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REL 200-02
Religious Perspectives on the Human Situation
Fall 2007
MWF 9:30-10:20am
GH 113

Mission Statement: Le Moyne College is a diverse learning community that strives for academic excellence in the Catholic and Jesuit tradition through its comprehensive programs rooted in the liberal arts and sciences. Its emphasis is on education of the whole person and on the search for meaning and value as integral parts of the intellectual life. Le Moyne College seeks to prepare its members for leadership and service in their personal and professional lives to promote a more just society.

Course Description and Objectives: This course is a study of the religious dimensions of human experience. During our time together, we will explore answers religion has given to some of life's most important questions: What is the nature of reality? What is humanity? Why do people suffer/die? How can I be saved? What may I hope? What must I do? What kind of person should I become? The approach is to study religious experience academically, using the categories developed in the field, such as myth, ritual, ethics, creed, and doctrine. In addition, we will look at the relationship between religion, the individual, and society, particularly the way religion promotes and restricts individual and social change. By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. formulate and defend a reasonable definition of religion (synthesis and evaluation);
2. provide accurate descriptions and examples of the language of religion (myth, symbol, metaphor, doctrine, ritual, ethics, etc.) (knowledge/comprehension);
3. compare the dimensions of religion in at least two different religious traditions (analysis);
4. relate the way (s) religions help humanity to create order to their own search for meaning (application);
5. provide examples of the relationship between religion, society, and individual and social change (comprehension);
6. explain ways religion promotes alienation and reconciliation (comprehension);
7. analyze the structure (organization, context, purpose, etc.) and worldview (symbols, myths, doctrines, ethos, etc.) underlying a religious action in a tradition other than his/her own (analysis);
8. work cooperatively with others on various tasks in a group context (affective); and
9. take an active role in and responsibility for her/his learning (affective).

Methods of Instruction: The content of the course will be covered by lectures, group discussions and presentations, audio-visual presentations, structured reading and writing assignments, and other media depending upon student interest and involvement.

Texts and Other Readings: The following required texts are available in the bookstore:

Ring, Glancy, Glennon, MacDonald, and Nash, *Introduction to the Study of Religion* (Orbis Books, 1998).

Coogan, ed. *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Bantam (1982) or Hill and Wang (2006) editions)

Satrapi, *Persepolis I* (Pantheon Books, 2005).

A copy of the bible—either the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) or the New American Bible: both are fairly recent translations based on the original languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic) (I will provide online links to passages we will read for class in the course schedule.)

In addition, I will place other required readings on reserve in the library, distribute them in class, or insure their availability electronically. Reference is made to these readings in the course schedule.

Office Hours: I will be in my office at the following times: Mon. and Wed. 2:00-3:30pm; Tues. 9-10am. If these times are not convenient, see me to make other arrangements. Come by if you have any questions related to the course.

Student Responsibilities and Rights: Students have the responsibility for sharing in and contributing to the learning process. This responsibility includes developing a learning covenant (click [here](#) for Learning Covenant Guidelines), reading assigned material prior to class, participating actively in group process, class presentations and discussions, completing written assignments on time, and evaluating and suggesting positive directions for the class. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the student has certain rights. These include a right to voice an opinion that is based on a self-chosen value system, a right to dissent or differ from the professor or from others in the class, a right to papers and tests returned at a reasonable time, access to the professor at hours other than class time, and a right to know the grading system.

Evaluation: Student evaluations will be based on successful completion of assigned and self-chosen activities. The assigned activities include group participation (15-20%), an analysis of a religious action from a tradition other than one's own (15-25%), and a group final exam (15-25%). The remaining 30-55% of the student's grade will be determined on the basis of the student choosing from a menu of activities (click [here](#) Activity Options). The grading scale will be as follows:

For College grading policies, including grievance policies for grades, please refer to the College Catalog, pp 26-27, or [online](#).

Course Grading Scale

	%	Points			%	Points			%	Points
A+			A	93-100	4.0	A-	90-92	3.67		
B+	87-89	3.3	B	83-86	3.0	B-	80-82	2.7		
C+	77-79	2.3	C	73-76	2.0	C-	70-72	1.67		
			D	60-69	1.0					
			F	< 60	0.0					

Blackboard: The bulk of the materials for this course will be distributed through the use of Blackboard at Le Moyne. To access these materials, just point your Internet browser to <http://blackboard.lemoyne.edu>. The course will be listed under Fall 2007, REL 200-02, Religious Perspectives on the Human Situation. Students who are enrolled in the course already have access to the course and just need to register their password for the course. I will use the email given to you by the school (your Le Moyne account) as the official means to communicate with you. If you want to use a different email account, you must make that change in your blackboard profile.

Web Page: I have created a Web Page that includes my courses, pedagogy, etc. You can access my Web Page through the Le Moyne Page under faculty. Or you can access it directly by typing: <http://webserver.lemoyne.edu/~glennon/> The primary reasons for accessing this page are because I have included other web sites in the syllabus to provide additional information, and because I have a course evaluation form that you can send to me any time you want to provide feedback about the course. The information comes to me anonymously (unless you add your name).

Special Needs: In coordination with the [Academic Support Center](#) (ASC), located on the first floor of the Noreen Reale Falcone Library, reasonable accommodations are provided for qualified students with disabilities. Qualified students should register with Mr. Roger Purdy (purdyRG@lemoyne.edu), Director of [Disability Support Services](#) (445-4118 [voice] or 445-4104 [TDD]), for disability verification and determination of reasonable accommodations. After receiving the appropriate form from the ASC, students should meet with the instructor to review the form and

discuss their needs. Students should make every attempt to meet with the instructor during the first week of class so that accommodations can be implemented in a timely manner.

Students with Personal Problems: Students who encounter personal problems of any kind, especially problems that might affect their academic performance, are encouraged to contact the Center for Personal Growth and Counseling. The Center is located in Romero Hall; appointments may be arranged by phone at 445-4195. The Center provides both individual and group counseling on a strictly confidential basis. The professional staff is also available on an emergency basis.

Policy on Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating) undermines the trust between instructors and students and among students themselves. Such dishonesty is the attempt to fulfill a course requirement by representing as your own the intellectual property (ideas, words, or work) of another person (living or dead; professional writer or student) found in print or electronic sources, even with the person's permission. Please note that this definition includes paraphrasing another's work: *if you read it somewhere, cite it*. As a member of an intellectual and academic community, you are obliged to acknowledge the source of phrases and ideas that are original to someone else. The minimum penalty is failure of the assignment but could lead to failure of the course. In addition, I will report the incident to the Dean of Arts and Sciences who may decide to take further disciplinary action. A second act of academic dishonesty during your career at Le Moyne often results in expulsion from the college (College Catalog, p. 41). You may access the LeMoyne site on plagiarism at: <http://www.lemoyne.edu/library/plagiarism/students.htm> The Landmark Citation Machine is an excellent resource for students. This website will format any type of citation into MLA or APA style:

Course Schedule

Date/Topic	Questions and Assignments
<p style="text-align: center;">8/27</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Introductions</p>	<p>Questions: Why am I in this class? What do I hope to learn from taking this class? Who else is in this class and why? Who is this professor? What qualifies him to teach this class? Can he help me meet my learning objectives?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">8/29</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Learning Covenant</p>	<p>Questions: What is a "learning covenant"? What contribution, if any, can it make to my learning in this class and beyond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fred Glennon, "<u>The Learning Covenant: Promoting Freedom and Responsibility in the Religious Studies Classroom</u>" <i>CSSR Bulletin</i> (April 1995): 32-37. • Read Syllabus and Learning Covenant materials on Blackboard (<u>http://blackboard.lemoyne.edu</u>) or my web page (<u>http://webserver.lemoyne.edu/~glennon/rel200.htm</u>)
<p style="text-align: center;">8/31</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Religion and Ordinary People</p>	<p>Questions: Why are people religious? How does one's culture and upbringing shape one's religious experience? How is my experience similar to or different from Marji's?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satrapi, <i>Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood</i> (Introduction and pp. 3-72). • In lieu of reading summary, answer questions to <i>Persepolis</i> reading guide, pp. 3-72 on Blackboard. • Assessment #1, Learning Self-Assessment, Due (<u>Click here</u> or see Blackboard, Assessment Activities for guidelines on this activity)
<p style="text-align: center;">9/3</p>	<p>Labor Day (No class)</p> <p>Sri Krishna Jayanti (or Janmashtami) celebrates the birthday of Krishna. According to the Hindu epics, Krishna was the eighth incarnation of the God Vishnu. His purpose was to destroy the demon Kansa who was responsible for the increase of evil in the world.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">9/5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Religion and Identity</p>	<p>Questions: What is the effect of religion on personal identity? How does religion shape one's society? What effect has religion had on my life or on my society?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satrapi, <i>Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood</i>, pp. 72-153. • In lieu of reading summary, answer questions to <i>Persepolis</i> reading guide, pp. 73-153 on Blackboard. <p>Mass of the Holy Spirit (10:45 in Panasci Family Chapel)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">9/7</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Studying and Defining Religion</p>	<p>Questions: How do scholars study and define religion? What are the differences between essentialist and functional definitions of religion? How do these definitions shape one's approach to religious phenomena?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russell McCutcheon, <i>Studying Religion</i> (online version: read Introduction, Essentials of Religion, and Functions of Religion (or read same in pdf version on Blackboard).

<p>9/10</p> <p>Definitions and Dimensions of Religion</p>	<p>Questions: Are there similarities between religious traditions? If so, what are they? How extensive are they? How do I define religion? What are the dimensions of religion that scholars have identified?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russell McCutcheon, <i>Studying Religion</i> (online version: read Resemblances Among Religions, Religion and Classification, and Conclusion (or read same in pdf version on Blackboard). <p>*Bring the Ring text, <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i></p>
<p>9/12</p> <p>Religion, Order, and Meaning</p>	<p>Questions: What does it mean to say religion brings order and meaning to the lives of individuals and communities? What is the nature of the order and meaning that religion provides? Does religion play any role in providing order and meaning in my life?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 1-20 <p>Assessment #2, Constructing a definition of religion, due (see Blackboard, Assessment Activities for guidelines on this activity)</p> <p>Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year. A time of introspection, abstinence, prayer and penitence. The story of Abraham is read, the ram's horn is sounded, and special foods are prepared and shared.) and Ramadan (9th month on Islamic calendar, devoted to the commemoration of Muhammad's reception of the divine revelation recorded in the Qur'an. The event begins when authorities in Saudi Arabia sight the new moon of the 9th month. It is the holiest period of the Islamic Year. There is strict fasting from sunrise to sunset) begin at Sundown</p>
<p>9/14</p> <p>Introductions to Religions Traditions (Western)</p>	<p>Questions: What are the origins of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam? Who are the founders? Where did they develop? How widespread are they practiced? How many different sects of these traditions currently exist?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Illustrated Guide to World Religions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judaism (16-25) ○ Christianity (54-65) ○ Islam (90-99) <p>Learning Covenants Due</p>
<p>9/17</p> <p>Introductions to the Religious Traditions (Eastern)</p>	<p>Questions: What are the origins of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Chinese Religions? Who are the founders? Where did they develop? How widespread are they practiced? How many different sects of these traditions currently exist?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Illustrated Guide to World Religions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hinduism (126-133) ○ Buddhism (164-175) ○ Chinese Religions (200-207)

<p>9/19</p> <p>Ritual Action: Types of Religious Ritual</p>	<p>Questions: What is ritual? Why do people practice rituals? Do I have rituals that I regularly practice? How do religious rituals differ from secular rituals? What is the difference between a calendar, life cycle, and life crises ritual?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion, 71-94</i>
<p>9/21</p> <p>Sacred Space (meet in Panasci Family Chapel)</p>	<p>Questions: What makes some space sacred and other space ordinary? Is there any space I would consider sacred? What moods, feelings, aesthetic sensibilities does sacred space seek to instill in people? What is the difference between a shrine and a traditional ritual space? Why do those roadside memorials I see develop?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Illustrated Guide to World Religions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judaism (pp. 40-43) ○ Christianity (pp. 76-79) ○ Islam (pp.112-113) ○ Hinduism (146-149) ○ Buddhism (186-189) ○ Chinese Religions (220-223) • Case Study: Spontaneous Memorials and Shrines • <u>Roadside Religion</u> <p>Fall Equinox (Wicca observance of the change of seasons.)</p> <p>Yom Kippur (Jewish Day of Atonement. This holiest day of the Jewish year is observed with strict fasting and ceremonial repentance.) Begins at Sundown</p>
<p>9/24</p> <p>Sacred Time</p>	<p>Questions: Why do religious traditions identify particular days and times as sacred? Are there days and times I would consider sacred? Is sacred time fluid (changing at different times and places) or fixed (the same for everyone regardless of year or place)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Illustrated Guide to World Religions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judaism (pp. 44-47) ○ Christianity (pp. 80-83) ○ Islam (pp.114-117) ○ Hinduism (152-155) ○ Buddhism (190-191) ○ Chinese Religions (224-227) • Jewish Practice & Ritual (Video Presentation)
<p>9/26</p>	<p>Catch-up day: The purposes of this day are multiple: we can get caught up if we get behind; we can use the day for guest speakers or student presentations; we can use the day to review what we have learned thus far; we can use the day to discuss important questions from the bag or from the news; or we could use the day you think important. Many times we will do several of these things.</p>
<p>9/28</p> <p>Ethical Action: Moral Conduct</p>	<p>Questions: What is ethical action? How does it differ from morality? Are religious ethics different from secular ethics? If so, in what ways? Can a person engage in ethical or moral action without being religious? Do religions require certain moral conduct on the part of their practitioners? What ethical actions have I done that have been influenced by my religious tradition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion, 97-113</i>

<p>10/1</p> <p>Ethical Action: Moral Conduct (cont.)</p>	<p>Questions: What are norms for moral conduct? What norms for moral conduct do different traditions require? How are laws, ends, and responsibilities different? Are there any norms that all religious traditions agree upon? Are there any that I would agree upon?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Illustrated Guide to World Religions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judaism (pp. 38-39) ○ Christianity (pp. 74-75) ○ Islam (pp. 110-111) ○ Hinduism (pp. 144-145) ○ Buddhism (pp. 184-185) ○ Chinese Religions (pp. 216-219) • Supplementary Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Morality (Sila) in Buddhism, The Dhammapada</u> ○ <u>Deuteronomy 5:1-21; 6:1-9</u> (from the Bible) ○ <u>Matthew 25:31-46</u> (from the Bible) ○ <u>Principles of Islamic Ethics</u> ○ <u>Hindu Ethics</u> ○ <u>Daoist Ethics</u> ○ <u>Confucian Ethics</u>
<p>10/3</p> <p>Ethical Action: Moral Character</p>	<p>Questions: How do norms for moral conduct differ from norms for moral character? What is moral character? Would I consider myself a moral character? How does religion shape moral character? What is the difference between a moral conscience and moral consciousness?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 113-127
<p>10/5</p> <p>Ethical Action: Moral Exemplars</p>	<p>Questions: What is a moral exemplar? Who do know that I would call a moral exemplar? Who are the moral exemplars in the religious traditions we are studying them? What characteristics make them examples that others should follow? Are there commonalities among them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Illustrated Guide to World Religions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judaism (pp. 36-37) ○ Christianity (pp. 70-73) ○ Islam (pp. 106-109) ○ Hinduism (pp. 142-143) ○ Buddhism (pp. 182-183) ○ Chinese Religions (pp. 214-215) • Supplementary Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>The Dalai Lama</u> ○ <u>The Life of the Buddha</u> ○ <u>Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?"</u> ○ <u>Mother Theresa</u> ○ <u>Selections from Gandhi</u>, see especially selections 11 (Nonviolence) and 17 (Religion and Morality)
<p>10/8</p>	<p>Fall Break (no class)</p>

<p>10/10</p> <p>Relationship Between Ritual and Ethics</p>	<p>Questions: What do the terms, moral pedagogy, moral redemption, and moral transformation mean? Have I engaged in any rituals that have sought to help me to become a better person? Do all religious rituals encourage a certain moral way of life? Or do broader ethical issues sometimes call certain rituals into question?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 127-135 • Rituals and Moral Objections Case Study: Circumcision Christine Gudorf, "A Question of Compromise" (to be distributed)
<p>10/12</p> <p>Talking About the Sacred</p>	<p>Question: How do people talk about the sacred? What metaphors, symbols, names do they use? Why is metaphorical language so important in this regard? What metaphors do I use for the sacred? Are there some names that I have difficulty with? Why is this the case?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 137-149 • • Assessment #3 due (Online Mid-term evaluation of the course: click here to complete evaluation)
<p>10/15</p> <p>Aspects of the Divine</p>	<p>Questions: What metaphors, symbols, names do the traditions we are studying use for the Sacred? Are there similarities among them or are they really different? How do my ideas relate to them? What is theism? Why are western religious traditions monotheistic while many eastern traditions are polytheistic or even atheistic or monistic? What do these terms even mean?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Illustrated Guide to World Religions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judaism (pp. 26-29) ○ Christianity (pp. 64-67) ○ Islam (pp. 100-103) ○ Hinduism (pp. 134-137) ○ Buddhism (pp. 176-177) ○ Chinese Religions (pp. 208-211)
<p>10/17</p> <p>Myths of Origin</p>	<p>Questions: What is the peculiar way that religious traditions use the term myth? What are the myths or stories of religious traditions attempting to say about the origins of the universe and the place of humanity in it? Are there any myths that I find meaningful for understanding the universe?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 20-27, 154-164, 194-197 • <u>Genesis 1-3 (from the Bible)</u>

<p>10/19</p> <p>Stories of Challenge and Suffering: Job</p>	<p>Questions: What is a theodicy? Why do religious traditions provide stories to help people deal with suffering in the world? How do I understand the nature of innocent suffering in the world?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 198 • <u>Job 4-5, 8, 11, 29-31, 38-42 (from the Bible)</u> • Supplementary Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Howard Kushner, "<u>The Story of a Man Named Job.</u>" in <i>When Bad Things Happen to Good People</i>, ch. 2. ○ Fred Glennon's reflections on suffering and theodicy, <u>The Absence of God</u>
<p>10/22</p> <p>Sacred Texts and Interpretation</p>	<p>Questions: Why do religious traditions identify some writings and texts as sacred? Do all people in those traditions interpret the texts in the same way? If not, why not? Are there any texts that I would consider sacred? What are they and why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 178-185, 189-192 (all read) • <i>The Illustrated Guide to World Religions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judaism (pp. 30-35) (MH read) ○ Christianity (pp. 68-69) (HD read) ○ Islam (pp. 104-105) (TT read) ○ Hinduism (pp. 138-141) (LL read) ○ Buddhism (pp. 178-181) (JJ read) ○ Chinese Religions (pp. 212-213) (BM read)
<p>10/24</p> <p>Doctrines and Creeds</p>	<p>Questions: What is a doctrine or a creed? Are there any doctrines or creeds that I have? How do the traditions view death, redemption, and the afterlife? What are the similarities? What are the differences? How do I view them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 198-203 • Case Study: Religious Views of Death, Redemption, and the Afterlife • <i>The Illustrated Guide to World Religions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Christianity (pp. 84-85) ○ Islam (pp. 118-119) ○ Hinduism (pp. 156-157) ○ Buddhism (pp. 192-193) ○ Chinese Religions (pp. 230-233)
<p>10/26</p>	<p>Catch-up day</p>
<p>10/29</p> <p>Society and Religion</p>	<p>Questions: In what ways do religion and society effect one another? How do changes in a society create changes in religion? What about the reverse? What effects do you notice in the U.S.?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Illustrated Guide to World Religions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judaism (pp. 48-51) ○ Christianity (pp. 86-87) ○ Islam (pp. 120-123) ○ Hinduism (pp. 158-161) ○ Buddhism (pp. 194-197) ○ Chinese Religions (pp. 234-235)

<p>10/31</p> <p>Personal Religious Change as Development and Conversion</p>	<p>Questions: Has your religious experience changed over time? In what ways? Has the change been slow and gradual or sudden? What does conversion mean? What does it mean to be "born again"?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 211-230 • <u>William James on conversion</u> • <u>Francis of Assisi</u> <p>Halloween (All Hallow's Eve: Christian celebration of mystery combining prayers and merriment involving children and families. It is a prelude to All Saint's Day.) Reformation Day: Protestant Christian anniversary of their tradition and its emphasis on the place of the Bible and religious freedom. On October 31, 1517 c.e. Martin Luther posted a belief statement on Wittenberg Church door</p>
<p>11/2</p> <p>Note the Change from Previous Version of Course Schedule</p>	<p>Student Presentation</p> <p>(I have decided to delete the reading on Augustine's Confessions in order to allow students to make a presentation. Augustine's experience is recounted in <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>.)</p>
<p>11/5</p> <p>Social Change as Catalyst for Religious Change</p>	<p>Questions: In what ways do changes in society generate changes in religious ideas, practices, and traditions? What effect has the development of modern western society, with its emphasis on personal, political, and economic freedom, had on religion? How has this freedom affected your own religious practice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 233-249
<p>11/7</p> <p>Religious Fundamentalisms</p>	<p>Questions: What is fundamentalism? Is it unique to Christianity or does it affect many religious traditions? To what social changes in modern society do fundamentalist movements respond?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, "<u>Fundamentalism</u>" (all read) • <u>Notes on Fundamentalism</u> (all read) <p>Supplementary Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max Stackhouse, "<u>Fundamentalism Around the World</u>" • <u>Robert Wuthnow, "Fundamentalism in the World"</u>
<p>11/9</p> <p>Religious Fundamentalisms (continued)</p>	<p>Questions: What is the connection between fundamentalism and violence in various parts of the world? What responses would you make to the rise of fundamentalist movements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karen Armstrong, <i>The Battle for God</i>, <u>Introduction</u> • Martha Nussbaum, <u>Genocide in Gujarat</u> • David Hirst, "<u>Pursuing the Millenium: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel</u>" • "<u>Fundamentalism in Christianity and Islam</u>" <p>Diwali (Deepavali) (Hindu celebration - a five day festival of lights marking the end of the Hindu year and symbolizing the human urge to move toward the light. Gift exchanges, fireworks and festive meals. Jain celebration of Lord Mahavira's day of final liberation. First day is observed as a holiday by many Hindu people.)</p>

<p>11/12</p> <p>Religious Change as Catalyst for Social Change</p>	<p>Questions: see questions for King's letter below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 250-258 • <u>Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"</u> (PDF version) • <u>Questions for King's Letter</u> (on Blackboard)
<p>11/14</p> <p>Religion and Politics in the U.S. and China</p>	<p>Questions: What is the relationship between religion and politics in the U.S.? What does the First Amendment say? What is the relationship between religion and politics in China? Do you think religion and politics should mix? Why or why not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>First Amendment Establishment Clause</u> (all read) • <u>First Amendment Free Exercise Clause</u> (all read) <p>Supplementary Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>"Religion and Politics,"</u> Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (all read)
<p>11/16</p>	<p>Group Final Preparation</p>
<p>11/19</p>	<p>Independent Work on Ritual Papers</p>
<p>11/21-25</p>	<p>Thanksgiving Break (No classes)</p>
<p>11/26</p> <p>Religion as Alienating</p>	<p>Questions: What does it mean to say that religion can be alienating? In what ways can and has religion been alienating to people? Have you experienced religion in alienating ways?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 293-311 <p>Day of the Covenant (Baha'i celebration of the covenant given in the last will and testament of Baha'u'llah)</p>
<p>11/28</p> <p>Alienation: Philosophical Responses</p>	<p>Questions: In what ways does Feuerbach say religion alienates humanity? How does Marx push his ideas? What do these philosophers suggest will ultimately happen to religion? Do you agree?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Feuerbach, <i>Essence of Christianity</i>; Karl Marx on Religion</u> (read first 6 paragraphs) <p>Supplementary Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Sigmund Freud, <i>The Future of an Illusion</i></u> • <u>Introduction to Atheism</u> <p>Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha (Baha'i celebration of the rising of the spirit of Abdu'l-Baha to the heavenly dwelling.)</p>
<p>11/30</p> <p>Alienation: Personal Responses</p>	<p>Questions: see questions for Wiesel, <i>Night</i> below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Study: <u>The Holocaust</u> • Elie Wiesel, <i>Night</i> • <u>Questions for <i>Night</i></u>

<p>12/3</p> <p>Reconciling Religion</p>	<p>Questions: How does religion act as a reconciling force for the individual and for society? In what ways has it been reconciling for you or for people you know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduction to the Study of Religion</i>, 264-291
<p>12/5</p> <p>Religious Pluralism</p>	<p>Questions: What is religious pluralism? What is the impact on the perception of the U.S. as a "Christian" nation? In what ways have you experienced religious pluralism?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diana Eck, "<u>What is Pluralism?</u>" • ----- "<u>The Challenge of Pluralism</u>" • ----- "<u>From Diversity to Pluralism</u>" <p>Hanukkah (12/5-12) (Jewish Festival of Lights. It commemorates the Maccabean recapture and rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in 165-164 b.c.e. Special readings and praise songs focus on liberty and freedom. The eight candle Menorah is lighted.)</p>
<p>12/7</p> <p>Summary and Review (Last Day of Class)</p>	<p>Questions: How has your definition of religion changed? What have you learned this semester about the nature of religion? What do you think you still want to learn?</p> <p>Assessment #4, Revised definitions of religion, due (see Blackboard, Assessment Activities for guidelines for this activity)</p>
<p>12/13</p>	<p>Final Exam (9:00-11:30am) (Completed finals are due by 5pm, 12/14)</p> <p>Assessment #5, Reflection on Learning in REL 200, due (see Blackboard, Assessment Activities for guidelines for this activity)</p>

LEARNING COVENANT

Guidelines

The learning covenant is an explicit agreement between the student, the professor, and other students concerning the involvement of the student in the class. As such, it sets down the formal requirements for your participation in this course. It lists the learning objectives the student will seek to achieve, the activities the student will perform to meet those objectives, and explicitly identifies the criteria which will be used by the professor to evaluate the student's learning. It has the following advantages over more traditional methods of evaluation: (1) it allows for greater individual flexibility and freedom on the part of the student to select those activities which she or he finds of most interest; (2) it states everything clearly and explicitly so that there is no confusion or ambiguity about what is expected; and (3) it allows the student an opportunity to take responsibility for his or her own learning.

We both know that this is a required core course. Some of you probably would not be taking the course otherwise. Because it is a core course, Le Moyne College has certain objectives they require the course to achieve which I must honor. I also have some objectives for the course and for student involvement. The combination of these objectives constitutes the course objectives which every student must meet successfully to pass the course (see attached covenant).

However, learning is about more than meeting someone else's requirements. Learning is a life-long adventure that contributes to our development as mature, responsible persons in relationship with others. The learning covenant is a means to enhance your potential as life-long learners. That is why in addition to course objectives you have the opportunity in this course to meet objectives you have chosen based on your own interests and needs.

Before deciding on your objectives take the time to assess your **learning needs**. A learning need is the gap between where you are now and where you want to be in regard to certain competencies and abilities. These competencies can relate to your knowledge, your understanding, your skills, your attitudes, and your values. For example, do you want to learn more about your own or other religious traditions? Do you need to enhance your analytical writing, public speaking, listening, or discussion leadership skills? Are you interested in appreciating the diversity of religious traditions? Clarity about your needs or interests can help you to be more specific about what objectives you would like to pursue.

You are now ready to start listing your **learning objectives**. A learning objective is a clear and concise statement that defines specifically what you want to learn. Your learning objectives should describe what you will learn, in terms most meaningful to you, not what you will do to learn them. Look at the examples I have provided (course objectives and others). You can write as many learning objectives as you want within the parameters of the course. (These will also provide the basis for the final self-assessment activity.) Write these on the covenant in the space provided.

Once you have listed your objectives, you will need to describe how you propose going about accomplishing each objective, your **learning activities**. I have provided a list of Activity Options from which you can select to meet your objectives, or you can identify your own. The key is to make sure that the activities selected help you to meet your objectives. For example, an objective to improve your ability to write analytically may lead you to write three focused thought papers. An objective to learn more about Jewish worship may lead you to take a field trip to a synagogue. Accomplishing your learning objectives fully may lead you to engage in more than one learning activity. Once you have identified your learning activities, write them on the covenant in the space provided.

Next you will have to give **evidence** that you have in fact achieved each objective. For example, evidence that you learned more about Jewish worship might lead you to write a report about your field trip and what you learned. Evidence that you have a clearer understanding of the relationship between religion and ethics may lead you to lead a class discussion on what you have learned. The list of Activity Options provided include the evidence associated with each option. However, you may select one of those options but offer different evidence to demonstrate your learning. Write the evidence you will provide in the space provided on the covenant.

After specifying what evidence you will provide for each objective, you must then specify the criteria by which the evidence will be evaluated. Make sure that the criteria are appropriate for each objective. On the handout which lists suggested activities you will find "**Evaluation Criteria**" attached to each activity. These are evaluation criteria I am suggesting are appropriate to determine the quality of the project. You may make changes to those criteria on your covenant, but we will negotiate any disagreements. Only the evaluation criteria listed with each objective may be used by the professor to determine the quality of your evidence (and a grade). You should pay careful attention to them when completing your activities. It is also possible to have persons other than or in addition to the professor to evaluate your work. If you choose to do this, then you must state what their qualifications are and how they will express their judgments (e.g. rating scales, grades, etc.).

In the final column of the covenant, you must identify "**due dates**" for each learning activity. You are in the best position to determine when you have time to complete activities. Just remember, the later you wait to turn things in, the less opportunity I will have to provide feedback. Finally, you must indicate how each activity will be **weighed** so that a final course grade may be calculated. This should be indicated in terms of percentages (e.g. participation = 20%; religious action paper = 20%; final exam = 20%; thought papers = 20%; class presentation = 10%; and film review = 10%). No one objective and related activities can be worth more than 25% of your grade. This means that you must identify at least two learning objective and related learning activities to complete your learning covenant.

After you have completed the first draft of your covenant, you will find it useful to review it with your home groups to get their reactions and suggestions (you may also review it with others as well). Some questions they might ask about your covenant to help you include:

- Are the learning objectives clear, understandable, and realistic? Do they describe what you propose to learn?
- Do the learning activities seem reasonable and appropriate? Can they suggest other possibilities?
- Does the evidence seem relevant to the objectives? Or would other evidence be better?
- Are the evaluation criteria clear, relevant, appropriate? Are there other ways or persons that might be more appropriate?

After consulting with your home groups, prepare a final draft of your covenant to turn in to the professor no later than **Monday, September 10**. I will review your covenant and return it to you when I meet individually with you (during the weeks of September 10-17. I will have a sign up sheet on my door, which I will bring to class, to set up individual meetings). We will negotiate any revisions necessary at that meeting. The final step is to carry out your covenant. Remember, the implementation of the covenant is your responsibility. Failure to fully implement any or all parts of your covenant may result in receiving a grade of "F" for those uncompleted sections and/or withholding of the final grade. **Your covenant may be revised and/or modified any time prior to November 28**. Revisions after that date will only include final allocations of weights for each graded activity.

REQUIRED ACTIVITY OPTIONS

PARTICIPATION (Worth 15-20% of final grade)

One of the assumptions I make is that students learn best in cooperation with others. However, students do not always have the opportunity or the ability to do it. One of my goals is to enable students to work collaboratively with others by providing such opportunities. That is why the basic pedagogy in this class is cooperative learning: students working in various groups to teach and learn from one another. To pull this off, it is imperative that students be present and participate actively in their groups (even at 9:30 in the morning). The Participation Activity is one way of providing incentive to do so.

I also believe that students ought to be rewarded for effort as well as ability. Students often complain that, no matter how hard they work on an assignment, they can get no higher than a C or B. This leaves them disappointed and frustrated. Through your participation in this class, you have the opportunity to make A for 15-20% of your grade. That is because the Participation Activity grade measures the effort you put into the class.

I will determine the student's grade for this activity by class attendance, preparations and participation, and successful completion of assessment activities.

- Attendance is critical if cooperative learning is to take place. Each student should expect to attend all classes. (But because students want to know how many classes they can miss, students who miss more than 5 classes will receive a D for the attendance portion of their grade, and can expect repercussions on the other aspects of their participation grade. **Students who miss more than 6 classes can expect no higher than C on their participation grade. Students who miss more than 9 classes will receive an F for the course. Note for Athletes: your participation in the sport will use up your allowable absences.**)
- Participation and preparation grades will be determined on the basis of peer evaluations from home groups (evaluation format will be distributed later) and successful completion of reading summaries, homework questions, and points accumulated from in class games on readings. [Click here](#) for a copy of the reading summary format I have in mind. (Check Blackboard under Assignments for questions on particular readings.) They should be **done before class. Late reading summaries will not be accepted.** For each reading summary, you will receive 1-2 points depending upon how well you complete the summary. In addition, we will play games drawn from the readings in class each week. You can accumulate points from these games that can add to your total for reading summaries.
- The final portion of the participation grade will come from completion of assessment exercises (learning autobiography, definitions of religion at beginning and end of class, mid-term class evaluation, and completion of a final self-assessment). The purpose of these exercises will be to assess student learning of course materials. They are not graded. (See Blackboard folder on Assessment Activities for guidelines for each.)

RITUAL REPORT (Worth 15-25% of course grade)

This activity requires that students pick a religious ritual to **research, observe/participate in, and report about.** It must be a ritual one does not normally attend (for Catholics, weekly mass is not appropriate, but a Jewish Sabbath service is, etc.). You must do some research about the ritual action in the library or on the internet first, then attend an observance of the action and write a report that reflects a blending of your research and observations. Be sure to focus both on the structure (organization, context, leadership, participants, purpose, etc.) and worldview (symbols, myths, doctrines, ethos, etc.) expressed in the ritual action. Record your reactions to it, intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, and how it compares/contrasts with your own religious experience and ritualistic expression. Be analytical not merely descriptive. This activity has three (3) phases:

First, you must identify a particular ritual you will observe/participate in, the type of ritual it is, the location of the ritual activity, and a date and time this ritual will take place. You will communicate this in writing no later than **September 28**.

Second, you will do some research on the ritual you are going to observe that discusses the structure and worldview of the ritual. You will provide an **annotated bibliography** of your sources (see Blackboard for an example of an annotated bibliography) no later than **October 19**.

Third, you will then attend the ritual and write a **good first draft** of your report. (Incomplete drafts will be returned without comment.) These must be submitted to me electronically no later than **November 19**. These will be evaluated and returned to you after Thanksgiving. **Final ritual reports** must be submitted to me electronically no later than 5pm, **December 7** (last day of class)

You may choose to do this activity in groups (identify a common ritual, research together, attend together, discuss the ritual together). However, because each person is different in terms of background, experience, reflective lenses, etc., each person must write individual reports.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Content (information and comprehension). How focused, informative, and comprehensively developed is the report? How well does the report demonstrate understanding of the ritual observed and the meaning of the rituals to the participants? How well does the analysis accurately interpret the sources and the ritual service? How well does it contrast with the writer's own ritual experience?
2. Organization (clarity, transition, and flow). How logical is the progression and development of the ideas in the report? How clearly are they expressed? How effective are the transitions between ideas? Is there an effective introduction and conclusion?
3. Sources (variety/credibility of references). Are there a variety of references used? How relevant, accurate, and credible is the information used from those sources? How well do they help in understanding and analyzing the particular ritual?
4. Presentation (grammar, spelling, vocabulary). Are the grammar and spelling correct? Are there a variety of proper sentence and paragraph structures employed? Is the vocabulary accurately and effectively used?
5. Documentation (appropriate sources and formatting). How complete and correct is the documentation?

GROUP FINAL EXAMINATION (Worth 15-25% of course grade)

The material from which the exam questions will be taken is the readings and the class discussions. The final exam will be a group exam and will occur on the date of the scheduled final for your class. Further information on the content of the final exam and the evaluation criteria will be distributed at a later time.

The format for the group final, essays from Fall 2007, and Other Activity Options can be found on Blackboard or at the following URL:

<http://webserver.lemoyne.edu/~glennon/200-act.htm>

You will choose from that menu of activities (or develop others) to complete your learning covenant.

REL 200: Religious Perspectives on the Human Situation
Learning Covenant
Fall 2007

Student: _____ **Home Group** _____

Learning Objectives (What are you going to learn?)	Learning Activities (How are you going to meet objective?)	Evidence (How are you going to know that you met it?)	Evaluation Criteria (How are you going to prove it and how well?)	Due Date/ Percentages (When will you finish it? How much will it count?)
1. Course Objectives (see syllabus)	1. Group Participation	Class Attendance Preparation and Participation Assessment Activities	See Activity Options Sheet	12/7 (15-20%)
	2. Group Final Exam	Completed Essays Group Evaluations	See Group Final Process	12/13 (15-25%)
	3. Religious Ritual Activity	Identification of ritual Annotated Bibliography Drafts of Report Final Reports	See Activity Options Sheet	9/28 10/19 11/19 12/7 (15-25%)
2. Your Objectives				