

SCR 5151: World Scriptures and World Peace

Spring 2024 Course Syllabus

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Course Description

World Scriptures and World Peace studies the major world religions by focusing on their sacred texts as primary sources for belief and practice. Students will become familiar with key scriptural texts, and through them explore various points of conflict and convergence between religions. Attention will be given to passages relevant to peacebuilding, attitudes towards other religions, and the status of women.

Some of the scriptures to be studied in this course include the Bible, the Qur'an, the Mishnah, the Dhammapada, the Lotus Sutra, the Bhagavad Gita, the Analects, the Doctrine of the Mean, and the Tao Te Ching. Yet, primary attention is given to the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam because among the world's religions, these "Abrahamic faiths" are at the center of religious conflict today. Through studying their scriptures, we can find meeting-points for peace and interfaith harmony.

Each of the scriptures weave a rich tapestry of teachings that speak to the varieties of human experiences with God and the ways that faith addresses the human condition. They speak to the ways of God's providence, the pain of undeserved suffering, and the hope for redemption. There are both hard texts that cause friction and golden texts that inspire believers to strive for peace.

With ample coverage of the Bible, this course can serve as a general introduction for students whose ministries are in the Christian world. We spend nearly four weeks on the Qur'an, to elucidate relevant issues in Islam. Then we will conclude by tasting the scriptures of Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism and look at their ethical and social teachings.

Three different perspectives are intertwined in this course: First, we can look at a scripture as it is understood the faith community that holds it sacred. Second, we can look at it from the standpoint of our own faith. These perspectives complement each other, as understanding the traditions and beliefs of others opens new avenues and helps us avoid pitfalls when sharing our truth with them or engaging in dialogue. Third, we look at scripture as it molds believers' attitudes on wider social issues including war and peace, interfaith relations, and the status of women.

All throughout we will examine the various ways that believers look at these texts, a topic called *hermeneutics*, because when it comes to scripture, the interpretation of a text is often more important than the text itself.

In looking at the scriptures of different faiths and their relationship to Rev. Moon's teachings in particular, we have a great resource, *World Scripture and the Teachings of Sun Myung Moon*. You may wish to consult this work throughout the course.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Knowledge:** Discuss the scriptures of the world's religions and the texts that define their teachings.
2. **Interpretation:** Discuss options for interpretation of scriptural texts and explain their basis in theology and/or historical context.
3. **Interfaith:** Identify key passages for interfaith relations, war and peace, and the status of women and discuss how these scriptures mold the lives and attitudes of believers
4. **Pastoral:** Describe the value of the passage in the religious life.
5. **Unificationism:** Discuss meeting points and differences between the scriptures of the world's religions and Unification teachings (or the beliefs of your faith).

Textbooks

1. *The Bible* (NIV, NKJV or NRSV) Every student should own a good Study Bible, such as the *Concordia Self-Study Bible* (NIV). Concordia Publishing House, 1986. ISBN-13: 978-0570005056. \$47. Or *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*. Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN-13: 978-0195289602. \$27.
2. *The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text with English Translation*, Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Kitab Bhavan, 2000. ISBN-13: 978-8171512188. \$12.00
3. Andrew Wilson, ed. *World Scripture and the Teachings of Sun Myung Moon*. New York: Paragon House, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-1930549579. Currently out of print, it is available to be downloaded as a PDF [here](#).
4. *Handouts*, can be downloaded at the appropriate lesson.

Supplemental Texts (Optional):

1. John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0800697501. \$41
2. Bart D. Ehrman, *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ISBN-13: 978-0199740314. \$11.42.
3. Walter H. Wagner, *Opening the Qur'an: Introducing Islam's Holy Book*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0268044220. \$27.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

The course by its nature covers a lot of ground. There are lectures and assignments almost daily. Therefore, it is important to complete each week's work on time. Online courses are not very forgiving of late work. All work must be completed by the end of the semester.

Lectures

There are 33 assigned lectures covering specific topics in the world's religions, focusing on the scriptures. The lectures are each worth 10 points, graded based on submitting a brief 1-2 paragraph reflection. A paragraph that reflects deeply on the content of the lecture will receive a better grade than a mere summary.

Essays Based on the Readings

There are 9 essays on selected passages from the scriptures being studied, each worth 30 points.

Discussions

There are 15 threaded discussions, one each week. The instructor posts a question, and each student posts a response. Once you have answered the instructor's question, you can see other students' answers and comment on them as much as you like. Your participation in the discussions is graded, so your answers should be substantial and well considered; each one is worth 30 points. Each discussion will be open for a specific window of time, usually about a week, after which it will be closed.

Final Exam

The last assignment is the Final Exam, a take-home final that recaps all the religions studied in the course. It is worth 240 points. The exam must be submitted on May 22 before midnight. It will be available for 3 days, beginning on May 20.

Evaluation

A letter grade will be assigned based on:

1. Lectures (34) 26%
2. Essays (9) 21%
3. Discussions (15) 35%
4. Final Exam 18%

Grades for each assignment are recorded by letter, and are understood as follows:

A	Excellent	D	Poor
B	Good	F	Failure
C	Satisfactory		

Failure to complete an assignment will result in an F for that assignment.

In calculating the final grade for the course, letter grades for assignments are converted into the following numerical equivalents, and the total is then converted back to a letter grade, as follows:

A	97	A-	91.5	B+	87
B	82	B-	77	C+	72.5
C	67.5	C-	62.5	D+	57.5
D	53	D-	50	F	0

This scale severely penalizes Fs. Therefore, it is better to hand in a poorly done assignment than not to hand one in at all. ***Please try to complete all the assignments!***

Final grades are posted on Populi after the course has closed. Grades in the Canvas gradebook are interim grades that do not count incomplete assignments that have yet to be graded. If a student has missed many assignments that grade may be deceptively high, because before the end of the course those missed assignments turn into Fs.

There is no grade of “Incomplete” for failure to hand in assignments. Incompletes are only given on account of exceptional circumstances beyond the student’s control.

Satisfactory completion of this course will award you 3 credits towards a Masters Degree at HJI.

Course Policies

Keeping on Task

It is vital that all students keep pace with the course and try to finish each week's work on schedule. All assignments and especially Discussions should be completed within 3 days of the due date, so that the entire class can participate as a group. Discussions will be closed after one week, and students who have not participated will receive an F for that assignment.

By the same token, assignments will not be visible until a few days before the due date, so that students will engage the material in order.

A student who has a sudden medical or other emergency that would prevent him or her from staying abreast of the course, or who must attend a church program that falls in the middle of the course, should contact the instructor so that he can make special arrangements.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is taken weekly, every Saturday. A student will be counted Present if he or she completes at least one of the assignments due during an attendance period. Students who are absent for more than 5 attendance periods may be subject to withdrawal at the discretion of the instructor. It is HJI policy that students who are absent for 4 out of the first 7 attendance periods are given an automatic administrative withdrawal, effective the 4th week, with no refund. An exception will be made for students who make special arrangements due to an emergency situation.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty that occurs when a student passes off someone else's work as their own. This can range from failing to cite an author for ideas incorporated into a student's paper, to cutting and pasting paragraphs from different websites, to handing in a paper downloaded from the Internet. This includes buying or submitting a paper written by a third party. All are considered forms of "plagiarism" and a violation of the school's academic integrity policy. Instances of plagiarism may be reported to the Associate Provost for disciplinary action. Possible disciplinary actions include probation, suspension or withdrawal.

Netiquette Policy

When posting online, you need to follow the same ethical standards and laws as you would in face-to-face communications. Your language should be respectful of faculty members and fellow students. Do not post private or confidential information about anyone, and do not provide personal information that could put yourself at risk. The school's LMS has robust security measures to protect communication between teacher and student. Yet please be aware that anything that you post in discussions and groups in which other students participate can be retrieved by others and copied.

Do not download and share course materials without permission of the instructor, as this may violate copyright. HJI reserves the right to delete postings on HJI-maintained sites that are considered insensitive, harassing or illegal. Language that is illegal, obscene, defamatory, threatening, infringing of intellectual property rights, invasive of privacy, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing abusive, hateful or embarrassing to any person or entity, or otherwise, is a violation of the Student Code.

Course Summary:

Date	Details
Mon Jan 29, 2024	The Book of Two Religions
	Introduce yourselves
Tue Jan 30, 2024	The Torah
Wed Jan 31, 2024	Essay: Mishnah and Talmud
Thu Feb 1, 2024	The Ten Commandments
Fri Feb 2, 2024	Discussion Topic: Commandments in your faith
Mon Feb 5, 2024	Exodus from Egypt
Tue Feb 6, 2024	Discussion Topic: Covenant and Democracy
Wed Feb 7, 2024	Chosen people and the land of Israel
Thu Feb 8, 2024	Discussion Topic: Chosen People
Mon Feb 12, 2024	Prophets of Israel
Wed Feb 14, 2024	Essay on the Prophets and Peace
Thu Feb 15, 2024	Judaism and the future hope
Mon Feb 19, 2024	Judaism and other religions
Tue Feb 20, 2024	Essay on the problem of other religions

Date	Details
Wed Feb 21, 2024	Problem of innocent suffering
Thu Feb 22, 2024	Discussion Topic: Reflections on theodicy
Mon Feb 26, 2024	Sermon on the Mount, Part 1
Tue Feb 27, 2024	Sermon on the Mount, part 2
Thu Feb 29, 2024	Discussion Topic: Jesus' peace teachings
Mon Mar 4, 2024	Parables of Jesus
Tue Mar 5, 2024	Essay on a Parable
Wed Mar 6, 2024	The Historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith
Thu Mar 7, 2024	Discussion Topic: The Historical Jesus and Divine Principle
Mon Mar 11, 2024	Christ's Passion and Atoning Death
Tue Mar 12, 2024	Discussion Topic: The Victory in Christ's Passion
Wed Mar 13, 2024	Jesus and the Jews--an Interfaith Problem
Thu Mar 14, 2024	Discussion Topic: Antisemitism in Scripture
Mon Mar 18, 2024	Paul
Tue Mar 19, 2024	Discussion Topic: Paul and Your Faith
Wed Mar 20, 2024	The Gospel of John and Letters of John

Date	Details
Thu Mar 21, 2024	Essay: New Life in Christ
Mon Apr 1, 2024	Christian visions of the end times
Tue Apr 2, 2024	Discussion Topic: The Last Judgment, the Last Days and Peace
Thu Apr 4, 2024	Introduction to Islam and the Qur'an
Fri Apr 5, 2024	Duties of Muslims
Mon Apr 8, 2024	God and Man in the Qur'an
Tue Apr 9, 2024	Life of Muhammad Video
Wed Apr 10, 2024	The Qur'an and the Life of Muhammad
Thu Apr 11, 2024	Discussion Topic: Muhammad and Rev. Moon
Mon Apr 15, 2024	The Qur'an and the Old Testament
Tue Apr 16, 2024	People of the Book
Wed Apr 17, 2024	Jesus in the Qur'an
Thu Apr 18, 2024	Discussion Topic: Islam and Christianity
Mon Apr 22, 2024	Women in Islam
Tue Apr 23, 2024	Jihad (Holy War)
Thu Apr 25, 2024	Discussion Topic: Islam and Your Own Faith: Jihad or Women

Date	Details
Mon Apr 29, 2024	Buddhism
Tue Apr 30, 2024	The Lotus Sutra
Wed May 1, 2024	Buddhism and Peace
Thu May 2, 2024	Discussion Topic: Buddhism and Your Faith
Mon May 6, 2024	Hinduism
Tue May 7, 2024	Lecture: Hinduism and Peace
Wed May 8, 2024	Essay: Hindu Scriptures and Christian/Unification Teachings
Thu May 9, 2024	Confucianism
Fri May 10, 2024	Essay on Selected Confucian Texts
Mon May 13, 2024	Filial Piety
Tue May 14, 2024	Lao Tzu and Taoism
Wed May 15, 2024	Mo Tzu, Han Fei Tzu and Sun Tsu
Thu May 16, 2024	Discussion Topic: Chinese Thought and Peacebuilding
Wed May 22, 2024	Final Exam

Course Rubric

Criteria	Ratings			
<p>Knowledge Discuss the scriptures of the world's religions and explain the elements of their message.</p>	<p>4 pts Demonstrates command of key texts</p>	<p>3 pts Refers to key texts in explaining the elements of a religion</p>	<p>2 pts Describes an element of a religious teaching</p>	<p>1 pts Identifies a few facts about a scripture</p>
threshold: 3.0 pts				
<p>Interpretation Discuss options for interpretation of scriptural texts and explain their basis in theology and/or historical context</p>	<p>4 pts Discuss options for interpretation of texts and explain their theological or contextual basis</p>	<p>3 pts Explains various interpretations of a text and theological or contextual basis</p>	<p>2 pts Recognizes other meanings</p>	<p>1 pts Describe only one meaning of a text</p>
threshold: 3.0 pts				
<p>Unificationism Discusses meeting points and differences between the scriptures of the world's religions and Unification teachings (or the teachings of one's own faith)</p>	<p>4 pts Discusses the value of other scripture for the Unification faith</p>	<p>3 pts Discusses meeting points and differences between a scripture and Unification teaching</p>	<p>2 pts Discuss Unificationist and non-Unificationist understandings of texts</p>	<p>1 pts Views texts entirely within the framework of Unificationism</p>
threshold: 3.0 pts				
<p>Pastoral Describe the value of the passage in the religious life.</p>	<p>4 pts Gives exceptional insights from the passage to religious life</p>	<p>3 pts Explains relevance of the passage to a religious life</p>	<p>2 pts Discusses insights about the religious life</p>	<p>1 pts General discussion of the text</p>
threshold: 3.0 pts				
<p>Interfaith Identify key passages for interfaith relations, war and peace, and the status of women and discuss how these scriptures mold the lives and attitudes of believers</p>	<p>4 pts Identify passages on these themes, discuss how they mold attitudes, and explain positive interpretations</p>	<p>3 pts Identify passages on these themes and discuss how they mold attitudes of believers</p>	<p>2 pts Identifies passages on these themes</p>	<p>1 pts Explains religious teachings without reference to these themes</p>
threshold: 3.0 pts				