

## History/Religious Studies 208

### WESTERN INTELLECTUAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY TO 1500

Spring 2016

TTh, 1:00-2:15 p.m., 120 Ingraham Hall

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 11-12; Thursdays, 9-10; and by appointment

#### Course Description

This course explores how a variety of thinkers from classical antiquity to Renaissance Europe grappled with some of the central questions of human existence: Who are we? Does human life have purpose and meaning? What is wrong with the world and can evil be overcome? Does the divine exist and, if so, what is its nature and what are the implications for humans? Is it even possible to find answers to such questions? Together we will consider a range of thinkers, texts, and movements in thought and religion that have profoundly shaped how people in the West have approached some of life's most pressing questions. We will start with a selection of philosophical writings from the Greco-Roman world. We then turn to ancient Judaism and early Christianity and probe some key themes in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. In the final section of the course we will analyze how ancient and medieval thinkers drew on biblical and classical sources to engage life's big questions as these confronted them in their diverse historical settings—and how in the process they forged a distinct intellectual tradition.

#### Course Objectives

The course is designed to accomplish three main pedagogical goals. If you invest time, thought, and hard work in the course, you can expect to:

- get to know some of the main ways in which people in the pre-modern West approached the perennial questions of meaning and human existence, and how the Western intellectual tradition emerged
- become a more insightful and critical reader of rich, complex writings from the past in light of their historical contexts
- become a more skillful writer of analytical, argumentative prose based on textual evidence

#### Course Requirements

1. Attend and be prepared to participate in all class meetings. In opting to take this course, you are committing yourself to attend class regularly. I will take attendance throughout the semester. If an illness or emergency forces you to miss a class, please email me in advance. More than two unexcused absences will lower your final grade in the course. Most meetings will include some writing exercise, class activity, and/or discussion of assigned readings. You are expected to have read all texts closely in advance and to participate actively in our discussions and class exercises. You must bring a copy of relevant texts, including those posted on Learn@UW, to each meeting. (You may bring electronic versions of texts on a laptop or tablet.) Attendance and class participation, including in-class writing exercises, count for 10% of your final grade.

2. Write four response papers of 250-300 words each, answering a specific question about assigned readings. Questions will be posted on Learn@UW at least two days before the due date, often earlier. You will have the option of writing on most assigned texts and may choose which readings you respond to. The first paper must be turned in by February 2, the second by March 3, the third by March 31, and the fourth by May 3. Response papers will be graded based on the following criteria: (1) Did you answer the question clearly and directly? (2) Does your response reflect a close, careful reading of the relevant text(s)? (3) Is your response based on the text itself rather than generalizations or things you may have read about the text elsewhere (including the Internet)? (4) Is it written in clear prose, free of errors? To get credit for a response paper, you must leave an electronic copy in the Dropbox on Learn@UW before the start of the class period when the reading is due; the Dropbox closes at 1:00 p.m. sharp. No late papers accepted. Together, the four responses make up 10% of your final grade.

3. Write two analytical papers of 1600-1800 words (5-6 pages) each. You will submit two versions of each essay. On February 9 you will turn in a complete, polished draft of your first paper (hard copy in class and e-copy on Learn@UW). The following week you will meet individually with a Writing Fellow for comments and feedback on your draft (see below for more on Writing Fellows). On February 23 you will submit a revised version of your essay that takes your Writing Fellow's feedback into account. The schedule for the second paper will be similar: first draft due on April 5, meeting with your Writing Fellow the following week, revised version due on April 19. Each part of the process (draft, meeting, revision) will form part of your final grade on each paper. Details about the process and criteria for evaluation will be given with the first essay assignment. Each paper counts for 20% of your course grade.

4. Write an in-class midterm exam on March 15 and a final exam on May 12. The midterm will include several short (one-paragraph) identifications and a longer essay. The final will take a similar format but will include an additional essay or text analysis section. A study guide with potential identifications and essay questions will be distributed in advance. The midterm counts for 15% and the final for 25% of your final grade.

### **Policy on Late Papers**

Because the Writing Fellows will be reading your papers on a tight schedule, it is imperative that you submit them on time. If you face an emergency that makes it impossible for you to complete your paper on schedule, please contact me immediately. Late papers will be deducted one half grade for each day they are late (e.g., a B becomes a BC).

### **Grading Scale**

All assignments and your final course grade will be calculated using the following scale:

92-100%=A	82-86.9%=B	72-76.9%=C	0-66.9%=F
87-91.9%=AB	77-81.9%=BC	67-71.9%=D	

### **Disabilities and McBurney Students**

If you are a McBurney student or have a disability that requires special accommodations, please let me know at the beginning of the semester and I will be happy to make arrangements.

### **Communication and Office Hours**

I welcome meeting with students outside of class time. You are strongly encouraged to come to office hours at any time during the semester, whether to discuss a question or problem you've encountered in the course, to get help on a paper, to explore an idea, or simply to chat. I hold regular office hours on Tuesdays, 11-12 and Thursdays, 9-10, but if you have a schedule conflict during those times, let me

know and we can arrange another time to meet. Generally, the best way to reach me is via email ([eric.carlsson@wisc.edu](mailto:eric.carlsson@wisc.edu)). I check email regularly and will try to respond within 24 hours. Often I can reply sooner than that, but on weekends response time may be up to 48 hours.

### **Writing Fellows**

We are very fortunate to have four Writing Fellows working with us this semester: Zach Clark ([zclark@wisc.edu](mailto:zclark@wisc.edu)), Shireen Mathews ([mathews3@wisc.edu](mailto:mathews3@wisc.edu)), Andrew Newman ([ahnewman@wisc.edu](mailto:ahnewman@wisc.edu)), and Emma Sayner ([esayner@wisc.edu](mailto:esayner@wisc.edu)). These undergraduate students are skilled writers who have been chosen through a campus-wide selection process and given intensive training on how to offer constructive criticism during the writing process. Each of you will work with one of the Writing Fellows individually on your two papers. Your Fellow will read your polished drafts closely, offer detailed comments, and meet with you individually to make suggestions for how your drafts can be improved. When you submit your revised paper, you will also turn in your first version and a cover sheet indicating how you have responded to your Fellow's feedback.

Experienced writers know that all good writing involves extensive revising. The most effective way of re-seeing one's work is by getting thoughtful feedback from an intelligent reader. That is what the Writing Fellows provide. They are not experts in the subject matter of the course and will generally not offer substantive critiques of your paper. Nor will they grade your papers. Instead, they will help you see where your argument and presentation could be clearer and more effective and they will flag logical and conceptual problems in your prose. All of us, no matter how much experience we have as writers, can benefit immensely from the kind of thoughtful engagement with our work that the Writing Fellows will offer you. I urge you to make the most of this opportunity.

### **Classroom Conduct**

Please arrive to class meetings on time and silence any cell phones and electronic devices before the session begins. Be sure to bring a copy of the relevant texts, including those from the course reader and Learn@UW, to each meeting. If you wish, you may access electronic versions of readings on a laptop or tablet. Computers are also allowed for note-taking, but not for web surfing, social media, games, or other purposes unrelated to class.

### **Academic Integrity**

Cheating and plagiarism—representing somebody else's work as your own—violate ethical and academic standards and will not be tolerated in this course. All work you turn in must be your own. In your papers you must cite sources carefully, whether you repeat someone else's exact words or paraphrase or draw on her or his ideas. All papers will be checked electronically for plagiarism. If you have questions about plagiarism and how to avoid it, please speak with me or consult [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA\\_plagiarism.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html). Penalties for plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and other forms of cheating range from failing an assignment or a course to being expelled from the university. For university policies on academic misconduct, see <http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html>.

### **Course Texts**

The following books are available for purchase at local and online bookstores. The primary sources come in multiple English translations and editions; please use and cite these particular versions:

Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates*, trans. and ed. Hugh Tredennick and Harold Tarrant (Penguin, 2003)

Epictetus, *Discourses and Selected Writings*, trans. and ed. Robert Dobbin (Penguin, 2008)  
 Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford University Press, 1992)  
*The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. and ed. Betty Radice, rev. by M. T. Clanchy (Penguin, 2003)  
 Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, trans. Betty Radice and ed. A. H. T. Levi (Penguin, 1993)

You will also need an English translation of the Bible. Any modern scholarly version will do for our purposes, but the following edition is recommended: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, College Edition, 4th Edition (Oxford University Press, 2010).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: Reading assignments marked with an asterisk (\*) are posted as links or documents on our Learn@UW course website.

Jan 19            Course Introduction

### I. The Greeks, the Gods, and the Good Life

Jan 21            The Break with Myth  
 \*Homer, *The Iliad*, Book I  
 \*Xenophanes, fragments

Jan 26            Socrates and the Sophists  
 Plato, *Apology* (entire)

Jan 28            Plato: Knowledge and the World of Ideas  
 \*Plato, "Parable of the Cave," from *The Republic*  
 Plato, *Phaedo*, 116-45 (57a-78b)

Feb 2            Plato: The Soul and the Afterlife RESPONSE #1 DUE  
 Plato, *Phaedo*, 145-99 (78b-118a)  
 \*Plato, "The Myth of Er," from *The Republic*

Feb 4            Aristotle's World  
 \*Aristotle, selection from *Metaphysics*

Feb 9            Skepticism and Materialism PAPER #1 POLISHED DRAFT DUE  
 \*Lucretius, selections from *On the Nature of Things*

Feb 11            Stoicism: Philosophy and the Good Life (I)  
 Epictetus, *Discourses*, Book I, 1-3, 6, 9, 12-21, 24

Feb 15            Screening of *Gladiator* (dir. Ridley Scott), 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Feb 16            Stoicism: Philosophy and the Good Life (II) MEET WITH WRITING  
FELLOW THIS WEEK  
 Epictetus, *Discourses*, Book II, 2, 5, 8, 10, 14, 18, 22

## II. The People of God and the Goal of History

- Feb 18 Monotheism and Election  
Genesis 1-4; 6-9; 11-12; 15:1-18:15; 21-22; 25:19-34; 27:1-28:4; 37; (39:1-50:14 recommended); 50:15-26
- Feb 23 Israel and the Covenant **PAPER #1 REVISED VERSION DUE**  
Exodus 1-7, 11-16, 19-20, 32; Leviticus 16; Deuteronomy 1-6, 27-30, 34
- Feb 25 God's Kingdom?  
Joshua 1, 23-24; 1 Samuel 8, 12; 2 Samuel 5-7, 11-12; 1 Kings 1-3, 8, 11-12; 2 Kings 21-25
- Mar 1 Exile and Return  
Hosea 1-3; Isaiah 1:1-2:4; 9:1-7; 11; 40; 52-53; Jeremiah 30-33; Ezekiel 37
- Mar 3 Jesus and the Kingdom of God **RESPONSE #2 DUE**  
The Gospel According to Matthew 1-10, 13, 16-17, 20-28; The Gospel According to John 1-3
- Mar 8 Paul, the Gentiles, and Christian Eschatology  
Acts of the Apostles 1-2, 8-10, 15, 17; Paul's Letter to the Galatians (entire); Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 15
- Mar 10 Parting of the Ways  
\*Selections from the Talmud
- Mar 15 MIDTERM EXAM

## III. Athens, Jerusalem, and the Making of an Intellectual Tradition

- Mar 17 What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?  
St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Books I & II
- SPRING BREAK--
- Mar 29 Saint Augustine (I)  
St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Books III-VII
- Mar 31 Saint Augustine (II) **RESPONSE #3 DUE**  
St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Books VIII & IX
- Apr 5 Monasticism and Mysticism (I) **PAPER #2 POLISHED DRAFT DUE**  
\*St. Benedict, selections from *Rule for Monasteries*
- Apr 7 Monasticism and Mysticism (II)  
\*Hildegard of Bingen, selections from *Vita and Scivias*  
\*Julian of Norwich, selections from *Revelations of Divine Love*

- Apr 12      Screening of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (dir. Carl Theodor Dreyer)      MEET WITH WRITING  
FELLOW THIS WEEK
- Apr 14      The Recovery of Aristotle  
\*Moses Maimonides, selections from *Guide for the Perplexed*  
\*St. Thomas Aquinas, selections from *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae*
- Apr 19      Scholastic Culture      **PAPER #2 REVISED VERSION DUE**  
Peter Abelard, *The Story of His Misfortunes*, 3-43  
Heloise, Letter to Abelard, 47-55
- Apr 21      Renaissance Humanism: The Individual and Human Nature  
\*Petrarch, *The Ascent of Mount Ventoux*  
\*Pico della Mirandola, selections from *Oration on the Dignity of Man*
- Apr 26      Artistic Expressions  
\*Giorgio Vasari, selections from *The Lives of the Artists*
- Apr 28      Humanism and Religious Reform (I)  
Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, 3-49
- May 3      Humanism and Religious Reform (II)      RESPONSE #4 DUE  
Desiderius Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, 50-134
- May 5      Retrospect and Prospect

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2:45-4:45 P.M.