

Religious Studies 102
The Bible: Texts and Contexts
Spring 2008
9:30-10:45; 12:30-1:45

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Overview

Religious Studies 102 continues the Life sequence begun in Religious Studies 101 by examining the development and central themes of the traditions based on the Bible. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to some of the important facets of post-biblical theology and religious practice as well as the contexts in which they occur. Beginning with the close of the Bible and proceeding to the present, we will consider in chronological fashion some of the representative figures and issues of these traditions. Through careful reading and discussion of important writers, we will develop an understanding of significant concepts, terms, and points of view in western religion. As a writing intensive course, Religious Studies 102 will also provide opportunities for the engagement of theological ideas and practices through a series of written assignments that are designed to stimulate critical thinking and improve the skills necessary for verbal and written expression.

In the first unit of the course, we will examine the early Christian world and the central issues faced by the first Christians. We will observe the great diversity among early Christians and study how the processes of institutionalization gradually shaped this diversity into orthodoxy, with special attention to Augustine's autobiography. We also will note some of the characteristic religious practices that developed during this era, including sacramental practices and asceticism.

In the second unit, we will see how these early theologies and practices shaped the religious outlook and activities of the medieval world. Our examination of this era will focus on monasticism, scholastic theology, the phenomenon of mysticism, and religious architecture. Unit three investigates the religious reformations of the late middle ages; in this section of the course we will encounter the ideas of Martin Luther and John Calvin.

When we turn to theology in the modern world in the final unit of the course, we will meet decidedly new problems and new efforts to maintain Christianity's intelligibility. As we will see, modernity causes a fragmentation in western culture that has profound effects on religious and theological communities. We will review the importance of religious experience for western Christians, the controversies between modernist and fundamentalist ideas, and theological responses to the moral dilemmas of the twentieth century.

Required Texts

- Augustine, *Confessions*
- Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*
- Luther, *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings*
- Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
- Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*
- Mary Gerhart and Fabian Udoh, *A Christianity Reader*

Other readings will be available either on web-sites linked to the syllabus or in "pdf" files at the course Moodle site.

Tasks

Students enrolled in this course shall:

- 1) attend and participate in *class sessions*, having actively read assigned material
- 2) complete several *writing assignments*
- 3) complete weekly quizzes and/or writing assignments
- 4) regularly participate in *class discussions*

Explanations

Attendance, Preparation and Participation

Attendance, preparation and participation are crucial aspects of a student's involvement in a course such as this. *Attendance* means being present in class on time and remaining until class is concluded. *Preparation* means coming to class having actively read the assignment, noting questions or learnings to be shared on request. *Participation* means contributing regularly to discussions in a critical, searching and honest way.

N.B.: *Students may miss two classes during the semester for any reason. Three or more absences will negatively affect a student's A & P grade.*

Discussions will be most fruitful if each of us respects others' opinions, is careful not to dominate, allows the full and free expression of divergent views, and resists the pressure to reach premature or artificial solutions to problems. Above all, our classroom should be a safe place for us to discuss things we care about.

Class Participation

Since effective participation requires "contributing regularly to discussions," a student who does not participate in class discussions should not expect an A for attendance and participation, even with perfect attendance. In general, I will grade class participation this way:

- If a student attends class, appears to be prepared and regularly contributes, they will earn a grade in the A range.
- If a student attends class and appears to be prepared but doesn't regularly participate, they will earn a grade in the B range.
- If a student has excessive absences, doesn't regularly participate, and/or does not appear to be prepared for class, they will earn a grade in the C range.

If you are not accustomed to these expectations for class participation, you may need to mentally prepare comments before coming to class. Note that meaningful class participation results from active reading of assignments. *Active reading requires a dictionary and a pencil or highlighter.* Use the latter to emphasize important points, make marginal notes, or record questions. N. B. *Bring a copy of the readings to each class session. I will expect them to be "marked up" in ways that reflect your active reading.*

Writing Assignments

This course is F2 "writing intensive" course in the new curriculum. Thus, the majority of the graded work will be written essays. Here are brief descriptions of the writing assignments:

Assignment 1: First Descriptive Essay (600-800 words). Due Thursday, January 25th. Descriptive essays provide an account of the meaning and function of a text. After carefully reading and outlining your text, you should prepare a 600-800 word essay that describes its content (what does it say?) and purpose (what does it do?).

Peer Workshop on Opening Paragraphs, Tuesday, January 29th. During class, copies of first paragraphs from descriptive essays will be handed out. In three-person peer groups, students will read and discuss these paragraphs

with the following questions in mind: What is your reaction to this paragraph—does it make you want to read on? Does it adequately introduce the ideas that the essay will discuss? Does it try to do too much? What would help you as a reader to be more engaged with this paper?

Assignment 2: Second Descriptive Essay (600-800 words). Due Thursday, February 7th.

Assignment 3: Analytic Essay (1200-1400 words). Due date Thursday, February 28th. The purpose of the analytic essay is not only to describe the assigned text, but to evaluate it. A good analysis attends to the central claim of the text (its thesis), the evidence adduced in support of that claim, and the structure of the argument. Your analysis should note both the merits and flaws of the argument.

Assignment 4: Comparative Essay (1200-1400 words). Due date Thursday, March 27th. The comparative essay brings two texts into conversation. You should offer an analysis of each text, but this analysis is in service of your comparative work. What values and commitments do the authors share? Where do they differ? How might they respond to each other on their points of difference? The final version of this essay is to be turned in on the due date, though peer reviews are encouraged.

Assignment 5: Spiritual/Intellectual Autobiography (900-1100 words). Due date Thursday, April 10th. Write your own spiritual/intellectual autobiography. Augustine's work is written in the form of a prayer. Notice that although Augustine intends for others to read the work, he addresses it to God, not to us as readers. You may do the same if it helps you frame the project. Notice too that Augustine provides both broad, sweeping descriptions of his life and occasional, detailed accounts of particular events. Try to do the same: zero in from time to time on particular episodes that have been moments of clarification for you.

Assignment 6: Final Paper (1500-1800 words). Due date Friday, April 25th. Your final paper will be an analysis of course materials that incorporates secondary sources. It will be on a topic that you select in consultation with the professor. In your paper, you should seek to advance a clear thesis and argument about your topic.

Students who receive a C or lower on any of the first five assignments may rewrite them within one week of the date the papers are handed back. The final grade for the paper will be an average of the grade on the original and the grade on the rewrite.

All written work in this class should conform to the mechanics and style prescriptions in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. A briefer guide to good writing is "[A Guide to Effective Paper Writing](#)," a publication of the Rhodes Writing Center. **All students are expected to abide by the Honor Code. I will be diligent about reporting all violations to the Honor Council.**

In general, papers will be graded according to the following criteria:

- F: No paper is turned in or instructions were not followed.
- D: Paper would receive a "C," but instructions were not followed.
- C: Paper is plagued by poor grammar, incomprehensible prose, a weak or unclear argument, and/or reflects little insight or original thought.
- B: Paper has a clear argument, proper grammar, and clear prose, and reflects good insight and original thought.
- A: Paper is elegantly written and shows considerable insight and original thought.

Quizzes

Quizzes and other assignments will be given weekly via Moodle.

Other Activities

Periodically, students will be asked to participate in small group discussions or to complete in-class writings

assignments. Both activities will help form the instructor's impression of students' preparation for class.

Late Work

Without an explicit extension from the professor, assigned work will not be accepted after the due date. Missed quizzes may not be made up.

Percentages for Tabulating Grades:

- Descriptive Paper, 5%
- Analytic Paper, 10%
- Rhetorical Analysis Paper, 15%
- Spiritual/Intellectual Biography, 15%
- Final Paper, 25%
- Quizzes, 10%
- Class participation and preparation, 20%

Grading Scale:

93-100	A
90-92.9	A-
88-89.9	B+
83-87.9	B
80-89.9	B-
78-79.9	C+
73-77.9	C
70-72.9	C-
68-69.9	D+
63-67.9	D
60-62.9	D-
0-60	F

Incompletes

An incomplete grade may be given to a student who is unable to complete the required coursework because of illness or other extenuating circumstances. Students wishing to receive an incomplete must consult with the professor prior to the end of the semester. Upon the professor's approval, the student will submit the appropriate application to the Registrar before final grades are due.

Students with Disabilities

Students with a documented disability in need of special accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Services and also discuss the situation with their professor. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented psychological and physical disabilities.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

<i>Th, Jan. 10</i>	<i>Introduction</i>
<i>Tu, Jan. 15</i>	<i>Film: "From Jesus to Christ"</i> <i>Apologetics</i> CR, 223-248
<i>Th, Jan. 17</i>	<i>Diversity in Early Christianity</i> CR, 270-297
<i>Tu, Jan. 22</i>	<i>Early Christian Practices</i> CR, 346-368
<i>Th, Jan. 24</i>	<i>Christological Controversies</i> CR, 298-305; 323-341
<i>Tu, Jan. 29</i>	First Descriptive Essay due <i>Writing Workshop</i>
<i>Th, Jan. 31</i>	<i>Pelagian Controversy</i> CR, 306-323
<i>Tu, Feb 5</i>	<i>Augustine</i> <i>Confessions</i> , Books 1-4;
<i>Th, Feb 7</i>	<i>Augustine</i> <i>Confessions</i> , Books 5-9
	Second Descriptive Essay Due
<i>Tu, Feb 12</i>	<i>Monasticism</i> CR, 457-487
<i>Th, Feb 14</i>	<i>Monasticism</i> <i>The Rule of St. Benedict</i>
<i>Tu, Feb 19</i>	<i>Architecture</i> CR, 434-448
<i>Th, Feb 21</i>	<i>Mysticism</i> CR, 585-607
<i>Tu, Feb. 26</i>	<i>Theology</i> CR, 607-628
<i>Th, Feb. 28</i>	<i>Leadership</i> CR, 487-508
	Analytic Essay Due
<i>Tu, March 4</i>	<i>Spring Break</i>
<i>Th, March 6</i>	<i>Spring Break</i>
<i>Tu, March 11</i>	<i>Reformations</i> Luther, <i>Selections from His Writings</i> , 3-41; 42-96
<i>Th, March 13</i>	<i>Reformations</i> Luther, <i>Selections from His Writings</i> , 166-203
<i>Tu, March 18</i>	<i>Reformations</i> Calvin, <i>Institutes</i> , 21-68
<i>Th, March 20</i>	<i>Easter Break</i>
<i>Tu, March 25</i>	<i>Reformations</i> Calvin, <i>Institutes</i> , 69-124; 181-202; 213-227
<i>Th, March 27</i>	<i>Reformations</i> CR, 521-538
	Comparative Essay Due
<i>Tu, April 1</i>	<i>Reformations</i> CR, 369-388
<i>Th, April 3</i>	<i>Enlightenment</i> John Locke, <i>The Reasonableness of Christianity</i> , 21-77
<i>Tu, April 8</i>	<i>Liberalism</i>

<i>Th, April 10</i>	CR, 658-667; 686-691 <i>Neo-Orthodoxy</i>
<i>Tu, April 15</i>	CR, 667-682 <i>Liberation</i> CR, 705-709; 757-760 Spiritual/Intellectual Biography Due
<i>Th, April 17</i>	<i>Liberation</i> CR, 693-705
<i>Tu, April 22</i>	<i>The Tradition Today: Attitudes toward Other Religions</i> CR, 816-830
<i>Th, April 24</i>	<i>The Tradition Today: Science and Religion</i> CR, 780-791
<i>Friday, April 25</i>	Final Paper due