

RELI 102

**CONTEMPORARY WESTERN RELIGIONS:
FROM JERUSALEM TO MECCA VIA ROME**

SCHOOL OF ART HISTORY, CLASSICS & RELIGIOUS STUDIES

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Summer 2006 - 2007

RELI 102

CONTEMPORARY WESTERN RELIGIONS: FROM JERUSALEM TO MECCA VIA ROME

Course co-ordinator:	Rebecca Frost rebecca.frost@vuw.ac.nz
Tutors:	Daniel Dowling dddd767@hotmail.com David Murphy davidmurphy99@yahoo.com Lita van Bunnik lita.vanbunnik@vuw.ac.nz
Where and when:	Lectures: HU 323 Tuesdays 5:30 pm –8:30 pm Tutorials: tba

Religious Studies is at Hunter. The programme administrator, Aiki Kalliabetsos, is in HU 318 on ext 5299. **Notices regarding the course or any information on changes will be posted on the notice board outside her office.**

Office Hours: The main office is open Monday - Friday, 09:30 am – 12:00 noon and 1:30 – 3:30pm. You can arrange to meet with Rebecca in HU 118 or email regarding essay guidance or any questions or queries.

Course outline

1 Course aims and objectives: The **first aim** of Contemporary Western Religions is to introduce students to the major Western religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). The course begins and ends by reflecting on the nature of the contemporary world (modern/ postmodern) and how the studies and approaches to the study of religions have changed over time in contrast to the so-called pre-modern world of tradition. The course explores each of the three religions in turn by examining some of their characteristic features, the challenges posed by the modern world, and the contemporary political and cultural contexts of these religions. It does so by giving an historical overview of religious traditions – including ancient history, theology and historical interactions with politics and cultures – and follows with contemporary case studies of transformations of religious traditions as we find them at the end of the twentieth century.

The **second aim** of Contemporary Western Religions is to develop students' academic skills in the context of the course. The following skills will be addressed:

- preparation, reading and note taking.
- essay research and writing.
- tutorial assignment writing and oral participation.
- test preparation and technique.

The **third aim** of Contemporary Western Religions is to introduce students to the academic study of religion and its various methodologies. At the end of the course students should have a sound grasp of significant aspects of the three religious traditions and the modern challenges they face, a degree of familiarity and experience with primary and secondary sources, some appreciation of the context of the study of contemporary religions and of knowledge of the various scholarly approaches to the academic study of religion.

Although complete in itself the course is also structured to provide a firm foundation for the more advanced 200 Level courses in Western religions.

- 2 The **lecture programme** follows. Lectures may be varied from time to time. As much notice as possible will be given when changes occur and, if necessary a revised programme will be issued at lectures.
- 3 The **tutorial programme** will follow the lectures at times to be arranged. Discussions will focus on the lectures and on the material in the Reader. Tutorials provide an opportunity of discussing aspects of the course in a small group and developing your ability to contribute to discussions.
Attendance at tutorials is strongly recommended. It is an expectation of this course that students will attend at least 80% of tutorials. In the case of students who have not attended the requisite number of tutorials and who are in a borderline situation between grades, attendance at tutorials shall be a determining factor in the final grade.
- 4 **The course is internally assessed** by means of two essays, 8 weekly tutorial assignments, and a class test, weighted as follows:
 - **TWO ESSAYS**, both to be between **1,500 and 2,000** words and **each** worth **30%** of the final grade.
First Essay: **due date Friday 15th of December by 5pm**
Second Essay: **due date Friday 2nd of February by 5pm**
Deposit essays in the Essay Box outside HU 318 and sign and date next to your name in the register.
 - **FIVE in-class quizzes** are based on readings and lecture material and are worth **10%** of the final grade.
Quizzes will be held during lecture time and will be made up of multichoice questions and short-answer questions. Students are advised as to dates for Quizzes in the lecture outline that follows.
 - **CLASS TEST** is worth **30%** of the final grade.
THE FINAL TEST WILL BE HELD DURING CLASS TIME on Tuesday the 23rd of January 2007

In order to meet the **mandatory course requirements** both essays must be submitted and the final test must be sat.

Rationale for assessment: The course is designed to foster a number of different academic skills. Guidance will be given in preparation for the writing of essays (the formulation of research questions, the marshalling of relevant data, the analysis of assembled materials, and the structuring of written answers). There are three forms of assessed work.

- 5 **Required text** There is no set textbook. The *RELI 102 Course Reader* should be obtained from the Student Notes shop.
- 6 **Work-load (Recommendation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences):** For 100-level 18 points one trimester courses, the working party on workloads and assessments recommends 12 hours per week. An average student should spend 9 hours per week for preparation, reading and writing in addition to attendance at lectures and tutorials.
[100 – level 1 – trimester 18 points 12 hours]
- 7 **General University Requirements** Students should become familiar with the University's requirements, particularly those regarding assessment and course of study requirements and formal academic grievance procedures contained in the statutes in the VUW website.

The University Statute on Conduct and Policy on Staff Conduct

The Statute on Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the university community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of university's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps can be taken if there is a complaint and the requirements of the course outlines should be read alongside this. For queries about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor.

This Statute is available in the Faculty Student Administration Office or on the website at:

<http://aida.its.vuw.ac.nz/policy/policy/generalstatute-statuteonstudentconduct.htm>

Policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at:

<http://aida.its.vuw.ac.nz/policy/policy/policy-policy-on-staff-conduct.htm>

- 8 **Academic Grievances:** If you have any academic problems with your course (such as too much work compared with other similar courses, poor teaching quality, unfair assessment, or poor feedback on assignments), you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned in the first instance. If you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Programme Director (Professor Paul Morris, tel: 463 5037), the Head of School (Professor John Davidson, tel: 4635969) or the Associate Dean Students (Allison Kirkman, tel: 463 5676). Your class representative can assist with this process. If after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievances Statute which is published on the VUW website: <http://aida.its.vuw.ac.nz/policy/policy/generalstatute-statuteonacademicgrievances.htm>

- 9 **Aegrotat regulations apply** to internally assessed courses. Students who cannot submit or complete the course requirements due to illness or some other impairment due to circumstances beyond their control may apply for an aegrotat pass. Applications may be submitted concerning class tests or for other assessment items which are due at most three weeks before the day on which lectures cease for the course, and for which no alternative item of assessment could reasonably be substituted or extension time be granted. Applications should be made on the appropriate form to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Office within seven days of the relevant test or submission date. In exceptional circumstances late applications may be accepted if supported by a health professional seen at the relevant time. (Refer to the aegrotat provisions in section 4.5 of the Assessment Statute).

10 **Student Support**

Staff at Victoria want students' learning experiences at the University to be positive. If your academic progress is causing you concern, the following staff members will either help you directly or quickly put you in contact with someone who can.

	Staff member	Location
FHSS	Dr Allison Kirkman	Murphy Building, room 407
Law	Kirstin Harvey	Old Govt Building, room 103
Science, and Architecture and Design	Liz Richardson	Cotton Building, room 150
Commerce and Administration	Colin Jeffcoat	Railway West Wing, room 119
Kaiwawao Maori	Liz Rawhiti	Old Kirk, room 007
Manaaki Pihipihinga	Melissa Dunlop	14 Kelburn Pde, room 109D
Victoria International	Anne Cronin	10 Kelburn Pde, room 202

The Student Services Group is also available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/

Email: student-services@vuw.ac.nz.

VUWSA employs two Education Coordinators who deal with academic problems and provide support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building:

Telephone 463 6983 or 463 6984

Email: education@vuwsa.org.nz.

- 11 **Students with special requirements:** Students with any other special requirements should contact the programme administrator (Aliko Kalliabetsos, HU 318, tel: 463 5299) to discuss these as soon as possible. Contact should also be made with VUW's Disability Support Services by ringing 463 6070 or emailing at disability@vuw.ac.nz. The offices of the disability support services are on the ground floor of the Robert Stout building. Ava Gibson and her staff can arrange note taking, transport, support groups and special facilities, as well as give general help and advice.

12 Student Learning Support Services: A range of workshops, drop-ins and other assistance is provided by SLSS, covering such things as study techniques, essay writing, exam preparation and note taking skills. They are at Level O, Kirk Wing, Hunter Courtyard, tel: 463 5999.

13 Manaaki Pihipihinga Maori and Pacific Mentoring programme (Faculties of Humanities and Social sciences and Commerce and Administration).

- Academic Mentoring for Maori and Pacific students studying at all levels. There are weekly sessions for an hour with a mentor to go over assignments & any questions from tutorials or lectures. Registered students can use the facilities study rooms & computer suite, at any time, at Kelburn & Pipitea.
- Mature student and Post grad network

If you would like to register as a mentor or mentee please contact or pop in & see the coordinator, Melissa Dunlop, Programme Coordinator, 109 D, 463 6015, Email: Maori-Pacific-Mentoring@vuw.ac.nz, 14 KP: back courtyard

14 Taping of Lectures

All students in the School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies are welcome to use audio-tapes to record lectures. If you want to do this, please see your lecturer, tutor or the relevant programme administrator and complete a disclaimer form which advises of copy right and other relevant issues.

15 Class representatives: Class representatives are elected in the first week or two of term. They are supported by the VUW Students' Association, and have a variety of roles, including assistance with grievances and student feedback to staff and VUWSA. Contact details for your class rep will be listed on the Religious Studies notice board.

16 Evaluation: This course will be evaluated by **UTDC**

Lecture Programme

- 14 November** **Lecture One: Religious Studies and the Study of Western Religions**
 Course Introduction
 The Study of Western Religions
 Religious Studies: the Discipline and History in Aotearoa and Internationally
- 21 November** **Lecture Two: Judaism I**
 Defining Judaism
 What is Halakah?
- 28 November** **Lecture Three: Judaism II: Contemporary Jewish Cultures, Politics and Religious Change**
 The Shoah/ Holocaust and Diaspora
 The State of Israel: People? Nation? Religious Community?
 Judaism and Contemporary Jewish Practice: Living in the World of Religious, Political and Cultural Pluralism
(QUIZ)
- 5 December** **Lecture Four: Christianity I: Christian Histories**
 Jesus and the Gospels
 Christian Histories: Origins, Catholicism and Reformation
 Christian History in Aotearoa and the Ratana Church
 The Rise of Pentecostalism: South America
- 12 December** **Lecture Five: Islam I:**
 Islam, Politics and Revolution
 Scripture and the Prophet Muhammad
(QUIZ)
- 19 December** **Lecture Six: Christianity II: Contemporary Christianity in Western Politics and Cultures**
 Political Interactions with Christianity in a Global World and Pluralistic Nation-States: Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the United States
(QUIZ)

MID TRIMESTER BREAK

(Friday 22nd December 2006 – Sunday 7th January 2007)

- 9 January **Lecture Seven: Islam II: Contemporary Islam in the Middle East and Western Islam**
Middle Eastern Revivalist Scholarship
African-American Islam & Civil Rights: The Five Percenters
Contemporary Islam in Aotearoa New Zealand: The Burka Trial
(QUIZ)
- 16 January **Lecture Eight: The Futures of Religions**
What do Religions Tell Us About Ourselves?: Transformations of Religions and Interactions with Secular Politics and Cultures
(QUIZ)
- 23 January **CLASS TEST (2 hours)**

*Tutorial Topics and Weekly
Readings*

Week beginning:

- 13 Nov **The loss of certainty: What does it mean to study religion today?**
- 20 Nov **Does the law deny human autonomy?**
- 27 Nov **What has been the impact of the Shoah on Jews and Judaism?**
- 4 Dec **'It makes no sense to talk about Christianity in the singular: right from the start, we find plural Christianities.'**
- 11 Dec **Was the Iranian Revolution Islamic or anti-Western?**
- 18th Dec **Why have Christian ideas been used to support Conservative Politics?**

MID TRIMESTER BREAK
(Friday 22nd December 2006 – Sunday 7th January 2007)

- 8 Jan **How do Islamic scholars promote Human Rights interests in a global political context?**
- 15 Jan **What are the signposts of new interactions between Religions and Secularity in the contemporary World?**
- 22nd Jan No tutorial: CLASS TEST this week

Essay Guidance and Essay Questions

1 **Essays and assignments** must be placed in the locked assignment box located outside the Administrator's office (HU 318) and students must date and sign the essay register when submitting an essay. **No responsibility will be taken for assignments that have not been signed in the register. Students should keep a copy of all their work until it is returned.**

2 **Due dates:** The **first essay** to be submitted by **Friday 15th of Dec by 5pm**
The **second essay** to be submitted by **Friday 2nd of Feb by 5pm**

3 **Penalties for late essays / assignments:**

- 1 percentage point per 24 hours will be deducted for late essays, up to 2 weeks from due date.
- to avoid these deductions an extension may be sought with an explanation in writing. The reason for an extension does not need to be medical; in the event that it is, a medical certificate must be submitted.
- requests for extensions may be made to the tutor or the course co-ordinator.
- if an essay is handed in 2 weeks after the due date and an extension has not been sought, the matter will be referred to the course co-ordinator who will make the final decision as to whether the essay shall be accepted for assessment or not.

4 **Academic integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means no cheating. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria.

The University defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not.

'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea, even if it is presented in your own style. It includes material from books, journals or any other printed source, the work of other students or staff, information from the Internet, software programmes and other electronic material, designs and ideas. It also includes the organization or structuring of any such material.

Plagiarism is not worth the risk.

Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct (www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct) and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- suspension from class or university
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course.

Find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it, on the University's website at: www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html.

5 Essay Topics

The essays should be a thoughtful treatment of a well-defined topic, based on your own thinking and research. Students are encouraged to come up with their own essay topics, but it is essential that they first discuss their plans with the lecturer. Otherwise please choose one essay only from each section.

Section One: Questions for Essay One

Choose One Essay Question from the following Ten Options:

ONE

How do different Jewish religious communities interpret the State of Israel and how do religious positions shape contemporary politics in Israel?

(Give examples of Orthodox, Reform and Secular Jewish understandings. Consider the tensions between Israel understood as a Jewish State and as a Secular State and how these positions are informed by Diaspora, Shoah and Jewish theology.)

TWO

What issues does the Holocaust raise for Jewish religious thought?

(How have Jewish thinkers responded to the Holocaust? How has traditional Jewish thought been challenged, revised, rejected or re-affirmed by contemporary thinkers? You will need to have a grasp of what actually took place and of the stages in the responses)

THREE

'When Jews discuss theology they debate law'. Describe the Jewish Scriptural traditions of debate and how the Halakah is interpreted in Orthodox and Reform Judaism.

(What are the major synagogue movements in modern Judaism? What do they have to say about Halakah (law)? How does debate shape the ability of Judaic thought to change and absorb new influences?)

FOUR

How does Hasidic Hiphop make the transition between Orthodox religious claims and its popular cultural genre?

(What conflicts or problems can you see in this interaction? How do Hasidic Rappers respond to these problems? What claims do they make about religions and politics in pluralistic societies? You should illustrate an awareness of the development and contemporary forms of Hasidism.)

FIVE

What happens to religions during modern political and cultural changes? Use a case study of a particular religious community or a religious thinker and discuss how they respond to the challenges posed by modernity.

(For this essay you could choose to look at the new place of Christianity within nation-states in modernity (Church-State separation) and consider the impact of modernity on Christian communities. Or, you could look at the Jewish Haskalah and trace how a particular Jewish community responds to liberal political ideals. What specifically modern forms of religion have developed?)

SIX

Discuss the ways that the Prophet Muhammad is seen as a model for Muslims.

(Discuss how the figure of the Prophet in the Qur'an and Hadith has been interpreted as an exemplar of Islamic virtues. You could use examples from contemporary political and/or religious Islamic contexts and reflect on how the figure of Muhammad has been at the centre of controversy (e.g., the Belgium Cartoons). Alternatively, you could look at how Muhammad is seen differently in Shi'ite and Sunni Islam or in a particular nation or community)

SEVEN

Has Pentecostalism been a positive or negative force in Latin America?

(Consider the historical dominance of Catholicism and the challenges that Pentecostalism has posed to Catholic religious institutions and social structures. Describe the main political and personal reasons Latin Americans have converted to Pentecostal Churches? Do you see Pentecostalism as continuing to have a strong influence? What problems do you see developing?)

EIGHT

What is the significance of History in Christianity? How does Christian theology view human history and what does this mean for the ways Christians view politics?

(Refer to one of: Christian eschatology, Jesus as the Messiah or the Modern idea of the Spirit of History. You might also choose to consider the uniqueness of the Christian understanding of History as very different to Jewish and Islamic interpretations of human history.)

NINE

What are the tensions between Westernisation and Modernisation in an Islamic context?

(Consider the differences between interaction with Western nations and resistance to Western political subservience in a Middle Eastern context. How do religious understandings shape the rejection of Westernisation and shape nation-state independence movements?)

TEN

Are religious texts an adequate guide for life today?

(Discuss the religious uses of scripture, and the traditions of interpreting scripture, in light of a particular contemporary issue or event. Give some examples of re-interpretation of texts in response to change. You could, for example, consider the conservative response to religious liberalism and assess the positive and negative implications.)

Section Two: Questions for Essay Two

Choose One Essay Question from the following Twelve Options:

ONE

Is Aotearoa New Zealand a Christian country?

(What might it mean to make this claim in terms of the traditions of morality, law, institutions, and so on, in this country? What part have the churches played, and continue to play, in our history and society?)

TWO

Assess the significance of media and/or film representations of religions. Critically analyse the impact of media and film in shaping public understandings using academic sources.

(Focus your analysis on a particular event that has received extensive coverage in the media or on a particular topic of contemporary films – for example; the Passion of the Christ, the series of films on September 11 – and look at the different perspectives forwarded by media and filmmakers)

THREE

Identify some of the main issues facing contemporary Muslim minorities living in non-Muslim societies and assess their importance.

(Choose one or two countries – Australia, Britain, the United States or Aotearoa New Zealand – to frame your discussion and talk about Muslim communities responses to a significant contemporary issue.)

FOUR

What are the most important changes contemporary Muslim Reformists demand in their respective societies?

(You may wish to focus on one country. Identify the main ideas driving change and consider how scholars interpret religious-political interactions in new ways. You should frame your discussion around a particular contemporary issue in the country of choice.)

FIVE

Conservative Christian ideas have been adopted in secular politics during the early 21st century. Analyse why the ideas of conservative Christianity resonate with the public, and consider recent challenges from religious and secular voices.

(Refer to material from lecture week six and discuss the development of New Right politics in a particular nation-state and the challenges to the New Right.)

SIX

Dialogue between different religious communities from different political and cultural contexts is increasingly important. Give an assessment of the difficulties and positive outcomes of religious dialogue between two of the three traditions.

(You could base your discussion on interactions over a disputed territory such as Israel and assess the difficulties in official negotiations. You could also look at attempts in a particular country to deal with tensions between religious communities. If you choose to look at Christian efforts at dialogue, for example, you could consider: Why many Christians promote dialogue with those of other faiths? Are the unique claims of Christianity a barrier to dialogue?)

SEVEN

African-American Islam is a distinctive religious response to historical and contemporary conditions. What role has the Nation of Islam played in the forwarding of African-American Civil Rights? Is this reflected in popular culture today?

(You might consider the particular appeal of Islam and consider the history and development of central figures such as Malcolm X and his criticism of and split with the Nation of Islam. Consider the impact of postmodern culture on religions and assess whether a popular format is inconsistent with religious ideas or whether religions have undergone a shift in interactions with politics and the Market)

EIGHT

In what ways are religions central to contemporary political Human Rights concerns?

(Assess the central significance of religious tolerance in the principles of Liberal Democracy and consider the importance of challenges from religious communities that this principle is under threat.)

NINE

'Being Jewish is as important a part of my identity as being a woman'. Assess the significance of feminism for Judaism in the light of this claim.

(Why do some many Jewish women continue to identify with Jews and the 'Jewish community' in spite of their criticisms of Judaism? What issues does feminism raise for Jewish women?)

TEN

'Feminist theology focuses on women's experience'. Discuss the development of this claim for Christians and for Western societies.

(There has been a continuing debate both inside the various churches and beyond about the status and role of women as shaped by Christian ideas. You could discuss the feminist backlash against Christianity and the feminist Christian response to this.)

ELEVEN

Why do some Muslims feel that Islamic communities and non-Muslims need further education on the status of women in Islam?

(It is a good idea to limit your essay to a particular area: for example, the arguments over whether the Burka is liberating or oppressive in a particular country and political context. Refer to interpretations of the Qur'an, changing contemporary practices and Muslim women's views.)

TWELVE

How do religions change and respond to postmodern pluralism?

(Consider that most modern theorists predicted the demise of religion in modernity under the pressures of science and rationality, and yet religion thrives. What are the features of postmodernity? How do religions change during postmodern changes, and to what extent have religions led these changes?)