

FWIS 132

Western Biblical Traditions – Jewish, Christian, and Islamic

Rice University, Spring 2016, 2:00-2:50pm MWF, GRW 160A

Instructor

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Office hours

By appointment, weekdays.

Course description

The similarities and differences between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are a matter of historical and scholarly as well as current political interest. We explore them in this course, which introduces the three Western biblical traditions, from their origins to the present, and which surveys their scriptures, from the Hebrew Bible to the New Testament and the Quran. Along the way, you write argumentative/analytical papers, deliver oral presentations, and participate in class discussion and peer review. No prior knowledge of the topic is necessary.

FWIS learning objectives and additional course goals

By taking this First-year Writing-Intensive Seminar, you will:

- Enhance your understanding of the central place of writing and communication in the learning process and in academic life.
- Learn strategies for analyzing, synthesizing, and responding to college-level readings.
- Improve your ability to communicate correctly and effectively in writing and in speech, taking into account audience and purpose.
- Become comfortable with writing as a process and learn strategies – such as prewriting, outlining, and revision – for working through that process.
- Learn appropriate use of the work of others and, where necessary, specific practices of citation.
- Learn to articulate oral arguments and to respond productively to arguments of others in formal presentations and in class discussion.
- Additionally you will become familiar with the three major Western religions and the critical study of their sacred writings, including aspects of research.

About the Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication (CWOVC)

Plan ahead and make appointments with the peer consultants at the Center for any of your assignments in this course, especially the three papers and oral presentation. These consultants do not proofread or edit your work for you, but they will provide feedback on topics such as the organization of your paper or presentation, the coherence of your argument, appropriate sentence structure, and grammatical errors. For more information and to schedule an appointment, visit the Center's website: <http://cwovc.rice.edu>.

Required texts to buy/rent:

Attridge, Harold W., et al., eds. 2006. *The HarperCollins Study Bible*. Revised edition. HarperSanFrancisco. ISBN-13: 978-0060786847

Droge, Arthur J., ed. 2013. *The Qur'ān: A New Annotated Translation*. Equinox. ISBN-13: 978-1845539450

Ruthven, Malise. 2012. *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*. Second edition. Oxford. ISBN-13: 978-0199642878

Solomon, Norman. 2014. *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction*. Second edition. Oxford. ISBN-13: 978-0199687350

Woodhead, Linda. 2014. *Christianity: A Very Short Introduction*. Second edition. Oxford. ISBN 13: 978-0199687749

Recommended texts on writing:

Booth, Wayne C., et al., 1995. *The Craft of Research*. [multiple editions.] Chicago.

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. 2006. *They Say, I Say*. [multiple editions.] Norton.

Trimble, John R. 1975. *Writing with Style*. [multiple editions.] Prentice Hall.

Course requirements and policies**1. Grade overview**

Attendance, preparation, and participation 20%

0-3 points/day

0 = absent

1 = was not prepared and (so) did not participate (meaningfully)

2 = prepared and participated partially

3 = prepared and participated fully

Major assignments (see instructions below)

Three argumentative/analytical papers (3 pages each) 10%, 15%, 20%
graded on scale

Individual oral presentation (5 minutes), 10%
graded on scale

Minor assignments (see instructions below)

Statement of interest and writing goals (2 pages) 2%
completed = full credit

Three research or interest assignments (2 pages each) 5%, 5%, 5%
completed = full credit

Rhetorical style and mechanics assignment plus reflection (2.5 pages) 8%
completed = full credit

2. Grading scale

100-94 (A), 93-90 (A-), 89-87 (B+), 86-84 (B), 83-80 (B-), 79-77 (C+), 76-74 (C), 73-70 (C-), 69-67 (D+), 66-64 (D), 63-60 (D-), 59-0 (F).

3. Attendance. “Students are expected to attend *all* scheduled activities for *all* of the classes for which they are registered during the entire course of the academic semester for which they are enrolled,” according to university academic policies and procedures (emphasis added). See

<http://ga.rice.edu/Home.aspx?id=223&libID=243>.

4. *Absence*. “The university understands that students participating in university-sponsored extracurricular activities *may, on rare occasions*, need to miss a class session during the semester. As a matter of course, students should inform their instructors *in advance* of absences resulting from participation in university-sponsored activities, and faculty normally will give a reasonable opportunity to make up work missed on such occasions ... Absences for activities other than university-sponsored events *may be negotiated* on an informal basis between the student and the faculty member,” again according to university academic policies and procedures (emphasis added). See <http://ga.rice.edu/Home.aspx?id=223&libID=243>.

In case of rare absence due to university-sponsored extracurricular activities, please send me an email in advance. To negotiate any other absence, please do the same. At most, 3 total absences may be excused in either case.

5. *Deadlines and late work*. “No student should be given an extension of time or opportunities to improve a grade that are not available to all members of the class, *except for verified illness or justified absence* from campus,” according to university grading guidelines (emphasis added). See http://professor.rice.edu/professor/grading_guidelines1.asp.

To verify an illness or justify another cause of absence (primarily medical or family emergency) please send me an email in advance if possible, and if not, then as soon as possible after the fact. At any rate, please do so before returning to class or turning in any work late.

Otherwise deadlines in this course are not flexible, and late work will not be accepted.

6. *Electronic devices in class*. Laptops and tablets are not prohibited, but of course you will only want to use them for the purposes of our class (it goes without saying that you won’t want to text or talk on your cellphone). Before using a laptop to take notes, consider the advantages of the traditional pen-and-paper method or its equivalent. See <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/news/releases/take-notes-by-hand-for-better-long-term-comprehension.html>.

7. *What to bring to class*. To facilitate and ground our discussion of the reading, please bring the required text/s with you to class, either in hard copy or on an electronic device.

8. *Seminar means discussion*. In keeping with FWIS learning objectives reflected in the very designation of the FWIS as a seminar rather than a lecture course, class will be a mix of lecture and discussion, with an emphasis on the second. This is also in keeping with my teaching philosophy: While I lecture as appropriate, I see my role as a teacher to be not only delivering information but more importantly posing carefully informed questions as prompts for reflection, discussion, and knowledge application. I believe that the love of learning itself and the euphoria of discovery are the best motivators of academic excellence, which I seek to exemplify and facilitate for my students. I also believe that the give-and-take of discussion and human interaction between instructor and student as well as between the students themselves is an essential part of learning that solitary study, as imperative as it is, simply cannot get at. I foster a critical exchange of ideas in the classroom that is both rigorous and respectful, and I do not anticipate that my own interpretations or conclusions will necessarily become those of my students.

9. *Reading.* Because the papers and other assignments are based on the required texts, it's imperative that you read them before you begin the writing process. And you'll want to do that early. By all means, then, read ahead. Moreover you'll find at least some re-reading to be necessary as you write and revise your papers.

10. *Writing and revision.* Most any good writing process involves several steps, including prewriting (cataloguing and ranking your ideas), writing (articulating your ideas and their relation to one another), and rewriting or revising (re-arranging, adding to, and subtracting from what you have written). It takes time, in other words, and you should start soon enough for your papers to sit a while before they're due.

I expect you to have revised your papers already when you turn each of them in to me. Before the due date, you will have opportunities to revise in light of our regular class discussions about writing, about the reading, and about the progress of your papers. You will also have opportunities to revise in light of the peer-review exercises and the Q&A to follow the oral presentation of one of your papers. Additionally you are welcome to solicit individual feedback from me at any time, excepting the last two days before the due date; just make an appointment. And don't forget the consultants at the CWOVC.

After the due date of each paper, there will be no further opportunities for graded revision, with this exception: you may further revise one of your three papers and resubmit it by the end of finals. To do so, make an appointment with me no later than 4/26. At the appointment, have an action plan ready. I will give you feedback and offer additional suggestions for revision. The grade of the optional further-revised paper will not replace the original grade; the two will be averaged.

Honor code statement

One of the purposes of the FWIS is to help new students understand the Rice Honor Code and, more explicitly, to teach students the rules of paraphrasing and scholarly attribution as well as the appropriate uses of different types of evidence. Accordingly FWIS instructors will take an educational approach to transgressions of these rules and respond to errors in these areas foremost as issues for grading and opportunities for correction, rather than as instances of academic dishonesty. At the same time, all FWIS instructors retain the authority to treat instances of repeat or egregious violations as matters for the attention of the Rice Honor Council.

In this course, you are expected to do the actual writing of your assignments in your own words with no help from anyone else. You are strongly encouraged, however, to collaborate on all other aspects of your coursework, which includes discussing the texts and assignments with your fellow students, reading each other's writing for purposes of peer review, and making suggestions for revision.

ADA statement

If you have a documented disability and will be seeking academic adjustments or accommodations, please let me know during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will need to contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.

Add/Drop

Because the registration process for FWIS is unique, I include the how-to link here:

http://registrar.rice.edu/fwis_reg/#how

Proviso

The information contained in this course syllabus, other than the absence policy, is subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Schedule

WEEKS ONE TO FOUR

M 1/11

In class: Course intro and overview

After class: Begin your statement of interest and writing goals.

W 1/13

Before class: **Upload statement of interest and writing goals to Owlspace.**

Before class: Read Booth et al. 188-199 (Owlspace); Graff & Birkenstein 55-67 (Owlspace).

In class: Lecture and discussion about summary, paraphrase, quotation and citation; ways of engaging others and their ideas; research processes

After class: Begin the first research or interest assignment.

F 1/15

Before class: Read Solomon 1-68. Prepare notes or talking points, re: what you were surprised to learn, something you want to know more about, other questions you have from the reading.

In class: Discussion

M 1/18 Martin Luther King Jr Day: No Class

W 1/20

Before class: Read Solomon 69-136. Prepare notes or talking points, re: what you were surprised to learn, something you want to know more about, other questions you have from the reading.

In class: Discussion

F 1/22 [Add/drop deadline]

Before class: **Upload informative research or current interest assignment, Judaism.**

In class: Reports on the assignment.

After class: Begin the second research or interest assignment.

M 1/25

Before class: Read Woodhead 1-56. Prepare notes or talking points, re: what you were surprised to learn, something you want to know more about, other questions you have from the reading.

In class: Discussion

W 1/27

Before class: Read Woodhead 57-114. Prepare notes or talking points, re: what you were surprised to learn, something you want to know more about, other questions you have from the reading.

In class: Discussion

F 1/29

Before class: **Upload informative research or current interest assignment, Christianity.**

In class: Reports on the assignment.

After class: Begin the third research or interest assignment.

M 2/1

Before class: Read Ruthven 1-81. Prepare notes or talking points, re: what you were surprised to learn, something you want to know more about, other questions you have from the reading.

In class: Discussion

W 2/3

Before class: Read Ruthven 82-157. Prepare notes or talking points, re: what you were surprised to learn, something you want to know more about, other questions you have from the reading.

In class: Discussion

F 2/5

Before class: **Upload informative research or current interest assignment, Islam.**

In class: Reports on the assignment.

After class: Start the HB paper.

WEEKS FIVE TO EIGHT

M 2/8

In class: Lecture and discussion about writing: argument and evidence; about oral presentations

W 2/10

Before class: Read Genesis 1-25.11. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

F 2/12

Before class: Read Genesis 25.12-50. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

M 2/15

Before class: Read Deuteronomy. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

W 2/17

Before class: Read Jonah, Ecclesiastes. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

F 2/19

Before class: Read Daniel. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

M 2/22

Before class: **Upload draft of HB paper.**

In class: Peer review

W 2/24

In class: Individual oral presentations of papers, followed by Q&A

F 2/26

In class: Individual oral presentations of papers, followed by Q&A

Spring Break

WEEKS NINE TO ELEVEN

M 3/7

Before class: **Upload final draft of HB paper.**

In class: More lecture and discussion about writing: organization and flow

After class: Start the NT paper.

W 3/9

Before class: Read Luke 1-16. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

F 3/11

Before class: Read Luke 17-24, Acts 1-9. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

M 3/14

Before class: Read Acts 10-28. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

W 3/16

Before class: Read Galatians, Romans. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

F 3/18

Before class: Read Revelation. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

M 3/21

Before class: **Upload draft of NT paper.**

In class: Peer review

W 3/23

In class: Individual oral presentations of papers, followed by Q&A

F 3/25

In class: Individual oral presentations of papers, followed by Q&A

WEEKS TWELVE TO FOURTEEN

M 3/28

Before class: **Upload final draft of NT paper.**

In class: More lecture and discussion about writing: introductions and conclusions

After class: Start the Quran paper.

W 3/30

Before class: Read s.v. Adam; Abraham; Ishmael; Isaac; Moses; Torah; Jews; Israel, Sons of. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

F 4/1 Midterm Recess

M 4/4

Before class: Read s.v. John the Baptist; Mary; Mary, son of; Jesus; Messiah; Gospel; Christians. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

W 4/6

Before class: Read s.v. Muhammad; Prophet, the; messengers; prophets; Islam; Muslim/s; Kaba; House, the; Mosque, the Sacred; mosques. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

F 4/8

Before class: Read s.v. men; women; marriage; divorce; inheritance; ... diatribe; disbelievers; idolaters; fighting. Prepare notes or talking points, re: possible questions/passages for the paper, other passages you'd like to discuss.

In class: Discussion

M 4/11

Before class: **Upload draft of Quran paper.**

In class: Peer review

W 4/13

In class: Individual oral presentations of papers, followed by Q&A

F 4/15

In class: Individual oral presentations of papers, followed by Q&A

WEEK FIFTEEN

M 4/18

Before class: **Upload final draft of Quran paper.**

In class: Lecture and discussion about rhetorical style and mechanics, examples from my writing

After class: Start rhetorical style and mechanics assignment plus reflection.

W 4/20

Before class: Read Trimble 64-93 (Owlspace).

In class: More lecture and discussion about rhetorical style

After class: Re-read your three papers and revisit your writing goals.

F 4/22

Before class: **Upload rhetorical style and mechanics assignment plus reflection.**

In class: Reports on the assignment; wrap-up discussion

[Last day to meet with me about the optional further-revised paper, T 4/26]

[Optional further-revised paper due, W 5/4 by 5pm]

Assignment instructions

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

Argumentative/analytical response papers (HB, NT, Quran)

- Complete the scriptural readings listed on the schedule.
- As you read, identify a specific question from the text that you want to answer or a passage that you want to analyze closely in literary/historical terms. Jot down your ideas. After you've run them by me, start drafting right away.
- Your final paper should be 3 pages double-spaced. This does not count the cover sheet or the bibliography. The paper should be written in Times New Roman 12pt font. It should start with your name and an appropriate title, ideally one that captures your answer/analysis as well as describes your topic. It should include consistent citation either in the form of in-text citation or in the form of footnotes (not end-notes), author-date (not author-title), with a bibliography at the end. For full details of the author-date system, see ch.15 of the Chicago Manual of Style, which can be accessed on the stacks in the library or online here:
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.ezproxy.rice.edu/16/ch15/ch15_toc.html
- Upload your draft to Owlspage (at least 2 full pages) by the due date on the schedule. On a cover sheet, at the beginning of your file, please state: what the question is that you are writing about; what your answer to that question is; and what your top two or three reasons are for that answer, with supporting evidence. In the case of a passage to be analyzed rather than a question to be answered, please state the reference for the passage, what insight your analysis brings to it and the text as a whole, and why your analysis may be significant to those outside our class. *Note: If you do not upload your draft by the due date, unfortunately you will not be able to participate in the peer-review exercises or the oral presentations with Q&A, and you will lose the participation points for those days.
- Upload your final draft to Owlspage by the due date on the schedule. On a cover sheet, at the beginning of your file, please state: what you have done to revise your paper since you uploaded your draft, chiefly how you addressed the feedback you got as part of the peer-review exercises, how you addressed the feedback you got during the Q&A following the oral presentation of your paper (if your turn), and how you addressed any feedback you may have solicited from me.

Individual oral presentation of one paper

- Prepare a 5-minute oral presentation of your paper.
- This includes either slides or a handout, but not both.
- You won't have time to read your full paper, so decide what to showcase, adapting sections of what you have written there.
- For yourself, consider whether you want a set of talking points or a complete script.
- Either way, rehearse your presentation more than once, and be sure that it comes in at right around 5 minutes.
- Anticipate questions.

MINOR ASSIGNMENTS

Statement of interest and writing goals

- In 2 pages, state your interest in this course, what you expect or would like to learn about the three biblical traditions we'll be studying, and your writing goals.

Informative research or current interest assignments, Judaism, Christianity, Islam

Option A:

- While reading the Oxford VSI, chose something from that religion you want to know more about. Then run it by me.
- Use the book's bibliography and/or Fondren library resources to find a publication with the info you need.
- In 2 pages, describe what it was you wanted to know more about, why, and what you found. Start with your name and an appropriate title. Include consistent citation either in the form of in-text citation or in the form of footnotes (not end-notes), author-date (not author-title). There should be a bibliography at the end, which does not count towards the page count.

Option B:

- While reading the Oxford VSI, look for a news story about that religion – it should interest you, be from a more or less major outlet, and be as current as possible. Then run it by me.
- Use the book to contextualize the news article; if necessary, use Fondren library resources to find a publication with additional info.
- In 2 pages, summarize and assess the news story in the light of the Oxford VSI, mentioning why you were interested in that story. How does your reading for class affect your understanding of recent events? How accurate does the news story seem to be? Start with your name and an appropriate title. Include consistent citation either in the form of in-text citation or in the form of footnotes (not end-notes), author-date (not author-title). There should be a bibliography at the end, which does not count towards the page count.

Rhetorical style and mechanics assignment plus reflection

- After reading Trimble, re-read your three papers and ask yourself: What about my writing does or does not make it enjoyable to read? Do I vary the length of my sentences? Do I choose appropriate words? Do I repeat certain words or phrases (too often)? How is the tone of my writing (e.g. serious vs. impersonal, playful vs. flippant, critical vs. antagonistic)? Do I make any common mistakes in spelling, punctuation, or grammar? Are they plainly mistakes? Etc.
- In 2 pages, answer these or any other questions that arise from your reading of Trimble. Besides what you could do better or else differently, identify what you do well and feel free to defend as much of your language usage as you want.
- In a final half-page (thus 2.5 total), reflect on your writing goals from the first week of class. Which goals did you meet and how? Did you develop as a writer in other, perhaps

unexpected, areas? In your reflection, shoot for one really polished paragraph that you could (but don't have to) submit to the PWC blog.