RELIGIOUS STUDIES 330: ABRAHAMIC FAITHS         FALL 2016
Instructor: Dr. Kirkegaard

Section 1, Schedule Number 22973
Monday and Wednesday  10:00-10:50am    Storm Hall 119
Course Webpage: blackboard.sdsu.edu  (then enter SDSU Red ID and your password
select RELS 330 Abrahamic Faiths from "My Courses")
email : bkirkega@mail.sdsu.edu
Office Hours:    Arts and Letters 664; Mondays 10:50am-1:50pm
(also by appointment)

Course Description: This course explores the Abrahamic Faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These three world religions share many stories and beliefs in common. They each claim descent from Abraham and look to a powerful creator God. They are also all strictly monotheistic. But for all that they hold in common, these religious traditions also have important differences and have frequently come into conflict with one another.

In this course we will be studying the major beliefs of these traditions – what binds them together and what has often set them in opposition to one another. We will also be looking at the historic contexts of interaction between these traditions that have shaped their attitudes towards one another and continue to inform their modern relationships.

General Education: This course fulfills the humanities Area C in General Education Explorations and is designated a cultural diversity course. Explorations of Human Experience courses take the goals and skills of Foundations of Learning courses to a more advanced level. This may find expression in one or more of the following pedagogical elements: greater interdisciplinary, more complex and in-depth theory, deeper investigation of local problems, and wider awareness of global challenges.

Upon completion of this area of Explorations, you will be able to: 1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments; 2) develop a familiarity with various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures; 3) argue from multiple perspectives about issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance; 4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.

Learning Outcomes: Through active engagement with this course, students will:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of content and context for the Abrahamic Faiths including major figures, events, and complex themes through quizzes, midterm and final examinations.
2. Discover and analyze core beliefs and differences between these traditions, and interpret historic events from multiple perspectives through Journals and exams.
3. *Integrate* and *synthesize* their study of complex problems and questions with attention to the personal and global relevance in their final Reflection.

**An Important Caution:** The interrelationships of the Abrahamic Faiths can be a very sensitive subject, particularly in modern times. I will seek to always treat the topics and the individual traditions with care and respect and I would ask that you try to do the same. That does not mean that we have to avoid tackling hard questions or difficult topics. Many of the hardest questions and topics are essential to meaningful engagement with this subject. The sensitivity needed to engage them productively is also a vital learning goal for this class.

As a class we will be dealing with texts and issues that are deeply important to many people of faith—including fellow students. Please treat the texts and topics with respect even as you question and explore them within an academic environment. For some students this will raise a range of questions of faith and identity. Some of these questions will be of general interest to the class, but given the diversity of perspectives many will not. Please feel free to raise questions throughout the course of the semester, but do not be surprised if I suggest that it is a topic better discussed after class or during office hours, or within your own faith setting.

**Disabilities:** If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and accommodations based upon disability cannot be made until you provide an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services.

**Success in a Hybrid Class:** A Hybrid class includes both traditional classroom meetings and structure and required on-line components. For the on-line elements you will need the following:

- A computer - PC or Macintosh- with a stable Internet connection. Higher speed Internet connections (cable modem, DSL) are strongly recommended.
- Basic computer skills
- A reliable email address that will not change from the beginning until the end of the semester.
- A "technology back-up" plan. Students should plan out an alternative location to do assignments and quizzes in the event their computer or Internet connection is not working!

Students are also required to:

- Make use of the online course materials available via Blackboard.
- Participate in asynchronous online activities – for this class these include mini lectures and short quizzes.
- Complete readings and assignments by the dates indicated on the syllabus.
- Check email on a regular basis.

**Academic Honesty:** The University adheres to a strict policy regarding cheating and plagiarism. These activities will not be tolerated in this class. Become familiar with the policy (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html). Any cheating or plagiarism will result in failing this class and a disciplinary review by Student Affairs.

Examples of Plagiarism include but are not limited to:
• Using sources verbatim or paraphrasing without giving proper attribution (this can include phrases, sentences, paragraphs and/or pages of work)
• Copying and pasting work from an online or offline source directly and calling it your own
• Using information you find from an online or offline source without giving the author credit
• Replacing words or phrases from another source and inserting your own words or phrases
• Submitting a piece of work you did for one class to another class

If you have questions on what is plagiarism, please consult the policy (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/conduct1.html) and this helpful guide from the Library (http://infodome.sdsu.edu/infolit/exploratorium/Standard_5/plagiarism.pdf)

Grading:
Quizzes 15%
Midterm 15%
Final 20%
Journal 20%
Final Reflection 15%
Participation 15%

The Quizzes (15%) will test your comprehension of material from the on-line mini-lectures, your knowledge gained from class, and understanding of the readings. Only the best 8 out of 12 on-line Quizzes will count towards your grade. Because the lowest 4 Quizzes will be dropped, you may only take each Quiz once and no allowances will be made for technical difficulties. The Midterm (15%) and Final (20%) will be comprised of objective questions. These examinations will test your mastery of essential information and your ability to explore complex themes within the topic of Abrahamic Faiths. Additional details for the Midterm and Final will be discussed in class several weeks before the exams. The Journal (20%) will chronicle your observations and engagement with the readings throughout the semester. The Journal will be your opportunity to express your thoughts and detail your own exploration. The Journals will be exchanged for peer-review twice during the semester. The peer-review is part of your grade for the Journal and is required. The Journal will be collected at the end of the semester to be graded. For more detail on what is expected in the Journal please see the Journal Guide on blackboard. You will also write a Reflection (15%) that is due at the end of the semester. The Reflection is a sustained and formal essay integrating what you have learned over the course of the semester and its personal and global relevance. The Reflection Guide on blackboard will give you more detail on what to expect. Participation (15%) is an important component of this class. Participation will be measured on the basis of the value of the contributions you make to the class and especially to discussions. You can, of course, only contribute meaningfully to in-class discussion if you attend class regularly and prepare for class discussion. Attendance at class meetings and preparation of the reading assignments, therefore, ARE REQUIRED. Arrive to class on-time and remain the length of the class or you will not receive credit for attending that day. You will also be required to write one 400 word Class Summary during the semester and to post this summary to blackboard. Instruction for writing the summary is available on blackboard. The class summary comprises part of your total participation grade.

A number of extra credit opportunities will be available throughout the semester. Each opportunity will be worth up to ½ of a point on your final grade with a maximum of 2 points earned in extra credit for the semester. To earn the extra credit you must attend one of the approved opportunities and write a short
250-300 word essay. A list of extra credit opportunities will be posted on blackboard and I will inform you as additional opportunities arise.

In your written work and in your classroom involvement (both in person and on-line) you will be expected to adhere to "acceptable standards of conduct" as discussed on the web page for the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/). Turn OFF cell phones and pagers while in class. As a general rule, extensions on journal due dates will not be granted. PLAN AHEAD.

**Required Readings:**


2. Electronic Readings (links on blackboard)

Electronic Readings: To cut down on your costs, required readings throughout the semester will be provided as internet links and pdfs. These Electronic Readings will provide a range of religious texts and scholarly treatment of the Abrahamic Faiths. These readings ARE REQUIRED and will be tested on the quizzes, midterm and final exams. You will also be writing your Journals on these readings. I will be checking your Journals several times during the semester and collecting them at the end of the semester. You can access the Electronic Readings by following the links on the Blackboard site.

**Contacting me:**

I will try to respond within 24-48 hours to emails. For quick questions, the turnaround time may be much shorter. If I do not, for any reason, respond within 48 hours please feel free to email a second time (It is rare, but occasionally I can miss an email if I get a lot all at once). For more complex questions you may wish to come to office hours where we can discuss topics at greater length. I am also typically available a few minutes before and after class to answer quick questions.

I look forward to getting to know you over the semester!

**Calendar of Readings and Assignments**

Unless otherwise noted, make sure that you complete the readings listed after Wednesday before taking the quiz each weekend. These more general readings are intended to give you core understanding of the three major religions and their interrelationships with one another. You will also have readings for each week that will focus more narrowly on the week’s topic and inform class discussion (these are listed as being for Monday and for Wednesday). For discussions on Wednesdays these readings will often include relatively short primary sources. The on-line quizzes each weekend test knowledge of the material covered during the previous week as well as the assigned readings and mini-lectures that prepare you for the next week’s material.

**Week One (Aug. 29 and 31)   Introduction and God the Creator**
Monday: Introduction

For Wed. Aug. 31: Read Genesis chapters 1-4 and Qur’an 13:2-4; 32:4-9; 2:28-37; 7:10-29; 20:115-123 - for class discussion.

After Wed. (and before you take the quiz) read the short general overview of Abrahamic Faiths (link on blackboard) and either of the short treatments on Abraham (links on blackboard)

On-line mini-lectures 1 and 2

On-line Quiz 1 (Quizzes will be available each week from Friday afternoon through Monday morning)

Week Two (Sept. 5 and 7) Children of Abraham

Sept. 5 – NO CLASS LABOR DAY


After Wed. Read Peters, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2

On-line mini-lectures 3 and 4

On-line Quiz 2

Week Three (Sept. 12 and 14) Children of Abraham (cont.) and The Faith of Abraham

For Monday Read Qur’an 2:124-135; 6:74-89 and Galatians 3 and 4; Romans 4 and 9

For Wednesday Read TBA

After Wed. Read TBA

On-line mini-lectures 5 and 6

On-line Quiz 3

Week Four (Sept. 19 and 21) Foundational Figures: Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed

Readings TBA

Readings for after Wed. – Peters, Chapters 3 and 4

On-line mini-lectures 7 and 8

On-line Quiz 4
Week Five (Sept. 26 and 28)  Community and the Law
Readings for Monday and Wednesday TBA
Readings for after Wed. – Peters, Chapters 5 and 8
On-line mini-lectures 9 and 10
On-line Quiz 5

Week Six (Oct. 3 and 5)  Interpreting Texts and Traditions
Readings for Monday and Wednesday TBA
Readings for after Wed. – Peters, Chapters 6 and 7
On-line mini-lectures 11 and 12
On-line Quiz 6

Week Seven (Oct. 10 and 12)  Ascetics, Worship and Pilgrimage (Approaching the Sacred)
Readings for Monday and Wednesday TBA
Readings for after Wed. – TBA
No Quiz or Mini-lectures this weekend. Study for the Midterm!

Week Eight (Oct. 17 and 19)  MIDTERM EXAM and Transition
Oct. 17: MIDTERM EXAM
Oct. 19: Transition discussion
Readings for after Wed. – TBA
On-line mini-lectures 13 and 14
On-line Quiz 7

Week Nine (Oct. 24 and 26)  A Shared History Part 1: From Origins to Medieval Spain
Readings for Monday and Wednesday TBA
Week Ten (Oct. 31 and Nov. 2)  A Shared History Part 2: The Crusades and After

Week Eleven (Nov. 7 and 9)  Making the Modern World – Conflicts and Possibilities

Week Twelve (Nov. 14 and 16) Negotiating A Peace – the Camp David Accords (a Case Study)

(Nov. 21-25)  NO CLASS  Thanksgiving Break

Week Thirteen (Nov. 28 and 30)  The Modern Landscape
Readings for after Wed. – TBA

On-line mini-lectures 23 and 24

On-line Quiz 12

**Week Fourteen (Dec. 5 and 7) Considering the Future - Shared Space**

For Mon. read TBA

Dec. 7th no class -- finish Journals and Reflection!!

Mon., Dec. 12th: Final Lecture and Review Session for the final exam

Dec. 12th: COLLECT JOURNALS and REFLECTION in class for final evaluation

Dec. 14th: NO CLASS – study for exam!

**FINAL EXAM:** Dec. 16th 10:30-12:30