

**Topics in Premodern World History II: *Encountering the Sacred: Religious Transformation in the Early Modern World, 1400-1750***

**HIS 207-02** (CRN: 10042): GRAM 209

**Instructor:** Steven J. Peach

**Spring 2014:** Thur., 6-8:50 P.M.

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**Office Hours:** Thur., 4-5 P.M.

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## **I. Course Summary**

This course will train you to become historical investigators and critical thinkers. You will develop a working knowledge of global religious history (*the historical information*) and use the tools of history (*the historical skill-set*) to think historically and, more broadly, to think critically. You will *read* primary and secondary sources in order to gain a deep understanding of the religious parameters of world history in the early modern period (1400-1750). These sources form the basis of the course's historical information. Furthermore, you will *evaluate* the historical information by applying a four-pronged historical skill-set. This skill-set will both deepen your understanding of the information and sharpen your critical thinking skills. Ultimately this course is designed to help you to compete successfully in the university curriculum, in other universities, in our nation, and in the twenty-first-century global marketplace.

In terms of historical information, this course investigates religious transformation in Mesoamerica, Europe, Africa, South Asia, and East Asia in the early modern era. As adherents of Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Mexica spirituality came into increasing contact with one another in the fifteenth century, they forged new understandings of the sacred. Four themes shaped the restructuring of world religions: cross-cultural encounters; violence and the State; divine and human nature; and duty and faith. The Mughal emperor Akbar, who is seated in the corresponding image, captures the themes of this course. He enjoyed debating religion with foreign missionaries, promoted religious toleration, and in 1582, created the "Divine Faith" from the elements of several religions. Religious encounters, however, were not solely punctuated by peace and reasoned discussion; more often than not, religion generated violence, warfare, and bloodshed across the globe.

## **II. Cultural Sensitivity**

In the creation of this course, I strove for a respectful but rigorous and objective approach toward the major world religions. I do not favor one religion over another. However, if you are offended by some of the historical information that you will examine in this course, please schedule a meeting with me, and we can discuss any culturally-sensitive issues that are troubling you. With that said, please approach this course with an open mind and with respect toward other students whose faith may differ from your own. We are here to learn, not to pontificate.

### **III. Learning Objectives**

By the end of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Command a thorough knowledge of the diversity and complexity of premodern global religious history in five regional concentrations.
  - 1) Religions in Mesoamerica
  - 2) European Christianity
  - 3) Islam and Judaism in Africa and Southwest Asia
  - 4) Sikhism and other spiritual systems in South Asia
  - 5) East Asian religious traditions
2. Apply a skill-set both orally and in writing that includes:
  - 1) Sourcing – Analysis of individual primary sources
  - 2) Corroboration – Analysis of multiple primary sources
  - 3) Narrative – Use of historical information to chart change over time
  - 4) Argumentation – Articulation of historical claims that are supported by evidence
3. Fulfill General Education requirements: **Historical Perspectives** (GHP).
  - 1) Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize both primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives. (LG3)
  - 2) Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally, and in writing. (LG1)

### **IV. Required Reading: Primary-Source Collection**

Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E. *Religious Transformations in the Early Modern World: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009.

### **V. Course Requirements**

1. **40%** of final grade: **four assessments**. Designed to assess your comprehension of the historical information and your application of the historical skill-set. These will be in-class open-book.
2. **50%** of final grade: **historical textbook assignment**. Capstone assignment in which you are the creator of the proverbial “textbook” chapter. Will discuss this in-depth later in the course.
3. **10%** of final grade: **participation**. I expect you to attend each time, to participate both verbally and in writing, and to contribute your thoughts both individually and in group activities.

### **VI. Evaluation of Final Grade**

**A** = Student demonstrates a thorough comprehension of all five concentrations and all four components of the historical skill-set.

**B** = Student demonstrates a thorough comprehension of four concentrations and three components of the historical skill-set.

**C** = Student demonstrates a thorough comprehension of three concentrations and two components of the historical skill-set.

**D** = Student demonstrates a weak comprehension of course material and the historical skill-set.

**F** = Student has completed no work.

## **VII. Course Guidelines**

1. Please bring the primary-source collection to every class.
2. I will grant you **two** excused absences with no grade penalty. If you miss **three** class periods, I will lower your final grade by 5% (one-half letter grade). If you miss **four** class periods, I will lower your final grade by 10% (a full letter grade). And so on.
3. If you miss an assessment, you may make it up within 24 hours with a 10% reduction. That is, you have until 8:50 P.M. the next day (Friday) to submit it. You may not use your excused absences on assessment days.
4. Should you have any questions about the course, the history department, or me, please ask. I am here to help you succeed.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Unit One**

Concentration: Religion in Mesoamerica, 1300s-1600s

Thursday, 16 January

Thursday, 23 January

Thursday, 30 January: Assessment One

### **Unit Two**

Concentration: European Reformation, 1400s-1560s

Thursday, 6 February

Thursday, 13 February

Thursday, 20 February: Assessment Two

**Unit Three**

Concentration: Mysticism in Africa and Southwest Asia, 1400s-1650s

Thursday, 27 February

Thursday, 6 March

Thursday, 20 March: Assessment Three

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**Unit Four**

Concentration: Religious Diversity in South and East Asia, 1300s-1600s

Thursday, 27 March

Thursday, 3 April - NO CLASS

Thursday, 10 April

Thursday, 17 April: Assessment Four

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**Historical Textbook Chapter**

Thursday, April 24

Chapter is due Noon, 1 May 2014