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

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler
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Office: 4 Glebe St. Entryway C
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.

There are also weekly readings on Electronic Reserve online at 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

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

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

953-5635