Course Description and Goals
This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion in general, and a comparative survey of the major world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course will examine each religious tradition thematically by focusing on some of its myths, doctrines, rituals, social institutions, ethical teachings, religious experiences, and its material symbols. These dimensions will be explored primarily through literature. We will read excerpts from the classical scriptures of each tradition, in addition to more recent articles, short stories, and excerpts from novels. We will also make use of documentary films to gain insight into the world views of individuals and the cultural worlds they inhabit. Goals for students enrolled in this course are: 1) to broaden one’s understanding of religion; 2) to gain empathy and an appreciation for the diversity of religions; 3) to foster critical thinking about religions and worldviews; and 4) to make what is strange seem familiar, and what is familiar seem strange.

Course Requirements

- **Completion of required reading assignments prior to lecture**
  It is strongly recommended that you read the entire weekly assignment the weekend before we study the topic in class. This will help you understand the lectures, and you can then go back and study specific readings in more detail as well as your class notes. There is one required textbook: *Sacred Texts of the World: A Universal Anthology*, ed. by Ninian Smart and Richard Hecht, available at the CofC Bookstore for $34.95 new. There is also a Required Coursepack, with articles, short stories and selections from novels. It is available on Electronic Reserve online: ereserve.cofc.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?page=instr under Bjerken and RELS 105. You will need the password to access the material: darshan This is a Sanskrit word meaning “seeing, knowing, philosophical view, doctrine”

- **Regular attendance at lecture, and participation in class discussions**
  There will be 3 allowed absences; 4 or more absences will negatively affect your grade. If you have excused absences (illness, emergency) please let me know and contact the Undergraduate Dean’s Office to document the reason for your absence. You are responsible for making up any absences; get any notes on missed lectures from classmates.

- **Midterm Exam on March 1 (25% of grade)**

- **Final Exam on May 3 (section 02) and May 5 (section 03) (25%)**
  Exams consist of multiple choice, short answer, identification of scriptural passages, and essay. The final exam is not comprehensive, but deals with the material from the second half of the semester. If you miss an exam and provide a documented excuse, I do give makeup tests, but they are harder than the original tests. An unexcused missed exam counts as a 0.

- **One essay of 6-7 pages (25%)**
  This essay will be based upon a topic to be assigned in advance. It is due without fail on April 21 in class.
• **Quizzes and Weekly Question Cards (25%)**

There will be occasional quizzes (announced in advance) and regular homework assignments. Every Tuesday you are to bring to class a thoughtful, written question and/or reflection related to the assigned reading for that week. The question or reflection should be written on a 3x5 card, and be based on a topic or issue that you have found puzzling, thought-provoking, challenging, or interesting. The questions should not simply ask for factual information, but raise significant issues or express concerns about the topic that are important to you.

**Grading Scale:**

- **A** 90-100 points
- **B+** 86-89 points
- **B** 80-85 points
- **C+** 76-80 points
- **C** 70-75 points
- **D** 60-70 points
- **F** Below 60

**Academic Integrity**: There is a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty in this course. This means that anyone caught taking credit for work that is not his or her own, or cheating in any other way, will receive a **failing grade for the entire course**. Note that ignorance of the policy is not considered a mitigating circumstance. I will provide a handout that discusses the ethics of learning, intellectual honesty and plagiarism to remove any ambiguity about what this zero-tolerance policy entails.

**Lecture Topics and Reading Schedule for RELS 105**

This schedule of topics and the list of readings is tentative. Abbreviations will be used in listing the required reading: selections from the textbook anthology *Sacred Texts of the World (STW)* list the page numbers; selections from the sources on Electronic Reserve [ER] are numbered.

1/13   Introduction: What is a “World Religion?” How do we study them?

**Week 1    Classical Hindu Philosophy in India**

1/18   The Multiple Dimensions of World Religions: Making the Familiar Seem Foreign  
(ER #1-3: “The Importance of Understanding the World’s Worldviews”; “Body Rituals among the Nacirema;” “The Sacred Rac”)  
**Quiz on Seven Dimensions of Religion**

1/20   The Worldview of Classical Hinduism: What is Real, What is Illusory?  
(*STW: 192-193, 195-196; ER #4: “The Indian Life”*)

**Week 2    Hindu Society and Devotion**

1/25   The Hindu Social Order: The Caste System  
(*STW: 212-215; begin ER #5 Darshan*)  
Video: 330 Million Gods

1/27   Hindu Image Veneration and Devotion: Are Hindus “Idolators?”  
(*STW: 193-195; ER #5: Darshan*)
Week 3  Jain and Buddhist Models of Renunciation

2/1 Jain Asceticism and Renunciation
(STW: 278-9, 287-289; ER #6: Chapter 1-2 of A River Sutra)

2/3 The Life of the Buddha and his First Teachings
(STW: 233-235, 237-38, 243; ER #7: “Buddhism and Elephants” and “The Buddha”)

Week 4  Buddhist Philosophy and Meditation

2/8 Buddhist Philosophy and Ethics
(STW: 236-37, 269-271; ER #8: “The Four Noble Truths” and “Ethics”)

2/10 Buddhist Meditation
(STW: 259-264; ER #9-10: “Meditation” and “Buddhist Meditation”)
Video: In the Footprints of the Buddha

Week 5  Buddhism in East Asia

2/15 The Mahayana Buddhist Pantheon and Paradises
“Passages on Pure Land Buddhism”)
Quiz on Indian religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism)

2/17 Life in a Zen Buddhist Monastery: Site of Enlightenment or Buddhist Boot Camp?
(STW: 247-250; ER #14-15: “My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk” and “Rites of
Passage: Ordination at Pao-hua Shan”)

Week 6  Confucianism in China and Japan

2/22 Confucianism: Religion or Humanistic Ethics?
(STW: 305-307, 311-312, 315; ER #18: “The Master Kung”)

2/24 The Confucian Character of the Corporate World in Japan Today
(ER #19: “Continuing Education”)

Week 7  Religion in Japan Today

3/1 MIDTERM

3/3 Buddhism and New Religions in Contemporary Japan
Video: The Yamaguchi Story

3/8-10 Spring Break
Week 8  The Rise of Monotheism: Biblical Judaism

3/15   Early Judaism and the Revelations of the Prophets  
       (*STW* 45-50, 53-54, 74-75; ER #20: “A History of the Jewish People”)  

3/17   Jewish Worship and Rituals  
       (*STW*: 52, 64-5, 69-71; ER #21, 23: “Jewish Beliefs and Practices;” “Rabbi Hanina ben Dossa”)  

Week 9  Judaism in the Diaspora and the Life and Teachings of Jesus

3/22   Hasidic Judaism in America Today  
       (ER #24: “Introduction” and “Judaism in the Twenty-First Century”)  
       Video: *A Life Apart*  

3/24   Who Was Jesus? The Quest for the Historical Jesus  
       (*STW*: 93-97, 102-104; ER #25: “Christianity: Jesus Christ is Lord”)  

Week 10  Early Christianity

3/29   Early Christian Creeds and the Seven Sacraments  
       Video: *From Jesus to Christ*  

3/31   Medieval Monks and Mystics: a Mystery  
       (*STW*: 97-99; ER #28: *The Name of the Rose*, pp. 40-97)  
       Short paper on *The Name of the Rose* due in class  

Week 11  The Protestant Reformation and Early Islam

4/5    Protestant Christianity from the Reformation to American Fundamentalism Today  
       (*STW*: 104-106; ER #29: “Are You a Christian?”)  

4/7    Life and Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad  
       (*STW*: 130-132, 142-144, 174-176; ER #30: “Islam: There is no god but God”)  

Week 12  Islam: Mecca and Jihad

4/12   Islam’s Five Pillars and the Pilgrimage to Mecca  
       (*STW*: 150-158; ER #31: “Mecca”)  
       Video: *The Hajj: One American’s Pilgrimage*  

4/14   Islam, Nationalism, and Jihad  
       (ER #32: “Islam in Today’s World”)  
       Quiz on Judaism, Christianity and Islam
Week 13  Religion in the Contemporary America

4/19  The Religious Dimensions of American Nationalism  
      (*SW: 381-382, 391; ER #33: “The Nature of Secular Worldviews”)

4/21  New Religious Movements in the USA: Religion on the Road in the Twenty-first Century  
      Video: Road Scholar  
      Term Paper Due!

Week 14  Walking in Another’s Moccasins: New Age “Indian” Religion in America

4/26  Overcoming Spiritual Colonialism: The New-Age Religion of the “Wannabe” Tribe  
      (ER #34: “Wanting to be Indian”)  
      Video: White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men

FINAL EXAM  Section 002 (TR 12:15) on May 3 (Tuesday)  12-3 pm
SCHEDULE    Section 003 (TR 1:40) on May 5 (Thursday)  12-3 pm
Important Terms and Concepts for the Study of World Religions

Note: These are technical terms that you must know in order to do well on the exams and quizzes. Keep this list handy as you read the assignments, and write down their definitions and meanings. This list is subject to change.

**Hinduism**: samsara, karma, reincarnation, maya, yoga, Brahman, atman, Upanishads dharma, caste system, the Four Stages of Life, sannyasin darshan, bhakti, aniconic, puja, Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva)

**Jainism**: Jina, Mahavira, Fordmaker, shramana, asceticism, ahimsa, kevala

**Buddhism**: Shakyamuni, Siddhartha, Gotama, Four Noble Truths, Three Marks of Existence (impermanence, no-self [anatman], suffering), Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) the Middle Way, nirvana, arhat, bodhisattva, Hinayana, Mahayana, concentration, insight emptiness, skillful means, Buddha field, Western Pure Land, Amitabha, zazen, koan

**Confucianism**: K'ung tzu, Analects, ancestor worship, filial piety, ritual propriety (li) five relationships, benevolence (jen/ren), mandate of heaven

**Judaism**: Judea, Jerusalem, Israel, Yahweh, Moses, Tanakh, Torah, Diaspora, Exodus, Passover Biblical vs. Rabbinic Judaism, covenant with Abraham/Moses, circumcision, 10 Commandments Temple in Jerusalem, Ark of the Covenant, bar mitzvah, kosher, synagogue, Shabbat, gentile Shema, phylacteries, Hasidic Judaism, rabbi, devekhut, Rabbi Hanina ben Dossa, Essenes

**Christianity**: Christ, Messiah, Son of God, Synoptic Gospels, Jesus and Judaism in Matthew’s Gospel, Resurrection, creed, dogma, heresy, Nicene Creed, Trinity, Book of Revelation Apocalypse, Benedictine Rule, St Francis, Orders, Inquisition, indulgences, Reformation, Luther, justification by faith, Calvin, predestination, fundamentalism, Legalist vs non-legalist Christianity

**Islam**: Islam, Muslim, Muhammad, “Seal of the Prophets,” Khadija, Gabriel, Mecca, Ka’ba Medina, umma, mosque, Allah, Ninety-Nine Names, Qur’an, Arabic, Hadith, Five Pillars: (Kalima, Salat, Fasting, Zakat, Hajj), Haji, Ramadan, Jihad, theocracy, purdah

**Nationalism and New Age Nature religion**: nation-building myths, the church/state relationship, theocracy, shamanism, vision quests, spiritual materialism, cultural appropriation

**Terms for the Academic Study of Religion**: Seven Dimensions of Religion monism, monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, dualism, monotheism, theodicy numinous vs. mystical experience, Prophet, orthodoxy, orthodoxy, hagiography, exegesis, canon scripture, interfaith dialogue, pluralism, atheism, humanism, ecumenicism, eclecticism

**Terms to Avoid**: supernatural, superstition, primitive, irrational, idolatry, devil worship
## INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS: RELS 105 SPRING 2005
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**Week 1: The Academic Study of Religions and Classical Hindu Philosophy**
3. “The Sacred Rac” an article of unknown authorship but it is widely available on the Web. See [http://pittsford.monroe.edu/staffweb/lyons/Unit1/u1The%20RAC.htm](http://pittsford.monroe.edu/staffweb/lyons/Unit1/u1The%20RAC.htm)

**Week 2: Hindu Society and Devotion**

**Week 3: Jain and Buddhist Models of Renunciation**

**Week 4: Buddhist Meditation and Philosophy**

**Week 5: Buddhism in East Asia**
15. “Rites of Passage: Ordination at Pao-hua Shan” from *The Experience of Buddhism*, ed. by John S. Strong, pp. 312-316.

**Week 6: Confucianism in China and Japan**
16. 17.
Week 8: The Rise of Monotheism

Week 9: Judaism in the Diaspora and the Life and Teachings of Jesus

Week 10: Early Christianity

Week 11: The Protestant Reformation and the Life and Teachings of Muhammad
30. Mary Pat Fisher, “Islam: There is no god but God” from Living Religions, pp. 361-375.

Week 12: Islam: Mecca and Jihad

Week 13: Religion in Contemporary America

Week 14: Walking in Another’s Moccasins: New Age “Indian” Religion in America
34. Myke Johnson, “Wanting to be Indian: When Spiritual Teaching Turns into Cultural Theft,” 1995. Essay available from RESPECT Inc. (Responsible Ethics for Spirituality - Project to End Cultural Theft) P. O. Box 2516, Boston, MA 02130.