



*GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY*  
School of Continuing Studies

## BLHS 010-01                      RELIGION AND THE WORD

**Dates:** Wednesday September 4 – Wednesday December 18, 2019

**Location:** This course takes place on-site at the Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies' building located at 640 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001. Additionally, Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies (SCS) uses Canvas as its Learning Management System. To learn more about Canvas, please go through the [Canvas Guide for Students](#).

**Faculty:** Joseph E. Jensen, Ph.D. **Contact Information:** [jej3@georgetown.edu](mailto:jej3@georgetown.edu)

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 5:00-7:30 in the lounge area on C2 at the Mass Ave / Chinatown Campus. Or request an appointment by email with a couple of suggested times to meet in person, or on Zoom. I will respond to all emails within one business day.

### **Course Description:**

A Survey of the teachings and scriptures of the world's great living religious traditions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Special emphases will be given to an appreciation of the belief systems, moral teachings, rituals, histories and structures of these traditions as they touch upon and reflect the human quest for ultimate meaning.

A successful leader in today's world needs a basic knowledge of the beliefs and practices of several of the Worlds' many religions and the significant roles these religions have played and continue to exercise in human history and social interaction. Familiarity with various understandings and examples of religion and of religious expression and practice is essential no matter what one's own religious persuasion. Throughout the course, the following general curricular goals will be emphasized: the quest for ultimate meaning, a liberal arts foundation, appreciation for diversity, ethical insight, and a focus on gender.

### **Course Learning Objectives:**

At the completion of this course:

- 1.) Students will be able to articulate orally and in writing the concept of “ultimate questions” and to discuss the alternative responses to these questions as they found in the wisdom of the world’s major living religions.
- 2.) Students will have read and explored significant portions from the scriptures of the world’s major living religious traditions, in light of the historical times, geographical places, and distinctive cultures in which the texts were produced.
- 3.) In short academic essays students will have reflected upon the concept of “revelation” and of the influence of culture and language in communicating revelation.
- 4.) Students will be able to articulate the difference between exegesis of a sacred text on the basis of historical critical analysis and eisegesis, the reading into a particular text a meaning that one is seeking.
- 5.) Students will gain skill in the ability to identify and distinguish different kinds of literary genre within sacred texts and, be able to explain the importance of making such distinctions when seeking to interpret and apply any text in today’s world.
- 6.) In keeping with the goals and themes of the Liberal Studies program, students will be able to address how the sacred texts of different religions have contributed to and shaped the interpretations of relationships between the human and the divine, the individual and society, and identity and difference.
- 7.) Students will achieve a sensitivity for abusive use of sacred texts and an awareness of the potential constructive use of such texts in current debate related to gender roles, the construing, exercise, and challenge of authority, and ethics, especially as ethics relates to justice.
- 8.) Students will be able to discuss and articulate the relationship between this course’s goals, those of the Liberal Studies program, and their own individual goals and ambitions.

Georgetown’s Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies program is not a one-size-fits-all curriculum; rather, it is a combination of many different programs of study. This interdisciplinary approach provides students with a comprehensive learning experience while helping them achieve intellectual advancement, enhanced critical thinking abilities, and a greater cultural understanding.

Rooted in Georgetown’s Jesuit values, the program prepares students to excel academically and professionally, equipping them with the tools they need to become successful leaders who are committed to serve others and make an impact on the world. Through an emphasis on educating the whole person, Georgetown provides students with a world-class education that teaches them the art of inquiry and innovation. Students learn advanced critical thinking while developing a deeper understanding of past and present human behavior—in all its interconnected complexity.

### **Required Textbooks:**

***The Norton Anthology of World Religions*** (NAWR), Jack Miles, ed. 2 vols. WW Norton, 2015. ISBN 978-0-393-06253-3.

***Confucianism: A Very Short Introduction***. Daniel K. Gardner. Oxford University Press. 2014. ISBN: 978-0-19539891-5

In addition to readings from the textbooks, *other material is posted on Canvas* as reading assignments for individual classes.

## Course Requirements:

As part of your learning experience, you can expect to:

1. Communicate via email including sending attachments.
2. Navigate the internet using a Web browser.
3. Use office applications such as Microsoft Office to create documents.
4. Learn how to submit assignments in Canvas.
5. Upload and download saved files.
6. Have easy access to the Internet.
7. Navigate Canvas, including using the email component within Canvas.
8. Use a microphone to record audio through your computer.
9. Use an internal or external camera to record video through your computer.

In this course we will use TurnItIn and Zoom.

- TurnItIn is a writing assessment tool that is used to detect plagiarism and allows teachers to provide assignment feedback to students. [Instructions for TurnItIn are available here.](#)
- Zoom enables users to conduct synchronous (“real-time”) conferences, presentations, lectures, meetings, office hours and group chats via audio, video, text chat and content sharing. [Instructions for Zoom are available here.](#)

Computer requirements to complete the course are listed by [Canvas in the Instructure Guides.](#)

## Course Expectations:

This course consists of 15 weeks. You are expected to have done the readings in advance of the weekly lectures, to engage with the course material in depth, and to attend and be on time for the weekly class session. Your responsibilities include completing the assigned reflections and papers. Participation is essential to your success in this class. In order to get full credit for participation, you will have to attend and participate in all discussions.

You should plan on spending a minimum of 4 hours per week outside of class to complete the work for each class.

**Academic Integrity:** All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. We assume you have read the honor code material located at <http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code>, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, What is Plagiarism, Sanctioning Guidelines, and Expedited Sanctioning Process. Papers in this course will all be submitted to turnitin.com for checking. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code.

The Honor Code pledge follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a

responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

**Plagiarism:** Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in the workplace, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the [Gervase Programs](#). If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing, and the need to credit, check out [Plagiarism.org](#).

### Course Writing Assignments

- 1.) Eight academic essays: As a part of your preparation for a minimum of eight classes during the semester you will prepare an academic essay that reflects on the readings assigned for that week, to be completed and submitted on-line on Canvas **prior** to the class. The entries are to be **two to three pages** [625 – 900 words]. In your essays you will properly reference the reading materials using **proper APA citations** [see below]. More specifics on Canvas.
- 2.) Four assigned Papers [Prompts and specific instructions on Canvas]:
  - A three page [900 – 1000 words] paper that answers the question "What Constitutes a Religion?" due on Canvas Saturday, September 14 at midnight.
  - A five page [1500 – 1650 words] paper discussing theories about the origins of religion, due on Canvas Saturday, October 5 at midnight.
  - A five page [1500 – 1650 words] paper discussing religions as sources for moral decisions due on Canvas Saturday, November 9 at midnight.
  - A ten page [3000 – 3300 words] paper that reflects upon and compares how each of the religions we have considered over the semester answers the question, "What does it mean to be human?" due on Canvas Saturday, December 21 at midnight.

**Citation Style:** This course uses APA style for all writing and research assignments. Resources for this citation style are available through [Georgetown Library Citation Guide](#) and [APA Style Guidebook](#).

**Late Submission Policy:** Written work is due by the assigned due dates. Follow-ups and class participation are contingent on the timely submission of your work. As stated in the [Student Handbook](#), you must notify me and obtain my approval if you are unable to complete any assignment by the published submission deadline. I will gladly consider granting extensions for assignments as long as the request is made at least 24 hours before the due date/time. The request must include the date and time when you intend to submit the assignment. If you fail to give both a date and a time, however, the request will not be honored. However, no late submissions or extensions are available for the last week of class or for any missed lectures. Late responses with no previous arrangements for all assignments will be penalized by 10% for each day or portion of a day that the assignment is late, unless previous arrangements have been made.

**Grading:**

- The eight academic essays are 25% of the final grade.
- The assigned paper on “What Constitutes a Religion” is 10% of the final grade.
- The assigned paper on “The Origins of Religion” is 15% of the final grade.
- The assigned paper on “Religion and Moral Decisions” is 15% of the final grade.
- The assigned paper on “Religion and What Does it Mean to be Human” is 25% of the final grade.
- Attendance and participation is 10% of the final grade.

Grading in this course will be determine by the following grading scale:

- A: 93% to 100%
- A-: 90% to 92%
- B+: 87% to 89%
- B: 83% to 86%
- B-: 80% to 82%
- C+: 77% to 79%
- C: 73% to 76%
- C-: 70% to 72%
- D+: 67% to 69%
- D: 63% to 66%
- F: 62% and below

**Accommodations:** Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations to ensure equity and access to programs and facilities. Students are responsible for communicating their needs to the Academic Resource Center, the office that oversees [disability support services](#), (202-687-8354; [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu); ) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. The University is not responsible for making special accommodations for students who have not declared their disabilities and have not requested an accommodation in a timely manner. Also, the University need not modify course or degree requirements considered to be an essential requirement of the program of instruction. For the most current and up-to-date policy information, please refer to the [Georgetown University Academic Resource Center website](#). Students are highly encouraged to discuss the documentation and accommodation process with an Academic Resource Center administrator.

**Student Support Services:** SCS offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed online, at the School of Continuing Studies downtown location, and on the main Georgetown campus:

- [Academic Resource Center](#)
- 202-687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)
- [Counseling and Psychiatric Services](#)
- 202-687-6985
- [Institutional Diversity, Equity & Affirmative Action \(IDEAA\)](#)
- (202) 687-4798

**Georgetown Library:** Students enrolled in online School of Continuing Studies SCS coursework have access to the University Library System's eResources, including 500+ research databases, 1.5+ million ebooks, and thousands of periodicals and other multimedia files (films, webinars, music, and images). Students can access these resources through the [Library's Homepage](#) by using their University username (NetID) and password (this is the same login information used to access email, BlackBoard, etc.). The Library does not mail physical items to students.

SCS students may make an appointment with a librarian to discuss a research topic, develop a search strategy, or examine resources for projects and papers. Librarians offer an overview of and in-depth assistance with important resources for senior or master's theses, dissertations, papers and other types of research. Appointments are conducted using Google Hangout (video-conferencing function) through the Georgetown Gmail System or by telephone. This service is available to currently enrolled students who need assistance with Georgetown-assigned projects and papers. Please review the [Services & Resources Guide for Online Students](#) for additional information.

**Research Guide:** The Bachelor of Liberal Arts program has an extensive online [Library Research Guide](#) designed for the subject and research specifications of our program. This Guide will give you direct access to the library resources central to your course research work.

**Learning Resources:** SCS offers a host of [learning resources](#) to its students. Two that you might find particularly helpful in this course are the [Writing Center](#) and [Refworks](#).

- The [Writing Center](#) offers professional writing support through its online peer tutoring service.
- [Refworks](#) is an online research management tool that aids in organizing, storing, and presenting citation sources for papers and projects.

**Technical Support:** Click on the Help link (on the bottom-left corner in Canvas) to reach Canvas Support, including the [Canvas Student Guide](#) and 24 hour Canvas Support Hotline at 855-338-2770. In this course we will use TurnItIn and Zoom.

TurnItIn is a writing assessment tool that is used to detect plagiarism and allows teachers to provide assignment feedback to students. [Technical support for TurnItIn is available.](#)

Zoom enables users to conduct synchronous ("real-time") conferences, presentations, lectures, meetings, office hours and group chats via audio, video, text chat and content sharing.

[Technical support for Zoom is available.](#)

## **Communications Guidelines**

**Netiquette Guidelines:** To promote the highest degree of education possible, we ask each student to respect the opinions and thoughts of other students and be courteous in the way that you choose to express yourself. The topics in this course can be controversial and promote debate. Students should be respectful and considerate of all opinions.

In order for us to have meaningful discussions, we must learn to genuinely try to understand what others are saying and be open-minded about others' opinions. If you want to persuade someone to see things differently, it is much more effective to do so in a polite, non-threatening

way rather than to do so antagonistically. Everyone has insights to offer based on his/her experiences, and we can all learn from each other. Civility is essential.

### **Statement of Student Conduct, Civility, and Engagement:**

The School of Continuing Studies offers students the opportunity to engage with faculty, staff, and peers in ways that foster intellectual growth and development in their chosen field of study. It is important to recognize that each member of our community brings his or her own values, thoughts, perspectives, and experiences into each interaction. We expect students to behave in a manner that is civil and respectful of others, and appreciate the learning opportunities that come from engaging pluralistic perspectives in a dynamic educational environment.

Engagement within the SCS Georgetown community takes places in on-campus meeting spaces and classrooms, and extends to online learning platforms and forums. Students should be particularly mindful that participation in class discussions, group assignments, emails, blogs, and social media reflect upon them personally, academically, and professionally. All viewpoints, editorials, and opinions expressed by students represent those students exclusively – and not the students' instructors, classmates, academic program, School, or University – even in cases when students are using Georgetown-affiliated systems like email, blogs, and online portfolios. The expectations for respect and civility are consistent for on-campus classes and spaces, as well as cyber, virtual, and online environments. Thus, civility and cybercivility are expected of all students, in all campus spaces.

SCS students are expected to adhere to the SCS guidelines for student conduct and the University Code of Student Conduct. In the event that a student's behavior is perceived to fall outside the stated SCS guidelines or may be a violation of the Code of Student Conduct, the matter may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for further review and possible sanctioning. Such instances can include but are not limited to: disruption of official university functions (including teaching, research, administration), failure to comply with a directive issued by a University official, harassment and bullying, and incivility. For questions regarding the SCS student conduct expectations please review the policy in-full found in the [Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies Undergraduate Bulletin](#). For questions about the Code of Student Conduct, please review the information provided by the [Office of Student Conduct](#).

**Communication:** In this course we will use Canvas to send email for private messages. You can either check your messages in the Canvas system or set your notifications to your preferred method of contact. Please check your messages at least once per day. When submitting messages, please do the following:

- Put a subject in the subject box that describes the email content with your name and module.
- Do not send messages asking general information about the class, please post those in the General Questions Discussion Board Forum.

**Turnaround and Feedback:** If you have a concern and send me a message, you can expect a response within one business days. Please allow two business days for assessment submission feedback.

**Extreme weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity:** During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Canvas will not be changed due to campus closings.

The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

**Copyright:** The materials used in Georgetown University courses ("Course Materials") generally represent the intellectual property of course instructors which may not be disseminated or reproduced in any form for public distribution (e.g., sale, exchange, etc.) without the written permission of the course instructor. Course Materials include all written or electronic documents and materials, including syllabi, current and past examination questions/answers, and presentations such as lectures, videos, PowerPoints, etc., provided by a course instructor. Course Materials may only be used by students enrolled in the course for academic (course-related) purposes.

Published course readings (book chapters, articles, reports, etc.) available in Canvas are copyrighted material. These works are made available to students through licensed databases or fair use. They are protected by copyright law and may not be further disseminated or reproduced in any form for distribution (e.g., uploading to websites, sale, exchange, etc.) without permission of the copyright owner.

More information about intellectual property and copyright can be found here:

<https://www.library.georgetown.edu/copyright>

More information about computer acceptable use policy and intellectual property can be found here: <https://security.georgetown.edu/it-policies-procedures/computer-systems-aup>

### **Policy Accommodating Students' Religious Observances**

The following is university policy: Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.

**Title IX at Georgetown:** <https://titleix.georgetown.edu/>

**Sexual Misconduct:** Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational programs, which includes sexual harassment or any acts of sexual misconduct. Title IX requires the University, upon becoming aware of any incident of sexual harassment and misconduct to respond appropriately to protect and maintain the safety of the University community, including students, faculty, and staff.



Georgetown University prohibits sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking.

Discrimination based on sex, including sexual misconduct and discrimination based on pregnancy or parenting status, subverts the University's mission and threatens permanent damage to the educational experience, careers, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Please know that as a faculty member I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence and sexual assault. However, University policy also requires me to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct.

Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. These resources include:

**Jen Schweer, MA, LPC**

Associate Director of Health Education Services for  
Sexual Assault Response and Prevention  
(202) 687-0323  
jls242@georgetown.edu

**Erica Shirley**

Trauma Specialist  
Counseling and Psychiatric  
Services (CAPS)  
(202) 687-6985  
els54@georgetown.edu

More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at:  
<https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help>

**Pregnancy Adjustments and Accommodations:** Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant and parenting students. Students may request adjustments based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication. Specific adjustments will be handled on a case by case basis and will depend on medical need and academic requirements. Students seeking a pregnancy adjustment or accommodation should follow the process laid out at:  
<https://titleix.georgetown.edu/student-pregnancy>.

**Course Schedule:**

Week 1: Wednesday, September 9.

Review Syllabus. What is religion? Origins of religion. Primal religions.

Read in NAWR vol. 1: "Preface," pp. xli – li, "General Introduction," pp. 3 – 51.

Week 2: Wednesday, September 11.

The Beginnings of Institutional Religion.

Read: "Introduction" and "Farmers and Herdsmen," pp. 1 – 45 in *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*, by Karen Armstrong. Anchor Books. 2014.

Canvas.

Read: "Introduction," pp. xv – xxiii and "The Axial Peoples (c. 1600 to 900 BCE)," pp. 3 – 56 in *The Great Transformation: The Beginnings of our Religious Traditions* by Karen Armstrong. Anchor Books. 2006. Canvas.

Saturday, September 14. First Assigned Paper, "What Constitutes a Religion" due on Canvas at midnight

Week 3: Wednesday, September 18. Hinduism.

Read in NAWR 1. Wendy Doniger. "Introduction: The Zen Diagram of Hinduism," pp 55 – 68. See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 1.

Week 4: Wednesday, September 25. Hinduism (continued)/

See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 1.

Week 5: Wednesday, October 2, Buddhism.

Read in NAWR 1. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. "Introduction: In the World of the Buddha," pp. 727 -759. See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 1.

Saturday, October 5. Paper discussing theories about the origins of religion, due on Canvas at midnight.

Week 6: Wednesday, October 9, Buddhism (cont.)

See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 1.

Week 7: Wednesday, October 16, Daoism & Confucianism.

Read in NAWR 1. James Robson. "Introduction: Daoism Lost and Found," pp. 1473 - 1500. See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR.

Week 8: Wednesday, October 23, Daoism & Confucianism (cont).

Read: **Confucianism: A Very Short Introduction**. Daniel K. Gardner. Oxford University Press. 2014. See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 1.

Week 9: Wednesday, October 30, Judaism

Read in NAWR vol. 2. David Biale. "Introduction: Israel among the Nations," pp. 55 – 66. See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 2.

Week 10: Wednesday, November 6, Judaism (cont.)

See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 2.

Saturday, November 9. paper discussing religions as sources for moral decisions due on Canvas Saturday, November 9 at midnight.

Week 11: Wednesday, November 13, Christianity

Read in NAWR vol. 2. Lawrence S. Cunningham. "Introduction: The Words and the Word Made Flesh," pp. 737 – 763. See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 2.

Week 12: Wednesday, November 20, Christianity (cont.)  
See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 2.

Week 13. Wednesday, November 27, Islam  
Read in NAWR vol. 2. Jane Dammen McAuliffe. "Introduction: Submission to God as the Wellspring of a Civilization," pp. 1377 – 1407. See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 2.

Week 14: Wednesday, December 4, Islam (cont.)  
See Canvas for specific selections from NAWR 2.

Week 15: Wednesday, December 18, Wrap Up Session.  
Class will be devoted principally to a student led and guided discussion of the course as a whole, its goals and objectives, its relation to other courses, to the Liberal Studies program, and to their own life and aspirations. Faculty will share some concluding thoughts on the course.

Saturday, December 21. • Paper that reflects upon and compares how each of the religions we have considered over the semester answers the question, "What does it mean to be human?" due on Canvas at midnight.