



COURSE SYLLABUS

RT1001 Introduction to Religious Texts

Fall 2026

3 Credits



[A part of a Taoist manuscript, ink on silk, 2th century BCE, Han Dynasty](#)

Instructor

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Teaching Assistant

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*Please communicate with the instructor and TA by **email only**.*

You can expect a response to all email communication within 48 hours M-F.

Virtual office hours are by appointment via [Google Appointments](#)

On-campus and Zoom class meetings Tuesdays 1:30–4:45 p.m. CT¹

The course instructor will conduct all class meetings remotely via Zoom.

Zoom will be set up in the classroom for on-campus students.

¹ After November 1, class starts at 1:30 p.m. CST in Minnesota, which is one hour LATER than 1:30 p.m. CDT in Minnesota.

The [Canvas course](#) containing the Zoom meeting link will open to students on September 8.

Course Description

This course examines the use of religious texts within various religious and spiritual contexts. The purpose of this course is to orient the student towards the tools and methodologies, as well as philosophical underpinnings, of how texts are used and interpreted within religious and spiritual contexts. Besides broad methodological approaches the students will also be challenged to examine their own human situatedness and its impact on the interpretation of texts. Texts from several religious traditions will be used in this course. Due to the integrative and multi-religious nature of this course, previous biblical hermeneutic courses cannot be used to substitute for this course.

Prerequisites

N/A

Eligible for DMin Credit

Yes. See the Course Registration section of the *Student Handbook* for registration information. Contact the professor before the start of the term to arrange the work requirements for earning DMin credit for the course.

Eligible for Auditing

Yes. See “Auditing Courses” in the Course Registration section of the *Student Handbook* for registration information. Contact the professor before the start of the term to arrange the auditor participation requirements for the course.

Course Learning Outcomes

See the Academic Catalog for the complete list of learning outcomes for your degree or concentration that this course partially addresses.

- Identify the primary religious texts of prominent religious traditions (a select few will be the focus of this course) and articulate their spiritual and/or religious significance.
- Interpret a selected passage from a religious text from multiple historical and contemporary perspectives, and demonstrate an understanding of the influence of one’s own situatedness in interpretation.
- Develop a capacity to critically reflect on unfamiliar religious texts in a way that respects and honors its religious and spiritual meanings for practitioners of the associated tradition.
- Demonstrate an ability to conduct academic theological research, and engage critical methodologies and reflection through writing.

Course Assignments

Note: The professor may modify these assignments based on their ongoing assessment of student needs. The professor will notify students of any change to an assignment after the start of the term. Assignment grading rubrics are located at the end of this syllabus.

All instructional materials (non-textbook readings and lectures) will be provided on Canvas. Students must watch/review all instructional materials (recorded lectures, videos, etc.) during the corresponding week of instruction and complete all weekly assignments in response to the material for that given week.

All work submitted must be students' original work; it may not be material produced by another individual or AI, or work that was produced for another class/occasion. Any work found to include content that is not the student's original work without proper citation is plagiarism and will result in failure of the course. For this class, **students may not use Generative AI** (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, etc.) **to produce any elements of submitted assignments (including research, outlines, and final written, visual, or audio works)**. Students are advised to exercise great caution with use of Assistive AI for purposes such as translating or editing original student work; use of Assistive AI must be cited in the assignment bibliography (including Grammarly).

Under ordinary circumstances, **late assignments will not be accepted unless arranged with the professor prior to the deadline**. I advise that you give yourself additional time for submitting your work on Canvas in case technical difficulties arise. In the case of an emergency, students should contact the professor to devise a plan to submit their work and remain accountable to the course expectations and their peers.

*All assignment grading rubrics can be found [here](#) at the end of the syllabus

- 1) **Course Engagement (45%)**: Given that this is a seminar style course, discussion among students is an essential aspect of learning in this course and thus comprises a significant portion of the grade for this course. Each individual brings unique insights and experiences to course material and dialogue, and thus the full and prepared presence of each student is significantly important to our collective learning. Course engagement will be assessed through weekly reading reflections and class discussion.
 - a) **Text Reflections (25%)** [In service of CLOs 1, 3]: This assignment aims to help students better prepare for class discussion by reflecting critically on one of the required readings for the upcoming class session. Reading reflections are to be completed prior to coming to class and should focus on *one* of the week's assigned readings of the student's choice. **Students may drop their lowest Text Reflection score at the end of the term.* Reflections should be 300-350 words and uploaded as a document to Canvas by Mondays at 11:59 pm CT each week (unless indicated otherwise in the course schedule). Each reflection must include:

- i) A significant quote: cite one key passage from the assigned reading and briefly explain why it stuck out to you.
 - ii) An impactful idea: articulate one key idea communicated in the chosen reading and briefly reflect on how it informs your understanding of the related religious text(s) or your own vocational work/scholarship.
 - iii) A critical question: formulate a question that engages critically with the chosen reading. What questions or curiosities were you left with that you'd like to explore further?
 - b) **Class Discussion (20%)** [In service of CLOs 1, 3]: Students must actively participate in class discussions and activities during the weekly Zoom class session. Students are expected to come to class prepared to engage with the assigned readings for the session after having read them closely and completed the weekly text reflection. During class sessions, they are expected to display active and respectful listening to peers and the instructor, and make contributions that are insightful, reflect deep engagement with the assigned materials, and help move the conversation forward. Students may use the weekly discussion threads on Canvas to make contributions to discussion that they may not have been able to make during class; any contributions to the weekly discussion threads will be considered as a part of their participation in class discussion.
- 2) **Religious Texts in Context (15%)** [In service of CLOs 1, 3]: Many religious texts take new shape and invite different forms of interpretive engagement in the context of their religious community. Observing the ways in which religious texts inform and are incorporated into religious practice and teaching can illuminate the religious and/or spiritual significance of these texts in their tradition. This assignment allows students an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the function and importance of a particular tradition's religious text(s). Students will choose a religious community or site of worship to visit and observe the way that tradition's text(s) are a part of communal practice, teaching, worship, and/or ritual. Students must choose 1 site in their area to visit and attend a service/gathering. During that visit, students are to observe all engagement (or lack thereof) with the tradition's religious texts. After their visit, students must write a 3-4 page reflection paper that includes: 1) a summary of their observations of how religious texts were engaged; 2) an analysis of the importance and function of these texts conveyed in their engagement; 3) a reflection on how this experience shapes your understanding of this religious text and its tradition and/or impacts your own vocational or scholarly work. *The assignment must be submitted on Canvas by 11:59 pm CT on Sunday, October 11th.*
- a) Some guiding questions for your visit might be: In what ways are religious text(s) being presented, spoken, engaged in worship, or used for teaching? Who is engaging with these texts (religious leadership, community members, etc.)? With what posture are the texts engaged? In what kinds of ways are

religious texts *not* engaged? What is a surprising or new observation in terms of the way the texts are engaged or interpreted?

- b) Note: Students are strongly encouraged to choose a religious community that is unfamiliar to them. Please do the necessary research beforehand to know what customs and etiquette are common for this kind of site (eg. appropriate clothing to wear, prayer practices, languages spoken, etc.) and prepare accordingly. It is also strongly encouraged that you contact a leader/teacher in the selected community before you make your visit so that you can: ask of good time to visit and arrange a meeting if needed; let them know you'll be coming as a seminary student to observe, learn, and participate (if you plan on doing so); ask any other questions related to the logistics or learning outcomes of your visit that you were not able to find answers to on the site's website.
- 3) **Children's Book (15%)** [In service of CLOs 2, 3, 4]: It requires practice to be able to distill complex religious and philosophical ideas into ways that we can be conversant in them, let alone teach them to others. In this vein, students will create a children's book to teach an idea or value found in one of the religious texts we've examined in class. This assignment will challenge students to distill a complex idea or belief found in a particular religious text in order to create an accessible educational tool for young audiences (though children's books often function to teach readers of all ages). *Children's books must be scanned and uploaded as a PDF (with the 1-page analysis) to Canvas by 11:59 pm CT on Sunday, November 8th.*
- a) Each book must:
 - i) Be 15-20 pages long in length, with 2-5 sentences of carefully crafted content on each page (which can be typed or hand-written)
 - ii) Contain a clear and overarching storyline that communicates the selected idea
 - iii) Include original illustrations/artwork to accompany every 1-2 pages of the book (each student *must* illustrate their children's book, but can choose to do so via hand-drawing, painting, digital illustration, or even a medium such as collage; no AI generated illustration)
 - iv) Be accompanied by a 1-1.5 page (double-spaced) analysis of the book that addresses: who the audience of the story is (age range, community, demographics, etc.); how the story engages an idea or belief found in a religious text we've read in this course; how this story contributes something new/necessary to children's education; why you wrote *this story in particular* and how your own situatedness influences your interpretation of this text/idea.
 - b) Presentation: Students will prepare a 5 minute presentation to share their children's book in class; presentation sign up slots will be available two weeks prior to the assignment due date. Presentations should include a reading of the book (pictures included!) and a brief summary of the idea they aimed to convey through the story.

- 4) **Sacred Texts in Society Essay (25%)** [In service of CLOs 2, 3, 4]: As will likely be the case in your vocational work, we are often tasked with interpreting and wrestling with religious texts from a diversity of religious traditions that are unfamiliar to us. This assignment aims to further develop students' competency in interpreting a sacred text from multiple historic and religious/philosophical perspectives. It also encourages them to consider the potential impact of this religious text in society by imagining how this text might serve as a resource for a particular population or community (i.e. an interreligious community, sexual abuse survivors, religious nones).
- a) Proposals should include: a proposed chapter/passage of a religious text to analyze; a 300-350 abstract explaining what approaches you will engage to interpret the passage and what primary questions your analysis seeks to address; the population/community you will reflect on and the text's potential impact; an annotated bibliography of 4 academic sources you plan to engage in your essay; a list of any additional (unannotated) sources that you may consider using in your research. *Proposals must be submitted via Canvas by 11:59 pm CT on Sunday, November 22nd.*
 - b) Essays should be 5-7 pages (double-spaced) and should include: a summary of the selected passage; an introduction to the religious/philosophical tradition the text is rooted in; a brief overview of the historical and cultural context of the text; an analysis of what key question(s) the text seems to be answering; a brief naming of your own social location as an interpreter and 2 potential interpretations of the passage from two different religious/spiritual or philosophical perspectives; a constructive reflection on how this text might resonate with or serve as a resource for a particular population or community. Students must cite at least 7 scholarly sources in their essay and are encouraged to conduct research beyond course readings with the resources offered by the Spencer Library and the DTL. *Essays must be submitted via Canvas by 11:59 pm CT on Friday, December 18th.*

Assignment Notes

- All grading rubrics are posted on Canvas with the corresponding assignment.
- All written assignments must adhere to the following style: 12-point Times New Roman font; standard 1" margins; double-spaced; Chicago Turabian citations (including a bibliography). NO EXCEPTIONS. See the [Chicago Manual of Style Quick Guide](#) for citation guidelines.
- Students can expect to receive feedback on their weekly text analyses within a week and prior to the next class. For all other assignments, it is my goal to return all assignments with feedback within 2 weeks of the submission date. *Note: If students would like to get a head start on their Sacred Texts in Society Essay, proposals may be submitted prior to the submission deadline and I will, in turn, return feedback and project approval earlier.

Grading Policy

Each student's final course grade will be determined based only on the evaluation of work submitted by the last day of the academic term, unless the professor approves an extension of time for the student to complete coursework beyond the end of the term. An extension will only be approved under extraordinary circumstances and must be agreed to by the professor prior to the end of the term. See the Extensions section of the *Student Handbook* for more information.

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Late assignments will not be accepted unless arranged with the professor prior to the deadline. I advise that you give yourself additional time for submitting your work on Canvas in case technical difficulties arise. In the case of an emergency, students should contact the professor to devise a plan to submit their work and remain accountable to the course expectations and their peers.

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Assignment Grade Point Value</i>	<i>Weighted Average of Earned Assignment Grade Points That Corresponds to Course Grade</i>
AH*	Superior with Honors	-	3.83–4.00
A	Superior	4.00	
A–		3.67	3.50–3.82
B+	High Pass	3.33	3.17–3.49
B		3.00	2.83–3.16
B–		2.67	2.50–2.82
C+	Pass	2.33	2.17–2.49
C		2.00	1.83–2.16
C–		1.67	1.50–1.82
D+	No Pass	1.33	1.17–1.49

D		1.00	0.50–1.16
F	Failure	0.00	0.00–0.49

* The AH course grade is reserved for the exceptionally outstanding demonstration of the following qualities, where relevant: mastery of material; course participation; engagement with material and peers; respect for peers; timely completion of assignments; ability to contextualize material in real-world experiences or situations; and expression of United's values of curiosity, creativity, community, and intersectional justice.

Course Texts

Please purchase or acquire all required books prior to the start of the term. Many United course texts are accessible to students online at no cost through the [Digital Theological Library \(DTL\)](#).

Note: Given the financial and ecological impact of buying new books, I encourage you to look for used copies of course texts whenever possible. BetterWorldBooks and ThriftBooks are two great online used bookstores.

Required

The Dhammapada: The Sayings of the Buddha (Oxford World's Classics). Translated by John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 2000, 2008. ISBN: 9780199555130 (\$9.95), **print version required**

Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu. Translated by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English. New York: Vintage Books, 1972, 2011. ISBN: 9780679724346 or 978-0307949301 (\$17.00), **print version required**

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version 5th or 6th Edition. Edited by Michael Coogan, Marc Brettler, Carol Newsom, Pheme Perkins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0190276089 (\$45.00), **print version required**

** Referred to as NOAB elsewhere in the syllabus

All additional readings for this course will be provided via the library's online offerings.

Recommended

Daodejing, Laozi. Translated by Brook Ziporyn. New York: Liveright, 2025. ISBN: 978-1-324-09728-0 (\$15.99)

Decolonial Futures: Intercultural and Interreligious Intelligence for Theological Education, Christine J. Hong. Lexington: Lexington Books, 2021. ISBN: 978-1498579384 (\$38.65)

Sacred Texts Interpreted: Religious Documents Explained, Carl Olson. London: Bloomsbury, 2017. ISBN: 9781440841880. ([DTL](#))

Course Schedule

The final 12-week schedule of readings, topics, activities, and assignments due will be available when the Canvas course opens to students on September 8. Master's students should expect an average of approximately 10–12 hours of coursework per week, including class meetings. DMin students should expect an average of approximately 14–16 hours of coursework per week, including class meetings. This schedule is subject to change without notice until the start of the term. Additionally, the professor may modify the schedule during the term based on their ongoing assessment of student needs. The professor will notify students of any change to the schedule after the start of the term.

Be aware that the academic term begins the Saturday prior to the first class meeting. Please complete assigned Week 1 coursework prior to the first class.

Topics / Class Activities	Assignments Due <i>Please complete all required readings and lectures (listed on Canvas) before class</i>
Week 1: September 12–20 Studying Religious Texts: Orientating our Approach	-Religious Texts Inventory due in lieu of Text Reflection
Week 2: September 21–27 What is a religious text?	-Weekly Text Reflection Due
Week 3: September 28–October 4 Interpretive Methods	-Weekly Text Reflection Due
Week 4: October 5–11 Buddhist Texts	- No weekly Text Reflection due ; work on Religious Texts in Context assignment - <u>Religious Texts in Context</u> due by 11:59 pm CT on Sunday, October 11th
Week 5: October 12–18 Buddhist Texts	-Weekly Text Reflection Due
Week 6: October 19–25 Daoist Texts	-Weekly Text Reflection Due
Reading Week: October 26–November 1	No classes this week No coursework assigned or due

Week 7: November 2–8 Daoist Texts	-Weekly Text Reflection Due - <u>Children's Book</u> due by 11:59 pm CT on Sunday, November 8th
Week 8: November 9–15 Jewish Texts	-Weekly Text Reflection Due
Week 9: November 16–22 Jewish Texts	-Weekly Text Reflection Due - <u>Essay Proposal</u> due by 11:59 pm CT on Sunday, November 22nd
Thanksgiving Week: November 23–29	No classes this week No coursework assigned or due
Week 10: November 30–December 6 Christian Texts	-Weekly Text Reflection Due
Week 11: December 7–13 Christian Texts & Essay Workshop	- No weekly Text Reflection due ; bring a draft writing sample from your essay to workshop in class
Week 12: December 14–20 Topic of Choice & Course Wrap Up	- No weekly Text Reflection due ; work on your Sacred Text in Society Essay - <u>Sacred Text in Society Essay</u> due by 11:59 pm CT on Friday, December 18th *Course feedback survey due January 3, 2027

Grading Rubric

1a) Text Reflections

Grade	Explanation
Full Credit (10)	Responds clearly and thoughtfully to all components of the prompt and demonstrates a robust engagement with the readings.
Partial Credit (7)	Responds to the prompt but is lacking components, remains unclear at points, or is only tangentially related to the readings.
No Credit (0)	Response largely ignores the prompt and shows no indication of serious engagement with the readings.

1b) Class Discussions

Grade	Explanation
Full Credit (10)	Student consistently displays active and respectful listening to peers and the instructor; contributions are insightful, reflect deep understanding of assigned readings, and help move the conversation forward.
Partial Credit (7)	Student often displays active and respectful listening to peers and the instructor; contributions are lacking insight and do not always reflect a deep understanding of assigned readings or help move the conversation forward.
No Credit (0)	Student does not engage in respectful listening or dialogue and/or is inattentive to the conversation or unengaged entirely.

2) Religious Texts in Context

Criterion	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Summary	Thoughtful, perceptive, and insightful description of how religious texts were engaged during site visit.	Decent description of how religious texts were engaged during site visit, but lacks the thoughtfulness, perceptivity, and/or insight of an excellent paper.	Adequate description of how religious texts were engaged during site visit, likely a surface-level description void of detail and nuance.	Does not adequately describe how religious texts were engaged during site visit.
Analysis	Clear and insightful analysis of the importance and function of these texts as observed during site visit; includes citation of course readings or other academic sources.	Clear analysis of the importance and function of these texts as observed during site visit.	Adequate reflection on the importance and function of these texts as observed during site visit; lacking the critical engagement needed to make this a graduate-level analysis .	Analysis is insufficient in its engagement with the importance and function of religious texts as observed during site visit.
Reflection	Reflection thoughtfully and effectively communicates how this experience shapes the student's understanding of this religious text and its	Reflection sufficiently communicates how this experience shapes the student's understanding of this religious text and its tradition and/or impacts their own	Reflection insufficiently communicates how this experience shapes the student's understanding of this religious text and its	Reflection does not include all elements of prompt or is missing entirely.

	tradition and/or impacts their own vocational or scholarly work.	vocational or scholarly work.	tradition and/or impacts their own vocational or scholarly work.	
Formatting & Writing	12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced for text, single spaced for bibliography, 1" margins; formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style; well-organized, engaging and clear writing, no spelling or grammar errors.	12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced for text, single spaced for bibliography, 1" margins; formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style; mostly well-organized, clear writing, few spelling or grammar errors.	Follows most but not all: 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced for text, single spaced for bibliography, 1" margins; formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style; not necessarily well-organized, some unclear writing, may have several spelling or grammar errors.	Misses half or more of the following: 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced for text, single spaced for bibliography, 1" margins; formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style; poorly organized and/or unclear writing with errors throughout.

3) Children's Book

Criterion	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Formatting, Illustration & Tone	The book is 15-20 pages in length with 2-5 exceptionally crafted sentences on each page; illustrations are thoughtful and original and aid the overall storyline and thesis; the tone and level of the writing is accessible and appropriate for young readers.	The book is 15-20 pages in length with 2-5 carefully crafted sentences on each page; illustrations are original and aid the overall storyline and thesis; the tone and level of the writing is suitable for young readers.	The book is 15-20 pages in length with 2-5 sentences on each page; illustrations are original but may not aid the overall storyline and thesis; the tone and level of the writing is suitable for young readers.	The book does not meet the page or sentence requirements; illustrations may not be original or may not aid the overall storyline and thesis; writing is not suitable for young readers.
Clear & Effective Storyline	The book has a clear storyline that creatively and effectively communicates the religious idea/value of focus.	The book has a clear storyline that effectively communicates the religious idea/value of focus.	The book may not have a clear storyline or it may not effectively communicate the religious idea/value of focus.	The book does not have a recognizable storyline and it does not effectively communicate the religious idea/value of focus.
Analysis	Analysis thoughtfully	Analysis sufficiently	Analysis may be	Analysis does not

	reflects on: who the audience of the story is (age range, community, demographics, etc.); how the story engages an idea or belief found in a religious text we've read in this course; how this story contributes something new/necessary to children's education; why you wrote <i>this story in particular</i> and how your own situatedness influences your interpretation of this text/idea.	reflects on: who the audience of the story is (age range, community, demographics, etc.); how the story engages an idea or belief found in a religious text we've read in this course; how this story contributes something new/necessary to children's education; why you wrote <i>this story in particular</i> and how your own situatedness influences your interpretation of this text/idea.	missing one or more of the following: who the audience of the story is (age range, community, demographics, etc.); how the story engages an idea or belief found in a religious text we've read in this course; how this story contributes something new/necessary to children's education; why you wrote <i>this story in particular</i> and how your own situatedness influences your interpretation of this text/idea.	sufficiently address the prompt and provides little explanation of the student's intent in writing this story and its intended meaning.
Presentation	Effective reading of the book and clear presentation of the religious idea/value the book aims to communicate and the religious text it draws upon.	Sufficient reading of the book and clear presentation of the religious idea/value the book aims to communicate and the religious text it draws upon.	Sufficient reading of the book but presentation may be lacking in its explanation of the religious idea/value the book aims to communicate and the religious text it draws upon.	Insufficient reading of the book and presentation lacking in its explanation of the religious idea/value the book aims to communicate and the religious text it draws upon.

4) Sacred Texts in Society Essay

Criterion	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Partially meets expectations	Does not meet expectations
Formatting & Writing	12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced for text, single spaced for bibliography, 1"	12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced for text, single spaced for bibliography, 1"	Follows most but not all: 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced for text, single spaced for bibliography,	Misses half or more of the following: 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced for text, single spaced

	margins; formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style; well-organized, engaging and clear writing, no spelling or grammar errors.	margins; formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style; mostly well-organized, clear writing, few spelling or grammar errors.	1" margins; formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style; not necessarily well-organized, some unclear writing, may have several spelling or grammar errors.	for bibliography, 1" margins; formatted according to the Chicago Manual of Style; poorly organized and/or unclear writing with errors throughout.
Evidence/ Research	The goals/claims of the paper address the prompt in a compelling and original way; they are well-supported by at least 7 relevant academic sources and thoughtful engagement with religious texts.	The goals/claims of the paper address the prompt; they are supported by at least 7 relevant academic sources and engagement with religious texts.	The goals/claims of the paper may not fully address the prompt or do not do so clearly; academic sources may be lacking or poorly selected or poorly incorporated; engagement with religious texts may be unfounded or unrelated to the goal of the project.	The goals/claims of the paper may not address the prompt or do not do so clearly; academic sources are lacking or poorly selected or poorly incorporated; engagement with religious texts is unfounded or unrelated to the goal of the project. or altogether absent.
Essential Components	The following components are fully present and contribute to the overall argument of the essay: a summary of the selected passage; an introduction to the religious/philosophical tradition the text is rooted in; a brief overview of the historical and cultural context of the text; an analysis of what key question(s) the text seems to be answering; a brief naming of your own social location as an interpreter and 2 potential	The following components are fully present but may not always contribute to the overall argument of the essay: a summary of the selected passage; an introduction to the religious/philosophical tradition the text is rooted in; a brief overview of the historical and cultural context of the text; an analysis of what key question(s) the text seems to be answering; a brief naming of your own social location as an interpreter and 2	The following components may not be fully present and may not contribute to the overall argument of the essay: a summary of the selected passage; an introduction to the religious/philosophical tradition the text is rooted in; a brief overview of the historical and cultural context of the text; an analysis of what key question(s) the text seems to be answering; a brief naming of your own social location as an interpreter and 2 potential interpretations of the passage from	Over half of the following components are missing and those present may fail to contribute to the overall argument of the essay: a summary of the selected passage; an introduction to the religious/philosophical tradition the text is rooted in; a brief overview of the historical and cultural context of the text; an analysis of what key question(s) the text seems to be answering; a brief naming of your own social location as an interpreter and 2 potential

	interpretations of the passage from two different religious/spiritual or philosophical perspectives; a constructive reflection on how this text might resonate with or serve as a resource for a particular population or community.	potential interpretations of the passage from two different religious/spiritual or philosophical perspectives; a constructive reflection on how this text might resonate with or serve as a resource for a particular population or community.	two different religious/spiritual or philosophical perspectives; a constructive reflection on how this text might resonate with or serve as a resource for a particular population or community.	interpretations of the passage from two different religious/spiritual or philosophical perspectives; a constructive reflection on how this text might resonate with or serve as a resource for a particular population or community.
Writing Process/Improvement	Final essay reflects thoughtful and significant revisions; it demonstrates the students' engagement with instructor and peer feedback, a development of ideas/arguments throughout the writing process, and improvement in any of the above rubric areas.	Final essay reflects revisions; it demonstrates the students' engagement with instructor and/or peer feedback, a development of ideas/arguments throughout the writing process, and improvement in any of the above rubric areas.	Final essay reflects minimal revisions; it demonstrates the students' engagement with some of the instructor's feedback and engagement with peer feedback may be lacking, a minor development of ideas/arguments throughout the writing process, and improvement in any of the above rubric areas.	Final essay reflects very little effort in revisions; it does not demonstrate substantial engagement or may be missing entirely the following: engagement with instructor and peer feedback, a development of ideas/arguments throughout the writing process, and improvement in any of the above rubric areas.

Selected Seminary Policies

United's Statement on Interreligious Engagement

United is a progressive Christian seminary rooted in the United Church of Christ, grounded in the liberal Protestant tradition, and committed to interreligious engagement, welcoming students of all faiths and religious traditions (and of none) into its community.

Although United does not have the resources or theological training among its faculty to provide an equal experience for persons of every religious tradition, all of the faculty and staff are committed to providing safe and welcoming space for non-Christian students, staff and faculty and are also committed in our education to co-learning with and from our non-Christian students and faculty, humbly seeking knowledge and insight and growth in our relationships with religious others.

United's complete Statement on Interreligious Engagement is in the Seminary-Wide Policies document, available on the Student resources webpage.

Required Technology

All United students are expected to have knowledge of and access to a minimum level of technology in order to participate in online activities and submit required course materials online. This technology includes a PC or Mac computer with an Internet connection, a working webcam, microphone, and speakers, as well as the Zoom videoconferencing tool installed. See the "Student Technology Requirements" section of the *Student Handbook* for a complete list of technology expectations.

Remote Zoom Use

Please follow the instructions linked below on joining a class session using Zoom. Be sure to test your audio and video in Zoom before the first class session and read the expected behaviors for participating remotely:

https://unitedseminary.instructure.com/courses/35/pages/zoom-tutorials#join_zoom

If you are enrolled in the on-campus section of a course, you are normally not permitted to attend any class sessions via Zoom. A student enrolled in the on-campus section of a course may, in very rare and exceptional circumstances, attend a single class meeting via Zoom with prior approval of the instructor. The student's attendance will be marked as an approved absence for that session.

Zoom Behavior Expectations

Students participating in a classroom session via Zoom are expected to observe the same respectful behavior as they would if they were physically present in the classroom. These behaviors include dressing appropriately for class; setting aside a quiet room to join the class without foreseeable potential distractions; being punctual in joining the class and returning from breaks; remaining within view of the class by webcam (except during breaks); only eating during breaks; and no driving or social media. See the "Student Technology Requirements" section of the *Student Handbook* for a more complete list of expectations.

Instructors have the right to refuse the participation of Zoom-in students who fail to observe these behavior expectations and ask that the student rejoin when they are able to comply. Students who are unable to rejoin a class session due to noncompliance with behavior expectations may be marked absent.

Student Teaching Assistants

Some courses have a student teaching assistant to carry out some course functions as defined by the instructor including helping develop lesson plans, making or assisting in class presentations, facilitating discussion groups, engaging in individual consultations with students about course issues, keeping records of attendance and participation, consulting with students about papers and exams, and evaluating student group processes. Student

assistants are prohibited from grading exams, papers, projects, etc. and leading class sessions in absence of the instructor, except in emergency situations.

United's full policy on student teaching assistants is located in the Student Assistant Directed Study section of the Student Handbook, available on the Student resources webpage.

Course Attendance

Excessive absences or tardiness, even for legitimate reasons, may jeopardize a student's course grade or course completion. Absences that exceed 1/3 of the total class meetings (e.g., 4 absences in a 12-week academic term) will normally result in a failing grade for a course. At the professor's discretion, excessive tardiness will count as absences. A more restrictive attendance policy stated in an individual course's syllabus supersedes the general attendance policy described here. See the *Student Handbook* for the full Course Attendance policy.

Email Communications

To be in compliance with FERPA regulations, email communications from United faculty and staff will be sent only to students' United email accounts. Assistance setting up forward or redirection of messages to another email account is available by contacting computersupport@unitedseminary.edu.

Live Streaming and Recorded Class Sessions

Some United seminary classes are offered for online or distance students via live streaming or recording for later viewing. In addition, some of your classes may be recorded for use by other current or future students. You indicate your agreement to be recorded by taking the class. If you object to being recorded for seminary use outside of this course, either as a whole or in a particular class session, please notify the instructor of your course at the beginning of the term or particular class so that alternate arrangements can be made.

Course Extensions

The instructor shall evaluate each student's performance in a course on the basis of the work submitted by the last day of the academic term, unless the instructor approves an extension of time for the student to complete coursework beyond the end of the term. The instructor shall approve an extension only under extraordinary circumstances. The instructor must agree to the extension by the last day of the academic term. In the case that the student is unable to contact the instructor in time due to critical health issues, the student must obtain the instructor's agreement as soon as possible after the end of the term. See the *Student Handbook* for the complete policy.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and cheating are each serious acts of academic dishonesty and violations of the seminary's Academic Integrity policy. Ignorance concerning the proper citation of sources or the unauthorized use of external assistance in a student's work does not exempt the student from the consequences of academic dishonesty. If plagiarism or

cheating are detected, consequences may include an “F” for the assignment in question, or an “F” for the course. Repeated offenses may be grounds for dismissal from the student’s program. See the *Student Handbook* for more information.

Use of Generative AI in Coursework

**Please see the “Course Assignments” section above for this course’s policy on generative AI.

From the student handbook: Students should be aware of the potential for inaccuracies and biases in AI generated content; students are responsible for the content of assignments submitted. All use of AI, including in the development process, must be acknowledged and cited. Information on citation, including examples, can be found on the Chicago Manual of Style website. It is a violation of United’s academic integrity policies to use generative AI tools if a) the instructor explicitly bans their use and b) the use of generative AI is not disclosed and cited appropriately.

Student Misconduct

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities strives for an educational environment in which the greatest academic potential of its students and professional potential of its faculty and staff may be realized. The Seminary therefore prohibits student behavior that disrupts Seminary activities or brings harm to its participants. Any student found to have violated the Student Misconduct Policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Seminary.

See the *Student Handbook* for the complete Student Misconduct Policy, including behaviors that constitute a violation of the seminary’s student conduct standards, the procedure the Seminary follows to determine a violation of these standards, and the steps for recourse when a violation has been committed.

Other Seminary Policies

For further information and details regarding all other academic policies and procedures, including those listed below, please see the following documents available on the Canvas Student Resources page.

Student Handbook

- Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*
- Tuition Charge Reductions for Dropped Courses*
- Counseling*

Seminary-Wide Policies

- Closing Procedure for Inclement Weather*
- Copyright Law*
- Inclusive Language*
- Freedom of Inquiry and Expression*
- Notice of Nondiscrimination*

Confidentiality and Disclosure within Small Group Settings
Boundaries Between Faculty and Students
Sexual Harassment
Reporting Sexual Offenses