

# **POHI 102: Wars, Gods, and Revolutions**

## **Woodbury University - Spring 2025**

Department of Politics and History

Class time: MW 9:00 – 10:15 BB 104

*Dr. Nathaniel Greely*

E-Mail: nathaniel.greely@woodbury.edu

Office Hours: MW 10:30-11:30am Liberal Arts and Sciences Building

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines the history, political context, and philosophical content of many (but not all) of the world's great religions, including Judaism, Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Mayan Religion, Christianity, and Islaam. There are many parallels in the development of religion across disparate regions, though the effects often differ depending on the political context. And although these religions have been used to consolidate and preserve political power, they have just as often served to undermine and overthrow political regimes in pursuit of their spiritual goals.

Religion is central to many people's lives, and this will likely be the case for many of us in this course. I will do my best to be ecumenical in my approach, reporting the best account our historians have been able to produce on matters that are deeply personal, ancient, and often mysterious. I do not intend, and I trust no one in the class will intend, to insult or otherwise demean anyone's religious faith. Hopefully we can all learn something that will deepen our various approaches to matters of spirituality.

**PREREQUISITES:** None.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the end of the class, it is expected that students will be able to:

- Analyze political situations clearly and convincingly with one or more different political ideologies and theories
- Demonstrate significant global awareness of multiple cultural, historical, and political traditions in the modern world
- Discuss intelligently the philosophical and historical origins of political and legal traditions
- Demonstrate a fluency in vocabulary relevant to the study of history and politics and a familiarity with world geography.

### **Assessments:**

#### **Participation and Online Discussion – 15%**

Students are expected to discuss the readings in class and to post once a week to a discussion board on Moodle. The goal of the online discussion is not simply to summarize the reading, but to spark original ideas that might be developed into a term paper. Feel free to object to one of the claims in the reading or lecture. Or if something is unclear to you, ask a question. If you agree with some claim in the readings or lecture and think they could be extended in interesting ways, explain.

#### **In-Class Quizzes – 15%**

There will be five in-class quizzes, alternating between multiple choice and short essay formats. They will be designed to be quite easy so long as you are keeping up with the readings and lectures.

### **Midterm Exam – 15%**

The midterm will consist of two short in-class essays on topics from the first half of the course. Four prompts will be provided several days before. You may choose any two to write on. There is no length requirement so long as you answer all parts of the prompts thoroughly, but a guideline is roughly 1-2 pages per essay (2-4 pages for the whole exam). The midterm will be in class 3/24.

### **Essay Proposal – 10%**

Students will give a brief (5-10 minute) presentation in front of the class, explaining their idea for their term paper. I and your colleagues will provide feedback to help develop that idea. The presentations will happen over several days and will resemble an academic conference. Essay proposals will be in class 4/7 and 4/9.

### **Essay Draft – 15%**

The most important part of writing an essay is revision. To that end, you will turn in an early draft of your term paper via Moodle. I will provide comments on how to improve the draft. So long as the submission is a complete essay (5-7 pages, roughly) that exhibits an attempt at an argument for an original thesis, you will receive full points. The essay draft will be due on Moodle 4/23 at 11:59pm.

### **Essay Final Draft – 15%**

A polished version of your essay will be due at the end of the semester. The essay should be in PDF format, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, roughly 5-7 pages. If you use sources other than the course text, you may cite them in whatever format you prefer, but outside sources are not required. The final draft will be due on Moodle 5/5 at 11:59pm.

### **Final Exam – 15%**

The final exam will be similar in format to the midterm. You may choose two write on any two of four prompts provided several days earlier. The prompts will be on topics from the second half of the course. The exam will be written in class, 1-2 pages per essay (2-4 pages total). The final exam will be in class 5/5.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Armstrong, Karen. (1993). *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. (Provided on Moodle)

Goldstone, Jack A. (2014). *Revolutions: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford Press.  
ISBN: 978-0-199-85850-7 (paperback)

Other short readings will be provided on Moodle

## **CLASS SCHEDULE – Spring 2025**

1/13 – Course Introduction  
 1/15 – Polytheism; Reading: Armstrong pp. 1-27  
 1/20 – Martin Luther King Day – No Class  
 1/22 - The Axial Age; Reading; Armstrong pp. 28-39  
 1/27 – Buddhism; Watch Video on the Life of Siddhartha Gautama  
 1/29 - Plato and Aristotle; No reading  
 2/3 – Review and Quiz 1  
 2/5 – Mayan Religion; Reading: McKillop pp. 204-226  
 2/10 – Taoism; Reading: Wong pp. 40-56  
 2/12 - Monotheism; Reading; Armstrong pp. 40-78  
 2/17 – President’s Day – No Class  
 2/19 – Ancient Revolutions; Reading: Goldstone pp. 41-51  
 2/24 – Review and Quiz 2  
 2/26 – God Incarnate; Reading: Armstrong pp. 79-106  
 3/3 – Watch the film *Agora*  
 3/5 – *Agora* Cont.; Christian Doctrine; Reading: Armstrong pp. 107-131  
 3/10 – Spring Break – No Class  
 3/12 – Spring Break – No Class  
 3/17 – Islam; Reading: Armstrong pp. 132-169  
 3/19 – Review and Quiz 3  
 3/24 – Midterm Exam  
 3/26 – Cesar Chavez Day – No Class  
 3/31 - The God of the Philosophers; Reading: Armstrong pp. 170-208  
 4/2 – Revolutions of the Renaissance and Reformation; Reading: Goldstone pp 52-60.  
 4/7 – Presentations  
 4/9 – Presentations  
 4/14 – A God for Reformers; Reading: Armstrong pp. 257-292  
 4/16 – Enlightenment; Reading: Armstrong pp. 293-345  
 4/21 – Constitutional Revolutions; Reading: Goldstone, pp. 61-73  
 4/23 – The Death of God?; Reading: Armstrong pp. 346-376; Essay Draft Due  
 4/28 – Review and Quiz 4  
 5/5 – Final Exam; Final Draft of Essay Due

## Grading

Numeric	Grade	Numeric	Grade
Over 93%	A	73% to 76%	C
90% to 92%	A-	70% to 72%	C-
87% to 89%	B+	67% to 69%	D+
83% to 86%	B	63% to 66%	D
80% to 82%	B-	60% to 62%	D-
77% to 79%	C+	<60%	F

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Woodbury University is committed to building a university that values student, staff and faculty engagement in addressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusiveness because this is an essential part of an experience-centered education. We create an inclusive climate because we know that the richness of different experiences and perspectives is intrinsically valuable and vital to advancing innovation, critical thinking, solving complex problems, and creating a vibrant academic community. We seek to create a campus culture with this wide range of perspectives and experiences by recruiting and encouraging diverse candidates to apply as students, staff and faculty, including people of any race, color, creed, national origin, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, disability, religion or military status.

**OSD Accommodation:**

Woodbury University is committed to making reasonable accommodations to assist individuals with disabilities in reaching their academic potential. Students desiring accommodations due to a physical, learning or psychological disability must first complete an Accommodations Request Form, which can be downloaded from <http://go.woodbury.edu>, and found under "Academic Resources." Accommodations cannot be granted prior to the instructor's receipt of a Notification of Special Needs Release Form from the Disabilities Coordinator. Accommodations are never provided retroactively. (For more information, contact Dr. Teresa Young, Disabilities Coordinator in the Whitten Center (818) 394-3345.)

**Religious Accommodation:**

If you require any accommodation on religious grounds, please alert me in writing as soon as possible.

**Academic Integrity:**

All instances of academic offences including plagiarism, cheating on exams, and multiple submission of work, will be handled in accordance with official Woodbury University policy, which can be found in the Student Handbook on the University website Please read the policy and ensure that you understand it.