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RELS 102-03, The Bible: Texts and Contexts, Spring 2008

Item Type	Syllabus
Authors	Holmes, Emily A.
Publisher	Memphis, Tenn. : Rhodes College
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Religious Studies 102

The Bible: Texts and Contexts

Instructor: Emily A. Holmes
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Spring 2008
Section 3
MWF 11:00 a.m.
Buckman 204

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 and events 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 section 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 multiplicity into orthodoxy with special attention to Augustine, one of the most influential Christian thinkers. We also will study some of the characteristic religious practices of this era, including sacramental rites and pilgrimage.

In the second section, 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, iconography, mysticism, and religious architecture and music. Section two also investigates the development of Islam and the Jewish Kabbalah. This unit concludes with a study of the Christian reformations of the late Middle Ages through the work of the German theologian Martin Luther.

When we turn to 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 brings a scientific worldview and 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 and theological responses to the intellectual and moral dilemmas of the twentieth century.

Required Texts

Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*. Trans., Maria Boulding, O. S. B. New York: New City, 1997.

Benedict of Nursia. *The Rule of St. Benedict*. Trans., Timothy Fry. O.S.B. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.

Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*. Trans., Frank Tobin. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.

Zohar: Annotated and Explained. Trans., Daniel C. Matt. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2002.

Martin Luther, *Selections from His Writings*. Ed., John Dillenberger. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961.

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: In Which the Existence of God and the Distinction of the Soul from the Body Are Demonstrated*, 3rd ed. Trans., Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993.

Rhodes College: A Guide to Effective Paper Writing

Additional readings and films are available on the course Moodle site or through links to the internet and are indicated on the course calendar.

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course are as follows:

Participation (20%)

Your participation grade comprises your contributions to the colloquia and your involvement in out-of-class events related to the course. These elements of the participation grade are explained below.

Preparation: It is important that each person come to class adequately prepared, having read the assignments and thoughtfully considered them. Please bring the day's reading with you to class. To prepare for some discussions, you will also need to view a film prior to class. The films are available through the Moodle site.

Contributions to Discussions: Since the course is discussion-based, it is also essential that you contribute to the colloquia. If you have difficulty speaking up in class, please see me. I can offer you several strategies for contributing to class discussions.

Engagements: During the course of the semester, you will have the opportunity to attend several events related to the subject matter of this course. Your participation in these events will form part of your participation grade. More details to come.

In-class writings: I will occasionally have you complete writing exercises in class as a way to practice your writing and generate discussion. These exercises will comprise part of your participation grade and help you prepare for your formal essays.

Quizzes (10%)

I will administer unannounced short quizzes during the course of the semester. These quizzes will test your comprehension of the day's reading and viewing material. The quizzes will give you an opportunity for writing practice and provide the basis for the day's discussion. There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes, but I will drop the lowest quiz score.

Writing Assignments (50%)

This course is writing-intensive and fulfills the F2 (as well as the F1) requirement.

You will be asked to submit five essays at various times during the semester. The essays are designed to give you an opportunity to respond critically and creatively to the reading material, discussions, and engagements. Papers are due at the beginning of class. Late papers will be penalized by 1/3 of the letter grade. I do not accept late submissions after 2 p.m. on the due date.

Descriptive Essays: Paper 1 (5%) and Paper 2 (10%)

Descriptive essays provide an account of the meaning and function of a text. After carefully reading and outlining the assigned text you should prepare an essay that describes its content (what does it say?) and purpose (what does it do?).

The first descriptive essay, **due January 14**, is worth 5% of your final grade. The assigned text for this essay is Origen, *On First Principles*. Length: 400-600 words.

The second descriptive essay, **due January 25**, is worth 10% of your final grade. The revision is due on **January 30**. The assigned text for this essay is Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*. Length: 600-900 words.

Analytic Essay: Paper 3 (10%)

The purpose of the analytic essay, **due February 15**, is not only to describe the assigned text, but to evaluate it. A good analysis will attend 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 essay is Augustine's *Confessions*, Book 7. Length: 900-1200 words.

Comparative Essays: Paper 4 (10%) and Paper 5 (15%)

A 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 ideas, images, and concerns do the texts or authors share? Where do they differ? How might they respond to each other on their points of difference? Compare and contrast the two texts on a specific topic. The comparative essays should each be 1200-1500 words.

You have a choice of topics and due dates for the first comparative essay (Paper 4). Option #1, **due February 29**, compares John of Damascus and the Qur'an on the question of images of God. Option #2, **due March 26**, compares Mechthild and the Zohar on the place of feminine imagery in the human relation to God. Choose wisely based on the time you have available and your schedule of work for other courses.

The second comparative essay (Paper 5) is **due on April 14**. The topic of this comparative essay is Schleiermacher and Feuerbach on the essence of religion.

Final Writing Assignment (20%)

The final writing assignment will be a substantial paper incorporating material from the entire semester and reflecting an engagement with the central themes of the course. The assignment will be given during the last week of classes and the paper will be due on the date and time scheduled for the final examination. Length: 1500-1800 words.

All assignments must conform to the following requirements:

1. In the upper left-hand corner (header) type your name, the date, and paper number (e.g., Paper 1). Do not use a cover sheet for this course.
2. Two lines down, centered and in bold, type the title of your essay.
3. Use the Times New Roman 12 point font.
4. Set your line spacing to double.
5. Use one-inch margins on all sides.
6. Use page numbers in the lower right-hand corner of all pages except the first.
7. Citations should give the author's name, title, and page number in parentheses inside the sentence, like this (Augustine, *Confessions*, 52).
8. Use inclusive language (human beings or humankind instead of man or mankind).
9. Staple the assignment once in the upper left-hand corner. Staplers are available at the library if you do not own one.

Further 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. For additional help with your writing, visit the Writing Center in 315 Palmer or review their web page at www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter.

Academic Honesty

All work submitted should be exclusively your own work. **All students are expected to abide by the Honor Code.** If you have any questions or concerns as to what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please consult me **before** submitting the work. Together we shall likely be able to avoid any such incidents.

Attendance Policy

It is essential to attend class. I do not reckon absences as excused or unexcused. If you choose to miss class to participate in an extracurricular or other activity, your choice indicates the priority you give to this course and the grade you receive will reflect that decision. Each student is permitted three absences during the semester without an adverse effect on the grade. After the third absence, however, each subsequent absence will lower the final numeric average by one point.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at x3994 and please speak to me in the first week of class.

Electronic Communication

I encourage you to check your e-mail frequently for announcements and other matters concerning this course. I will use the e-mail to communicate with you collectively and individually. It is often easier to contact me through e-mail than by telephone. My e-mail address is holmese@rhodes.edu. All photocopied readings, along with this syllabus and films, will be available on the course Moodle site. To login to Moodle, click on the “login” menu at the upper right corner of the Rhodes home page. Click on “Moodle” and follow the instructions. You should be able to see this course listed as RS 102. If you have trouble logging in, call the Rhodes Help Desk, extension HELP (x4357)

Course Calendar

Wed	Jan 9	<p>Introduction to the Course</p> <p>Read: Syllabus Favazza and Kaltner, “How to Read a Primary Text” (handout)</p> <p>Due: Acknowledgement form (fill out in class)</p>
Fri	11	<p style="text-align: center;">PART I: THE ANCIENT WORLD</p> <p>From Jesus to Christ</p> <p>Read: Correspondence from Pliny to Trajan http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/texts/pliny.html.</p> <p>See in class: “From Jesus to Christ,” Part 4, 50 minutes</p>
Mon	14	<p>Scripture</p> <p>Read: Origen, excerpts from <i>On First Principles</i> (Moodle)</p> <p>Due: Paper 1: Descriptive essay of the reading (400-600 words).</p>
Wed	16	<p>Extra-Canonical Gospels</p> <p>Read: The Gospel of Judas http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel/timeline.html. http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel/pdf/GospelofJudas.pdf. The Infancy Gospel of Thomas http://www.cygnus-study.com/pageinf.html.</p>
Fri	18	<p>Heresy</p> <p>Read: Irenaeus of Lyons, “Against Heresies,” and “The Heretics Follow Neither Scripture Nor Tradition” (Moodle)</p>
Mon	21	Martin Luther King Observance, No Class
Wed	23	<p>Orthodoxy</p> <p>Read: Athanasius, “On the Incarnation of the Word” and “The Nicene Creed” (Moodle)</p>
Fri	25	<p>Writing workshop: Peer review in class</p> <p>Due: Two copies of Paper 2: Descriptive essay of Athanasius’ “On the Incarnation of the Word” (600-800 words).</p>
Mon	28	<p>Sacramental Practice</p> <p>Read: Cyril of Jerusalem, <i>Lectures on the Christian Sacraments</i>, pp. ix-xxiv; 40-80 (Moodle)</p>
Wed	30	<p>Christian Pilgrimage</p> <p>Read: Egeria, selections from <i>Travels</i>, pp. 333-347 (Moodle)</p> <p>Due: Revised version of Paper 2</p>

Fri	Feb 1	The Life and Teachings of Augustine Read: <i>Confessions</i> , Books 1-3
Mon	4	The Life and Teachings of Augustine Read: <i>Confessions</i> , Books 4-6
Wed	6	The Life and Teachings of Augustine Read: <i>Confessions</i> , Books 7-9
Fri	8	The Life and Teachings of Augustine In-class writing exercise Re-read: <i>Confessions</i> , Book 7, in preparation for Paper 3
Mon	11	PART II: THE MIDDLE AGES Monasticism Read: The Rule of St. Benedict, pp. xxvii-34
Wed	13	Monasticism Read: The Rule of St. Benedict, pp. 34-70
Fri	15	Islam Lecture: Introduction to Islam Due: Paper 3: Analytic Essay on Book 7 of <i>Augustine's Confessions</i>
Mon	18	Islam Read: Sura 4 from the Qur'an (Moodle) See before class: "The Message," 220 minutes, Barret Media Center or Moodle
Wed	20	Islam Read: John Kaltner, "Jesus" from <i>Ishmael Instructs Isaac</i> (Moodle)
Fri	22	Iconography Read: John of Damascus, <i>On the Divine Images</i> , pp.7-49 (Moodle) See: Selection of Icons (Moodle)
Mon	25	Sacred Space, Sacred Sound Meet in Voorhies Chapel Read: Suger, Abbot of St. Denis, <i>On What Was Done in His Administration</i> http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/sugar.html .

Wed	27	Apophatic Theology Read: Pseudo-Dionysius, "The Mystical Theology" (Moodle)
Fri	29	Visions and Prophecy Read: Hildegard of Bingen, selections from <i>Scivias</i> (Moodle) Due: Comparative option #1 due (Paper 4): John of Damascus and Qur'an
MW F	Mar 3-7	Spring Break
Mon	10	Allegory and Eros Read: The Song of Songs (Bible) Bernard of Clairvaux, "Three Kisses" (Moodle)
Wed	12	Mystical Union Read: Mechthild of Magdeburg, <i>The Flowing Light of the Godhead</i> , Introduction, pp. 1-11, I.1-5, I.11-20, I. 44
Fri	14	Mystical Authority and Visions Read: Mechthild of Magdeburg, <i>Flowing Light of the Godhead</i> , II.26, II.4, IV.2, III.1, III.9, III.21, V.4
Mon	17	Mystical Theology Reconsidered In-class writing exercise on Ps-Dionysius, Hildegard, Bernard, and Mechthild
Wed	19	Kabbalah Read: Daniel Matt, "A Glimpse of the Orchard" from <i>The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism</i> , pp. 1-19 (Moodle) <i>Zohar</i> , pp. ix-xxxiv; 1-43.
Fri	21	Easter Recess
Mon	24	Kabbalah Read: <i>Zohar</i> , pp. 44-125.
Wed	26	Martin Luther See in class: "Luther," 113 minutes Due: Comparative Option #2 due (Paper 4): Mechthild and Zohar
Fri	28	Martin Luther See in class: "Luther," 113 minutes Read: Martin Luther, "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings," Dillenberger, pp. 3-12; "Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans," Dillenberger, pp. 19-34.
Mon	31	Martin Luther

		Read: Martin Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian” from Dillenberger, pp. 42-85
Wed	Apr 2	PART III: MODERNITY Religion and the Modern World Read: René Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , pp. 1-59.
Fri	4	The Enlightenment Project Read: John Locke, <i>The Reasonableness of Christianity</i> , pp. 25-87. (Moodle)
Mon	7	The Turn to Experience Read: Friedrich Schleiermacher, <i>On Religion</i> , pp. 77-140. (Moodle)
Wed	9	The Turn to Experience Read: Friedrich Schleiermacher, <i>On Religion</i> , pp. 189-223. (Moodle)
Fri	11	The Critique of Theism Read: Ludwig Feuerbach, <i>The Essence of Christianity</i> , pp. 1-49. (Moodle)
Mon	14	Liberation: Race Read: “Statement by Alabama Clergymen,” and Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/clergy.pdf http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html James Cone, “The Social Context of Theology” (Moodle) Due: Paper 5: Compare Schleiermacher and Feuerbach on the essence of religion
Wed	16	Liberation: Gender Read: Valerie Saiving, “The Human Condition: A Feminine View” Mary Daly, excerpt from <i>Beyond God the Father</i> (Moodle)
Fri	18	Liberation: Earth Read: Rosemary Ruether, <i>Gaia and God</i> , chapter 1 (Moodle)
Mon	21	Postmodernity: Pluralism Read: John Hick, “Whatever Path Men Choose is Mine,” 171-190 (Moodle)
Wed	23	Concluding conversation Final paper topics distributed
Fri	25	No class Awards Convocation

		Undergraduate Research & Creative Activity Symposium (URCAS)
Fri	May 2	Final papers due by 8:00 p.m.

Student Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received and read carefully a copy of the syllabus for Religious Studies 102, "The Bible: Texts and Contexts" taught by Professor Holmes 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 e-mail at my Rhodes College e-mail address.

Student Name: _____

Local Phone Number/E-mail Address: _____

Class Year: _____

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

What did you learn in RS 101 that you hope to continue thinking about in RS 102?

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

Signature: _____

Date: _____