

## RELS 105-7: WORLD RELIGIONS

---

Dr. Padraic Fitzgerald (he/him/his)  
fitzgeraldp@cofc.edu  
Office hours: By appointment

Fall 2023  
T/R, Online Synchronous  
3:05 PM – 4:20 PM EST

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** An introductory study of the origins, beliefs, and practices of the major religions of the world. This course is an introduction to religious studies in which students will encounter several different religions, many of which they are not nor have ever been a part. While this class will cover “World Religions,” students will be challenged to ask what it means to be a “World Religion.” Who is excluded from this category, and who is included? This course will use 1.) a material religion approach, objects, artwork, ritual sites, sacred spaces, etc., 2.) to explore how different religious traditions engage with materiality 3.) to express their worldview, their history, and their personal ideas of what we call “Religion.”

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Stephen Prothero, *Religion Matters* (Norton & Company, NY: 2020)
  - The CofC bookstore has rentals available, as does Amazon. I know this is an expensive book. There is not a better book for World Religions. The rental from Amazon is very affordable.
  
- There will be supplementary PDFs and Videos to be found on our course pages.

### **GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

This course satisfies the General Education requirements for a course in the Humanities, which address these two additional Student Learning Outcomes: 1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture; 2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments. **Students will demonstrate successful mastery of the Learning Outcomes 1 & 2 by writing the second short essay at the end of the semester worth 12.5% of the overall grade.**

### **COURSE QUESTIONS:**

- What is religion?
- What is religious?
- How do religious traditions or religions use material culture and material objects to express their own religiosity?
- What is sacred space?
- What are sacred objects?
- What are rituals?
- What are ritual objects?

## Course Requirements and Assignments:

### THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM OR FINAL PROJECT

**Weekly Reverse Quizzes (120 pts.) & Reverse Quiz Re-Writes (120 pts.):** In lieu of one final cumulative exam, you will be quizzed each week using the Reverse Exam method, borrowed from CofC's Dr. Jennifer Wright in the Psychology Department. This method has shown to encourage learning over memorization, as well as encourage knowledge retention. Using the Reverse Exam method, students will take the quizzes **WITHOUT** studying. Each quiz will have a 15-minute time-limit with 10 to 15 questions per quiz. At the close of the quiz, you will know which questions you got wrong, but it will not show you the correct answers. The time-limit is in place to discourage (and make nearly impossible) open-note assistance. I really want you to take the quizzes using what you learned in class and what you retained. After the quiz, you will have 5 days to submit a "Quiz Re-Write." **Re-writes should include page numbers or PowerPoint references for the new answer.**

Padraic Fitzgerald

Quiz #1 rewrite: Christianity

- 1.) **Question:** Christianity is a religion that based in \_\_\_\_\_ because God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit make up the Holy Trinity.
- 2.) **Original Answer:** A: Polytheism
- 3.) **Correct Answer:** B. Soft Monotheism

**Supporting Evidence for Corrected Answer:** I originally selected "polytheism" because poly means many, and I thought the inclusion of all three meant "many." However, I revisited our textbook and saw that Christianity is a religion of "soft monotheism" (according to Prothero on page 226). Soft Monotheism is defined as a "belief in one God who appears in human form, as distinct from the strict monotheism of Muslims and Jews who reject the descent of the diving into a human body." Knowing this, I re-select B. Soft Monotheism

This will be submitted in the drop-box for the appropriate unit labeled "Quiz Re-Write."

**Weekly Discussion Question (120 pts.):** In addition to your weekly quizzes, you will have to answer ONE (**only one**) discussion question from the end of the chapter. These need to be formatted:

1. Question and question number you will answer
2. A 4-6 sentence answer including page numbers **FROM THE TEXT** that helped support your answer.
3. 1-sentence on what you learned during this unit that was most surprising.

**Discussion questions have no due date or start date. You can do these at any point in the semester. THEY ARE ALL DUE ON DECEMBER 5<sup>th</sup> BY 1:00 PM**

**Short Papers (100 pts. Each):** You will be called upon to write two brief (2-3 pages/500-750 word) reflective papers to reinforce and critically apply the concepts found in the readings and videos we will engage with.

**-Paper 1:** What is religion and why should we study it? For this essay, answer the following prompt in a cohesive (not in numbered short answers or stand-alone paragraphs) analytical paper: Provide a definition of what you think “religion” means. Discuss the elements of your definition and explain why you chose them. Then, explain why it is important to study religion. Finally, what do you hope to gain by studying world religions? Remember to cite your source(s) which will be our main textbook. **This paper will be due on Thursday 8/31 at 11:59 P.M.**

**-Paper 2:** This will be the “signature” assignment for this course that will satisfy learning outcomes 1 and 2 of the Gen Ed SLO’s. For this paper I would like you to research either a ritual or an aspect of religious material culture. The latter is a broad term that includes tattoos, jewelry, and hairstyles, clothes, texts, music, the landscape, and ritual implements. I would like you to consult with me on what this piece of material culture will be, and what tradition it comes from. I will help point you in the right direction regarding sources and am happy to provide general research guidance. **Please send me an email or set up an appointment with me to discuss your topic by Thursday 11/2.** This paper is **Due on 11/21 by 11:59 P.M. EST.**

## **Course Schedule**

### **What is Religion?**

#### **Tuesday 8/22**

- Introductions
- Syllabus Overview
- What is Religion?

#### **Thursday 8/24**

- Pgs. 3-25
- What is Religion?*
- Please submit your signed Syllabus Contract on OAKS by **11:59 PM EST**

### **Hinduism**

#### **Tuesday 8/29**

- Pgs. 29-52
- What is Hinduism?*
- *What are the Vedas?*

**Thursday 8/31**

-Pgs. 53-75

-*What is Vedanta?*

-**Quiz 1**

-**First Paper to be submitted by 11:59 P.M. EST**

**Buddhism**

**Tuesday 9/5**

-Pgs. 79-102

-*What is Buddhism?*

-**Quiz 1 Rewrites Due**

**Thursday 9/7**

-Pgs. 103-126

-*Are All Things Empty?*

-*Interview with Gyosen Asakura and Amidakyo ver 2016*

**Friday 9/8**

-**Quiz 2**

**Sikhism**

**Tuesday 9/12**

-Pgs. 129-149

-*What is Sikhism*

-**Quiz 2 Rewrites Due**

**Thursday 9/14**

-Pgs. 150-169

-*Daily Show Segment*

**Friday 9/15**

-**Quiz 3 due by 11:59 PM**

**Zoroastrianism**

**Tuesday 9/19**

-PDF pgs. 351-366

-*What is Zoroastrianism?*

-*The Origins of Satan*

-**Quiz 3 Rewrites Due**

**Thursday 9/21**

- PDF pgs. 367-379
- What is Manichaeism?*
- Who are the Yazidis?*

**Friday 9/22**

**-Quiz 4 due by 11:59 PM**

### **Judaism**

**Tuesday 9/26**

- Pgs. 170-197
- What is Judaism?*
- What is Kabbalah?*
- Quiz 4 Rewrites Due**

**Thursday 9/28**

- Pgs. 198-224
- Job and the Problem of Evil*
- Witnesses to the Age of Shoah*

**Friday 9/29**

**-Quiz 5 due by 11:59 PM**

### **Christianity**

**Tuesday 10/3**

- Pgs. 225-257
- When did Judaism and Christianity Part Ways?*
- Orthodoxy versus Heresy in Ancient Christianity*
- The Origins of Christian Saints*
- Quiz 5 Rewrites due**

**Thursday 10/5**

- Pgs. 258-290
- Was Jesus a Magician?*
- How did the New Testament Form?*

**Friday 10/6**

**-Quiz 6 due by 11:59 PM**

### **Islam**

**Tuesday 10/10**

- Pgs. 293-315

*-Introduction to Islam*  
*-What is the Hajj? And What is Ramadan?*  
**-Quiz 6 Rewrites Due**

**Thursday 10/12**

*-Pgs. 316-337*  
*-Sunni and Shia: what really is the Difference?*

**Friday 10/13**

**-Quiz 7 due by 11:59 PM**

**Tuesday 10/17**

**-Fall Break, no class!**  
**-Quiz 7 Rewrite Due**

### **Confucianism**

**Thursday 10/19**

*-Pgs. 340-365*  
*-What is Confucianism?*

**Tuesday 10/24**

*-Pgs. 366-389*  
*-What is Orientalism?*

**Friday 10/25**

**-Quiz 8 due by 11:59 PM**

### **Daoism**

**Thursday 10/26**

*-Pgs. 391-406*  
*-What is Daoism?*

**Tuesday 10/31**

*-Pgs. 407-438*  
*-Organized Daoism and Internal Alchemy*

**Friday 11/1**

**-Quiz 9 due by 11:59 PM**  
**-Quiz 8 Rewrites Due**

**Navajo Religion and Indigenous Religions of North America**

**Thursday 11/2**

-Pgs. 441-464

**-Deadline to meet with me for 2<sup>nd</sup> paper topic**

**Tuesday 11/7**

-Pgs. 465-487

**-Quiz 9 Rewrites Due**

**Thursday 11/9**

-PDF pgs. 33-47

*-Introduction to Indigenous Religions*

**Tuesday 11/14**

-PDF pgs. 48-63

*-Metal from the Dirt*

**Atheism**

**Thursday 11/16**

-Pgs. 491-513

**-LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW**

**Friday 11/15**

**-Quiz 10 due by 11:59 PM**

**Tuesday 11/21**

-Pgs. 514-534

**-Quiz 11 will open, it will be due by Friday 11/24 11:59 PM**

**-Quiz 10 Rewrites Due**

**-2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Due by 11:59 P.M.**

**Thursday 11/23**

**-Holiday break, no class!**

**-Quiz 11 Rewrites Due**

## *New (Old) Religions, Syncretic Traditions and Neopaganisms*

### **Tuesday 11/28**

- Origins of Neopagan Movements
- Regional Differentiations
- Quiz 11 Rewrites Due**

### **Thursday 11/30**

- Neopaganism and Ecology
- Neopaganism and Music
- Nordic Animism*

### **Friday 12/1**

- Quiz 12 due by 11:59 PM**

### *Finals Week*

#### **Tuesday 12/5**

- Discussion Questions due by 1:00 PM**
- Quiz 12 Rewrites Due by 1:00 PM**
- Enjoy the winter break!

## **ADDITIONAL COURSE NOTES & COLLEGE POLICIES**

**Writing Lab:** I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library, first floor). Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, please call 843.953.5635 or visit <http://csl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab/>.

**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.

**Late Policy:** Late assignments will lose 10% of the intended grade per 24-hour period that they are late. For example, a paper turned in one-day late that would have received a score of 89, will lose 8.9 points.

**SNAP:** If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please present a letter from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more



information regarding accommodation and the SNAP program, see: <http://www.cofc.edu/~cgs/index.htm>.

**Academic Integrity Statement:** Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed both by the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: <http://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/>."

**Netiquette & Tech:** This class is online and synchronous. Reliable internet and a camera & microphone are **required**. If you need help getting either of these resources, check out the IT page: <https://it.cofc.edu/laptops/>. This has resources for loaner computers, financial aid for tech, etc. **Please do not join our online class meeting on your phone.** It can be distracting for you, for others, and for me. If there are circumstances beyond your control where you need to "phone in" (i.e. an emergency has precluded you from having your computer) let me know one-day in advance (if possible). Finally, I want to be thoughtful, gracious, and strategic about requiring camera usage/non-usage. I would really like to encourage camera usage. Studies have found that students who see each other during online courses are more likely to be engaged and to participate. I want you all to feel safe in my "classroom" which includes feeling comfortable keeping cameras on. Embrace the fun and unexpected moments of an online, camera-on class. You all will likely see my dogs walking around or hear the faint sound of a leaf-blower outside. Let's create an environment that is safe, comfortable, and filled with laughter at the expected.

**OAKS:** OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

**CLASS RECORDINGS:** Class sessions will be recorded via both voice and video recording. By attending and remaining in this class, the student consents to being recorded. Recorded class sessions are for instructional use only and may not be shared with anyone who is not enrolled in the class

**MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING:** At the college, we take every students' mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at <http://counseling.cofc.edu> or 843.953.5640 3<sup>rd</sup> Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit <http://counseling.cofc.edu/cct/index.php>, or meet with them in person 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health.

**FOOD AND HOUSING RESOURCES:**

Many CofC students report experiencing food and housing insecurity. If you are facing challenges in securing food (such as not being able to afford groceries or get sufficient food to eat every day) and housing (such as lacking a safe and stable place to live), please contact the Dean of Students for support (<http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/about/salt.php>). Also, you can go to <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/student-food-housing-insecurity/index.php> to learn about food and housing assistance that is available to you. In addition, there are several resources on and off campus to help. You can visit the Cougar Pantry in the Stern Center (2nd floor), a student-run food pantry that provides dry-goods and hygiene products at no charge to any student in need. Please consider reaching out if you need more assistance.

**Syllabus Contract and Expectations (5 pts.):**

While I expect certain things of you in the course, participation, attendance, timeliness, and good engagement, you also should and could expect certain things of me. Think of the syllabus as a **tool** and also a **contract**. First, the syllabus is a tool. It can offer answers and solutions to problems. The syllabus can help you piece together the course to create an entire picture of what the final product will look like. Look to the syllabus first. Second, the syllabus is a contract. The syllabus says, to you, "This is what Professor Fitzgerald expects of you." There's nothing sneaky, tricky, or underhanded about it. But, the syllabus also holds me accountable to you. You know what to expect of me with regard to office hours, email response time, assignment expectations, and grade performance. Your first assignment will be to return this page to me, uploaded as an assignment (Syllabus Contract), and signed (typed name is fine).

I can expect you:

- To show up to class on time and ready to participate/listen.
- To be attentive and engaged for lectures and discussions

- To spend an appropriate amount of time on our readings, podcasts, videos, assignments, etc. each week.
- To turn in your quiz on time each week
- To do your quiz in the way it was intended: without notes and without “cheating”
- To engage with all parts of the material even if you may disagree
- To **ASK FOR HELP**.

You can expect me:

- To start and end class on time
- To answer emails within 24-48 hours during weekdays, and within 72 hours of weekends
- To assign readings, videos, movies, or podcasts that cover the material, are the appropriate reading level, and that are informative and engaging
- To give assignments that are fruitful, reflective of the material, and helpful to your overall construction of the course.
- Be available during the week to offer help

Signed (by professor): Padraic M. Fitzgerald (he/him)

Signed (by student):