

**RE 103, RELIGION AND CULTURE, MEETS TR 3.40-5.30 IN LADD 307  
DR. CATHERINE BURRIS, CBURRIS@SKIDMORE.EDU  
OFFICE: LADD 215, OFFICE HOURS TR 2.00-3.30 AND BY APPOINTMENT**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is an introductory course on the nature of religion, the interaction of religion and culture, and the function of religious belief in the life of the individual and the group. Consideration will be given to such phenomena as myth and ritual, sacred time and space, mysticism, evil, conversion, and salvation, all through the lens of pilgrimage. Readings will be drawn from primary and secondary sources.

COURSE GOALS:

By the end of the term, you will:

- have acquired a basic knowledge of the five numerically largest living religious traditions;
- be able to responsibly and appropriately compare aspects of the social, cultural, and political effects and functions of those traditions in their adherents' lives;
- be able to pursue a college-level research project, including the formulation of a topic and thesis, acquisition and evaluation of sources, use and citation of sources, and presentation of findings in an oral format;
- be able to write an analytical essay based on critical reading of sources.

REQUIRED TEXTS, AVAILABLE AT THE BOOKSTORE:

- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 978-0061571282
- Bianchi, *Guests of God*, 978-0195342116
- Sax, *Mountain Goddess*, 978-0195069792
- Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred*, 978-0520241916
- Huber, *Holy Land Reborn*, 978-0226356488
- Kelner, *Tours that Bind*, 978-0814748169
- Markham & Lewis, *A World Religions Reader*, 2nd ed, 978-1405171090
- Turabian et al, *A Manual for Writers*, 7th ed, 978-0226823379

GRADING/POINTS, OUT OF 100 POSSIBLE:

1st midterm essay exam	10
2nd midterm essay exam	15
Final essay exam	20; note that this exam is cumulative
Research topic	expected; lack or inadequacy can cost 5 points
Draft thesis paragraph	expected; lack or inadequacy can cost 5 points
Revised thesis paragraph	5
Preliminary bibliography	5, but lack or inadequacy can cost 10 points
Annotated bibliography	15
Final abstract	10

Final presentation	5; note that your presence and response to other students' presentations is part of your grade
Participation/ discussion	15
Small essays	expected; lack or inadequacy can cost 2 pts/each
Dossier	expected; complete or partial lack costs up to 10 pts

A 95-100

A- 90-94

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D 60-69

F 59 and below

Rounding policy: .49 and below rounded down, .51 and above rounded up; .5 rounded down if participation score is below 10, up if participation score is 10 or above.

POLICIES AND CLARIFICATIONS:

Assignments are due in both in hard copy AND as an MSWord file through Blackboard SafeAssign at the beginning of the class session for which they are listed or announced in class, and are late thereafter. Find a backup printer in case something happens to your primary. Anything over one page [you may print on both sides, and I hope you will] MUST be stapled or paperclipped. Do not EVER fold the corners together as an attempt to fasten. It makes me crazy and is unacceptable. As in, I will take off half a point, as I will for unfastened multiple-page assignments. Really. Anything turned in late will be marked down from the score you would have received for an on-time assignment; the number of letter grades lost depends upon how late it is.

I reserve the right to add in pop quizzes if it becomes apparent that some of you are not reading the material, in order to penalize those evildoers. If forced to do this, the points lost will come proportionally out of every category above, for a total potential loss of 10 points.

Your punctual attendance is expected, as is consistent preparation (reading and consideration of all assigned texts and prompts, if any). While we all have off days, and may be late, ill, or not fully prepared on a day or even two during the term, a tendency to be late, miss class, or be unprepared will adversely affect your grade. Your respectful, informed participation in class discussion is also expected. This does not mean that you must agree with everything everyone says, or understand everything you read before class, or speak at length every class session. It does mean that you

must address your classmates, and me, politely and refrain from explicit or implicit personal attacks, insults, or intimidations as we discuss various topics and traditions, some controversial. Sometimes, your participation will begin with admitting that you just didn't understand  $x$ , and a plea for clarification. This is absolutely fine. So long as you have read the material, put real effort into deciphering it and figuring out how it fits with what we're discussing, and [this is important] looked up the meanings of words you don't understand, honest confusion is not a bad thing, and the odds are that you are not alone in your bafflement. You should bear in mind that attempting to substitute our discussions and my lectures for reading will not only be obvious in class and cost you points, but will also leave you woefully unprepared for exams. Skipping class, or sleeping through it, and attempting to substitute reading for listening, participating, and taking notes, will have the same undesirable results.

Please do not speak just to exercise your vocal cords, or to attempt to impress, or to proselytize. This will not get you any points, but will just annoy me and the rest of the class. On the subject of annoying the rest of us: you may not, barring a special circumstance arising from a documented disability, use electronic devices in class. Every time you do so, you lose points. Big time. Don't set your devices to vibrate, or to ring in the supposedly too-high-for-fogies-to-hear tone. Turn them off/silence them and put them away when you walk into the room. There are two exceptions, one incredibly rare. First, each class period, I will ask one of you to silence your phone but keep it visible in case of text alerts through the campus emergency system. Second, if you are, for instance, someone's birthing coach, and waiting for the call that labor has begun, or you are on an organ transplant list and waiting to be beeped to come to the hospital, you should, of course, keep your phone on and handy. If something along those lines is going on, and you must be reachable, warn me before class.

You may reach me outside of class by coming to office hours, or by email. I promise to check email at least once every day that we meet as a class. Meaning, if I'm out sick, or snowed in, or it's the weekend/a holiday, I may check, but I may not. If something urgent has come up that requires you to miss class or whatever, a truly urgent situation will be just as convincing when you tell me after that fact, so stop worrying and deal with whatever it is. If you are confused about something that's coming due, you can and should check with your classmates to see if you just missed some key instruction/factoid if you don't hear from me as soon as you would like. 'You didn't respond to me in time' is never, ever, an acceptable excuse for failure to do an assignment, or for turning it in late.

Checking with your classmates is also your first, best, recourse when you must miss a class. I will not provide notes, or give you any lecture I gave in class in your absence. You are responsible, regardless of your presence, for everything covered in class, including any changes to assignments/due dates, as well as for all of the assigned readings.

Finally, the dossier listed above is a notebook containing every written assignment you do for the course, including your exams. You must include not just a copy, but the marked-up copy you turned in and I returned. Do NOT include your class notes. The assignments must be in order, and must be bound/fastened into the notebook. I suggest a 1" three-ring binder. Pocket folders and binders that consist of a cover with a plastic slide over one edge are unacceptable. Do not bring your dossier to class until it is due at the end of the term. Do not carry it around or loan it out. I suggest keeping a backup file on your computer of everything you do, so that if your dog or roommate eats your dossier you can at least print those backups out and get partial credit for the dossier. All other assignments listed above will be discussed in more detail in class as their due dates approach.

SCHEDULE - as with all things, change is possible. Changes will be announced in class or, if class is not meeting for whatever reason, via email to the entire class. I will use your Skidmore email for these emails, as well as for emails to you alone; you should, therefore, check it regularly no matter how many other email accounts you may have.

- Sept. R 6 Introduction to the course; no reading due.  
 T 11 Prothero introduction, Markham & Lewis ch.1  
 R 13 Prothero ch.1, Markham & Lewis ch.11  
 T 18 Guests of God intro and chs.1-3  
 R 20 Guests of God chs.4-5, Turabian chs.1-2  
 T 25 Guests of God chs.6 and 8  
 R 27 Research topic due; Library instruction day, meet in.....; Turabian ch.3
- Oct. T 2 Prothero ch.2, Markham & Lewis ch.10  
 R 4 Encountering the Sacred ch.1  
 T 9 Encountering the Sacred ch.2  
 R 11 Preliminary bib. and draft thesis due; Encountering the Sacred chs.4 and 5  
 T 16 FIRST EXAM DUE IN CLASS; Turabian chs.4-5, 15.  
 R 18 Prothero ch.4; Markham & Lewis ch.3  
 T 23 Mountain Goddess ch.3  
 R 25 Mountain Goddess ch.5  
 T 30 Prothero ch.5; Markham & Lewis ch.5
- Nov. R 1 Holy Land Reborn chs.1 and 3; Turabian chs.16-17  
 T 6 Holy Land Reborn chs. 5 and 7  
 R 8 Revised thesis paragraphs due; Holy Land Reborn ch.9  
 T 13 SECOND EXAM DUE IN CLASS: Turabian chs.12-14 ( skip 13.3)  
 R 15 Prothero ch.7; Markham & Lewis ch.9  
 T 20 Tours That Bind pp.1-9 and chs.2 and 3  
 R 22 **THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS**  
 T 27 Tours That Bind chs.4 and 5  
 R 29 Tours That Bind ch.8, Prothero conclusion

- Dec. T4 Presentations, ann.bib. and abstract due before you present.  
R 6 Presentations, ann.bib. and abstract due before you present.  
T 11 Final thoughts; no reading, but a short, easy writing assignment

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULED FOR 1.30-4.30 P.M. DECEMBER 20.