

# RELI 102

## WESTERN RELIGIONS

### FROM JERUSALEM TO MECCA VIA ROME



SCHOOL OF ART HISTORY, CLASSICS & RELIGIOUS STUDIES

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Summer 2007- 2008

# RELI 102

## WESTERN RELIGIONS

### FROM JERUSALEM TO MECCA VIA ROME

**Course co-ordinator:** Negar Partow  
Negar.partow@vuw.ac.nz

**Tutors:** Dan Dowling, Sean Durbin

**Where and when:** Tuesday 05:30- 8:30 pm  
**Lectures:** KK 301  
**Tutorials:** Times and place to be advised.

Religious Studies is in the Hunter Building. The programme administrator, Aliko Kalliabetsos, is in room HU 318 (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, 9.30 am - 3.30pm. You can arrange to meet with Negar by appointment or during her office hours, Tuesdays 1:00pm- 5:30 pm.

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### *Course outline*

- 1 **Course aims and objectives:**
- The course is designed to introduce the context in which the Abrahamic faiths were formed and developed by observing the birth and the fall of the Ancient Empires and religions in the Middle East and their encounter with Greece.
  - By studying Abraham's life, journey and message as defined in Western religions, the course attempts to enable course participants to understand basic beliefs of these religious systems.
  - The course is designed to provide an introduction to the lives and messages of the founders of Abrahamic faiths and discuss the significance of sacred texts in these religions
  - The course aims to familiarise students with the main concerns and methodologies of research in the study of religion as an academic discipline, and to prepare them for further study in the history, social dynamics and practice of religion.
  - It attempts to encourage students to critically engage with the issues and debates found in Western religions. In addition, it aims to provide students with the necessary skills and resources to undertake independent argument and analyses in the areas covered by the paper.

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 **Tutorials are held weekly** and all students should attend these. Tutorials deal with topics which arise out of and which complement the lecture programme.

4 **The course is internally assessed** by means of the following:

- **an essay** of no more than **1,500** words, to be submitted by **14<sup>th</sup> December 2007** worth **35%** of the final grade.
- **an essay** of no more than **2,500** words to be submitted by **25<sup>th</sup> January 2008** worth **45%** of the final grade.
- **7 tutorial assignments**, of no more than 700 words each, consisting of a thoughtful response to a given tutorial question from the assigned reading. The tutorial assignments will be marked out of 10 and account for a total of **20%** of the marks for the course.

5 **The assessment of this course relates to these objectives in the following ways:**

**The tutorial assignments** are designed to facilitate student reflection on the required readings, and to allow students to develop skills in critical reading and analysis necessary for essay writing and continued study.

**The essays** will encourage students to develop skills for writing cohesive and academic arguments. By focusing on primary sources, students will be exposed first-hand to the issues raised in scholarly analysis and will develop the knowledge and the skills necessary to critically evaluate scholarly studies of materials they have examined for themselves.

The differing percentage value for the essays is designed to allow students the opportunity to improve their skills without negative repercussions for their final grade.

6 **Mandatory course requirements** The mandatory requirements for this course are the submission of 2 essays, 7 tutorial assignments, and attendance at 80% of tutorials.

7 **Required Text:** All of the readings are contained in the Course Reader to be purchased from the Student Notes Shop at a cost of approx \$40.00.

8 **Work-load (Recommendation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences) For 100-level 18 points one trimester courses, 12 hours per week are recommended. 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

9 **General University statutes and policies**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University’s policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar available in hardcopy or under “about Victoria” on the VUW homepage at:

[http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/calendar\\_intro.html](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html)

Information on the following topics is available electronically at:  
[http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/downloads/course\\_outlines\\_general\\_information.pdf](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/downloads/course_outlines_general_information.pdf)

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

10 **Academic grievances**

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned; class representatives may be able to help you in this. If you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean; VUWSA Education Coordinators are available to assist in 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 Grievance Policy which is published on the VUW website at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances)

11 **Student and staff conduct**

The Statute on Student 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 the 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 are to be taken if there is a complaint. For information

about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor or refer to the statute on the VUW policy website at: [www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct)

The Policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at: [www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/staffconduct](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/policy/staffconduct)

**12 Students with Impairments** (see Appendix 3 of the Assessment Handbook)

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities the same opportunity as other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, please contact the course coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services (DSS) to discuss your individual needs and the available options and support on a confidential basis. DSS are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building:

telephone: 463-6070

email: [disability@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:disability@vuw.ac.nz)

The name of your School's Disability Liaison Person is in the relevant prospectus or can be obtained from the School Office or DSS.

**13 Student Support**

Staff at Victoria want students to have positive learning experiences at the University. Each faculty has a designated staff member who can either help you directly if your academic progress is causing you concern, or quickly put you in contact with someone who can. In the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences the support contacts are **Dr Allison Kirkman, Murphy Building, room 407** and **Dr Stuart Brock, Murphy Building, room 312**. Assistance for specific groups is also available from the Kaiwawao Māori, Manaaki Pihipihinga or Victoria International.

**14 Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme**

This programme offers:

Academic mentoring for all Māori & Pacific students at all levels of undergraduate study for the faculties of Commerce & Administration and Humanities & Social Sciences. Contact [Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz) or phone 463 6015 to register for Humanities & Social Science mentoring and 463 8977 to register for mentoring for Commerce and Administration courses

Postgraduate support network for the above faculties, which links students into all of the post grad activities and workshops on campus and networking opportunities  
Pacific Support Coordinator who can assist Pacific students with transitional issues, disseminate useful information and provide any assistance needed to help students achieve. Contact; [Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz) or phone 463 5842.

Manaaki Pihipihinga is located at: 14 Kelburn Parade, back court yard, Room 109 D (for Humanities mentoring & some first year Commerce mentoring) or Room 210 level 2 west wing railway station Pipitea (commerce mentoring space). Māori Studies mentoring is done at the marae.

**15 Student Services**

In addition, the Student Services Group (email: [student-services@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:student-services@vuw.ac.nz)) is available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/)

VUWSA employs 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 (tel. 463-6983 or 463-6984, email at [education@vuwsa.org.nz](mailto:education@vuwsa.org.nz)) is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building.

**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.

**16 Use of Turnitin:** Student work provided for assessment in this course *may be* checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <<http://www.turnitin.com>>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting misreferencing, misquotation, and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. *At the discretion of the School, handwritten work may be copy typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin.* You are strongly advised to check with your tutor or the course coordinator if you are uncertain about how to use and cite material from other sources. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

**17 Class representatives:** Class representatives are elected in the first week or two of the 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.

- 18      **Aegrotat regulations** apply to internally assessed courses. Students who are ill, or who have difficult personal circumstances may be having problems completing assessment. The aegrotat provisions apply to all courses and apply to assessment which falls within the last three weeks of teaching or the final examination period, including preparation time for final tests and examinations.  
Aegrotat provisions are detailed in section 4.5 of the Assessment Statute (2007 Calendar, p. 96) and also on p. 23 of the 2006 Assessment Handbook. Students can refer to the University's website for further information:  
<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/timetables/aegrotat.aspx>.  
Application forms and information pamphlets should be obtained from the Faculty Student and Academic Services Office (MY 411) or the Manager, Student & Academic Services (MY 410).
- 19      **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 14 Kelburn Parade, tel: 463 5999
- 20      **Supplementary Materials:** A website of materials related to RELI 205 is being maintained in Blackboard. You can find it by visiting <http://blackboard@vuw.ac.nz>. Your user name is the one issued to you by Student Computing Services. Your password is your Student ID Number. If in doubt, please contact the Student Computing Services Help Desk, 463-6666 (extension 6666 from VUW phones) or by email [scs-help@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:scs-help@vuw.ac.nz)

## *Lecture Programme*

The required readings are essential background for the lectures / tutorials and should be completed **before each lecture**. The readings will be discussed in the tutorials. It is essential that you attend the lectures and the tutorials. The readings are all found in the Course Reader.

### **In the Footsteps of Abraham : An introduction to Western Religions**

#### **Week 1                      20 November**

##### Introduction to the course

Lectures, assessments, tutorials, the reader, and the essays

Maps and introduction to the ancient Middle East (early settlements, civilizations, languages and traditions, writing systems, army, bureaucracy, natural and human resources).

#### **Week 2                      27 November**

##### Empires and wars, ancient religions in the Middle East

Resources; hegemony over geographical boundaries: water, trade routes; ethnic distribution in the ancient Middle East: Persians, Jews, Greeks, Babylonians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, Arians (1:30 minutes)

10 minute break

Religious diversity in the region: Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, Manichaeism, Zorvanism (1:20 minutes)

#### **Week 3                      4 December**

##### Abraham

Abraham's life story as defined in the Bible and the Qura'n; the significance of Abraham's message; the descendants of Abraham; the tradition of the prophets; the unique characteristics of Abraham's message; the universality of his religion



**Week 4                    11 December**

Introduction to Judaism

History; sacred books; rituals and politics (1:30 hours)

10 minute break

Romans; Christianity and Jewish life in exile (1:20 minutes)

**Week 5                    18 December**

Christianity

Sacred books; rituals and traditions; Eastern Orthodoxy (1:30 minutes)

10 minute break

Denominations; the expansion of Christianity to the west; Europe and Christianity (1:30 minutes)

**Summer break    (22<sup>nd</sup> December 2008 – 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2009)**

**Week 6                8 January**

Islam

Arabic peninsula, Islam and the early Muslim community (denominations); Shi'a and Sunnis (1:30 minutes)

**Week 7                15 January**

Western religions in the contemporary world

Demographic distribution; economic and political power (1:30 hours)

10 minute break

Western religions in New Zealand (1:20 hours)

## **Week 8 22 January**

### The Middle East in 20<sup>th</sup> century

The fall of the Ottoman empires; formation of nation-states in the region; European colonization and religious and ethnical distribution (1:30 hours)

10 minute break

The state of Israel; Iran's Islamic revolution; changes in the political structure of the Middle East (1:20 hours)

# Tutorials

## Weekly Tutorial Assignment Questions

### Week 2-

Write a short comparison between the Persian Empire and the Greek Empire (look at ideological and political differences)

### Week 3-

Discuss a chapter of Abraham's life story that you consider to be the most significant in his role as a prophet

### Week 4-

Explain the historical construction of Jewish communal identity

### Week 5-

What is the significance of crucifixion in Christianity?

### Week 6-

What are the prospects of mutual understanding and tolerance in the Middle East?

### Week 7-

Discuss the relationship between authority and succession after Mohammad

### Week 8-

Do you agree with Dawkin's view on God? Why?

## *Essays*

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.

**1 Essays and assignments** must be placed in the locked assignment box located near the programme 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 for which there is no record.** Students must keep a copy of all their work until it is returned.

**2 Due dates:**

The first essay to be submitted by **14<sup>th</sup> December 2007**

The second essay to be submitted by **25<sup>th</sup> January 2008**

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

- 1 percent 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 the 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. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

*The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.*

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

*Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.*

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student

Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

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

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html)

## 5 Essay topics:

### First Essay:

- Discuss the relationship between religion and states in the ancient Near East
- Analyse the role of empires in the cultural map of the ancient Near East
- Discuss the relationship between religion and philosophy in ancient Greece
- What is unique in Abraham's message?
- Why are Judaism, Christianity and Islam called Abrahamic faiths?
- What is the significance of the Torah in Judaism?
- Analyse the role of Jewish religious authorities in reinterpreting the Torah
- Why are the sacred texts recited in Abrahamic faiths?
- Discuss the significance of Moses life story in Judaism
- How did Jewish communities maintain their religious identity in exile?

### Second essay:

- Discuss the influence of the life story of Jesus in the formation of Christian religious institutions
- How does eastern orthodox Christianity view the concept of the trinity?
- What is the significance of Mohammad's Hijra (migration) from Mecca to Medina for Muslims?
- What is the significance of sacred spaces in Abrahamic faiths?
- Discuss the view of one of the Abrahamic faiths on the "Human" (roles and responsibilities)
- Will Middle East conflicts ever end?
- Discuss the influence of Protestant Christianity on modernity
- Critically discuss the political impact of Abrahamic faiths on the contemporary Middle East
- Critically analyse the problems caused by religious conflicts in the Middle East
- Discuss alternative responses to religious conflicts (i.e. sectarian wars...)
- Review the statement of religious diversity in New Zealand

## 6 For guidance in essay writing and presentation of bibliographies please refer to Religious Studies guidelines for essays, attached.