

REL 100 - Introduction to Christianity

California Lutheran University / Fall 2010 / HUM 118 / MWF 11:00am-12:05pm

Dr. Sam Thomas

Office: Hum 236

Email: sthomas@clunet.edu

Phone: x3693

Office Hours: M/W 1:30-2:30pm // T/Th 10:00-11:00am // by appointment

Course Description

This course will explore the scriptural, historical and theological foundations of Christian thought and practice, with special attention to the relationships and differences among Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Our approach to these things will be illuminated also by consideration of various cultural expressions of Christianity (and Judaism and Islam), especially in the forms of literature, art, and architecture. The course will provide students with a basic framework for the academic study of religion, and prepare you for further study in this area.

Course Outcomes

The course will contribute to the following student learning outcomes:

- ◇ Develop a vocabulary for **critical theological reflection** and discussion and become familiar with the **academic study of religion**
- ◇ Use the basic **vocabulary** and **methods** of the academic study of religion
- ◇ Gain an **understanding** of the contents and overall framework of the Bible
- ◇ Articulate clearly and knowledgeably the **nature of biblical texts**, the historical contexts in which they arose, and their scholarly interpretation
- ◇ Articulate clearly and knowledgeably **major theological questions** that have emerged in the history of Judeo-Christian tradition and the variety of answers that have been proffered for them
- ◇ Write respectfully about **different religious traditions**
- ◇ Articulate clearly and knowledgeably the **role of religion** in the manifold dimensions of social existence
- ◇ Attain an understanding of the basic contours of the **history of Christianity**, including its major figures and eras

Course Requirements

***Regular attendance** is crucial to your success in this course - in terms of your grade, and in terms of what you will get out of the course. Class participation forms an important part of your final grade; not being in class will make it difficult, if not downright impossible, for you to participate.

***Active engagement** in classroom discussions and other activities is required, and will be included as part of the final grade. While some people are naturally more talkative than others, even active listening is a form of engagement... You get the point.

*You must **read all assignments** and **submit all written work on time**. Assignments submitted after the due date will be subject to a grade unit decrease per day late. The success of classroom learning depends upon active preparation.

*You will complete **4 short papers** (3-4 pages each) that deal with various aspects of the course material. The papers will be as follows, on specific topics to be determined: ① a critical reading of a religious text; ② a comparative essay involving two different religious traditions; ③ an ethnographic study of a religious service or community; and ④ a historical analysis of a particular topic in the study of Christianity. These papers are intended to help you develop familiarity with different approaches in the study of religion.

*There will be six **quizzes and reading summaries** throughout the semester (the lowest score will be dropped).

*There will be two **Exams** covering all three units of the course.

*** No texting or cell phone use during class. You will be considered absent for the day if you violate this rule.

The final grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

Papers (4)	30% (total)
Quizzes / Reading Summaries (5 out of 6)	10% (total)
Exams (2)	40% (total)
Attendance and participation	20%

Classroom participation will be graded according to the following criteria:

Engages in discussions?

never	infrequently	frequently	consistently
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Asks questions in class?

never	infrequently	frequently	consistently
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Respectful of others? Does NOT dominate discussions?

never	infrequently	frequently	consistently
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Demonstrates serious academic pursuit

never	infrequently	frequently	consistently
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Students with Disabilities

CLU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to **students with various documented disabilities** (physical, learning or psychological). If you are a student requesting accommodations for this course, please contact your Professor at the beginning of the semester and register with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities (Pearson Library, Center for Academic and Accessibility Resources, x3260) for the facilitation and verification of need. Your Professor will work closely together with you and your coordinator to provide necessary accommodations.

Policy of Academic Honesty

All students are expected to know and to conform to the Policy on Academic Honesty and to sign the statement specific to this course if requested. No form of plagiarism will be tolerated, whether intentional or unintentional. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, do not hesitate to raise these with the instructor.

Required Texts

* [CTT] Catherine Cory and David Landry, *The Christian Theological Tradition* (3rd edition; Prentice Hall, 2008)

**Harper Collins Study Bible or The Peoples' Bible*

*Additional readings will be placed under 'Course Materials' on Blackboard

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. Ancient Texts and Contexts

Wed	9/1	Course Introduction: What are "religions"? What is the academic study of religion? What is theology?
Fri	9/3	NO CLASS, but do the following reading and assignment:
	CTT (&BB):	Chapter 1: Introduction, 1-16 (1, 3, 7, 8)
	BB:	Post responses to questions 3, 6, and 8 on p. 16 of CTT
Mon	9/6	NO CLASS: LABOR DAY (but read the following)
	BB:	Kessler, "Thinking about Being a Student of Religion"
Wed	9/8	<u>Modern and Postmodern Contexts for Reading the Bible</u>
	CTT:	Chapter 22, 378-398 (1, 2, 4, 11)

- Fri 9/10 Reading Biblical Texts and Interpretations
 BB: Murphy, "Reading and Experiencing the Bible"
 In class: Proverbs 8 / Genesis 1 / John 1 / Genesis Rabbah / Qur'an
- Mon 9/13 Religion, Text, and Writing
 BB: Schniedewind, "How the Bible Became a Book" and "The Numinous Power of Writing"
Due: Summary of Schniedewind (1/2 page each chapter)
 In class: A short, interactive play on Jeremiah 36
- Wed 9/15 The Old Testament/Hebrew Bible
 CTT: Part 1 / Chapter 2, 19-39 (2, 3, 4, 7)
- Fri 9/17 Enuma Elish, Genesis 1, and the Language of Myth
 BB: Kessler, "Myth as Sacred Story"
 Enuma Elish excerpts
 HCSB: Genesis 1
Reading questions
- Mon 9/20 The Epic of Gilgamesh, the Garden of Eden, and Human Civilization
 BB: Blenkinsopp, "Gilgamesh and Adam"
 BB: Epic of Gilgamesh excerpts
 HCSB: Gen 2-3 / 4-11
Reading questions
- Wed 9/22 Israel, Monotheism, and Covenant
 CTT: Chapter 3, 42-59 (1, 2, 6, 7)
 HCSB: Genesis 15; Exodus 19-24; 2 Samuel 7
- Fri 9/24 Abraham and Isaac
 BB: Jensen, "The Binding or Sacrifice of Isaac"
 HCSB: Genesis 22
Due: Paper #1: What is the meaning of the story in Genesis 22? What problems does the text present to the reader? Pay attention to the details, and allow yourself to "interrogate" the text.
Reading questions
- Mon 9/27 Prophecy, Wisdom, and the Book of Job
 CTT: Chapter 4, 60-73 (1, 2, 5, 7)
 HCSB: Amos // Job 1-7, 38-42

Developments in Early Judaism and Christianity

Wed	9/29 CTT:	<u>Early Judaism I: An Overview</u> Chapter 5, 74-89 (2, 3, 4, 6) Visit Library
Fri	10/1 HCSB: In class:	<u>Early Judaism II: Apocalypticism and Sectarianism</u> Ezra; Daniel Film: <i>From Jesus to Christ</i> , part I
Mon	10/4 CTT:	<u>Jesus</u> Part II, Chapter 6, 91-117 (1, 2, 4, 6) Quiz
Wed	10/6 HCSB:	<u>Jesus, the Gospels, and Christology</u> Mark; Matthew 1-5; John 1
Fri	10/8	NO CLASS: FALL BREAK
Mon	10/11 CTT: HCSB:	<u>First Century "Christian" Identity</u> Chapter 7, 118-134 (1, 4, 5, 6) Acts 15; Galatians 3
Wed	10/13 CTT:	<u>Heresy & Orthodoxy I: Christian Origins</u> Part III, Chapter 8, 135-159 (1, 2, 7, 8) Due: Paper #2: Comparison (see handout for guidelines)
Fri	10/15 BB: BB:	<u>Heresy & Orthodoxy II: Gnostic Christianity</u> Gospel of Thomas Ireneaus, "Against Heresies" excerpt
Mon	10/18	MIDTERM EXAM

Judaism, Christianity, Islam: Past and Present

Wed	10/20 BB: HCSB:	<u>Revelation and Empire</u> Rossing, "For the Healing of the World" Revelation 13, 18, 20-22
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- Fri 10/22 Martyrdom and Empire
 BB: Boyarin, *Dying for God* excerpts
 “Perpetua and Felicitas”
 In class: Film, *From Jesus to Christ*, part IV
- Mon 10/25 Belief, Doctrine, and the “Universal Church”
 CTT: Chapter 9, 161-179 (1, 3, 6)
 BB: “Apostles Creed” & “Nicene Creed”
Quiz
- Wed 10/27 Islam I
 CTT: Chapter 12, 211-233 (1, 5, 7, 8)
 Film: In class, *Muhammad*
- Fri 10/29 Islam II
 BB: Qur’an, “Introduction” and Suras I-2
 Excerpts from the Hadith, Shari’a and Sufi poetry
- Mon 11/1 Islam III: Medieval Spain, the “Ornament of the World”
 BB: Menocal, “Ornament of the World”
 Film: In class, selections from *Islam, Empire of Faith*
Due: Paper #3: Historical analysis
- Wed 11/3 The Renaissance, the Reconquista, and the “New World”
 CTT: Part IV, Chapter 17, 303-315 (2, 3, 8)
 BB: Columbus, “Libro de las Profecías”
 “Edict of Expulsion of the Jews”
- Fri 11/5 Christian Mission & Expansion
 CTT: Chapter 21, 363-76 (2, 4, 6)
 BB: Jewett, “To Convert or Destroy Them”
 Film: In class, selections from *The Mission*
Due: Reading summary of Jewett
- Mon 11/8 Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation
 CTT: Chapter 18, 316-330 (2, 3, 10, 11)
- Wed 11/10 Luther, Paul, and Justification by Grace
 BB: Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian”
 HCSB: Letter to the Romans

- Fri 11/12 Ritual Theory
BB: Kessler, "Ritual as Sacred Action"
- Mon 11/15 Space and Time
BB: Kessler, "Sacred Space and Time"
Due: Summary of Kessler 5/6 (1/2 paragraph each)
- Wed 11/17 Contemporary Situation
CTT: Chapter 25, 441-469 (2, 6, 8)
- Fri 11/19 Christianity in America
CTT: Chapter 23, 399-419 (1, 5, 9, 10)
BB: King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
Quiz

11/22-11/28: THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASS

- Mon 11/29 Liberation Theologies
BB: Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*
Internet: Wikipedia: Liberation Theology
- Wed 12/1 Black Theology, Black Power, and Prosperity
BB: Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*
"Did Christianity Cause the Crash?"
- Fri 12/3 Feminist/Womanist Theology
BB: Ruether, "Sexism and God-Talk"
Due: Paper #4: Ethnographic study
- Mon 12/6 Religious Diversity
BB: Kessler, "Religious Diversity and Truth"
"Interreligious Dialogue and Sacred Hospitality"
- Wed 12/8 Dialogue and Conversation
CTT: Chapter 26, 471-483 (3, 7, 8)
- Fri 12/10 EXAM REVIEW

FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, DEC 13, 10:30AM-12:30PM