RELIGION 105: MORAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE 21st CENTURY

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Welcome! This on-line course examines the different components that create and develop our responsibility, both personal and social. This sense of responsibility emerges in dialogue with God, our neighbors, and the environment. We then can act in loving and just ways to respond to and transform the twenty-first century world.

Yet, rather than merely talk about responsibility in general, I want to focus on responsibility in two ways. On the one hand, I will try to help you understand other local religious communities. We need to always remember that it is actual people who seek to be responsible. I think you will be amazed at the religious diversity in Georgia. On the other hand, I will initiate discussion about five different issues. My working sub-title for this course is as follows: "Georgia's Religious Communities and Sex, Sweat, Shrubs, Strangers, and Sickness." A little too cute I admit. But, these words, of course, are code words for all sorts of moral issues that we face as Americans. When you finish this course, I hope you have gained some further understanding about your own ideas of responsibility as well as those who are your religious neighbors as it pertains to these issues.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Reinhardt College’s courses do not stand alone. Each course is linked to various learning outcomes. In order to help students understand the significance of what occurs in the class.

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES: The General Education Learning Outcomes are expected of every student who graduates from Reinhardt College. In this class, the following learning outcomes are emphasized and required:

Communication – Effective expression of ideas through writing, speech, and visual media

Critical Thinking and Inquiry - Integrative, critical thinking, and inquiry-based learning using evidence, logic, reasoning, and calculation

Critical Thinking and Inquiry - Knowledge of various research methodologies, information, technological, and scientific literacy

 Critical Thinking and Inquiry - Independent thought and imagination; preparation for lifelong learning

Knowledge of Self, Society and Culture - Knowledge of the traditions of Western civilization and their global context

Knowledge of Self, Society and Culture Knowledge of the diversity of societies and cultures; the ability to view themselves and the world from cultural and historical perspectives other than their own

Values and Ethics - Integrity and Ethical Responsibility

Values and Understanding and commitment to physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness

Values and Ethics Stewardship and civic engagement, coupled with the ability to work with others both collaboratively and in leadership roles

RELIGION PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1: Students will understand the major religions of the world

2: Students will understand the Judeo-Christian traditions

3: Students will be able to clarify their religious vocation

4: Students will be able to think critically and be able to express those ideas in writing, speech, and visual media.

5: Students will become familiar with a variety of research methods used by religious scholars.

6: Students will develop their own theoretical and practical understanding of moral and spiritual issues.

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR COURSE

Students will describe important features of the contemporary Georgia, American and global religious context. (GEN. ED. 5)

Students will understand various features of responsibility as shaped by various moral and religious codes and worldviews. Students will be familiar with themes of moral motivation, moral reasoning, moral failure, moral change, moral exemplars, and moral ends. (GEN. ED. 5,6)

Students will discuss practical ways to act and be responsible. (GEN ED. 7,8,9)

Students will demonstrate “the effective expression of ideas in writing, orally, and through various media.” (GEN. ED. 1,2, 3)

REQUIREMENTS

1.Explore: Read Posted Readings for Each Module. I have written material for this course in order to make it relevant to our lives in Georgia. Thus, besides learning in general about different religions, I want you to learn about these religious communities in Georgia. As much as possible, I have sought to include specific statements and material from these communities and their members.

 2.Expand: On-line Participation. A significant portion of your course grade depends upon your active and timely participation in on-line exchanges of ideas, personal observations, and questions among all the students and the instructor. As seen on the weekly schedule of course events, there are regular activities requiring all students to post responses, engage in virtual classroom exchanges and complete writing assignments. Please be attentive to these assignments and plan on meeting the following expectations:

I suggest that you visit the course site several times a week. This will ensure your timely response to discussion board topics and engagement in small group work as assigned.

Each Weekly Module begins on Monday mornings (really midnight Sunday). All on-line work for the week must be posted by the next Sunday midnight. Read below for the exception to this statement! You are responsible for completing all work within the assigned week. There is no make-up work to replace incomplete or missed Forums.

 2.1. Primary Individual Assignment. Each week I post a paragraph with various questions to which you must respond. Your main INITIAL comments to the weekly online discussion thread MUST be posted by midnight Wednesday. This will give everyone time to read and respond to posted comments by the weekly deadline. If I accept a late post, a significant grade reduction will result for the post being late. Since this is a major assignment, please assume that you'll need to write 250-350 words to cover the questions.

 2.2. Secondary Individual Assignment. For several years, I have written a blog for this course. As I’m in the process of making this blog more accessible, I want you to respond with a brief response, only 50-100 words are necessary. From a possible number of blogs, I am asking that you simply choose one (or two if you wish), then write a few sentences fulfilling the assignment’s questions. Unlike the main discussion postings, you do not need to respond to others’ postings. Your response should be submitted by the end of the week, Sunday midnight.

Evaluate: Self- Quizzes. Weekly self-testing quizzes must be submitted by the Sunday midnight deadline.

Evaluate: Exams. There will be a Midterm and, possibly a Final exam. The Midterm Exam will be the fourth week. The Final Exam may be the eighth week. If you are happy with your grade at the beginning of the eighth week, then you do not have to take the final. If you want to try to improve your grade, then the exam will be given the last week.

 Discussions

Online discussions are the equivalents of traditional classroom discussions. As you may already know, these online discussions are set up to allow the exchange of observations, questions, and ideas whenever a student can log on to participate. Sometimes these are referred to as bulletin boards. Participation in this activity, as scheduled, is required of all students. I will be monitoring your discussions and will be noting the number of responses and the quality of the responses to each discussion. All postings to the forums are considered formal writing and should follow the rules of good grammar and spelling. As mentioned above, all initial comments to a thread must be posted no later than Wednesday evening.

The following guidelines will apply to these online discussions. If we agree to the same ground rules as a class, we might feel freer to express our ideas without worry of ridicule or embarrassment. It is hoped that by the end of the class you will be thinking about issues in a very different way- one that might make you more confident of your ability to express your thoughts more freely.

In both exchanges, we, the class, agree:

that all posting to the online discussion should be formal short essays reflecting articulate thoughts and critical thinking;

to proof-read and spell check our contributions before posting to the Forum.

to participate and stay on track with the topic.

to politely challenge the ideas of others without becoming personal; it is only by engaging differences of opinions that we develop our ideas.

to please avoid side conversations; these are group endeavors.

to respect one another’s ideas.

to avoid slang and non-academic styles of expression.

that our discussions need to be built on our interpretation of historical evidence, which means that we must be knowledgeable of that evidence; be able to support our opinions with facts.

In the online discussions you are required to make an initial comment and 3-4 additional comments to your classmate's comments. Once again, a reminder that your initial comment must be made no later than Wednesday midnight of each week that forum is scheduled. Remember, your participation grade is made up not only of the number of times you participate in discussions, but also by the quality of your responses.

How Much Time Should I Spend on This Course?

A good rule of thumb in a collegiate setting is to spend one to two hours outside of class for every hour spent in class. Our course is the equivalent of a traditional class that would meet five hours each week for half a semester. Therefore, you should anticipate spending five to ten hours PLUS the equivalent of five classroom hours each week (a total of ten to fifteen hours) engaged with the on-line course materials, reading assignments, completing learning exercises, writing papers and studying for tests.

The Need for Academic Honesty

Education thrives in an atmosphere of honesty and trust. Students who do not do their own work degrade education, demonstrate a lack of respect for themselves and the college, and rob themselves of the opportunity to improve their own thinking and writing. In this course, all work must be your own. Cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, the use of someone else’s ideas or words without acknowledging them as such, is a serious academic offense. Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be dealt with strictly, normally resulting in a failing grade in the course. The Academic Catalog of Reinhardt College details what constitutes academic dishonesty. If you are ever uncertain about whether or not your actions are academically honest, please consult your instructor, who will be glad to advise you.

Evaluation of Learning Outcomes and Grade Computation

Grading is based upon a 1000-point scale. The crucial grade is the accumulation of points throughout the semester. If you want to determine where you stand, each exercise’s letter grade as well as the final letter grade is determined according to the following criteria: 90+=A; 89-80=B; 79-70=C; 69-60=D; 59-=F. To determine any particular grade, you have to use your math skills! For example, if you get 30 out of 40 points for your discussion postings, then convert the grade to a fraction 30/40 and then divide 30 by 40. Remember your simple math equations

350 Primary Discussion Submissions (each of the 7 online discussions is worth 50 points)

280 Quiz (each of the 7 quizzes is worth 40 points)

 70 Secondary Blog Submission (each of the 7 responses is worth 10 points)

200 Midterm Exam

100 Final Exam (Optional)

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS SPRING 2024

 WEEK ONE

Begin Monday, January 8th. All material must be finished by midnight Sunday, January 14th.

 Lesson One: Who Are We at the Crossroads of Ga. 140 and Ga. 108

Explore: Read Lectures posted on site

Expand: Submit Primary Discussion Posts

Expand: Submit Secondary Blog Assignment Post

Evaluate: Multiple-choice quiz

 WEEK TWO

Begin Monday, January 15th. All material must be finished by midnight Sunday, January 21st.

Lesson Two: Strategies for Analyzing Religious Communities and Moral Responsibility

Explore: Read Lectures posted on site

Expand: Submit Primary Discussion Posts

Expand: Submit Secondary Blog Assignment Post

Evaluate: Multiple-choice quiz

WEEK THREE

Begin Monday, January 22nd. All material must be finished by midnight Sunday, January 28th.

 Lesson Three: Hindu Communities and Moral Responsibility

Explore: Read Lectures posted on site

Expand: Submit Primary Discussion Posts

Expand: Submit Secondary Blog Assignment Post

Evaluate: Multiple-choice quiz

WEEK FOUR

Begin Monday, January 29th. All material must be finished by midnight Sunday, February 4th.

Lesson Four: Buddhist Communities and Moral Responsibility

 Explore: Read Lectures posted on site

Expand: Submit Primary Discussion Posts

Expand: Submit Secondary Blog Assignment Post

Evaluate: Multiple-choice quiz

WEEK FOUR

Mid-term Exam

Must be finished by February 4th. No exceptions

WEEK FIVE

Begin Monday, February 5th. All material must be finished by midnight Sunday, February 11th.

Lesson Five: Jewish Communities and Moral Responsibility

Explore: Read Lectures posted on site

Expand: Submit Primary Discussion Posts

Expand: Submit Secondary Blog Assignment Post

Evaluate: Multiple-choice quiz

WEEK SIX

Begin Monday, February 12th. All material must be finished by midnight Sunday, February 18th.

Lesson Six: Christian Communities and Moral Responsibility

Explore: Read Lectures posted on site

Expand: Submit Primary Discussion Posts

Expand: Submit Secondary Blog Assignment Post

Evaluate: Multiple-choice quiz

WEEK SEVEN

Begin Monday, February 19th. All material must be finished by midnight Sunday, February 26th.

Lesson Seven: Muslim Communities and Moral Responsibility

Explore: Read Lectures posted on site

Expand: Submit Primary Discussion Posts

Expand: Submit Secondary Blog Assignment Post

Evaluate: Multiple-choice quiz

WEEK EIGHT

Begin Monday, February 26th. All material including the FINAL EXAM must be finish by midnight Wednesday, March 3rd. THIS IS NOT A WHOLE WEEK

 Lesson Eight: Final Thoughts on Understanding, Comparing, and Evaluating Communities and Moral Responsibility

 Explore: Read Lectures posted on site

Evaluate: Multiple-choice quiz

FINAL EXAM

Complete by midnight Wednesday, March 3rd.