

RELIGION 191

Religion, Meaning, and Knowledge

Fall 2016

Tuesdays and Thursdays
5:00 P.M. to 6:20 P.M.
111 Hall of Languages

Professor: Dr. Marcia C. Robinson
Office: 511 HL
Office Hours: 1:30 P.M. to 2:30 P.M.,
Tuesdays
E-mail: mrobin03@syr.edu

Teaching Assistant: Ms. Sara Swenson
Office: 514HL
Office Hours: 1:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M.,
Mondays
E-mail: saswenso@syr.edu

Course Description and Methods

This course explores the age-old quest for wisdom and faith in the face of suffering, injustice, and loss by focusing on theologies and philosophies grounded in life and illuminated in literature, music, and art. Three prominent religious thinkers and practitioners will guide us on our journey into this dynamic world of the examined life, namely, Thich Nhat Hanh, Howard Thurman, and Søren Kierkegaard. Plato's Socrates will accompany them by introducing and framing our exploration. Along the way, we will also be graced with the insights of a variety of related figures or texts, including Augustine, Friedrich Schleiermacher, the Bible, Euripides, Shakespeare, the creative expressions of a select group of artists and musicians, and especially by Martin Luther King, Jr., who will enter our discussion at the end of the semester. All of these figures and texts will afford us the opportunity to engage some of life's most beautiful moments and most gripping trials!

As the title of the course suggests, the fundamental issue we will explore is the way in which *religion might be said to shape—positively and/or negatively—the search for existential meaning or wisdom*. Hence, we will naturally explore the meaning of religion, or to put it more pointedly, how our orienting figures conceive of and experience God or the divine, and the way that this experience influences their perspective on and interaction with the world.

Course Goals

To offer students an imaginative and exploratory environment in which to read and to listen closely so that they might develop an appreciation for the examined life. And to help students to develop the close reading skills needed for such exploration.

Required Course Texts in the Syracuse University Bookstore

- Plato, *THE LAST DAYS OF SOCRATES* (*Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*), trans. Christopher Rowe (Penguin)
- Søren Kierkegaard, *FEAR AND TREMBLING*, trans. Alastair Hannay (Penguin)
- Howard Thurman, *JESUS AND THE DISINHERITED* (Friends United Press or Beacon editions)
- Thich Nhat Hanh, *LIVING BUDDHA, LIVING CHRIST* (Riverhead Books, Berkeley Publishing Group, Penguin, 2007)
- _____, *THE POCKET THICH NHAT HANH* (Boston: Shambala, 2012)
- _____, *THE MIRACLE OF MINDFULNESS* (Boston: Beacon, 1992)

Students should acquire these particular editions or versions of these texts. Please do not purchase others; it makes coordinating pages problematic to say the least.

Other Required Readings on Reserve via Blackboard

Other required readings, which I will refer to as we go along, will be available on **Blackboard**. Students should make their own copies of these texts, and **bring them to class, when they are discussed**.

Course Assignments and Grading

This is a reflection course. Thus, **the primary skill that students should develop is their ability *to read closely and to think critically—yet in an easy and personal manner***. The primary assignment that students have, then, is to read the assigned materials for the day and to ***participate in class discussion, since this is the main way they will demonstrate their development as readers***. Equally important are ***two reflection papers*** that students will do at high points in the course ***that will ground a final dialogue that students will put on as a group***. To this end, students should do the following:

- **do all assigned readings when they are due;**
- **prepare for class discussion by selecting a passage from the assigned text or texts, and typing 1-3 questions on the reading or each of the readings in order to focus their participation in class discussion;**
- **participate in class discussion, group work, and any re-enactment of a section of a play;**
- **write two short reflection papers of no more than four (4) pages. The *first*, which will be *due in October*, will be a comparison of Socrates and Thich Nhat Hanh. The *second*, which will be *due in November*, will be a comparison of all three orienting figures—Thich Nhat Hanh, Howard Thurman, and Søren Kierkegaard. In both papers, you will need to address the basic questions for the course listed under “As a general rule” on the next page (pg. 3). In doing so, though, be sure that you make an argument. That is, formulate a thesis, and then support it over the body of the paper.**
- **over the Thanksgiving break, consider how each of our orienting figures present religion as a paradigm shift by typing your thoughts in three double-spaced pages. You will turn in your typed thoughts with your final dialogue.**
- **help to organize (in-class) and participate in a final dialogue, using assigned readings for this exercise, the just mentioned paradigm shift exercise, and other pertinent work done throughout the semester.**

Hence, a student's final grade will be constituted of three things: 1) *class participation*, which entails attendance, contributions to class discussion, and selected passages and discussion questions; 2) *two short reflection papers*; and 3) *a final group dialogue* on readings assigned at the end of the course, along with your thoughts about each figure representing a paradigm shift. *Class participation will count for one third of a student's grade; the two reflection papers averaged will count for a third of a student's grade; and the final dialogue will count for a third of a student's grade.*

As a **general rule**, when doing readings, writing papers, and preparing for the final dialogue, students should **always ask three basic and related questions reflecting the main topic of this course:**

1. What is faith or religion for this person?
2. Who is God or the divine, or what is sacred or inviolable, for this person?
3. According to this person, how does one know God, the divine, or the sacred? And what kind of knowledge is this? Is it the objective or factual knowledge of a scientist, the propositional knowledge of an academic philosopher? Or is it some other kind of knowledge?
4. How does faith, religion, God, and/or the sacred affect and inform life for this person?

Asking these basic questions does not mean that they themselves should literally be the ones that students turn in after every reading. Rather, it means that students should use them as guides as they approach the readings and as they write their papers. Once students began to get into the readings, they should develop their own questions, which should naturally relate to the guiding ones.

Discussion questions with selected passages from readings *should be done for every class session in which there are assigned readings, starting with the readings from Plato's dialogues.* Therefore, students should have them *typed, printed, and ready to turn in after every class session as indicated.* **The primary readings from which to select passages and on which to write discussion questions are:**

Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, and *Crito* in THE LAST DAYS OF SOCRATES, trans. Christopher Rowe (Penguin)

Thich Nhat Hanh, LIVING BUDDHA, LIVING CHRIST (Riverhead Books, Berkeley Publishing Group, Penguin, 2007)

_____, THE MIRACLE OF MINDFULNESS (Boston: Beacon, 1992)

_____, GOING HOME (selections on Blackboard)

Howard Thurman, MYSTICISM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF LOVE (on Blackboard)

_____, "Belief and Faith," from THE INWARD JOURNEY (on Blackboard)

_____, JESUS AND THE DISINHERITED (Friends United Press or Beacon editions)

Søren Kierkegaard, FEAR AND TREMBLING, trans. Alastair Hannay (Penguin)

_____, WORKS OF LOVE (selections on Blackboard)

_____, "The Joy of It: The Weaker You Become, the Stronger God Becomes in You," from CHRISTIAN DISCOURSES (on Blackboard)

You may include other texts from our readings in your regular questions and passages, if you wish; however, this is not required. Therefore, please be sure to cover the ones that are required, as listed above.

In regard to a **basic format for presenting questions and passages**, students should connect the passages that they select with their questions. They might do something like this:

"On reading Socrates' initial remark to Euthyphro about taking his father to court (p. xx), I immediately thought: What does Socrates mean by.....? The full passage reads thus:....."

Students might also simply place the passage(s) of interest, and that are related to the course topic, at the top of the page, and follow the passage(s) with their questions. Either way, they should make sure that their **questions show a line of related inquiry**. *Students should not simply say "I don't understand." If you don't understand a passage, but wish to discuss it in class, indicate what exactly is confusing to you with a line of questions that show that you are making a serious attempt to understand the text.* In regard to style, be sure to provide the title and author of the reading and the page numbers. For quoting, if you have indicated the author and title of the work at the top of the page, you only need to provide page numbers in parentheses after your quotation. Be sure to print your **passages and questions** on clean paper. Also **keep a collection** of them **in a notebook or portfolio as you go along** so that you can turn the full collection of them in easily when we request them, and especially at the end of the semester. I and/or my TA will use the questions that you hand in to determine the quality and the depth of your engagement of the text. We may pass them back with comments on occasion so that you get some idea as to how we are viewing your participation. **However, your questions and passages will not be graded separately. Rather, they will be used as a whole to help me to determine the overall quality of your participation in the course. Therefore, take these little exercises seriously; don't just dash off something.**

The two short reflection papers should be four pages, no more than five. They should be typed, double space, printed on clean paper, and handed in when due. Students should select a group of focal passages from the readings on which to develop a thesis. Although students will be comparing and situating the orienting figures in these papers, they should nevertheless **compose an argument** based on a selection of passages that are of real interest to them. In other words, make these papers address something you can get into just as you could a discussion. And in order to help me and/or my TA follow your interests and concerns, be sure to type a small, yet pertinent portion of the passages that you select from these figures at the top of the first page of the paper. Don't forget to provide a brief citation of the work and the page number, and be sure to put your name and the date on your paper.

Course Format: Lecture, Discussion and Group Work. Lectures are meant to facilitate the reflective process at the heart of this course by demonstrating how students might closely read particular materials. The coordinating discussions accompanying lectures then allow students to demonstrate their own careful reading and reflection on the same materials, either individually or in group work. The dialogue at the end of the course is the culmination of this process. It gives students an opportunity to create and perform a conversation that allows them to demonstrate what they have learned over the semester.

Grade Scale

A	=	95-100
A-	=	90-94
B+	=	87-89
B	=	84-86
B-	=	80-83
C+	=	77-79
C	=	74-76
C-	=	70-73
D	=	60-69
F	=	0-59

Fractions of points will be rounded to the nearest whole point only at my discretion, and only in regard to the final grade.

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. THEREFORE, MAKE SURE THAT YOU ATTEND REGULARLY AND TIMELY; THAT YOU SIGN IN EVERY DAY; AND THAT YOU HAVE YOUR BOOKS FOR THE 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. I am always willing to work with you.**

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://academicintegrity.syr.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

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.**

Use of Text

Slides Posted on

Blackboard: Text slides from PowerPoint lectures are posted on Blackboard for your use and convenience. They, however, **should never be downloaded and posted by students to any external website.** That is a violation of the instructor's intellectual rights and the University's rights as the instructor's employer. **Any student who violates this policy will receive a "0" in participation.** Slides may also no longer be posted to Blackboard.

Problems: If you have problems with the assignments or anything else that might affect your performance, please contact me or my teaching assistants 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 assistants 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:**

Unless abuses become a problem, students are permitted to use computers in order to access readings and take notes. **Students, however, are not allowed to surf the web, read the news, answer email, etc. during lecture, discussion, or any other class activity. Students who violate this rule will be confronted during class; maybe denied the use of their computer in class; or asked to leave.**

Disability:

The Syracuse University community and I value diversity and seek 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://disabilityservices.syr.edu>

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, ASSIGNMENTS, FILMS, & PRESENTATIONS

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1.	Tues., 8/30	Introductions and Introduction to the Course.
1.-2.	Thurs., 9/1- Tues., 9/6	Questioning Religion/Being Religious—The Peripatetic of Athens: Introduction to Socrates and Plato's <i>Euthyphro</i>.

Thich Nhat Hanh, Howard Thurman, and Søren Kierkegaard are/were readers of Plato's dialogues. In several of Plato's late dialogues, Socrates, the central figure, muses about religion, and reveals its impact on individuals and society. In doing so, he sets the stage for our discussion of our orienting figures on religion and its impact on individuals and their relation to society and the world.

NOTE: Today, 9/1, start composing discussion questions for primary readings (central works that we will discuss in class; see p. 3, above), and bringing your typed questions to class, along with your class texts. *In composing your questions, be sure to indicate the passages to which they refer.* That is, along with the discussion question(s), give a brief characterization of the passage that gave rise to it/them, and provide the page number(s) of its location. It would help greatly, if you would also simply type the full passage(s). For example, you might do something like this: "On reading Socrates' initial remark to Euthyphro about taking his father to court (p. xx), I immediately thought: What does Socrates mean by.....? The full passage reads thus:....." For more on these instructions, see pg. 3, above. **Finally, as we discuss Socrates, Thich Nhat Hanh, Howard Thurman, and Søren Kierkegaard, be sure to look at your highlighted passage(s) and questions after class to see if you have gotten**

answers to those questions; if you can answer them yourself; and/or if they are relevant questions.

For Thurs., 9/1, read the *Euthyphro* in the Plato anthology, *The Last Days of Socrates*. Compose discussion questions by highlighting a passage of dialogue for class discussion. For Tues., 9/6, we will continue to discuss the *Euthyphro*; there fore, continue to read and to compose questions for discussion.

2.-3. Thurs., 9/8-
Thurs., 9/15

The Peripatetic of Athens: Plato's Socrates on Faith and the Examined Life.

From Thurs., 9/8 through Thurs., 9/15, we will focus on Plato's *Apology* and *Crito* in light of the *Euthyphro*. For Thurs., 9/8, we will transition from the *Euthyphro* to the *Apology*, so read the *Apology*. Compose discussion questions by highlighting a passage of dialogue from the *Apology* that you think gets to the heart of the matter. As it may take a while to get to this, for Tues., 9/13, complete the *Apology*, picking a passage and composing questions that seem more pointed to the central issue. On Thurs., 9/15, read the *Crito* in light of our discussion of the *Apology* and the *Euthyphro*. Compose discussion questions by highlighting a passage of dialogue for class discussion. All of the dialogues are in the Plato anthology, *The Last Days of Socrates*.

4. Tues., 9/20

Summary and Transition to Thich Nhat Hanh, Howard Thurman, and Søren Kierkegaard. Today, we will finish our discussion of Socrates with a summary lecture. We will then move to our discussion of the three orienting figures for the course, focusing on the basic links between them with reference to Socrates.

4.-6. Thurs., 9/22-
Thurs., 10/6

Religion as Experience/Awakening: Thich Nhat Hanh on Mindfulness.

On Thurs., 9/22, there will be an introduction to Thich Nhat Hanh. Please read *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, xiii-xviii (the Foreword by Brother David Steindl-Rast); 1-26, 81-82, 179-181. Please also read the biographical sketch of him on Blackboard by Sister Annabel Laity.

For Tues., 9/27, please read the Translator's Preface and Chapters 1-3 of *The Miracle of Mindfulness* at pp. vii-31. As you read Nhat Hanh, please read carefully; don't rush. He is not difficult to read; however, you do need to be attentive to what he is saying. If necessary, just pick up where you left off after class. When you come to class, please bring *The Miracle of Mindfulness* and also *The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh*. As we discuss *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, we may refer to sections of the first part of *The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh*, "Mindfulness," pp. 1-52, and also to sections of the second part, "Enlightenment," pp. 53-107. Don't worry about reading these referential selections from *The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh* ahead of time. You will have plenty of time to look at these later.

For Thurs., 9/29, please read Chapters 4-6 of *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, and bring it to class today, along with *The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh*. As in the previous class, we may refer to sections of *The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh*, particularly the second part, "Enlightenment," pp. 53-107, as we discuss *The Miracle of Mindfulness*. We may also return to the first part, "Mindfulness," pp. 1-52. Once again, don't worry about reading these referential selections ahead of time.

For Tues., 10/4, we will close our discussion of *The Miracle of Mindfulness* by finishing our previous conversations and then focusing on Chapter 7. Please be sure to bring the book to class.

For Thurs., 10/6, we will close our initial treatment of Thich Nhat Hanh with a discussion of the kind of ecumenical (Buddhist-Christian) dialogue and dynamic thinking—or “living” philosophy of religion, if you will—that Thich Nhat Hanh does. Therefore, please read pp. 1-31, 43-45, 56-65 from Nhat Hanh’s *Going Home: Jesus and Buddha As Brothers* (on Blackboard). Please also read James Forest’s essay at pp. 101-108 in *The Miracle of Mindfulness*. Please bring all readings to class.

During the last part of class, we will discuss the first reflection paper, which will compare Thich Nhat Hanh and Socrates. See below for more details, as well as pp. 2-4, above, for basic instructions on writing papers.

6.-7. Thurs., 10/6-
Thurs., 10/13

FIRST REFLECTION PAPER. *In a paper of no more than four typed, double-spaced pages, compare Socrates and Thich Nhat Hanh on religion.*

- What is religion for them?
- Who is God, the divine, or the sacred for them?
- What kind of knowledge does this entail? And how does religion affect life?
- Does it seem to be part of what they take to be authentic living? What is authentic living?

In preparation for this paper, consider what each figure thinks that these things mean. As you do, **consider what kind of argument you wish to make.** That is, on seeing what they each think, what can you say about them collectively? This will be your thesis. The rest of your paper is support for this. Be sure to use specific passages from the texts. Also be sure to cite these passages or any others briefly, but in a consistent way. Proof your papers after you write them. And print them on clean paper, and staple the pages.

You have an entire week (NO CLASSES) to think through the work that we have done up to this point so that you might write a thoughtful, carefully crafted paper. THIS FIRST REFLECTION PAPER IS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON THURS., 10/13.

8.-9. Tues., 10/18-
Thurs., 10/20

Religion or “Religio” as Experience/Awakening: Howard Thurman on Faith and Divine Love.

For Tues., 10/18, there will be an introductory lecture on Howard Thurman. We will also began our discussion of *Mysticism and the Experience of Love*. Please read *Mysticism*, pp. 3-11. Please also read “The Narrow Ridge” and “Belief and Faith” in the selections from *The Inward Journey*; “God Seeks Me,” meditation # 17 from *Meditations of the Heart*, pp. 175-176; and the selection from *The Creative Encounter*, pp. 28-30. All of these readings are on Blackboard. **Be sure to bring them to class.**

For Thurs., 10/20, read pp. 11-23 in *Mysticism and the Experience of Love*. Please read all of the meditations from *Meditations of the Heart*, pp. 174-176; and the selections from *The Creative Encounter*, pp. 72-82, 118-124. Please also read “Keep Open the Door of Thy Heart” in the selections from *The Inward Journey*.

On Tues., 10/25, there will be a group discussion of Thurman on religion and God. In preparation for this discussion, please type a two-page, double-spaced reflection, using the readings from the previous class sessions. As you compose this reflection, think about the way that Thurman both relates to and differs from Thich Nhat Hanh. Be prepared to discuss your reflection, and to turn it in. This is a “warm-up” assignment meant to help you with the second reflection paper, which builds on the comparisons started in the first. Today’s class will complete our initial discussion of Thurman.

9.-10. Thurs., 10/27-
Thurs., 11/3

Religion or “Religio” as Experience/Awakening: Kierkegaard on Faith, Grace, and Divine Love.

On Thurs., 10/27, I will introduce Kierkegaard and we will begin our initial discussion of him by focusing on his signed discourses, especially the one on weakness and strength in the *Christian Discourses*. Please read the discourse on weakness and strength in Kierkegaard’s *Christian Discourses* and pp. 114-115, on belonging to God, in the short selection from Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love*. Both works are on Blackboard. Focus your passages and questions on the discourse on weakness and strength at pp. 127-129. If you find something of interest on pp. 130, 131-133, please feel free to note that as well. **Bring both texts to class, along with your passages and discussion questions.** If you are unfamiliar with the biblical references that Kierkegaard makes, please read the first creation story in Genesis 1, focusing on the creation of human beings in verses 26-30, and Acts 17:28, noting its context in a conversation that the Apostle Paul was having with ancient Athenians. These biblical passages are available on Blackboard.

On Tues., 11/1, we will continue this discussion of Kierkegaard. However, we will begin it today with a “trifle,” that is, a little “concert,” to set the tone. After that we will continue with lecture and discussion.

11.-12. Thurs., 11/3-
Thurs., 11/17

The Conflict of Religion with the World: Kierkegaard’s Poet Ponders the Faith of Abraham.

Over the next two and a half weeks, we will focus on Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*. Be sure also to read Genesis 12:1-23:2, which includes the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac on which *Fear and Trembling* is based. When we discuss Johannes de Silentio’s interpretation of the Abraham and Isaac story in light of the biblical story of Jephthah and his daughter, the tragedy of Agamemnon and his daughter Iphigenia, and the tragedy of Lucius Junius Brutus and his sons (cf. Marcus Junius Brutus, a purported descendent and assassin of Julius Caesar), we will also look at Judges 11 and a selection from Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*. As we discuss Abraham’s distinction from these other fathers and children, particularly Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Aulis*. As with all class sessions, **bring *Fear and Trembling* and all other required texts for this period to class everyday.**

11.

For the first part of class on Thurs., 11/3, read the “Preface” and “Attunement” in *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 39-48 (unabridged Hannay translation), and Genesis 12:1-

23:2, focusing on Genesis 22. These biblical passages are available on Blackboard. Focus your discussion questions on the “Attunement” by picking one or two of the sketches as your base passage(s) for your discussion question(s). **During the second part of class today**, I will introduce the next section for discussion, “Preamble from the Heart” in *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 57-82 (unabridged Hannay translation). You do not need to read it all now, but please start reading it so that you might better follow my lecture, and also get a head start on the conversation next week.

For Tues., 11/8, read all of the “Preamble from the Heart” in *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 57-82 (unabridged Hannay translation). Focus on the way in which de Silentio distinguishes the two types of “knights”—a knight of resignation and a knight of faith—as he continues to deal with the problem of faith that Abraham presents. As you will soon see, Abraham is the exemplary knight of faith. Pick passages in the “Preamble” that will allow you to raise questions on the two knights separately, and then on the two knights together. This should allow you to get a clear sense of their differences. In order to facilitate discussion, please focus on pp. 60-67; 70-77, top; 80-82 in the unabridged Hannay translation. We will also begin working in discussion groups, which we probably will retain until the end of the semester. Each person in the group, however, should bring her/his question(s) and thoughts to the group.

12. **Thurs., 11/10**, read “Problema I: Is There a Teleological Suspension of the Ethical” in *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 83-95 (Hannay translation). Focus on the way in which Abraham differs from Jephthah, Agammemnon, and Brutus. That is, consider how the “knight of faith” differs from the “tragic hero.” Screening a portion of *Iphigenia*, a contemporary Greek film adapted from Euripides’ tragedy *Iphigenia at Aulis*, will help us in this interpretive effort. Therefore, please *read the selection from Iphigenia at Aulis on Blackboard, and be prepared to discuss it with Fear and Trembling. Also be prepared for a possible impromptu re-enactment and comparison of Iphigenia with the “Attunement.”* Please review Genesis 22 with Judges 11 on Jephthah and his daughter.

On Tues., 11/15, we will finish our discussion of “Problema I” and *Fear and Trembling* by questioning the meaning of the ideal that initially drove Abraham. In doing so, we will not only return to the notion of weaning raised in the “Attunement,” but we will also attend to the issue of idolatry, and with it, the issue of power. This will lead us back to the issue of faith and the authentic life in Thich Nhat Hanh, Howard Thurman, and the Kierkegaard of the Christian discourses, and to the matter of all three figures representing paradigm shifts, which will be addressed in a summary lecture. Today’s class will end with a discussion of the comparison paper that is to be done over the Thanksgiving break on Kierkegaard, Thurman, and Nhat Hanh.

- Thurs., 11/17 **Summary Discussion and Lecture of *Fear and Trembling*: A Suggested Reading. Discussion of assignment over the Thanksgiving Break.**

13. Tues., 11/22-
Thurs., 11/24

THANKSGIVING BREAK/SECOND REFLECTION PAPER. Over the break, write a second reflection paper that *considers how each of the religious experiences and subsequent lifestyles that Kierkegaard, Thurman, and Thich Nhat Hanh discuss represents a paradigm shift.* This paper should be no more than four pages, typed, double-spaced.

In order to do this, **first return to the texts.** As you do, *be attentive to the connection that they all make between religious experience and the moral life.* For Thich Nhat Hanh, you may want to read more broadly in the assigned texts. For example, you might return to *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, and re-read or read the Foreword, pp. xiii-xviii and pp. 1-59, 66-69, 76-86, 151-157, 178-189. You might find it helpful to focus on pp. 40-47, 56-59 (p. 56 makes a reference to pp. 25-26), 66-69, 76-86 (84-86 focuses on loving the enemy; cf. *Going Home*, 31-38). For Howard Thurman, review *Mysticism and the Experience of Love*, especially pp. 11-23. You might find it helpful to focus on his discussion of love as intrinsic care, which includes a discussion of the imagination as love's messenger (pp. 13-14, 16-23). Note how he differs from Thich Nhat Hanh on the imagination. You will also want to review the selections from *The Creative Encounter* on surrender and conflict. In doing so, you may find it helpful to return to the selections from *Meditations from the Heart* and *The Inward Journey*. Finally, for Kierkegaard, you may want to think about how he will relate to Thurman and Thich Nhat Hanh on forgiveness, since this exercise is meant to lay the foundation for the Final Dialogue. To this end, please go ahead and read the other selection of passages from *Works of Love* (with file extension: "Beauty, Flaws, and Forgiveness") on Blackboard.

While you are reading, be sure that you can answer the basic questions that we have used all semester, namely:

- What is **religion** for each of them individually?
- Who is **God, the divine, or the sacred** for each of them?
- What kind of **knowledge** does this entail for each of them?
- And **how does religion affect life** for each of them? Does it seem to be part of what they take to be authentic living? What is authentic living?

If you work with each figure separately **FIRST**, you should be able to find the parallels and/or connections between these, and to avoid collapsing what they each think into each other. You should have some of idea of this already, so you should not be starting from scratch.

Second, make a comparative chart for all three, using these topics. This should help you to see similarities and differences, that is, if you make the chart correctly. So, for example, if you make the chart substantive enough, you will see that the experience that emerges from Nhat Hanh's practice of mindfulness is not exactly the same as Thurman's experience of divine love or Kierkegaard's experience of divine grace. Similarly, although Thurman and Kierkegaard both present Christian perspectives, they come from very different places and tendencies. For example, Kierkegaard is in no way a mystic, even though he was influenced by Schleiermacher's rather mystical theology. This is because Kierkegaard's emphasis on consciousness focuses on clarity and distinctions more than Thurman's perspective does. He, however, is close to Thich Nhat Hanh in this regard, for

when he talks about “being present,” awoken to life in all of its goodness in the present, even in the midst of suffering, he parallels Nhat Hanh’s promotion of being alive and living deeply.

Third, once you have this chart, then consider what kind of argument you can make about their views on the religious life as authentic living collectively. That is, how does each figure present the religious experience and the life it engenders as a paradigm shift? From what is this experience and its life shifting for each of these thinkers? With this in mind, what can you say about their views about the religious life as a paradigm shift collectively? **WHATEVER YOU SEE TYING THESE FIGURES’ VIEWS TOGETHER WILL BE YOUR THESIS.** The rest of your paper is support for this. Be sure to use specific passages from the texts. Also be sure to cite these passages or any others briefly, but in a consistent way. **Proof your papers** after you write them. **And print them on clean paper, and staple the pages.** **THIS SECOND REFLECTION PAPER IS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON THURS., 11/29.**

14.-15. Tues., 11/29-
Thurs., 12/8

Religion as Experience or “Religio” and the Meaningful Life: Howard Thurman on Jesus as Life-giving Person.

Over the remaining weeks, we will use the wisdom of Thurman to synthesize the themes and topics of the course by focusing on his treatment of the man Jesus in *Jesus and the Disinherited*. This, along with a discussion of Martin Luther King, Jr. on loving the enemy, will provide the final pieces of our study as we move toward your production of a final dialogue.

14.

For Tues., 11/29, we will open class with a 30-minute discussion of your papers on how you think Thich Nhat Hanh, Thurman, and Kierkegaard represent paradigm shifts. We will begin by breaking into groups, where you will discuss your thoughts with each other for about 10 minutes before we have a 20-minute general class discussion

The remainder of the class session (50 minutes) will focus on Chapter I of Thurman’s classic work, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Please read the entire chapter, but pay particular attention to pp. 15-35 on the significance of Jesus. I will lecture on this chapter, so you do not need to pick a passage and write discussion questions on it. However, be attentive to the issue of power, especially the immoral relations between the powerful and the powerless, and the relation of God to power for the powerful and the powerless. Finally, if you have time, please also read Chapter II on fear.

For Thurs., 12/1, we will focus our discussion on Chapter III of *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Please prepare the usual discussion questions. Draw your passages from and focus your questions on pp. 62-73, if you have the 1976 edition. If you have a different edition, the focal pages start about five pages into the chapter (look for the sentence that starts, “The question of deception is not academic,...”), and go until the end of the chapter.

During the second part of today’s discussion, we will pay particular attention to Thurman’s reference to deception in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

Although Thurman's point is to say that the disinherited should avoid becoming a deception or a lie like Macbeth, we want to consider why it is bad for the powerful as well. We will focus this investigation by screening and discussing part of Rupert Goold's production of *Macbeth*, a contemporary adaptation featuring Sir Patrick Stewart. Please bring the following sections of Shakespeare's play to class: **Act 1, sc. 1-7; Act 2, sc. 1-2; Act 3, sc. 1-4; Act 4, sc. 1-2; Act 5, sc. 1, 5, 8.** They can be found on Blackboard. If you have time, please also look at Chapter III in *Jesus and the Disinherited* on hate.

15. **On Tues., 12/6, please read Chapter V and the Epilogue of *Jesus and the Disinherited*; meditation # 25 in Thurman's *Deep is the Hunger*, pp. 97-98; and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Loving Your Enemies" from *Strength to Love*.** The selection from *Deep is the Hunger* and the King sermon are on Blackboard. (NB: As you read the selections from Thurman, do not forget what you have already learned from his "Belief and Faith," *The Creative Encounter*, and especially *Mysticism and the Experience of Love*.) We will focus our discussion on King, and ask how he compares to Thurman, as well as to Thich Nhat Hanh and Kierkegaard. **Please bring all pertinent texts to class, along with copies of your second reflection papers.**

On Thurs., 12/8, the official last day of class, but not our last day, today is a preparation day for the final dialogue. To this end, **use your paradigm shift papers and your readings to compose (i.e., type) a preliminary dialogue in which King, Thurman, Nhat Hanh, Kierkegaard, and Kierkegaard's pseudonym Johannes de Silentio discuss the viability of loving the enemy.** As you prepare your preliminary dialogue, keep in mind that King was influenced by Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited*; was a reader of Kierkegaard (and Plato); and a colleague of Nhat Hanh. In your dialogue, be sure to create a concrete scenario that will allow all of the figures to engage this issue in some detail. Allow de Silentio, Kierkegaard's pseudonym from *Fear and Trembling*, to function as a Socratic (i.e., critical or questioning) voice.

During class, we will break into groups to discuss, select, and refine the dialogues that will be presented and discussed on Tues., 12/13. Therefore, bring the readings, your paradigm shift papers, and your typed dialogues to class. **After class, someone in the group should type the revisions for the dialogue selected by the group, and email it to the class via Blackboard.** This should probably be the person whose dialogue is chosen. **AT THE END OF CLASS, EVERYONE SHOULD TURN IN HER/HIS OWN PRELIMINARY DIALOGUE AND PORTFOLIO OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.**

16. **TUES., 12/13, POST-OFFICIAL LAST DAY OF CLASS FOR FINAL DIALOGUE (OUR FINAL EXAM):** During exam week, we will finish our conversation on wisdom and the quest for the authentic life by "putting on" one of your selected and refined dialogues. **We will meet in our usual classroom (111HL) from 5:15-7:15PM.**

ORDER OF CLASS:

You will have about **5 minutes** to vote on the dialogue that will be presented in class. COME TO CLASS HAVING READ THE EMAILED DIALOGUES, AND HAVING CHOSEN THE ONE YOU WISH TO SEE PERFORMED.

The group doing the presentation will then have **10 minutes** to prepare. After their presentation, the other groups will engage the presenters in a conversation that assesses the presenters' treatment of the issues.

The presentation (**30 minutes**) and discussion (**30 minutes**) will last an hour.

After the dialogue, there will be about **15 minutes** of closing remarks, and **30 minutes** for course evaluations.