

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES 234: GENRES OF WESTERN RELIGIOUS WRITING

### LECTURES: TR 9:30-10:45

Lee Palmer Wandel

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office hours: T 8-9, R 11-12 &  
by appt.

Humanities 4105

263-1661

### DISCUSSION:

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### PRELIMINARIES

This course is intended to introduce students to the three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. No prior knowledge is necessary.

It is our goal that, at the end of the semester, each student will have a better understanding of all three of these traditions which shape our world. Lectures will introduce the sacred texts, history, rituals, and understandings of the self of each tradition. While lectures do not directly address the readings, they are intended to provide students with various contexts – ways of entering – each week's readings. Students are, therefore, strongly encouraged, but not required to attend lectures.

All students are required to participate in weekly discussion of assigned texts in section. In section, students will encounter a number of different kinds of texts from each tradition and learn various methods of close reading. In the first class meeting, your discussion leader will give you his or her specific requirements, including class presentations and paper assignments. This is a CommB course. Students, therefore, are also required to complete oral and written assignments, which are due in section. No late papers will be accepted.

The *Course Reader* [CR] is available at Bob's Copy Shop. Augustine's *Confessions*, the one book required, is available for purchase at UBS. The Qur'an reading is available online at the URL listed below. For students who wish to purchase their own copy of the Torah, I strongly recommend Robert Alter's new and quite beautiful translation, *The Five Books of Moses*. The course will use the Revised Standard Version, should students wish to purchase their own copy of the Bible. The RSV is also available online: <http://www.hti.umich.edu/r/rsv/>. Students who wish to purchase their own copy of the Qur'an are urged to consult with faculty in Islamic Studies.

Over the course of the semester, we shall also be showing movies, at times and dates to be determined, as well as making DVDs available for groups who cannot make the larger screen showing. The movies are strongly recommended, but not required.

**LECTURES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

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Week 1: "Religions of the Book"

1/22 "Religion"

Tu B'shevat

1/24 Sacred Texts

1/25 Conversion of St. Paul

Week 2: The Written Torah: The Five Books of Moses

1/29 The Torah

1/31 What does Rashi say? Practices of Reading

Reading: CR: selections from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy

2/2 Candlemas

Week 3: The Oral Torah: The Sayings of the Fathers (Mishnah)

2/5 The Architecture of Time

Shrove Tuesday

Ash Wednesday

2/7 History and the Torah

Reading: CR 43-61: selections from the Mishnah

Movie: "Ushpizin"

Week 4: Christianity

2/12 "The Word Made Flesh"

2/14 Jesus Among the Jews, Paul Among the Gentiles

Reading: CR 63-77: The New Testament: Readings from Luke, Matthew, John, and Revelation

Week 5: The "Bible"

2/19 The Formation of the Canon

2/21 Augustine's Bible, Luther's Bible

Reading: CR 78-95: The New Testament: Readings from Romans,

I Corinthians; and from Martin Luther's Preface to Romans

Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII. xii. 29-30

Week 6: Islam

2/26 The Prophet Mohammed

2/28 The Qur'an

Reading: <http://www.hti.umich.edu/relig/koran>

Surahs 1, 2, 4, 23

Week 7: The Qur'an and Hadith

- 3/4 Hadith
- 3/6 Law and Purity

Reading: CR 97-109: selections from the Hadith

Movie: "Islam: Empire of Faith"

3/9 Passion Sunday

Week 8: Jewish Identity

- 3/11 Diaspora
- 3/13 A Jewish Life in the Twelfth Century: Maimonides

Reading: CR 111-149: Ethical Wills

**MARCH 15-23      SPRING BREAK**

3/16 Palm Sunday

3/20 Maunday Thursday

3/23 Easter

Week 9: Christian Identity

- 3/25 "converso"
- 3/27 "The Two Cities"

Reading: Augustine, *Confessions*: Books I-II, VIII

Week 10: Muslim Identity

- 4/1 How Does One Become Not Muslim?
- 4/3 Mecca

Reading: CR 151-195: selections from *One Thousand Roads to Mecca*

Week 11: Culture: Places of Worship

- 4/8 The Architecture of Worship
- 4/10 Orientations and Exile

Reading: CR198-210: Psalms 23-24, 120-134, Mohammed's Last Sermon

Week 12: Culture: Acts of Worship

- 4/15 Enacting Faith
- 4/17 Rituals

[visit and report upon one worship service]      April 20-27 Pesach

Week 13: Judaism in the Modern World

4/22 Jews in the World

4/24 The Holocaust

Reading: CR: Responsa

Movie: tba

Week 14: Christianity in the Modern World

4/29 Christians in Africa & South America

5/1 Lutherans and Catholics under the Third Reich

Ascension of Christ

Reading: to be emailed

Movie: "The Mission"

Week 15: Islam in the Modern World

5/6 Colonialism and Islam

5/8 Palestine

Reading: CR: Fatwas