

**SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION 11: ORIGINS OF WESTERN RELIGION  
WINTER 2005**

**Instructor:** Catherine Murphy  
**Office:** Bannan 351  
**Office hours:** Tu/W 11:45 a.m.–1:00 p.m., and by appointment  
**Phone:** (408) 551-1909

SCTR 011.12984  
 Bannan 332  
 TTh 9:55-11:40 a.m.  
**E-mail:** cmurphy@scu.edu

**Recommended Text:**

*The Bible (NRSV)*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. [ISBN 0-19-528380-5] [ \$24.99/\$18.75]  
*If you already have a copy of the Bible, feel free to use that instead, though please notify the professor of the version.*

**Required Texts:**

'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. Beltsville, Maryland: Amana, 1996. [ISBN 0-915957-55-8] [ \$13.95/\$10.50]  
 Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987. [ISBN 0-06-063035-3] [ \$15.95/\$12.00]  
 Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. [ISBN 0-520-08328-8] [ \$20.25/\$15.20]  
 John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. [ISBN 0-195154355] [ \$14.95/\$11.25]  
 Readings on ERes [no cost, unless you decide to print them]

**Course Description**

From *The Da Vinci Code* to Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ," from 9/11 to the recent presidential election, western religion is in the news every day. This course offers a chance to explore the religious in the modern world through the origins of those Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and Greco-Roman traditions.

The course is divided into four parts. We begin with a snapshot of the experience of western religions in the U.S. today, looking particularly at some recent phenomena like Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* to explore how Americans consume western religion today. We then turn in greater depth to specific features of religious systems, exploring first a theoretical model and then applying these to ancient and/or modern western religions. Thus we will look at the **myths** we live by in the U.S. today, and compare these to the functions of myth in Jewish antiquity. We will look at **ritual** performances today and compare these against the rituals apparent in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. Finally, we will address **religion and violence** in American civil religion, in radical Islam and in Mel Gibson's Catholic meditation, "The Passion of the Christ."

**Course Objectives**

The goal of the course is not to provide a systematic introduction to all of the major religious systems of antiquity, but rather to probe a few of these in depth in order to understand the cultural role and social function of religion in the past and in the present. By the end of the course, the successful student will be able to:

- articulate some critical models for probing religion today and in the past
- define myth, apply it appropriately to religious and secular phenomena, and understand its political function in ancient Israel
- understand ritual behavior and how it functions for the individual and the community
- articulate some theories and examples of the connections and disjunctures of religion and violence and apply these to moments in Christian and Islamic history
- undertake a small-group research project, gain greater confidence at oral presentation, function effectively in a small-group setting

## The Religious Studies and Core Requirements

The Religious Studies Department at Santa Clara University offers courses in three major areas: 1) Scripture and Tradition (SCTR), 2) Theology, Ethics and Spirituality (TESP), and 3) Religion and Society (RSOC). This course is in **Area 1, Scripture and Tradition**, which means that it focuses on sacred texts and the interpretation of them. But our attention to contemporary issues will introduce you to the methods in RSOC courses, and some of the issues of theology and spirituality we address are those with which TESP courses are concerned, so actually you will be introduced to all three areas and methods of study.

This introductory level course is part of the **University core**, whose theme at this level is “Community: Sense of Person and Place.” You are part of a larger world, as you well know, and education is about expanding your sense of that world. Since religion plays a major role in our world today, this course will help you reflect on your relationship to classic religious questions and to explore the role of religion in cross-cultural conflict and reconciliation.

### Course Format

**Reading Prior to Class.** Please read the assigned readings in advance of the class under which they are listed. They will provide the basis for our class discussion. Readings listed as "primary" are those from the past (e.g., the Bible, the Qur'an, the Oresteia), while those listed as "secondary" are more modern reflections on topics.

**Lecture and Open Discussion.** The professor will begin each class with questions about the readings. A conversational lecture will open up other topics for discussion. Class discussion and small group work will be slotted for fully half of each class period.

### Course Requirements

#### *Attendance*

You are expected to be present and on time to class. Should illness or circumstance necessitate absence, please notify the professor in advance or within a week of the missed class. Notice renders the absence excused; lack of notice constitutes an unexcused absence. After the first excused absence, and for all unexcused absences, your attendance and class participation grades will be affected. At two or more unexcused absences (10+% of the course) your entire grade for the course begins to drop. Five unexcused absences (25% of course) will result in a failing grade. Daily roll will be taken. 5% of grade +.

#### *Class Participation*

Class participation is a critical part of this course. It will include your informed oral remarks in class—during formal lectures, in open question periods, and during small group work and class discussion. You will occasionally be required to prepare a short list before class; these lists will provide fodder for class discussion. Lists count for 5% of grade total. Oral participation 15% of grade.

#### *Critical Inquiry: Short Essays and Group Research Project*

In lieu of quizzes and exams, you will be required to write a short, 4-5 page essay for each of our three major units. In these papers, you will take the theoretical model we have been discussing in class and apply it to the unit readings. Each essay is 20% of your grade and will be submitted on the due date in two formats: hard copy in class and electronically to TurnItIn.com.

In the second week, you will choose a group of 3-4 other students with whom to do a short research project in lieu of a midterm exam. This project will explore the function of earlier scripture in a myth in modern Israel. The project counts for 15% of your grade: 10% for the content and presentation of your portion, and 5% for the group grade.

#### *Quizzes & Examinations*

There are no quizzes or exams scheduled for this course, although the professor has discretion to introduce them if students are not keeping up with the reading.

#### *Extra Credit*

Extra credit opportunities will be posted online at “Extra Credit Events” periodically throughout the quarter. To receive extra credit, attend the event, write a 2-3 page summary and evaluation, and turn it in within one week of the event. Directions for the paper can be found online at “Extra Credit Events.” 3% of grade max, only applicable if all required assignments have been submitted.

## Grades

### Grade Philosophy

Your level of engagement in a course determines your success in that course. That does not mean that a lot of effort will earn you an "A"; it does mean that a lot of effort will enable you to exceed yourself in several measures of performance beyond grades, such as self-discipline, note-taking, coherent writing, oral confidence, initiative, creativity, and group participation.

### Grade Breakdown

Class Participation (5% for 3 lists; 15% in-class comments/questions, 5% attendance)	25%
Short Essays (3 @ 20% each)	60%
Group Research Project	15%

### Grade Scale

93.5–100	A	86.7–89.9	B+	76.7–79.9	C+	66.7–69.9	D+
90.0–93.4	A-	83.3–86.6	B	73.3–76.6	C	63.3–66.6	D
		80.0–83.2	B-	70.0–73.2	C-	60.0–63.2	D-

## Disability Accommodation Policy

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahmann Center in Benson, room 214, (408) 554-4111, TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

## Academic Integrity

You are expected to collaborate to share ideas, resources, and questions, particularly for in-class work and exam preparation. This sharing becomes cheating or plagiarism when you present as original the insights or work of another. It thus includes copying someone else's work without attribution, whether the source is a friend, a book, or the web. Work on extra credit, lists and short essays is expected to be original to you. That does not mean that every idea and insight you write about will be your own. What it does mean is that your assignments should be guided by your insights and, when you do rely on an authority other than yourself, you note that reliance through standard footnotes and bibliography (see the online "Research Tips" and "Style Sheet"). If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing on a required assignment, you will receive an "F" on the assignment and in the course, and the matter will be forwarded for further action to the Office of Student Leadership.

Wk	Date	Pages of Reading	Topic of Lecture, Discussion & Symposium
----	------	------------------	--

1	1/4		INTRODUCTIONS; "WESTERN RELIGIONS"
---	-----	--	------------------------------------

### UNIT 1. CONSUMING RELIGION

1/6		CONSUMING RELIGION <u>Secondary Reading:</u> Forbes article (distributed in class) <u>List #1:</u> Make a list of specific manifestations of religion in pop-culture that you are aware of. Group the items in the list into the four types of relationships that Forbes describes (e.g., "religion in pop culture"), and explain each example with a phrase or sentence. These will be a basis for class discussion. You will turn in this list, so follow the format guidelines for a short assignment at the Style Sheet on the course web site.
-----	--	---

2	1/11	RELIGION AND POP-CULTURE: THE DA VINCI CODE <u>Secondary Reading:</u> Brown and Bock articles (ERes)
---	------	---

⇒ **Choose groups for Research Projects**

Wk	Date	Pages of Reading	Topic of Lecture, Discussion & Symposium
----	------	------------------	--

### UNIT 2. MYTH & RELIGIOUS NARRATIVE

2	1/13		<p>MYTHS AMERICA LIVES BY</p> <p><u>Secondary Reading:</u> Malinowski and Hughes articles (ERes)</p> <p><u>List #2:</u> List any stories you are aware of, outside of Hughes' suggestions, that use a fictional or semi-fictional construction of a past event to organize meaning or values for us in the United States today. After each entry, define the story and determine what meanings/values it promotes in U.S. society today (2-3 sentences for each entry).</p>
3	1/18		<p>THE BIBLE AND ITS MYTHS</p> <p><u>Primary Reading:</u> Genesis 1-3, 6-12; Exodus 1-20</p> <p><u>Secondary Reading:</u> Friedman 15-61, 79-88</p>
	1/20		<p>THE DEUTERONOMISTIC MYTH</p> <p><u>Primary Reading:</u> Deuteronomy 1-6, 30; 2 Kings 22</p> <p><u>Secondary Reading:</u> Friedman 89-135</p> <p><u>Short Essay #1:</u> Define myth and discuss some of its examples in the Bible and in America today.</p>
4	1/25		<p>THE PRIESTLY MYTH</p> <p><u>Primary Reading:</u> Genesis 1:1-2:4a, 6-9; Leviticus 1; 11; 19</p> <p><u>Secondary Reading:</u> Friedman 150-60</p>
	1/27		<p>THE APOCALYPTIC MYTH</p> <p><u>Primary Reading:</u> Daniel</p>
5	2/1		<p>THE CHRISTIAN MYTH</p> <p><u>Primary Reading:</u> Philippians 2; Mark 9; 14:1-16:8; John 1; Revelation 20-21</p> <p><u>Secondary Reading:</u> Carter article (ERes)</p>
	2/3		SMALL-GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTATIONS
6	2/8		SMALL-GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

### UNIT 3. RITUAL PERFORMANCE

6	2/10		<p>WHAT IS RITUAL?</p> <p><u>Secondary Reading:</u> Bell article (ERes)</p> <p><u>List #3:</u> List performances in U.S. popular culture that fit Bell's definition of ritual performance. For each, include a sentence or two describing how/why the act is a ritual performance.</p>
7	2/15		<p>AESCHYLUS' ORESTEIA, "AGAMEMNON"</p> <p><u>Primary Reading:</u> "Agamemnon"</p> <p><u>Secondary Reading:</u> pp. 3-23 in Oresteia book</p> <p><u>Resource:</u> The House of Atreus (available from the online syllabus; go to today)</p>

Wk	Date	Pages of Reading	Topic of Lecture, Discussion & Symposium
----	------	------------------	--

7	2/17		AESCHYLUS' ORESTEIA, "THE LIBATION BEARERS" <u>Primary Reading:</u> "The Libation Bearers" <u>Secondary Reading:</u> Intro to play in Oresteia book
---	------	--	---

8	2/22		AESCHYLUS' ORESTEIA, "THE KINDLY ONES" <u>Primary Reading:</u> "The Kindly Ones" <u>Secondary Reading:</u> Intro to play in Oresteia book; Mikalson article (ERes)
---	------	--	--

#### UNIT 4. RELIGION & VIOLENCE

8	2/24		VIOLENCE IN AMERICAN CIVIL RELIGION & IN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS <u>Secondary Reading:</u> Marvin/Ingle and Juergensmeyer articles (ERes; there are 2 Juergensmeyer articles on ERes – read the first one, "Thinking about Religion after September 11") <u>Short Essay #2:</u> Present Bell's definition of ritual performance, and then apply it to one major ritual in the Oresteia. Remember that the rituals embedded in the dramatic narrative are themselves part of a larger ritual performance. Finally, use Mikalson to compare/contrast Aeschylus' dramatization of your chosen ritual with the actual existence/practice of that ritual in Greek popular religion.
---	------	--	--

⇒ ***During this last unit of the quarter, find time to view Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ," in Varsi Media lab. We will only be watching brief excerpts in class***

9	3/1		JIHAD <u>Primary Reading:</u> Use the index in your Qur'an to look up "jihad" and read the passages you find <u>Secondary Reading:</u> Esposito article on ERes and Esposito book chs. 1-2
---	-----	--	--

	3/3		JIHAD <u>Primary Reading:</u> Review Qur'an readings from last class <u>Secondary Reading:</u> Esposito book ch. 4
--	-----	--	--

10	3/8		MEL GIBSON'S "THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST" <u>Primary:</u> Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" (Varsi Media Lab) <u>Secondary Reading:</u> Pawlikowski article (ERes)
----	-----	--	--

	3/10		MEL GIBSON'S "THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST" <u>Primary:</u> Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" (Varsi Media Lab) <u>Secondary Reading:</u> Juergensmeyer article (ERes) REVIEW & EVALUATIONS
--	------	--	--

11	3/15		⇒ <b><i>Short Essay #3 due in Bannan 351 by 4:30 p.m.</i></b> Using the readings from February 24, explore the correlations of religion and violence in either fundamentalist constructions of the jihad tradition or in Mel Gibson's movie. Structure your essay around the two aspects of religion we have studied in depth, namely, the particular use and function of myth and the characteristics and functions of ritual performance.
----	------	--	--