

## History/Religious Studies 209

### WESTERN INTELLECTUAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORY SINCE 1500

Fall 2016

MWF, 9:55-10:45, 6104 Sewell Social Sciences

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Office hours: Mondays, 11:00-12:00; Wednesdays, 12:00-1:00; and by appointment

#### Course Description

As philosopher Charles Taylor has noted, in Europe in the year 1500 it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, while in today's Western society many of us find this easy, even inescapable. How did this change occur? How did a widely shared religious world view of late medieval Europe give way to the diversity of beliefs and ethical norms that mark the West today? And what effects did the revolutionary societal and intellectual changes of the modern era have on the nature and expression of religious commitments? Those are the central questions we will engage in this course. We will consider shifts within Christianity and, to some extent, Judaism, as well as the rise of alternatives to religious outlooks, including atheism and agnosticism. We will ask how, in the absence of shared systems of meaning, people in the West have made sense of the world and their place in it, how they have struggled with the problem of evil, and how they have linked their ultimate commitments to the cause of social justice.

This is a course in intellectual history. We will focus much of our time on pathbreaking thinkers who have had an outsize impact on modern thought and belief and writers who have expressed more widely held perspectives with special eloquence. The course is based on the premise that ideas deeply shape actual conditions in the world—war, politics, social relations, culture, and the lives of communities and individuals. We won't assume, however, that there is a clear or simple relationship between ideas and these other aspects of human life. Ways of thinking often reflect the experience of societies and individuals as much as they form them. So we will pay attention not just to the cutting-edge work of intellectuals, but also to the broader social and political conditions in which they acted and their ideas were received, rejected, or transformed.

#### Course Objectives

The course is designed to achieve several educational goals. If you invest time, thought, and hard work, you can expect to:

- get to know key thinkers, texts, and trends that have shaped modern intellectual history and religious thinking in the West
- understand and be equipped to evaluate some of the scholarly debates surrounding these movements and the historical questions they raise

- become a sharper, more perceptive reader of rich, complex writings from the past in light of their historical contexts
- become a stronger writer of analytical and 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 come to class regularly. I will take attendance throughout the semester. If an illness or emergency forces you to miss a class session, please email me in advance. More than three unexcused absences will lower your final course grade.

Most meetings will include some writing exercise, activity, and/or discussion. You are expected to have read all assigned texts closely in advance and to participate actively in our discussions and class exercises. You must bring your own annotated copy of relevant texts to each meeting. Attendance and class participation count for 15% of your final grade.

2. Write four short response papers of 250-300 words each, answering a specific question about the day's assigned readings. Questions will be posted on Learn@UW. You will have the option of writing on most texts and may choose which readings you respond to. The first paper must be turned in by September 23, the second by October 12, the third by November 2, the fourth by December 7. 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, concise prose, free of errors? To get credit for a response paper, 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 9:55 a.m. sharp. No late papers accepted. Together, the four responses make up 20% of your final grade.

3. Write two analytical papers of 1500-1700 words (4-5 pages) each. You will submit two versions of each essay. On October 3 you will turn in a 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 October 17 you will submit a revised version of your essay. The schedule for the second paper will be similar: first draft due on November 9, meeting with your Writing Fellow the following week, revised version due on November 23. 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 come with the first essay assignment. Each paper counts for 20% of your course grade.

4. Write a take-home final essay of 2100-2300 words (6-7 pages). Prompts will be distributed during the last week of class, and your essay will be due on Learn@UW at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, December 19. The final constitutes 25% of your course grade.

## 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	66.9%=F
87-91.9%=AB	77-81.9%=BC	67-71.9%=D	

## **Communication and Office Hours**

I welcome meeting with students outside of class time. You are 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 Mondays, 11-12 and Wednesdays, 12-1, but if you have a schedule conflict at those times 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 two Writing Fellows working with us this semester: Lisey Doty ([edoty@wisc.edu](mailto:edoty@wisc.edu)) and Sam Gee ([sjgee@wisc.edu](mailto:sjgee@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 feedback during the writing process. Each of you will work with Lisey or Sam individually on your first two papers. Your Fellow will read your polished drafts closely, offer detailed comments, and meet with you individually to discuss how your essays 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 much revising. The most effective way of re-seeing one's work is to get 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 critique the content of your paper. (That's my job, and I'm very happy to help on this front.) Nor will the Fellows grade your papers. Instead, they will help you see where your argument and presentation could be clearer and more effective. All of us, no matter how skilled we are as writers, can benefit immensely from the kind of engagement with our work that the Writing Fellows will offer you. I urge you to make the most of this opportunity.

## **Policy on Late Papers**

Because the Writing Fellows will be reading your paper drafts on a tight schedule, you must 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. Unless arrangements for an extension have been made with me at least 24 hours before the due date, late papers will be deducted one half grade for each day they are late (e.g., an AB becomes a B the next day, a BC the following day).

## **Honors Credit**

Students taking the course for honors credit will have the chance to pursue an independent project in lieu of the second paper. This project may take the form of a longer paper (typically about 10 pages) on a topic arising out of course materials. For those with interests in art, media, or public presentations, there are other possibilities. Please contact me by the sixth week of the semester to discuss options and settle on a project.

## Electronic Devices

A growing body of research suggests that students grasp concepts better, process information more thoughtfully, focus their attention more sharply, and—not surprisingly—get better grades when they take notes with pen and paper rather than on a computer. Besides, who of us is not tempted to surf, check messages, scan Facebook, etc. with a laptop in front of us? For these reasons, you may not use laptops, phones, or other electronic devices in the classroom. If you're used to using a computer in class and this strikes you as unreasonable and confining, I ask you to try it for a semester and see if your learning doesn't improve.

## 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.

## Academic Integrity

UW-Madison takes academic integrity very seriously, and so do I. Plagiarism—representing somebody else's work as your own—will not be tolerated in this course. 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 specific 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 required and available for purchase at local and online bookstores. Copies are also available on reserve at College Library.

Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, trans. Theodore Besterman (Penguin, 2004)  
Peter Fritzsche, ed., *Nietzsche and the Death of God: Selected Writings* (Waveland Press, 2013)  
Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Hill and Wang, 2006)  
Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (HarperCollins, 1997)

Also, a reader containing all other required texts will be available for purchase at the College of Letters & Science Copy Center, 6120 Sewell Social Sciences. The texts in the reader are also available as PDFs on Learn@UW.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: Readings must be completed before class on the day noted: Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, respectively. Aside from the four required books, all texts can be found in the course reader and on Learn@UW. There you will also find full bibliographical information for each selection.

<u>Week 1</u> Sep 7, 9	<u>Introduction</u> F: Brad S. Gregory, <i>The Unintended Reformation</i> , 74-82	
<u>Week 2</u> Sep 12, 14, 16	<u>The Protestant Revolution</u> M: Martin Luther, <i>The Freedom of a Christian</i> W: Gregory, <i>Unintended Reformation</i> , 82-109 F: Gregory, <i>Unintended Reformation</i> , 109-28	
<u>Week 3</u> Sep 19, 21, 23	<u>Reason's Promise and Limits</u> M: Richard Popkin, <i>The History of Scepticism</i> , 44-63 M: Michel de Montaigne, "On the Cannibals" W: Popkin, <i>History of Scepticism</i> , 143-57 W: René Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i> F: Blaise Pascal, <i>Pensées</i>	Response 1 due 9/23
<u>Week 4</u> Sep 26, 28, 30	<u>Enlightenment's Critique of Religion</u> M: Voltaire, <i>Philosophical Dictionary</i> : "Abraham," "Amour-propre," "Ange," "Anthropophages," "Antitrinitaires," "Athée, athéisme," "Catéchisme chinois," "David," "Divinité de Jésus," "Dogmes," "Enfer," "Enthousiasme" W: "Fanatisme," "Foi," "Inquisition," "Liberté de pensée," "Miracles," "Péché original," "Persécution," "Religion," "Secte," "Superstition," "Théologien," "Tolérance"	
<u>Week 5</u> Oct 3, 5, 7	<u>Reconstructing Belief</u> W: David Sorkin, <i>The Religious Enlightenment</i> , 165-213 F: Friedrich Schleiermacher, <i>On Religion and The Christian Faith</i>	Paper 1 draft due 10/3
<u>Week 6</u> Oct 10, 12, 14	<u>From Hegel to Marx</u> M: James C. Livingston, <i>Modern Christian Thought</i> , vol. 1, 116-27 W: Ludwig Feuerbach, <i>The Essence of Christianity</i> F: Dominic Erdozain, <i>The Soul of Doubt</i> , 221-61	Response 2 due 10/12; meet with WF this week
<u>Week 7</u> Oct 17, 19, 21	<u>For and Against Christendom</u> W: William Barrett, <i>Irrational Man</i> , 149-76 W: Søren Kierkegaard, selections	Paper 1 revised due 10/17
<u>Week 8</u> Oct 24, 26, 28	<u>Science, Theology, Progress</u> M: Owen Chadwick, <i>The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century</i> , 161-88 W: Benjamin Jowett, "On the Interpretation of Scripture" F: John Henry Newman, selections	
<u>Week 9</u> Oct 31, Nov 2, 4	<u>"God is Dead!"</u> M: Peter Fritzsche, ed., <i>Nietzsche and the Death of God</i> , 1-36 W: Fritzsche, <i>Nietzsche</i> , 66-121 F: Fritzsche, <i>Nietzsche</i> , 121-60	Response 3 due 11/2

Screening of *The Seventh Seal* (dir. Ingmar Bergman),  
Monday, Nov 1, 7:00 p.m.

<u>Week 10</u> Nov 7, 9, 11	<u>Good-Bye to All That</u> W: Karl Barth, <i>Epistle to the Romans</i> W: Philip Jenkins, <i>The Great and Holy War</i> , 189-99, 207-33	Paper 2 draft due 11/7
<u>Week 11</u> Nov 14, 16, 18	<u>Theologizing under Nazism</u> M: James C. Livingston, et al., <i>Modern Christian Thought</i> , vol. 2, 96-128 W: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, <i>Letters and Papers from Prison</i>	Meet WF this week
<u>Week 12</u> Nov 21	<u>God and Genocide</u> M: Elie Wiesel, <i>Night</i>	Paper 2 revised due 11/23
<u>Week 13</u> Nov 28, 30, Dec 2	<u>Spirituality and Social Reform in America</u> M: Dorothy Day, <i>The Long Loneliness</i> , 1-109 W: Day, <i>Long Loneliness</i> , 113-204 F: Day, <i>Long Loneliness</i> , 204-86	
<u>Week 14</u> Dec 5, 7, 9	<u>Religion, Race, and the Civil Rights Struggle</u> M: Charles Marsh, <i>The Beloved Community</i> , 11-50 W: Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" W: James H. Cone, <i>A Black Theology of Liberation</i>	Response 4 due 12/7
<u>Week 15</u> Dec 12, 14	<u>A Secular Age?</u> M: John Micklethwait and Adrian Woolridge, <i>God is Back</i> , 109-39	

Final paper due in Learn@UW Dropbox on Monday, December 29 at 2:00 p.m.