



Medieval Religious Contexts

College of Arts & Sciences
HUMN 2023/4023, Section 101
TR 12:30-1:50, Fall 2026

Contact Information

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Course Description

This interdisciplinary course will introduce students to the early and medieval cultures of China, India, the Islamic world, Japan, Africa, Mesoamerica and South America, and Europe. During this period, these cultures were highly religious; we will therefore emphasize religious beliefs and practices. We will also look at other aspects of culture, including history, art, literature, philosophy, and music. Students will thus acquire an understanding of major world cultures during this time period, encounter different ways of viewing the world, analyze, interpret, and think critically about diverse works of art, literature, and music, and learn to take an interdisciplinary approach to the humanities by contextualizing major works. Through class participation and written reflections, students will improve their communication skills. As they come to understand the complexity of these parts of the world, students will develop increased respect for other cultures and peoples. Hopefully, they will be inspired to learn more about cultures other than our own.

THECB Core Course Objectives and Assessments for Language, Philosophy, and Culture

- Critical Thinking Skills
 - All assignments will assess critical thinking skills. The Humanities Essay Rubric will be applied to essays on the Final Essay Exam for assessment purposes.
- Communication Skills
 - To assess written communication skills, the Humanities Essay Rubric will be applied to essays on the Final Essay

Exam to evaluate readability, clarity, and the ability to support an argument with specific and accurate examples and details as evidence.

- Personal and Social Responsibility

To assess personal and social responsibility in critical thinking, the Humanities Essay Rubric will be applied to essays on the final essay exam to evaluate the ability to support an argument with specific and accurate examples and details as evidence and to evaluate different ways of viewing the world.

Course Objectives

- Study primary texts in religion, literature, philosophy, and other disciplines, as well as the historical and cultural contexts for the primary texts
- Think critically about primary works in context and in comparison with one another
- Learn interdisciplinary approaches to the study of cultures
- Learn how to discuss other cultural artefacts, including art, architecture, and music
- Gain a sense of historical chronology and the interconnectedness of various cultural trends, including the ways in which they respond to one another, as relevant
- Gain a detailed knowledge of major religions and how they are reflected in cultural artefacts
- Gain a detailed knowledge of the well-known works covered in class
- Practice expressing and supporting ideas both orally and in writing

Required Textbook

Sayre, Henry M. *The Humanities: Culture, Continuity & Change*, Vol. I, 4th ed. on Pearson's Revel Digital Learning Platform, available through D2L.

Grading

Course Requirements	Weight
Participation	2023, 10%; 4023, 5%
In-Class Writing	2023, 4023, 20% total
Pearson Quizzes and Tests	2023, 20% total; 4023, 15% total
Shared Writing	2023, 10% total; 4023, 5% total
Discussion Forum Posts	2023, 10% total; 4023, 5% total
Guest Visit Responses	2023, 4023 10% total
Final Essay Exam	2023, 20%; 4023, 15%
Research-Based Presentation	4023 only, 10%
Research Paper Draft	4023 only, 5%
Final Research Paper	4023 only, 10%

Course Requirements

Note: You do not have to do the Journal Responses in the textbook.

- **Participation:** It is essential that you participate in class discussion and activities to help you understand and master the material we cover. Please note that participation is different from attendance. Participation means talking in class.
- **In-Class Writing:** At the beginning of most classes, I will give you a brief question on or a quotation from one of the texts assigned for the day to respond to. These are low-stakes assignments, and your grade for these reflections will be check plus, check, check minus, or X, which will be entered in D2L as 100, 85, 75, or 0. Your response should demonstrate critical thinking and an understanding of the text. Spelling and grammar will not count. The number of in-class writings as listed in the Gradebook is subject to modification.
- **Pearson Quizzes, and Tests:** Please complete all of the quizzes and tests on the Revel platform by the due dates indicated there. You have three attempts for each quiz and test.
- **Shared Writing:** Please complete the Shared Writing short answer assignments on the Revel platform by the deadlines indicated there.
- **Discussion Forum Posts:** At the end of each chapter, as indicated in the course schedule and on D2L, post an image related to the material in that chapter in the relevant D2L Discussion Forum. Do not post an image that is reproduced in the chapter or that has already been posted by someone else. Your post should be at least 250 words long. Identify the image with a description and date range, say what museum it is from, explain why you chose it, compare/contrast it with one of the images in the textbook, and briefly describe its function in the relevant cultural context. Cite any sources you use in your post. Then comment briefly on at least one other student's post, indicating what you like about it. Images must come from one of the following museums: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Louvre, the National Museum of China, the Tokyo National Museum, the National Museum in Delhi, the National Museum of African Art (Smithsonian), or the Museo Nacional de Antropologia (Mexico).
- **Guest Visit Responses:** We will have five guest visits. Write a response of at least 400 words to each one. You should say what you thought was most important and/or most interesting and relate it to what you learned in the textbook and/or our classes.

- **Final Essay Exam:** The final essay exam will be comprehensive, and will be graded using the Humanities Essay Rubric on D2L.
- **Research-Based Presentation:** Upper-level students must choose a topic for a 10-15 minute presentation. The topic should complement the textbook, not repeat what it says. You will be expected to consult at least three scholarly sources, and upload your presentation to D2L. Include a bibliography in MLA or APA style in your presentation. See the presentation rubric on D2L for guidance. You should look through the textbook and submit a topic proposal to me by **Sept. 3**, and we will set an appropriate date for your presentation.
- **Research Paper:** Upper-level students will write a 5-6 page research paper on a topic of their choice, but not on the same topic as their presentation. The paper must be in MLA or APA format, including in-text citations. English majors must use MLA. If you use a cover sheet, it will not count toward the minimum length. The Works Cited page also does not count. You should watch the video on D2L on writing a research paper. See the rubric on D2L for guidance. Please submit a brief paper proposal by **Nov. 19** and a draft with a bibliography of at least three scholarly sources by **Dec. 1**. You will get credit for submitting the draft with the bibliography, and I will give you feedback. The final version is due on **Dec. 11**.

Note: The D2L Gradebook is set up for the 2000-level of this course. I will record presentation and paper grades separately, and you must contact me if you wish to know what your grade is and get my feedback. I will calculate 4000-level final grades individually at the end of the semester.

Late Work

Late assignments will be marked down one-third of a letter grade per day, including weekends and holidays (i.e., A > A-), unless you have a good reason for lateness and have preferably spoken to me about it beforehand.

Make-Up Work

If you miss an in-class writing, you may make it up in my office within one week of your return to class (or longer if you make special arrangements with me). You must take the initiative to schedule a time with me in person or by email to make up an assignment.

Attendance

You must attend class to help you master and contextualize the material. You are permitted two unexcused absences. Absences will be excused on the basis of a note from a doctor, dean, military official, or coach. However, if you believe you

have a good reason for missing class but are unable to get a written excuse, please let me know, and if your excuse is valid, I will excuse you.

Your final grade will be lowered by one point for each unexcused absence in excess of the two permitted unexcused absences. In addition, three “lates” will add up to one unexcused absence unless you provide me with a valid reason for lateness.

Any student with more than four absences for any reason may be dropped from the course.

Instructor Class Policies

- **Individual Assistance:** I will be more than happy to meet with you during my office hours or at a time arranged in advance to discuss anything at all.
- **AI Policy:** Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as academic dishonesty, the penalty for which is a zero on the assignment. However, you are permitted to use AI in an ethical manner, specifically:
 - You may use Grammarly and/or other spelling and grammar checkers, including those on Google Docs, but you may not use them to “rewrite” your paper or change the “tone” (that is, to “make it sound more academic,” etc.);
 - You may use AI to generate ideas. For example, you may put your topic into ChatGPT and ask for some ideas, and you may ask it follow-up questions.
 - If you use AI as indicated above, please state at the end of your submission how you used it.

Be aware, however, of the following drawbacks of AI:

- AI is often inaccurate. Check everything you find through AI with other sources;
- AI tends to “hallucinate” sources—that is, it is known to come up with sources that do not actually exist;
- AI tends to confirm what you already believe (“confirmation bias”);
- Grammarly and similar programs may give you suggestions that actually change the meaning of what you wrote, so always check it carefully;

- Similarly, do not simply accept everything Grammarly suggests. You will not learn anything that way. Go over each suggested change and make sure you understand it and agree with it before you accept it;
- AI is NOT private. Do not put any personal information into AI chats.
- **Cellphones:** You may not use your cellphone in class except to consult the texts we are discussing, or to google a question we cannot answer. If I see you using a cellphone or a computer in class for any other reason, I may give you an unexcused absence for the day without warning.
- **Food:** In accordance with the building policy, you may bring only bottled water to class.
- **Computers:** You may not use a computer in class except to consult the text.
- **Attention:** Please be alert and do not lay your head down on your desk during class, or I may mark you late or absent without warning.
- **Class Dismissal:** Please do not start to pack up your things or leave until I have dismissed the class. If you believe I have gone over the allotted time, please raise your hand and let me know.
- **Email Communication:** I will communicate with you through D2L email. You should set up D2L so that D2L emails are delivered to your preferred email account. You are responsible for checking your email or D2L daily for any reminders, clarifications, or other communications from me.
- **Safe Zone Statement:** This class is a “safe zone” in which all students will be treated and will treat one another equally, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Diversity of thought is encouraged.

Extra Credit

In the interest of fairness, I generally do not give extra credit assignments because some students may be unable to attend extracurricular events. If the occasion arises, I may give an extra credit writing assignment that everyone can do.

Important Dates

- Deadline to file for December graduation: Sept. 21
- Last Day to drop with a grade of “W”: Nov. 23
- See also: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Recording Classes

Recording classes is generally prohibited without the professor's explicit permission. Such recordings, when permitted, are for personal use only and may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published without the professor's prior consent. Some faculty may not permit recordings of their classes. When it is feasible and appropriate, students may record classes to accommodate disabilities under the Americans With Disabilities Act, with prior approval of Disability Support Services. Such recordings may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published.

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the [Office of Student Conduct](#).

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exists in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Emergency Aid Resources for Basic Needs

Unexpected life circumstances can affect anyone. If you are experiencing challenges meeting basic needs—such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, technology, textbooks or other life necessities, resources may be available to help. Visit the [Student Emergency Support and Resources webpage](#) to learn more, and explore emergency support opportunities through MSU and how to access them. For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Affairs: Clark Student Center #108, (940) 397-7500, student.affairs@mstuexas.edu.

MSU Policies

See the [Student Handbook](#)

College Policies

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “Run. Hide. Fight.” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#).

Course Schedule

Note: Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the instructor's discretion. You must keep up on due dates for all assignments following this Schedule.

Aug. 25 Introduction

Chinese Civilization

27 Early Chinese Culture, The Shang Dynasty

Background Reading: Ch. 7

Primary Text: *The Book of Songs*

Sept. 1 The Zhou Dynasty, The Qin Dynasty

Background Reading: Ch. 7

Primary Text: *The Dao De Jing* (including additional poems on D2L)

3 The Han Dynasty

Background Reading: Ch. 7

Primary Texts: *Confucius, *The Analects* (including additional excerpts posted on D2L); Han poetry

8 The Tang Dynasty, The Song Dynasty, The Yuan Dynasty

Background Reading: Ch. 11

Primary Texts: Li Bai; *Du Fu (including additional poems posted on D2L)

10 Guest Visitors: Dr. Meng Yu and Dr. Xu Yang

The Ming Dynasty

Background Reading: Ch. 18

Indian Civilization

15 Ancient India, Hinduism and the Vedic Tradition

Background Reading: Ch. 7

Primary Text: *The Bhagavad Gita*

Discussion Post: China

Guest Visit Response 1 Due

17 Buddhism: The Path of Truth

Background Reading: Ch. 7

Shared Writing: The Silk Road

Primary Text: *The Dhammapada*

22 Guest Visitors: Dr. Lopamudra Roychoudhuri and Dr. Dittika Gupta

Buddhist Art and Architecture, Hindu Art and Architecture

Background Reading: Ch. 11

Chapter 7 Quizzes Due

Primary Texts: *Akka Mahadevi, poems (on D2L)

Islamic Civilization

24 The Rise of Islam

Background Reading: Ch. 9

Discussion Post: India

Primary Texts: The Qur'an; The Hadith

29 The Spread of Islam

Background Reading: Ch. 9

Primary Text: *The Thousand and One Nights*

Guest Visit Response 2 Due

Oct. 1 Islam in Africa and Spain

Background Reading: Ch. 9

Primary Texts: Rumi, poetry

6 Guest Visitors: Yoseph Helal, Dr. Hamidreza Moeiniasi, and Dr. Mohsen Jalali

The Arts of the Islamic World, Islamic India

Background Reading: Ch. 9 and 18

Shared Writing: Islam

Primary Texts: Nezami, *Haft Paykar*; Jumi, "Seduction of Yusuf and Zulaykha"

Japanese Civilization

8 Japan and the Role of Myth in Cultural Life, The Heian Period

Background Reading: Ch. 1 and 11

Discussion Post: Islamic Civilization

Chapter 9 Quizzes Due

Primary Texts: Murasaki Shikibu, *Diaries*; Ki no Tomonori, "This Perfectly Still"; Sei Shonagon, *The Pillow Book*

13 The Kamakura Period through the Azuchi-Momoyama Period

Background Reading: Ch. 11 and 18

Primary Text: Zeami Motokiyo, *Semimaru*

Guest Visit Response 3 Due

Mesoamerican Civilizations

15 Sacred Sites: The Example of the Americas, The Olmec, The Zapotecs, Teotihuacán

Background Reading: Ch. 1 and 11

Discussion Post: Japan

20 The Maya, The Toltecs and the Aztecs

Background Reading: Ch. 11

Primary Texts: *The Popol Vuh*; *Mesoamerican poems (on D2L)

South American Civilizations

22 The Moche, The Inca, The Spanish in the Americas

Background Reading: Ch. 11 and 18

Primary Text: Bernadino de Sahagún, *History of the Things of New Spain*

African Civilizations

27 The Cultures of Africa, West African Culture and the Portuguese

Background Reading: Ch. 11 and 18

Shared Writing: Cultural Sophistication

Early Medieval Europe

29 Anglo-Saxon Culture

Background Reading: Ch. 10

Chapter 11 and 18 Quizzes Due

Discussion Post: Mesoamerican, South American, and African Civilizations

Primary Text: *Beowulf*

Nov. 3 Carolingian Culture, Capetian France and the Norman Conquest

Background Reading: Ch. 10

Primary Texts: *The Song of Roland*; Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*

5 Guest Visitor: Dr. Tiffany Ziegler

The Crusades

Background Reading: Ch. 10

Primary Text: *Deeds of the Franks*, "The Fall of Jerusalem"

10 The Romanesque, Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Art of Courtly Love

Background Reading: Ch. 10

Primary Texts: Bernard de Ventadour, Comtesse de Dia, and Marie de France, poetry

Guest Visit Response 4 Due

The Gothic Style

12 Saint-Denis and the Gothic Cathedral

Background Reading: Ch. 12

Chapter 10 Quizzes Due

Shared Writing: Courtly Love

17 Guest Visitor: Dr. Tyler Williams

The Rise of the University

Background Reading: Ch. 12

Primary Text: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

4013 Paper Proposal Due

19 The Radiant Style, The Gothic in Italy

Background Reading: Ch. 12

Shared Writing: Sainte-Chapelle

Discussion Post: Medieval Europe

Primary Texts: Saint Francis of Assisi, "Canticle of the Sun"; Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*

Siena and Florence in the Fourteenth Century

24 Siena and Florence, Painting: A Growing Naturalism, Dante and the Rise of Vernacular Literature

Background Reading: Ch. 13

Chapter 12 Quizzes Due

Primary Text: Dante, *Inferno*

Guest Visit Response 5 Due

26 Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 1 The Black Death and Its Literary Aftermath

Background Reading: Ch. 13

4023 Paper Draft Due

Primary Texts: Boccaccio, *Decameron*; Petrarch, Sonnet 134

3 Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Women in Late Medieval Society

Background Reading: Ch. 13

Chapter 13 Quizzes Due

Primary Texts: Chaucer; Christine de Pizan

10 Final Exam, 10:30-12:30

4023 Final Paper Due, 11:59 p.m.