

**Rel 324 : Abrahamic Traditions**



Spring 5769/ AD 2009/ AH 1430  
MWF 10-10:50; Bryant 207

Professor: Dr. Mary Thurkill  
Office/Hrs.: Bryant Hall 21/MW 11-1, and by appointment  
e-mail: [maryt@olemiss.edu](mailto:maryt@olemiss.edu)

**Course Description**

This course provides a survey of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam along thematic lines. We will examine and compare scripture and tradition; monotheistic theology; ritual activities; and (briefly) modern conflict in the Middle East.

**Learning Outcomes**

After completing this course, students should be able to identify the basic beliefs and rituals of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Students should be able to critically discuss the similarities and differences between the traditions as well as offer historical insight into their present day struggles. Students should be able to express their ideas in coherent if not elegant prose.

**Note for Religious Studies Majors (and those considering RS)**

A senior capstone course is required of all our majors, and a portfolio is one of the important components of that course. Therefore, you are encouraged to save all course papers as well as lists of community service projects, course 'field trips,' leadership responsibilities and any other materials that you feel reflect your Religious Studies training. If you need a place to store your portfolio, please see a faculty member as we have reserved a filing cabinet in Bryant Hall for that purpose.

**Course Texts**

Chittister, Chishti, Waskow, *The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims*

Corrigan, Denny, Eire, and Jaffee, eds., *Jews, Christians, and Muslims*  
2 bluebooks for exams



Arabic calligraphy: Man in prayer (*salat*)

### Course Requirements

#### (\*Motto: Every Action Has A Consequence\*)

1. *Exams* (100 pts. each; 200 pts. total): A mid-term and final exam will be given consisting of objective short answer/multiple choice, citation passages, and essay questions. Study guides will be made available on Blackboard at least one week before each exam.
2. *Homework* (20 pts. each; 100 pts. total): Several homework assignments will be due during the semester (as indicated on the course schedule). These assignments are based on the assigned Readings (available on-line). The instructor will average the top 5 scores. The assignments will be due in-class, on the date indicated on the syllabus, hard copy (typed), and it will be accepted only if the student is present *in class*. No exceptions. Quizzes may also be given over assigned readings at the instructor's discretion.
3. *Papers* (50 pts. each; 100 pts. total): Two 4-5 page papers will be due as indicated on the syllabus. The first paper is based on *Reading #5*; the second paper is based on *The Tent of Abraham*. These papers need not include outside research (although you may consult other sources). If you choose to use outside sources, you *must* provide a bibliography. We will discuss possible paper topics in class.
4. *Textbook Quizzes* (30 pts.; 90 pts. total): Three quizzes covering Parts I, II, and IV from *Jews, Christians and Muslim* are available on BB. You should take them during the weeks indicated on the syllabus. The quizzes: 1) consist of 10 multiple-choice questions worth 1 point each; 2) focus on assigned 'textbook' material NOT covered in class; 3) are timed for 15 minutes (10 questions), so you should read the chapters before you begin the quiz as you have limited time to locate answers; 4) contain occasional references to page numbers from the text, so you should have your book available when taking the quiz; 5) can be launched ONLY ONCE.
4. *Events* (25 pts. each; 50 pts. total): Two 1-2 page reports covering program attendance are required. These reports are reaction papers; they should describe the lecture/religious service you attended/visited. These papers are due within one week of the event discussed.

Students may attend any university lecture approved by the instructor. Appropriate religious services include Friday prayers at the local mosque (12:00 noon); the local Jewish community's Sabbath services in Paris-Yates chapel (dates TBA); and/or an Orthodox Christian service in Memphis.

5. *Classroom expectations.* Much of this class will be devoted to discussion of assigned readings, thus students should prepare accordingly. Unless otherwise noted, textbook chapters (indicated as Corrigan ...) are due on Fridays. \*The instructor expects students to arrive on time, stay for the entire class period, contribute to discussion, and respect their colleagues' opinions and comments. \*The instructor will check roll each day, although attendance is neither required nor calculated as part of students' scores. \*The instructor's policy toward plagiarism follows: any case of plagiarism will result in the student receiving an F in the course.

### Grade Breakdown

480 points possible	432-480	A
	384-431	B
	336-383	C
	288-335	D
	287/below	F

### Course Schedule

#### *Wks 1-4*      **Scripture and Tradition**

##### *Wk. 1 (Jan. 21-23)*

Topics:      W: Introduction to Course

              F: Hebrew Bible

Readings:    Corrigan, Part I.

Holiday:     *Jan. 6, Ashura (I); Epiphany (C)*



Torah Scrolls (Judaism)

##### *Wk. 2 (Jan. 26-30)*

Topics:      M: Hebrew Bible, cont'd

              W: Discussion, Reading #1 ([Epic of Gilgamesh](#))

              F: Discussion, Reading #2 ([Selections from Talmud](#))

Readings:    Corrigan, Part I

##### *Wk. 3 (Feb. 2-6)*

Topics:      M/W: Christian canon

              F: Discussion, Reading #3 (Two Apocryphal Gospels)

Readings:    Corrigan, Part I



Page from the Qur'an (Muslim holy book)

*Wk. 4 (Feb. 9-13)*

- Topics: M/W: Muhammad, the Qur'an, and tradition  
F: Discussion, Reading #4 ([Selections from the Qur'an](#); [Selections from hadith collections \(Bukhari\)](#)); and, [select tafsir](#))
- Readings: Corrigan, Part I
- QUIZ #1** Complete the TEXTBOOK READING QUIZ #1, available on BB, THIS WEEK (available only Monday-Friday)

*Wk. 5 (Feb. 16-20)*

- Topics: Scripture and Tradition #1  
M: Discussion, *Eve and Adam*, pp. 41-107  
W: Discussion, *Eve and Adam*, 108-55  
F: Discussion, *Eve and Adam*, 156-203
- Readings: Selections from *Eve and Adam* available on BB

*Wk. 6 (Feb. 23-27)*

- Topics: Scripture and Tradition #2  
M: Discussion, Reading #5 (collection of scripture and tradition relating to Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac/Ishmael on BB)  
W: **PAPER #1: Analysis of Reading #5**  
F: **MID-TERM EXAM**
- Readings: Reading #5 on BB
- Holidays: *February 25, Lent begins, Ash Wednesday (C)*

*Wks. 7-10* **Monotheism**

*Wk. 7 (March 2-6)*

- Topics: M/W: Identifying God in Judaism  
F: Discussion of Reading #6 (Selections from Maimonides, [Guide for the Perplexed](#))
- Readings: Corrigan, Part II
- Holiday: *March 2, Eastern Orthodox Lent begins (C)*

*Wk. 8 (March 9-13)*

- Topics: M/W: Identifying God in Christianity  
F: Discussion of Reading #7 (Selections from Aquinas, [Summa Theologiae](#))
- Readings: Corrigan, Part II
- Holiday: *March 9, Purim (J)*

Wk. 9            **Spring Break!!**

Wk. 10 (March 17-20)

Topics:            M/W: Identifying God in Islam  
                      F: Discussion of Reading #8 (Selections from al-Ghazali's [Incoherence of the Philosophers](#))

Readings:        Corrigan, Part II  
**QUIZ #2**        Complete the TEXTBOOK READING QUIZ #2, available on BB, THIS WEEK (available only Monday-Friday)

Wks. 11-13      **RITUAL**

Wk. 11 (March 30-April 3)

Topics:            M/W/F: Ritual Lives of Jews  
Readings:        Corrigan, Part IV

Wk. 12 (April 6-10)

Topics:            M/W: Ritual Lives of Christians  
Readings:        Corrigan, Part IV  
Holiday:          April 8, *Passover begins* (J); April 12, *Easter* (C)

Wk. 13 (April 13-17)

Topics:            M/W/F: Ritual Lives of Muslims  
Readings:        Corrigan, Part IV  
**QUIZ #3**        Complete the TEXTBOOK READING QUIZ #3, available on BB, THIS WEEK (available only Monday-Friday)



*Eid al-Adha during the Hajj*

Wks. 14-15      **RELIGION, POLITICS, AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

Wk. 14 (April 20-24)

Topics:            M/W/F: Current Strife in the Middle East  
Readings:        TBA

Wk. 15 (April 28-May 1)

Topics:            M: Inter-religious Dialogue: Comparative Ethics  
                      Guest speaker: Professor Sarah Moses  
                      W: Discussion, *The Tent of Abraham*, **Paper #2 Due**  
                      F: Review for final

**Final Exam:** Wednesday, May 6, 9:00 a.m. (not 8:00 a.m.)