Course Description
An introductory study of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These traditions share much in common, for each have their roots in the Hebrew Scriptures, each is monotheistic, and each has had a formative impact on global culture, particularly on the cultures of the Mediterranean world, Europe, and the Americas. In the context of these and other commonalities, we will explore the practices, ideas, and histories that make each tradition distinctive; we will consider their interactions with each other; and we will explore basic approaches to the study of religion.

Course Requirements and Grading
1) Attendance/Participation (10% of final grade)
You are expected to attend all class sessions having completed the assigned reading and prepared to participate in all class activities. More than one or two absences or late arrivals will have a negative impact on your final grade.

2) Group Work (25% of final grade)
At the beginning of the semester, you will be assigned to a small group of 4-5 students with whom you will meet regularly during the semester for Friday discussion groups and for preparing an in-class presentation at the end of the semester. The presentation will involve researching and reporting on a contemporary event, debate, or issue that involves one or more of the religious traditions we are studying. Your group will present this work to the class at one of the classes sessions of the last two weeks of the semester. Peer evaluation will be significant part of your group work grade.

3) Papers (25% of final grade)
Three papers will be assigned in the course of the semester. The first will be a summary of one of the early chapters in the Peters book (due Feb. 6), the second will discuss a book review of Karen Armstrong’s Muhammed (due Feb. 25), and the third will explore Rowan Williams’s Christ on Trial (due April 21).

4) Midterm (15%) and Final Exam (25%)
The final is scheduled for 9:00 am on Thursday, May 15.

Reading and Assignment Schedule
Week 1: In the Beginning. . .
Jan 21: Intro
Jan 23: Bruce Feiler, Abraham, 3-35  
F. E. Peters, The Children of Abraham, 1-6  
Corrigan, et al. Readings in Judaism, Christianity and  
Islam, 1-6  

Week 2: Abraham  
Jan. 28: Feiler, 36-110  
The Bible, Gen. 15-25  
Jan. 30: Feiler, 113-159  
Feb. 1: Discussion Meetings  
Feiler, 160-220  

Week 3: Historical Origins: Judaism and Christianity  
Feb. 4: Peters, 6-20  
JCI, 7-17 (to 1.2D)  
Feb. 6: Peters, 21-30  
JCI, 23-31  
Paper #1 Due  
Feb. 8: Peters, 31-40  

Week 4: Historical Origins: Islam  
Feb. 11: Karen Armstrong, Muhammed, Chaps. Intro-Chap 2  
Feb. 13: Armstrong, Chaps. 3-4  
JCI, 67-70  
Feb. 15: Discussion Meetings  
Armstrong, Chap. 5  

Week 5: Community and Law  
Feb. 18: Peters, 41-66  
Feb. 20: Peters, 67-84  
Feb. 22: Video: Inside Mecca  

Week 6: Scriptures and Traditions  
Feb. 25: Peters, 85-94  
JCI, 17-22, 157-160 (through 7.1E), 164-7, 170-82 (to 8.5), 184-6  
Paper #2 Due  
Feb. 27: Peters, 94-102  
JCI, 70-86, 187-202  
Feb. 29: Discussion Meetings  
New Testament, The Gospels of Mark and John  

Week 7: Worship  
Mar. 3: Peters, 103-115
Mar. 5: JCI, 203-230, 234-249
Mar. 7: Discussion Meetings
   View before class: A Life Apart

Week 8: God
Mar. 10: Peters, 138-166
       JCI, 87-99
Mar. 12: JCI, 103-23, 126-46
       Peters, 167-72
Mar. 14: Midterm Exam

Week 9: Life of the Spirit
March 31: Rowan Williams, Christ on Trial, ix-48
       Peters, 116-137
Apr. 2: Rowan Williams, 49-94
Apr. 4: Discussion Meetings
       Rowan Williams, 95-finish

Week 10: Reformations and Modernities
Apr. 7: JCI, 263-5, 317-27
Apr. 9: JCI, 278-285, 337-356
Apr. 11: JCI, 286-304, 357-376

Week 11: Contemporary Realities
Apr. 14: Discussion Meetings
       View: Nazrah
Apr. 16: Halevi, Forward-Chap. 1
Apr. 18: Halevi, Chaps. 2-3

Week 12: Contemporary Realities
Apr. 21: Halevi, Chaps. 4-5
       Paper #3 Due
Apr. 23: Halevi, finish
Apr. 25: Group Presentations

Week 13: Group Presentations

Week 14: Group Presentations and Class Summary

*Readings on reserve

Texts for Purchase at Bookstore
Karen Armstrong, Muhammed: A Prophet for Our Time
Discussion Meeting Guidelines

Early in the semester, the class will be divided into six groups of four or five students. On the Fridays (and one Monday) designated above as “Discussion Meetings,” one of these groups will meet together with me for a “Seminar” discussion of assigned material and the other groups will meet individually for “Small Group” discussion of the same material, with one member of each group assigned to be the discussion leader. Each student will be required to lead one Small Group discussion.

1) Seminars
When your group is participating in the Seminar discussion with me, you are expected to come to class having written a one-page reflection paper exploring an issue from the reading that you think would be worth discussing further with the group. It might consist of developing briefly a question you have about the reading, identifying and reflecting on a point in the reading you find particularly illuminating or provocative, or relating the reading in some way to other issues we have treated in the class. Your reflection papers and your participation in the seminar meeting will count for about 1/4 of your “Group” grade.

2) Small Groups
Each member of your small group must act as leader of one Small Group discussion session. Your group should decide on a leadership schedule and then submit that schedule to me. You should also decide how you are going to contact each other to arrange meetings. Small groups can meet anywhere that is convenient for the members.

The leader should take responsibility for initiating conversation, guiding it in constructive ways, and facilitating everyone’s participation. The leader should prepare an agenda for the meeting. This means that he or she should carefully do the assigned reading and then prepare several written questions that will help the group to productively discuss and assess the readings. Generally, it is a good idea to begin devote some time in discussion to the interpretation and evaluation of the reading. On some days, this will take all your time. But you might also want to consider the implications of the assigned reading for your own experience, current events, things that you are learning in other courses, etc.. Leaders may also want to help direct the group’s attention to issues or questions that have come up in previous meetings. Near the end of the meeting, it would be a good idea to ask the members of your group to help you identify the three to five main points they think most important for the report each group leader must submit to me after the discussion.
Your report should take the form of a 2-3 page report of the main issues your group discussed (your report should indicate who was present for the discussion). The summary should capture the progression of the discussion, rather than simply list memorable comments or observations. Even if the discussion was casual, the report should not be. The leader’s responsibility is to analyze the discussion so that you can convey its critical and constructive substance. Please submit your reports to me or to my mailbox in Steiner no later than Monday’s class following the discussion.

Summary: Discussion Meeting Requirements
• for both “Seminar” and “Small Group,” all students are required to read the assignment/watch the film in advance and come to the session ready to participate in discussion of the material.
• For your “Seminar” meeting with me, you are required to bring to class a one-page reflection paper.
• As a “Small Group” leader you are required to email your agenda to me in advance of your meeting and to hand in a report of the meeting by the Monday following the discussion.