Course Description: A seminar designed for, and required of, seniors who are majoring in Theology and Religious Studies. It will examine major methodological approaches to theology and religious studies, while focusing on a theme, author, or text. The focus for the 2012 Capstone Seminar is “Scripture in Global Perspective.”

Scripture in Global Perspective: Many of the world’s religious traditions have sacred texts: the Bible, the Qur’an, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Tripitaka, and so on. However, to refer to them all as “scriptures” is to read a great number of presuppositions into their interpretation exported from one’s own home tradition, e.g., Christian notions about the Bible. In this course, aside from reading a representative sample of sacred texts from several traditions, we will also examine a number of theoretical questions relating to “scripture” as a category: Does a religious tradition need a scripture? How are canons of scripture formed? How strong is their authority? Can there be multiple layers of scripture with varying levels of authority? Whence do scriptures derive their authority? Can a scriptural text lapse and become non-scriptural? How do scriptures interact with their religious communities and vice versa to remain normative and meaningful?

Instructional Methods: Seminar teaching and learning experience modeled on graduate level seminars, wherein students are involved in high-level participation and engagement. The course is structured around discussion of the readings and representative examples of sacred text under discussion. Students are asked to prepare by composing a 2-page reflection that highlights key insights gleaned from the readings and poses questions for class discussion. Additionally, each student will write a research paper, which will be evaluated both by peers in the course and by the instructor, and will make a formal presentation of their research.

Required Texts:

*The Holy Bible*

*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum* (1965)


**Other readings (posted to Blackboard):**


**Goals for Student Learning:**

At the conclusion of the course students will:

1. Have a general familiarity with representative scriptural texts from several religious traditions.

2. Be able to articulate key theoretical notions surrounding “scripture” as a category in religious studies such as canonization, authority, interpretation, doctrinal and ritual use, and so on.
3. Be able to describe and theoretically analyze the place, function, and meaning of sacred texts within two or more separate religious traditions.

**Assessment:**

(20%) of the grade will be based on **Participation**

(20%) of the grade will be based on weekly **Reflection Papers** on the assigned readings.

(40%) of the grade will be based on the process of preparing a **Research Paper** for Publication, to include peer-review.

(20%) of the grade will be based on a **Presentation** of your research before your classmates.

**Course Requirements:**

1. For each class students will prepare the readings assigned for the day, be present in class, and be prepared to engage in discussion. **(20% of the grade)**

2. For each class students will prepare a 2-page paper, double-spaced with one-inch margins in 12-point type. The paper will note key developments or issues raised in the readings for the day and raise questions for discussion by the class. Bring the paper to class and be prepared to discuss. Papers will be collected at the end of each class session. **(20% of the grade)**

3. Each student will write a comparative analysis of scriptures from two different religious traditions. This will require reading the sacred texts of two traditions (partial readings if the texts are very long) along with commentary on the texts both from within the traditions and by scholars. The paper will conclude with the student’s own comparative analysis of the texts. The texts or extracts of texts chosen must be approved by the instructor in advance. The paper should be 20-25 pages long, in 12-point Times New Roman type, double-spaced, and with one-inch margins on all four sides. **(40% of the grade)**

4. Students will make a twenty-minute presentation of their research to their fellow students. In class, with an additional ten minutes for questions and answers. **(20% of the grade)**

**University grades:**
The University grading system is at [http://policies.cua.edu/academicundergrad//gradesfull.cfm#II](http://policies.cua.edu/academicundergrad//gradesfull.cfm#II)
Reports of grades in courses are available at the end of each term on [http://cardinalstation.cua.edu](http://cardinalstation.cua.edu)

This is our point scale equivalent to the University grade system:

- A = 95-100
- B = 84-88
- C = 74-77
- A- = 92-94
- B- = 81-83
- C- = 71-73
- B+ = 89-91
- C+ = 78-80
- D = 65-70
- F = 64 and below

**Expectations and Policies**

You are expected to be present at all classes and to arrive on time. If you have to miss a class and know that in advance please notify me by e-mail. In other cases, let me know
afterwards why you were unable to be present. Turn off your cell phones and refrain from checking text messages when in the classroom.

**Academic Honesty:** Academic honesty is expected of all CUA students. Faculty are required to initiate the imposition of sanctions when they find violations of academic honesty, such as plagiarism, improper use of a student’s own work, cheating, and fabrication. University policy is that the presumed sanction for undergraduate students for academic dishonesty will be failure for the course. Please review the complete texts of the University policy and procedures regarding Student Academic Dishonesty at [http://policies.cua.edu/academicundergrad/integrity.cfm](http://policies.cua.edu/academicundergrad/integrity.cfm).

**Campus Resources for Student Support:** The Writing Center is located in room 111 O’Boyle Hall; phone 319-4286. The Counseling Center is in room 127 O’Boyle Hall; phone 319-5765. The Center for Academic Success is located in Suite 201, Pryzbyla Center. The TRS reference room is 300 Mullen Library, and the Theology Library is on the fourth floor of Mullen Library. In particular, the Writing Center is an excellent resource for any student here at CUA. The Writing Center is committed to supporting the writing needs of students at all stages of the writing process. The Writing Center offers:

- Advice from trained consultants;
- Techniques for invention, arrangement, and style;
- Assistance for student writers of all levels; and
- Reference material such as dictionaries, thesauri, and citation formats for APA, MLA, and Chicago style guides.

If, at any point in the semester, you feel like you are struggling to draft, revise or properly reference sources in a writing assignment, make an appointment at [http://english.cua.edu/wc](http://english.cua.edu/wc). It always helps to have an extra pair of eyes.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact Disability Support Services (at 202 319-5211, room 207 Pryzbyla Center) to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. To read about the services and policies, please visit the website: [http://disabilitysupport.cua.edu](http://disabilitysupport.cua.edu)
Course Outline and Schedule

Aug. 29:
- Introduction to course

Sept. 5:
- “Scripturalization”

Sept. 12:
- Scriptures in Christianity
  - Dei Verbum; Denny and Taylor, p. 36-62.

Sept. 19:
- Scriptures in Christianity
  - Evans, “Tradition and Scripture”; Steinmetz, “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis”

Sept. 26:
- Scripture in Judaism
  - Denny and Taylor, p. 10-35. Deuteronomy, chap. 1-11; Psalms of Ascents (120-134);

Oct. 3:
- Scripture in Hinduism
  - Denny and Taylor, p. 126-147; The Rig-Veda, “Introduction,” “Creation,” “The Elements of Sacrifice,” Indra,” and “Rudra and Visnu”

Oct. 10:
- Scripture in Hinduism
  - Stoler-Miller, trans., The Bhagavad-Gita, entire.

Oct. 17:
- Scripture in Buddhism

Oct. 24:
- Scripture in Daoism
  - Denny and Taylor, p. 204-223; Tao Te Ching, entire.

Oct. 31:
- Scripture in Confucianism
  - Denny and Taylor, p. 181-203; Analects, entire.
Nov. 7:
   Scripture in Islam First draft of paper due for peer evaluation
   Denny and Taylor, p. 84-108; The Qur'an, surahs 1, 5, 36, 73, 81, 96.

Nov. 14:
   Student presentations

Nov. 21:
   Thanksgiving recess: no class

Nov. 28:
   Student presentations

Dec. 5:
   Summing up
   Schopen, “Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism.”
Research paper and presentation guidelines and tips

1. On comparison: Comparisons are difficult to do. A successful comparison accomplishes three things: (a) and (b) it provides an adequate presentation of the two items under comparison, and (c) it demonstrates why the comparison is worth undertaking. Since one may compare anything with anything else, it is important that the two items under comparison be commensurate in some way, and that the comparison has a payoff of some kind. The payoff generally takes one of two forms. Either the comparison reveals or sheds light on a larger category of which the comparisands are members, or one of the items is illuminated in new ways through comparison with the other.

2. Since our topic is scriptures, you may use some of the guiding questions of the course as a basis for comparison. Examples: What is the basis for the scriptures’ authority? Through what activities does a religious community keep scriptures meaningful? How are the scriptures used? How were they composed, compiled, codified, and canonized? Does the tradition within which the scripture resides have multiple layers of privileged texts with different levels of authority? If so, where do these scriptures stand and how are they used? Other questions may be raised as well.

3. On November 7th, students will exchange first drafts of their papers for peer evaluation. By the next class session, on November 14th, students will return papers with a one-page, double-spaced critique.

4. Presentations will last about twenty minutes, followed by ten minutes or so for questions. Plan carefully for the kind of presentation that can be done in this time frame so that it leaves the class with sense of completion and closure when you finish. You may want to rehearse the presentation ahead of time. If you plan to use technology in your presentation, arrive at the classroom early enough to set up and test your files.

4. Presentations will be graded on the following criteria:
   a. Level of research in evidence
   b. Clarity and organization
   c. Appropriate level of coverage for time frame
   d. Handling of questions

Papers will be graded according to the following criteria:
   a. Level of research in evidence (40%)
   b. Clarity of organization (40%)
   c. Adherence to proper style in text, notes, and bibliographies. (10%)
   d. Mechanics: grammar and spelling (10%)