



THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

REL 312

3 credits (45 contact hours)

THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a comparative study of the three Abrahamic religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It examines the shared aspects as well as the distinct elements of these religions, and shows that sometimes these traditions work together and sometimes they are at odds with each other. The course first introduces the three Abrahamic religions emphasizing their common source. Then it compares them along thematic lines, and finally it examines the way these three major traditions impact the modern West and the Middle East specifically. Among the themes to be discussed are: Abraham, scripture and tradition, law, the creation, God, worship, mysticism, the house of God, the tradition of head covering, homosexuality, Jerusalem, and the end of times.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the course, a student should possess the following abilities and knowledge:

1. Understand the cultural and historical meaning of these religions.
2. Identify the basic beliefs and rituals of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
3. Critically discuss the similarities and differences between the three Abrahamic traditions.
4. Understand the present-day struggle of these religions, and become aware of their influences on today's world.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND ACTIVITIES

- The course is structured around lectures, discussion, and debate.
- Fieldtrip to the MuCEM in Marseille.
- Presence in class and participation.
- Completing the assigned readings *before* the class.
- Weekly quizzes based on the assigned readings.
- Mid-term exam.
- Final exam.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

- Attendance, participation, quizzes 40%
- Mid-term Exam 30%
- Final Exam 30%

RESOURCES AND READINGS

Required Textbook:

- F. E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, a New Edition, Princeton University Press, 2004.

Additional readings to be provided by the instructor:

- Extracts from the Tanakh, New Testament and the Quran
- F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem*, Princeton University Press, 1985.
- F. E. Peters, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: The Classical Texts and Their Interpretation*, 3 vols, Princeton University Press, 1990.
- John Corrigan (ed.), *Jews, Christians, Muslims: A Comparative Introduction to Monotheistic Religions*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1998.

ATTENDANCE

- Students are required to attend all classes. Any unexcused absence is detrimental to the student's final grade and the grade is reduced one-half letter for each unexcused absence above two.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Weekly Course outline)

This outline is subject to modification

INTRODUCTION: Abraham, his Children & their Scriptures

WEEK 1

Monotheism and its Source

Readings: John Corrigan (ed.), *Jews, Christians, Muslims: A Comparative Introduction to Monotheistic Religions*, Part II (Monotheism), pp. 75-151.

WEEK 2

The Children of Abraham in a nutshell

Readings: F.E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity & Islam*, Chapter Three (Community and Hierarchy), pp. 41-66.

WEEK 3

Scripture, Tradition and Law

Readings: F.E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity & Islam*, Introduction, pp. 1-6 + Chapter Five (Scripture and Tradition), pp. 85-102.

“IN THE BEGINNING”: the Origins of the World & Humanity

WEEK 4

The Creation and Adam & Eve

Readings: Genesis 1-4 + extracts from the Quran.

THE CONCEPT OF GOD AND ...

WEEK 5

The One God: Yahve, God the Father & Allah

Readings: F.E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity & Islam*, Chapter Eight (Thinking and Talking about God), pp. 138-166.

WEEK 6

The Worship of God

Readings: F.E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity & Islam*, Chapter Six (The Worship of God), pp. 103-115.

WEEK 7

Mysticism and MIDTERM EXAM

Readings: F.E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity & Islam*, Chapter Seven (Renunciation and Aspiration), pp. 116-137.

FALL BREAK

THE HOUSE OF GOD

WEEK 8

Temple and Synagogue

Readings: F.E. Peters, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: The Classical Texts and Their Interpretation*, vol. 3, Chapter 1 (The Worship of God: Temple and Synagogue), pp. 3-67.

WEEK 9

Church and Mosque

Readings: F.E. Peters, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: The Classical Texts and Their Interpretation*, vol. 3, Chapter 2 (The Worship of God: Church and Mosque), pp. 68-122.

VARIOUS THEMES

WEEK 10

The Tradition of Head Covering

Readings: Torah Numbers Chapter 15; 1 Corinthians: 11; extracts from the Quran.

WEEK 11

Homosexuality

Readings: Genesis Ch. 18 & 19; Leviticus Ch. 18 & 20
Romans: 1, 1 Corinthians: 6, Epistle of Jude
Extracts from the Quran.

WEEK 12

Jerusalem: One City Three Faiths

Readings: F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem*, Chapter 1 (Holy Land, Holy City), pp. 3-41.

THE END OF TIMES

WEEK 13

Apocalypse: The End of Times and the Afterlife

Readings: F.E. Peters, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: The Classical Texts and Their Interpretation*, vol. 3, Chapter 6 (The Last Things), pp. 328-396.