

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION



READING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S SCRIPTURE

SYLLABUS AND COURSE GUIDE
RELIGION
SPRING QUARTER, 2016
PROFESSOR LAURIE ZOLOTH

Monday and Wednesday 11-12:20pm

WELCOME

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Have you ever read the Koran? How about the Hebrew Bible? The New Testament?

This is a seminar in which we will slowly and carefully read the core sacred texts of three traditions—Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. At the heart of each of these religions is a Book that is considered holy. It is read and studied and used to justify behavior, especially ethical and moral choices. These texts have been treasured and taught, taken across thousands of years and miles to play a role in our contemporary public life. Typically, these books are only read carefully within their communities. But at the University, we study these texts seriously, thoughtfully and respectfully and pay close attention to their reasons and justifications. We live side by side in a pluralistic American democracy, and we should know what our neighbor holds most dear and finds most true. We will begin to learn by simply reading together and thinking about the reasons of these different Scriptural traditions. No prior expertise needed.

POLICIES

Of course, in a class about Scripture(s) you should be good. Do not cheat. Don't plagiarize. It is great to quote an article or text you like at length in your writing or oral arguments- just cite it in proper footnote form and give the author full credit. Please be ethical, honest and kind to your fellow class citizens. Detailed lists that expand the idea of honesty, integrity and kindness to all are available online in the student handbook. Each seminar that I teach is an attempt to create a thoughtful, serious and creative scholarly community. So, please help to create such a place.

This does not mean that you will agree with every idea presented in the course, or the readings, or the discussion of your honest and kind fellow course citizens. Deep and passionate arguments are the hallmark of all serious thought. These texts are the site of deep and abiding contention and we live in an historical era in which the texts you will read motivate action, sometimes violent, sometimes heroic, sometimes compassionate. We will

learn to think and argue with care and intelligence. Learning to argue passionately but peacefully and logically on behalf of your position is one of the skills of academic scholarship. Please come to see me after class with any concerns about this or any other issue.

Things Professor Zoloth prefers

I, too, am tempted by cell phones and computers. Thus, I ask you to turn off these seductive implements during class. Please print out and bring the text selection and please bring your book to class. When you are writing; Do not end your sentences with a dangling participle and please remember to use inclusive language, for our language shapes our thought.

OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL

How to find me/ Please find me:

Crowe 4-140

lzoloth@northwestern.edu

Open office hours—just drop in! Monday and Wednesday at 12:30-2:30pm

Or make an appointment for another time (email me to schedule)

It is my expectation that you will come to at least one office hour this quarter.

Class Structure

Our class will begin with a introduction to the three Scriptures of the Abrahamic Tradition This are: The Hebrew Bible, The New Testament, and The Qu'ran (Koran.) We will then turn to the method of reading and discussing these books called "Scriptural Reasoning," which will give you tools for understanding a theological argument. Each week, we will break into small groups to discuss the texts, focusing on a different theme each week. In addition, we will read secondary essays (called "secondary" because they are not the original work but commentary about them.)

Note on discussion:

This is a seminar with a strong discussion component. I expect you both to understand and be able to summarize the ideas put forward by the texts that you read and to think creatively about them, then make and defend your own arguments about the texts we will read in class.

GRADING

The class will use several different methods of evaluation. Every week, you will be required to reflect on the readings, and produce a short (500 word) “A” paper. This is based on British methods (the name of the standard size paper in England is called an “A-4” not “8 1/2 by 11,” thus “A paper”) in this paper you will first will summarize the arguments in the reading assignment and then you will evaluate the authors argument. I will grade this weekly. You will also be graded on your class participation, and your ability to orally defend arguments persuasively. Finally, there will be a short essay midterm and an 8 page essay final based on your “A” papers and the readings assigned and read and “reasoned” in class.

Participation: We will read texts in small groups every week.

This class uses a combination of brief lectures and discussion. As such, students are required to attend all classes and actively participate by asking questions. You can raise the question in class or write questions about the reading and hand them in at the beginning of the seminar. Students should come to class on time, having done the reading and have the texts they have read printed and with them. This class is ***highly interactive***. I will be evaluating your participation along several criteria: initiating discussion and questioning the text, responding to your fellow students kindly and honestly, logical using the text in supporting your points. Oral participation is expected and encouraged, and since each of you matters, please email me if you will not be in class. Remember that the College asks you to stay home if you have fever and a contagious illness. You are required to attend all classes. If you are ill, have a family emergency, or a pressing work or community obligation, please email me in advance, for I am concerned, as your teacher, for your welfare.

SYLLABUS: READINGS AND SCHEDULE

BOOKS:

REQUIRED:

THE TORAH JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY VERSION

THE QU’RAN OXFORD EDITION

THE NEW TESTAMENT REVISED STANDARD EDITION

SELECTIONS ON CANVAS:

THE PROMISE OF SCRIPTURAL REASONING, FORD AND PECKHAM

JEWISH VIEWS OF SCRIPTURE SOMMERS
QURANIC LAW AHMED
SURPRISED QUASH

1. WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURE(S)

TUESDAY: MARCH 29, 2016

1. INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURES: WHY READ?
2. INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURAL REASONING AS A METHOD: HOW TO READ?

WHAT TO READ TODAY: READ THE FIRST 11 CHAPTERS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE (GENESIS 1)
READ IT LIKE A NOVEL. THIS IS THE PREHISTORY OF A SHARED NARRATIVE

WEDNESDAY: MARCH 30, 2016

1. THE CREATION OF THE WORLD
2. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

WHAT TO READ TODAY : NOW READ THE QURAN, SURA 2(THE COW) VERSE 22, 29-30;
SURA 57 1-4; SURA 23 27-31 ; SURA 71 (NUN) ENTIRELY.

ON CANVAS: "SCRIPTURAL REASONING," DAVID FORD

**DUE ON MONDAY! YOUR FIRST ESSAY. WRITE YOUR REFLECTION ABOUT THE CREATION STORIES
WE HAVE READ. DOES FORD'S ESSAY HELP YOU TO READ THESE TEXTS DIFFERENTLY THAN YOU MAY
HAVE?**

WEEK TWO: THE CENTRAL FIGURE OF ABRAHAM

MONDAY: APRIL 4

1. READING ABRAHAM
2. WHO IS ABRAHAM AND WHY IS HE IMPORTANT?
3. THE MODELS OF HOSPITALITY—THE TENT AND THE CITY

**WHAT TO READ TONIGHT: ON CANVAS "READING WITH OTHERS" GIBBS AND SURA 37- 83-
113**

WEDNESDAY: APRIL 6

1. ABRAHAM AND THE AKEDAH
2. WHY IS THIS STORY INCLUDED?
3. ISMAEL VS ISAAC VS JESUS

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT: LOOK AT THE ACCOUNT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT OF THE DEATH OF JESUS. COMPARE THIS IS MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE AND JOHN.

A PAPER DUE MONDAY

WEEK THREE: THE WOMEN IN OUR STORY

MONDAY APRIL 11

1. SARAH
2. HAGAR

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT (ON CANVAS) AYESHA CHAUDRY ON SCRIPTURE AND WIVES

WEDNESDAY APRIL 13

1. NEW TESTAMENT MARY
2. QURANIC MARY

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT (ON CANVAS) SCRIPTURAL READING AND THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY, SUSANNAH TICCIAI

A PAPER DUE MONDAY

WEEK FOUR: THE STRANGERS

MONDAY: APRIL 18

1. JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS – HEBREW SCRIPTURES
2. JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS- QURAN

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT ON CANVAS: ZOLOTH ON CLIMATE REFUGEES

WEDNESDAY APRIL 20

1. SAMARITANS
2. RUTH
3. THE POOR IN MEDINA

MIDTERM HANDED OUT TODAY: DUE ON MONDAY -- NO "A" PAPER THIS WEEK

WEEK FIVE: OPPRESSION AND LIBERATION

MONDAY: APRIL 25

1. SLAVES IN EGYPT
2. ROMAN OPPRESSION

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT : ON CANVAS: READING THE BURNING BUSH, DAVIES

WEDNESDAY: APRIL 27

1. POLITICAL THEOLOGY
2. LIBERATION NOW AND THEN

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT: ON CANVAS EXODUS AND LIBERATION, WALTZER

A PAPER DUE MONDAY

WEEK SIX: POWER AND VIOLENCE

MONDAY: MAY 2

1. VIOLENCE AND RELIGION
2. ALLIES AND ENEMIES

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT: ON CANVAS READING AS A QURANIC PRACTICE, WINTER

WEDNESDAY: MAY 4

1. THE SHOAH

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT: ON CANVAS: THE DOG: LEVINAS

A PAPER DUE MONDAY

WEEK SEVEN: PROMISED LANDS

MONDAY: MAY 9

1. WHAT IS A PROMISED LAND?
2. PROBLEMS AND PROMISES

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT: ON CANVAS PHILOSOPHIC WARRANTS FOR SCRIPTURAL REASONING. OCHS

WEDNESDAY: MAY 11

1. DUTIES TO THE PROMISED LAND

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT: LAUDATO SI, POPE FRANCIS

A PAPER DUE MONDAY

WEEK EIGHT: LEARNING AND TEACHING

MONDAY: MAY 16

1. LEARNING
2. WHAT IS A LESSON?

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT: MAKING DEEP REASONS PUBLIC, ADAMS

WEDNESDAY MAY 18

1. TEACHING
2. WHAT ARE YOUR DUTIES TO THE FUTURE?

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT: ON CANVAS A HANDBOOK FOR SCRIPTURAL READING, KEPNES

A PAPER DUE MONDAY

A SPECIAL CLASS: AT YOUR PROFESSOR'S HOUSE, SATURDAY, MAY 21
1232 HINMAN AVENUE (AN EASY WALK)
4: 30 -6PM: READING TEXTS AND EATING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S FOOD

WEEK NINE: COVENANTS

MONDAY: MAY 23:

1. PROMISES AND COVENANTS
2. CAN PROMISES BE BROKEN?

WHAT TO READ TONIGHT: THE PROMISE OF SCRIPTURAL REASONING: HARDY

WEDNESDAY: MAY 25TH

1. **LAST CLASS- WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR NEIGHBOR?**

WEEK TEN: HOLIDAY AND READING WEEK

FINAL EXAM:. DUE ON JUNE 8TH

Enjoy Your Summer!