

Introduction to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

RELI 1710 A (Summer 2021: May 6—June 27)

Religion

College of the Humanities

Professor Z.A. Crook

I can help you! But only if you let me know you need help.

By Email: send me your questions and concerns: zeba.crook@carleton.ca

By Zoom: Email me about a Zoom session and I will set up a meeting with you.

Course delivery note: This course is exclusively asynchronous. There are no live meeting times. All lecture modules will be available at the start of term, and quizzes will occur on assigned days, administered through Brightspace.

Course Objective

This course presumes no previous knowledge about Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. However, many students arrive with things they know, and things they think they know, about these three religions. Learning about a religion from an academic as opposed to a confessional approach can require some students to learn some new things, other students sometimes to learn old things differently, and others to relearn things. It can take, for some students, a thick skin. This material is taught in a critical, historical, but most importantly also a non-judgemental manner. We will focus on the historical development of these religions, their complex array of competing beliefs, and the many practices of the smaller groups that make up each religion. You should never feel pressured to change your religious perspective, nor should you pressure each other to do so.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students should:

- know the basic facts about the religions covered in the course, namely their histories and the vocabulary pertaining to their beliefs and practices
- understand the academic study of religion
- be able to think critically about religion as a human, historical, and cultural phenomenon
- be able to explain the great diversity that exists within each religion

This course features an Experiential Learning component: the Work Place Reflection.

Religion Program Learning Objectives

This course contributes towards the Program Learning Objectives. By the end of a degree in Religion, students should:

- be able to employ the methods of the academic study of religion, which stresses outsider discourse, methodological atheism, and the ability to differentiate between advocacy and the critical study of religion
- be able to describe the history of and relationship among the major religions of the world in their local and global contexts
- be able to examine characteristic features and experiences of religious people in a global environment
- be able to describe the integral role of religion as a category helping to shape cultures, identities, political systems, and public life
- be able to demonstrate religious literacy, which includes facility in terminology native to religions as well as to the discipline

Course Evaluation

Quiz 1 – Method and Theory Quiz – 10% (May 17)

Paper 1: Analyzing Religion in the News 10% (May 26)

Quiz 2 – History Quiz 20% (May 31)

Paper 2: Experiencing Religious Practice – 10% (June 9)

Quiz 3 – Orthodoxies Quiz 20% (June 14)

Paper 3: Religion in the Workplace – 10% (June 16)

Quiz 4 – Orthopraxies/LDS/Baha'i – Quiz 20% (During Exam Period; date set by university)

Required Textbook

Zeba A. Crook, *Religions of a Single God* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2019)

Ordered through the Carleton Bookstore. Also available from the publisher:

<https://www.equinoxpub.com/home/religions-single-god/>

Email Communication

- This is an entirely on-line course. Email is my only way to contact you, and Carleton's Connect e-mail is the official mode of email communication for all matters having to do with the university and with this course. Therefore, you must check your Carleton email daily (at least). All communications sent to your Carleton address are official, and you are expected to get them. It is not an option to claim you did not get some announcement or request because you have another email address or took a break from email. You can configure your Connect account to forward university emails to another address, but you

must be reachable through your Connect account. Also, any communication between you and me involving your personal information (like grades) must originate from a Connect account (FIPPA).

Module, Reading, and Evaluation Schedule/Due Dates

This course is 100% asynchronous. Watch the lecture modules whenever you want

Course Introduction: Video Module	
Module 1: Syllabus and Course	
Reading → A General Theory of Religion (Ch. 1)	
Method and Theory: Video Modules:	
Module 2: What is Religion?	
Module 3: The Contemporary Study of Religion	
Module 4: Defining Religion	
Quiz 1	Method and Theory Quiz (Modules 2-4) open May 17
Histories	
History of Judaism Reading → Part 1 Intro + Chapter 2	
History of Judaism: Video Modules:	
Module 5: What is Jewish History?	
Module 6: Second Temple Judaism	
Module 7: Rabbinic Judaism	
Module 8: Persecution	
Module 9: Holocaust and Zionism	
History of Christianity Reading → Chapter 3	
History of Christianity: Video Modules:	
Module 10: What is Christian History?	
Module 11: Constantine	
Module 12: Creeds	
Module 13: Holy Roman Empire	
Module 14: Protestant Reformation	
Module 15: Christian Colonialism	
Due Date: May 26	Paper 1

History of Islam Reading → Chapter 4	
History of Islam: Video Modules: Module 16: What is Islamic History? Module 17: The Caliphate Module 18: The Battle for Succession Module 19: Umayyads and Abbasids Module 20: Mongolian and Christian Colonialism	
Quiz 2	History Quiz (Modules 5-20) open May 31

Orthodoxies

Jewish Theology Reading → Part 2 Intro + Chapter 5	
Jewish Theologies: Video Modules: Module 21: Foundational Jewish Theology Module 22: Core Jewish Theological Ideas Module 23: Tanakh Module 24: Talmud	
Christian Theology Reading → Chapter 6	
Christian Theologies: Video Modules: Module 25: Foundational Christian Theology Module 26: Core Christian Theological Ideas Module 27: The New Testament Module 28: Thomas Aquinas	
Due Date: June 9	Paper 2

Islamic Theology Reading → Chapter 7	
Islamic Theologies: Video Modules: Module 29: Foundational Islamic Theology Module 30: Core Islamic Theological Ideas Module 31: Sufism Module 32: Qur'an and Hadiths	
Quiz 3	Orthodoxies Quiz (Modules 21-32) open June 14

Orthopraxies

Jewish Practice Reading → Part 3 Intro + Chapter 8	
Jewish Practices: Video Modules:	

Module 33: Religio-Cultural Practice Module 34: Jewish Schools of Practice Module 35: Distinctive Jewish Practices Module 36: Jewish Holy Days Module 37: Jewish Culture	
Christian Practice Reading → Chapter 9	
Christian Practices: Video Modules: Module 38: The question of practice for Christians Module 39: Sacraments Module 40: Holy Days Module 41: Christian Culture	
Islamic Practice Reading → Chapter 10	
Islamic Practices: Video Modules: Module 42: Meaning and Structure of Shari’ah Module 43: Arkan Module 44: Holy Days Module 45: Islamic Culture	
Due Date: June 16	Paper 3
The Continuing History of Religions	
LDS and Baha’i Reading → Part 4 Intro + Chapter 11	
LDS and Baha’i: Video Modules Module 46: LDS History Module 47: LDS Theology Module 48: LDS Practice Module 49: Baha’i History Module 50: Baha’i Theology Module 51: Baha’i Practice Conclusions: Video Module Module 52: The Study of Religion	
Quiz 4	Orthopraxies/LDS/Baha’i/Conclusion Quiz (Modules 33-52) During Exam Period (June 21-27)

Writing Assignment Directions and Expectations

The grading rubric for all three writing assignments will be the same:

Poor	Good	Excellent	Exceptional
4	6.5	8	10
<p><i>Qualities Commonly Associated with 4/10:</i></p> <p>insufficient attention to all assignment instructions; severe problems with writing clarity; absence of thoughtful content; unsuccessful execution of assignment</p>	<p><i>Qualities Commonly Associated with 6.5/10:</i></p> <p>adequate attention to all assignment instructions; common problems with writing clarity; adequate thoughtfulness; successful completion of assignment</p>	<p><i>Qualities Commonly Associated with 8/10:</i></p> <p>careful attention to all assignment instructions; almost perfectly clear writing; very thoughtful responses to questions; excellent example of a successful assignment</p>	<p><i>Qualities Commonly Associated with 10/10:</i></p> <p>artful, eloquent, erudite, profound</p>

Word-Count Requirement:

- All three writing assignments in this course are limited to 300 words. Adhering to this limit is important. It is a very valuable and employable skill to be able to say what you need do in the space allotted to you. But also, more words take more time to read, more time to mark, and thus more time to get grades back to students.
- For this reason, pieces will not be marked if they are longer than 300 words. Write your piece in a word processor; it will tell you how many words it is.
- Students must include the number of words at the bottom of their piece. This is your promise to us that you have submitted no more than 300 words. **Dishonesty in this regard will be treated as an academic infraction.** NB: There is no need to put your name or student number or any other information into the submission box, but if you do, you do NOT need to count those words, nor the two words it takes you to write “300 words.”

Paper 1: Analyzing Religion in the News 300 words max; 10%; Due 11pm (EST) May 17

- 1) Find a news item in which religion generally or Judaism, Christianity, Islam, LDS, or Baha’i specifically is part of the story (no analyses involving religions not covered in this course, please).
 - Submit the URL with your assignment.
 - The story does not have to be recent (i.e., during this course); if the story exists on-line, it can be used.
 - The story must come from any **news** website; it cannot come from a blog, it cannot be a tweet, and it cannot come from the personal website of an individual or from a religious organization.

- The news item must be in English.
- If you are uncertain whether what you have found on-line can be used, please check with me. Just remember: the exercise is not called “Analyzing Religion on the WWW,” but rather “Analyzing Religion in the News.”
- Analyze any part of the story: the headline (chosen by the newspaper), the content of the story (authored by a writer or Editorial Board), a quotation from someone interviewed within the story. Though the *Comments Section* of any news story would also be a rich place to do this kind of analysis, please **do not** include material from here for this exercise. Analysis involves answering any two of these questions:
 - Which elements of the religion are being discussed (or which elements of the religion are being ignored)?
 - Why is religion part of this story? (or: is religion really a relevant or critical part of the story)?
 - Does the author assume any normative statements about religion?
 - Does one of the people being interviewed assume any normative statements about religion?
 - Would any sect or denomination within the same religion contest this representation?
 - You may choose a news story dealing with your own religion (if you belong to a religion covered in this course). But avoid placing yourself in the story, that is disagreeing with how your religion is being represented because *you* are committed to a different version of it.
- This is not an exercise assessing the accuracy of the story or the statements made within the story (e.g., by people quoted or interviewed). It is an exercise analyzing how they represent religion or a specific religion, how they *think* religion functions, how they implicitly define religion (e.g., what they *assume* religion means), and so on. Successful exercises will draw heavily from the method and theory modules (Modules 2-4) and Chapter 1 in the textbook.

Paper 2: Experiencing Religious Practice Max 300 words; 10%; Due 11pm (EST) June 9

- This is an experiential learning exercise.
- Your options: to live an Orthodox Jewish Sabbath, or to live 24 hours by the Sermon on the Mount, or to do a Ramadan Fast for a day.
- **How to do this assignment:**
 - **1)** This is an experiential learning exercise, and it cannot be done of your own religion. It also cannot be done on the religion of your parents or your majority culture. For instance, Peter Dennison (not an actual person) does not go to church and no one who hears what he believes would ever conclude that he is a Christian. But he had Christian grandparents and was raised and enculturated in a Christian country (Canada). He loves getting Christmas presents. Therefore, if he were a student in this class, he would not be allowed to do the assignment for Christianity, even though he doesn't self-identify as religiously Christian.
 - **This is a non-negotiable requirement:** if you have a name commonly associated with one of the religions being studied here, and you have done the assignment associated with that religion, I will question you about it, and might reject your assignment because of it.
 - Many of us have complicated cultural and familial histories. If you are uncertain where to place yourself, please ask my advice. I love learning your stories.
 - **Please note:** this is not an exercise that involves faith. You are not being asked to change what you believe, merely to live by the rules and religious practices of someone else for a day.
 - **Final note:** you're only doing ONE of these religious practice exercises, not all three.
 - **2)** Twenty-four hours of living by the rules of an Orthodox Sabbath, or by the Sermon on the Mount, or on a Ramadan Fast. You **MUST** tell me in the first sentence of your submission which 24 hours you did your experience. **Note:** Your Sabbath observance does not have to start on a Friday at sundown if that is inconvenient for you, but it should start at sundown on which-ever day you choose. Likewise, the Ramadan fast should start at sundown. Trying to live by the Sermon on the Mount can start any time. All three experiences are to last 24 hours. For further important instructions, see the assignment Brief in Brightspace.
 - **3)** You will not write about your experience. Rather, you will reflect on it by answering both of the following questions:
 - **Question 1:** How did this one-day experience help you understand the religion?
 - **Question 2:** How might your one-day experience have been or felt different were you a member of that religious community (and not under quarantine)?
 - **4)** The rules you will be trying to follow have been posted in Brightspace.

Paper 3: Workplace Experience Reflection (Max 300 words) 10%; Due 11pm (EST) June 16

- This is an experiential learning exercise.
- Explain how something you have learned in this course could potentially assist you in engaging different religious people in the workplace.
- Successful assignments will: 1) avoid the obvious (three of many potential examples include: “I learned that Jews fast on Yom Kippur” or “I learned that Muslims pray five times a day” or “I learned that all people deserve to be treated with dignity”); 2) avoid gushing (“I learned that religion is an important part of life” or “I learned that religious people are amazing”). All of these statements (and similar ones) might well be perfectly true, but they’re not very thoughtful.

Quizzes

There will be four Brightspace quizzes over the course

- Quiz 1
 - Will cover the Method and Theory modules (2-4)
 - 20 multiple choice questions in 30 mins
 - Worth: 10% of course grade
 - Quiz will be available in Brightspace 6am – 11pm May 17
- Quiz 2
 - Will cover the History modules (5-20)
 - 50 multiple choice questions in 60 mins
 - Worth: 15% of course grade
 - Quiz will be available in Brightspace 6am – 11pm May 31
- Quiz 3
 - Will cover the Theology modules (21-32)
 - 50 multiple choice questions in 60 mins
 - Worth: 15% of course grade
 - Quiz will be available in Brightspace 6am – 11pm June 14
- Quiz 4
 - Will cover the Practice modules, the LDS/Baha’i modules, and the concluding module (33-52)
 - 70 multiple choice questions in 90 mins
 - Worth: 20% of course grade
 - Quiz will be available in Brightspace according to the exam schedule released by the university
 - NOTE: though this quiz will happen during the final exam period, and for that reason must be formally scheduled by the university, it is NOT really a final exam. It is merely the fourth of four quizzes. It is worth a little more than the

other quizzes only because it covers a little more material and so needs to have more questions. But don't stress: it's NOT a final exam.