

**Semester at Sea Course Syllabus  
Colorado State University, Academic Partner**

**Voyage:** Fall 2017  
**Discipline:** Philosophy  
**Course Number and Title:** PHIL 171 Religions of the West  
**Division:** Lower  
**Faculty Name:** James D. Bratt  
**Semester Credit Hours:** 3

**Meeting:** B Days 1100-1220, Kino

**Prerequisites:** None

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course studies the three major branches on the Abrahamic religious tree: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It proceeds by tracing the history of each tradition from its founder/s and origins through the variations that developed as it gained adherents far removed geographically, culturally, and socially from the context of its birth. The course attends to the rituals by which each faith has been enacted and transmitted, as well as the various codes of behavior and doctrine it has prescribed. The survey concludes with an analysis of the different responses that have arisen in each tradition to the challenges of modernity. Students will regularly be asked to draw comparisons among the three traditions in an effort to determine what all of them truly share (which make them a recognizable 'family' among world religions) as well as where they diverge, and why.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will demonstrate

1. familiarity with the principal teachings, rituals, and ethical codes of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and of the primary divisions or schools within each tradition.
2. knowledge of the historical evolution of each tradition across its major periods of development.
3. critical awareness of the diverse settings in which each tradition has developed around the world and the varying political programs with which it has been and continues to be associated.
4. the capacity to draw apt comparisons and contrasts among these traditions.
5. informed understanding of the connection of each tradition's texts and ritual spaces with specific historical and geographical contexts.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

**AUTHOR:** Raymond P. Scheindlin  
**TITLE:** *A Short History of the Jewish People*  
**PUBLISHER:** Oxford University Press  
**ISBN #:** 978-0195139419  
**DATE/EDITION:** 2000/1<sup>st</sup> edition

AUTHOR: Robert Bruce Mullin  
TITLE: *A Short World History of Christianity*  
PUBLISHER: Westminster John Knox Press  
ISBN #: 978-0664259631  
DATE/EDITION: 2014/Revised edition

AUTHOR: Reza Aslan  
TITLE: *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*  
PUBLISHER: Random House  
ISBN #: 978-0812982442  
DATE/EDITION: 2011/ Updated edition

## TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Depart Bremerhaven—September 9

### **B1—September 12** *Introduction*

Review of syllabus, assignments, and grading. Discussion of the purpose of the academic study of religion: not proselytization or debunking but empathic and critical understanding.

## PART I

### **B2—September 14** *From 'Wandering Arameans' to Kingdom of Israel*

The evolution of an identifiable religious lineage amid contentions with neighbors and rival cults under a sequence of radically different socio-political regimes. Rise of the prophets alongside priests and kings amid the looming threat of conquering empires.

READINGS: Scheindlin ch 1; selections from the Pentateuch

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1:** In 500 words, explain how the readings for today either challenged, confirmed, or revealed something new in your understanding of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. If you've had little acquaintance with those scriptures to date, give your impressions of their leading teachings and emphases.

Barcelona/Valencia, Spain — September 15-18

### **B3—September 20** *The Birth of Judaism: 587 BCE – 70 CE*

'Second Temple Judaism': a distinct religious tradition emerges with a scriptural canon and prescribed rituals. Different parties arise, correlated with different political formulas, out of arguments over how to observe that tradition amid changing imperial regimes and internal rebellions. READINGS: Scheindlin ch 2; selections from the Prophets and Writings

### **B4—September 22** *Diaspora & the Rabbinical Tradition: 70 - 632 CE*

The destruction of the Second Temple and exile from the Promised Land lead to greater regularity in doctrine and practice. The variety of Jewish life across the eastern and western reaches of the diaspora.

READINGS: Scheindlin ch 3, Aslan ch 1

No Class — September 23

**B5—September 25**     *The Birth of Christianity: Jesus & Paul*

From a reform movement within Judaism to a distinct way of salvation amid the Gentiles.

READINGS: Mullin, chs 1-3; selections from the New Testament.

Tema, Ghana — September 27-30

**B6—October 1**     *Early Christianity, c. 100 – 500 CE: Defining & Dividing*

The emergence of canon, cult, clerical hierarchy, and creed in a socio-political ambience that oscillated between tolerance and persecution only to reach preferred and then established status within the Roman Empire.

READINGS: Mullin, chs 4-6; the Nicene-Chalcedonian creed.

**B7—October 4**     *The Origins of Islam: The Prophet and His Visions*

The contentious and seemingly corrupt socio-economic and religious ambience in which the Prophet received his revelations, and the radical new order they prescribed.

READINGS: Aslan chs 2-3; selections from the Qur'an.

**B8—October 6**     *Struggles & Successors*

The politics in and around early Islam: its struggle for survival in the Hejaz, the Arabic wars of conquest, the establishment and 'golden age' of the Caliphate/s, and the legacy these all left for Muslims in subsequent ages and different global contexts.

READINGS: Aslan chs 4-5; selections from the Qur'an

Cape Town, South Africa — October 7-12

**B9—October 14**     *The Sunni Way: Theology as Law and Science*

The principles, schools, and leading figures of Islam's largest tradition.

READINGS: Aslan ch 6; selections from the Hadith

No Classes — October 16

**B10—October 17**     **EXAM #1**

Port Louis – October 19

**PART II**

**B11—October 20**     *Medieval Judaism: East & West*

Key doctrinal, philosophical, and cultural developments in the Middle Ages; Judaism's comparative fortunes under Muslim and Christian regimes.

READINGS: Scheindlin, chs 4 - 6

No Class — October 22

**B12—October 23**     *Eastern Christianities*

The varieties of Christianity and their flourishing life outside of Europe until the catastrophic 14<sup>th</sup> century. Their legacies in Africa and Asia to the present.

READINGS: Mullin, ch 7, Jenkins, ch 2

Cochin, India — October 25–30

**FIELD CLASS— OCT 26** ‘Western’ Religions in an ‘Eastern’ City

No Classes — October 31

**B13—November 1** *Western Christianity: Formation & Division, 800 – 1550*

Moving back to examine the growth of a distinctly Western type of Christianity from the time of Charlemagne and the Muslim conquests through the High Middle Ages and the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation. READINGS: Mullin, chs 8-10

**B14—November 3** *Western Christianity: Missions & the Enlightenment, 1550-1800*

From the Wars of Religion and the Catholic/Counter-Reformation’s launching of world missions to the re-configuration of Christian self-understanding under the twin 18<sup>th</sup>-century forces of Enlightened rationalism and evangelical fervor. READINGS: Mullin, chs 11-13

Yangon, Myanmar — November 4-8

**B15—November 10** *Islam: The Shi’a Way*

The distinctive principles and practices of Islam’s largest variant tradition.

READINGS: Aslan, ch 7; selections from the Hadith

No Class — November 11

**B16—November 13** *Islam: The Sufi Way*

The teachings and practices of mystical spirituality in a tradition emphatic about law and monotheism. READINGS: Aslan, ch 8; selections from Rumi.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam — November 14-18

**B17—November 20** **Exam #2**

No Class — November 21

### **PART III**

**B18—November 23** *Judaism in Modern Europe: Liberation & Ordeal*

The varieties of Jewish belief and practice—ranging from Hasidism to secularism—under the conditions created by modern science, Enlightened toleration, and nationalism; and the Holocaust considered as a reaction to all of these. READINGS: Scheindlin, chs 7, 8a, 9.

Shanghai, China — November 24-29

**B19—December 1** *Islam: Colonization and Resistance*

The forces of modernity that bore down on Judaism and Christianity come to Islam in the train of European colonialism. Examination of the menu of responses these triggered.

READINGS: Aslan, ch 9; Iqbal, "The Principle of Movement"

Kobe, Japan — December 2-6

**B20—December 8** *Christianity in the Americas*

The distinctive opportunities and challenges arising from a context of voluntary religious affiliation but unofficial cultural dominance in a radically pluralistic society.

READINGS: Mullin, chs 14-16.

**FIELD-WORK PAPER due no later than today.**

**B21—December 10** *Judaism in America & Israel*

North America and Israel as counterpoint centers of contemporary Judaism: the first with its spectrum of Jewish 'denominations,' the second with its accentuation of the secularist-traditionalist contest under the conditions of achieved power in the State of Israel.

READINGS: Scheindlin, chs 8b, 10-11.

**B22—December 12** *20<sup>th</sup>-century Christianity*

The catastrophic world wars centered in Europe reverberate in both Protestant and Catholic churches, issuing in a mixed package of reforms, retrenchment, and reassertions.

READINGS: Mullin, chs 17-19.

**B23—December 14** *Christianity as a Global Religion*

As European imperialism recedes, Christianity (re-)emerges as a truly global religion. Pentecostalism as a common driver of church growth in the "first" as well as "third" world.

READINGS: Mullin, ch 20 - Epilogue

Honolulu, Hawaii — December 16

**B24—December 17** *20<sup>th</sup> Century Islam: Reformers & Fundamentalists*

The variety of Muslim ventures in espousing, and then dealing with, decolonization. Here we will deal with the minor—though highly publicized—place of violent Islamist politics in that mix, and the significant—though typically overlooked—proposals for reform and pluralism.

READINGS: Aslan, chs. 10-11

Study Day — December 19

**B25—December 20** **WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2**

Religious responses to modernity are often simplistically divided into the polar-opposite camps of "fundamentalists" and "modernists;" depending on the observer's point of view, one camp or the other (sometimes both!) is then summarily dismissed as being beneath consideration. This essay asks you for a more nuanced and comparative treatment. Using carefully chosen cases from across Jewish, Christian, and Muslim lines, describe figures and movements that EITHER (1) defy such blanket categories by their creativity or unusual combination of traits, OR (2) fall close to one of the familiar categories or the other but deserve praise nonetheless for

their courage and critical acumen in opposing various debilitating features of modern life. If your cases follow line (1), explain why they seem to be ignored in popular summaries of the religious scene. If they follow line (2), ask whether, and how, they successfully defy the faults typically ascribed to the 'extreme' company they keep.

Your essay should be 1500-1800 words in length (5 pp) and is due on B25/December 20, the finals date for this course.

San Diego, California — December 23

## **FIELD WORK**

Semester at Sea field experiences allow for an unparalleled opportunity to compare, contrast, and synthesize the different cultures and countries encountered over the course of the voyage. In addition to the one field class, students will complete independent field assignments that span multiple countries.

**Field Class attendance is mandatory for all students enrolled in this course. Do not book individual travel plans or a Semester at Sea sponsored trip on October 26.**

## **Field Class and Assignment**

The Field Class for this course will take place on Thursday, 26 October, in Cochin, India.

Class Title: 'Western' Religions in an 'Eastern' City

As a prominent port in the trans-oceanic trade, Cochin long attracted traders from many lands and faiths, including those we associate with Western monotheism. We will visit three houses of worship connected with these: the Paradesi Synagogue (founded by Portuguese Sephardim in 1558), St. Francis Church (the first church built by Europeans in India), and one of the city's half-dozen prominent mosques. We will take a guided tour at each site and converse, if possible, with clergy and laity present.

Field Class Learning Objectives:

- To become better acquainted with the design, décor, and functions of the ritual spaces in which Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are practiced, and to see how these spaces are located and function within their ambient communities.
- To observe and analyze how these spaces compare with their counterparts in lands where their adherents are proportionately more numerous or even the predominant population.
- To listen to members of these faiths describe and reflect on their experiences within a context dominated by non-monotheistic religion.

## **ASSIGNMENT**

Students will submit a project comparing the houses of worship we visit in Cochin to three others—one from each tradition—from three different ports of call on our itinerary. The project may be the usual type of academic paper or may take a less conventional form:

- a photographic or sonographic essay—a carefully selected array of images or sounds with written commentary;
- a well-organized and properly edited journal that records a conversation you undertake with yourself, showing a growing awareness of and more informed personal response to what you’re observing in the different venues.
- I’m open to other ideas as well—contact me for discussion and approval before starting out, however!

Whatever option you choose, you should reflect on the ways that the sacred space in question:

- corresponds to the doctrine taught by its tradition, to the ritual requirements of the same, and—perhaps—to its ethical demands;
- compares to the other building you examine from this tradition but in another place and/or from another era. Note both differences and similarities. Also, do not be afraid to “cross-pollinate” over the boundaries of the three traditions. The most relevant comparison for synagogue A might be mosque B, etc.

If your project follows the usual paper or the journal format, it should be 1500 words in length. If it is of another genre, it needs to get the equivalent work done with no less clarity and strength of argument.

Your project is due no later than B20/December 8. It may be handed in on any date before that as well, and I encourage you to do so.

**PLEASE NOTE that the number and variety of houses of worship from these three traditions will be greater in our European and African ports of call than in the Asian ones**, although at least one example of each can be found in most of the latter. You are therefore strongly encouraged to make your “comparative” visits **before** we tour the sites in Cochin. Consult shipboard guidebooks, read the materials at the site, and take plenty of notes for later recollection and comparison,

Before venturing out, please read the relevant chapters of Stuart Matlins and Arthur Megida, eds., *How to Be a Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook*, found in the Ship’s library. Note that you should **always** check to make sure that photography or sound recording is permitted at a particular venue—and also at specific spots within that venue. **Always** be sure that you have permission from the person/s you wish to photograph or record before proceeding. And be mindful of the dress requirements/prohibitions that houses of worship may have. (Bare skin, uncovered hair, and footwear are the most common issues.) Pack along clothing—lightweight blouse/shirt; sandals/flip-flops if you’re wearing walking shoes—that you can quickly don to avoid a problem. In general, this is not the sortie on which to appear sexy or macho....

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. Two in-class exams, on B-10 and B-17, covering the material in Part I and Part II of the course, respectively. 20% each
2. Field work, including the Field Class and comparative paper connected with it. (See ‘Field Work’ section above for details.) 25%
3. Prepared class participation: regular attendance showing familiarity with and

reflection on the assigned readings for the day. 15%

4. Writing Assignments:

#1. See B2: 5%

#2. See B25: 15%

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING SCALE**

The following Grading Scale is utilized for student evaluation. Pass/Fail is not an option for Semester at Sea coursework. Note that C-, D+ and D- grades are also not assigned on Semester at Sea in accordance with the grading system at Colorado State University (the SAS partner institution).

Pluses and minuses are awarded as follows on a 100% scale:

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory/Poor</u>	<u>Failing</u>
97-100%: A+	87-89%: B+	77-79%: C+	Less than 60%:
93-96%: A	83-86%: B	70-76%: C	
90-92%: A-	80-82%: B-	60-69%: D	

## **ATTENDANCE/ENGAGEMENT IN THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

Attendance in all Semester at Sea classes, including the Field Class, is mandatory. Students must inform their instructors prior to any unanticipated absence and take the initiative to make up missed work in a timely fashion. Instructors must make reasonable efforts to enable students to make up work which must be accomplished under the instructor's supervision (e.g., examinations, laboratories). In the event of a conflict in regard to this policy, individuals may appeal using established CSU procedures.

## **LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS**

Semester at Sea provides academic accommodations for students with diagnosed learning disabilities, in accordance with ADA guidelines. Students who will need accommodations in a class, should contact ISE to discuss their individual needs. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation.

A memo from the student's home institution verifying the accommodations received on their home campus is required before any accommodation is provided on the ship. Students must submit this verification of accommodations to [academic@isevoyages.org](mailto:academic@isevoyages.org) as soon as possible, but no later than two months prior to the voyage.

## **STUDENT CONDUCT CODE**

The foundation of a university is truth and knowledge, each of which relies in a fundamental manner upon academic integrity and is diminished significantly by academic misconduct. Academic integrity is conceptualized as doing and taking credit for one's own work. A pervasive attitude promoting academic integrity enhances the sense of community and adds value to the educational process. All within the University are affected by the cooperative commitment to academic integrity. All Semester at Sea courses adhere to this Academic Integrity Policy and Student Conduct Code.



Depending on the nature of the assignment or exam, the faculty member may require a written declaration of the following honor pledge: "I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment."

#### **RESERVE BOOKS AND FILMS FOR THE LIBRARY**

AUTHOR: Tarif Khalidi

TITLE: *The Qur'an: A New Translation*

PUBLISHER: Penguin Classics

ISBN #: ISBN-13: 978-0143105886

DATE/EDITION: any

Additionally, please list any films you plan to show in your course or via the CCTV loop here.

None.

#### **ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS**

AUTHOR: Philip Jenkins

CHAPTER TITLE: Chapter 2: "Churches of the East"

BOOK TITLE: *The Lost History of Christianity*

DATE: ISBN-13: 978-0061472817 (2009). But any edition will do.

PAGES: 45-70

AUTHOR: Charles Kurzman

CHAPTER TITLE: Muhammad Iqbal, "The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam"

BOOK TITLE: *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook*

DATE: ISBN-13: 978-0195116229 (1998)

PAGES: 255-69