

Abilene Christian University
College of Biblical Studies
Course Syllabus

BMIS 458.01 ABRAHAMIC FAITHS

Fall 2011
TR 3:00 - 4:20
3 Credit Hours

INSTRUCTOR: Kilnam Cha, Ph.D.

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OFFICE HOURS: TR: 2-3:00 PM; MWF: 9-11 AM

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of ACU is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. The broad mission of the Department of Bible, Missions, and Ministry is to provide Biblical training, Christian spiritual formation, and a Christian world-view for every student in the university.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The various aspects of religion - conceptual, ritual, personal and social - from the perspective of the living world religions in order to gain a greater skillfulness in approaching the non-Christian.

TEXTBOOK

- Smith, Houston. *The World's Religions*. New York: Harper Collins. 1991.
- Maurer, Andreas. *Ask Your Muslim Friend: An Introduction to Islam and a Christian Guide for Interaction with Muslims*. Kempton Parks: AcadSA Publishing, 2008.

COURSE GOALS

- To understand each religion as the cumulative tradition of a people group and the personal faith of an individual.
- To understand that there are universal patterns of belief and behavior that can be observed in all religions (Therefore, the student may find similarities between his or her religion and the religion of others).
- To understand each religion, however, is unique unto itself and cannot be "demystified" or reduced to common universal elements.
- To understand some of the ways that religious pluralism has been understood.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Recognize pivotal historical events and seminal belief systems of the major religions of the world.
- Demonstrate comprehension of key religious concepts discussed in class.
- Identify similarities and differences between the various religions of the world.

- Develop the ability to “bracket” one’s own religious beliefs in order to empathize with, and therefore, understand more fully other religious perspectives.

REQUIREMENTS

- **ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION** (100 points total)
 - o The course will include both lecture and discussion. Your learning experience will suffer when you’re not in class. Thus all students are expected to attend every class. If a student misses more than 5 sessions s/he will automatically receive a failing grade for the semester regardless of her/his performance on the class assignments including exams.
- **REFLECTION PAPERS** (20 points each, 300 points total)
 - o You are to reflect on reading assignments for each day and write a 300 word essay.
- **EXAMS** (300 points total)
 - o There will be three take-home exams synthesizing and reflecting on reading assignments and lectures.
- **SUMMIT REFLECTION PAPER** (100 points)
 - o Attend at least two sessions related to the topic of our course and reflect on how they help you understand the topic better.
- **CHURCH /SYNAGOGUE/ MOSQUE VISIT REPORTS** (100 points total)
 - o Participate in at least five different religious rituals, e.g., prayer or worship practices of some spiritual traditions, and write a report for each visit. You need to provide evidence in worship report, such as a bulletin. (Visits to other Christian traditions should include at least one visit to an ethnic church).
 - o They will be a typewritten, single-spaced report of a 500 words in length.
 - o They should include the following:
 - Characteristics of other faiths/tradition including strengths and perceived weaknesses, if there is any;
 - What you learned from the visit;
 - Was there any challenge to your faith?
- **FINAL PAPER** (100 points)
 - o This paper culminates visits to other faiths’ sanctuaries (Synagogue, mosque)
 - o It should include the following:
 - Characteristics of other faiths/traditions, including perceived strengths and weakness.
 - What you learned from the visit and from the course over all
- **GRADING SCALE**
 - o 90-100 = A
 - o 80 - 89 = B
 - o 70 - 79 = C
 - o 60 - 69 = D
 - o 0 - 59 = F

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA): If you have a diagnosed disability, please notify **Alpha Academic Services** (674-2750) before or immediately after your first scheduled class meeting. After your disability has been verified, your instructor will work with you and **Alpha Academic Services** to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that you have a fair opportunity to perform in the course.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Buber, Martin. *Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1997.
- Camody, Denise L. and John T. Camody. *Ways to the Center: An Introduction to World Religions*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1981.
- _____. *The Story of World Religions*. Mt. View: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1988.
- Heschel, Abraham J. *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism*. New York: The Free Press, 1959.
- _____. *Prophets*. Peabody: Prince, 1999.
- Hopfe, Lewis and Mark Woodward. *Religions of the World*. 11th ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2008.
- Kugel, James L. *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now*. New York: Free Press, 2007.
- Neusner, Jacob. *Signposts on the Way of Torah*. Wadsworth Publishing Company: Belmont, 1998.
- Nielsen, Niels. et al. *Religions of the World*. New York: St. Martin Press, 1983.
- Noss, John B. and David S. Noss. *A History of the World's Religions*. New York: Macmillan, 1990.
- Riches, John. *The Bible: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Samuelson, Norbert M. *An Introduction to Modern Jewish Philosophy*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1989.
- Smart, Ninian. *The Religious Experience*. New York: Scribner, 1984.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. Nottingham: IVP, 2004.

BMIS 458.01 ABRAHAMIC FAITHS COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Subject	Reading Assignment
8/30	Introduction to the Course	
9/1	Introduction to Judaism	Smith, 271-316
9/6	What is the Bible to the Jews?	Kugel, 662-689
9/8	Non-Specialization of Justice	Heschel, <i>Prophets</i> , Chs. 1, 9, 11
9/13	Franz Rosenzweig & Covenant	Samuelson, 212-266
9/15	Knowledge of God	Heschel, <i>BG&M</i> , 12, 23, 38
9/20	SUMMIT	NO CLASS
9/22	Guest Speaker	Buber, 89-102, 113-118, 214-233
9/27	Discussion on Synagogue Visit	Synagogue Visit Report Due
9/29	EXAM 1	
10/4	Introduction to Christianity: Brief History on Christian thinkers	Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters
10/6	Unity & Diversity of the Bible Acts and Paul's Jerusalem Journey	Bruce Metzger, <i>The Canon of the NT</i>
10/11	History of Biblical Interpretation	Riches, <i>The Bible</i> , 70-99
10/13	Different Christian Traditions	Smith, 346-362
10/18	Discussion on Other Tradition Visits	Other Tradition Visit Report Due
10/20	GLOBAL MISSION WORKSHOP	
10/25	Knowledge of God	Wright, Chs. 5-6
10/27	Global Christianity - Guest Speaker	
11/1	EXAM 2	
11/3	Introduction to Islam	Smith, 221-267
11/8	Quran	Maurer, 30-96
11/10	Islamic laws and duties	Maurer, 97-124
11/15	Diversity in Islam	Maurer, 126-166
11/17	The Spread of Islam	TBA
11/22	Guest Speaker	
11/29	NO CLASS	Professor at the annual SBL meeting
12/1	Encountering Muslims	Maurer, 223-267
12/6	EXAM 3	
12/8	Conclusion	