

College of Charleston
Department of Religious Studies
Fall 2019

RELS 105-01: INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS
MWF 10-10:50, ECTR 116

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler
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Office: 4 Glebe St. Second Floor
Office Hours: MWF 11-12, or by appointment

This course introduces the beliefs and practices of several major religious traditions, emphasizing how religions change and interact with each other in the modern world. The class is structured around the courses offered by the College of Charleston's Department of Religious Studies. Several 200-level courses, and one 300-level course will be introduced to the students of this course, at the rate of one per week.

Students will learn to explore worldviews and ways of life other than their own, to recognize something of the diversity and complexity of major religious traditions, to become acquainted with some of the methods and theories in religious studies, and to think critically about religion and the way it functions in the contemporary world.

This course will fulfill the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes:**
Student Learning Outcome #1: Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture.
Student Learning Outcome #2: Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.
These two learning outcomes will be assessed with an essay question the final exam, which will ask students to analyze primary sources in terms of their religious ideas.

Required text:

World Religions Today, sixth edition, by Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis
ISBN 978-0-19-064419-2

There are also required short readings on OAKS. You should print out these readings.
Please bring the book and/or printout to class.

Course Requirements:

- * Participation and attendance including in-class group work: **10%**
- * One 3-4 pp. paper due in class October 9: **10%**
- * One 5-7 pp. paper due in class November 25: **20%**
- * Five out of seven "surprise" quizzes, which will be announced the class before.
(The two lowest quizzes will be dropped.): **5 x 5% =25%**
- * A midterm exam on October 11: **15%**
- * A final exam on December 11: **20%**

We will review and discuss each assignment before it is due. There will also be various opportunities to gain bonus marks by attending relevant lectures and writing short papers about them.

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. Students can find a complete version of the Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook, available online.

Grading Scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 61-62 F: 60 or below.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

UNIT I: Introduction

Wed 8/21: What is this class about?

Fri 8/23: Why study religion?

Read: religiousstudies.cofc.edu; studyreligion.org

UNIT II: Theories in the Study of Religion (see also RELS 210)

Mon 8/26: What do religions have in common? How do they change?

Read: 3-15, 26-33

Wed 8/28: Psychological Theories of Religion: Freud and James

Read: OAKS #1

Fri 8/30: Social Theories of Religion: Tylor, Marx and Durkheim

Read: 44-48; OAKS #2

UNIT III: The Hindu Tradition (see also RELS 245)

Mon 9/2: What is Hinduism?

Special Guest: Dr. June McDaniel

Read: 261-272; OAKS # 3

Wed 9/4: Who are the Hindu deities?

Read: 276-284, 285-287

Fri 9/6: Hinduism Today

Read: 291-296, 298-318

UNIT IV: The Buddhist Tradition (see also RELS 240)

Mon 9/9: What is Buddhism?

Read: 337-35; OAKS #4

Wed 9/11: What is the self?

Special Guest: Dr. Zeff Bjerken

Read: 356-363, 374-385

Fri 9/13: Buddhism Today

Read: 385-389, 401-408

UNIT V: Religious Traditions of China and Japan (see also RELS 248)

Mon 9/16: What religions are practiced in China and Japan?

Read: 413-425, 430-433, 365-368; OAKS #5

Wed 9/18: How do religions and government influence each other in China and Japan?

Read: 434-449

Fri 9/20: Chinese and Japanese Religions Today

Read: 395-398, 464-465, 468-471, 480-482

UNIT VI: New Religious Movements (see also RELS 315)

Mon 9/23: What are New Religious Movements?

Read: OAKS #6

Wed 9/25: Which New Religions Began in America?

Read: 487-501

Fri 9/27: Which New Religions Began in Asia?

Read: 326-328, 449-452, 466-468, 472-476

First paper proposal emailed to me by 5:00 pm

UNIT VII: The Daoist Tradition (see also RELS 247)

Mon 9/30: What is Daoism?

Special Guest: Dr. Louis Komjathy

Read: 425-430, 433-434; OAKS #7

Tues 10/1 3:30 bonus lecture on the Daodejing

Wed 10/2: What is the difference between Daoism and folk religion?

Read: 453-463

Fri 10/4: What do Daoists practice?

Read: OAKS #8

UNIT VIII: Catching our Breaths

Monday 10/7: Catch-up, Discussion and Midterm Exam Review

Wed 10/9: **First Paper due in class**

Fri 10/11: **Midterm Exam**

Mon 10/14: **Fall Break**

UNIT IX: Native American Religions (see also RELS 260)

Wed 10/16: What are Native American Religions?

Special Guest: Dr. Todd LeVasseur

Read: 49-52, 55-62

Fri 10/18: What are Shamans and “White Shamans”?

Read: OAKS #9; 493-502, 504-507

UNIT X: The Jewish Tradition (see also RELS 225 and RELS 201)

Mon 10/21: What is Judaism?

Read: 67-70, 73-87

Wed 10/23: What is Torah?

Special Guest: Dr. John Huddleston

Read: OAKS #10; 87-97

Fri 10/25: Judaism Today

Read: 97-103, 110-114

UNIT XI: The Christian Tradition (see also RELS 230 and RELS 202)

Mon 10/28: What Is Christianity?

Read: 125-143; OAKS #11

Wed 10/30: What is Christendom?

Read: 143-156

Fri 11/1: Christianity Today

Read: 156-166, 171-175

UNIT XII: The Islamic Tradition (see also RELS 235)

Mon 11/4: What is Islam?

Read: 183-204, 206-211

Wed 11/6: What is Sharia?
Special Guest: Dr. Kathy Foody
Read: 211-219; OAKS #12

Tues 10/1 4:00 bonus lecture on Hidden Sacred Spaces

Fri 11/8: Islam Today
Special Guest: Dr. Leonard Lowe (on Christianity)
Read: 219-238, 249-256

UNIT XIII: Religions in America (see also RELS 250)

Mon 11/11: Is the United States a Christian Nation?
Read: 175-180; OAKS #13

Wed 11/13: How do we explain religious diversity in America?
Read: 103-104, 242-245, 248-249, 398-400
Second paper proposal emailed to me by 5:00 pm

Fri 11/15: What is Civil Religion?
Read: OAKS #14

UNIT XIV: African-American Religion (see also RELS 270)

Mon 11/18: What is African-American Religion?
Read: OAKS #15

Wed 11/ 20: African-American Religions Today
Special Guest: Dr. Matthew Cressler
Read: 245-248, OAKS #16

Wed 11/20 7:30 bonus Three Rabbi panel on Coming of Age

Fri 11/22: Paper Workshop

Mon 11/25: Catch-Up; **Second paper due in class**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Mon 12/2: Final Discussion and Exam Review

Wed 12/11 8am to 11am: Final Exam

Note: Students with documented disabilities who have been approved to receive accommodation through SNAP should feel free to discuss this during office hours. For more information, contact Disability Services at 953-1431.

Visit the **Center for Student Learning** for help with study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call (843)953-5635.

If the College of Charleston closes and members of the community are evacuated due to inclement weather, students are responsible for taking course materials with them in order to continue with course assignments consistent with instructions provided by faculty. In cases of extended periods of institution-wide closure where students have relocated, instructors may articulate a plan that allows for supplemental academic engagement despite these circumstances.