Instructor: Todd LeVasseur
Office: 4A Glebe St., Room 102 (office of Dr. Margaret Cormack)
Office Hours: MWF 11:10am to 12:30 pm or by appointment (email works best)
Email: levasseurtj@cofc.edu (I typically respond to emails within 24 hours)
Lectures: Section .005: MWF 9:00 to 9:50am, ECTR 219, Section .006: MWF 10:00 to 10:50am, ECTR 219; Section .007: MWF 3:00 to 3:50pm, MYBK 108
Credits: 3 Semester Hours (fulfills core requirement for Religion Major or Minor)
***Any student may email me for a copy of my teaching philosophy.***

Course Description and Instructional Format: This course is designed to introduce College of Charleston students to some of the diverse religious traditions extant on our planet. The course is a mixture of lectures, videos, open class discussion, and small group discussion. The course is designed so that the student, by the end of the semester, has gained an appreciation and understanding of some of the world’s major religions and why such an understanding is important for both a liberal arts education and also to being a world citizen.

Course Goals and Objectives: Specific goals of the course are as follows:

1. To introduce students to the academic study of religion, including a brief exposure to key theorists and various methodologies for studying religion.
2. To gain a basic level of understanding and knowledge about a variety of world religions, including their historical development and current manifestations, as well as learning about key figures, sacred texts, important terms, and foundational concepts for a variety of world religions.
3. To gain an appreciation for the complex, myriad, and often times contentious ways in which religion has shaped politics, from ancient to modern times and from local to global levels.
4. To help students encounter religious traditions outside of those in which they were raised/are most familiar with.

Specific objectives of the course are as follows:

1. To facilitate the development of critical thinking skills regarding the study of world religions.
2. To expose students to some of the world religions located in the Charleston area.
3. To develop comfort in working with small groups and participating in class discussions.

Required Texts: Available at the CofC and University bookstores (and most likely used copies on-line):

There are also required readings that will be made available on OAKS. These readings are to be printed out and brought to class for discussion. You should bring all assigned readings (book or on-line) to class for they day they are assigned, as this is when you should raise questions about any content you did not understand.

Requirements, Expectations, and Resources:
1) Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each lecture. If you are more than 5 minutes late to class, you will be counted as absent for that day. Tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. Notes or discussion of class material that have already been covered will not be provided by the instructor for any student. It is your responsibility to be present and to be to class on time. Only excused absences render the above moot. After 3 unexcused absences of any kind, your grade drops by 1/3 letter (i.e. A to A-, C- to D+, etc.) for each successive absence. After 5 unexcused absences (i.e. your 6th unexcused absence), you will receive a WA and be dropped from the course. It is the student’s responsibility to approach the College in order to receive a “documented” excuse, which the College emails me. Undocumented excuses count as an absence. Please observe the totality of this attendance policy. Keep in mind that you must attend the section in which you are enrolled. Lecture notes will not be shared and/or repeated, so it is your responsibility to contact other students to receive copies of notes for classes you have missed. Students are able to come to the office to borrow a copy of .ppt lectures if they were present the day of the lecture and were not able to fully capture all of the material during a lecture. .Ppt’s will not be made available online.

2) Common Courtesy: As stated by the Code of Conduct in the CofC Student Handbook, cell phones, personal computers, and other electronic devices must be turned off during the whole class period. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (i.e. whispering, reading a newspaper, surfing the web, texting messages, etc.) to leave the class. Repeat violations of these rules will result in dismissal from the class. Each time a person is caught texting messages during class or engaging in activities on their computer that are not related to the immediate class lecture (such as checking Facebook or sending email), they will be required to write a 10 page research paper of the professor’s choosing. Failure to complete this paper will result in an incomplete grade for the course.

3) Honor Code: On all work submitted for credit by students at CofC, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The legal code of the College specifically prohibits plagiarism, cheating, bribing, conspiracy, misrepresentation, and fabrication. If it is proven that any student has committed any of the above infractions of the honor code, then that student will automatically fail the course with an XF. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action. Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration (working together without permission) is a form of cheating.
4) Accommodation for Disabilities: To request classroom accommodation, you must first register with the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. This office will provide you with documentation that you will then provide to me when you request accommodation. For more information, please see http://www.cof.cedu/~cds/index.htm

5) Counseling Resources, a writing lab, and a career resource center are all available to CofC students and are staffed with trained professionals.

6) Assignments: Your grade will be determined based on the performance you exhibit for the following:

1. Class participation—This includes attendance and how often and how well you contribute to class discussions and small group discussions. Included in this grade is performance on pop-quizzes that will be 3 to 5 questions and will occur during the first 5 minutes of class. These quizzes will be based on assigned readings and are open note (i.e., these are not open book, but if you have taken notes on the readings, then you can have access to your notes to help answer the quiz questions). 10% of grade

2. Paper assignments—
   A) You are to prepare a short paper of 1,150 to 1,250 words that compares and contrasts an aspect of two separate traditions. Topics include pilgrimage sites; holy figures; sacred texts; concepts of the afterlife; rites of passage; and so on. Due at the beginning of class on Monday, 10/3. 12.5% of grade
   B) You are to visit a place of worship somewhere in the Charleston area and write a paper about your experience. A hard copy of this is due on Wed., 11/16 at the start of class. I will email more information on this assignment in February and we will discuss it in class. 17.5% of grade
   a. Hard copies of both assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned day; late papers will be marked down 1/3 grade for every 24 hours they are late from the start of class period; late papers must be a hard copy, either handed to me directly or placed in my mailbox in the Religious Studies Office. Only pre-arranged emailed copies will be accepted.

3. Tests—There will be four tests spread throughout the semester. These are not cumulative, and will consist of fill in the blank, multiple choice, matching, short answer, and/or essay questions. 10% for first test, 15% for second and third tests, 20% for final exam, for 60% of grade.

4. Extra Credit—There will be options for extra credit as the semester develops. Most likely these will include attending guest lectures, watching movies, writing book reviews (worth 1.5 points each), and/or analyzing a current source of conflict over religion that is garnering media attention. Extra credit summaries of these events must be 250 to 350 words and contain three things you have learned about religion and contain connections to what we have covered in class. Each student may earn a total of 4 possible extra credit points that are added onto their final score. The final day to turn in extra credit work is the final day of class.
Grading Scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 88-89; B: 83-87; B-: 80-82; C+: 78-79; C: 73-77; C-: 70-72; D+: 68-69; D: 63-67; D-: 61-62; F: 60.49 or below (all grades ending in .5 or higher are rounded up to the next point)

Course Schedule  [the assigned reading is to be read by the meeting time indicated; for example, pgs. 19-30 are to be read by the beginning of class on Wed., 8/31.]

Unit 1: What is Religion? Why should we study religion?
- W 8/24 1st class
- F 8/26: OAKS: read Pluralism Project case study “Branding a Hero;” OAKS: read Ninian Smart on Religion
- M 8/29: read Molloy, chapter 1, pgs. 1-19; [http://studyreligion.org/]

Unit 2: South Asian religions (that have since gone global)
- F 9/2: History of India and rise of “Hinduism;” read chapter 3, pgs. 75-92; OAKS—vocabulary list for Hinduism
- M 9/5: read pgs. 92-120
- W 9/7: [discuss paper assignments #1; study guide added to OAKS]
  - [http://www.amritapuri.org/](http://www.amritapuri.org/) website for Amma
  - [http://saibaba.org/](http://saibaba.org/) website for Sai Baba
  - OAKS: encyclopedia entries on Dharma, Karma, and Bhakti
- F 9/9  OAKS, read Thomas Hopkins, “Hindu Views of Death and Afterlife”
- M 9/12: study, finish any unread readings for Unit 2
- W 9/14: test #1
- F 9/16: read chapter 4, pgs. 125-142; OAKS: reading about India at the time of Buddhism’s origins
- M 9/19: read pgs. 142-175
- W 9/21: read pgs. 178-184; encyclopedia entry on Merit
- F 9/23: OAKS: selections from What the Buddha Never Taught and from The Gods Drink Whiskey
- M 9/26 OAKS: no reading; wrap up Buddhism; work on paper #1

Unit 3: Asian and East Asian Religions (which have spread, but not as much as South Asian, and we’ll discuss why)
- W 9/28: Brief history of China; read chapter 6, pgs. 213-17; OAKS: selections from Keith Stevens Chinese Mythological Gods
- F 9/30: read chapter 6, pgs. 234-258; study guide added to OAKS
- M 10/3 : paper #1 due, discuss paper #2
- W 10/5: test #2

Unit 4: “Abrahamic” religions
- F 10/7: The ancient Greek world; begin chapter 8, pgs. 289-311
- M 10/10: The early Israelites; chapter 8, continue pgs. 289-311
- W 10/12: pgs. 311-321; OAKS: selections from Walking the Bible
- F 10/14: pgs. 321-338
- FALL BREAK—do something fun! And while taking a break, read: OAKS selection about Jewish prayer
- W 10/19: Early Christianity; chapter 9, pgs.342-362
- F 10/21: Christianity in the Middle Ages, pgs. 362-383
- M 10/24: Protestant Reformation, pgs. 383-398
- W 10/26: pgs. 398-417; study guide added to OAKS
- F 10/28: OAKS reading on Women and Christianity
- M 10/31: wrap up Christianity
- W 11/2: Test #3
- M 11/7: pgs. 438-452
- W 11/9: pgs. 462-484
- M 11/14: OAKS: readings on arriving to Mecca for the Hajj; historical timeline and key legal schools; passages from the Quran
- W 11/16: paper #2 due; wrap up Islam

Unit 5: New Religious Movements; Globalized Religion
- F 11/18: OAKS: David Loy’s article “Religion of the Market” (Study guide for final exam put on OAKS)
- NO CLASS week of November 20th through 27th—have a safe break!
- 12/2: Conclusion of class
- *****You will be required to know some of the content for Chapter 11 from Molloy for the final exam; this will NOT be covered in class, but the study guide gives hints as to what parts of the chapter you will need to know. You might want to look at this over Thanksgiving break.

- Final Exam—held in the same room as lectures (You MUST take your exam during your scheduled time. *No exceptions will be made.*)
  - .005 Wed, Dec. 14th 8am-11am
  - .006 Wed, Dec 7th 8am-11am
  - .007 Mon, Dec 12th 12pm-3pm