

Rel 101 Judaism, Christianity and Islam Fall 2023

Section 1 10:00-10:50 Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays

Section 2 12:00-12:50 Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays

Class meets *in person* in Room 128 CCC. Assignments and drop boxes on Canvas.

Prof. Alice Keefe

Office location: 406 Collins Classroom Center (CCC)

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1-2; Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-3

and by appointment. You can also request to meet with me via zoom.

Contact email: akeefe@uwsp.edu (There is also a messaging system on Canvas, but for best results in contacting me, use the university email system. I check that frequently during weekdays.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course surveys of the world's major monotheistic religions -- Judaism, Christianity and Islam -- and introduces you to the methods and perspectives used in the academic study of religion. Students will learn about the origins and historical development of each tradition, their key sacred stories and rituals, and dynamics of internal conflict and diversity within the modern world. Students will gain a solid foundation from which to think about the similarities and differences between these traditions. As well, students will practice the skill of empathetic engagement with worlds of meaning different from their own.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

Knowledge:

- Be able to identify and explain the basic concepts and vocabulary necessary for an accurate, beginning level understanding of the religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Skills:

- Exercise and improve skills in reading comprehension, written communication, information literacy and critical thinking

Dispositions:

- Explain and employ the three step "rules of engagement" method for studying other peoples' religions: identifying and bracketing one's own worldview and biases, cultivating empathetic understanding of otherness, and responding in a way that builds greater understanding and insight.

BOOKS:

Jeffrey Brodd, et. al, *Invitation to Western Religions* (text rental)

Night, Elie Wiesel (purchase)

Additional readings and videos posted on Canvas

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION:

| | |
|--|-----|
| 3 tests @ 13% each | 39% |
| Final essay @ 13% | 13% |
| Best 10 out of 14 Discussion Forum posts | 10% |
| Best 8 out of 10 Short Essays | 30% |
| Attendance and participation | 8% |

EXPLANATION OF REQUIREMENTS

Three tests (13% each) will test your knowledge of material covered in lectures, readings, and assigned videos. Format for these tests may include T/F, multiple choice and short answer questions.

Late policy: Tests 1 and 2 will remain open for three days after due date. Test #3 will remain open for one day after the due date. Tests taken late will lose 2 points per day late.

The final essay (13%) is due during exam week and submitted on Canvas. You must write a clear, coherent and accurate essay (500 words minimum) on the following question: *Consider the similarities and differences between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Are these religions more similar than different, or more different than similar? Make an argument and support your points using material, information and ideas gained in this course. Conclude with your thoughts on the value of studying religion in comparative perspective.*

Your essay should be:

- A required minimum of 500 words and a recommended maximum of 750 words; (however there is no penalty for exceeding maximum)
- typed and double-spaced, with minimal grammatical errors
- clear and concise, addressing the question in a thoughtful and informed manner
- a comprehensive answer; while you can't possibly write about every meaningful similarity or difference, you should try to *cover a range of important topics* or ideas.
- Well-illustrated with specific points or examples drawn from our studies this semester
- Relies entirely upon material covered in class and assigned materials; (this is to discourage use of A.I. software)
- free of content errors concerning the religions we have studied

Late policy: Essays submitted after the due date will lose one point (out of a possible 20 points) per day after the posted deadline. No essays accepted after the end of the final exam period.

Discussion forum posts (10%) will facilitate the exchange of ideas among students and allow for conversations that go beyond the class session. I will count your **best 10 out of 14** discussion forum posts.

Discussion posts should consist of meaningful and substantive content, *conforming to the following criteria:*

- Posts should be approximately 50 to 100 words in length.
- Posts should reflect accurate knowledge of material under discussion.
- Posts should consist of complete and grammatically accurate sentences.
- Posts that initiate threads should raise an issue or idea to which others can respond.
- Posts that respond to existing threads should reflect thoughtful engagement with other posts on the thread, and should advance the conversation.
- Posts should avoid profanity, rants, personal attacks, or disrespect towards any group or person on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.

The criteria for scoring discussion posts is as follows:

10 pts = Thoughtful and clearly expressed post which reflects accurate knowledge of material under discussion and advances a conversation. Meets all criteria (see above) AND includes at least one additional and substantive response (at least 50 words) to another students' post.

9 pts = Thoughtful and clearly expressed post, or response to another student's post, which reflects accurate knowledge of material under discussion and advances a conversation. Meets all criteria (see bullet points above)

8 pts = Post is lacking in one of the required criteria (see above)

7 pts = Post is lacking in two or more of the required criteria (see above)

6 pts = Post is lacking in three or more of the required criteria (see above)

Late policy: Discussion forms will remain open for three days after the due date; late posts will lose *1/2 point per day late* (including weekends and holidays).

8 short essays (30%) in response to assigned prompts, each 1-2 pp., typed and double spaced. Some of these short essays will be on "religion in the news" and will require database research on topics current in today's world. Other essay prompts will ask you to reflect on an assigned video or reading. I will count your **best 8 out of 10** homework essays.

Short essays are due by 11:59 p.m. on the day indicated on the syllabus (usually Friday night).

Satisfactory homework will

- be approximately 250-500 words in length (at least one typed page)
- respond to the prompt in its entirety
- must be typed and double-spaced
- must be relatively free of grammar and spelling errors.
- include citations where required, and use a standard citation style
- must be your own composition

The criteria for scoring these short essays is as follows:

10 pts = on time and demonstrates reflection and insight on assigned materials that is significantly above average and is well written

9 pts = on time and demonstrates good, solid reflection and insight into assigned materials;

8 pts = on time and demonstrates that you did the reading and thought about the question, but your answer is somewhat confused, off-target or too brief; for “Religion in the News” essays, fails to provide three citations in correct format

5-7 pts = on time but does not address prompt fully, or is too brief

1 point off for every three grammar errors noted

Late policy: Late submissions will lose ½ point per day late (including weekends). Drop box closes one week after due date.

Citation format

All citations on short essays must follow a standard citation format (e.g., Chicago, MLA, APA).

Whatever citation format style you follow, the key information that must be included is:

- Author’s name
- “Title” of the article, in quotes
- Date of publication
- Name of the newspaper, magazine or news outlet
- Where you located the article (e.g., URL address of publisher’s website, or URL address of database service used) – full URL address is not required and usually not desired.

Example 1 (Chicago style) Newspaper article accessed online from publisher website--

David Halbfinger, “Jerusalem: It’s Tense, Crowded and Can feel like a Jail,” *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com>

Example 2 (Chicago style) Newspaper article accessed online from a database service (Nexi Uni)

David Halbfinger, “Jerusalem: It’s Tense, Crowded and Can feel like a Jail,” *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 2017. <https://advance.lexis.com>.

The URL for the source is not a citation, although it can be included if desired.

Attendance and Participation (8%)

Class attendance is required. I will take attendance in each class period, and expect you to be present unless you have contacted me about an excused absence. Your attendance grade will be based on the percentage of classes attended (or for which there is an excused absence) out of the total class periods we met.

Excused absence: An absence may be excused for reasons of illness, Covid quarantine, family emergency, military service obligations, a school or team related event, or important religious observance. (This rule follows official university policy.) **If you wish for an absence to be excused, you must send an email to Prof. Keefe stating the reason for your absence in advance of the absence.**

Whether the absence is excused or unexcused, if you miss class, take these steps:

Step 1: Complete all assigned readings or videos for the class you missed

Step 2: Carefully study the posted power point notes for the class you missed

If you still have questions, visit with Prof. Keefe to ask. *It is not the professor's responsibility to fill you in on what you missed if you were absent, but I am happy to answer questions if you have completed steps 1 and 2.*

Participation: Deep learning depends upon active participation in the learning process. Please come to class prepared (having completed the assignments for the day) and ready to ask questions or offer comments. Good participation can raise your grade in the attendance and participation category.

Classroom Etiquette:

- Cell phones must be muted and put away unless you are quickly researching a point of fact pertinent to the class discussion. Please ask for special permission to have your phone on your desk in cases where it is urgent that you be available for a call. It is however OK to pull your phone out briefly to research a point of information relevant to the conversation in class.
- Laptop use in class is acceptable, though not recommended. (Studies show most students learn more effectively by taking handwritten notes.) If you are using a laptop for taking notes, you must close all social media sites and other sources of distraction.
- Do your best to get to class on time. However, sometimes circumstances intervene, and it is OK to enter the classroom late. Please come up after class to get credit for attendance.
- When speaking in class about matters involving religion, be aware of the religious diversity within the class, and strive to ensure that your comments are respectful of difference and contribute to an atmosphere of civil discourse. Be careful to avoid generalizations about entire groups of people.

Grading Criteria

| | | | |
|-----------|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| A | 94-100% | C+ | 77-79% |
| A- | 90-93% | C | 74-76% |
| B+ | 87-89% | C- | 70-73% |
| B | 83-86% | D+ | 67-69% |
| B- | 80-82% | D | 60-66% |
| | | F | 0-59% |

Plagiarism and cheating policy:

Plagiarism and cheating are violations of the codes of honesty and mutual respect that binds us together as a community. The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. In addition, all infractions will be reported to the university.

Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments must be prepared by the student.

For more information regarding the university policy on academic misconduct (plagiarism) and disciplinary procedures, please see chapter 14 of the University Handbook, located at this web page link: <http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs/rights/rightsChap14.pdf>.

Intellectual property rights: Lecture materials and any recordings for Rel 101-01 are protected intellectual property at UW-Stevens Point. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. You are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or share lecture materials and recordings outside this class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyinfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability Services Office and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way I can. For more information, please visit the Disability Services Office, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>.