

REL 191 Fall '08
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RELIGION, MEANING, AND
KNOWLEDGE

Assignments by week:

1. 26 August [**no class August 28**]
The Stranger
2. 2 & 4 September: *Stranger*
3. 9 & 11 September *Cloister Walk*
Practice paper due
4. 16 & 18 September *Cloister Walk*
5. 23 and 25 September *Dickenson*
6. **Sept. 30 / Eid Ul-Fitr** -- 2 Oct.
1st Papers Due
7. 7 Oct.; **Oct. 9 Yom Kippur**
Moby Dick
8. 14 and 16 October *Moby Dick*
9. 21 and 23 October *Moby Dick*
10. 28 and 30 October
2nd Papers Due *Inward Morning*
11. 4 and 6 November *Inward Morning*
12. 11 and 13 November *Narrow Road*
13. **18, 20, and 25 Nov – Writing Days**
14. 2 and 4 December *Narrow Road*

**Last Paper Due December 11
HL 501**

Total **grade**: two papers plus final paper;
30%, 30%, 40%

Points deducted for poor attendance
Points added for raising your hand

Handouts: Passages from Moby Dick and
Inward Morning, and of Poems of Dickenson

Reflection (meditation) Papers:

In your reading and writing, be alert for moments that strike you in some fashion, and make marginal notes of these moments. Why do they ring a bell or jump out at you (for good or ill)? What triggers your imagination -- heart and mind. The first papers will be **three-page [the last, 4 page]**, double spaced and specially formatted. Before your first paragraph begins, **set out in bold the sentences from the text** that contain the images, descriptions, phrases, actions, or situations that grab you. That's the focus. The paper then becomes an elaboration, exploration, and clarification of that focus, a reflective meditation on those ideas or themes.

You'll find yourself drawing on your own memories and experiences in this elaboration, exploration, and clarification. And you'll find yourself remembering other passages or moments in the text that work in tandem with whatever you put in focus in your opening sentences. Don't forget, if nothing grabs you, *you'll have nothing to say*. You can, of course, use the first person. And please, avoid anything that reads like a book report. The paper shows *you* -- your *response*. I should learn something about how your mind and imagination work as I read it. Let your voice and personality come out.

Art, religion, philosophy, and literature offer resources for celebration of life, and hence offer ways to stave off at least part of the suffering that can afflict us. They bring us meaning and knowledge. The texts we read in this class evoke struggles between meaning and its loss. We can think of the age-old quest for Religion, Meaning, and Knowledge as humanity's effort, individually and collectively, to shore up our capacities for confidence and conviction against inevitable encroachments.

Books

Cloister Walk by Norris 9781573225847
Moby Dick by Melville 9780142000083
The Stranger by Camus 9780679720201
Essential Dickenson 9780060887919
Narrow Road by Basho 9780140441857
Inward Morning by Bugbee - 9780820320717