For this course’s take-home final exam, students will write a short essay of comparative analysis which focuses on two figures whose writings we read and discussed over the course of the semester (i.e. the assigned readings besides the Oxtoby, Hussein, and Amore text book). The purpose of this exercise will be to see how comparing and contrasting two figures might provide insights into how religious traditions deal with a range of issues from the role of scriptural narratives in religious communities to the challenges of confronting modernity to the place of ritual in shaping adherents’ characters and worldviews.

Students are able to choose any two figures as long as they are from the same section. (this guarantees that the figures you choose are discussing the same topic, which thus ensures that you are comparing apples to apples, as it were). You may choose any two figures from the following three sections:

* **Formative Periods and the Power of Scriptural Narratives** (Heschel, MLK, Jr., and al-Bisṭāmi)
* **Modern Period and Its Challenges** (Rubenstein, Sobrino, and Iqbal)
* **Ritual and Practice as Ethico-spiritual Formation** (Plaskow, Williams, and Malcolm X)

The essay will be composed of five sections:

1) Introduction including thesis statement

2) Brief summaries of each figure’s writings

3) Comparison of the writings which draws out their similarities and differences

4) What such a comparison might tell us about how these religious traditions have dealt with the particular topic that is the focus of that section. The topic of each section is as follows: a) formative periods: the power of scriptural narratives in the life of the religious community; b) modern period: how religious traditions confront and negotiate the challenges of modernity; and c) ritual and practice: how rituals as social practices shape the character and worldviews of believers

5) Conclusion

Your essay should be 4-6 double-spaced pages using 12-point Times New Roman font. Feel free to use which ever citation style you’re most comfortable with (MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian), but make sure to be correct and consistent in your use of it!