

## Syllabus

### Religion 351: Theorizing Religion, Culture and Theology

Room: 111 HL

Time: Tuesday and Thursday 2:00 – 3:20 PM

Instructor: Ronald R. Cavanagh

E-mail: [rrcavana@sur.edu](mailto:rrcavana@sur.edu)

Office: 431 Hall of Languages

Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs. 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Or by special appointment

Telephone: 443-4903

**Course Objective:** To introduce students to the scholarly study of religion at University through a consideration of the nature and role of religion and theology within the emergent global culture of the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

#### Course Requirements:

Each student is responsible for:

(1) the critical reading and discussion of the following texts

**The World to Come** by Lloyd Geering

**Pluralism** by Chester Gillis

**The Dignity of Difference** by Jonathan Sacks

(2) prepared attendance and participation in all scheduled class sessions

(3) the legible writing / printing of three (3) take home essay tests

(4) the submission of an **Edited Paper / Typed Course Notebook** summarizing his or her cumulative reflections on all the issues and themes of this course in lieu of a Final Exam. The professor will periodically assign *topics for comment* reflection tasks. This work should reflect WEEKLY INSTALLMENTS.

**Attendance Policy:** It is expected that all students will attend all classes prepared for critical discussion. Students are expected to be in their seats at

the beginning of class through to its conclusion. A student may miss up to two classes without excuse or penalty. Any additional unexcused absence will result in a reduction, by one +/-letter grade qualifier, to the student's final grade for the course.

**Testing Policy:** All examinations will be take-home essay tests and your responses must be handed in during the specified class period or into the Office of the Department of Religion, 501 Hall of Languages, no latter than 3:30 PM on the designated due day.

**Grading Policy:** The assessment of a student's work will be weighted in the following manner: 40% of the final grade for the quality of his or her cumulative class participation; 40% of the final grade for the quality of the three take-home essay examinations; and twenty 20% of the final grade for the quality of the Edited Paper / Typed Course Notebook.

**Academic Integrity:** It is expected that any work submitted by a student is his or her own work. Representing the work of others as your own, even when it involves the inadvertent failure to cite sources (plagiarism), is cheating, a violation of academic integrity, and will be identified to the appropriate College officials for institutional action. There is no circumstance that justifies cheating or that can compensate you for the loss of your integrity.

**Class Etiquette:** It is expected that all class participants will display a disposition of courtesy and politeness in class interactions. Good classroom etiquette requires that everyone turn off their cell phones before class, and avoid late arrivals, early exits, using listening devices, doing e-mail or other inconsiderate acts.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with physical or learning disabilities requiring modification of any aspect of this course must secure and present to me documentation to that effect from the Office for the Services for Students with Disabilities, 804 University Avenue, Room 309, ex-4498.

## **CLASS READING, TESTING AND DISCUSSION SCHEDULE**

Week 1 Introduction to the field of Religion Study  
August 26 – 28th

Reading Assignment: Introduction of **The World to Come**

Week 2 Religion and Human Existence

September 2 – 4th

Reading Assignment: Chapter 1-3 of **The World to Come**

Week 3 Healthy Religion and Truth

September 9 - 11th

Assigned Reading: Chapters 4-6 of **The world to Come**

Week 4 The Commitment and Growth of Religion

September 16 – 18th

Reading Assignment: Chapters 7-8 of **The World to Come**

Week 5 Conclusion

September 23-25th

Reading Assignment: Chapter 9 – 10 of **The World to Come**

*Get First Take Home Exam in class on the 25th, it is due in class Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>.*

Week 6 Religion and Violence

September 30-October 2<sup>nd</sup>

(no class on September 30<sup>th</sup> Eid Ul-Fitir )

Reading Assignment: Introduction and Chapters 1-2 of the **Dignity of Difference**

Week 7 Violence in the texts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam

October 7- 9<sup>th</sup>

(no class October 9<sup>th</sup> Yom Kippur)

Reading Assignment: Chapters 3-4 of the **Dignity of Difference**

Week 8 The Saving Power of Doubt

October 14-16th

Reading Assignment: Chapters 5-6 of the **Dignity of Difference**

Week 9 Terror and God

October 21-23th

Reading Assignment: Chapters 7-8 of the **Dignity of Difference**

Week 10 The Theater of Terror

October 28 – 30<sup>th</sup>

Reading Assignment: Chapters 9-11 of the **Dignity of Difference**

*Second Take Home Exam due Nov 4<sup>th</sup> in class.*

Week 11 Warriors and the Mind of God

November 4-6<sup>th</sup>

Reading Assignment: Chapter 1 **Pluralism**

Week 12 Is Religion the Problem?

November 11-13<sup>th</sup>

Reading Assignment: Chapters 2-3 **Pluralism**

Week 13 The Time of Absolute Truth and Blind Obedience

November 18-20<sup>th</sup>

Reading Assignment: Chapters 4-5 **Pluralism**

Week 14 What End Justifies the Means?

November 25<sup>th</sup> Thanksgiving

Reading Assignment: Chapter 6 **Pluralism**

*Third Take Home Exam is due December 4<sup>th</sup> in class.*

Week 15 A Faith for Our Time

December 2-4<sup>th</sup>

Reading Assignment: Chapters 11- 12 **The World to Come**

**Edited Paper / Typed Course Notebook** is due in the Office of the Department of Religion no later than 12:00 PM, Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> of December. This project, which is in lieu of a final exam, will be on average 10 printed pages in length and include edited response to your *weekly reflections* on course materials and discussions and assigned *topics for comment*.