

## Religious Studies 102: The Bible. Texts and Contexts Spring, 2008



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Office hours: M-F, 12-1pm and by appointment

### Course 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 shall 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 students' skills to express themselves verbally.

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 Teresa of Avila.

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 shall 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.

## Texts

Augustine, *Confessions*.

Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of St. Benedict*. Trans. by Timothy Fry.

Mark Salzman, *Lying Awake*

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*.

Moodle Site for other readings.

## Course Requirements

Final course grades will be based on these components:

Attendance and Participation:	10%
Daily Writing:	10%
Paper 1:	15%
Paper 2:	20%
Paper 3:	20%
Paper 4:	25%

All work should be your own. All students are expected to abide by the Honor Code and we will be diligent about reporting all violations to the Honor Council. Guidelines for “Writing a Paper in Religious Studies” can be found on the Religious Studies web page at [http://www.rhodes.edu/public/2\\_0-Academics/2\\_1\\_7-Religion/2\\_1\\_7\\_6-News/2\\_1\\_7\\_6\\_1-Paper.shtml](http://www.rhodes.edu/public/2_0-Academics/2_1_7-Religion/2_1_7_6-News/2_1_7_6_1-Paper.shtml). For additional help with your writing, visit the Writing Center in 315 Palmer or review their web page at [www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter](http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter).

## Attendance and Participation

Many important features of this course will be imparted in class meetings, through lectures, films, and discussions. It is essential, therefore, to attend class. Students with extracurricular activities (especially athletes) that will require them to miss one or more classes during the semester should talk to their professor in advance of their anticipated absence. All absences that are not approved in advance will adversely affect your grade. The attendance portion of the attendance and participation grade will be based on the following scale.

0-1 absences	A	3 absences	C	5 or more absences	F
2 absences	B	4 absences	D		

### Student-led Class Discussion Information

As part of your participation grade, you and one or more colleagues will lead the discussion for one class period during the semester. It is not my expectation that you lead for the entire fifty minutes of class. However, I hope that good questions will lead to good discussion. Discussion groups and days will be assigned by the professor and distributed during the first week of class. The student-led discussion entails a more thorough preparation of the assignment. You will be responsible for preparing, in advance, a handout to be distributed at least one class period prior to your assigned day. This should provide a working outline of the process and format for the discussion. Please distribute it electronically as an attachment sent to the entire class. While you are free to structure the discussion as you wish, *and it must be grounded in the assignment and text(s)*, you might consider including any or all of the following parts:

1. What are the key ideas in the text? While the text may contain many ideas, try to identify what you think are the one or two most important ones, or the ideas upon which other ideas rest. As part of this process, direct the class to one or two key passages in the text where these ideas are best articulated by the author.
2. Do the ideas of this text connect to other texts we have read or other texts you have read in other classes? The connections you make might be very obvious or they might be much more obscure. What I am most interested in is your ability to think synthetically and contextually beyond a single text or author.
3. If the author of the text were alive today, what would s/he say about...? Set up a scenario where the author of the text is engaging some contemporary event, person or topic. Be creative.

### Daily Writing

A one-page paper is due at the beginning of every class session. These daily writing assignments provide an opportunity for you to practice both formal, analytical writing and personal, reflective writing. At the close of each class session I will pose a question about the reading assignment due for the next class meeting. Your paper should consist of two parts: first, a one-paragraph answer to that question that is derived directly from a close-reading of the assigned text; second, a one-paragraph response to the answer. Daily writing assignments are not due on class days when other writing assignments are scheduled. They will be graded on a ten-point scale.

### Paper Assignments

**Paper 1 (600 words). Descriptive Essay.** Descriptive essays provide an account of the meaning and function of a text. After carefully reading and outlining the assigned text you should prepare a 600-800 word essay that describes its content (what does it say?) and purpose (what does it do?). The assigned text for this paper is Egeria, *Travels*.

**Paper 2 (1200 words). Analytic Essay.** 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. The assigned text for this paper is Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 9.

**Paper 3 (1500 words). Comparative Essay.** The purpose of the comparative essay is to compare the arguments of two readings. 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 assigned text combinations are the readings from: Abbot Suger and Benedict of Nursia OR Abbot Suger and Bernard of Clairvaux.

**Paper 4 (2100 words). Final Essay.** In this paper, you need to apply the course readings of Hume, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, and Otto to your reading of Mark Salzman, *Lying Awake*.

### Moodle Site

Many of the assigned readings are found on the Moodle Site for this course. The site can be accessed from the "Login" section on the Rhodes home page. You are required to submit a username and password. If you have trouble logging in, call the Rhodes Help Desk, extension HELP (4357). From the class home page (titled "RS 102"), you can access the readings; you will find a link to the reading under its title. Once you open the reading document, you should **print it so that you can bring a copy with you to class**. Please check your e-mail frequently for announcements and other matters (including changes) concerning this course.

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## Grading Standards for Written Assignments

**Papers received after class and before 5pm on the due date will be given a late penalty of a full letter grade; a penalty of a full letter grade will be given for each subsequent day that the paper is late.**

1. The **A** paper or essay demonstrates originality of thought, independence of opinion and maturity of interpretation in stating and developing a central idea. Its basic notions and observations are clear, logical, and thought provoking. The evidence provided in the paper warrants its conclusions. The A essay contains all of the following characteristics: (a) concentration on a central purpose, demonstrated by an adequate development of its arguments and the specific support of valid sources; (b) careful construction and organization of sentences and paragraphs; (c) careful choice of effective words and phrases; (d) full understanding of the concepts central to the reading material used; and (e) correctness of mechanical procedures (spelling, typing, etc.).

2. The **B** paper or essay has a clearly stated thesis, has been logically argued, and has been supported by specific evidence from the texts read. Its ideas are clear and its organization is coherent because it contains most of the characteristics described above. It is relatively free of errors in the use of expository English prose. Although competent, the B paper lacks the originality, stylistic maturity, and the precision of thought of the A paper.

3. The average paper or essay will receive the grade of **C**. The essay has a central purpose and is organized clearly enough to convey its thesis to the reader. It demonstrates adequate familiarity with the concepts and material in question and it relates them to the course's reading assignments. It avoids serious errors in English grammar and usage. It may, in fact, require few corrections, but it lacks the vigor or complexity of thought and expression, which would entitle it to a higher grade.

4. The grade of **D** indicates a below-average achievement in the correct and effective expression of ideas. Most D papers contain serious logical errors and grammatical mistakes. The D paper fails either to present a central thesis or to develop and support it adequately.

5. The grade of **F** indicates a failure to state or develop a main idea. It may also indicate serious errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or sentence structure. Typing errors or poor proofreading are signs of haste and poor presentation. The following major errors are to be avoided: (a) misunderstood ideas used without discrimination; (b) poorly constructed essays without introduction, logical development, or conclusions; (c) essays that miss the point of the question(s) asked; (d) papers that demonstrate derivative use of source material; (e) comma-splicing or run-on sentences; (f) sentence fragments; (g) misspelling common words; (h) lack of verb-subject agreement; (i) lack of antecedent-pronoun agreement; (j) faulty use of tense or person; (k) misplaced or dangling modifiers; and (l) faulty punctuation.

## Grading Scale

The final grade will be determined on the basis of this scale:

A (94-100)	C+ (77-79)	D- (60-63)
A- (90-93)	C (74-76)	F (below 60)
B+ (87-89)	C- (70-73)	
B (84-86)	D+ (67-69)	
B- (80-83)	D (64-66)	

### Schedule of Topics and Readings

1/9 Introduction  
Assignment: In-class reading and work with Favazza and Kaltner, "How to Read a Primary Text"

#### Unit I: The Early Christian Body

1/11 "From Jesus to Christ"

1/14 Pilgrimage  
Assignment: Egeria, *Travels* (excerpts)

1/16 Pilgrimage  
Assignment: Egeria, *Travels* (excerpts)

1/18 Class Discussion and Assessment of Paper 1. **PAPER ONE DUE.**

1/21 No class.

1/23 Virginity  
Assignment: Jerome, *On Virginity* (excerpts)

1/25 Asceticism  
Assignment: Athanasius, *Life of Antony* (excerpts)

1/28 Sacramental Life  
Assignment: St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*

1/30 Sacramental Life  
Assignment: St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*

2/1 Class Discussion (Student-led).  
Assignment: Review all course readings in Unit I.

#### Unit II: The Medieval Body

2/4 Human Condition  
Assignment: Augustine, *Confessions*

2/6 Grace  
Assignment: Augustine, *Confessions*

2/8 Memory  
Assignment: Augustine, *Confessions*

2/11 Class Discussion and Assessment of Paper 2. **PAPER TWO DUE.**

2/13 Humility  
Assignment: Benedict of Nursia, *Rule of Benedict*

2/15 Conversion of Manners  
Assignment: Benedict of Nursia, *Rule of Benedict*

- 2/18 Obedience  
Assignment: Review *Rule of Benedict*
- 2/20 Mystical Union  
Assignment: Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Three Kisses*
- 2/22 Sacred Universe  
Assignment: Abbot Suger, “*On what was done in his administration: St. Denis*”
- 2/25 Sacred Universe  
Assignment: Abbot Suger, “*On what was done in his administration: St. Denis*”
- 2/27 Sacred Knowledge  
Assignment: Anselm, “*Ontological Argument for the Existence of God*”
- 2/29 Class Discussion (Student-led).  
Assignment: Review all course readings in Unit II.
- 3/3-3/7 No Class. Spring Break.

### Unit III: Reformed Bodies

- 3/10 Reformation (Lecture). **PAPER THREE DUE.**
- 3/12 Reformation  
Assignment: Luther, “*A Treatise on Christian Liberty*”
- 3/14 Reformation  
Assignment: Luther, “*A Treatise on Christian Liberty*”
- 3/17 Reformation  
Assignment: Teresa of Avila, *Autobiography* (selection)
- 3/19 Reformation  
Assignment: Teresa of Avila, *Autobiography* (selection)
- 3/21 No Class. Easter Break.
- 3/24 Class Discussion (Student-led)  
Assignment: Review all course readings in Unit III.

### Unit IV: The Body and Christianity in the Modern World

- 3/26 The Intellect  
Assignment: David Hume, *On Miracles*
- 3/28 The Miraculous  
Assignment: David Hume, *On Miracles*
- 3/31 Modernity  
Assignment: Schleiermacher, *First Speech*

- 4/2 Experience  
Assignment: Schleiermacher, *Fifth Speech*
- 4/4 Identity  
Assignment: Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity* (selection)
- 4/7 Creating Religion  
Assignment: Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity* (selection)
- 4/9 Defining Religion  
Assignment: Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (selection)
- 4/11 Class Discussion (Student-led)  
Assignment: Review all course readings in Unit IV.
- 4/14 Knowing Religion.  
Assignment: Salzman, *Lying Awake*. **PAPER FOUR DUE.**
- 4/16 Living Religion  
Assignment: Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (selection)
- 4/18 Living Religion  
Assignment: King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
- 4/21 Tolerating Religion  
Assignment: "9/11, Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero"
- 4/23 Conclusion and Evaluation

**Student Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge that I have received and read carefully a copy of the syllabus for Religious Studies 102, “Bible: Texts and Contexts” taught by Professor McNary-Zak in the Spring semester, 2008. I understand that I am responsible for fulfilling all obligations, for completing all assignments on time, and for adhering to all policies as specified in the syllabus. I also acknowledge that failure to do so will adversely affect my grade in this class. I further understand that the professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, and that I will be notified of any such changes by email at my Rhodes College email address.

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Phone Number/Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Class year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your anticipated major (or academic interests if you are unsure about a major)?**

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**What did you learn in RS 101 that you hope to continue thinking about in RS**

**102?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What is your interest in taking this class, and what do you hope to learn?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_