

## SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

### Colorado State University, Academic Partner

<b>Voyage:</b>	Fall 2019
<b>Discipline:</b>	Philosophy and Religion
<b>Course Number and Title:</b>	PHIL 372 Meaning and Truth in Religion
<b>Division:</b>	Upper
<b>Faculty Name:</b>	James D. Bratt
<b>Semester Credit Hours:</b>	3

**Prerequisites:** One (1) lower division religion or philosophy course. OR one (1) introductory level course in the humanities, be it philosophy, religious studies, or literature, as approved by the instructor.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course takes a phenomenological approach to understand how people find meaning and truth for their lives via interaction with a wide range of materials and situations. The different places and religious traditions we encounter on our voyage will provide case studies for our analysis, and some classic texts in the academic study of religion will lend us conceptual and methodological assistance, enhancing students' insight into the field of religious studies. We will begin with a gripping statement about the human need for meaning written out of the Nazi death camps, which were centered in our first country of call, Poland. Around the Mediterranean Sea we will take up the notion of and practices at sacred sites, comparing principles and examples of Muslim, Jewish, and Roman Catholic architecture and pilgrimage. On our crossing from Ghana to Brazil we will explore the phenomenon of spirit possession in Candomblé, pioneered in Bahia as a creolization of West African practices. In the Caribbean the music of Bob Marley will provide a case study of how religious innovation forged under the cloud of colonialism could provide hope and inspiration to a vast audience around the world. We will conclude with the ironic and self-critical autobiography of an American missionary to Costa Rica, our last port of call, as a prompt to our own reflections upon our semester's experience abroad. This exposure to a variety of religious experiences will give students deeper insights into (1) scholarly methods of analyzing religion, (2) the lands and cultures they are visiting, and (3) their own quest for meaning.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, the students will have demonstrated the capacity to:

1. discuss intelligently, orally and in writing, the issues and dynamics that go into the construction, reception, and alteration of meaning in religious texts and rituals.
2. draw informed and nuanced comparisons across various individual case studies and faith traditions.
3. interpret religious sites and practices critically and comparatively.

4. incorporate data and experiences at field sites to enrich or alter impressions gained from reading.
5. reflect in a more intelligent and self-critical manner upon meaning-seeking as a universal, and personal, human activity.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Victor Frankl  
TITLE: *Man's Search for Meaning*  
PUBLISHER: Beacon Press  
ISBN #: 978-0807014271  
DATE/EDITION: 2006 paperback

AUTHOR: Jean Holm, ed.  
TITLE: *Sacred Place*  
PUBLISHER: Continuum  
ISBN #: 978-0826453037  
DATE/EDITION: 1998 paperback

AUTHOR: Jamie Wright  
TITLE: *The Very Worst Missionary: A Memoir or Whatever*  
PUBLISHER: Convergent Books  
ISBN #: 978-0451496539  
DATE/EDITION: 2018 paperback

## TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

### Depart Amsterdam, the Netherlands — September 9

#### **B1—September 12** *Introduction*

Review of syllabus, assignments, and grading. Discussion of the purpose of the academic study of religion: not proselytization or debunking but empathic and critical understanding.

## PART I: CONSIDERING THE QUESTION

#### **B2—September 14** READING: Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 15-69

Religion is tied to the apparently innate human quest for meaning or purpose in life. We begin the course by examining a classic account of the struggle for such meaning amid the worst possible conditions, the Nazi death camps. The author's discovery that a sense of meaning was key to survival and recovery sets the tone—and the challenge—for the course.

### Gdansk, Poland — September 15-20

#### **B3—September 22** READING: Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 70-115

Locating Frankl's existentialist assumptions, we will consider the extent to which his model is universal or time-bound.

**B4—September 24** READING: Brooks, *The Road to Character*, ch 2.

A selection from a very recent updating of Frankl's basic message, aiming to speak to conditions of postmodern meritocracy. Is this the context of your life?

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTION:** In 500 words, discuss your own place and aspirations in terms of the diagnosis and prescription that David Brooks lays out in today's reading. Are you part of the dominant pattern that he laments, and do you wish for a different sort of character and life too? Or are you part of it and happy with that—if so, why? Or is your life to date of a very different pattern—and set of challenges—than the one he describes?

**Lisbon, Portugal — September 26-28**

**Cadiz, Spain — September 29 - October 1**

## **PART II: SACRED PLACES**

**B5—October 2** READING: Holm, *Sacred Place*, 33-61

The quest for meaning takes religious expression most regularly in collective rituals at places deemed to be holy. This section of the course analyzes the principles behind and examples of sacred sites in the three monotheistic religions that have historically dominated the Mediterranean basin. We begin with Christianity, the now-dominant faith on the Iberian Peninsula where all three of these religions have had a major historical presence.

**B6—October 4** READING: Holm, *Sacred Place*, 115-48

An exploration of how notions of sacred place in Judaism have altered with the ebb and flow of Jewish history.

**Dubrovnik, Croatia — October 6-10**

**B7—October 11** READING: Holm, *Sacred Place*, 88-114

An examination of the theology behind and aesthetic principles of Islamic architecture.

**B8—October 13** READING: Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, chs 17-18

Some holy places are distinguished as pilgrimage sites—not places of routine but of extraordinary worship and meaning. Reviewing some classic examples, we will consider in more detail a famous recent pilgrimage, that of Malcolm X to Mecca.

**Casablanca, Morocco — October 15-20**

**B9—October 21** READINGS: Knight, *Power & Paradise in Walt Disney's World*, 24-43  
Pahl, *Shopping Malls & Other Sacred Places*, 83-102

A consideration of the phenomena and meanings of the #1 site of American pilgrimage today, Disney World, looked at from both a friendly and a critical perspective.

**B10—October 23** READING: Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 1-24

A classic argument from one of the USA's greatest Jewish theologians that the truly venerable belongs to sacred time, not space.

### **PART III: RECOMBINANT RELIGION**

**B11—October 26** READING: Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 93-108  
Introduction to religion as a cultural system helping us understand collective systems of meaning, from a seminal essay in the academic study of religion.

**PAPER #1 due:** 1200 words

Option 1: Discuss the principal differences between the architecture of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Your grade will be enhanced by the extent to which you incorporate observations from personal visits to these sites and use them to reflect on the assigned readings and class discussions.

Option 2: Discuss the phenomena of pilgrimage as laid out and evaluated in the assigned readings and class discussions. Your grade will be enhanced by the extent to which you incorporate observations from personal "pilgrimage" experiences, whether these be to traditional sites or modern functional equivalents (Disney World, shopping malls, sports events, concerts, etc.).

**Tema, Ghana — October 28-30**

**Takoradi, Ghana — October 31 - November 2**

**B12—November 2** READING: Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 109-25  
Further consideration of religion as a cultural system.

**B13—November 5** READING: Prothero, *God is Not One*, 203-41  
The principal features of Yoruban religion, characteristic of the West African source of the European slave trade and carried over to the Western Hemisphere where it recombined with different forms of Christianity. In Brazil this takes the form of Candomblé.

**B14—November 7** READING: Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 94-112, 125-30  
Another classic from academic anthropology, laying out key concepts for our understanding of religious ritual, especially as performed in Candomblé.

**B15—November 9** READING: Glassie & Shukla, *Sacred Art*, 9-25, 336-53  
The artistic productions of Candomblé devotees and public processions.

**Salvador, Brazil — November 10-15**

**B16—November 17** READING: Barrett, *The Rastafarians*, 103-45  
Introduction to Rastafarianism in Jamaica, the second recombinant religion we will consider.

**B17—November 19** FIELD CLASS PROJECT due; class presentations

**B18—November 22** Field Class presentations

## Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago – November 24

**B19—November 25** READING: MacNeil, *Bible and Bob Marley*, xi-xvii, 1-19

A close analysis of the ways that Bob Marley used specific biblical materials in his music, giving us some practice in the religious practice of hermeneutics.

**B20—November 27** READING: Goldman, *The Book of Exodus*, 209-44

Analysis of the theological messages of the album that *Time* magazine deemed the greatest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Here we will give more attention to the musical uses and context of texts.

## PART IV: SELF-REFLECTION

**B21—November 30** READING: Wright, *Very Worst Missionary*, chs 1-8

As we enter the last phase of our voyage, we will read and discuss the ironic and self-critical autobiography of an American missionary to Costa Rica, our last port of call. This will prompt our own reflections upon our semester's experience abroad.

## Guayaquil, Ecuador – December 2-7

**B22—December 8** READING: Wright, *Very Worst Missionary*, chs 9-14

**B23—December 10** READING: Wright, *Very Worst Missionary*, chs 15-20  
**JOURNALS due**

## Puntarenas, Costa Rica – December 11-15

**B24—December 17** READINGS: Wallace, "This is Water;" Brooks, "The Ultimate Spoiler Alert"  
Two college commencement addresses that will further prompt reflection on life goals.

**B25—December 20** **FINAL PAPERS due** 1200 words

This paper should arc back to the Autobiographical Reflection you wrote at the start of the course and consider how your sense of things has been changed, deepened, or reinforced by your experiences on this voyage. Your grade will be enhanced by the extent to which you

- interact specifically with the assigned readings and class discussions for days B19-B24 of the course;
- incorporate more generally the methods and materials learned in this course.

## Arrive San Diego, California – December 23

## FIELD WORK

Semester at Sea<sup>®</sup> field experiences allow for an unparalleled opportunity to compare, contrast, and synthesize the different cultures and countries encountered over the course of the voyage. In addition to the one field class, students will complete independent field assignments that span multiple countries.

## Field Class & Assignment

The field class for this course is on **November 11 in Salvador, Brazil.**

**Field Class attendance is mandatory for all students enrolled in this course. Do not book individual travel plans or a Semester at Sea sponsored trip on the day of your field class.**

Field Classes constitute at least 20% of the contact hours for each course, and are developed and led by the instructor.

**Field Class Topic:** African and European in Brazilian Religion

**Site:** Salvador, Brazil

**Date:** DAY 2 - Monday, 11 November

We will explore sacred sites in Salvador—Igreja de Nosso Senhor do Bonfim and Igreja de São Francisco—as informed by an opening visit to the Museu Afro-Brasileiro and enhanced by a Candomblé dancing workshop, to see how distinct African and European strains of ritual and architecture have persisted and sometimes combined to define the highly diversified local religious landscape.

**Learning objectives:** Students will get first-hand exposure to:

1. the representation of religious ideas and history in art and architecture
2. the power of pilgrimage and healing rites in religious experience
3. the contribution of Yoruba religion and Christianity to the recombinant practices of Candomblé
4. local examples of themes and symbols discussed in the classroom

### Assignment

Students will collaborate in small teams to create a project that critically reflects on the sites visited during the Field Class in Salvador. The projects are due on B17/November 19 and will be presented in class at that or the following class session.

- **Format/genre:** the project may take the form of a traditional academic paper, presented in class with projected illustrations, or it may incorporate more visual and/or aural elements as a photographic/sonographic essay.
- **Aim:** Since everyone in class will have visited the same sites, your goal in this project is not to introduce but to interpret the latter, aiming for a deeper level of analysis. Think of moving from *sight* to *insight*. In particular, your project should interact with what we have read and discussed in PART III of the course. Bottom line: what new light can your project shed on our reading, discussions, and on-site experiences?

If your project follows the usual paper format, it should be at least 1500 words in length. If it is of another genre, it needs to get the equivalent work done with no less clarity and strength of argument. This assignment, including attentive participation in the site-visits themselves, will count for 25% of your final grade.

### Independent Field Assignments

Students will keep a **journal** in which they record and reflect upon their experiences on SAS Fall 19 as these intersect with the questions and issues surrounding the human quest for meaning. As our voyage takes 14 weeks, the journal should record at least 7 substantial entries, or you may prefer to write more often and more briefly. Your entries should respond to:

- experiences in port, whether these are on visits to formally religious sites or chance glimpses along the road;
- course readings and discussions;
- reflections upon your understanding of things before the voyage began and how that understanding is changing—or being reinforced—because of what are encountering over the course of this semester;
- etc.

Entries need not use formal academic prose but should show increasing knowledge and insight under the skills and interpretive methods gleaned from the course. You are welcome to supplement your writing with photographs, sketches, drawings, and any other representation that enhances your memory, understanding, and communication. The completed journals are due no later than December 10 (B23).

#### **METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING SCALE**

1. Class participation: regular attendance; informed contributions to class discussion. 15%
2. Autobiographical Reflection, due September 24 (B4). 10%
3. Paper #1: due October 26 (B11), 15%
4. Field Class project: due November 19 (B17). 25%
5. Journal: due no later than Dec 10 (B23). 20%
6. Paper #2: due December 20 (B25). 15%

The following Grading Scale is utilized for student evaluation. Pass/Fail is not an option for Semester at Sea® coursework. Note that C-, D+ and D- grades are also not assigned on Semester at Sea® in accordance with the grading system at Colorado State University (the SAS partner institution).

Pluses and minuses are awarded as follows on a 100% scale:

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory/Poor</u>	<u>Failing</u>
97-100%: A+	87-89%: B+	77-79%: C+	Less than 60%: F
93-96%: A	83-86%: B	70-76%: C	
90-92%: A-	80-82%: B-	60-69%: D	

#### **ATTENDANCE/ENGAGEMENT IN THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

Attendance in all Semester at Sea® classes, including the Field Class, is mandatory. Informed contributions to class discussion based on having read and reflected on the day's assigned reading is vital to the success of this course and to the student's learning. Student performance on this score will count for 15% of the final grade. Students must inform their

instructors prior to any unanticipated absence and take the initiative to make up missed work in a timely fashion. Instructors must make reasonable efforts to enable students to make up work which must be accomplished under the instructor's supervision (e.g., examinations, laboratories). In the event of a conflict in regard to this policy, individuals may appeal using established CSU procedures.

## LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS

Semester at Sea® provides academic accommodations for students with diagnosed learning disabilities, in accordance with ADA guidelines. Students who will need accommodations in a class, should contact ISE to discuss their individual needs. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation.

A letter from students' home institutions verifying the accommodations received on their home campuses (dated within the last three years) is required before any accommodation is provided on the ship. Students must submit verification of accommodations to [academic@isevoyages.org](mailto:academic@isevoyages.org) as soon as possible, but no later than two months prior to the voyage. More details can be found within the Course Registration Packet, as posted to the [Courses and Field Classes page](#) no later than one month prior to registration.

## STUDENT CONDUCT CODE

The foundation of a university is truth and knowledge, each of which relies in a fundamental manner upon academic integrity and is diminished significantly by academic misconduct. Academic integrity is conceptualized as doing and taking credit for one's own work. A pervasive attitude promoting academic integrity enhances the sense of community and adds value to the educational process. All within the University are affected by the cooperative commitment to academic integrity. All Semester at Sea courses adhere to this Academic Integrity Policy and Student Conduct Code.

Depending on the nature of the assignment or exam, the faculty member may require a written declaration of the following honor pledge: "I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment."

## RESERVE BOOKS FOR THE LIBRARY

AUTHOR: Jean Holm, ed.  
TITLE: *Sacred Place*  
PUBLISHER: Continuum  
ISBN #: 978-0826453037  
DATE/EDITION: 1998 paperback

## FILM REQUEST

TITLE: *Marley* (directed by Kevin MacDonald, 2012)  
Distributor: Magnolia

TITLE: *Black Orpheus* (directed by Marcel Camus, 1959)  
Distributor: Lopert Pictures

## ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS

AUTHOR: Leonard E. Barrett, Sr.  
CHAPTER TITLE: ch 4: "Beliefs, Rituals, and Symbols"  
BOOK TITLE: *The Rastafarians*  
DATE: Beacon Press, 1997; ISBN-13: 978-0870-1039-1  
PAGES: 103-45

AUTHOR: David Brooks  
CHAPTER TITLE: ch 2: "The Summoned Self"  
BOOK TITLE: *The Road to Character*  
DATE: Random House, 2016; ISBN-13: 978-080703418  
PAGES: 16-48

AUTHOR: David Brooks  
TITLE: "The Ultimate Spoiler Alert"  
DATE: Dartmouth College 2015; <https://news.dartmouth.edu/news/2015/06/david-brooks-commencement-address>

AUTHOR: Clifford Geertz  
CHAPTER TITLE: ch 4, "Religion as a Culture System"  
BOOK TITLE: *The Interpretation of Cultures*  
DATE: Basic Books 1973; ISBN-13: 978-046503425X  
PAGES: 87-125

AUTHOR: Henry Glassie and Pravina Shukla  
CHAPTER TITLE: ch 1, "The Historical Center;" ch. 11, "Saints and Orixas..."  
BOOK TITLE: *Sacred Art: Catholic Saints and Candomblé Gods in Modern Brazil*  
DATE: Indiana University Press 2017; ISBN-13: 978-0253032058  
PAGES: 9-25, 336-53

AUTHOR: Vivien Goldman  
CHAPTER TITLE: ch. 11, "Exodus: A Song Cycle"  
BOOK TITLE: *The Book of Exodus: The Making and Meaning of Bob Marley....*  
DATE: Three Rivers Press 2006; ISBN-13: 978-1400052868  
PAGES: 209-44

AUTHOR: Abraham Joshua Heschel  
CHAPTER TITLE: "Architecture of Time" and "A Palace in Time"

BOOK TITLE: *The Sabbath*  
DATE: Farrar, Strauss & Company, 1952; ISBN 13: 978-0374529758  
PAGES: 2-24

AUTHOR: Cher Krause Knight  
CHAPTER TITLE: ch 2, "Keeping the Faith: Disney World as a Pilgrimage Center"  
BOOK TITLE: *Power and Paradise in Walt Disney's World*  
DATE: University Press of Florida 2014; ISBN-13: 978-0813049120  
PAGES: 24-43

AUTHOR: Dean MacNeil  
CHAPTER TITLE: ch 1, "Introduction"  
BOOK TITLE: *The Bible and Bob Marley*  
DATE: Cascade Books, 2013; ISBN-13: 978-1625640345  
PAGES: 1-19

AUTHOR: Malcolm X  
CHAPTER TITLE: chs 17-18, "Mecca" and "El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz"  
BOOK TITLE: *Autobiography*  
DATE: Ballantine Books; Reissue edition (1992) ISBN-13: 978-9990065169  
PAGES: 325-70

AUTHOR: Jon Pahl  
CHAPTER TITLE: ch 4, "Worshipping the Golden Mouse"  
BOOK TITLE: *Shopping Malls and Other Sacred Places*  
DATE: Wipf & Stock Pub; Reprint edition (2008); ISBN-13: 978-1606083970  
PAGES: 83-102

AUTHOR: Stephen Prothero  
CHAPTER TITLE: ch 4, "Yoruba Religion"  
BOOK TITLE: *God is Not One*  
DATE: Harper Collins 2008; ISBN-13: 978-0061571275  
PAGES: 203-42

AUTHOR: Victor Turner  
CHAPTER TITLE: ch 3, "Liminality and Communitas"  
BOOK TITLE: *The Ritual Process*  
DATE: Aldine Transaction; 1 edition 1995; ISBN-13: 978-0202011905  
PAGES: 94-130

AUTHOR: David Foster Wallace  
TITLE: "This is Water"  
DATE: Kenyon College 2005; <https://fs.blog/2012/04/david-foster-wallace-this-is-water/>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

None