

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

History / Religious Studies 209

WESTERN INTELLECTUAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY SINCE 1500

Spring 2019

MWF, 9:55-10:45, 1213 Engineering Hall

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Office hours: Wednesdays 11:00-1:00 and by appointment

Course Description

In Europe in the year 1500, it has been argued, it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, while in today's pluralistic world many people find this option easy, even inescapable. How did a widely shared religious worldview of the late Middle Ages give way to the diversity of beliefs and ethical norms that mark the West today? And how did the seismic social and intellectual changes of the modern era affect how Europeans held and expressed their religious and philosophical commitments? Those big questions set the agenda for this course.

Throughout the course we will consider rival ways in which scholars have tried to explain and evaluate shifts in religious belief and behavior in the modern period; here the concept of secularization looms large. Most of our time will be spent exploring some big trends in modern European thinking about religion, often using specific thinkers and texts as windows into broader movements. We will study changes within Christianity and Judaism, as well as critiques of religion and the rise of modern atheism and agnosticism. Throughout, we will ask how people's ultimate commitments have shaped their visions of the good life and/or their approaches to social justice and concrete action in the world.

Course Texts

The following required books are available for purchase at local and online bookstores and are also on reserve at College Library in Helen C. White Hall:

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve Celebration: A Dialogue*, trans. Terrence N. Tice (Cascade Books, 2010)

Peter Fritzsche, ed., *Nietzsche and the Death of God: Selected Writings* (Waveland Press, 2013)

Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (Harper Perennial, 2009)

Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God* (Schocken, 1995)

A reader containing all other required texts will be available for purchase at the College of Letters & Science Copy Center, 6120 Sewell Social Sciences. The texts in the reader are also available on Canvas as PDFs, in case you prefer to print them out individually. A number of recommended readings will also be posted online.

Course Objectives

My main goal in this course is to spark and nourish your interest in the utterly fascinating fields of

modern European intellectual history and religious thought. If you invest time, thought, and hard work in the course, by semester's end you will also be equipped to:

- identify and explain key trends, personalities, and texts that have shaped modern European thinking about religion
- understand and evaluate some of the scholarly debates surrounding these movements and the historical questions they raise
- construct strong historical arguments based on textual evidence and careful reasoning
- compose clear analytical and argumentative written prose

Course Credit

This three-credit course meets for three 50-minute periods each week over the semester and carries the expectation that you will spend *an average* of two hours outside of class for each class meeting. In other words, plan to allot about six hours per week for reading, writing papers, and preparing for class meetings. Some weeks the work load will be heavier; other weeks it will be lighter.

Course Requirements

1. Attend and be prepared to participate in all class meetings. The success of this course depends on your presence and engagement in class. I will take attendance throughout the semester. You may miss three class sessions without penalty, but please do inform me by email of your absence beforehand. Unexcused absences will lower your class participation grade.

Most meetings will include some class participation and some sessions will be devoted entirely to discussion. You are expected to have read all required texts closely beforehand and to come to class ready to voice your ideas and questions about them. *You must bring a hard copy of the text(s) assigned for the day to each meeting.* You will receive a participation grade (on a 10-point scale) three times during the semester: on February 22, March 29, and May 3. Attendance and class participation count for 15% of your final grade.

2. Write four responses of 250-300 words each, answering a specific question about the day's assigned readings. Questions will be posted on Canvas. You will have the option of writing on most readings and may choose which ones you respond to. If you wish, you may write up to six response papers; in that case only the four highest grades will count. The first paper must be turned in by February 8, the second by February 27, the third by March 29, the fourth by May 1. Your response papers will be graded based on the following criteria:

- (1) Did you answer the question clearly and directly?
- (2) Does your response reflect a close, thoughtful reading of the whole of the relevant text(s)?
- (3) Is your response based on the text itself rather than generalizations or things you may have read about the text elsewhere (including the Internet)?
- (4) Is it written in clear, concise prose, polished for grammar and style?

To get credit for a response paper, you must leave a copy on Canvas before the start of the class period when the reading is due; the submission folder closes at 9:55 a.m. sharp. No late papers accepted. Together, the four responses make up 20% of your final grade.

3. Write two analytical essays of 1500-1700 words (4-5 pages) each. You will submit two versions of each essay. On February 18 you will turn in a complete draft of your first paper. The following week you will meet individually with a Writing Fellow (WF) for comments and feedback on your draft (see below for more on WFs). On March 4 you will submit a revised version of your essay that takes your WF's feedback into account. The schedule for the second paper is similar: first draft due on April 8 meeting with your WF the next week, revised version due on April 22. Each part of the process (draft, meeting, revision) will form part of your final grade on each essay. Details about the process and evaluation criteria will come with the first essay assignment. Each paper counts for 20% of your course grade.

4. Write a take-home final essay of 1800-2100 words (5-6 pages). Prompts will be distributed during the last week of class and your essay will be due on Canvas at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, May 10. The final paper counts for 25% of your course grade.

Grading Scale

All assignments and your final course grade will be calculated using the following scale:

93-100%=A	83-87%=B	70-77%=C	60-59%=F
88-92%=AB	78-82%=BC	60-69%=D	

Communication and Office Hours

I welcome meeting with students outside of class time. You are encouraged to come to office hours at any time during the semester, whether to discuss a question or problem you've encountered in the course, to get help on a paper, to explore an idea, or simply to chat. I hold regular office hours on Wednesdays, 11:00-1:00, but if you have a schedule conflict then, let me know and we can arrange another time to meet. In general the best way to reach me is by email (eric.carlsson@wisc.edu). I check email regularly and will try to respond within 24 hours. Often I can reply sooner than that, but on weekends response time may be up to 48 hours.

Honors Credit

Students taking the course for Honors credit should consult with me by the fifth week of class to discuss options for an Honors project. These include expanding one of the analytical papers, writing a research paper on another topic, or doing a project involving art, media, or another form of public presentation. For Honors students, the course grade will be determined as follows: class participation 15%; responses 15%; first essay 20%; Honors project 25%; final paper 25%.

Writing Fellows

We are very fortunate to have three Writing Fellows (WFs) working with us this semester: Bryce Retzlaff (bretzlaff2@wisc.edu), Farid Torbey (ftorbey@wisc.edu), and Hannah Widmaier (hwidmaier@wisc.edu). These undergraduates are skilled writers who have been chosen through a campus-wide selection process and given intensive training on how to offer constructive criticism during the writing process. Each of you will work with one of the WFs individually on your two papers. Your WF will read your polished drafts closely, offer detailed comments, and meet with you individually to make suggestions for how your drafts can be improved.

Experienced writers know that all good writing involves extensive revising. The most effective way to "re-see" one's work is to get thoughtful feedback from intelligent readers. That is what the WFs provide. They are not experts in the subject matter of the course and will generally not offer substantive critiques of your paper. Nor will they grade your papers. Instead, they will help you

see where your argument and presentation could be clearer and more effective and they will flag logical and conceptual problems in your prose. All of us, no matter how much experience we have as writers, can benefit immensely from the kind of attentive engagement with our work that the WFs will offer you. I urge you to make the most of this opportunity.

Policy on Late Papers

Because the Writing Fellows will be reading papers on a tight schedule, you must submit them on time. If you face an emergency that makes it impossible for you to complete your paper on schedule, please contact me immediately. Unless arrangements for an extension have been made with me at least 24 hours before the due date, late papers will be deducted one half grade for each day they are late (e.g., an AB paper becomes a B the next day, a BC the day after that, etc.).

The History Lab

The History Lab is an excellent resource specifically for undergraduates writing history papers. Trained Ph.D. students in history will help you regardless of your stage in the writing process—formulating a thesis, developing your argument, citing sources, revising your drafts, and more. The History Lab is located in 4255 Mosse Humanities Building. Sign up for a one-on-one consultation at <https://advising.wisc.edu/content/history-lab#info>.

Electronic Devices

A growing body of research suggests that students process information more thoughtfully, grasp concepts better, focus their attention more sharply, and—unsurprisingly—earn better grades when they take notes with pen and paper rather than on a computer. And who of us with an open laptop isn't tempted to surf, check social media, play games, etc.? For these reasons, and because this course runs on face-to-face interaction, I strongly encourage you not to use computers in class. Cell phones should be silenced and put away during class.

Academic Integrity

UW-Madison takes academic integrity seriously. No form of cheating or plagiarism—representing somebody else's work as your own—will be tolerated in this course. In your papers you must cite sources carefully, whether you repeat someone else's exact words or paraphrase or draw on their ideas. If you have specific questions about plagiarism and how to avoid it, please speak with me or consult <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/quotingsources/>. Penalties for plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and other forms of cheating range from failing an assignment or a course to being suspended from the university. For university policies on academic misconduct, see <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that requires accommodations, please inform me of this need at the start of the semester or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with you or coordinate with the McBurney Center to provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

UW-Madison Statement on Diversity

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves

to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. UW-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background—people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: Readings must be completed before class on the day noted: Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, respectively. Aside from the four required books, all texts can be found in the course reader and on Canvas. There you will also find full bibliographical information for each selection.

<u>Week 1</u> Jan 23, 25	<u>Course Introduction</u> F: Charles Taylor, <i>A Secular Age</i> , 1-14	
<u>Week 2</u> Jan 28, 30, Feb 1	<u>Mapping Modernity: Secularization Stories</u> M: Jonathan Israel, <i>Radical Enlightenment</i> , 1-13 F: Brad S. Gregory, “The Reformation and Modernity”	
<u>Week 3</u> Feb 4, 6, 8	<u>Reformation Legacies</u> M: Dominic Erdozain, <i>The Soul of Doubt</i> , 10-33 W: Carlos Eire, “Redefining the Sacred and the Supernatural” F: Peter Harrison, “Protestantism and the Making of Modern Science”	Response 1 due 2/8
<u>Week 4</u> Feb 11, 13, 15	<u>Confronting New Worlds: Relativism and Skepticism</u> M: Richard Popkin, <i>The History of Scepticism</i> , 44-63 W: Michel de Montaigne, “On the Cannibals”	
<u>Week 5</u> Feb 18, 20, 22	<u>Searching for Certainty</u> W: Richard Popkin, <i>The History of Scepticism</i> , 143-57 René Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i> F: Richard Popkin, <i>The History of Scepticism</i> , 174-88 Blaise Pascal, <i>Pensées</i>	Paper 1 draft due 2/18
<u>Week 6</u> Feb 25, 27, Mar 1	<u>Enlightened Faiths</u> M: John Robertson, <i>The Enlightenment</i> , 15-48 W: Voltaire, selections	Response 2 due 2/27
<u>Week 7</u> Mar 4, 6, 8	<u>Reconstructing “Religion”</u> W: Friedrich Schleiermacher, <i>Christmas Eve Celebration</i> , 1-35 F: Schleiermacher, <i>Christmas Eve Celebration</i> , 36-87	Revised Paper 1 due 3/4
<u>Week 8</u> Mar 11, 13, 15	<u>New Directions in Judaism</u> W: Leora Batnitzky, <i>How Judaism Became a Religion</i> , 13-28	
—SPRING BREAK—		
<u>Week 9</u> Mar 25, 27, 29	<u>Religion vs. Science?</u> M: David N. Livingstone, “Re-Placing Darwinism and	Response 3 due 3/29

Christianity”

W: Dominic Erdozain, *The Soul of Doubt*, 173-93

F: Dominic Erdozain, *The Soul of Doubt*, 193-220

Week 10

Apr 1, 3, 5

The Death of God

M: Peter Fritzsche, *Nietzsche and the Death of God*, 8-14, 19-34, 68-79

W: Peter Fritzsche, *Nietzsche and the Death of God*, 79-110

Week 11

Apr 8, 10, 12

Good-Bye to All That

W: Leslie A. Fiedler, Introduction to Weil, *Waiting for God*

F: Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, 1-53

Paper 2 draft

due 4/8

Week 12

Apr 15, 17, 19

Against Christendom

M: Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War*, 207-33

F: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*

Week 13

Apr 22, 24, 26

God and Genocide

W: Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God*, Act I

F: Elie Wiesel, *Trial of God*, Acts II & III

Revised paper 2

due 4/22

Week 14

Apr 29, May 1, 3

Secularization Revisited

W: David Martin, “Secularization: Master Narrative or
Several Stories?”

Response 4

due 5/1

Final paper due on Canvas on Friday, May 10 at 1:00 p.m.