

SYLLABUS--REL 1035 NEAR EASTERN RELIGIONS
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Fall 2013
Dr. Barry R. Sang

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Course Summary, Goals, and Means of Assessment

There is no longer justification for ignorance of the world's major religious traditions. World-wide physical and electronic mobility have made next-door neighbors of Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Daoists, and the like. The West has conducted business for centuries with non-Judeo-Christian traditions, and the fact of religious pluralism in America is now almost a commonplace. Therefore, a better understanding of these major religious traditions is necessary if only to help us better understand the people around us. However, there might be even more compelling reasons for understanding these traditions. Religion, as the search for and response to that which is experienced as Sacred, is a search for ultimate meaning; it is about what is fundamentally important to humans. The major religious traditions represent the most influential patterns in humanity's quest for meaning. To ignore these versions of the quest would be to ignore much of what humanity, in its brief presence on this planet, has valued above all things; it would miss some of the most profound searching and influential ideas of human history. Thus, in better understanding these traditions we come to understand better what humanity is, and, therefore, who we might be.

There are several ways to approach the study of major religious traditions. We have chosen to group them geographically, recognizing that such a division is somewhat arbitrary and may lead to some misguided assertions about similarities unless we are careful. However, the fact of the matter is that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in addition to sharing origins in the Near East, all share a common progenitor, Abraham. Thus we choose in this semester to focus on the major Abrahamic religious traditions. The sequel to this course, REL 1036, will concentrate on those traditions which evolved in the Far East.

Departmental Learning Outcomes

Expected Learning Outcomes <i>Each Student Should Be Able to:</i>	Means of Assessing Those Outcomes
Know and describe in writing the salient history, theology, rituals, and moral structures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two, in-class examinations ("objective" and essay questions) • Pop and announced quizzes (primarily "objective" questions on basic definitions, persons, and events) • Final Examination (cumulative)
Know and describe in writing the basic nature of sacred texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two, in-class examinations ("objective" and essay questions) • Pop and announced quizzes (primarily "objective" questions on basic definitions, persons, and events) • Final Examination (cumulative)
Demonstrate analytical reasoning in interpreting sacred texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in Class Discussion • Two, in-class examinations ("objective" and

	essay questions)
Distinguish the meaning and significance of the alternative world views represented in the religious traditions studied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Reaction Papers (see end of Syllabus) • Final Examination (cumulative)
Personally evaluate the theologies, rituals, and moral structures of two of the three religions studied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Reaction Papers (see end of Syllabus)

General Education Learning Outcomes: Non-Western Perspective

Learning Outcomes	Briefly describe how outcome is addressed by an assignment or specific exam questions
Students will describe at least one topic beyond Western society.	Essay exams and a final exam require students to analyze the salient beliefs, rituals, and history of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The latter two religions are non-Western.
Students will interpret at least one text or artifact from beyond Western society.	Through the essay exams and a final exam, students are required to understand and analyze passages from the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), the Talmud, the Qur'an, and the Sunni Hadith.

TEXT: *Required for this course:*

- **DVD-ROM:** *Revealing Western Religions*, Cynthia Eller, Version 4.3. Thinking Strings, 2013. The approximate cost of the DVD-ROM for *Revealing Western Religions* is \$60.00.
- **Very Important:** You must purchase a USB flash/jump/thumb drive to work in conjunction with your text. I'll explain why in class.
- **Pass key:** In order to activate your DVD-ROM and connect it with this course, you must use the following pass key: **Isaac** This is case-sensitive.

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be checked promptly each day at the beginning of class. If you are late you must speak with me at the end of class or you will be counted absent. **Four absences are allowed during the semester. Each absence beyond the four permitted will result in a two-point reduction in the final grade for the course.** Any student missing more than one quarter of the sessions during the semester will automatically be given an F or an I for the course, depending on the circumstances. Tardiness should be a rare exception. Should late arrivals persist, they will be counted as absences.

Except for sanctioned college activities, and other circumstances over which you have absolutely no control (e.g., court dates, your hospitalization, etc.), if you are not in class, you will be counted as absent. If you miss class for sickness or for a sanctioned college activity, you are still responsible for the information covered in that class so you will be prepared for the next class.

Missed Tests can be made up **ONLY** if you present to me on the day of your return to class a justifiable and verifiable excuse. Missed quizzes cannot be made up, although the lowest quiz score will be dropped from your final quiz tally. Papers turned in late without a justifiable

and verifiable excuse will be penalized 10 points for each weekday they are late.

Cell Phones: As a courtesy to all, please turn your cell phone notification system off when you enter the classroom. You are not permitted to send or receive messages of any kind (including texting) during class time. If you use your phone in class, I will count you absent for the day.

Laptop Computers or tablets may be used in class. In fact, they are often the most useful way to take notes. However, while in class **you may use your computer for course-related purposes only. If this becomes a problem, you will not be allowed to use your computer in class.**

Summary of Grade Distribution

Quizzes:	20%
(2) Tests:	35%
(2) Reaction Papers:	20%
Class Preparation*	5%
Class Participation	5%
Final Exam:	15%

*“Class Preparation” refers to your having completed the “Try It!” sections for the relevant reading assignments in *Revealing World Religions*. Your grade for this element will be based on the percentage of “Try It!” sections you have completed.

Grading Scale:

100-92:	A	Clearly superior college-level performance
91-90:	A-	
89-87:	B+	
86-83:	B	Good college-level performance
82-80:	B-	
79-77:	C+	
76-73:	C	Acceptable college-level performance
72-70:	C-	
69-67:	D+	
66-63:	D	Minimally-acceptable college-level performance
62-60:	D-	
≤ 59:	F	Failure to achieve minimum competency

TOPICS AND PREPARATIONS

Note: Because I encourage class discussion, the schedule given below is approximate. It is therefore the responsibility of each student to keep up with the class’ progress. Your absence from class does not excuse you from this responsibility.

SPECIAL NOTE: Unless otherwise noted, your preparations/assignments for each class are the parts of Eller’s text with the same titles as the class subject; for example, for Aug. 26-28 you must read the sections entitled “What is Religion? Types of Religion; Studying Religion,” all of which are found under the section entitled “Exploring Religion.” Then, you are to read “Religious Pluralism” found at the very end of the list of modules. I expect that you will read

and look at and listen to everything on each page in the Eller assignments; that you will complete the “Try It” sections, and that you will use the “Review” questions for every unit. I STRONGLY encourage you to take notes on your reading so you may retain the information contained therein.

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND BEGINNINGS

- 8/21 A. Introduction to Course and Syllabus
 8/23 B. Using *Thinking Strings*
 8/26,28 C. Exploring Religion: What is Religion? Types of Religion; Studying Religion.
 Religious Pluralism

PART II: JUDAISM

- 8/30;9/4 A. Basic Principles of Judaism
Note: Remember, there is no class on Monday, Sept. 2—Labor Day
 9/6,9 B. Hebrew Scriptures
 9/11 C. Ancient History
 9/13,16 D. Jewish Diaspora
 9/18 E. The Cultural Context; The State of Israel
 9/23 F. Judaism in America
 9/25 G. Jewish Practice; Jewish Holidays
 9/27,30 H. Jewish Rites of Passage; Women in Judaism

10/2 EXAM #1

PART III: CHRISTIANITY

- 10/4,7 A. Jesus; Early Christianity
 10/9 B. Christian Scriptures
 10/11,16 C. After the Fall of Rome
Note: Remember, there is no class on Monday, Oct. 14-- Fall Break
 10/18 D. Medieval Christianity
 10/21 E. The Protestant Reformation
 10/23,25 F. Christian Practices; Christian Holidays
 10/28 G. Christianity in the 21st Century

10/30 EXAM #2

PART IV: ISLAM

- 11/1 A. The Life of Muhammad
 11/4 B. Film
 11/6,8 C. Islamic Texts
 11/11,13 D. Major Tenets of Islam
 11/15,18 E. The History of Islam
 11/20 F. Islamic Religious Practices

11/22 G. Islam Around the World
11/19 H. Sufism
11/25 I. Women in Islam
Note: *No class on Nov. 27,29—Thanksgiving Break*
12/2,4 J. Growing Up Muslim; Becoming Muslim
12/6 Conclusions and Evaluation

FINAL EXAMINATION: Thursday, December 12, 2013: 8:00 – 11:00 a.m.

REACTION PAPERS

You are to write a reaction paper to **TWO** of the three Abrahamic religions discussed in this course. The purpose of these papers is to encourage you to reflect in an organized fashion on your encounter with the chosen religious traditions. The two basic questions which must be addressed in this paper are as follows:

- What did I find meaningful in this religion's theology, ritual, or morality? Of course, explain why.
- With what did I disagree most in this religion's theology, ritual, or morality? Of course, explain why.

In short, carefully explain what you liked and why, and what you didn't like and why. And, when you react to a particular ritual or practice, don't react only to the particular actions, but react to the meanings behind those actions as well. It is possible that you may agree with the principle behind something, but not with the practice of it (or, vice versa!). I do not expect your responses to these questions to be balanced, i.e., that your positive reactions will equal your negative reactions. However, both topics must be broached seriously. This is not to be a description of the new things you learned about the religion. It should be your reactions to those things. As resources you should use: 1) Personal experience; 2) Class notes; 3) Notes from Eller's "book." I want **your** words and **your** reactions. Do not paraphrase or quote Eller, although you may surely refer to some of the religions' sacred texts. **Do NOT simply compare and contrast your own religion with the religion you are reacting to. I need more reasons for your reactions than merely that the religion in question is similar to or different from the religion you currently profess. Also, do NOT react to the religion's history.** *Please speak with me if you have any questions about my expectations here. The burden of understanding is on your shoulders.* Your papers must be type-written, double-spaced, and should be 3-4 pages long. They will be **due precisely ONE WEEK after that unit has been completed. The only exception to this is Islam, in which case your paper will be due no later than 4:00 p.m. on the last day of regular class sessions.** Please use standard fonts. Your paper must also conform to the following Paper Policy:

Paper Policy

The papers submitted in this course are expected to reflect those qualities epitomized by a liberal arts education. *Your grade will be directly affected by grammar, syntax and spelling. After determining your paper's grade, I will deduct 2 points for each grammatical error, and 1 point for each spelling and punctuation error. The greatest total penalty, however, will only be 10 points (i.e., one letter grade).* The simplest way to avoid such penalties is to have a reliable friend proofread your paper before submitting it for a grade. For further information on plagiarism and the Honor Code consult the appropriate pages in the *Catawba College Catalog*.

Special Instructions for Submitting Papers

It is a requirement of this course that you submit your papers to me via *Blackboard*. You must follow the following instructions carefully:

1. Compose your paper in a recent edition of **WORD (not in WORKS)**. If you do not compose your paper in WORD, then you must convert it to WORD format before sending it to me. **This is a must.**

2. The paper must be titled and must conform to all of the paper requirements stated above.
3. **Your name must appear at the top of the first page. If it is not there, I will deduct five points from your paper's grade.**
4. Save the paper in WORD, noting where you saved it. (Of course, always back up your paper to a thumb drive or some similar, secure storage device.)
5. Log in to Blackboard.
6. Go to this course and click on the **Assignments** link.
7. Find the assignment for which your paper has been written, and click on the hyper-link for that assignment.
8. To attach your file, use this sequence of commands:
Browse; Choose File, Open, Submit (don't forget this one): **CLICK SUBMIT ONLY ONCE.**
Blackboard will tell you whether the submission was successful.

The Writing Center

The Catawba College Writing Center provides free, one-on-one consultations to *all* Catawba students. Writing Center tutors have been intensely trained, and while they won't rewrite students' papers for them, they will give students feedback and encouragement at all stages of the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, polishing). Students who use the Writing Center should be prepared to discuss the assignment they are working on and to begin making revisions, with the tutor's guidance, during the session.

All appointments take place face-to-face. The Writing Center is open afternoons (in ADMN 211) and evenings (in the Library, Study Room #5). Walk-ins are welcome, but the Writing Center honors appointments first. Appointments can be scheduled online at www.catawba.edu/writingcenter. We also encourage students to "Like" our Facebook page at facebook.com/catawbawriting

Internet Resources on World Religions:

- Islam: <http://www.al-islam.org/index/main3.htm#women>. This site is just loaded with information.
- Interesting chart comparing Judaism, Islam, and Christianity:
http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/comparison_charts/islam_judaism_christianity.htm
- Questia.com has some great materials on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam:
<http://www.questia.com/searchglobal?q=keyword!Judaism!allwords#00000Book>
- Succinct coverage of many facts about Judaism: <http://www.jewfaq.org/>
- There are over 92 million web sites on Christianity. One of the more helpful and basic sites is: <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/index.htm>
- The absolute best source on religions in America today is <http://www.pewforum.org/>

Revealing® Western Religions (version 4.3)
Notes to Students

1. **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQs) concerning use of *Revealing World Religions* are answered on the Thinking Strings web site. Go to www.thinkingstrings.com and click "Support." For additional technical assistance, click "Contact **Thinking Strings Support**" and complete the request form (<http://www.thinkingstrings.com/contact.php>), or email support@thinkingstrings.com. Include your name, academic institution, the title of your courseware, and your *Revealing World Religions* serial number in all correspondence.
2. If you have any question concerning **installation and registration** of your courseware, contact Thinking Strings immediately by email at support@thinkingstrings.com. Don't wait until the day before an assignment is due!
3. When you register your *Revealing World Religions* courseware using your Pass Key (provided by your instructor), your **registration information** will be sent to your instructor's Interactive Grade Book® so be sure the information you enter is accurate. Our Pass Key is **Isaac**.
4. **IMPORTANT:** If you are using *Revealing World Religions* in a computer lab, you **MUST** store your data on a USB jump/flash drive. You *cannot* store your data on the college server (the college will delete it).
5. Be sure to **read the instructions** on the package insert. Additionally, a more comprehensive **user guide** (WR User Guide.pdf) is available for download from the Support web page <http://www.thinkingstrings.com/support.php>
6. **Audio** enhances your experience with *Revealing World Religions*. If you are working in a computer lab, bring a pair of headphones.
7. Be sure to **read the instructions** on the package insert for installation and registration. Additionally, a more comprehensive **user guide** (WR User Guide.pdf) is available for download from the Support web page <http://www.thinkingstrings.com/support.php>
8. "**How to**" **videos** introducing the features of *Revealing World Religions* are available on this web page: <http://www.thinkingstrings.com/revealing-world-religions.php>
9. Podcasts of the narrated content of *Revealing World Religions* are available for download to your iPod or other mp3 player: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/revealing-world-religions/id117762189>
10. **Audio** enhances your experience with *Revealing World Religions*. If you are working in a computer lab, bring headphones.
11. To **Send Progress Report to Interactive Grade Book**, click the envelope button at the lower right of your Achievement Profile™.
12. **Printing Essays:** To print any of your written Essays for safekeeping, just click the "Print" button on the screen on which you have entered your response.
13. **Print your progress report:** To print your current Progress Report, which is essentially your Achievement Profile™, click the Print Progress Report button on the Achievement Profile™ screen.
14. On the **Assistance Palette** (which you open by clicking the Question Mark button in the lower right of every screen), you can copy from the Bibliography and the Glossary by selecting the text and typing Ctrl-C (command-C on the Macintosh). Paste the text into a word processor document by typing Ctrl-V (command-V on the Macintosh).

15. **Print or Copy Text:** Print the text of any screen by clicking the Print Page button at the lower right of the screen. Many students find it useful to print the “Summary” page of each section to use as a study guide. Copy the text of any screen to paste it into another application by shift-clicking the Print Page.
16. **Glossary:** Display a term’s definition by clicking on the term. You can display additional definitions by clicking on terms within the definition.
17. To **place your order** for *Revealing World Religions*, go to the Thinking Strings web site: www.thinkingstrings.com. Click on “Place Your Order” in the Quick Links at the right of the page. Thinking Strings accepts Visa or Mastercard. You can also pay by check (the courseware will be shipped after the check clears) or money order. Shipping is by USPS Priority Mail from Massachusetts. **NOTE: If your instructor already gave you your Revealing World Religions DVD-ROM, order “Serial Number Only.”**

Using the Thinking Strings Interactive Grade Book (Students)

1. Launch your web browser (for example, Safari, Internet Explorer, or Firefox).
2. Navigate to <http://interactivegradebook.com/> (NOTE: If you are using Internet Explorer, you will need to navigate to <https://interactivegradebook.com/session/new>.)
3. You will see the Interactive Grade Book log in screen. In the Student Log In fields enter your courseware serial number (case-sensitive) and your class Pass Key.
4. Once logged in successfully, you will see your name, contact information, your password and password reminder for your courseware, your course information and your Interactive Grade Book data.
5. Looking at your Interactive Grade Book data, you will see the titles of the modules of your courseware horizontally across the screen. A "+" indicates that you have done some of the work for this module, but it is incomplete. A "date" indicates the date on which a module was completed. If you click a module title, it will expand and you can view your data for the sections of that module. Click a section title and it expands to show you the Concepts. Continue expanding until you can see how many times you viewed a page and for how long. Click the Display Essays button to see your Essay submissions.