San José State University
Humanities/ Comparative Religious Studies
REL 70A, Western Religious Traditions, Fall ‘16

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Victoria Rue
Office Location: Clark, 412H
Telephone: 408 924 4722
Email: victoria.rue@sjsu.edu
Office Hours: Mondays, 4:15—5:15p
Class Days/Time: Mondays + Wednesdays, 3—4:15p
Classroom: DMH, Rm 354

Catalog: Primitive beginnings to present expressions such as Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Jewish, Christian and Islamic. Structure and dynamics manifest in sacred texts, institutions, rituals, central figures and movements. Emphasis on living religions and their traditional roots.

Course Description:
We will focus on the history of the three most significant and related monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Themes to be explored include religion and politics, religion and women, mysticism, and the co-existence and intolerance that have marked the history of interaction among these faiths. The course surveys the traditions rather than arguing for or against their truth claims or scriptural support systems.

We will use theatre techniques and plays to stimulate and provoke conversation on: How should we live? What is religious experience? How do historical and cultural contexts affect diverse religious experience? Do women and men have different religious experiences? Plays read will focus on religion (or aspects thereof) and help us to navigate through spiritual/cultural/religious worlds.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. recognize how significant works illuminate enduring human concerns
2. respond to such works by writing both research-based critical analyses and personal responses;
3. write clearly and effectively
4. discuss the methodological problems inherent in the study of religions;
5. describe and evaluate one’s religion of family origin;
6. compare these religious traditions and understand their interaction;
7. discuss issues and practices surrounding religion in American culture;
8. engage in rational critical dialogue about religious issues;
9. identify the way in which each tradition responds to our existential needs.
These outcomes will be met through the successful completion of the class discussions, quizzes, student presentations, exams, written personal responses, research papers and a final field/research paper.

**REL 70A LIBRARIAN:**

Peggy Cabrera  
408-808-2034, Peggy.Cabrera@sjsu.edu

**REQUIRED BOOK:**  
*Religions of the West Today,* third edition, by John Esposito, Darrell J. Fasching and Todd Lewis

**Supplemental Readings**  
Other required readings will be available on Canvas and listed on syllabus.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Student Presentations:**  
During the course of the semester each student will make a ten minute presentation on topics listed in the syllabus.

**Field Research and Final Paper**  
You are to choose a religion that is not your own or not that you were raised in. Throughout the semester, students will conduct field research at a local synagogue, church or mosque of their own choosing to observe a religious ceremony, rite or festival from the standpoint of a respectful outsider and academic observer. For example, a student might attend a Saturday minyan service in the main sanctuary of a synagogue and describe what happens, discuss the history and meaning of a minyan and how it has changed over time, analyze the prayers, and reflect on the social dynamics of the service. This field experience would constitute the minimum field work necessary for focusing the research of the paper. The final paper will be roughly 6 pages long, typed, double-spaced, with standard fonts [10-12pts] and margins. It would include citations from at least three approved reference works in the study of religion and no less than three peer reviewed journal articles or academic book chapters. Further guidelines will be handed out.  

Additionally, during the last two weeks of the semester, students will be organized in groups according to the religion they observed to present their findings [differences and similarities] to the rest of the class.

**Breakdown of Points for the Course Evaluation:**

- 9 points  
  Participation in classroom discussion/conversation, theatre exercises, quizzes
- 6 points  
  Posting Assignments to Canvas
- 15 points:  
  Student Presentation and Research Paper
- 15 points:  
  Exam 1: Religions of Antiquity and Judaism
- 15 points:  
  Exam 2: Christianity
- 15 points:  
  Exam 3: Islam
- 10 points:  
  Field Research Panel Presentation
- 15 points:  
  Final Paper
- 100 Total points
Extra Credit Opportunities will be offered during the semester.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICY
Unless otherwise noted, papers are to be typed and double-spaced with standard margins. Most papers can be handed in through the Canvas system. I insist that you use standard bibliographic formats, and proofread your papers. If grammar or spelling errors are rife through a paper, that may affect your grade. I will have no mercy on papers that are plagiarized, either intentionally or unintentionally. Full footnoting of all sources, including paraphrases, is required.

Grading
A=94-100; A-=90-93; B+=88-89; B=81-87; B-=76-80; C+=75; C=72-74; C-=70-71; D+=65-69; D=60-64; D-=58-59

Makeup Exams
If students have a written medical excuse for missing an exam, a makeup exam will be given within a week of the missed exam or, at the discretion of the instructor, during the final makeup period. If students do not have a written medical excuse, the student will receive a zero for the missed exam.

Reference Works in the Study of Religion

Dictionaries

Encyclopedias
JUDAISM


CHRISTIANITY


ISLAM

The Encyclopaedia of Islam. Leiden, Brill, 1960-. [King Reference 2nd Floor DS 37 .E523]


OTHER ENCYCLOPEDIAS:


(2nd ed., 2003, 15 vols.)


Encyclopedia of American Religion and Politics, Djupe & Olson, editors (BL2525 .D58 2003);
**Bibliography:** this section on some works in the study of religion (not an exhaustive list!) is intended primarily to illustrate to you the proper use of bibliographic formats. This list illustrates two kinds of bibliographic form.

**First is MLA format. I prefer this mode.**


**These items are in a social science format [APA]:**

Adler, Margot


Asad, Talal


Bynum, Caroline Walker


Holladay, John S.


Jeffries, John W.


**CANVAS and MY SJSU emails:**

While the professor prefers to use the Canvas system for messaging students, I will sometimes still use the MySJSU system. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU, in
any case, because some university announcements come through that channel (I have been known to use this mechanism to send interesting news stories). If the email associated with MySJSU defaults to your parents, stay in touch with them!

**Classroom Protocol**

1. The Religious Studies classroom is a **no-proselytizing zone!** We are engaged in the academic, comparative study of religion. There will be no attempt on the part of any student to convince other students of the truth or falsehood of any given belief. Absolutely no threats of eternal damnation, or promises of eternal reward, are to be enunciated by the professor or the students. The purpose of Religious Studies is NOT to evaluate the truth claims made by religions, but to understand the interpretive systems established by religions as a part of human life. As long as we are in the classroom, the professor has no stake in whether or not a given religious assertion is true or false in the ultimate sense, nor will such questions be entertained.

2. Try to be on time; it is both responsible and respectful.

3. If you must eat in class, try to bring something not overwhelmingly fragrant, or really noisy (e.g. Nacho Cheese Doritos would violate both rules), or really messy.

4. Please place your name prominently atop all written work, including in-class work.

5. Turn off all text messaging devices and cell phones. You may have your computer on for taking notes, but please don't surf the internet when the professor or your fellow students are talking. I am a realist: I know this is happening. But it is disrespectful, much as reading a newspaper when someone else is talking.

6. Be respectful of others in class discussions. Those who violate the common etiquette of good dialogue can receive a lower grade for class participation.

7. Be certain to check the Canvas interface for this course, in case of changes, study guides, etc. Check Canvas before emailing the professor if you are looking for an assignment.

8. While this professor is often glued to her email and Canvas accounts, she also has a penchant for traveling without email or cell phone coverage. She will respond as quickly as she can, but do not expect always-instantaneous response.

**University Policies**

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs’ Syllabus Information web page at http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/

**Campus Statement on Disabilities:**

“If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with AEC to establish a record of their disability.” [Academic Senate Policy F06-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/)

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REL 70A / Western Religious Traditions, Spring ‘17, Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change with fair notice and I will give you notices of changes on CANVAS and in class.

Course Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</th>
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| 1    | 1/30  | Religious Experience, theatre as a methodology, Pluralism  
      |       | Reading: Religions of the West Today [ROWT],  
      |       | Esposito: Intro/Chapter 1 : pg 3--37 [CANVAS]  
| 1    | 2/1   | Current Religious Issues  
      |       | Pluralism, Gender and Sexuality, and other Issues of Modernity  
      |       | Reading Due: “Current Issues”: Hussein + Oxtoby [CANVAS] |
| 2    | 2/6   | Religions of the Ancient World  
      |       | Reading Due: [CANVAS]  
      |       | “Antiquities: Religions of the Ancient World” : Hussein + Oxtoby |
| 2    | 2/8   | JUDAISM  
      |       | The Sacred and Secular, Pre-modern Judaism: The Formative Era  
      |       | The story of Sarah, Hagar, Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael— from the perspective of Judaism  
      |       | Reading Due:  
      |       | 1. Genesis text of Sarah/Hagar/Abraham  
      |       | 2. ROWT: p77--84 |
| 3    | 2/13  | JUDAISM  
      |       | Opening the Door of Judaism through storytelling  
<pre><code>  |       | Guest Artist: Jerry Falek, storyteller |
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<th><strong>Readings:</strong></th>
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<td>ROWT: 84--100</td>
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| 3 | 2/15 | **JUDAISM**  
Story of Abraham/Sarah/Ishmael/Isaac continues  
**Reading Due:**  

*Across the Jordan*: (a play) by Merle Feld  
From MAKING A SCENE: the contemporary drama of Jewish-American women [CANVAS]  

**Student Presentations:**  
Write a 2 page, contemporary monolog for one of the following characters in the Torah story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, Ishmael OR Yahweh/YHWH.  
**NOTE:** [This means you must imagine, for example, Sarah living today: who would she be? would she have a job? what? where would she live? what would her economic status be? Or Hagar? Or Isaac? etc.]  

Please see “how to write a monolog” in CANVAS files  
1. Monolog should be 2 pages, double spaced.  
2. Bring a copy to class as it will be read in class.  
3. **Write a 3 page paper that discusses the significance of the Abraham/Sarah/Hagar/Isaac and Ishmael story for Judaism today.**  
4. Use at least one scholarly research source from the library databases. Cite the research source at least twice in the body of the paper. |

| 4 | 2/20 | **JUDAISM**  
Pre-modern Judaism: The Classical Period  
**Readings: cont.**  
ROWT: 100--114 |

| 4 | 2/22 | **JUDAISM**  
Holy Days of Judaism  
**Handout: Study Review for Ancient religions and Judaism Exam**  
**Reading Due:**  
ROWT: pg 114—128 |
Student Presentations:
resource: http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/2016.htm
(10 minutes each; please hand in your report afterward)

• History of Tu'Bishvat [Jan. 11, 2017] what is it? how did it originate?, what are the religious practices?
• History of Pesach / Passover [April 11–18, 2017] what is it? how did it originate? what are the religious practices?
• The Passover Seder meal what is it? how did it originate, what are the religious practices?
• Shavuot [May 31—June 1, 2017] what is it? how did it originate, what are the religious practices?

Student Presentation PAPER: [Please hand in a minimum of 3 pages] Answer these questions in your paper:

1. What is the scriptural, historical and spiritual significance of this holy day?

2) What are the practices associated with this holy day?

3) How do these practices help shape the understanding and role of Judaism in today’s society?

4) Use at least one scholarly resource from a library database, citing it at least twice in the body of the paper.

5 2/27 JUDAISM : Judaism and Modernity

DUE:
Assignment: View 2 Films
Film: “Jews and Muslims: Intimate Strangers”: 4 part series
“Jews & Muslims: The Separation (1789-1945)” [55 minutes]

“Jews and Muslims: Narratives at War” [1945--] [55 minutes]
[streamed on Kanopy through SJSU’s Library]

--type in Kanopy in the library’s search engine
--enter your student information re your library card
--once on the Kanopy site type in Jews and Muslims
--choose this four part series and watch the 2 listed above

+ Writing Assignment Posted to Canvas by Sunday, 2/26 5p, or before.

Reading Due Cont.:
ROWT 114-128
| 5  | 3/1    | **JUDAISM**  
|     |        | Judaism and Postmodern Trends in a Postcolonial World  
|     |        | forgiveness, Holocaust, Palestinian Conflict, ultra-Orthodox  
|     |        | **Reading Due:**  
|     |        | ROWT: 128—143 |
| 6  | 3/6    | **JUDAISM EXAM**  
|     |        | **Exam will cover:** Esposito: Introduction/About Religion, plus  
|     |        | Oxtoby: Religions of the Ancient World, plus  
|     |        | Esposito: Judaism |
| 6  | 3/8    | **CHRISTIANITY**  
|     |        | Opening the Door of Christianity: Guest Lecturer, TBA  
|     |        | **Reading Due:**  
|     |        | ROWT: p 147--169 |
| 7  | 3/13   | **CHRISTIANITY**  
|     |        | Mary, Jesus, Joseph, Divinity, ROWT: Christianity + Empire,  
|     |        | **Reading Due:**  
|     |        | 2. Infancy Gospel of James [Canvas]  
|     |        | 3. ROWT: p 169--184 |
| 7  | 3/15   | **CHRISTIANITY**  
|     |        | Augustine, Middle Ages + Ritual  
|     |        | Christianity + Modernity  
|     |        | **Reading Due:** ROWT: 184--201 |
| 8  | 3/20   | **CHRISTIANITY**  

Christianity and Postmodern Trends in a Postcolonial World
Holy Days and Practices within Christianity

Reading Due:
ROWT: p 201--215

Student Presentations:
http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/2016.htm
(10 minutes each; please hand in your report afterward)

- **Lord's Evening Meal - Jehovah's Witness**  [April 11, 2017]
  what is it? how did it originate, what are the religious practices?

- **History of Ash Wednesday + Lent in Protestant and Catholic Churches** [March 1—April 15, 2017] what is it? how did it originate, what are the religious practices?

- **History of Holy Week: Maundy Thursday [April 13, 2017]**
  Christian, Holy Friday [April 14, 2017], Orthodox Church in America and Christian Churches, Holy Saturday [April 15, 2017] Christian; what is it? how did it originate? what are the religious practices?

- **History of Easter in Protestant and Catholic Churches and Orthodox Church in America** [April 16, 2017]... what is it? how did it originate? what are the religious practices?

- **History of the Founding of the LDS Church, Church of the Latter Day Saints/Mormons, Pioneer Day** [July 24, 2017] what is it? how did it originate? what are the religious practices?

Student Presentation PAPER:  [Please hand in a minimum of 3 pages] Answer these questions in your paper:

1) What is the scriptural, historical and spiritual significance of these feast days?

2) What are the practices associated with this feast day?

3) How do these practices help shape the understanding and role of Christianity in today’s society?

4) Use at least one scholarly resource from a library data base, citing it at least twice in the body of the paper.

8 3/22  CHRISTIANITY : Vatican II and Women and Christianity and Women’s Leadership in Christianity: where it is and where it isn’t
Reading Due:
1. Jamie Manson- “The Catholic Church's complicity in Glyzelle Palomar's Suffering” [CANVAS]
2. a related video story from Religion and Ethics/ PBS from June 12, 2015:
   http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2015/06/12/june-12-2015-birth-control-philippines/26155/

View these 3 short videos:
Dr. Victoria Rue, Roman Catholic woman priest, TEDx talk:
1. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuerEyKJdك
Diane Whalen, Roman Catholic woman priest, TEDx talk:
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gK8owLhHLVw

Please Post to Discussion on Canvas: by Tuesday 3/21 @ 5p.

Each answer should be a paragraph of at least 4 sentences

1. Women scholars are uncovering evidence of women in the leadership of early Christian communities. What difference would religious women’s leadership make to reproductive issues reported on in the Philippines by Manson and the video from Religion and Ethics.

2. Vatican II expressed a new openness to modern trends and ideas. Catholic women saw this as an opening to women’s ordination. This led to the ordinations of women in Europe on the Danube in 2002 and eventually in the USA from 2005 to the present day. In both TEDx films, two women priests offer ideas about what their Catholic communities look like. How would their visions of community change the Catholic Church?

Further Reading: Feminist Theology and Women in Leadership in Christianity

http://www.womensordination.org
http://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org
http://www.womenpriests.org

SPRING BREAK
3/27 --- 3/31/17

9 4/3 CHRISTIANITY
Palestinian Liberation Theology. Guest Lecturer: TBA

Reading Due:
Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth [CANVAS]
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<td>9/4/5</td>
<td><strong>CHRISTIANITY</strong>&lt;br&gt;Forgiveness in Judaism and Christianity&lt;br&gt;Handout Christianity Exam Study Guide</td>
<td>Reading Due:&lt;br&gt;“The Last Days of Judas Iscariot”: a play by Stephen Gurgis [CANVAS]&lt;br&gt;Student Presentations:&lt;br&gt;1. Write a 2 page monolog [double spaced] in the flavor of the Gurgis play. Choose a character in the play and have them explore the idea of forgiveness, either about themselves or about Judas. Is self-forgiveness possible? Is God all forgiving?&lt;br&gt;2. Bring copies to class as it will be read in class&lt;br&gt;3. Write a 3 page paper [double spaced] that backs up why your monolog is an example of forgiveness. Use at least one research source to support your argument from a Library Database. Cite that research source in the body of your paper at least two times.</td>
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<td>4/10</td>
<td><strong>CHRISTIANITY EXAM</strong></td>
<td>EXAM: Christianity</td>
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<td>4/12</td>
<td><strong>ISLAM:</strong> Opening the door to Islam:&lt;br&gt;Guest lecturer: Islamic Networks Group&lt;br&gt;Reading Due:&lt;br&gt;“Maryam, Mother of Jesus, in the Qur’an” America Magazine [CANVAS]&lt;br&gt;ROWT: p 219--228</td>
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<td>4/17</td>
<td><strong>ISLAM</strong>&lt;br&gt;The story of Maryam from the perspective of Islam, Examining the perspectives on women it offers</td>
<td>Reading Due:&lt;br&gt;1. Qur’an---Sura 3: 1—51, Oxford World Classics [CANVAS]&lt;br&gt;2. Qur’an---Sura 19: 1—40, Oxford World Classics [CANVAS]&lt;br&gt;Student Presentations:&lt;br&gt;Write a 2 page, contemporary monolog for one of the following characters in the Qur’an story of Maryam: Maryam, Angel Jibril/Gabriel, God/Allah</td>
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NOTE: [This means you must imagine, for example, Maryam living today: who would she be? would she have a job? what? where would she live? what would her economic status be?]

Student Presentation Monolog + Paper:
---Please see “how to write a monolog” in CANVAS files
---Monolog should be 2 pages, double spaced.
---Bring a copy to class as it will be read in class.
---Write a 3 page paper:
   1. discusses the significance of the Maryam Story for Islam
   2. Use at least one scholarly research source from the library databases. Cite the research source at least twice in the body of the paper.

11  4/19

ISLAM: The Play: Mary/Maryam in Christian and Islamic Traditions

Watch the play and Answer questions on Canvas [guidelines will be offered]: https://youtu.be/p2D3BdsT2hw [70 minutes]

Responses Due on Canvas by Sunday 4/23 @ 5p

Reading:
ROWT: p 228—242

12  4/24

ISLAM: Premodern Islam: The Classical Era

Encounter with Modernity: The Challenge of Western Colonialism

Reading Due:
p243--264

12  4/26

ISLAM: Islam and Postmodern Trends in a Postcolonial World

Reading Due:
“The Who and the What” by Ayad Akhtar, a dramatic play, [Canvas ROWT: 264--285]

13  5/1

ISLAM: Questions for Postmodern Times:

Handout Islam Exam Study Guide
**Reading Due:**

“The Who and the What” by Ayad Akhtar, a dramatic play, [Canvas]

ROWT: 285--301

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<th><strong>ISLAM</strong>: Holy Days of Islam</th>
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<td><strong>Student Presentations:</strong></td>
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<td>(10 minutes each; please hand in your report afterward)</td>
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<td><strong>History of RAMADAN</strong> (begins May 27, 2017) include <strong>EID AL FITR</strong> [June 26—27, 2017]: what is it? how did it originate? what are the religious practices?</td>
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<td><strong>History of the Hajj</strong> (expected to fall in August, 2017) please include Eid Al Adha. ---- what is it? how did it originate?, what are the religious practices?</td>
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<td><strong>History of Lailat al Miraj</strong> (April 24, 2016) what is it? how did it originate?, what are the religious practices?</td>
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<td><strong>History of Laylat al Kadr</strong> (June 22, 2017) --What is the scriptural, historical + spiritual significance of this holy day? --What are the practices associated with this holy day?</td>
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<td><strong>Student Presentation PAPER:</strong>  <strong>[Please hand in a minimum of 3 pages]</strong> Answer these questions in your paper:</td>
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<td>2) What is the scriptural, historical and spiritual significance of these feast days?</td>
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<td><strong>EXAM</strong>: Islam</td>
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<td>5/10</td>
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<td>Panel Presentations of field work groups</td>
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<td>5/15</td>
<td>5/15</td>
<td>Final Class: Panel Presentations + Summing Up</td>
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**FINAL PAPER posted to Canvas by May 24, 12 noon.**

This is the final exam date for our class time. You, however, will be turning in a final paper instead of a final exam. Further guidelines will be provided.