

**College of Charleston**  
**Department of Religious Studies**  
**Fall 2007**

**RELS 105-006: INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS**  
MWF 1-1:50, ECTR 103

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler  
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Office Hours: M, T, W, F 2-3 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. We will read one primary text from each religious tradition, as well as watch short films and hear from experts from the College's faculty. The class is structured around the courses offered by the College of Charleston's Department of Religious Studies. Ten 200-level courses, and one 300-level course will be introduced to the students of this course, at the rate of one per week. The last week of class we will re-visit a topic in more depth. That topic will be chosen by the students.

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 **required text** is available at the C of C and the University bookstores:  
*World Religions Today*, second edition. By Esposito, Fasching, and Lewis  
ISBN 0-19-517699-5

There are also weekly readings on Electronic Reserve online at [ereserve.cofc.edu](http://ereserve.cofc.edu) under my name (Siegler, Elijah). You will need the password: You should print out these readings. Please bring the book and/or printout to class.

**Course Requirements:**

- \*Attend class regularly and on-time, ready to discuss the reading and ask questions: **5%**
- \*Submit two 3-4 pp. papers: 15% x2 = **30%**
- \* Be prepared for a total of seven "surprise" quizzes (which will be announced the class before), of which the best five will count: **25%**
- \* Take a midterm exam on October 12: **20%**
- \* Take 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.

All work must be original and all sources correctly cited. The university's honor code will be strictly enforced. 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 8/22: What is this class about?

Fri 8/24: Why study religion?

Read: Studyreligion.org

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

Mon 8/27: What do Modernization and Colonialism have to do with religion?

Read: 3-16, 22-33

Wed 8/29: Psychological Theories of Religion: Freud and James

Read: ER #1

Fri 8/31: Social Theories of Religion: Tylor, Marx and Durkheim

Read: ER #2; 42-45

### **UNIT III: The Jewish Tradition (see also RELS 225)**

Mon 9/3: What is Judaism?

Read: 65-88

Wed 9/5: Historical Development of Judaism

Read: 89-97; 116-120

Fri 9/7: Reading Jewish Texts

Special Guest: Dr. Joshua Shanes

Read: 98-100; ER #3

### **UNIT IV: The Christian Tradition (see also RELS 230)**

Mon 9/10: What is Christianity?

Read: 131-150

Wed 9/12: From Augustine to John Wesley  
Special Guest: Prof. Louise Doire  
Read: 151-164; ER #4

Fri 9/14: Global Christianity Today  
Read: 167-177; 182-188

**UNIT V: The Islamic Tradition (see also RELS 235)**

Mon 9/17: What is Islam?  
Read: 195-217; 219-222

Wed 9/19: Islamic Law and Islamic Mysticism  
Special Guest: Dr. Margaret Cormack  
Read: 223-231; ER # 5

Fri 9/21: Islamic Revivalism Today  
Read: 233-254; 260-267

**UNIT VI: The Religions of India (see also RELS 245)**

Mon 9/24: What is Hinduism?  
Read: 271-294

Wed 9/26: Historical Development of Hinduism  
Special Guest: Dr. June McDaniel  
Read: 301-317; ER #6

Fri 9/28: Hindu Practice Today  
Read: 321-337

**UNIT VII: The Buddhist Tradition (see also RELS 240)**

Mon 10/1: What is Buddhism?  
Read: 341-361

Wed 10/3: The Rise of Mahayana  
Read: 361-380; ER #7 **FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

Fri 10/5: Varieties of Buddhism Today  
Special Guest: Dr. Zeff Bjerken  
385-391; 392-396; 406-413

**UNIT VIII: Catching Our Breaths**

Mon 10/8: Catch-Up, Discussion, and Midterm Review

Wed 10/10: Watch Films for Midterm  
Read: 101-102; 380-383

Fri 10/12: **Midterm Exam**

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

Monday 10/15: FALL BREAK

Wed 10/17: What are East Asian Religions?  
Read: 417-437

Fri 10/19: Religion and the State  
Read: 438-459: ER # 8

Mon 10/22: East Asian Religious Practice Today  
Read: 463-481; 489-492

**UNIT X: Native American Religions (see also RELS 260)**

Wed 10/24: What is Native American Religion?  
Read: ER #9

Fri 10/26: The Visionary Tradition  
Special Guest: Dr. Lee Irwin  
Read: ER #10

Mon 10/29: Shamans and “White Shamans”  
Read: 46-59

**UNIT XI: Religions in America (see also RELS 250)**

Wed 10/31: What is religion in America?  
Read: ER #11

Fri 11/2: Religious Diversity in America  
Read: 102-108; 188-191; 254-256; 259-260; 391; 404-405

Mon 11/5: Does America Have a Civil Religion?  
Read: ER #12

**UNIT XII: African-American Religions (see also RELS 270)**

Wed 11/7: What is African-American Religion?  
Read: ER #13

Optional Evening Event for Extra Credit: Three Rabbi Panel on Jewish Views of Torah  
7:30 PM Stern Center Ballroom

Fri 11/9: African American Islam and Afro-Caribbean Religions  
Special Guest: Dr. Eric Thomas  
Read: 256-259; ER #14

**UNIT XIII: New Religious Movements (see also RELS 315)**

Mon 11/12: What are New Religious Movements?  
Read: ER #15

Wed 11/14: New Religions in America  
Read: 497-513

Fri 11/16: How do New Religions develop?

Mon 11/19: Study Day  
**SECOND PAPER DUE IN PROF'S MAILBOX AT 14 GLEBE ST.**

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Mon 11/26: New Religions in Asia  
Read: 459-463; 481-486; 514-519

**UNIT XIV: Class Choice!**

Wed 11/28: Class Choice  
Read: ER # 16

Fri 11/30: Class Choice  
Read: ER #17

Mon 12/3: Final Discussion and Exam Review

**The final exam is on Tues December 11, from noon to 3 PM**

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.

**Help for writing papers**

There are good resources from your very own Department of Religious Studies at the College of Charleston, on how to write a religious studies paper:

[http://www.cofc.edu/~rels/research\\_resources.htm](http://www.cofc.edu/~rels/research_resources.htm)

The Center for Student Learning has writing labs and can arrange individual tutoring for this particular class:

<http://www.cofc.edu/~csl/>

953-5635