RELIGION 156 — CHRISTIANITY

Fall 2011

Tuesdays and Thursdays
11:00 A.M. to 12:20 P.M.
010 Eggers

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Office: 511 HL
Office Hours: 12:45P.M. to 2:00P.M.,
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Course Description and Methods

This course is an introduction to the academic study of Christianity. Students can expect to learn about the ideas and beliefs, the sacred writings and practices of the people who call themselves Christians or who belong to Christendom or Christian culture, particularly in the Western world. Our approach to Christianity will not privilege any of its many groups, movements, practices, or expressions. Rather, we will take a humanistic approach to this complex set of faith traditions. That is, we will ask what Christianity has to do with being human; how it addresses human needs and concerns, particularly for those people who are committed to it. This means that we will ask who Christianity’s people are, especially some of its leading thinkers and noteworthy figures; why this religion is compelling to them; how it addresses their concerns and issues; how it relates to their world; what problems it has caused and continues to cause for its own people as well as others; and why in spite of its problems, Christianity remains appealing and viable to a broad array of people over centuries and across cultures.

This humanistic approach to Christianity will primarily involve intellectual, social, and cultural history. That is, we will look at ideas, beliefs, sacred writings, creative expressions, cultural ideals, social values and conventions, personal experiences, and religious, moral, and institutional practices in their historical and cultural context in order to see how particular people at particular times with particular issues and concerns embraced or attended to this faith. In doing so, we will assume that as a religion, Christianity is something distinctive, something with its own integrity, even as it interacts with and is embedded in the world. Thus, we will not treat it as though it were simply reducible to an understanding of human behavior in sociological, psychological, or even philosophical terms, even though we will not neglect to attend to these insights, especially when we examine Christianity in the modern world.

Course Goals

There are two broad goals of this course. First, this course aims to give students a general understanding of Christianity, through its historical, intellectual, and cultural expressions, so that
they might comprehend something of its significance – and pervasiveness – in human affairs today. Second, this course aims to help students to think critically, particularly existentially, about a religion that itself claims to be fundamentally about the meaning of human life.

**Required Course Texts in the Syracuse University Bookstore**


**IMPORTANT NOTE ON THE HARPERCOLLINS STUDY BIBLE**

All biblical references that I use in class will come from this version of the Judaeo-Christian Bible. When referring to particular passages from the Bible, students are also required to use this version.

If you are unable to purchase the *HC Study Bible*, you may use Bird Library's copy. It will be placed on 2-hour reserve. Keep in mind, though, that this is a large class; therefore, you must plan ahead in order to have the texts when you need them. In other words, you are responsible for making your own photocopies of required and supplemental readings, and for bringing them to class as needed. *You will not be excused for not having the readings from the Bible, because it was not available when you went to the library.*

**IF YOU ARE A STUDENT ATHLETE, you undoubtedly will have high demands on your time, and so will not have the time to go to the library to use the Bible as required. Therefore, it is especially important that you PURCHASE YOUR OWN COPY.**

Finally, if you have taken REL 114 – The Bible, you may use *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha*, New Revised Standard Version. You, however, will need to figure out how to coordinate your use of this version with the work that we do in class.

**Other Required Readings on Reserve via Blackboard**

Other required readings listed on the schedule below will be available via Blackboard. Students should make their own copies, and bring them to class, when they are discussed.
Course Requirements and Grading

In addition to the weekly reading assignments, students will be required to: 1) take three take-home exams, and 2) participate in class through informal discussion, occasional short writing assignments, films and film discussions, and occasional pop quizzes.

The three, take-home exams will account for three quarters of a student’s grade. Thus, each of the three exams will account for one quarter of a student’s grade. The first exam may be a combination of objective and short-answer essay questions worth up to 100 points. If this format is used, students will write no more than three or four paragraphs in the short-answer section of the exam. This exam might also simply be a short-answer essay exam. The second exam, also worth 100 points, will only be a short-answer essay exam. In this case, students will write short responses of no more than one or two pages to a select number of questions. For example, students might be asked to respond to three out of seven questions. The third exam will be an essay of no more than four, double-spaced, typed pages, based on the film Babette’s Feast, which will be screened in class on Wednesday, December 7, 2010, in the evening, so save the date. See below for more details. This exam is designed to give students the opportunity to use what they have learned in the course to assess the meaning of Christianity as a human affair. Like the first two exams, this exam will be worth 100 points. STUDENTS MUST BE IN CLASS TO RECEIVE ALL TAKE-HOME EXAMS. EXAMS ARE CONTROLLED EVENTS THAT CANNOT BE DISTRIBUTED BY OTHER STUDENTS, OR SENT TO YOU ELECTRONICALLY. ONLY I, MY ASSISTANT, A RELIGION DEPARTMENT SECRETARY, OR OTHER AUTHORIZED PERSON MAY DISTRIBUTE AN EXAM. ANY STUDENT WHO COPIES AND DISTRIBUTES AN EXAM WILL FAIL THE EXAM AND CAUSE THE OTHER STUDENT TO WHOM IT IS DISTRIBUTED TO FAIL THE EXAM.

Class participation, comprised of informal class discussion, short writing assignments, and perhaps pop quizzes, will account for the last quarter of a student’s grade. A student’s regular participation in class discussion will be noted by me and my assistant over the course of the semester. A letter grade will be assessed for it based upon the quality of a student’s verbal participation—insightfulness, preparedness, and clarity. Three short, occasional writing assignments, which will be graded and returned as quickly as possible, will be worth up to 100 points. These short papers will typically be assigned as a way to respond to a film, a certain reading, or a presentation. In fact, several films will be screened and discussed in class, including one for the final exam. Pop quizzes may also be given occasionally throughout the course. They will usually cover some aspect of the reading, and be worth up to 100 points each. The final class participation grade will be an average of the writing assignments and any pop quizzes—increased, balanced, or lowered by my and my assistant’s assessment of a student’s participation in class discussion. (In other words, the average of writing assignments and pop quizzes will be reduced by the assessment of a student’s verbal contributions to class and film discussions only if s/he never contributes anything to such discussions). Failure to attend the course regularly and timely can also hurt this grade. Therefore, MAKE SURE THAT YOU ATTEND REGULARLY AND TIMELY AND THAT YOU SIGN IN EVERY DAY. Irregular attendance, including regular tardiness, will diminish your overall class participation grade in the following manner:
• One absence = No deductions.
• Each absence thereafter = 10 points per instance.
• Regular tardiness = 10 points per instance.

These penalties will be enforced. However, if you are having problems or have special issues, do not hesitate to inform me or my assistant immediately. We are certainly willing to work with you.

**Grade Scale**

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<td>A</td>
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Fractions of points will be rounded to the nearest whole point *only at my discretion, and only in regard to the final grade*. No rounding off will apply to individual exams, pop quizzes, or written assignments.

**Expectations and Policies**

*Attendance*: Students are expected to attend each class session regularly and timely. **You are not fully present, if you do not have your books or readings for the day.**

*Preparation*: Students are expected to be prepared for each class and to submit all assignments when due. **Tardy work will not be accepted.**

Students are also expected to do their own work, and not to plagiarize anyone else's work. Plagiarism not only means using someone else's exact words and ideas without putting them in quotation marks and providing a citation. But it also means rephrasing someone else's ideas or words in such a way that it is clear that you are still borrowing from them without citing them. **Plagiarism is a very serious academic offense that can cause you to fail an assignment and the course.** Be sure, then, that if you use someone else's words or ideas, including in a summary, cite that person. In other words, avoid even the hint of plagiarism. For more information on the University's policy on this issue, go to: [http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/acad_integrity.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/acad_integrity.htm).
Respect: Students are expected to be attentive and courteous to me, my assistant, and each other. This means no talking while others are talking; no entering and exiting while class is in session (unless there is an emergency or this is part of the structure of a presentation); no cell-phone calls; no text messaging or writing and sending e-mails; no reading newspapers during class; no chewing gum or eating; no putting on makeup or combing one's hair; and so forth.

Problems: If you have problems with the assignments or anything else that might affect your performance, please contact me or my teaching assistant immediately. If you cannot reach us during office hours, please e-mail us.

Holidays: The University no longer observes any religious holidays. Therefore, students planning to observe religious holidays must contact me and my assistant well ahead of time so that they might arrange to be absent without penalty and to complete any missed assignments. Students will not be given the opportunity to avoid a penalty or to complete any missed assignments, if they do not contact us ahead of time.

Computer Use During Class: I am generally not opposed to students using computers in order to take notes. I have found, though, that too many students abuse this privilege by surfing the web and answering email rather than listening to lecture or participating in discussion. Therefore, no computers may be used during class time.

Disability: I, my assistant, and the Syracuse University community values diversity and seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. This includes supporting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at (315) 443-4498 or (315) 443-1371 (TDD). They are located at 804 University Avenue, Room 309. For more information, please visit their website at: http://provost.syr.edu/provost/Units/academicprograms/DISABILITYSERVICES/index.aspx

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, ASSIGNMENTS, FILMS, & PRESENTATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tues., 8/30</td>
<td>Introductions &amp; Introduction to the Course.</td>
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<td>Thurs., 9/1</td>
<td>What is Christianity?: Defining and Studying Christianity, A Humanistic Approach (Belief, Meaning, and Life).</td>
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2. Tues., 9/6  The Bible, Inspiration, and Identity: Introduction to the Bible and Canon Formation.

Assignment: Read Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 1, Introduction; Pt. I, opening pages, pp. 19-27; Pt. II, opening pages, pp. 91-96. We will focus on the material discussed in the introductions to Parts I and II. But you may find Ch. 1, Introduction, a helpful way to review the material covered in the first class session, along with the text slides available on Blackboard.


Assignment: Read Cory and Hollerich, Chs. 2-3. Also read Exodus 1-20 (that is, the Book of Exodus, chapters 1-20), on Moses, the Israelites, and the Ten Commandments in HarperCollins Study Bible. Please bring the Bible (or your copies of the reading from it) to class.


Assignment: Read Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 6. Before doing so, though, browse Chs. 4-5. They set the stage for Ch. 6. Then, read the Gospel of Matthew in HarperCollins Study Bible. Consider what it might mean to say that God is a human being who suffers. Please bring the Bible (or your copies of the reading from it) to class.

3.-4. Thurs., 9/15, and Tues., 9/20  Jesus the Jew and Jesus the Rebel: Portraits of Jesus (continued). Who is Jesus? And why have people been so taken with him? We will screen two films in the BBC series, “The Lives of Jesus.” On Thursday, we will watch and discuss “Jesus the Jew,” Part 1 of the series. On Tuesday, we will watch and discuss Part 2 of the series, “Jesus the Rebel.”

[Note: During our discussion on Thursday, I may refer to the work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, a feminist New Testament scholar who allows us to ask if Jesus, the god-man, were a woman. A selection of Schüssler Fiorenza's work is on Blackboard.]

Assignment: Take notes on the films, and write a short summary-reflection paper (2-3 pages, typed, double-spaced) that takes into consideration what the films, class lecture, and class discussion suggest about who Jesus might be? Be sure to bring the Bible or a copy of the four Gospels to class. Summary-Reflection Papers are due at the beginning of Thursday's class.
4. Thurs., 9/22  Revelation, Sin, and Conversion: How does one become part of Christianity as a religious movement? Focusing on the conversions of Paul and Augustine, we will ask: What did they need to be saved from? And what about Christianity seemed to be an answer? Today’s focus: Paul.

Assignment: Read Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 7. Also read Acts 7:54-8:3, 9:1-31 in HarperCollins Study Bible. Please bring the Bible (or your copies of the reading from it) to class.

Summary-Reflection Papers on the BBC Jesus films and class discussions of Jesus due at the beginning of class today.


Assignment: Read Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 10. Read the selection from Augustine’s Confessions on Blackboard, as well as the selection from Augustine’s The Way of Life of the Catholic Church in the Christian Humanism reader.

Thurs., 9/29  Power: The movement catches fire: How does Christianity develop and spread? What role does heresy, persecution, and the Roman world play in disseminating and developing the faith?

Assignment: Read Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 8. Read the selection from Justin and Tertullian, as well as the Apostles’ Creed, in the Christian Humanism reader. Also read the selection from Perpetua on Blackboard.

6. Tues., 10/4  Power: The Imperialization of Christianity—Should Christianity have taken over the style of Pagan rule, with bishops, popes, armies, etc?

Assignment: Read Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 9. Read the Nicene Creed and the selection from Augustine’s City of God in the Christian Humanism reader. In the City of God selection, focus on chapters 4, 12-14.

Thurs., 10/6  TAKE-HOME EXAM 1: Review Session and distribution of the exam. YOU MUST BE IN CLASS TO RECEIVE THE EXAM. This exam will cover everything that we have studied up to this point, and is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, October 11, 2011.
7. Tues., 10/11 **Prayer as Power/Prayer Institutionalized/Prayer and Worship:** From the “ascetics” of the Egyptian and Syrian deserts to the “monastics” of Medieval Europe to the “igumens” of the Russian Orthodox Church.

**Assignment:** Review Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 9, as needed. Read short selections from Athanasius’ *Life of St. Antony*, and identify passages and issues that you find interesting and would like to discuss.

**TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS TODAY!**

Thurs., 10/13 **Prayer and Worship (continued):** From Syrian semi-monasticism to the “igumens” of the Russian Orthodox Church.

**Assignment:** Review Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 9, as needed, and read Ch. 11. Focus on short selections from Ephrem’s *Hymns* and Igumen Chariton of Valamo’s *The Art of Prayer* on Blackboard. For class discussion, jot down the distinctive features of these pieces and consider how they differ from the piece on St. Antony.

8. Tues., 10/18 **Prayer and Worship (continued).** Our discussion today will be interspersed with images and music from the medieval monastic world. We will consider these as we discuss Benedict and Hildegard today.

**Assignment:** Read the Prologue and chapters 1-3, 5, 7, 16, 19, 33-37, 39-40, 48, 53-55 of Benedict’s *Rule* in the *Christian Humanism* reader; and the selection from Hildegard of Bingen on Blackboard. Browse all of the selections under “Hymns and Sequences from the Middle Ages” in the *Christian Humanism* reader. Read Cory and Hollerich, Chs. 13-14, respectively. Also look at Islam Time-line at p. 211 (Ch. 12).

Thurs., 10/20 **Faith and Knowledge (or God, Cosmos, and Human Knowing):** Thomas Aquinas.

**Assignment:** Read Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 15. Read the selection from Aquinas’ *Summa Contra Gentiles* in the *Christian Humanism* reader.

**Supplementary reading only:** If you have time, and are interested, you might browse Aristotle’s *Politics* and *Ethics*, and Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*, all of which is in the *Christian Humanism* reader.

9. Tues., 10/25 **Dignity, Finitude and Grace:** Renaissance and Erasmus.

**Assignment:** Read Cory and Hollerich, Chs. 16-17; read pp. 262-263
under Erasmus’ *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (Handbook of the Militant Christian) in *Christian Humanism* reader, and also the short selections from Ficino’s *Platonic Theology* and della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man* in the *Christian Humanism* reader. For fun, you might look at Erasmus’ “Pilgrimage for Religion’s Sake” on Blackboard. I will refer to all of these briefly in class.

**Thurs., 10/27**  **Dignity, Finitude and Grace (continued):** Luther.

**Assignment:** Read Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 18. In *Christian Humanism* reader, read selections from *The Freedom of a Christian* and *The Bondage of the Will*.

**NOTE!!! SIGN UP FOR EXTRA CREDIT:**
Volunteers needed for a play of Zwingli’s liturgy in two weeks.

**10. Tues., 11/1**  **Dignity, Finitude and Grace (continued):** Luther and Erasmus.

**Assignment:** *Write a short paper* (2-3, double-spaced, typed pages), comparing Luther’s *Bondage of the Will* to Erasmus’ *Diatribe or Sermon Concerning Free Will* (also in the course reader). Explain the differences between the two men’s positions on the human condition. Be prepared to discuss your paper in class today.

**Thurs., 11/3**  **Smashing Images and Altars:** Iconoclasm and Protestant Reform.

**Assignment:** Read Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 19 for background. Focus your reading, though, on Zwingli’s liturgy and the Catholic Low Mass on Blackboard reserve. Pay attention to what is emphasized in each event, and make some notes comparing the two liturgies. EVERYONE SHOULD DO THIS, EVEN THOSE WHO ARE PERFORMING.

BE SURE TO BRING YOUR NOTES AND YOUR COPIES OF BOTH LITURGIES TO CLASS. We will perform Zwingli’s liturgy, and then discuss it and the Catholic Low Mass.

**11. Tues., 11/8**  **Sin, Human Being, and the Glory of God:** Calvin and Puritanism.

**Assignment:** Read selections from Calvin’s *Institutes* in *Christian Humanism* reader and selections on reserve. Browse selection from John Bunyan, in *Christian Humanism* reader. Review Cory and Hollerich, Ch.19, pp. 336-340, 344-348; and read Cory and Landry, Ch. 23 on Blackboard, pp. 349-359.
Thurs., 11/10  **Perfecting the Human Being:** Wesleyan Pietism Responds to Calvinism.

**Assignment:** Read short selection from John Wesley in *Christian Humanism* reader. Read Cory and Landry, Ch. 23 on Blackboard.

12.  ** Tues., 11/15  **Perfecting the Human Being:** Catholic and Quaker Mysticism.

**Assignment:** Read brief selections from Teresa of Avila and Howard Thurman, on Blackboard. For context, read as needed Cory and Hollerich, Chs. 20, 25 (463-466). Also review Cory and Landry, Ch. 23, 360-363 on Blackboard.

Thurs., 11/17  **TAKE-HOME EXAM 2: Review Session and distribution of the exam. YOU MUST BE IN CLASS TO RECEIVE THE EXAM.** For this short-essay exam, you will choose from several questions on our study of Christianity from the monastic traditions of the desert in the 4th-century to Catholic and Protestant Mysticism of the 16th and 20th centuries. **THIS ESSAY EXAM IS DUE TUESDAY, 11/29, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS (11:00 A.M.).**

**GENERAL THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND FOR THIS EXAM:** As our classes since the first exam have focused on Catholicism and Protestantism, the questions for the exam will explicitly or implicitly compare these two broad, often conflicting traditions. Some questions to consider: Are individuals free to “connect with God” on their own? What is the danger of this, as well as a multiplicity of churches? Or is it a good thing that Christianity is so diverse? Why should the Christian religion be one? What might be at stake in this? Consider our study of early Christianity. Finally, what is appealing about a theocracy? What is dangerous about it? Consider the Puritans as well as ancient Jews and Christians in this regard. Also consider the kind of world that Wesley and the Methodist seem to promote.

13.  ** Tues., 11/22,**

and Thurs., 11/24  **NO CLASSES: THANKSGIVING BREAK.**

Assignment: Read Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 22. Read the small selection from Kant on Blackboard.

TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE TODAY AT 11:00A.M.!

Thurs., 12/1  Religion as Faith, Feeling, and Passion: Schleiermacher, with reference to Kierkegaard.

Assignment: Read Schleiermacher’s Christmas Eve dialogue in the Christian Humanism reader. Be prepared to discuss why Schleiermacher thinks Christmas embodies Christianity’s core feeling or sensibility. If you are interested, and able, browse the selection from Schleiermacher’s On Religion on Blackboard. Also, take a look at the selection from Kierkegaard’s Christian Discourses on Blackboard.

15. Tues., 12/6  Confronting Evil, Justice, and Hope: Religion as a Discourse of Human Value and Empowerment: Christianity and Human Rights in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Assignment: Read the selection from Martin Luther King, Jr. in the course reader. For context, review/read Cory and Landry, Ch. 23, pp. 360-363, on Blackboard, and Cory and Hollerich, Ch. 25, pp. 455-466.

**Wed., 12/7 FINAL EXAM EVENT-WEDNESDAY NIGHT AT THE MOVIES: BABETTE’S FEAST.**

THIS IS A SPECIAL NIGHT, SO MARK YOUR CALENDARS EARLY, AND PLAN ON ATTENDING!

WHERE: 010 EGGERS (IF AVAILABLE)
WHEN: 7:00P.M. TO 9:00P.M.

For your final exam, you will have the pleasure of watching a film that in its very subject takes us beyond Christianity as doctrine, faith tradition, or institutional practice (even though it does deal with all of these things) to art, particularly culinary art, as a medium for spiritual health and personal well-being. In light of our recent discussion of Romanticism, and the film’s setting in the 19th and early 20th centuries, one might call it a Romantic
expression of art or the aesthetic as the religious—that is, the means for human beings to body forth the divine (Christian idea of the incarnation).

Depending upon everyone’s schedules, and the availability of our room, 010 Eggers, we will screen the film in class on Wednesday night. The film is about 1 hour and 45 minutes, so plan on a 2-hour time slot. The current thought is to run it from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. So bring some after-dinner munchies and your notepad.

Here is what you should make note of while you watch the film:

**BASIC QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD KNOW THE ANSWERS TO IN WRITING YOUR FINAL-EXAM ESSAY.**

1. What is Babette’s background? What was she well known for in Paris? What event did she participate in that led to her exile? Did it have something to do with revolutionary ideals? If so, what? And how does this activity bring her to Denmark? That is, how does she come to be part of the household and the community of two kind, but austere Danish Lutheran sisters? Who connected her to these sisters, and why?

2. What forms of Christianity come together, even clash in the film? That is, what are these different expressions of Christianity in the film? Catholicism and/or Protestantism? If so, what kinds of Catholicism and Protestantism? And how do they relate to each other?

3. What is the basic storyline or plot of the film? That is, if you had to summarize it for a friend, how would you do that and make your summary as interesting and as subtle as the film?

**Thurs., 12/8 Discussion of Final (Take-Home) Exam/Closing Lecture.**

**PART I: DISCUSSION OF FILM AND FINAL EXAM ESSAY:**
The first 20-25 minutes of the day will be a discussion of the film from Wednesday night. You should review your notes, and be able to answer at least two or three of the basic questions provided above. You will have an opportunity to screen the film again on your own in order to note anything you may have missed, and/or to help you to write your final essay. Be ready, though, to think about how you might compose that essay, as we discuss the film in class. To this end, here are the guidelines for the final take-home exam essay:
MAIN QUESTION TO ADDRESS IN YOUR FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAM ESSAY:

This course has focused on Christianity as a human affair. **How does the film Babette's Feast depict Christianity as a human affair?** Is Babette or the way that Babette's cooking affects the lives, attitudes, and beliefs of those who eat her food an appropriate expression of Christianity? For example, could one say that there is a Eucharist theme in the film? If so, how is it represented? What role does Babette play? What role do the people in the small Danish community play? What is it that makes their relationship Eucharistic?

Consider our previous discussions of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, here, and remember that the word “Eucharist” literally means “good gift.” Consider also the earlier discussions that we have had in class about how Christianity may be said to address human needs.

**DO NOT USE FILM INTERPRETATIONS THAT YOU MIGHT FIND ONLINE OR ELSEWHERE. STICK TO THE DISCUSSIONS THAT WE HAVE HAD IN CLASS.**

**PARTS II & III: CLOSING LECTURE AND EVALUATIONS.**
The next 25-30 minutes will be devoted to a summary lecture of the course. This will be followed by a course-evaluation period of no more than 30-35 minutes, which will conclude our class sessions.

16. Tues., 12/13 **EXAM 3: TAKE-HOME ESSAY EXAM DUE AT 4:00 PM IN DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION OFFICE. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**