



*School of Arts & Science  
Humanities*

**RELIGION 100**  
**World Religions of the West**  
**Fall, 2007**

Course Description

An introductory survey of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, this course explores the sources, beliefs (including representative texts), and practices of these religions. The traditions of each will be studied in their cultural and political contexts from both historical and contemporary perspectives.

1. Instructor Information

(a)	Instructor:	Clarence Bolt		
(b)	Office Hours:	MW, 8:30-9:20 AM, 11:30-12:20 PM Tu. 4:00-4:50 PM		
(c)	Location:	Y319		
(d)	Phone:	370-3347		
(e)	Email:	cbolt@camosun.bc.ca		
(f)	Website:			

2. Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course you will be able to:

1. Explain the contexts/historical settings in which Judaism, Christianity, and Islam arose.
2. List major dates, events, and places central to each.
3. Describe the historical linkage/relationships among them.
4. Summarize their major beliefs, teachings, ideals, and practices.
5. Explain variations/splits/divisions in each tradition.
6. Analyze their similarities/differences.
7. Compare/contrast each religion's view of the others.
8. Evaluate their relationship to and impact on the world today.

3. Required Materials

David Noss, *A History of the World's Religions*  
Bible (New International Version or Revised Standard Version)  
Qu/ran (Koran), Daewood

## 4. Course Content and Schedule

Week 1 Introduction to Course: Definitions, Religion and Religious Studies, Assignments Explained

Week 2 Terminology and Issues – A Brief Look at Zoroastrianism  
Noss, ch. 1, I-II, ch. 12, I-III

Week 3 Some roots of Western Religions  
Noss, ch. 2  
Seminar (Seminar A at 5:00, Seminar B at 8:00)\*  
**First Assignment Due** (and discussed)

Week 4 Lecture: Judaism – Sources  
Noss, ch. 13  
Seminar  
Genesis 1-9, 11-21  
Exodus 1-20  
I Samuel 1-4, 8-9  
II Samuel 5-9  
Isaiah 1, 2, 6-11  
Jeremiah 1

Week 5 Lecture: Judaism – the Formative Period  
Noss, ch. 14, I-V  
Seminar  
Job 1, 2, 38-42  
Psalms 1, 8, 46, 47  
Ecclesiastes 1, 2, 4, 6, 12.9-14  
**Project Proposal Due**

Week 6 Judaism – In History  
Noss, ch. 14, VI-VII  
Film

Week 7 **Test One**

Week 8 Christianity – Sources  
Noss, ch. 15  
Seminar  
Matthew 1-8, 26-8  
Luke 1, 2  
John 1.1-18  
**Article Review Due**

- Week 9** Christianity – The Development of  
Noss, ch.16, I-V  
Seminar  
Acts 1, 2, 9.1-31  
Romans 9-11  
Hebrews 10.19-12.29  
Ephesians
- Week 10** Christianity – the Modern Era  
Noss, ch. 16, VI-X  
Film
- Week 11** Islam – Sources  
Noss, ch. 17, I-III  
Seminar  
Readings from the Quran (to be assigned)
- Week 12** Islam – Spread of and Development of Traditions  
Noss, ch. 17, IV – ch. 18, II  
Seminar  
Readings from the Quran (to be assigned)  
**Project Due**
- Week 13** Islam Today  
Noss, ch. 18, III-VI  
Film
- Week 14** The Western Religions in the World Today  
Handout – compendium of news/articles from Sept. to Dec

Test Two will be during the exam period, on the Tuesday evening following the last class.

**\*Seminars and the Readings from the Scriptures of Each Tradition.**

For weeks 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, and 12, the class will be divided into two seminar groups, one meeting at 5:00 PM, before the lecture, the other at 8:00 PM, after the lecture. The division into seminars will be made during the second class. I will attempt to accommodate your preferred choice.

The seminar will discuss the readings. Some points and guidelines about reading:

1. The writers of scriptures were not writing history, sociology, anthropology, theology, or novels. They were expressing beliefs, values, teachings, lessons, and so forth. In other words, these are not historical works, academic treatises, or literary works in the modern sense of those words. This does not mean that they contain no history, reasoned

argument, or literary quality. But they are religious expressions, fundamental to the writers' existence as humans, not inquiry or analysis. They record the known "deeds whereby [God] has made himself manifest." They were writing 'religion,' not 'history,' 'philosophy,' or 'theology.'<sup>1</sup>

2. While remembering the above, you are to take each selection and determine what is being said. Within the Scriptures there are different genres of writing. Understanding how these genres work is vital to comprehending meaning. About each source:

- Why was it written?
- What was its message to its audience?
- What was being said about God?
- What was it telling humans about how they ought to live? not to live?
- What lessons should the believer derive?

3. Remember that we are all outsiders to faiths, traditions, and belief systems that are not our own. Hence, because we are covering three 'religions,' no matter what our personal belief and value systems, we will all be outsiders at most points in the semester (or all of the time). You do not have to share the values/beliefs of any of the traditions covered but you must recognize that the Scriptures in each tradition are sacred to adherents. The point of this course/these readings is for all of us to get a sense of what is meaningful to large numbers of people.

## 5. Basis of Your Assessment (Weighting)

Two tests	40%
Media Analysis	10%
Project	
Proposal	05%
Review	10%
Paper	25%
Participation	10%

1. **Test** details will be handed out well in advance and will consist of three types of questions:
  - a. Terms to identify based on the list given at the end of Noss chapters as well as ones provided in class.
  - b. Short paragraph-size answers to questions on themes and issues.
  - c. Longer essays from a list of topics handed out before the tests.
2. The **Media Analysis** will consist of a diary tracking the religious coverage of four media from September 4-16: a newsmagazine (weekly), a newspaper, CBC radio (one newscast a day), and television (one non-CBC station, one newscast every two days). You will list each media and answer the following questions: What was the story (if any)? Which of the 3 western faiths did it cover? Was there a detectable bias? If so, negative or positive? What evidence do you have for this conclusion?
3. The **Project** will comprise work on a topic from the list below or one approved by me. It will focus on either 1. key concepts/movements *within* each of the traditions or 2.

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<sup>1</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of history* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), pp. 12-15

historically significant *contacts among* them. You are strongly advised to consult with me before starting your work and continuing to do so regularly to ensure staying on track.

For many topics, the *Encyclopedia of Religion* is a good reference work and starting point to define the topic. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* is also a great source and is on-line.

a. Proposal (5%) – due Week 5

You will submit a proposal that will

--introduce the topic (who, what, when, where, etc.). Reference/source material is critical

--explain the question that the paper will answer

--lay out the approach/style of presentation

There is no need to formulate a thesis at this point; theses should arise from research rather than the reverse.

Included will be a list of sources, a minimum of three books and two academic (journal) articles, specific to the topic. It is possible that you may not find a book completely focussed on your topic. In that case, the book's coverage of your topic must be significant. Consult with me to assist in making that judgment. Primary sources are encouraged. *Attached to what you will hand in will be a photocopy of the first two pages of each source and a short summary explaining why that source is appropriate for the paper.*

b.. Review of one of the articles chosen (10%) – due Week 8

You will write a review of one of the two academic articles chosen for the essay. Each review will be 300 words and consist of three paragraphs:

--paragraph one will define the theme

--paragraph two will discuss style, sources, and method

--paragraph three will give your opinion on the basis of the information in paragraphs one and two.

The article will be attached.

c. Completed Essay (25%) – due Week 12

Assignment and Marking Conditions and Standards:

1. Each essay will be no longer than 2500 words (approx. 8 pp).

2. The final product will consist of a thesis, supported by evidence, analysis of alternative interpretations, and a conclusion summarizing why the chosen interpretation fits the evidence best.

3. It must contain a minimum of 20 footnotes documenting specific information, themes, ideas, quotes, or paraphrases. The paper will include a title page and proper footnote and bibliographical style (for details on History style, see the Humanities web page). You will double space, not use headings, and not leave extra space between paragraphs. Margins must be justified.

Attached to the back will be a copy of the original proposal, along with the article review.

4. Two copies of the essay must be handed in, one to be kept on file for five years.

5. Grammar, spelling, and syntax are critical to a good paper. Marks will be lost for deficiencies in these areas.

6. The final grade will be determined on the basis of quality of work and presentation (see 5), use of sources, a clear and strong thesis, consistent argument, proper transitions, and originality of approach.

**All work is due in class on the due date, before the class meets. Attendance for that class is mandatory. Failure to follow these rules forfeits the mark.**

**3. Participation** in classroom activities is an important part of the course. Seminar sessions as well as the last hour of non-seminar classes will be devoted to discussion of assigned readings other than Noss. Seminar attendance is required. If you must miss one, your absence must be arranged/discussed with me ahead of time.

### **List of Possible Topics**

Variant views of Monotheism in each tradition, or contrasts between two  
Conception (nature) of God, in one, or a comparison of two  
Dead Sea Scrolls, Essenes, Qumran  
Jihad  
Formation, gathering together of the 'Scriptures' in each tradition, or a comparison  
Baha'i faith  
Mormonism  
Jehovah's Witnesses  
20<sup>th</sup> c fundamentalism – in any of the three traditions or comparison of two  
Sufism  
Politics and religion in any, or comparison of two  
Free will vs. predestination in any, or comparison of two  
Relationship of one faith community to non-faith communit(y)(-ties)  
Modernism's impact on one or a comparison of two  
Black Muslims  
How are Jews, Christians, Muslims identified (pick one)  
Kabbalism  
Wahhabism  
Shi-ism  
Shari a law  
Science/culture and faith – are they compatible –pick one tradition or compare  
Zionism  
Basis for ethics in one of the traditions (or subset) – what is appropriate behaviour and why?  
Nature of Christ, the debates, or as compared to Islam's view of the nature of Muhammad  
Creating the Talmud  
Thinkers/philosophers/theologians' relationship to other faiths and to secular thinkers  
Augustine  
Roman vs. Orthodox Christians

Note the dimension of time. Be sure to be clear about which time in history, which place, and about whom you are writing. Context is crucial in writing accurate papers.

## **Study and Guide Questions for Noss**

### Chapter 1

1. What does the book mean by 'primal' and 'prehistoric'?
2. How is religion reconstructed in 'prehistoric' cultures?
3. List 16 characteristics of 'primal religion.' Are these unique to 'primal religions'?
4. Know the following terms -- sacred, ritual, myth, magic, fetishism, shamanism, prayer, divination, mana, animism, taboo, and totemism

### Chapter 2

Be aware of the main features and characteristics of the Mesopotamian, Greek and Roman religious/philosophical traditions. What stands out in each? I.e., what was unique? similar?

1. List five characteristics of Mesopotamian religion that strike you as definitive.
2. Do the same for Greek religion. Why would Greece produce both the 'mystery' religions and philosophy (define each, of course)?
3. List five characteristics of Roman religion? How did it differ from Mesopotamian and Greek religious ways? What did it borrow from them?
4. From your current knowledge base, what elements of these three traditions show up in our three Western World religions? Note: save your answer to this question and come back to it at the end of the semester to compare.

### Chapter 12

1. Explain the location of and the nature of the sources of Zoroastrianism. What are some of the problems in understanding and knowing about the nature of its early developments?
2. Who was Zoroaster? How did he come to his 'knowledge' and 'vision'? What were his core teachings?
3. What happened to the faith at the time of and after the Sassanid revival?

### Chapter 13

1. Describe the religions of the pre-Mosaic Hebrews: a. beginning with the Semitic peoples; and b. and explaining the role and place of Abraham
2. Summarize the story of Moses, noting the Exodus, the commandments, the covenant rituals, etc. How was monotheism implicit?
3. Summarize the conflict between Yahweh and the Baals. What were the major issues?
4. Who were the prophets? What significance do they hold for the development of the Mosaic tradition? What were the various kinds of prophets? What was their message? Note Elijah/Elisha, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah.
5. What was the Deuteronomic reform? How did Jeremiah fit into this picture?
6. What was the Babylonian exile? What came out of it and how did it shape the traditions which became Judaism? Note especially the roles of Ezekiel and deuterio-Isaiah.
7. Know the words and terms of the glossary.

### Chapter 14

1. Explain the restoration (after the Babylonian captivity) and the impacts of those efforts on the religious development of Judaism. Note the prophets. What is meant by the 'priestly state?' What were its proponents seeking to do?
2. How were the Jewish Scriptures collected, and how did they develop (pp. 420ff)? See 4 below as well.
3. Summarize the events and religious developments of the Hellenistic and Maccabean periods (look up these terms if necessary).
4. What happened under the Romans? Note the movements and parties among the Jews. Note also the development of scriptures (432ff) and connect this to the earlier section. This relates to the Talmud. (What is Talmud and the Talmud?) Explain the 'schools' and their contribution to the development of Judaism.
5. Note/explain the Middle Ages and relations between Christians and Jews. Remember this for later -- think about why these relationships took on the flavour they did.
6. Not all Jews were Talmudists. Explain the karaite challenge and the kabbala.
7. Who are the Sephardim and Ashkenazim?
8. List and define the differing traditions of Judaism in the modern world (443-448).
9. What is Jewish identity?
10. Know the words and terms of the glossary.

## Chapter 15

1. How does the book explain the sources of Christianity?
2. Explain the religious and political context of the Jesus' time.
3. Summarize the life, teachings, and climactic events of Jesus' life.
4. Summarize the events of the Apostolic age. What were the main disputes? What are the key doctrines of Paul's teachings?
5. Explain the spread, development, and early structures of Christian faith communities.
6. How did the Christian scriptures emerge?
7. Know the words and terms of the glossary.

## Chapter 16

1. What is heresy? What ideas did the early Catholic Church deem heretical? Why? How were the conflicts eventually resolved? What role did the state play?
2. Explain the rise of Monasticism.
3. What did Augustine believe?
4. Why did the church divide into east and west? How were the two traditions different?
5. Describe the Roman church's dominant position in the so-called middle ages. How was this dominance evident in everyday life? in politics? in education? Explain scholastic thought and the debates of the era (realism vs. nominalism, Aquinas, etc.)
6. What was the Protestant reformation? What did Luther affirm? What were the contributions of Zwingli and Calvin to the Protestant tradition? Note the spread to other countries and the forms taken there.
7. Who were the Anabaptists? What made them different from the Catholics and from the reformers?
8. Explain the Catholic reformation. What did it affirm? Was this a defensive or an innovative response?
9. How has the Roman Catholic church responded to Modernism?
10. Note Protestant responses to Modernism. Contrast the liberal/fundamentalist answers.
11. Note the book's treatment of recent theological trends.
12. Know the words and terms of the glossary.

## Chapter 17

1. Explain Arabian beliefs and practices before Muhammad.
2. Who was Muhammad and how did his life unfold? Note major events in his life and afterward.
3. Explain the faith and practice of Islam. Know the terms.
4. Note the spread of Islam (the book is extremely weak on this).
5. The first five centuries saw the unfolding of various strands of Islamic thought. Note the hadith canons, the Kharijites and Murjites, the Sunnis and Shiites (see pp. 578-84 as well), the four schools of law, and the various strands of thought as described from pp. 565-77. These are useful summaries and give some idea of the diversity within Islam and the questions which, shared with Judaism and Christianity, the Abrahamic, monotheistic religions confront.
6. Know the words and terms of the glossary.

## Chapter 18

1. As in the question asked for the previous chapter, be familiar with the Shiite traditions and their key differences from Sunni traditions.
2. How does the book deal with Islam and culture?
3. How does the book explain issues/pressures on Islam in the modern world? Examine the issues carefully: are the issues the same as those of the other two western religions? Are there differences? Does each have unique issues in dealing with Modernism? In framing your answer, think about the variety of Islamic communities (note the book's treatment of Islam around the world -- pp. 594-606). Does the nature of Islam make it harder or easier to respond to modernity? Think of this about the other two faith traditions as well.
4. What is Baha'i?
5. Know the words and terms of the glossary.



## Other

### 1. Grading System

Percentage	Grade	Description	Grade Point Equivalency
90-100	A+		9
85-89	A		8
80-84	A-		7
77-79	B+		6
73-76	B		5
70-72	B-		4
65-69	C+		3
60-64	C		2
50-59	D		1
0-49	F	Minimum level has not been achieved.	0

#### Temporary Grades

Temporary grades are assigned for specific circumstances and will convert to a final grade according to the grading scheme being used in the course. See Grading Policy at [camosun.ca](http://camosun.ca) or information on conversion to final grades, and for additional information on student record and transcript notations.

Temporary Grade	Description
I	<i>Incomplete:</i> A temporary grade assigned when the requirements of a course have not yet been completed due to hardship or extenuating circumstances, such as illness or death in the family.
IP	<i>In progress:</i> A temporary grade assigned for courses that are designed to have an anticipated enrollment that extends beyond one term. No more than two IP grades will be assigned for the same course.
CW	<i>Compulsory Withdrawal:</i> A temporary grade assigned by a Dean when an instructor, after documenting the prescriptive strategies applied and consulting with peers, deems that a student is unsafe to self or others and must be removed from the lab, practicum, worksite, or field placement.

Temporary grades are assigned for specific circumstances and will convert to a final grade according to the grading scheme being used in the course. See Grading Policy E-1.5 at [camosun.ca](http://camosun.ca) for information on conversion to final grades, and for additional information on student record and transcript notations.

### 2. Recommended Materials or Services to Assist Students to Succeed Throughout the Course

#### LEARNING SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

There are a variety of services available for students to assist them throughout their learning. This information is available in the College calendar, at Student Services or the College web site at [camosun.ca](http://camosun.ca).

#### STUDENT CONDUCT POLICY

There is a Student Conduct Policy **which includes plagiarism**. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the content of this policy. The policy is available in each School Administration Office, at Student Services and on the College web site in the Policy Section.