

AMS 230
RELIGIONS OF BALTIMORE
FALL 2019
JR G27, MW 8:40- 10:30AM

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WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?

This course will provide an introduction to the world religions through attention to the religious life of Baltimore, MD. The course will explore how religious communities in the city engage in social justice work through attention to the theme of immigration. Readings and course work on the religious histories and theologies that inspire this work will be combined with community-based learning opportunities to increase the religious literacy and interreligious engagement skills of students. This course fulfills the Race, Power, and Perspective course requirement.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THE CLASS?

Throughout the semester, students will encounter world religions from historical, sociological, and theological perspectives. These encounters will reveal the family resemblances, commonalities and disjunctures between these religions and how these characteristics match or challenge the religious paradigms of the Western world. Particular attention to how these religions arrived in Baltimore, developed over time, and manifest today will lead to exploration of immigration (forced and voluntary), redlining and other forms of discrimination, and faith-inspired social justice work around immigrants and refugees. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the worldviews under study and their basic beliefs, rituals and organizing structures.
2. Explore how these religions have found a home in the Baltimore area and identify the contributing factors to various types of differences, inequalities and power structures.
3. Analyze how the characteristics of each worldview allow it to find welcome or resistance in the U.S. generally and Baltimore specifically, and what this suggests about religious privilege and assumptions in this country and city.
4. Use primary sources from a variety of religious traditions to explore belief systems and current societal engagement.
5. Plan a community event to facilitate dialogue amongst community groups engaging directly with religion and immigration.

WHAT WILL WE READ?

We will read a variety of primary and secondary sources throughout the course – everything from ancient sacred texts to contemporary political commentary and theology. You will only be required to purchase one book:

- Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*, New York: Harper Collins, 2009.

This book is also available on reserve at the library. All other readings are available online or on Canvas.

WHAT ASSIGNMENTS WILL YOU COMPLETE AND HOW IS YOUR FINAL GRADE DETERMINED?:

I will use Canvas extensively throughout the semester for readings, assignments, and to record grades. The percentages for each assignment or assignment group listed below are portions of your final grade. All written assignments are submitted through Canvas and will be graded online as well. Full descriptions of those assignments can also be found there.

Reading, preparation and participation (20%)

This course is designed to be primarily discussion based. For that reason, both your attendance and participation are crucial to make the most of this class. You will be allowed two unexcused absences. Beyond that, your participation grade will be affected. If an absence is due to an illness or emergency, please contact me as soon as possible and the absence can be excused and a make-up assignment given. We will work together to develop guidelines for discussion and participation to encourage inclusion and respectful and open dialogue.

Religious Observance Policy: If you need to request accommodation for religious observance, fill out the form available here: <http://www.goucher.edu/experience/getting-involved/religious-and-spiritual-life/documents/religious-holidays/Religious-Observance-Form.pdf> and submit it to me as soon as possible and at least two weeks before the observance, if possible. If you communicate with me in a timely manner and complete any mutually agreed upon make-up work, any such absences or schedule changes will be excused and will not adversely affect your grade.

***** ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT IN CLASS:** Cell phones are to be turned off or silenced at all times. Students may bring computers to class for note-taking, etc. Please be mindful of the fact that computers can be distracting for you and for students sitting around you so please use sparingly and with respect for me and your fellow classmates. **Any student seen to be texting, e-mailing or surfing the internet during class will lose their participation points for that day. Any student using a phone or computer during an exam will receive a zero on the assignment.**

Weekly Reflections (20%)

For 10 of the 15 weeks of the semester, you will write an approximately 500 word reflection on the week's work. In addition to specific prompts provided in class, these reflections should respond to one of the following prompts:

1. Reflect on one thing that surprised you or stuck with you in the week's readings and discussions. What were your preconceived notions and what new did you learn?

2. Identify a local organization or religious community connected with the topic under discussion this week. Learn what you can about the group and their current activities and write a profile that is both descriptive and makes connections to our course and the week's discussions.
3. Find and link to a news article related to our topic from the week. Summarize the article and then discuss connections with our week's work.
4. Reflect on the connection between our topic for the week and Goucher's history and current community. What connections or possibilities do you see?

Reflections will be graded more on content than style but should be clearly organized and written and should show direct and specific engagement with the readings and discussions for each week. Each reflection will be worth 10 points and are due by 5pm on Fridays. Reflections lose 1 point for each day they are late so be strategic about your work load and submissions!

Field Work Paper (10%)

You will have the opportunity to make a visit to a Baltimore-area religious community practicing one of the traditions studied in this class. Group trips will be organized in class -- you may attend one of those or attend on your own. If you choose the latter, please consult with me ahead of time. After your visit, you will write a 3-4 page paper on your field work experience, due on DECEMBER 4. This paper should narrate your observations and activities but should also connect those observations with what you have learned about the tradition and how this community has adapted to life in the Baltimore area. More information will be given about this assignment in class.

Event Planning and Execution (10%)

As a class, we will work together to plan and carry out two events: one focused on the Goucher community and one focused externally (tentatively a panel discussion of leaders from faith-based groups working directly with immigration). Opportunity will be given in class to complete much of this work and direction will be given on expectations, ways to equitably divide work, and for reflection on personal and group progress. Grades for this portion of the course will be based on three things: Individual engagement and support of the project, overall success of the events, and group dynamics and organization.

Midterm Exam (20%)

The midterm will contain a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions covering the material in the first half of the course. This exam is scheduled for Monday, Nov. 4. More will be said in class about how to prepare and what to expect.

Final Exam (20%)

The final exam will be cumulative and will contain a combination of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. More will be said in class about how to prepare and what to expect. The exam is scheduled for Friday, December 13 from 9-11am. You may not take the exam at a different time and should make travel plans accordingly.

WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU NEED ACADEMIC ACCOMODATION?

Goucher College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS). Because classes change every semester, eligible students must sign a ROI at ACE in order for their professors to be notified so that the accommodations can be implemented. The Director of OAS (Arnelle Hanley) is available by appointment to answer questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have. Address general inquiries to 410-337-6146 or e-mail access@goucher.edu.

WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A STUDENT?

I consider our class to be a community of learners – myself included. I try to make space for student experience, creativity, and perspectives to shape our discussion and inquiry even as I bring my own expertise to the table and curate our overall experience. I expect students to come to class ready to engage, prepared to work (and have fun!) and with respect for me , for each other, and for themselves as a guide for classroom behavior. I hope all students will feel comfortable talking to me in class or in office hours about anything related to the class – good, bad, or indifferent. I am happy to adjust my methods and the course trajectory as necessary to best meet our course objectives and encourage student learning but need you to communicate with me if you have ideas on how to do so.

As an institution, Goucher has articulated this idea of respect and integrity in our Academic Honor Code. All students are bound by the Academic Honor Code. Each student is encouraged to read this code which can be found at <https://www.goucher.edu/learn/documents/Academic-Honor-Code.pdf> Any suspected or actual violations of the honor code will be referred to the Academic Honor Code Council.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR EACH CLASS?

What follows is a weekly schedule of our topic for the day and any readings or assignments that should be prepared or submitted prior to class. Those readings and assignments listed to the right of the topic are due on that day. (I.e., for our first class, come having reviewed the syllabus and Canvas page).

This schedule is your roadmap to the class and though the first section of the course has been finalized as have the topics for the remainder of the semester, readings will be updated for the second and third portion of the course to reflect evolving current events, student interest, and possibilities for field trips and special guests.

SETTING THE STAGE

Week	Date	Topic	Reading and Assignment
1	Mon Aug 26	Introduction and Guiding Questions	Review syllabus and Canvas page

	Wed Aug 28	Religious Literacy and How we talk about religion	Take the religious literacy test available here: https://www.pewresearch.org/quiz/u-s-religious-knowledge-quiz/ Read the Pew Report available here: https://www.pewforum.org/2019/07/23/what-americans-know-about-religion/
2	Mon Sept 2	Labor Day	No class
	Wed Sept 4	What is Religion?	Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in <i>Critical Terms for Religious Studies</i> (Canvas)
3	Mon Sept 9	How do we talk about religion?	Smith, <i>The World's Religions</i> , Chapter I: Point of Departure Review Ninian Smart's 7 Dimensions of Religion: https://o.b5z.net/i/u/2167316/f/Ninian_Smart_s_Seven_Dimensions_of_Religion.pdf
	Wed Sept 11	Religion and cities	Katie Day, "Urban Space and Religion in the United States," https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-470?print=pdf
4	Mon Sept 16	City of Immigrants	Ron Cassie, "City of Immigrants," <i>Baltimore Magazine</i> , https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/2018/2/11/city-of-immigrants-the-people-who-built-baltimore
	Wed Sept 18	A Tale of Two Baltimores	Selections from <i>Not in My Neighborhood</i> "The White L vs. The Black Butterfly," https://www.baltimoresun.com/citypaper/bcpnews-two-baltimores-the-white-l-vs-the-black-butterfly-20160628-htmlstory.html

ABRAHAMIC TRADITIONS

Week	Date	Topic	Reading and Assignment
5	Mon Sept 23	Introduction to Judaism	Smith, <i>The World's Religions</i> , Chapter VII: Judaism
	Wed Sept 25	Jewish Theology	Selections from Hebrew Bible (Canvas)
6	Mon. Sept 30	Judaism in Baltimore	Listen to podcast "On Middle Ground: The History of Baltimore's Jewish Community," https://www.wypr.org/post/middle-ground-history-baltimores-jewish-community
	Wed Oct 2	Case Studies	Group research on assigned Baltimore organization

7	Mon. Oct 7	Introduction to Christianity	Smith, <i>The World's Religions</i> , Chapter VIII: Christianity
	Wed. Oct 9	Christian Theology	Gospel of Matthew, Letter to Romans (Canvas)
8	Mon Oct 14	Christianity in Baltimore	Group research on assigned organization
	Wed Oct 16	Case Studies	Group research on assigned Baltimore organization
9	Mon Oct 21	Intro to Islam	Smith, <i>The World's Religions</i> , Chapter VI: Islam
	Wed. Oct 23	Islam Theology	Quran, Sura II (Canvas)
10	Mon. Oct 28	Islam in Baltimore	Group research on assigned Baltimore organization
	Wed. Oct 30	Panel planning	Group work on panel preparations.
11	Mon. Nov 4	Islam in America and Review	Prepare for in-class activity on integration of Jewish and Muslim holy days to BCPS calendar. Review for Midterm Exam and bring questions.
	Wed. Nov 6	Midterm	Study!

BEYOND THE ABRAHAMIC TRADITIONS

Week	Date	Topic	Reading and Assignment
12	Mon Nov 11	Introduction to Hinduism	Smith, <i>The World's Religions</i> , Chapter II: Hinduism
	Wed Nov 13	Hinduism in Baltimore	Selections from <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> (Canvas)
13	Mon. Nov 18	Introduction to Buddhism and Panel Preparations	Smith, <i>The World's Religions</i> , Chapter III: Buddhism
	Tues Nov 19	PANEL 4:30-6PM Chapel	
	Wed Nov 20	Buddhism in Baltimore	Selections from the <i>Dhammapada</i> (Canvas)
14	Mon. Nov 25	Workshop – AD at AAR Conference	Panel Reflections Due on Canvas Rough Drafts of Field Work Paper due for Workshop
	Wed Nov 27	<i>Thanksgiving Holiday</i>	<i>No Class</i>
15	Mon Dec 2	Counternarratives	Find an example of a religiously-motivated perspective arguing for greater restriction on immigration and refugee admittance to the United States. Be prepared to identify the religious ideals used to justify this perspective.

	Wed Dec 4	Field Work Reflections and Looking Forward	Field Work Papers Due
	Friday Dec 6 5pm	<i>Deadline for submission of any late work.</i>	
Finals	Fri Dec 13 9-11am	Final Exam	Study!
