Course Web SCTR 19
Purpose of the Core Course in Religious Studies

Course Description

Recommended Book

The Bible, NRSV. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989. [ISBN 9780195283808] You need a Bible for this class, but you don’t need to buy this one if you already have one, borrow one, or use an online NRSV (various versions are available at biblia.com).


Required Books


Course Description

This course introduces you to three major religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It focuses especially on one religious phenomenon they all share, namely “a book”—for Jews the Tanak, for Christians the Old and New Testaments, and for Muslims the Qur’an. These scriptural traditions and their interpretations overlap and thus reveal what the religions share in common, while also disclosing the differences between them. Our study of these traditions will allow us to ask the perennial questions raised by spiritual seekers over the ages, as well as to explore more recent encounters and issues. As we study these religions, what they share and how they differ, you’ll have the chance to rethink what scripture is, how religious beliefs function, and what your own beliefs are.

Purpose of the Core Course in Religious Studies

At Santa Clara University, the study of religious belief and practice in various cultural contexts (including your own) is one of the central features of the Core Curriculum. This has always been important in Jesuit Catholic education, which is why this is just the first of three Religious Studies courses you’ll take with us (RTC 1). But it isn’t about making you believe certain teachings or limiting your inquiry to one tradition. Religious Studies at Santa Clara is broader, deeper, and more analytical than you might expect. We want you to think critically about religious experiences, practices and beliefs—yours if you profess any, and those of other people. We want you to consider how these are all embedded in specific histories and cultures, and to appreciate the diversity. We hope that this will help you to negotiate a world in which religion matters, but in very different ways to different peoples.
Course Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Describe the central religious ideas and practices of Islam, Christianity and Judaism (exams, iBible, research paper), and for one of these traditions compare them in two different global regions (final exam). **Core RTC 1**

2. Use critical approaches to reflect on your own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence (iBible, research paper). **Core RTC 2**

3. Develop skills in critical thinking: especially reflection, close reading, information literacy, and self-expression (iBible, class participation, quizzes/exams, research paper). **Course**

How to Prepare for Class

**Course Website and Camino Page**
A website accompanies this course and provides resources for you, such as assignment directions and guidelines, a glossary, a library reserve page, grade reports, and support for your research. It also has a link to our Camino page, where some readings for our course are stored and where you will submit most of your assignments.

**Reading, Worksheets & Study Prior to Class**
The readings listed for each day’s topic should be prepared before that class. Readings listed as “primary” are those from the past (e.g., Tanak, Bible, Qur’an), while those listed as “secondary” are from contemporary authors writing about those traditions. A worksheet will be distributed before each set of readings. The questions on the worksheet highlight the most important ideas in the readings. Complete this worksheet before class; it will serve as a basis for class discussion (and later exams), and will be collected regularly for evaluation (because this entails regular work, it counts for 15% of your grade). The worksheets will be posted on the “Class Prep” tab, so if you miss class you can always download the sheet.

**Where to Find the Readings**
Most of our primary readings are in the Bible and the Qur’an, which are in the bookstore, online (see links listed above), and on reserve in the library (just go to the Circulation Desk, and ask for the resource you need for SCTR 19, Prof. Murphy). Most of the secondary readings will be in our four course textbooks (*Jewish Concepts of Scripture* [JCS]), *The Qur’an: The Basics*, *Inheriting Abraham*, and *Darwin and Intelligent Design*). Occasionally, though, the reading won’t be in one of those four books, but on our course Camino page instead (logon via http://www.scu.edu/siteindex/sculogin/).

**Questions, Discussion & Lecture**
Classes will begin with a brief q&a session (yours for the professor and classmates, or the professor’s questions for you). We will generally do some close reading of the primary texts (course learning objective 3), followed by a conversation about the central questions on your worksheets. Brief lectures will occasionally supplement the conversation to provide background or emphasis on key concepts. On a few days there will be time provided in class to begin your iBible reflections. **Because we need to maintain the focus and respect for our common work, no computers, iPads, cellphones, or other electronic devices may be used during class** (though you can use them during the mid-class breaks outside of the classroom).

Assessment and Grading

**Grade Components and Scale**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Components</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation (reading worksheets 15%; oral participation 15%, attendance 5%)</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>iBible: A Personal Anthology</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes &amp; Exams (quizzes 5%, exam #1 10%, exam #2 10%)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Scale**

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>93.5–100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0–93.4</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>86.7–89.9</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83.3–86.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80.0–83.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76.7–79.9</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>73.3–76.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70.0–73.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>66.7–69.9</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63.3–66.6</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60.0–63.2</td>
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SCTR 19H Syllabus, Fall 2013 (SCU, C. Murphy)
Oral Participation & Attendance

Class participation is a critical part of this course, since self-expression is an important critical skill to develop (learning objective 3). Class participation includes your informed responses on quizzes and in class—during formal lectures, in open question periods, and during small-group work and class discussion. In order to participate, you’ve got to come to class (see the attendance policy below) and bring the readings, worksheets and questions with you. Your preparation for class, based on your reading and reflection, is a substantial contribution to your classmates, and therefore to your grade. With attendance (which counts for 5%), your participation totals almost a third of your grade (35%).

iBible: A Personal Anthology

Jews, Christians and Muslims have collectively gathered stories from their communities that capture something of their sense of a transcendent or higher power at work in their lives. The texts they gathered, and their interpretation of them, is like a window onto their lives and priorities and the social circumstances that shaped them. This is no less true in our own time, when our scientific mindset has led us to question not only the facticity of these texts, but also their relevance to our lives.

The iBible project offers you an opportunity to explore your own beliefs about the questions our texts raise. You can approach the project from whatever point of view you bring to the class: as a believer in one of these traditions, as a practitioner of another spiritual tradition, as an agnostic or as an atheist. No matter your starting point, the process is the same: to select two questions raised by the Jewish texts, two raised by the Christian texts, and two raised by the Muslim texts, and answer them for yourself. Your “answer” to each may be a reflective essay, or a combination of music, art and/or poetry with your reflection on their relation to the question. Thus you will be compiling a kind of anthology that represents your engagement with the questions that Jews, Christians and Muslims have grappled (and still grapple) with. Though the anthology is called an “iBible” and represents your personal reflections, it’s expected that your reflection will (a) include some consideration of the social influences on you that have led you to find your answer persuasive at this point in your life, and (b) engage the Jewish, Christian, or Muslim “answers” to your question, so as to lie in our course readings. Evaluation of your project will focus on these two components.

The “questions” raised by our texts are many, and only a few have been identified for each class in unit 1 (the worksheets lists some questions). If you find another question in the primary reading that you would prefer to address, just discuss your idea with the professor in advance. It's recommended that you begin your reflection before the class that deals with that text, so you can start trying to articulate your ideas in class discussion and get some feedback from other students. You’ll likely want to revise your thinking after class, and again it would be best to do this right after that class, so that you don’t have to pull the iBible together at the last minute. Time will occasionally be provided in class to build your reflection.

This is a 12-15 page typed paper that will be due one week after the midterm, on Thursday, November 7. You’ll submit an electronic copy in Microsoft Word to two drop boxes on our course Camino page (the assignment and TurnItIn drop boxes). The professor’s evaluation of your work will be posted there as well. 15% of total grade.

Examinations

In addition to pop quizzes in class (5% total), there are two scheduled exams—one in the 6th week and one during finals week. The first exam is cumulative of material covered to that point in the course, and will take the whole class period (10%); the second exam covers material from the midterm through the final week and will not take the full exam period, though you have the whole period (10%). The quizzes and exams will assess the first and third learning objectives.

Research Paper

One of the major assignments for the course is an 8-page research paper. This exercise allows you to find a topic that interests you and to explore it more deeply. It is about building information literacy, developing solid research skills, and exploring the beliefs and practices of a single religion. You can choose any topic you like, and cross-disciplinary work is encouraged; the only requirements are that you (a) focus on only one of the three religions, (b) select a significant belief or practice (or a related set of beliefs and/or practices) of that religion, and (c) integrate the interpretation of the relevant scripture in your analysis. It may be possible for you to do an alternate type of assignment in which you compare a single belief or practice across two of our religions, but this is more difficult to do well and the professor will therefore have to approve such a project in advance.
You will compile the exercise in the following stages:

1. **Topic statement** and bibliography  
   - **4th week** Thursday, October 17
2. **Outline of strategy for paper**  
   - **9th week** Thursday, November 21
3. **Research Paper**  
   - **11th week** Tuesday, December 10

All stages will be typed and will follow the guidelines on the Style Sheet on the course website. All stages will be submitted in Microsoft Word and in electronic form to the course Camino assignment drop boxes (the final paper will also be submitted to the TurnItIn drop box on Camino, and will not be graded unless both copies have been submitted). Feedback and grades will be posted there as well. Specific directions for each component of the exercise, along with the grading rubric, are posted on the course website at the “Assignments.” Some ideas for possible research topics are posted on the course website at “Research.” This exercise assesses your progress on learning objectives 1 and 3. 25% of grade.

**Extra Credit**

Extra credit opportunities will be posted online at “Extra Credit Events” periodically throughout the quarter. There are a whole series of events this year on the topic, “What Good Is God?” which should really help you with your iBible anthology. 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.” Both types of assignment help you to practice your skills at close reading or listening, reflection, and critical thinking. 3% of grade max, only applicable if all required assignments have been submitted.

**Course Evaluation**

You will have a chance to assess the course through a mid-quarter survey (so that adjustments can be made to improve the course), and at the end of the course through a numerical evaluation, a narrative evaluation, and a Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG).

**Policies**

**Attendance**

If you’re sick or something comes up, please notify the professor in advance or within a week of the missed class. **Remember: You’re not doing yourself or anyone else any favors if you come to class sick—you can always make up the work.** Notifying the prof means that the absence is excused; it’s unexcused and counts more against your grade if you don’t let the prof know. 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 +.

**Academic Integrity**

You are expected to collaborate to share ideas, resources, and questions, particularly on group work and exam preparation. This sharing becomes cheating or plagiarism when you present as original the insights or work of another. Work on extra credit, exams and the research paper 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 “Style Sheet” at the course website). 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 also be forwarded for further action to the Office of Student Life.

**Disability Accommodation Policy**

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disabilities Resources at the outset of the quarter. The Disabilities Resources office is located in Benson Center 216, (408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445.
UNIT 1.
BOOKS, BELIEFS & PRACTICES

1 9/24 [---]  INTRODUCTIONS, REVIEW OF SYLLABUS

9/26 [30]  (HOW) IS SCRIPTURE STUDY SCIENTIFIC? JEWISH APPROACHES
Primary: Genesis 1–3; 7–8; Exodus 19–20; Deuteronomy 5–6; Psalm 68
Secondary: Baruch J. Schwarz, “The Pentateuch as Scripture and the Challenge of Biblical Criticism” (JCS 203-229)

2 10/1 [30]  PRESENT-ING THE PAST: ENGAGING GOD @ SINAI NOW
Primary: Exodus 1–20
Secondary: Steven D. Fraade, “Concepts of Scripture in Rabbinic Judaism: Oral Torah and Written Torah” (JCS 31-46)

10/3 [32]  SUFFERING & THE LIMITS OF HUMAN KNOWING
Primary: Genesis 22; Deuteronomy 30:1-20; Isaiah 45; Job 1–12; 19; 38:1–40:5; 42:1-17

3 10/8 [36]  IMAGINING ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITIES & FUTURES
Primary: Ruth 1–4; Jonah 1–4; Daniel 2; 7
Secondary: Yair Zakovitch, “Scripture and Israeli Secular Culture” (JCS 299-316)

10/10 [25]  TELLING THE STORIES OF JESUS
Primary: Mark 1:1–3:6, 8–9; 14:1–16:8; Matthew 1–5; John 1:1-18; Hebrews 4:14–5:10; Romans 5:12-19
Quiz

4 10/15 [35]  SEEKING CERTITUDE: THE (SCIENTIFIC) QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS
Primary: Synopses of the Gospel stories (Camino)
Secondary: Catherine M. Murphy, “Pursuing the Historical Jesus in the Gospels” and “Sharing in the Quests: Appreciating Modern Scholars’ Efforts,” in The Historical Jesus for Dummies (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2007) 33-60 (Camino)

Primary: Review John 1:1-18; excerpts from gnostic gospels on Camino

Research Paper: Topic Statement and bibliography due

5 10/22 [50]  SHAPING THE QUR’AN IN ISLAM
Primary: Surahs 1; 96; 74:1-31
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<th>Topic of Lecture &amp; Discussion</th>
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| 5  | 10/24 | [45]             | BELIEVING, BEHAVING, SUBMITTING  
Primary: Surahs 37:35; 48:29 (shahadah); 2:43, 110, 177; 4:162; 5:55; 11:114; 17:78-79 (salat and zakat); 2:183–200 (hajj and siyam)  
| 6  | 10/29 | [28]             | JESUS & THE MAHDI IN MUSLIM TRADITION  
|    | 10/31 |                  | ➤ EXAM #1  |
| 7  | 11/5  | [28]             | WHO WAS (AND IS) ABRAHAM?  
Primary: Genesis 11:26–25:18  
Secondary: Levenson, “Introduction” in Inheriting Abraham (1-17)  |
|    | 11/7  | [48]             | ELECTING ELECTION  
Primary: Genesis 12; Ezekiel 16; Romans 4:1–5:11  
Secondary: Levenson, chapters 1-2 in Inheriting Abraham (18-65)  
Optional: Aaron V. Hughes, “Concepts of Scripture in Nahmanides” (JCS 139-56)  |
|    | 11/12 | [46]             | TESTING FAITH  
Primary: Genesis 22; Galatians 3:1–5:18; Romans 8:28-32; Hebrews 11:1-19; surah 37:100-113  
Secondary: Levenson, chapter 3 in Inheriting Abraham (66-112)  
Optional: Yael S. Feldman, “Scripture and Modern Israeli Literature” (JCS 280-98)  |
|    | 11/14 | [59]             | CHANGING NOTIONS OF GOD & COMMUNITY  
Primary: Genesis 12:11-3; Apocalypse of Abraham 1–8 (online); surahs 6:74-79; 21:51-69; 37:83-99; Galatians 3:6-9; Romans 9:6-8; James 2:20-26  
Secondary: Levenson, chapters 4-5 in Inheriting Abraham (113-72)  
Optional: Benjamin D. Sommer, “Concepts of Scriptural Language in Midrash” (JCS 64-79)  |
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<td>UNIT 3. TWO CONTEMPORARY DEBATES</td>
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<td>Primary: Genesis 14:18–19; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; Jude 1:7</td>
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<td>11/21</td>
<td>[48]</td>
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<td>CLASS CANCELLED</td>
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<td>The professor will be in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore for research and a professional meeting; enjoy sleeping in!</td>
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<td>➤Research Paper: Outline due on Camino by 5:00 p.m. today</td>
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<td>11/25-29</td>
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<td>Happy Thanksgiving Break!</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>12/3</td>
<td>[41]</td>
<td>DOES SCIENCE CHALLENGE SCRIPTURE? The Creation-Evolution Debate</td>
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<td>Primary: Review Genesis 1–3</td>
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<td>Secondary: Ayala, Darwin and Intelligent Design 1-41</td>
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<td>12/5</td>
<td>[51]</td>
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<td>DOES SCIENCE CHALLENGE SCRIPTURE? Confusions of Science &amp; Faith</td>
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<td>Secondary: Ayala, Darwin and Intelligent Design 53-104</td>
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<td>11 12/10 Tu</td>
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<td>➤ EXAM #2 (covers material since the midterm; definition and short answer essay only) 9:10 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.</td>
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<td>➤ Research Paper due before the exam begins; submit an electronic copy at our course Camino page by midnight tonight (the assignment cannot be counted otherwise)</td>
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