

RELS 3 Course Outline as of Fall 2025**CATALOG INFORMATION**

Dept and Nbr: RELS 3 Title: HISTORY OF GOD

Full Title: History of God

Last Reviewed: 1/27/2025

Units		Course Hours per Week		Nbr of Weeks	Course Hours Total	
Maximum	3.00	Lecture Scheduled	3.00	17.5	Lecture Scheduled	52.50
Minimum	3.00	Lab Scheduled	0	6	Lab Scheduled	0
		Contact DHR	0		Contact DHR	0
		Contact Total	3.00		Contact Total	52.50
		Non-contact DHR	0		Non-contact DHR	0

Total Out of Class Hours: 105.00

Total Student Learning Hours: 157.50

Title 5 Category: AA Degree Applicable

Grading: Grade or P/NP

Repeatability: 00 - Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

Also Listed As:

Formerly: HUMAN 10.3

Catalog Description:

Students will be introduced to the origins and evolution of monotheism from ancient Egypt and Canaan, through ancient Israel and its variations in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Prerequisites/Corequisites:**Recommended Preparation:**

Course Completion of RELS 1 and Course Completion of ENGL C1000 or equivalent

Limits on Enrollment:**Schedule of Classes Information:**

Description: Students will be introduced to the origins and evolution of monotheism from ancient Egypt and Canaan, through ancient Israel and its variations in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (Grade or P/NP)

Prerequisites/Corequisites:

Recommended: Course Completion of RELS 1 and Course Completion of ENGL C1000 or equivalent

Limits on Enrollment:

Transfer Credit: CSU;UC.

Repeatability: Two Repeats if Grade was D, F, NC, or NP

ARTICULATION, MAJOR, and CERTIFICATION INFORMATION:

AS Degree:	Area		Effective:	Inactive:
	E	Humanities	Fall 2025	
	L3	Arts and Humanities		
	E	Humanities	Fall 1983	Fall 2025
CSU GE:	Transfer Area		Effective:	Inactive:
	C2	Humanities	Fall 1983	
IGETC:	Transfer Area		Effective:	Inactive:
	3B	Humanities	Fall 1981	
CSU Transfer:	Transferable	Effective:	Fall 1983	Inactive:
UC Transfer:	Transferable	Effective:	Fall 1983	Inactive:

CID:

Certificate/Major Applicable:

Major Applicable Course

COURSE CONTENT

Student Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Explain texts of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scripture in terms of their historical and social context, and relationship with the indigenous religions of the Ancient Near East.
2. Use the vocabulary of critical scholarship to evaluate the monotheistic religions' claims, rituals, and narratives.
3. Demonstrate a sensitive and detailed understanding of the diversity within and among the monotheistic religious traditions.

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Discover and describe the complex evolution of Judaism and Islam and their interaction with Christianity.
2. Discover and describe the internecine conflicts and variations in the histories of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
3. Identify sources for specific religious concepts, stories and rituals in the monotheistic religions in Egyptian, Canaanite, Mesopotamian, Hittite, and Iranian indigenous religions.
4. Identify seminal thinkers within the context of the course and the unique characteristics of their thought within the historic circumstances and literary understandings of their own time.
5. Analyze and evaluate persistent religious themes and controversies within rival hermeneutics of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.
6. Trace the historic and religious sources of contemporary values and belief systems.

Topics and Scope:

- I. The Ancient Near Eastern Origins of "Western" or "Monotheistic" Religions

- A. Egyptian "monotheism" under Akhenaten
- B. The Divine Council of the autochthonous Canaanites
- II. The Evolution and Diversity of Pre-Exilic Israelite Religion
 - A. Yahwistic monolatry
 - B. Polytheism and syncretism in Biblical Israel
- III. The Emergence of Judaism After the Exile
 - A. The evolution of rabbinic Judaism: temple to Torah
 - B. Hellenistic Judaism: allegorizing the God of Torah
 - C. Other sects and movements such as the Essenes, apocalyptic
 - D. The development of the sacred texts: Tanak, Mishnah, Talmuds and Midrashim
- IV. The Origins and Early Development of Christianity
 - A. The diversity of early Jesus movements
 - B. Orthodoxy and heresy: for example, Gnosticism, Arianism, Ebionitism, Modalism
 - C. Rival Jewish and Christian hermeneutics
 - D. Christian apologetics and polemics
 - E. The triumph of orthodoxy under Constantine and his successors
 - F. The Ecumenical Councils: the Trinity and Christology
 - G. The establishment of the papacy and East-West conflict
- V. The Origins and Early Development of Islam
 - A. The Arabian context
 - B. Muhammad and the Quran, thoroughgoing monotheism
 - C. The evolution of Muhammad's prophetic career: Mecca to Medina and back
 - D. The Rashidun: first four Caliphs and success of Islam's conquest
 - E. The Hadith: the evolution of tradition and Muslim practice
 - F. The Sufis and the relationship between mysticism and orthodoxy
 - G. The House of Islam as empire: the sharia, education, science and culture
 - H. The dhimmis: Jews and Christians under Islam
- VI. The Middle Ages: Interaction and Conflict
 - A. The Crusades
 - B. The Inquisition
 - C. The God of the philosophers: scholasticism and the sharing of scholarship in Maimonides, Ibn Rushd and Thomas
 - D. Theological interaction with the Renaissance
- VII. The Protestant Reformation
- VIII. The Enlightenment: Science and Historical-Critical Biblical Scholarship
 - A. The trial of Galileo
 - B. The excommunication of Spinoza
- IX. Modernity and the Rise of Fundamentalisms and Ultra-Orthodoxy
- X. Contemporary Issues such as Ecology, Economic Policy, and Social Justice

Assignment:

1. Weekly reading assignments of between 20 and 50 pages
2. Exams (2 - 5)
3. Quiz(zes) (0 - 10)
4. (1-3) essays or response papers (short papers of 500-1000 words)
5. A research paper of 1500-2000 words
6. Final exam (objective, essay, or a combination)
7. Additional assignments as determined by instructor may include
 - a. Oral presentations
 - b. Reports on interviews
 - c. Museum visits

d. Field trips

Methods of Evaluation/Basis of Grade:

Writing: Assessment tools that demonstrate writing skills and/or require students to select, organize and explain ideas in writing.

1-3 short papers; research paper

Writing
30 - 60%

Problem Solving: Assessment tools, other than exams, that demonstrate competence in computational or non-computational problem solving skills.

None

Problem solving
0 - 0%

Skill Demonstrations: All skill-based and physical demonstrations used for assessment purposes including skill performance exams.

None

Skill Demonstrations
0 - 0%

Exams: All forms of formal testing, other than skill performance exams.

Exams, quiz(zes), final exam

Exams
25 - 50%

Other: Includes any assessment tools that do not logically fit into the above categories.

Classroom participation, additional assignments (if assigned)

Other Category
10 - 20%

Representative Textbooks and Materials:

New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha. 5th ed. 2018. (classic).

God: A Human History. Aslan, Reza. Penguin Random House. 2017. (classic).

Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict. Norenzayan, Ara. Princeton University Press. 2015. (classic).

The Evolution of God. Wright, Robert. Back Bay Books. 2009. (classic).

Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation. Ali, Ahmed. Princeton University Press. 2001. (classic).

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: The Classical Texts and Their Interpretation (3 volumes). Peters, F.E. Princeton University Press. 1990. (classic).