

Religion 236
The Christian Experience of Sin and Redemption

Spring 2006
Dr. Gordy

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Office Hours: MTWRF 9:00-10:00 or by appointment

Class will convene at 12:50 every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. You should be seated and ready to begin our work together promptly at the beginning of the period. AS I AM NEVER LATE FOR CLASS, THERE IS NO GOOD REASON FOR YOU TO BE LATE EITHER. Moreover, since we will organize for the day right at the beginning of each class, it is disruptive when we have to readjust for late arrivals. Just don't be late—please plan accordingly. CELL PHONES BLOWING UP WILL NOT BE TOLERATED—please respect your classmates and your instructor in this regard: turn the cell phone off or, better, don't bring it into the classroom.

Students are expected to attend all classes, although “roll” will not be taken after the final registration list is established. I will treat you as mature and responsible adults, and I assume that you will conduct yourselves in just that manner. Excessive absences will be noted, and my concern might be expressed, but no direct penalty to the final grade will be assigned on that account.

It is expected that the reading assignment for a particular day will be done prior to class on that date, as the classroom work for that day will build upon that assigned reading.

You will be called upon to respond to the readings and discussion points, and your participation grade will be determined by your responses: keeping up with the readings and regular attendance, in that sense, are indispensable elements of the course.

This course explores a variety of Christian interpretations of sin and redemption: theological, philosophical, aesthetic. Each of you has some sense of what the experiences of sin and redemption look like. They are what underlie the occasional feelings of guilt and peace that we all have, but mostly (especially in the case of sin) they are what we observe in “the other guy.” We see his or her sins rather clearly and without place for mitigation; our reading of our own lives is typically more generous and less insightful.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Discussion participation*	25%
In-class writing assignments	25%
8-12 page paper**	25%
Final examination	25%

*Attendance does not equal “discussion participation.” The latter entails actually speaking to your peers about the subject matter of the day: offering insights and reactions, responding to the comments of peers, answering questions posed by the instructor. Your “presence” in the classroom should be that of a human being, not a “thing”—a distinction that will become clear to you during the course, if it isn’t already clear.

**The paper assignment is a simple one. You must analyze “the experience of sin and redemption” articulated in a film, television series, or body of popular music (your choice) in light of the perspective offered by either Berger, Tillich, Kierkegaard, or Freud (again, your choice). You must discuss your choices with me in advance of doing the paper. I am happy to work with you on the preparation of the paper at any point. The paper is due no later than 12:00 noon on April 21, but you may certainly submit it at any time prior to that. No late paper will be accepted—no exceptions, no excuses.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Go Tell It On The Mountain, James Baldwin
The Sacred Canopy, Peter Berger
The Stranger, Albert Camus
Civilization and Its Discontents, Sigmund Freud
The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne
Fear and Trembling, Soren Kierkegaard
Macbeth, William Shakespeare
The Courage To Be, Paul Tillich
A Month of Sundays, John Updike

SYLLABUS OF ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 16	Introduction to the course
Jan. 18	Sin and redemption
Jan 20	Sin and redemption
Jan. 23	READ Berger 1
Jan. 25	READ Berger 2
Jan. 27	READ Berger 3

Jan. 30	READ Berger 4
Feb. 1	READ Berger 5
Feb. 3	READ Berger 6
Feb. 6	READ Berger 7
Feb. 8	READ Tillich 1
Feb. 10	READ Tillich 2
Feb. 13	READ Tillich 3
Feb. 15	READ Tillich 4
Feb. 17	READ Tillich 5
Feb. 20	READ Tillich 6
Feb. 22	READ Kierkegaard "Preface" through "Speech in praise of Abraham"
Feb. 24	READ Kierkegaard "Preamble From The Heart"
Feb. 27	READ Kierkegaard "Problema I"
Mar. 1	READ Kierkegaard "Problema II"
Mar. 3	READ Kierkegaard "Problema III" and "Epilogue"
Mar. 6-10	SPRING BREAK
Mar. 13	READ Freud I
Mar. 15	READ Freud II
Mar. 17	READ Freud III
Mar. 20	READ Freud IV
Mar. 22	READ Freud V
Mar. 24	READ <i>Macbeth</i> in its entirety
Mar. 27	continue discussion of <i>Macbeth</i>
Mar. 29	READ <i>The Stranger</i> Part One
Mar. 31	READ <i>The Stranger</i> Part Two
Apr. 3	continue discussion of Camus
Apr. 5	READ <i>A Month of Sundays</i> 1-8
Apr. 7	READ <i>A Month of Sundays</i> 9-16
Apr. 10	READ <i>A Month of Sundays</i> 17-24
Apr. 12	READ <i>A Month of Sundays</i> 25-31
Apr. 14	continue discussion of Upkike
Apr. 17	READ <i>Go Tell It On The Mountain</i> Part One

Apr. 19 READ *Go Tell It On The Mountain* Part Two
Apr. 21 READ *Go Tell It On The Mountain* Part Three

Apr. 24 READ *The Scarlet Letter* 1-9
Apr. 26 READ *The Scarlet Letter* 10-17
Apr. 28 READ *The Scarlet Letter* 18-24

Final Examination (day and time to be determined by the Registrar)