

## CLASSICS IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

### REL10311 SYLLABUS AUTUMN 2010

**Meeting Times:** Mon, 1-2.50pm lecture and Thur, 1-1.50pm seminar (room and group assignments will be handed out in the first lecture).

**Instructor:** Dr. Andy Crome

**Readings:** All of the required reading for the seminars for this course can be found in a course reading pack which can be purchased for a nominal fee from the school office (Samuel Alexander A6). Key supplemental readings related to the assignments for the course are also available on Blackboard, and in the John Rylands University Library. Two very good sourcebooks for this course are *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, London, Routledge, 2009, as well as *Religion, Language and Power*, London, Routledge, 2008, which has been written by many of the lecturers and professors in the Religions and Theology Department at Manchester. Lastly, keep in mind that the *Cambridge Companions* series offer excellent summary essays and good guidance on further reading on many of the topics for this course, and are available through the electronic books links in the university's library homepage at: <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/eresources/>.

### Course requirements

- 2 x 1200 word research portfolio (20% each to make up a total of 40%)
- 1 x 3000 word summative research essay (50%)
- 1 x 15 minute seminar presentation (10%)

**Online resource:** <http://blackboard.manchester.ac.uk>

**Attendance:** We expect you to attend all sessions. If you are ill or have to be away for a good reason, such as family illness or an interview, please let your Tutor know by e-mail and in advance if possible. If you are ill for more than 3 days or repeatedly, you should get a Certification of Student Ill-health from the School Office (A6) and follow the instructions for completion.

### Course aims

1. Introduce students to a selection of great religious thinkers and their influential works in religious thought.
2. Orient students to the key questions and problems that arise from the academic study of different religious traditions.
3. Enable students to make the transition into higher education by developing their study and other transferable skills (finding information, efficient reading, learning to think critically, working in groups, etc.)
4. Provide a range of methods of teaching in recognition of different learning styles and experience.

5. Help students to learn how to stand back from their own positions in trying to understand others and to enable them to reflect on your own learning.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Be aware of some of the intellectual history of religious ideas.
2. Understand and articulate the key concepts, questions and problems which are raised by religious thought.
3. Demonstrate familiarity with library and other information resources at Manchester.
4. Start to be able to critically evaluate and analyse primary and secondary sources.
5. Have developed written and oral skills of communication in starting to structure essays, listening and putting forward students' own view.
6. Have had opportunity to work individually and in groups and to receive feedback on assessed work.

## Structure

Each week of the core course begins with a 2-hour lecture on **Mondays 1-2.50pm**. These lectures are designed to provide a mix of introductory overview material as well as essay writing and research skills. The lecture will be followed by a 1-hour per week tutor led discussion session which will meet on **Thursdays 1.00 – 1.50pm**. You will be given a list in the first lecture at the beginning of the semester which will indicate which group you are in, the name of your tutor, and your group's room meeting locations for the semester.

## Coursework Assessment

**Research portfolio (cumulatively worth 40% of your overall grade):** On the fifth and tenth weeks you will submit **2 copies** of your short **1200 word type-script** essay (worth 20% each) to the school office (Samuel Alexander A6). The essays will address key questions related to the religious figures covered in the course. The questions for each week will be given in the schedule below. The grading criterion for this research portfolio emphasizes analytical accuracy and structural cohesion. Upon successfully completing this portfolio you should be well prepared for the research essay due in the exam period (see below). Both primary and secondary sources to support your portfolio are available online in Blackboard, and further resources are available in the John Rylands University Library.

**Research essay (worth 50% of your overall grade):** You will choose one research topic from the list below which will *guide* your summative essay. The topics are designed to spur your own critical thinking on research areas relevant to the course and its readings. It is therefore expected that you go beyond the assigned seminar readings, and the course bibliography available on Blackboard is a good place to start. The grading criteria for research essays will focus not only on analytical accuracy and structure as in your research portfolio, but your ability to expound upon a thesis. In other words, you must make an argument in relation to the primary and secondary literature for your given research topic. Keep in mind, **you must not duplicate** material from your research portfolio in this final research essay, and must **choose a different** topic than you wrote on in any of your short essays. You must submit **2 copies** of your **3000 word essay in type-script** to the School Office (Samuel Alexander Building A6) by 4pm on the deadline date in the exam period. Here is the list of topics:

1. Why is a self in Augustine's thought?
2. What effect does the Protestant Reformation have upon the relationship between the Church and the State in the western context?
3. Discuss, with examples, how religious poetry works on the reader.
4. What is the impact of Maimonides *Guide for the Perplexed* upon Jewish and Christian thought?

5. With reference to Shankara's historical and cultural context, discuss how one can speak of the ultimate.
6. What is the relationship between religion and politics in Gandhian thought and action.

**Seminar presentation (10% of your overall grade):** During the first week's seminar, you will be assigned a seminar day in which you will be paired with one other student in order to develop and deliver a 15 minute presentation based on your analysis and understanding of the assigned discussion reading for weeks 5 and 7-10. In order to prepare this presentation, however, you will need to go beyond the assigned reading. Here are a few key questions to guide your preparations:

1. The identity and interests of the author. What are her/his qualifications to write on this subject? Does s/he reveal her/his biases?
2. The gist/thesis. Write a couple of sentences that set forth what you believe to be the central point or points of the selected article or chapter. Do not simply copy from the text, but state the core thesis or theses as clearly as possible, in your own words. What is this reading trying to say? Can you summarize it in two or three statements?
3. Key terms/phrases. Now that you have stated the gist, what are the specific building blocks used to make the central point or points? Make a brief list of the four or five key terms or phrases found in the assigned reading, and write a brief explanation of each. Don't simply choose unusual vocabulary. Try to select terms or phrases that really seem most crucial to the meaning of the reading. These might include: a) passages, quotations, turns of phrase that appeal to you; b) difficult passages you have a problem understanding; c) terms or phrases that occur repeatedly throughout the text. When listing terms or phrases, cite page numbers where they can be found in the assigned reading.
4. Weaknesses in the argument. Try and identify possible flaws in the piece. Write down two or three questions that you would have liked to ask the authors for clarification or explanation. Such 'grey areas' represent either a) potential weaknesses in the particular piece, or b) weaknesses in your own knowledge – either way you need to focus on them to better understand the subject.

## Schedule of Discussion Seminars, Lectures and Assignments

Please note that the readings listed below are primary sources written by the religious figures covered in the course. *They are very brief*, roughly five pages or an equivalent, *but very dense* as well. These readings will likely require you to spend more time on them than you may be used to, *looking up words where appropriate in a dictionary online*. They are meant to provide the basis for your seminar discussions. Remember, this reading list is just the tip of the religious studies iceberg, and suggestions for further reading can be found in the course bibliography available on Blackboard. Furthermore, the research portfolio essay questions are listed with their due dates on the fifth and tenth weeks.

Session	Date	Assigned Readings
<b>Week 1: Introduction to the Course</b>		
Lecture	Mon 27/09 1-2.50pm	Orientation Lecture: What makes a religious classic? (Dr. Andy Crome).
Seminar	Thur 30/09 1-1.50pm	Meeting your tutor and assigning your seminar presentation day.
<b>Week 2: Critical Reading Skills</b>		
Lecture	Mon 4/10 1-2.50pm	Critical Reading Skills (Dr. Andy Crome)
Seminar	Thur 7/10 1-1.50pm	Discussion of: Stella Cottrell, <i>Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument</i> , Palgrave, 2005, pp. 37-43. And, critically reading the example of the first page of, Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'," in <i>Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'</i> , London, CUP, 1982, p. 131.

Week 3: Augustine			
Lecture	Mon 11/10 1-2.50pm	Augustine on Sources of the Western Self (Dr. Andy Crome)	
Seminar	Thur 14/10 1-1.50pm	Seminar discussion of: Augustine of Hippo, "Of True Religion," in <i>Augustine: Earlier Writings</i> , edited by J. H. S. Burleigh, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953, Book XXXIX-XLIII, pp. 265-68.	
Week 4: Essay Writing for Analysis and Structure			
Lecture	Mon 18/10 1-2.50pm	Essay Writing for Analysis and Structure (Dr. Andy Crome)	
Seminar	Thur 21/10 1-1.50pm	Discussion of: Stella Cottrell, <i>Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument</i> , Palgrave, 2005, pp. 167-70, as well as discussing the merits of a few marked example essays.	
Week 5: Luther			
Lecture	Mon 25/10 1-2.50pm	Martin Luther and the relationship between Church and State (Dr. Jeremy Gregory)	
Seminar	Thur 28/10 1-1.50pm	Student presentation and seminar discussion of "Excerpt from Luther's Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation" in Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward, <i>Religion and Political Thought</i> , London, Continuum, 2006, pp. 68-73.	
<b>Portfolio Essay 1 Due</b>	Fri 29/10 4pm	With reference to Augustine's "The Soliloquies," Book I, Chapters 1-11, pp. 23-30, why is the soul so important to the knowledge of God? (Available on Blackboard along with other secondary sources).	
Week 6 Reading Week 1/11 - 5/11: No Sessions			
		This is a break to catch up on reading and make a start on your research essay.	
Week 7: Maimonides			
Lecture	Mon 8/11 1-2.50pm	Maimonides and the Problem of Talking about God (Professor Philip Alexander)	
Seminar	Thur 11/11 1-1.50pm	Student presentation and seminar discussion of: Moses Maimonides, <i>Guide for the Perplexed</i> , I, Introduction, I 26 and I 35 (Shlomo Pines, <i>The Guide for the Perplexed: Moses Maimonides</i> , 2 vols (University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1963), vo. 1, pp. 5-6, 56-57, 79-81.	
Week 8: Rumi			
Lecture	Mon 15/11 1-2.50pm	Rumi and the Art of the Poet (Professor Alan Williams)	
Seminar	Thur 18/11 1-1.50pm	Student presentation and seminar discussion of: Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, "The First Book of the Masnavi-ye Ma'navi," in <i>Spiritual Verses</i> , translated by Alan Williams, London: Penguin Classics, 2006, Line 1-247, pp. 7-28 (selections).	
Week 9: Shankara			
Lecture	Mon 22/11 1-2.50pm	Shankara (Dr. Jacqueline Suthren Hirst)	
Seminar	Thur 25/11 1-1.50pm	Student presentation and seminar discussion of: Shankara, "Prose," in <i>Thousand Teachings (Upadesa Sahasri) of Samkara</i> , translated by A. J. Alston, adapted by Jacqueline Suthren Hirst, London, Shanti Sadan, 1990, pp. 5-32 (selections).	

Week 10: Gandhi			
Lecture	Mon 29/11 1-2.50pm	Gandhi, Religion and Politics (Dr. Atreyee Sen)	
Seminar	Thur 30/11 1-1.50pm	Student presentation and seminar discussion: Raghavan Iyer, "Satya-Absolute and Relative Truth," in <i>The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi</i> , OUP, 1990, pp. 222-28.	
<b>Portfolio Essay 2 Due</b>	Fri 10/11 4pm	With particular reference to Maimonides, <i>Guide for the Perplexed</i> , I.1 (trans. Pines, vol. 1, pp. 21-23), analyse how Maimonides argues that when the Bible speaks of God's "image" it does not imply that he has a body. (Available on blackboard along with other secondary sources as well).	
Week 11: Research Essay Skills			
Lecture	Mon 6/12 1-2.50pm	Research Essay Writing and Library Skills Training (Dr. Andy Crome)	
Seminar	Thur 7/12 1-1.50pm	Discussion of: Stella Cottrell, <i>Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument</i> , Palgrave, 2005, pp. 125-33. Students should come prepared to discuss their thesis statement, as well as one relevant research book which they've checked out from the John Rylands University Library.	
Week 12: Summary Review			
Lecture	Mon 13/12 1-2.50pm	Review and overview of the course with reference to further preparations for the research essay. (Dr. Andy Crome)	
Seminar	Thur 14/12 1-1.50pm	Study skills and preparation for writing the final essay. In this seminar, students should ensure that they have a clear thesis, a brief outline of the structure of their essay, and a plan to ensure that they get their essay done by the deadline.	
Exam Period			
<b>Research Essay Due</b>	Fri 21 January 2010	<b>Essay due at the end of the first week of the exam period.</b>	