

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
“INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES”
THEO 107

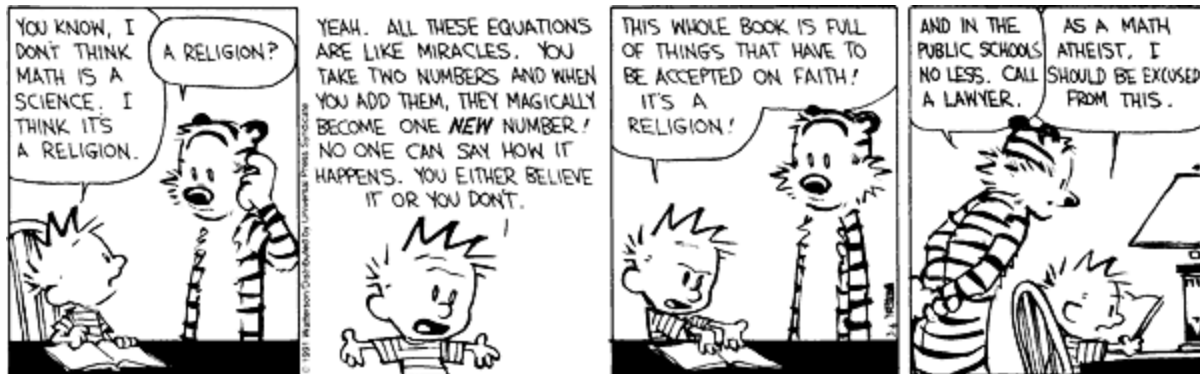
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Course Description:

This course is one of two foundational courses in Theology and Religious Studies offered by the Theology Department. Students will be introduced to the field of Religious Studies by considering key themes in many of the world's religions. The goal of our course is not in-depth study of religious traditions but an introductory survey of the way scholars understand religion and how multiple traditions address various religious themes. Texts will be taken from Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Daoism, Shintoism, indigenous religions, Asian philosophy, atheism, and various forms of Christianity (Pentecostalism, Black Christianity, Mormonism, Christian science, Unitarian Universalism). Our comparative analysis will be accompanied by a consideration of methodological questions related to the academic study of religion and will incorporate aspects of the following: religious expression as autobiography, religion and post/modernity, religion and human rights, religion and gender, and religion and ecology. This course constitutes a proper and adequate foundation for any of the second-tier courses. It has no prerequisites.

Core Curriculum

THEO 107 satisfies Loyola University's Core knowledge Area requirement in Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge, the Value Areas of Understanding Diversity in the U.S. or the World and Understanding Spirituality or faith in Action in the World, and the skill area of Critical Thinking.

Knowledge Area Objectives: Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge

*To analyze a wide range of religious beliefs and practices as an avenue for better understanding religion in personal, social, and global contexts.

*To understand and discuss the major contemporary theoretical approaches to religious truth and meaning. In all, by studying the major contemporary theoretical approaches to religion, students will gain insights into similarities across religions as well as the most salient elements of religious traditions such as scripture, rituals, and institutions.

Value Area: Understanding Diversity in the U.S. or the World

Because this course analyzes religious belief and practice within various religious traditions and areas of the world it will contribute to a richer understanding and appreciation of the diversity of religious activities throughout the world. It does this both by choosing multiple examples for investigations from various religious traditions (for example, rites of passage in multiple religious traditions or in various geographical areas) and by using and testing various theoretical approaches to better understand practices that may be quite different from one's own. In this way it both expands the awareness of diverse human practices and facilitates the ability to better understand this diversity.

Value Area: Understanding Spirituality or faith in Action in the World

By taking this course, students will be able to comprehend ways in which religion and spirituality are related and also different. Students will understand the relationship of faith to the practical exercise of life in society.

Skills Objective: Critical Thinking

This course will focus on critical thinking and dispositions. The course develops an entry-level proficiency in the vocabulary and interpretive methods in use by contemporary scholars who describe in a critically appropriate way human religious belief and behavior.

The course analyzes texts, rituals, behaviors, beliefs and practices of a variety of religious traditions. Because the student will be constantly utilizing various theoretical discourses he/she will be able to analyze the many ways in which concepts, statements, beliefs, and judgments relate to practice, action, and other concepts and beliefs, as clarified through theoretical discourse.

The student will develop the skill of evaluating how plural theoretical structures may work together to create an adequate understanding of religion. The student will also understand why some theoretical perspectives are no longer in use in contemporary scholarly practice. Thus they will be able to evaluate the strengths and weakness of theoretical discourse as it applies to religious practices.

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**Learning Assessments:**

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Online reading quizzes | 30% |
| Content quizzes        | 30% |

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Field visit report | 20% |
| Final project/exam | 20% |

Grading Scale:

|            |            |            |                  |
|------------|------------|------------|------------------|
| A = 100-94 | B+ = 87-89 | C+ = 77-79 | D+ = 66-69       |
| A- = 93-90 | B = 83-86  | C = 73-76  | D = 60-65        |
|            | B- = 80-82 | C- = 70-72 | F = 59 and below |

Class attendance and punctuality:

Your ability to keep up with course content depends on your attendance in class. Students are expected to attend class consistently, being absent only on account of unavoidable circumstances. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Due to the large size of our class, no separate “class participation grade” will be assigned. **However, students who do not miss more than three classes will be given the option of submitting a final paper instead of taking our final exam.** (University-related events will not count against this total.)

Students must also arrive on time in order to be counted present. If you arrive late to class, it is your responsibility to make sure you are counted present. Three tardies will result in an absence.

Online Reading Quizzes:

Most reading assignments will be accompanied by a quiz written directly from the assigned reading. These quizzes will be taken either online or in class. They will typically be short -- between five and ten questions -- and will almost always be “objective” (true/false, multiple choice). Quizzes taken online are open-book but timed. Quizzes taken in class will likely be closed-book. Of course, the moral of this story is: do your homework! The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

Content Quizzes:

Our goal is to engage both academic theory and religious claims. In order to understand theory behind religious critique, one must know the content of religion. Toward that end, we will have three scheduled quizzes throughout the semester that will be completely multiple choice and true/false, aimed to provide a structure for this learning. One of these content quizzes will be a library assignment.

**Part one of library assignment due Jan 24 -- bring to class!**

**Dates of Quizzes: Feb 12, Mar 21, Apr 25**

Field Visit and theological evaluation:

No understanding of religion is complete without consideration of the religious life accompanying religious claims. To this end, students are asked to attend one place of worship -- a church, synagogue, mosque (*masjid*), temple, or other community gathering. **You must choose the place of worship you will attend by January 31.** A written indication of the place of worship you plan on visiting will count as your quiz grade for that day. The paper you submit will provide

a summary of the worship service you attended and will connect the theological themes reflected in that service to at least two of the readings we will complete together this semester. Further instructions will be provided as the due date approaches. The final written paper is due

Options for final:

Write your "confessions":

No study of religion would be complete without engaging in a personal assessment of your own approach to religious claims. The opportunity to study multiple religious points of view should not be considered merely academic but should function as something like a mirror for your own self-understanding. To that end, students who miss no more than three class sessions throughout the semester are invited to write a final that reflects on the religious conclusions they have drawn this semester.

Following the examples of several thinkers we will read this semester, you are asked to write this project as your "confessions," telling your journey toward or away from faith and to include substantial reasons for your current convictions. Those who take this option are required to share their faith story with an acquaintance -- a friend, parent, grandparent, guru, pastor, priest, therapist, etc. -- and to include the reactions of that friend to your faith story as a component of your paper. Of course, this means that you must write your paper early enough to share it with your acquaintance before the final exam date. **A rough draft of this final paper must be submitted online by April 16.**

Final Exam:

For students who are absent more than three times, or for those who simply choose not to write the final project, the final exam will be a closed-note, closed-book, and cumulative assessment of how well you have grasped the content of our semester. Some questions will be derived from quizzes, others from blackboard assignments; many will be new. Questions could include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay.

Key dates:

January 20 -- no class; Martin Luther King Day

January 21 -- Last day to withdraw without a mark of "W"

**January 24 -- Complete part one of library assignment**

**January 31 -- Last day to let Dr. Myatt know of your field project plan**

**Feb 12 -- Content Quiz #1**

March 3-7 -- Spring Break

**March 21 -- Content Quiz #2**

March 24 -- Last day to withdraw with a mark of "W."

**March 31 -- Field project Report due**

**April 16 -- Rough draft of final paper due online**

April 17-21 -- Easter recess (no class on Friday, Apr 18 or Mon, Apr 21)

**April 25 -- Content Quiz #3**

\*\*All reading assignments will be posted on Sakai.

## **FINAL EXAMS**

**THEO 107-009 (MWF 10:25-11:15) Monday, April 28, 9:00am-11:00am**

**THEO 107-010 (MWF 1:40-2:30) Monday, May 5, 1:00-3:00pm**

**THEO 107-011 (MWF 2:45-3:35) Thursday, May 1, 1:00-3:00pm**

### **Students with disabilities:**

If you have a disability and need to request accommodations, please contact The Center for Services for Students with Disabilities (<http://www.luc.edu/sswd/index.shtml>) to obtain the appropriate forms. I am happy to work with you to help you succeed.

### **Technology in the classroom:**

No technology is allowed in the classroom. Classroom sessions are discussion-oriented, so you will not need internet access or your laptop. Dr. Myatt reserves the right to confiscate your device, if you are texting or emailing during class. Your cooperation is appreciated.

### **Statement on academic integrity:**

Please be aware that the university policy on academic integrity will be in full effect during this course. You can find Loyola policies at these websites:

[http://www.luc.edu/cas/pdfs/CAS\\_Academic\\_Integrity\\_Statement\\_December\\_07.pdf](http://www.luc.edu/cas/pdfs/CAS_Academic_Integrity_Statement_December_07.pdf)

<http://www.luc.edu/english/writing.shtml#source>

[http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicgrievance.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml)

**Cheating:** Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher
- Providing information to another student during an examination
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious form of violation of the standards of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. Examples of Plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as print, internet, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper

*Plagiarism, Cheating, or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination.* The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the chairperson of the department involved, and to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.