse Humanities

Instructor

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This course introduces some central themes in the history of Western religious thinking from the ancient Greeks to the dawn of the modern world. We will consider how two distinct and multifaceted intellectual traditions—the classical and the Judeo-Christian—arose in the ancient Mediterranean world and how those traditions interacted to shape European thought about God, humans, and the cosmos in the period from the late Roman empire to the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century.

The course has two main goals. First, we aim to familiarize you with some key thinkers, texts, and movements that continue to mold how people in the West approach religion and think about the universe and humankind's place in it. Second, we aim to hone your skills as a historical thinker and interpreter of texts. You will be asked to read closely, reflect on, discuss, and write about a number of profoundly influential writings. Class discussions will provide the opportunity to voice your insights and questions and to engage with those of your classmates. Writing exercises will give you the chance to synthesize your thinking into clear and persuasive arguments.

Course Requirements

1. Attend all lectures and participate actively in class discussions. Lectures form the backbone of the course by giving narrative and analytical continuity and setting the readings in historical context. In discussion section you will delve deeper into the readings and engage questions raised by course materials. For more on attendance and class participation requirements, please see the separate Discussion Section Syllabus.
2. Read closely all assigned texts *before* class and come prepared to discuss them.
3. Write two analytical papers of 1200-1400 words (about four pages) each, due at the beginning of lecture on October 4 and November 15, respectively. Each paper will respond to a question based on assigned readings. You will have some choice of topics.
4. Write a midterm exam on October 27 and a final exam on December 20. The midterm will include several short (one paragraph) identifications and a longer essay. The final will take a similar format but will include an additional essay or text analysis section. A list of possible identifications and essay questions will be distributed in advance.

Grade breakdown: Class participation: 15%; Paper One: 15%; Midterm: 15%; Paper Two: 25%; Final: 30%

Classroom Conduct

Please arrive to class on time and silence any cell phones or pagers before our session begins. Once class has started, please refrain from texting, surfing the web, reading newspapers, etc., and give your full attention to matters at hand. You are encouraged to ask questions and make comments during lecture as well as individually before and after class and during office hours. You are expected to participate actively in discussion section.

Academic Honesty Policy

All students are expected to adhere to the University's standards for academic honesty and integrity. Penalties for academic misconduct, including plagiarism and other forms of cheating, range from failing an assignment or a course to being expelled from the University. For more on University policies pertaining to academic misconduct, see <http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html>.

Course Texts

The following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore, 711 State Street. If you buy your texts elsewhere, please be sure to obtain these editions:

Plato, *Republic*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett, 2004) ISBN: 0872207366
Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic*, trans. Robin Campbell (Penguin, 1969) ISBN: 014044210-3
Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Harvard UP, 1961) ISBN: 0674220528
Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford UP, 1992) ISBN: 0199537822
Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Adams (Norton, 1989) ISBN: 0393957497
Martin Luther: Selections from his Writings, ed. John Dillenberger (Anchor, 1958) ISBN: 0385098766

You will also need a scholarly translation of the Bible. The following edition is recommended and available at UBS:

The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version, College Edition, 4th Edition (Oxford UP, 2010) ISBN: 0195289544

Other acceptable translations of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament as well as the New Testament include: Revised Standard Version, New American Bible, New International Version, New English Bible, New Jerusalem Bible, English Standard Version. Scholarly translations of the Hebrew Bible alone include those by the Jewish Publication Society (JPS and NJPS). "Living" and other free translations of the Bible are not acceptable for our purposes in this course. If you have questions about the suitability of a particular translation, please ask.

In addition to the texts listed above, a number of readings will be posted on the course webpage on Learn@UW. See the schedule below for details.

COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: Reading assignments marked with an asterisk (*) are posted as links or documents on our Learn @UW course webpage.

Sep 8 Introduction

I. The Greeks, the Gods, and Philosophical Religion

- Sep 13 Homeric Religion and Its Critics
*Homer, *The Iliad*
*Fragments from Xenophanes
- Sep 15 The Sophists and Socrates
Plato, *Republic*, Books 1-3
- Sep 20 Plato: The City and the Soul
Plato, *Republic*, Books 4-6
- Sep 22 Plato: Justice and the Good
Plato, *Republic*, Books 7-10
- Sep 27 Aristotle's World
- Sep 29 Hellenistic Thought (I): Critique of Religion
*Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*
- Oct 4 Hellenistic Thought (II): Stoicism
Seneca, *Letters from a Stoic*, #5, 7, 8, 15, 16, 18, 41, 56, 65, 90, 122, 123
PAPER #1 DUE

II. The People of God and the Goal of History

- Oct 6 Monotheism and Election
Genesis 1-4; 6:5-9:17; 11:27-13:18; 15:1-18:15; 21:1-22:19; 25:19-35:29
- Oct 11 Israel and the Covenant
Exodus 1-20, 24; Deuteronomy 1-6, 27-34
- Oct 13 Israel's Hope
Isaiah 40-55; Jeremiah 30-31; Ezekiel 37
- Oct 18 Jesus and the Kingdom of God
The Gospel According to Matthew (entire)
- Oct 20 Paul and the Gentile Mission
Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Romans (both entire)
- Oct 25 The Parting of the Ways
The Acts of the Apostles (entire)
- Oct 27 MIDTERM EXAM

III. Medieval Syntheses

- Nov 1 Athens and Jerusalem
Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (entire)

- Nov 3 Saint Augustine (I)
St. Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 3-61
- Nov 8 Saint Augustine (II)
St. Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 80-116, 133-78
- Nov 10 Monastic Culture
*St. Benedict, *Rule for Monasteries*
- Nov 15 Jewish and Islamic Thought
*Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*
*Ibn Rushd, *On the Harmony of Religions and Philosophy*
PAPER #2 DUE
- Nov 17 Scholastic Culture
*Peter Abelard, *The Story of My Misfortunes*
- Nov 22 High Scholasticism and Nominalism
*St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

IV. Towards the Modern

- Nov 24 The Individual and Human Nature in the Renaissance
*Petrarch, *The Ascent of Mount Ventoux*
*Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*
- Nov 29 Mysticism and Dissent
*Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*
- Dec 1 Christian Humanism
Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, pp. 1-87; and *Paraclesis*, pp. 118-27
- Dec 6 Sources of the Reformation
Martin Luther, *Preface to the Complete Edition of the Latin Writings*, pp. 3-12; *Preface to the New Testament*, pp. 14-19; and *The Freedom of a Christian*, pp. 52-85
- Dec 8 Humanism and Reformation
Erasmus, “An Inquisition into Faith,” pp. 212-222
Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, pp. 167-90, 199-203
- Dec 13 John Calvin (Lindsay Starkey)
*John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and *Commentary on Genesis*
- Dec 15 Retrospect and Prospect

FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 10:05 A.M.