

SCR 5151: World Scriptures and World Peace

Spring 2026

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Wilson

Course Description

World Scriptures and World Peace studies the major world religions by focusing on their sacred texts as primary sources for belief and practice. Students will become familiar with key scriptural texts, and through them explore various points of conflict and convergence between religions. Attention will be given to passages relevant to peacebuilding, attitudes towards other religions, and the status of women.

Some of the scriptures to be studied in this course include the Bible, the Qur'an, the Mishnah, the Dhammapada, the Lotus Sutra, the Bhagavad Gita, the Analects, the Doctrine of the Mean, and the Tao Te Ching. Yet, primary attention is given to the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam because among the world's religions, these "Abrahamic faiths" are at the center of religious conflict today. Through studying their scriptures, we can find meeting-points for peace and interfaith harmony.

Each of the scriptures weave a rich tapestry of teachings that speak to the varieties of human experiences with God and the ways that faith addresses the human condition. They speak to the ways of God's providence, the pain of undeserved suffering, and the hope for redemption. There are both hard texts that cause friction and golden texts that inspire believers to strive for peace.

With ample coverage of the Bible, this course can serve as a general introduction for students whose ministries are in the Christian world. We spend nearly four weeks on the Qur'an, to elucidate relevant issues in Islam. Then we will conclude by tasting the scriptures of Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism and look at their spiritual, ethical and social teachings.

Three different perspectives are intertwined in this course: First, we can look at a scripture as it is understood the faith community that holds it sacred. Second, we can look at it from the standpoint of our own faith. These perspectives don't always agree, and understanding the traditions and beliefs of others opens new avenues and helps us avoid pitfalls when sharing our truth with them or engaging in dialogue. Third, we look at scripture as it molds believers' attitudes on wider social issues including war and peace, interfaith relations, and the status of women.

All throughout we will examine the various ways that believers look at these texts, a topic called *hermeneutics*, because when it comes to scripture, often the interpretation of a text is more important than the text itself.

In looking at the scriptures of different faiths and their relationship to Rev. Moon's teachings in particular, we have a great resource, *World Scripture and the Teachings of Sun Myung Moon*. You may wish to consult this work throughout the course.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Knowledge:** Discuss the scriptures of the world's religions and the texts that define their teachings.
2. **Interpretation:** Discuss options for interpretation of scriptural texts and explain their basis in theology and/or historical context.
3. **Interfaith:** Identify key passages for interfaith relations, war and peace, and the status of women and discuss how these scriptures mold the lives and attitudes of believers
4. **Pastoral:** Describe the value of teachings from these scriptures in their religious life.
5. **Unificationism:** Discuss meeting points and differences between the scriptures of the world's religions and Unification teachings (or the beliefs of your faith).

Textbooks

1. *The Bible* (NIV, NKJV or NRSV) Every student should own a good Study Bible, such as the *HarperCollins Study Bible: Fully Revised and Updated* (HarperOne, 2006) ISBN-13: 978-0060786854. \$42 or *New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*. Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN-13: 978-0195289602. \$27.
2. *The Qur'an*. Text available online at <https://www.clearquran.com/>. A good study Qur'an from a progressive viewpoint is *The Study Qur'an* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr.
<https://ia803008.us.archive.org/22/items/TheStudyQuranANewTranslationAndCommentaryBySeyyedHosseinNasr/TheStudyQuranANewTranslationAndCommentaryBySeyyedHosseinNasr.pdf>
3. Andrew Wilson, ed. *World Scripture and the Teachings of Sun Myung Moon*. New York: Paragon House, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-1930549579. Currently out of print, it is available to be downloaded as a PDF.
4. *Handouts*, can be downloaded at the appropriate lesson.

Supplemental Texts (Optional):

1. John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. ISBN-13: 978-0800697501. \$41
2. Bart D. Ehrman, *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ISBN-13: 978-0199740314. \$11.42.

3. Walter H. Wagner, *Opening the Qur'an: Introducing Islam's Holy Book*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0268044220. \$27.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

The course by its nature covers a lot of ground. There are lectures and assignments almost daily. Therefore, it is important to complete each week's work on time. You will have only two weeks to complete discussions and essay assignments. Online courses are not very forgiving of late work. All work must be completed by the end of the semester.

Lectures

There are 33 assigned lectures covering specific topics in the world's religions, focusing on the scriptures. For every lecture, you are asked to write a 1-2 paragraph reflection. It will be graded based on evidence that you have engaged with the material. A paragraph that demonstrates you have reflected deeply on the content of the lecture will receive a better grade than a mere summary. Please write your reflection immediately after you finish viewing the lecture, while it is fresh in your mind. You can also ask questions. This will provide the instructor the opportunity to respond and give feedback.

Essays Based on the Readings

There are 8 essays on selected passages from the scriptures being studied, each worth 30 points. Each essay will be open for two weeks after the due date, after which it will be closed.

Discussions

There are 14 threaded discussions, one each week. The instructor posts a question, and each student posts a response. Once you have answered the instructor's question, you can see other students' answers and comment on them as much as you like. Your participation in the discussions is graded, so your answers should be substantial and well considered; each one is worth 30 points. You can improve your grade by replying to other students' posts. Each discussion will be open for a specific window of time, usually about two weeks, after which it will be closed.

Optional Zoom Q&A Sessions

Although this is an asynchronous course, students are invited to join the five optional Q&A sessions on Zoom that are scheduled at the end of each unit of the course.

Final Exam

The last assignment is the Final Exam, a take-home final that recaps all the religions studied in the course. It is worth 300 points. The exam must be submitted on May 28 before midnight.

Evaluation

A letter grade will be assigned based on:

1. Lectures (34) 25%
2. Essays (10) 20%
3. Discussions (14) 35%
4. Final Exam 20%

Grades for each assignment are recorded by letter, and are understood as follows:

- A Excellent
- B Good
- C Satisfactory
- D Poor
- F Failure

Assignments should be completed during the week that they are due. An assignment handed in more than 7 days after the due date will incur a penalty of 1 grade, with an additional penalty for each additional week that the assignment is tardy.

Failure to complete an assignment will result in an F for that assignment.

In calculating the final grade for the course, letter grades for assignments are converted into the following numerical equivalents, and the total is then converted back to a letter grade, as follows:

A	97	A-	91.5	B+	87
B	82	B-	77	C+	72.5
C	67.5	C-	62.5	D+	57.5
D	53	D-	50	F	0

This scale severely penalizes Fs. Therefore, it is better to hand in a poorly done assignment than not to hand one in at all. ***Please try to complete all the assignments!***

Final grades are posted on Populi after the course has closed. Grades in the Canvas gradebook are interim grades that do not count incomplete assignments that have yet to be graded. If a student has missed many assignments, that grade may be deceptively high, because once the course has closed, those missed assignments turn into Fs.

There is no grade of “Incomplete” for the course. Incompletes will be considered only for medical emergencies or other exceptional circumstances beyond the student’s control.

Satisfactory completion of this course will award you 3 credits towards a Master’s Degree at HJI.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Jan. 26-30): The Bible: Scripture of Two Religions
Which Bible should I use?

Unit on Judaism

The Torah
Mishnah and Talmud

Week 2 (Feb. 2-6): The Exodus from Egypt and the Covenant of Moses
The Ten Commandments
Commandments in your faith
Chosen People and the Land of Israel

Week 3 (Feb. 9-13) The Prophets
The Prophets and peace
Judaism and future hope

Week 4 (Feb 16-20) Judaism and other religions
Circumcision: violence against God's original design
Problem of innocent suffering
The theodicy problem

Zoom Q&A on Judaism

Week 5 (Feb 23-27) **Unit on Christianity**

The Sermon on the Mount
Jesus' peace teachings

Week 6 (Mar 2-6) Parables of Jesus
The historical Jesus
Christ's Passion and atoning death
The victory in Christ's passion

Week 7 (Mar 9-13) Paul: his life and letters
Paul and your faith
Gospel of John and letters of John
New life in Christ

Week 8 (Mar 16-20) Jesus and the Jews: an interfaith problem
Antisemitism in scripture
Christian visions of the end times
The Last Judgment, the Last Days and peace

Zoom Q&A on Christianity

Week 9 (Mar 23-27) **Unit on Islam**

Introduction to Islam and the Qur'an
God and human beings in the Qur'an
Duties of Muslims

Spring Break

Week 10 (Apr 6-10) **Life of Muhammad**

The Qur'an and Muhammad
Muhammad and Rev. Moon
Women in Islam
Jihad (holy war)

Week 11 (Apr 13-17) **The Qur'an and the Old Testament**

The Peoples of the Book
Jesus in the Qur'an
Islam and Christianity
Relating with Muslims

Zoom Q&A on Islam

Week 12 (Apr 20-24) **Unit on Hinduism**

Hindu texts
Hinduism: A vast universe of religiosity
Hinduism and peace
Hindu scriptures and Unification/Christian teachings

Week 13 (Apr 27-May 1) **Unit on Buddhism**

Buddhist texts
Buddhism: Teachings and Practices
The Lotus Sutra
Buddhism and peace
Buddhism and Unification/Christian teachings

Zoom Q&A on Hinduism and Buddhism

Week 14 (May 4-8) **Unit on Confucianism and Chinese Texts**

Confucianism
Confucian texts
Filial Piety

Week 15 (May 11-15) **Lao Tzu and Taoism**

Mo Tzu, Han Fei Tzu and Sun Tsu
Chinese thought and peacebuilding

Zoom Q&A on Confucianism and Chinese thought

Final exam (May 18-21)

Course Policies

Keeping on Task

It is vital that all students keep pace with the course and try to finish each week's work on schedule. All assignments and especially discussions should be completed within 3 days of the due date, so that the entire class can participate as a group. Discussions and essays will be closed after two weeks, and students who have not participated will receive an F for that assignment.

By the same token, assignments will not be visible until a few days before the due date, so that students will engage the material in order.

A student who has a sudden medical or other emergency that would prevent him or her from staying abreast of the course, or who must attend a church program that falls in the middle of the course, should contact the instructor so that he can make special arrangements.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is taken weekly, every Saturday. A student will be counted Present if he or she completes at least one of the assignments due during an attendance period. It is HJI policy that students who are absent for 4 out of the first 7 attendance periods are given an automatic administrative withdrawal, with no refund. An exception will be made for students who make special arrangements due to an emergency situation.

Academic Integrity

Each student's work is expected to be a product of his or her own effort. Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty that occurs when a student passes off someone else's work as their own. Plagiarism in its most severe form occurs when a student purchases a paper from a third party, or submits an entire body of work written by a third party, as the student's own. These most serious cases can be reported to the Office of the Provost for disciplinary action. Possible actions include probation, suspension, or dismissal/separation from HJI.

Cutting and pasting material from various websites without citing the source of said material also constitutes plagiarism, as is a failure to cite sources in a paper, conveying the impression, intentionally or not, that another writer's work is the student's own. In these cases of plagiarism, the instructor may give the student an "F" for the offending assignment, require that the student repeat the assignment, or if the plagiarism continues, give the student an "F" for the course. A pattern of such behavior may be reported to the Office of the Provost. It can lead to serious consequences as listed above.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT in assignments is permitted only with prior permission of the instructor. If the instructor permits students to use AI for research, students should know that it may give false results and its facts need to be checked and verified. Any passages generated by AI must be given proper citation, just as for citing other authors' works. In addition, students must append a paragraph at the end of their work explaining how

and why they used ChatGPT, which includes what prompts were used and what measures were taken to verify its accuracy. Students may not use AI to produce the content for an assignment. If an AI tool is used without obtaining prior permission and/or without providing the required citation or explanation, it will be treated as plagiarism.

Faculty reserve the right to use plagiarism detection software, such as Turnitin, to find instances of AI-generated writing, as well as plagiarism from other sources, in student assignments.

Netiquette Policy

When posting online, you need to follow the same ethical standards and laws as you would in face-to-face communications. Your language should be respectful of faculty members and fellow students. Do not post private or confidential information about anyone, and do not provide personal information that could put yourself at risk. Canvas has robust security measures to protect communication between teacher and student. Yet please be aware that anything that you post in discussions and groups in which other students participate can be retrieved by others and copied.

Do not download and share course materials without permission of the instructor, as this may violate copyright. HJI reserves the right to delete postings on HJI-maintained sites that are considered insensitive, harassing or illegal. Language that is illegal, obscene, defamatory, threatening, infringing of intellectual property rights, invasive of privacy, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing abusive, hateful or embarrassing to any person or entity, or otherwise, is a violation of the Student Code.

Assessment: Course Rubric

Criteria	Ratings				
Knowledge Discuss the scriptures of the world's religions and explain the elements of their message.	4 pts Demonstrates command of key texts	3 pts Refers to key texts in explaining the elements of a religion	2 pts Describes an element of a religious teaching	1 pts Identifies a few facts about a scripture	threshold: 3.0 pts
Interpretation Discuss options for interpretation of scriptural texts and explain their basis in theology and/or historical context	4 pts Discuss options for interpretation of texts and explain their theological or contextual basis	3 pts Explains various interpretations of a text and theological or contextual basis	2 pts Recognizes other meanings	1 pts Describe only one meaning of a text	threshold: 3.0 pts
Unificationism Discusses meeting points and differences between the scriptures of the world's religions and Unification teachings (or the teachings of one's own faith)	4 pts Discusses the value of other scripture for the Unification faith	3 pts Discusses meeting points and differences between a scripture and Unification teaching	2 pts Discuss Unificationist and non-Unificationist understandings of texts	1 pts Views texts entirely within the framework of Unificationism	threshold: 3.0 pts
Pastoral Describe the value of the passage in the religious life.	4 pts Gives exceptional insights from the passage to religious life	3 pts Explains relevance of the passage to a religious life	2 pts Discusses insights about the religious life	1 pts General discussion of the text	threshold: 3.0 pts
Interfaith Identify key passages for interfaith relations, war and peace, and the status of women and discuss how these scriptures mold the lives and attitudes of believers	4 pts Identify passages on these themes, discuss how they mold attitudes, and explain positive interpretations	3 pts Identify passages on these themes and discuss how they mold attitudes of believers	2 pts Identifies passages on these themes	1 pts Explains religious teachings without reference to these themes	threshold: 3.0 pts