

SPRING 2020
PHIL/REL 231

RELIGIONS OF THE WEST

MWF, 12:30-1:20, BRNG 1268

Dr. Thomas Ryba



The purpose of this course is to provide a systematic survey of those religions variously described, in the West, as ‘Western Religions’ or ‘Religions of the West.’ Immediately, a problem arises because the adjective, ‘Western,’ is questionable. The descriptions ‘Western’ or ‘of the West’ have been understood as designating a problematic geo-cultural location—but also a homogeneous style of religious thought because of their common origins as *Abrahamic* monotheisms. Contemporary scholars of religion, and indigenous believers, often contest this claimed homogeneity and have pointed to the incredible complexity and fluidity of these traditions, characteristics which resist simplistic classification. Well aware of the challenges such descriptions present, we, in this course, will engage in a comparative study of the systems of belief and thought traditionally termed ‘Religions of the West’ by Western scholars of religions. This will be accomplished through a series of readings on these systems’ histories, philosophies, and scriptures.

Required texts: (1) F. E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam*, (2) Thomas Ryba, *The Abrahamic Traditions: A Comparative Structures Approach*, and (3) Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2004. Also, background readings on BLACKBOARD will be posted.

Requirements: (1) Four objective exams, (2) regular attendance and participation. Significant extra credit will be available.