



**School of Theology & Christian Ministry
Spring 2025**

Theology 3020 / The World's Faith Traditions

Three Units

MWF 12:15 – 1:10, Wesleyan Center Seminar Room

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 7, 10:30 – 1:00 pm

**"The world's religious history is a matter of the life of human beings –
with the abstractions that we concoct derivative and at best secondary."
Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *What is Scripture?***

Point Loma Nazarene University Mission:

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

**Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education
in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged,
character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith.**

**Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community
where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.**

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Instructor title and name:	Michael Lodahl, Ph.D
Phone:	858 405 3184
Email:	mlodahl@pointloma.edu
Office location and hours:	Smee Hall 206 Meetings by appointment only arranged either in person or via email address above.

Course Textbooks:

Kupperman, Joel. *Classic Asian Philosophy: A Guide to the Essential Texts*

Lodahl, Michael. *Claiming Abraham: Reading the Bible and the Qur'an Side-by-Side*

Muesse, Mark W. *The Age of the Sages: The Axial Age in Asia and the Near East*

Catalogue

Description: This course introduces students to the convictions, writings, and practices of people in the Abrahamic (Jewish, Islamic, Sikh) and Asian (Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian) traditions from a Wesleyan theological perspective.

Objective: To introduce students to the major religious traditions – with a decided emphasis upon Asian traditions – as determined by numbers of practicing adherents, in the world today. We will accomplish this through careful study of holy texts, convictions, practices and institutions of the adherents of these traditions, as well as by onsite visits to local worship and/or meditation gatherings.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to

- identify the major religious, philosophical or theological themes in the dominant expressions of the great world religious traditions named above (under 'Catalogue Description'), particularly of those of India and China;
- describe the historical developments, key thinkers and streams of influence that have contributed to each of the above traditions;
- describe and evaluate the variety of interpretations that each of these traditions has offered of one another; and
- describe and analyze the leading Christian theological interpretations of other world religious traditions, including and especially those named above.
- **explain the intellectual integrity, rich diversity, and coherence of the Christian tradition in its historical and global development.**

Regarding this last learning outcome immediately above, one of the student's three visits / reflection papers will arise from **a synagogue visit** (either one arranged by the professor for a class visit for those able to attend, or else on the student's own) and conversation with the synagogue rabbi and at least one member of the congregation. Specific instructions:

Assignment: Participation in a Religious Experience Different from One's Own Tradition (for Theology 3020, a synagogue visit)

1. Students will choose a group activity to attend with a synagogue (either Reform, Conservative, or Reconstructionist) community. This may be a worship service, prayer meeting, meal, fasting service, vigil, demonstration, special religious observance (like a wedding or funeral) or any other similar activity approved by the instructor.
2. Students will complete an assigned reading, watch a video or listen to a podcast related to their chosen activity as assigned by the instructor.
3. Students will write a reflection essay about their experience that both engages the assigned reading/video/podcast and addresses the following prompts:
 - a. Give a general description of the event, including the gathering space, the community, and the activity in which you participated;
 - b. Describe your feelings about participating in the activity. What emotions did you feel?
What do they tell you about the community in which you participated?
What do they tell you about yourself?

- c. Identify similarities with what you experienced and the practices in your own religious community. What do these similarities tell you about the central purpose of Jewish gatherings like the one you attended? Does this experience teach you anything about what it means to be faithfully Christian?
- d. Identify differences with what you experienced and those of your own religious community.
- e. What is the chief function or purpose of the practices distinct to your own religious community?
- f. Describe how the practices distinct to the community you visited (might) fulfill the same purposes, although in different ways, of those practiced in your community?
- g. How did you perceive and/or experience God's presence in the meeting you attended?
- h. What questions do you still have about your experience?

Course Requirements:

- 1) Consistent class / field trip attendance and participation. *You will receive 5 attendance/participation points for each session attended; after four absences, you are eligible for dismissal from the course. After eight absences, dismissal is automatic.*
- 2) Careful and disciplined reading of assigned texts for each class session. This will be determined by the quality of interaction / discussion which you are able to contribute to the life of the class, and by any unannounced quizzes.
- 3) Three field trips to local sites of corporate worship, meditation, or religious practice. At least three such visits will be scheduled by the professor as potential class "field trips," but apart from those the student will be on her or his own to locate and attend such sites. If done apart from the class visits, please secure approval from the professor beforehand.

4) Reflection / response papers (3-4 pages typewritten) on all field trips. *These will be due within ten days of the visit.* No papers will be accepted after this span of time.

5) One final, cumulative exam, essay in nature. It will involve text recognition and commentary.

Course Grade: Will be determined on the basis of the final exam (18%), midterm exam (12%), field trip visits and response papers (15% each), and class attendance / participation, including quizzes and film notes (25%).

Final Examination Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

Content Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In *The World's Faith Traditions*, all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include unusual religious ideas and practices (some sexual in nature), visiting the worship or meditation gatherings of non-Christian religious adherents, willingness to converse with such people without aggressive evangelism, and the nature and extent of salvation. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of how educated and faithful Christians might

think about, and interact with, people of other great faith traditions in the world. I am here to support you throughout your learning in this course.

On Attendance

Each class day attendance is worth 5 quiz points; quizzes will vary in point total, roughly anywhere between another 5 and 15 points on any given day. Extra-credit points are added to the attendance / participation / quizzes category.

On Punctuality

On any writing assignment, if it is handed in later in the day than at classtime of the due date, it will receive a 5 point reduction (out of a scale of 100). For each day the paper is late thereafter, it will receive another 7 point reduction.

On Writing:

I cannot emphasize enough that grammar, spelling and punctuation all play a *highly* critical role in my evaluation of all your papers – and that you are *strongly encouraged* to solicit the benefits of at least one competent proofreader for your assigned papers.

Additionally, the School of Theology and Christian Ministry at PLNU is committed to the equality of women and men, including in the exercise of the gifts and graces of ministry in local church congregations. Recognizing that people have often used language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, the SOTCM urges students, faculty and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions and in written work.

Spiritual Care*

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If students have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the Office of Spiritual Life and Formation.

State Authorization

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on State Authorization to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See Academic Policies for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy*

You are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g, ChatGPT, iA Writer, Marmot, Botowski) to generate ideas, but you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will issue an academic accommodation plan ("AP") to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not wish to utilize some or all of the elements of their AP in that course.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free.

Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

You may report an incident(s) using the [Bias Incident Reporting Form](#).

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/title-ix.

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment.

If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

Course Calendar

Jan 13 – Introduction of ourselves and of the course; Acts 17 and Upanishads

Jan 15 – *Sages* preface (including timeline) & pages 1-6

Jan 17 – *Sages* 9-19; Vedic sacrificial texts

Jan 22 – *Sages* 39-57

Jan 24 – *Sages* 59-73

Jan 27 – *Sages* 75-95

Jan 29 – Lodahl returning from a funeral in AZ. Video material to be assigned.

Jan 31 – *Classic Asian Philosophy* preface & 1-22

- **Sunday morning, Feb 2: Tentative visit with the Vedanta Society in North Park.**

Feb 3 – *Classic* 43-59. *Bhagavad Gita* selections

- **Monday night, Feb. 3 or Tuesday night, Feb 4, 7:15-8:15 p.m., *Bhagavad Gita* class at Krishna Temple in Pacific Beach.**

Feb 5 – *Classic* 23-42 97-114

Feb 7 – *Sages* 97-114

Rev 06.16.23

- **Sunday morning, Feb 9, or Feb 16 – visit Buddhist Temple of San Diego**

Feb 10 – Lodahl gone for Janice's surgery. *Sages* 115-132

Feb 12 – *Sages* 133-141; Mahayana selections.

No classes Feb 14. K Fulcher inauguration

Feb 19 -21. In Florida for conference. *During this week, your assigned reading is from Sages, 143-183. I will create a Canvas assignment that will involve your taking careful notes on the reading and including any questions that arise for you in your reading.*

Feb 24 – *Sages* 185-199

Feb 26 – *Classic* 95-112

Feb 28 – *Classic* 76-94

Mar 3 – *Sages* 200-212; *Dao de Jing* selections

- **Possible visit this week of Taoist Center, North Park.**

Mar 5 – *Classic* 113-132

Mar 7 – *Sages* 213-232

Mar 10 – SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES THIS WEEK

Mar 17 – *Classic* 133-149; *Zuangzi* selections

Mar 19 – *Classic* 150-168; favorite *Zen Flesh*, *Zen Bones* selections.

Mar 21 – *Classic* 169-179

- **Possible visit of Zen Center of San Diego, Sunday morning Mar 23**

Mar 24 – Midterm exam.

Mar 26 – *Sages* 21-36

Mar 28 – *Claiming Abraham* 1-24

Mar 31 – *Claiming* 25-43

Apr 2 – *Claiming* 45-63

Apr 4 – *Claiming* 65-77

- **Possible visit of area synagogues (La Jolla, Bankers Hill, others) Friday nights**

Apr 7 – *Claiming* 79-97

Apr 9 – Lodahl paper on *adam* naming the animals

Apr 11 – *Claiming* 99-111

- **Possible mosque visits either Fridays midday or Sundays midday**

Apr 14 – *Claiming* 113-126

Apr 16 – *Claiming* 127-148

Easter Break

Apr 21 – Easter break continues

Apr 23 – *Claiming* 149-169

Apr 25 – *Claiming* 149-169 cont'd. More Jesus texts in the Qur'an.

Apr 28 – *Claiming* 171-185

Apr 30 – *Classic Asian Philosophy* 60-75

May 2 – *Claiming* 187-207

Final Examination Wednesday, May 7, 10:30 – 1:00