

MRE 481 World Religions
CUA Metropolitan School of Professional Studies
Instructor: Dr. James Kruggel

Guidelines for Course Paper

The Course requirements include writing a 6 page research or reflection paper. That is, six pages of material plus a cover page and a bibliography. Here are some guidelines for writing your paper.

I. Structure. A paper should have the following sections. Here's how you might write it with the following topic. How do Buddhism and Christianity view marriage?

1—An introduction that sets out briefly the thesis you are going to argue. It might actually be helpful to state the thesis as a question. For example, a paper that explores the question of how the Christianity and Buddhism view marriage. One might open the paper with these questions: "One of the most important parts of human existence is marriage. How do Christianity and Buddhism, two of the world's largest religions, view this institution? Both religions have various branches; what differences and similarities are there among the branches? This paper will explore these questions, and will conclude by offering an assessment of the different views."

2—A main body that lays out the evidence for your argument. A paper on marriage in Christianity and Buddhism would have a section on each religion. It would briefly offer each religion's view of God, drawing from course material. It would discuss some history, and what some representative major sources from each religion have to say. It would ask: how does each religion's view of the divine, and view of the human being, fit in? What does each religion have to say about sexual morals? If there have been changes or disagreements over the course of each religion's history, what are they? There are many branches in each religion; you might just focus in a couple of branches for the sake of keeping it around six pages. All papers should refer to class material.

3—A conclusion that offers your findings. The conclusion should sum up your findings about the subject matter, and your assessment of it. For a paper marriage on Christian and Buddhist views of marriage, you would offer a summary of each, some comparison and contrast, and your thoughts on what seems most helpful or not-so-helpful in each, and why.

II. Style. College papers should have these features:

1—Citations. Any material you cite directly or paraphrase must be cited, including a page number. That means that you either have a footnote for the citation, or have an in-text citation. If you use in-text citation, you should use a footnote on the first reference, and then use in-text format thereafter.

2—Bibliography. At the end of your paper, you should list all sources cited, including the author, title, publisher, and date of publication. The bibliography should be in addition to six pages of material.

3—Page numbers. Please include page numbers.

4. Wikipedia. Please do not cite Wikipedia as a source, because anyone can post to it. It's a great place to start your research, because most Wikipedia articles will have listings of links and sources at the end. But use any links an article includes, to find a peer-reviewed or official source. For information about a given church, for instance, Wikipedia might give you a good overview. But you should use links to go to that church's official documents online, or articles with a named author, and cite those.

For style matters, you can always consult the style manual that is the standard for the CUA School of Theology and Religious Studies: The Chicago Manual of Style. Here is the home page online where you can get a free trial: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>. At Mullen Library, its call number is LB2369 . T8 2007 . At Amazon, you can find the 16th (2010) edition at http://www.amazon.com/Chicago-Manual-Style-16th-Edition/dp/0226104206/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1333678036&sr=8-1

Possible Paper Topics.

Compare any two of the religions we have considered on a major point of religion:

- the nature of God / ultimate being;
- the role of meditation or prayer in the individual's religious life;
- annual worship or observance calendar;
- view of personal or social morals;
- what is the possibility and nature of eternal life.
- relationship of religion and civil society
- role of "heavenly helpers" in one's life—e.g. Buddhist Bodhisattvas or Catholic Saints

Compare two branches of one religion on one of the above questions—for example, Theravada vs. Mahayana Buddhism; Catholic or Lutheran Christianity.

Look more deeply into a point discussed in class, such as nirvana, the brahman and atman, or the Holy Trinity.

Lecture 6: Wednesday, April 13 Christianity Drawn from sources used in the class lecture.

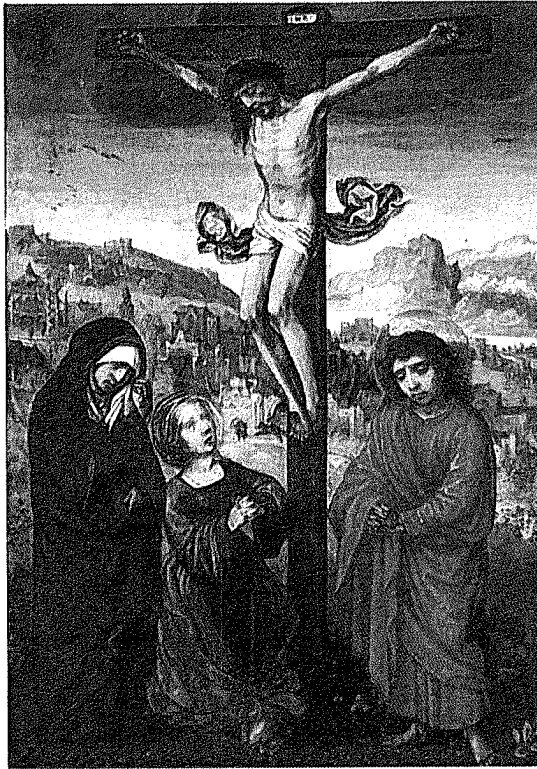


Fig. 1. The Crucifixion by Simon Bening
Centurion at the Cross said: "Truly this man was the Son of God." (Mk 15:39)

B. Redemption from sin. Jesus taught that human beings were sinners who needed redemption. He talked often about the danger of eternal damnation and urged repentance. God loved us and gave His Son that we might have eternal life. (Jn 3:16) Christ is the priestly mediator of our redemption by His blood sacrifice of himself. He brings a new covenant that truly saves (Heb. 7, 9). Christ is the New Adam. His obedience unto death undoes the disobedience of the first Adam and brings justification and salvation for many. The wages of sin is death, but eternal life is the free gift of God in Christ (Rom. 5,6)

5. Passion and Death. On the eve of the celebration of Passover, Jesus was betrayed the hostile high priests, who tried and convicted him of blasphemy and turned him over to the Romans, who crucified him. A wealthy disciple provided a tomb where he was buried.

6. Resurrection and Ascension.

The Gospels record that on the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus Christ arose from the dead. He then spent forty to fifty days living among his disciples before ascending to Heaven. He was in a glorified body—able to appear, change His appearance, yet eat with the Disciples. Jesus instructed

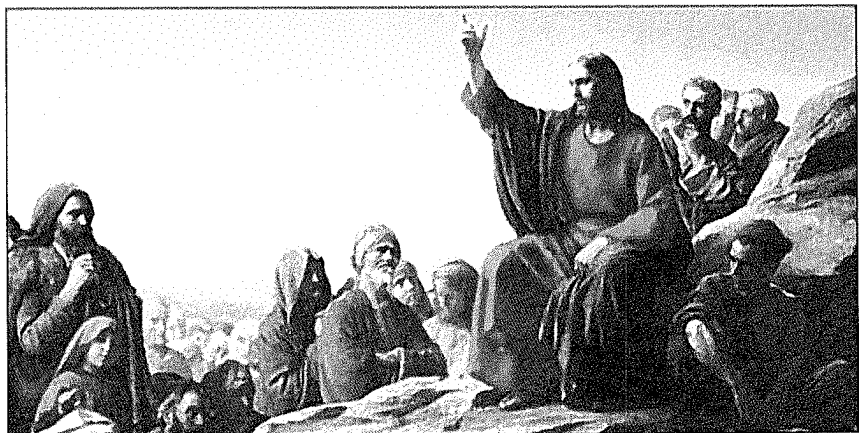
Introduction. A. Christianity is a set of beliefs about a) the life, death, and resurrection of **Jesus Christ** approximately 2,000 years ago, and b) the **history of Israel** recorded in the Jewish Bible or Old Testament.

1. Jesus Christ: God made man in history 1. Historical context and early life. Born in Palestine about 4 BC. After a quiet life he had a career of teaching and healing for three years. He angered the Jewish leadership and was crucified just outside of Jerusalem.

2. Public ministry. The Gospels portray a **Spirit-filled healer** like Jewish healing figures. He claimed that he was the Messiah promised in their Bible. Jesus did not announce political deliverance: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent, and believe in the Gospel." He taught a God-changed way of life.

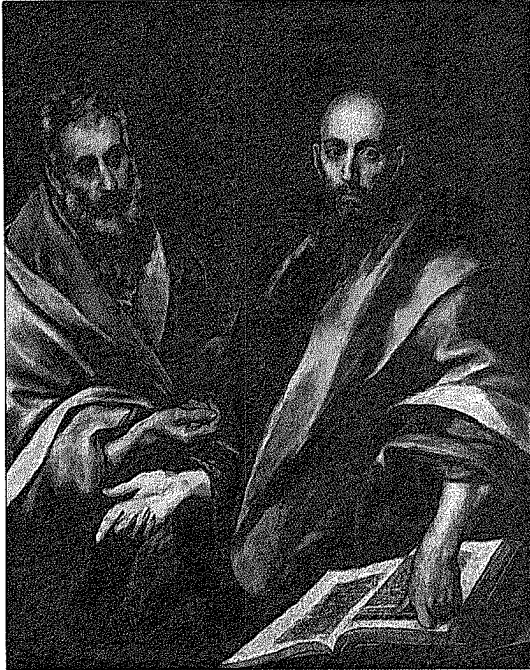
4. Example and teachings about life in God. A) Jesus' actions. Jesus did miracles quietly. He showed mercy to the contrite, challenged the proud. **B) Jesus' words.** Jesus spoke directly, offering a strong, urgent message. God loves us, and we need to live and share that love. **C) Who Jesus was:** The Gospels say He was God. "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." (Jn 8:58) The

Fig. 2. The Sermon on the Mount by Carl Bloch.



his followers to make disciples of the nations, and ascended to Heaven. **7. Pentecost and the Holy Spirit.** After ascending, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on the disciples, transforming them into fearless apostles who spread Christianity.

II. The Church: Christ's Body, and Key Beliefs



1. The Mystical Body. Christians believed that Christ remained in the assembly or *ekklesia* and made it a body with many parts. (1 Cor. 12) **A. The Church as Bride of Christ.** Paul wrote that the Church was the bride of Christ, as a wife is married to her husband. (Eph. 5)

2. Incarnation. The early Christians believed that Jesus Christ was God incarnate, although the Church took several centuries to articulate the belief in teaching. **A. Conciliar statements.** Chalcedon (451 A.D./CE) taught that Jesus Christ is one Person with two natures: a full human nature, body and soul, and a Divine nature.

3. Atonement. Christians believe that Christ heals us from the wound of original sin, and forgives us our personal sins as well. He atones for them by his death.

4. Trinity. There is one God, who exists eternally in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The names are Scriptural, and the Church teaches that they identify specific Persons.

Fig. 3. *Saints Peter and Paul* by El Greco

III. Tradition and the Bible: God's Word in two forms

1. Tradition gives birth to Scripture. The Church preserved Jesus' revelation in two ways. **Tradition** is the living memory of Christ in the Church, animated by the Holy Spirit. The apostolic men also committed the Gospel of Christ to writing, under Divine inspiration, in **the Bible**. The Church reads out the Bible with the help of Tradition. **The Canon:** To be accepted as canonical, a book had to be early, widely esteemed, and held by consistent groups of bishops in communion.

2. The NT: The Gospels and Acts. Four Gospels, or accounts of Jesus' life. Matthew was written for Jews; Mark was written for businesslike Romans; Luke was written at a time of persecution, John meditates on who Jesus is. Acts describes the activities of the first apostles. **Epistles** were written by apostles to churches; most prominent is the rabbi Paul.

Fig 4. St. Peter's, Vatican City.

IV. Early Christianity: the First Millennium

1. Early Growth of the Church. Christianity spread quickly and widely throughout the Mediterranean basin during the first few centuries after Christ's life. **2. The emperor Constantine** proclaimed toleration for Christianity in 313; by the end of that century Christianity was the official religion. These actions created **Christendom**. After the Empire fell the Church helped





Fig. 5. Mary and the baby Jesus (Madonna and Child) by Raphael.

A **sacrament** is a thing that, by God's design, effects what it signifies: Christ giving grace to us to help some aspect of our relationship with Him. Catholicism holds that there are seven.

3. Devotion to Mary. From the beginning, Catholic Christians have believed that Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, played a significant role in salvation history, and is still part of His plan to help us today. We can ask her intercession with Jesus, to help lead us to Him.

V. Eastern Orthodoxy. This branch of Christianity began in the Roman Eastern imperial capital at Constantinople. The Greek-oriented culture there had a more mystical, philosophical temperament, and it became isolated from the West. The Emperor there saw himself as a quasi Pope involved in the Church (Caesaro-papism). East and West grew apart. **1. Split in 1054.** East and west excommunicated each other after a series of disagreements over theology and church governance; the split has never been healed.

2. Distinctive beliefs. The East holds that the Pope only has an honorary primacy, and that each church is *autocephalous*, or its own head. They hold that only a Council can make doctrinal decisions, and believe that only the first seven councils have doctrinal authority.

VI. Christianity in the Middle Ages. By 1200 A.D./CE, Christianity had become the official, dominant religion of Europe. **1. Church and State.** The Holy Roman emperor, and the Pope of the Church, were the most powerful figures in Europe, and the Roman Church's practices had great influence throughout Western Europe.

2. Mendicant Orders. Western Europe grew more prosperous in the 13th Century, as trade and the Crusades brought wealth in to Europe. Some Christians decided to take up a simple life of Gospel poverty in imitation of Christ, as the Franciscan and Dominican orders. In the 11th Century Europe launched **3.**

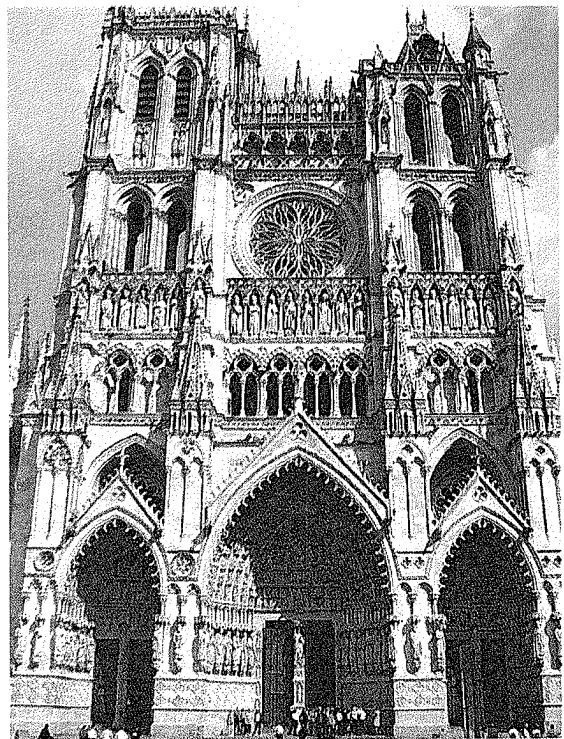
preserve order, and it converted Europe in the next centuries.

3. Augustine (354-430). Augustine was the most influential thinker in shaping Christianity early Church era. He argued strongly for the doctrine of original sin. **4. Benedict of Nursia** (480-547) wrote a rule for monastic life that shaped Christian monasticism. Monks were to live a life of prayer, work in their abbey, and remain in one place.

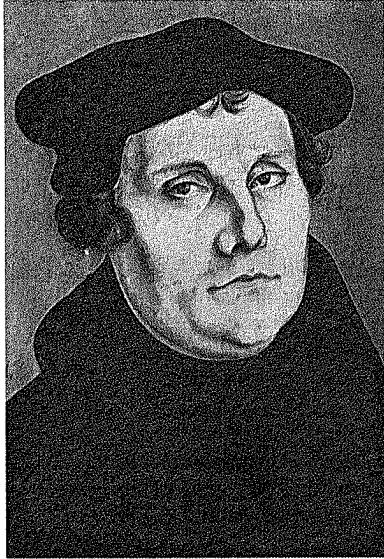
IV. Catholicism: Christ, Church, Sacraments **1. Hierarchy:** By Christ's design the apostles left bishops as successors to teach, sanctify, and govern the body of Christ in His name. Each bishop exercises his office in union with the other bishops and the Pope, the successor of Peter. The Pope can teach infallibly in limited circumstances. There is also a priesthood of all believers.

2. The Mass and Sacraments Catholic worship is the celebration of the mystery of Christ, of His crucifixion, death, and Resurrection to atone for our sins. At **the Mass**, the Bible is read and expounded in a sermon, and the Eucharist is celebrated: the bread and wine are changed into Christ's body and blood, consumed in keeping with John 6: 53-55.

Fig. 6. Amiens Cathedral in France.



Crusades to reconquer the Holy Land from the Muslims. This effort failed after two centuries, but it opened up intensive trade with the Middle East and helped bring about new economic, social developments. In the **14th Century**, disease, war, and Church schism weakened Europe's faith in the Church and in Christ.



VII. Protestantism: Reform and simplification. After centuries of close ties to power, the Catholic Church became wealthy and many abuses were tolerated. Interest in reform arose in the 1400's. Church's long history of establishment in Europe meant that she got intertwined with the nobility and aristocracy, and herself grew wealthy. Many devotional practices such as veneration of relics and saints, and the use of such items to raise money, seemed superstitious and venal to some. (M362) Interest in reform arose.

Common Protestant Principles. Several "Protestant" groups broke off. Common principles include: First, one was *Christian by faith alone*, not just belief, but personal trust in God reflected in one's actions. Second, *exceptional wariness of idolatry*—absolutizing things such as the intellect, sacraments, the Church, or personal experience. Also, *the Bible alone has absolute authority*, over teachings of councils or Popes; individuals must read it.

Fig. 7. Martin Luther, Protestant Reformer.

VII. The Catholic Reformation to Modernity

1. The Catholic Reformation. Catholicism was not defeated by the Protestant Reformation, but reformed and developed itself in response. The major response was **the Council of Trent**, held in northern Italy from 1545-1562. (M368) The Council reaffirmed long-held Catholic beliefs such as the Eucharist is Christ's body and blood. It also started great institutional reform such as establishing seminaries. It also created a 'defensive posture' for the Church that would last 400 years.

2. Global Spread of Christianity. From the Reformation period onwards, Christian missionaries took the Great Commission's teaching to "baptize the nations" (Mt. 28:19) around the world, going wherever European colonizers went.

VIII. Christianity and Modernity

1. Enlightenment and Secularization. During the 18th Century, The Enlightenment (c. 1600-1800) argued that human reason, not faith, was the only source of true knowledge. **A. The French Revolution** began the end of the Church's relationship with European states, ending Constantine's 1,400-year arrangement. Europe and North America would become increasingly secular cultures.

2. Physical Sciences and Christian Faith. Belief that physical sciences could tell us all we can or need to know about reality is probably the strongest challenge to Christianity. Many don't see how Divine revelation can have anything to say about items of history or science. Vatican II argued that the Scripture speaks about both only as God so wished for the sake of our salvation. (DV 13) Only those physical facts related to doctrine are taught. Natural sciences have proper authority about their objects.

3. Vatican II: Ecumenism and Interreligious dialogue. After 400 years of a defensive approach to the world, the Catholic Church changed course. Pope John XXIII (1881-1963) convened the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Council upheld all Catholic teaching, but presented it in a new way. The Church is the servant of the world, and Jesus Christ reveals the human being to himself. It also called for discussion and friendship with non-Catholics and with non-Christians. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI argues that only if faith and reason cooperate, can we build unity in the modern world.