



# Introduction to Theology & Religious Studies

Spring 2012

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[Professor Sheila E. McGinn, Ph.D.](#)

[Consult Dr. McGinn](#)

Tel: 216-397-3087

RL 101.60 ([V](#), [CS](#))

TR 11:00 AM–12:15 PM, AD 259

Office Hours: TR 2–4 PM or by appointment

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

A phenomenological approach to the academic study of religion. The course will investigate the universal human phenomenon of religion, especially as exemplified by Catholic Christianity and Chinese religious traditions, and how and why these religions shape and create meaning for their adherents. Topics include the human search for meaning; revelation and sacred scriptures; symbol, myth, and ritual; faith as it relates to reason, experience, and morality; theological method.

CLASS FORMAT includes lectures, discussions, careful reading of assigned texts, occasional film clips and slides, field research, simulations, debates, and various other activities that commend themselves throughout the course of the semester. An active learning model is emphasized.

## COURSE GOALS

1. Introduce students to the academic study of religion and theology (methods, approaches, central questions, distinctions between the two)
2. Introduce students to the basic features of Catholic Christianity and Chinese religious traditions
3. Reduce students' stereotyping of and prejudice against religious individuals and traditions other than their own, especially Catholics/Catholicism and Chinese religious traditions
4. Improve students' understanding of the value of a religious worldview

See the course Blackboard for detailed learning objectives.

REFLECTIONS on JESUIT EDUCATION & IGNATIAN PEDAGOGY (based in part on a talk given in September 2005 by the Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus)

Since the founding of their first school in 1548, the Society of Jesus has been committed to educating the whole person, head and heart, intellect and feelings. Disciplined studies engaging critical thinking are constitutive of the call to human excellence. The product of a Jesuit education is not a parrot repeating rote knowledge, but a person who exhibits precision of thought, eloquence of speech, moral excellence, and social responsibility. Ignatian pedagogy entails an apprenticeship where teachers accompany learners in the lifelong pursuit of competence, conscience, and compassionate commitment—a radically different process than the banking model ubiquitous in other educational settings.... [See the course Blackboard for further explanation.]

## ASSESSMENT

Students will demonstrate achievement of course learning outcomes by:

1. Successfully completing group discussions, quizzes, examinations, and other in-class writing assignments
2. Doing excellent work on the essays & podcast on the following topics (follow the hyperlinks for details):
  1. [What Is Real?](#)
  2. [Credo: What I Believe & Why](#)
  3. [Vocation: Discerning My Life-Calling](#)
  4. A Religious Worldview
3. Carefully and diligently completing a Social-Justice or Spirituality Project

## REQUIRED READINGS & RESOURCES

1. Adler, Joseph A. *Chinese Religious Traditions. Religions of the World*. Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002. ISBN 0-13-091163-1.
2. Mueller, J. J., *et alia*, *Theological Foundations: Alternate Edition*. Winona, Minn.: St. Mary's Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1-59982-008-8.
3. Hoff, Benjamin. *The Tao of Pooh*. New York: Routledge, 1987. ISBN 978-0-416-46960-8
4. Select films & videos. See the course Blackboard site for details.
5. Course Blackboard, RL 101 web, and other pertinent handouts, presentations, *etc.* See the course Blackboard site for details and for other recommended resources.

## ASSIGNMENTS, QUIZZES, & EXAMINATIONS

Various [written assignments](#), quizzes, and examinations will be used to facilitate and assess the student's achievement of the course objectives. The four essays are listed above under Assessment. The syllabus quiz is done online; other pop quizzes may be administered as needed. Two exams are required of everyone; the cumulative final exam is required of only those students who have an average test score below a passing grade (60%). See the Class Schedule for specific [due dates](#) for assignments and test dates.

## ASSUMPTIONS

This is an introductory survey of the fields of theology and religious studies, so students are not assumed to have any prior knowledge of the academic definitions of such technical terms as symbol, myth, scriptures, and revelation. As a college-level introduction, however, students are expected to speak and write in coherent and grammatically correct English, and to consult reference materials when they find it necessary to remedy any gaps in their basic knowledge and/or skills. Naturally, those with a broader understanding of religions—particularly Christianity and/or Chinese religious traditions—will have a more gradual "learning curve" than those who have had no prior exposure to the subject matter. The course website includes a list of suggested resources for students who are doing research in theology and religious studies or who feel the need for further background in the subject.

## EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to come prepared for each class and engage in polite, civil discourse while in class. [Follow this link](#) for more details.

## GRADING

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 25% | APPPAA (includes in-class and online discussions)     |
| 25% | Course Project  |
| 25% | Essays & Podcast (5% each)                            |
| 25% | Quizzes & Examinations (weighted 20/80, respectively) |

APPPAA [= [Attendance](#), [Professionalism](#), Preparation, Participation, Assessment, and Attentiveness].

Students benefit from interaction with their classmates, and they learn better when they are prepared for class. The baseline APPPAA score (what you have on the first of class) is a "0." Every contribution to class vitality will raise your [APPPAA score](#).

Attendance and professional behavior are expected at every class meeting. Consistently unprofessional behavior or more than three unexcused absences will have a *seriously* deleterious effect upon the final course grade. Follow the links above for further details.



#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University expects that students will submit their own original work and properly cite sources for their ideas, including the Bible, web pages, handouts, class notes, and ideas from other students. I am sure that you intend to do this. Follow this link to [be sure you understand what academic integrity comprises](#) so you can live up to it. Remember, "ignorance is no defense under the law"; you are required to know. *E.g.:*

- Do not "loan" papers or other assignments to friends, nor let them copy off your paper on a quiz or exam; this counts as academic dishonesty, too, and you face the same penalties as those who take the assignments and submit the ideas as their own.
- If you work with another class member to prepare an assignment, either submit the assignment jointly (one paper with both names on it) or footnote the other person's ideas just like you would any other source.

Any student who violates academic integrity will earn an "F" for the course. Almost every semester there is at least one student who chooses to test this policy and then is very upset when it is implemented; *do not be that student*. See [here](#) for the complete policy as published by the University in Summer 2007. You also may consult the appropriate section of the *JCU Community Standards Manual* for further information.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY & PRIVACY POLICY

Universities always have maintained confidentiality of students' transcripts and other records. In an attempt to establish more uniformity in this regard, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1972 established clear guidelines concerning which records can be available to whom and by what means. See the course Blackboard site for details on the course policies that conform to FERPA.

#### SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

John Carroll University recognizes its responsibility for creating an institutional climate in which students with disabilities can succeed. Students with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations and should have equal access to learning. In accordance with University policy, if you have a documented disability, you may be eligible to receive accommodations. If you believe you require accommodations, contact JCU's [Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities](#) (216-397-4967; room AD-7A) as soon as possible. Once your eligibility is determined, you will be given a letter to present to your instructors to help them know best how to assist you. Keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive so you must register promptly at the start of the term.

#### OTHER LINKS OF INTEREST

- [Dr. McGinn's home page](#)
- [Course Schedule](#)
- [Theology & Religious Studies Department home page](#)