Religious Studies 201: Religion and Culture

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Course Overview:
The pervasive mutual influence of modern (Western) culture and (Abrahamic) religion upon each other--focussing on the three religions "of the Book." Format: discussion of a succession of topics selected for broad interest and application. Theory of “revealed” religion, the Holocaust/Shoah, the influence of the Puritans in America, "fundamentalisms" both Christian and Islamic, the Qur’an, “intelligent design,” the qualities and kinds of "love" defined in our culture, Freud’s view of religion.

Emphasis not on mastery of facts (though facts help) or on the writing of formal research papers, but rather on thoughtful presentation of your own considered responses to the varied course materials. Testing by choice of pre-announced essay questions. You will be evaluated on your ability to analyze texts or issues, to think and judge for yourself, and to organize effective essay answers and “op-ed” pieces. Participation in class discussion will have a non-quantifiable impact upon the final grade.

Learning outcomes: you will be able to demonstrate elementary knowledge of the Holocaust/Shoah in Europe (1933-45), the roots and expressions of Christian Fundamentalism in America, the sacred text (the Qur'an) and its interpretations in historical and contemporary Islam, Freud’s actual theory of religion, and the traditionally conceived difference between romantic and religious love in western civilization.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete the course should be able to demonstrate elementary knowledge of the Holocaust/Shoah in Europe (1933-45), the roots and expressions of Christian Fundamentalism in America, the sacred text (the Qur'an) and its interpretations in historical and contemporary Islam, Freud's actual theory of religion, and the traditionally conceived difference between romantic and religious love in western civilization.

REQUIRED READING:

This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen, Tadeusz Borowski
The Crucible, Arthur Miller
The Koran (Dover Thrift Edition--cheap)
The Future of an Illusion, Sigmund Freud
Tristan and Iseult, ed., Joseph Bedier.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and reading of assignments expected.

3-Page/750-Word **Op-Ed Article** on an aspect of the Holocaust (12%)

**QUIZ** on *The Crucible* (8% of grade)

**MID-TERM** (20% of grade)

3-Page/750-Word **Op-Ed Article** on an aspect of Islam (12%)

3-Page/750 **Op-Ed Article** on Freud (12%)

**FINAL EXAM** (35% of grade)

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Readings are to be completed for discussion on the days indicated. Regular attendance expected. Keep up. Contribute to class.

Week 1  Introduction, “revealed religion”

Week 2  Holocaust issues

  “  Video: “Memory of the Camps” (1945)

Week 3  *This Way for the Gas*  
         (Eid-al-Fitr, end of Ramadan)

  “  Paul Celan’s “Death Fugue” (hand-out), Video

Week 4  Holocaust: treatment with humor? Videos  **Op-Ed Article due**  
         (Wed. – Fri.: Rosh Hashanah: New Year 5771)

  Puritanism in America

  (Friday: Eid-al-Fitr: end of Ramadan)

Week 5  *The Crucible -- Quiz*  

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  (Fri.- Sat.: Yom Kippur: repentence)

Week 6  Fundamentalism: definitions, history

  Case Study #1: Creation Science/Intelligent Design
Week 7  Video: Trial in Arkansas, 1980
        Case Study #2: rift in the Southern Baptist Convention
        (Rosh Hashanah, began at sundown the 28th)

Week 8  Video: W.A. Criswell, P. Patterson, 1st Church Dallas
        Video: Bill Moyers on the rift in the Southern Baptist Convention
        (Yom Kippur begins sundown on the 7th)

Week 9 Mid-Term
        Introduction to Islam, *The Koran (Qur'an)*, selections

Week 10 Video: the Hajj
        Fall Break

Week 11 *The Koran (Qur'an)*, selections
        Video: Leila Ahmed on opportunities of women in Islam

Week 12 *Koran/Qur'an*, other issues
        (All Souls on the 2nd)  **Op-Ed Article due**
        *Future of an Illusion*
        (Hajj begins on the 4th)

Week 13  
        (Kristallnacht 1938)
        
Week 14 Video: “Sigmund Freud” (A&E Biography)
        Romantic and Courtly Love “Wisdom”  **Op-Ed Article due**

        Thanksgiving break

Week 15 *Tristan and Iseult*, Richard Wagner’s “Liebestod” (video)
        Biblical/Traditional Christian Love “Wisdom”

        **Final Exam** (2:00 - 4:00 p.m.)

Note: The course has an online site at Blackboard, reachable through the login screen:
http://blackboard.sc.edu. To log in and proceed to your "My USC" screen you will need a
userid and password. At the "My USC" screen click on the number: title of this course.
Initially, I have put this syllabus up (under "course documents"), along with a link to my
personal pages, and the site will develop if interest and need dictate.