

California State University, Sacramento
Reason and Revelation: The Origins of Western Culture
Spring 2007

Humanities and Religious Studies 120-01
Sequoia 452
Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00-10:15

Professor Jeffrey Brodd. Email: jbrodd@csus.edu
Office: Mendocino 2028. 278-7703. Hours:
T 10:20-11:20, 4:20-5:20; R 12:20-1:20; by appt.

Course Description

A study of the conflicting cultures that have shaped the social, religious and ethical perspectives of Western culture. Readings in the Bible, Plato, Greek drama, the New Testament, and church fathers. In addition to comparing the ancient Hellenic and Hebraic worldviews, the course will study their confluence in the emergent worldviews of Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity. Focus is upon primary themes: cosmogony and cosmology; theology and the problem of evil; the human condition and salvation; and virtue and the religious life. Prerequisites: Completion of General Education Areas A2 and A3, junior standing, and passage of the Writing Proficiency Exam or ENGL 109E / ENGL 109W. The course fulfills the General Education Writing Intensive requirement.

Texts

Harold W. Attridge, ed., *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, Rev. Ed.
John Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works*
C. K. Barrett, ed., *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*, Rev. Ed.
Course Reader, with various selected texts

Learning Objectives

As its title suggests, the course intends to edify regarding the origins of Western culture, specifically with respect to the two most significant traditions of influence: the Hellenic and the Hebraic. We shall strive to identify which strands of each tradition were maintained through the Roman period (and in many cases, down to the present day), and we shall ask why.

In addition to general edification in this regard, the course strives to meet the following specific objectives:

- To employ and practice techniques of comparative analysis through focus on the primary themes (stated above), themes that are germane to the field of Religious Studies (and indeed to the human condition), and so our analysis will enhance familiarity with basic issues within the field.
- To improve critical thinking skills through careful reading and discussion of foundational sacred and philosophic texts.
- To enhance students' writing skills. Especially in light of its designation as Intensive Writing, the course puts great emphasis on the production and critique of written work.

Requirements and Grading

Careful reading of all assigned texts by the appropriate days (see Schedule and Assignments below) is essential. The course will offer much opportunity for class discussions (usually consisting of impromptu

question-and-answer in the midst of lectures). All students are encouraged to take advantage of this. Quality of participation in class sessions will affect one's course grade. Formal requirements and their correlative course grade percentages consist of the following:

Quality of participation	10%
Two half-hour quizzes (short answer)	20%
Three assigned essays (each app. 4 pages)	45%
Take-home final (app. 8 pages)	25%

A passing grade in the course requires (at a minimum) completion of one quiz, all three assigned essays, and the take-home final.

A late essay will be accepted for up to one week only, with daily reduction of grade. Quizzes must be taken at their scheduled times. Attendance is required, as per departmental attendance policy – a student's course grade may be reduced due to an excessive number of unexcused absences. Consult with the instructor if ever there is a need to miss class. Compliance with rules prohibiting cheating and plagiarism along with principles of courteous conduct are required (i.e., turn off cell phones and pagers, no 'chatting' during class, no leaving class without prior permission, no walking in front of the instructor if ever one needs to arrive late) (for the University's policy on plagiarism, see: <http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353>).

Schedule and Assignments

(Complete all underlined reading assignments by the dates indicated)

Tues 1/30 Introductions. "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"

(Cosmogony and Cosmology)

Thur 2/1 The Hebrew myth of creation and world order. Genesis 1-11; Barrett, 290-92 ("Septuagint and Targum") and 309-11 (#257: Targum of Genesis 1)

Tues 2/6 Greek revelation, Greek reason: two cosmologies. Hesiod's *Theogony* (excerpts, in Reader); begin reading Plato's *Timaeus* (at least through 69c)

Thur 2/8 Finish reading Plato's *Timaeus*. Varieties of the Hebraic-Hellenic confluence in Roman times. Barrett, 252 ("Philo") and 254-55 (#226: Philo on the first day of creation); Augustine, *City of God* (excerpt, in Reader)

Tues 2/13 The Gnostic myth. Barrett, 92-93 ("Gnosis and Gnosticism"); *Apocryphon of John* (with summary of Gnostic characteristics and chart of the Gnostic myth, all in Reader)

Thur 2/15 Summary of comparative themes in cosmogony and cosmology. **First quiz. First essay assigned**

(Theology and Theodicy)

Tues 2/20 Hebraic revealed theology. Exodus 1-24; Deuteronomy 34

- Thur 2/22 Greek theologies. Barrett, 65-66 (“The Earlier Stoics”), 67-68 (#67: Cleanthes’ “Hymn to Zeus”), 69 (#70: Chrysippus on the nature of the gods), 78-81 (on Epicurean theology); Plotinus’ *Enneads* (excerpt, in Reader; see also half-page summary of Neoplatonism, included with Gnosticism summary)
- Tues 2/27 Comparing Hebraic and Hellenic theologies. **First essay due**
- Thur 3/1 Jewish “Wisdom” theology. Proverbs 8; Barrett, 298-303 (“The Divine Wisdom” and #254: Wisdom of Solomon 7.1-8.1) and 262-65 (Philo on “Logos,” including #232 and #233). The Christian *Logos*. Gospel of John 1-3 and 18-21
- Tues 3/6 The ministry of Jesus and the Christology of Mark. Gospel of Mark. Christian orthodoxy and the Gnostic heresy. Church Fathers on Christology and Christianity (handout); “Nicene Creed” and “Definition of Chalcedon” (both in Reader); Barrett, 103-07 (#101: *Eugnostos the Blessed*)
- Thur 3/8 A Biblical theodicy. Job 1-19, 31, 38-42. A Hellenic theodicy. Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* (excerpts, in Reader)
- Tues 3/13 Various Hellenic responses to the problem of evil. Barrett, 68-69 (#69: Chrysippus on the problem of evil); Plotinus’ *Enneads* (excerpt, in Reader). The theodicy of apocalypticism. Barrett, 316-49 (“Apocalyptic”); Daniel (part of ch. 7 and all of ch. 12 are included in Barrett); review Mark 13. **Second essay assigned**
- Thur 3/15 **Second quiz**

(Anthropology and Salvation)

- Tues 3/20 Biblical insights on anthropology. (Review Genesis 1-11); Genesis 12-25; Barrett, 311-14 (#258: Targum of Genesis 22); Psalm 8; Ecclesiastes
- Thur 3/22 Hellenic anthropologies. Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (excerpt, in Reader); Plato’s *Phaedrus* 245c-249c (on the nature of the soul). A Jewish Middle-Platonist’s perspective. Barrett, 255-56 (#227: Philo on the nature of the soul). **Second essay due**

(Spring Break)

- Tues 4/3 Plato’s doctrine of the immortality of the soul and its purification. Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” (in *Republic* 514a-517c – also in Barrett, 62-65 [#63]); the “Myth of Er” (from Plato’s *Republic* 614a-621d)
- Thur 4/5 Plato’s doctrine of the immortality of the soul and its purification (cont.). Plato’s *Phaedo*
Platonic perspectives in Roman times. Cicero’s “Dream of Scipio” and Virgil’s *Aeneid* Book VI (excerpts, both in Reader)
- Tues 4/10 The Hebraic doctrines of corporate salvation and messianism. Isaiah 1-13, 25, 40-55; Barrett, 314-15 (#259: Targum of Isaiah 52.13-53.12); Psalms 2, 46, 77, 89, 110, and 139
- Thur 4/12 The Christian synthesis: bodily resurrection and the immortal soul. 1 Thessalonians; 1 Corinthians 15. The salvific role of faith. (Review Genesis 22); Romans 1-6; Hebrews 8-13; Augustine’s *Confessions* (excerpt, in Reader)

Tues 4/17 The Gnostic alternative: salvation via gnosis. Review: *Apocryphon of John* (excerpt, in Reader); Barrett, 111-14 (#103: excerpts from the *Gospel of Thomas*). **Third essay assigned**

(Virtue and the Religious Life)

Thur 4/19 The religious ethic of Torah. Deuteronomy 4-28; Leviticus 18-20; Psalms 1 and 19

Tues 4/24 Judaism's continuing focus on Torah. Barrett, 218-19 (on Qumran) and 231-34 (#216: ethics of the Qumran community); Barrett, 256-58 (#228: Philo on "Nature" and Torah); Barrett, 269-70 ("Josephus") and 283-84 (#248: Josephus on Jewish "theocracy"); Barrett, portions from 177-94 (the Rabbis on Torah; read #153, #162, #163, #165, #171, and #172)

Thur 4/26 **Third essay due.** Hellenic humanism. Barrett, 88-90 (#91: excerpt from Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, and #92: excerpt from Sophocles' *Antigone*)

Tues 5/1 Socratic virtue and ethical reasoning. Plato's *Apology* and *Euthyphro*

Thur 5/3 Jesus as revealer of the new Torah. Gospel of Matthew

Tues 5/8 Hellenic attitudes toward love and sexuality. Plato's *Symposium*

Thur 5/10 Other Hellenic perspectives on ethics. Barrett, 77-78 (#82: excerpt from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*) and 70-77 (##73-81: the Stoics Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius on ethics)

Tues 5/15 Ethics of early Christianity. 1 Corinthians 1-14; Church Fathers on sexuality and ethics (in Reader). The ethics of world-denial: Gnostic asceticism/libertinism. **Final exam (take-home) assigned**

Thur 5/17 Summary and conclusions

Final exam: Due by 5:00 on Tuesday, May 22