



**JOHN FELICE  
ROME CENTER**

**THEO 107: Introduction to Religious Studies**

**John Felice Rome Center**

Fall 2026

Mondays and Wednesdays | 5:15-6:30pm

Prof. Allison Beaty

Email: TBD

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00pm (by appointment)

**Course Description**

This course offers a "roots-up" exploration of religious studies, tracing the human quest for the divine from its earliest foundations to its diverse global expressions. We begin by examining modern critiques of religion and the evolution of the sacred, moving from primitive ritual into the heart of the Roman Empire. Students will investigate how early traditions engaged with the architecture, mystery cults, and civic piety of Pagan Rome to form new religious identities. The curriculum then transitions to the expansive landscapes of Eastern spirituality, covering the core teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Following this, we move into a detailed study of the Abrahamic faiths, exploring the foundational history of Judaism, the spread of Islam, and the rich branches of the Christian heritage. This includes an examination of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions, the "lost history" of the Church in the East, and the evolution of Protestantism. Through seminal texts and site-based reflections, students will develop a nuanced understanding of religion as an intrinsic, living dimension of the human experience. This course is taught from a Christian perspective, engaging with the world's traditions through the lens of a faith.

**Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course students should be able to:

- Critically examine religious foundations and modern critiques from a Christian perspective.
- Explore the multifaceted dimensions of religious anthropology.
- Compare and contrast major religious traditions.

**Required Text / Materials**

All readings for this course will be accessible through [Sakai](#), the learning management system of Loyola University Chicago.

**Participation:** Active class participation and contribution are vital and entail both actively listening and sharing in working groups.

- **Note-Taking:** I will provide all necessary notes and information needed for the midterm and final exams. You will not need to take notes during class to have the material required for success.
- **Device Policy:** In exchange for providing these materials, use of computers and phones are prohibited in the classroom.
- **Penalty:** Use of a laptop or visible disengagement due to phone use will result in a 1% deduction from your final course grade for each occurrence.



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**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is a professional commitment. This course uses a "**Proactive Communication**" policy:

- **One Free Pass:** Every student is allowed **one (1) discretionary absence** per semester with no grade penalty or explanation required.
- **Excused Absences:** For any further absences to be excused, you **must email me before class starts**. Excused students will be assigned **mandatory makeup work** to earn their credit for that day.
- **Unexcused Absences:** Any absence that is not pre-arranged or lacks completed makeup work will result in a **2% deduction** from your final course grade.
- **Tardiness:** Arriving more than **5 minutes late** or leaving early causes a disturbance and will result in a **1% deduction** from your final grade each time.
- **Excessive Absence Limit:** In accordance with the Rome Center's mission for academic rigor, any student who misses **six (6) or more class sessions** (whether excused or unexcused) will be ineligible to pass the course.

**Artificial Intelligence Policy**

Use of or consultation with generative artificial intelligence (AI) shall be treated analogously to assistance from another person. In particular, using generative AI tools to substantially complete an assignment or exam (e.g., by entering exam or assignment questions) is not permitted. Students should acknowledge the use of generative AI, other than incidental use, and default to disclosing such assistance when in doubt. Transparency with the course instructor is essential. The instructor reserves the right to utilize the latest means of AI detection and to apply these methods to past assignments.

**Assessment Components**

- |                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| • Attendance and Participation | 30% |
| • Quizzes                      | 25% |
| • Midterm Exam                 | 15% |
| • Visit                        | 15% |
| • Final Exam                   | 15% |

**Midterm Exam and Final Exam:** The midterm and final exams are designed to evaluate your understanding of the material provided directly through the course notes. The **midterm** will be a **traditional pencil-and-paper** exam based on these shared notes. The **final** exam will be conducted as an **oral assessment**, with two possible days available for students to complete it. To ensure you are fully prepared, you will be provided with the exact list of potential questions well in advance of the final. A sign-up sheet for your preferred exam slot will be made available approximately halfway through the course.



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**Religious Site Visit & Reflection:** For the visit component of your grade, students are required to break into groups of at least three to attend a religious event or observe a practice that is outside of their own personal tradition (e.g., Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, or Hindu). This may include attending a formal ceremony, observing communal prayers, participating in a guided meditation, or witnessing specific rituals. To receive credit, your group must provide a group selfie taken at the site during the time of the visit as proof of attendance. Following the visit, each student will submit a two-page, double-spaced reflection or narration of the experience. This paper should detail what occurred and offer your personal thoughts, specifically comparing the tradition you encountered to your own religious background or lack thereof.

### **Grading**

94-100: A  
90-93: A-  
87-89: B+  
84-86: B  
80-83: B-  
77-79: C+  
74-76: C  
70-73: C-  
67-69: D+  
60-66: D  
59 or lower: F

### **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are unacceptable at the Rome Center and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: <https://catalog.luc.edu/academic-standards-regulations/undergraduate/>. You are responsible to comply with the LUC University Catalog.

### **Late or Missed Assignments & Exam Policy**

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. ***As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours, will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.***

### **Accessibility Accommodations**

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) requiring academic accommodations should contact the Academic Affairs office at the John Felice Rome Center during the first week of classes.



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**Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, Retaliation**

Moreover, the Rome Center follows Loyola's [Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, Retaliation](#) and will comply with those as indicated and instructed.

**Course Schedule**

*(This syllabus is subject to change and changes will be announced according to the class)*

**Unit 1: Foundations & The Modern Problem**

- **Aug 31 (Mon): Course Introduction**
- **Sept 2 (Wed): The Masters of Suspicion** – Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche: The psychoanalysis, ideological critique, and resentment of religion.
- **Sept 7 (Mon): Secularization & Identity** – The modern "loss of faith" and how it impacts personal and societal identity.
- **Sept 9 (Wed): Primitive Religion** – Ritual, animism, and the earliest human attempts to categorize the divine.

**Unit 2: The Roman Spirit & Transition**

- **Sept 14 (Mon): Pagan Rome I** – The Mystery Cults: Exploring the underground influence of Mithraism and Isis.
- **Sept 16 (Wed): NO CLASS – Papal Audience Visit**
- **Sept 18 (Fri): (ON-SITE: San Clemente in place of Friday class)**
- **Sept 21 (Mon): Pagan Rome II** – The State religion, the Pantheon, and the concept of civic piety.
- **Sept 23 (Wed): The Great Borrowers** – How the early Church "upcycled" Roman architecture, holidays, and symbols.

**Unit 3: Eastern Roots & Midterm**

- **Sept 28 (Mon): Introduction to Eastern Spirituality & Hinduism**
- **Sept 30 (Wed): Buddhism & Taoism**
- **Oct 5 (Mon): Midterm Review Day**
- **Oct 7 (Wed): MIDTERM EXAM**

**[Oct 9 – 18: FALL SEMESTER BREAK - No Classes]**



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**Unit 4: The Abrahamic Root & Expansion**

- **Oct 19 (Mon): Judaism I.**
- **Oct 21 (Wed): Judaism II.**
- **Oct 26 (Mon): Introduction to Christianity**
- **Oct 28 (Wed): The Lost History of Christianity** – The "Church of the East" and the spread of the Gospel into Persia, China, and India.

**Unit 5: The Great Branches & Global Landscape**

- **Nov 2 (Mon): The Roman Catholic Tradition**
- **Nov 4 (Wed): Eastern Orthodoxy**
- **Nov 9 (Mon): Protestantism**
- **Nov 11 (Wed): Christianity in America**
- **Nov 16 (Mon): Islam I.**
- **Nov 18 (Wed): Islam II.**
  
- **Nov 23 (Mon): TBD.**
- **Nov 25 (Wed): TBD.**

**[Nov 26 – 29: THANKSGIVING BREAK - No Classes]**

- **Nov 30 (Mon): Final Exam Review** – A comprehensive recap of the semester's themes.
- **Dec 2 (Wed): First Final Exam Day.**

**[Dec 7 – 10: FINAL EXAM PERIOD]**