Intro to World Religions RELS105
Section 005: MWF 9:00 – 9:50 AM, ECTR 103
Section 006 MWF 12:00 – 12:50 PM, ECTR 219

Contact
Dr. Courtney Tepera
teperacs@cofc.edu
My mailbox: 4 Glebe St, Main Office

Drop In Office Hours: 10 – 11 AM M/W or by appointment
My office: 4B Glebe Street, Room 206

Office hours are the best way to contact me, followed by email. Drop in without an appointment during office hours or to make an appointment for another time. I usually respond to email within 1 business day.

Course Description
This course provides a basic introduction to prominent religious traditions and how they have impacted the world around them. We will focus primarily on Buddhism, Christianity, East Asian Traditions, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Yoruba. We will study these religions as cultural phenomena and repositories of knowledge. Through our study of the interaction of religion and the modern world we will increase your appreciation of the specific challenges faced by each and build your knowledge base and functional vocabulary as a well-rounded student.

This class will consist of a mixture of lecture, discussion, group work, and student activities. It is essential that you attend class on a regular basis and come to class prepared. To help you come prepared, there will be weekly quizzes administered on the website for this course. The website will also have the syllabus and any handouts distributed during class. Make sure you are familiar with it.

Prerequisites
None.

Course Goals
By the end of the semester, the successful student of this course will:
• Understand, interpret, and contextualize primary texts from one or more religious traditions
• Demonstrate an appreciation of the diversity of human religious experience and the challenges faced by religious traditions in the today’s world, particularly the interaction between religion and culture.
• Demonstrate effective writing skills with the ability to craft an argument in defense of a coherent thesis statement using and analyzing supporting evidence from primary and secondary sources.
• Recognize and explain the major theoretical perspectives and key issues of debate in the academic study of religion
• Come to a better understanding of themselves as religious or non-religious individuals and to a better understanding of the role of religion in the life of others, able to interact with others about religion in a positive way.

This course also satisfies the General Education Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted and 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

These two Gen. Ed. learning outcomes will be assessed in the Site Visit Assignment (20% of grade).
Required Materials
Readings on the OAKS course website

Any edition of the textbooks is acceptable as long as it is relatively recent. You will need reliable internet access regularly in this class. **Computer difficulties will not be accepted as an excuse for any assignment.**

**Grading**
The relation between letter and numerical grades is as follows:

- A: 100-93  
- A-: 92-90  
- B+: 89-87  
- B: 86-83  
- B-: 82-80  
- C+: 79-77  
- C: 76-73  
- C-: 72-70  
- D+: 69-67  
- D: 62-60  
- F: 59 and below

**Grading Breakdown**
- Reading Response: 20%
- Site Visit Activity: 20%
- Exams (3 @ 20% each): 60%

**Reading Response**
You will answer a brief set of questions on OAKS for each set of assigned readings – they cover ALL of the readings for a section (the textbook and the OAKS readings). The purpose is to help you engage with the readings & prepare for discussion. They are open book and notes. *They are due before noon on the scheduled days and cannot be made up for any reason*, including computer malfunction. I will drop two of the grades.

**Site Visit Activity**
Each student will be required to visit a religious service in the Charleston area of a religion that is substantially different than your own. You will interpret your experiences in an in-class presentation and a report. Further details are attached to the end of the syllabus. Dates will be assigned later in the semester.

**Exams**
You will have 3 exams for the course. Each exam will be 20% of your grade. The exams are non-comprehensive. Exams will be a mixture of multiple choice, matching, short answer, listing, and essay questions. A study guide will be given out a week before the exam.

**Policies**

*Late Work*: No late work will be accepted for the Reading Response grades at all. Exams may only be made up within one week of the original, and only if you have proper documentation of extenuating circumstances. If you do take an exam late, you will receive a different exam than that taken by the rest of your classmates. The site visit will be docked one letter grade (10 percent of total points) for each business day it is late.

*Classroom Behavior*: While you are in class, feel free to eat and use your computer to take notes. If you disrupt the learning environment, you will be asked to leave. Cell phones should be turned off.

*Attendance*: Regular attendance is expected; a portion of your grade is dependent on your being in the classroom. If you have excused absences please contact the Undergraduate Dean’s Office to document the reason for your absence. You are responsible for making up any absences; please get any notes on missed lectures from classmates before seeking clarification from me. After 4 absences a student will be dropped and earn a WA grade, which is equal to an “F.”

*Disability Statement*: The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply at the Center for Disability Services / SNAP, located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me at least one week before any accommodation is needed.
Policy on Academic Honesty: 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. A student found responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. If you are not familiar with the details of the College Honor Code, you can find it here: http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/

Schedule of Topics and Activities
RW = Religions of the World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Related Readings &amp; Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>Syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/10, 1/12, 1/17</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Reading Response 1 (due 1/11): RW Introduction and Chapter 1 OAKS 1: Miner Body Ritual Among the Nacirema</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/19, 1/22, 1/24</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>Reading Response 2 (due 1/18): RW Chapter 2 OAKS 2: Allen - Deer Woman, Endrezzee - The Humming</td>
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<td>1/26, 1/29, 1/31, 2/2</td>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>Reading Response 3 (due 1/25): RW Chapter 3 OAKS 3: McCarthy Brown - Voodoo, Achebe - The Sacrificial Egg</td>
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<td>2/5, 2/7, 2/9, 2/12</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>Reading Response 4 (due 2/4): RW Chapter 4 OAKS 4: Narayan - The Cat Within, God and the Cobbler</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/14, 2/16, 2/19, 2/21</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Reading Response 5 (due 2/13): RW Chapter 5 &amp; 6 OAKS 5: Wheeler - Ringworm, Chinese excerpt from Monkey</td>
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<td>2/23</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>3/17-25</td>
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<td>Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exam 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/16, 4/18, 4/20</td>
<td>New(er) Religions</td>
<td>Reading Response 10 (due 4-15): RW Chapter 7 OAKS 10: Wicca, Waco, Bahai</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/23</td>
<td></td>
<td>Exam 3</td>
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Site Visit Activity

You will select a local religious site (with which you are not very familiar) from a list I will provide later in the semester and attend a service for that tradition. You will then create two deliverables for the class: a presentation & a report. In both of these deliverables, you should:

1. Describe the service you attended, with attention to religious and cultural symbols, the layout of sacred space, the sensory input, the teachings, and the conversations that you have.
2. Discuss the similarities and differences between our readings about this religion and what you encountered in your visit.

Before you go:

1. Contact the place: Keep in mind you are a guest and should be respectful. While you may be attending the service from the perspective of an objective observer, most of the other people will be attending the service as part of their religious practices. Please do the following before you go:
   a. Call the place you wish to attend and ask if it is okay to attend as an observer.
   b. Ask if there are particular clothes to wear or restrictions to be aware of.
   c. Ask if you can take pictures during the service, or before/after the service, both, or neither.
   d. Ask if someone could (or should) act as a host when you attend.
   e. Ask if anyone would be willing to speak with you after the service to explain what happened and to answer a few questions about the basics of the religion.

2. Know the tradition:
   a. Read the relevant RW chapter before you go to your site visit.
   b. Read the site’s webpage if they have one.
   c. Read about the denomination/school/branch of that particular tradition in a resource like The Hutchison Dictionary of World Religions (http://libcat.cofc.edu/record=b1678855?).
   d. If anything in it confuses you or we haven’t talked about it in class yet, come chat with me.

During your visit:

1. Get there early. You want to get a feel for the space before the activities start.
2. Take notes while you’re there. Write down descriptions, observations, quotations. Try to capture a sense of what is going on:
   a. What is the religious space like? Does it have a particular architectural style? How is it decorated? Are there statues, alters, candles, paintings, pamphlets?
   b. What are the people like? Old or young? Are there children? How many people are there? Where do they go and who do they talk to before and after the service?
   c. What are the leaders like? Are they male or female? Are there more than one? What do they do? What do they say? What is their purpose?
   d. What activities happen during the service? Do people sit or stand or bow? Do they sing or chant? Do the people do different activities than the leaders?
   e. What worldview is encouraged by this service? Based on what they say and do, what is important to these people? What do they care deeply about? What do they believe the problem of the world is, and what solution do they propose?
3. Keep the points to be covered in your report in mind during your visit to help guide your encounter. The easiest way to understand what is important to someone else is let them tell you about their faith, their traditions, and their practices. The most important thing to do is to keep an open mind and listen.

Afterwards:
Reflect. Compare what you expected from the reading to what you experienced at the service. What is similar? What is different? If there was something you didn’t understand in the service that wasn’t covered in the reading, hit the library or my office hours to figure it out. Write your report & create your presentation.
Report:
The report should be 1000 words, in which you analyze how the ideas you encountered at the site are represented, interpreted, or valued as expressions of human culture. Each report will be evaluated on the level of writing, quality and depth of research, level of understanding of course concepts, and the soundness and complexity of the discussion. A suggested format for the report is:

a. Introduction: Your introduction should summarize the main points you plan on making in your report, and give a thesis statement that gives the specific argument you plan on making in this report: “The form of Shinto practiced at ABC Temple seemed more focused on cleanliness than what I read about, because I saw them perform several cleansing rituals.” This should be a paragraph (3-5 sentences).

b. Description of Site: Spend ~400 words giving a thick description of the site based on your observations. (an excellent resource: https://www.vanderbilt.edu/writing/wp-content/uploads/sites/164/2016/10/Taking-Good-Notes-in-the-Field.pdf)

c. Analysis of Site: Spend ~400 words here. Compare what you saw to what you read in your textbook or in outside sources from the library. You’ll need to summarize from/quote from the sources some to do this, and I expect to see footnotes. Tell me, based on what you read about this tradition, WHY you saw what you saw: what is its history, its meaning?

d. Conclusion: Resummarize your main argument in 1 paragraph.

Your report must:

• Be formatted properly: typed, double spaced, using Times New Roman font (size 12), with one-inch margins on all sides; references must be footnoted in APA, MLA, or Turabian format. I highly recommend using Zotero or a similar bibliographic program.

• Include a bibliography of used sources on a separate page. The bibliography page is not included in the required word count.

• Have the grading rubric stapled to the front, with your name on it.

• Be turned in before your presentation.

Presentation:
You will do a 15 minute presentation for the class. Your goal in this presentation is to give us a good understanding of your experiences, the history of the site, and its connection to the materials we are studying in class.

• You will provide the class with a handout containing key points, definitions of important terms, and 2 open-ended questions for discussion.

• You will create a slideshow or video to accompany your talk with pictures from the site and key facts.

Sources: No Wikipedia! The best sources for this assignment will be those found in your textbooks, at College of Charleston’s library, or in the databases of the library website such as JSTOR. The only acceptable websites to use outside of these are the official webpages of a particular group. Anything else is not scholarly, and I will dock points for use of them. If you’re at a loss for where to start, come see me.

A Word on Plagiarism: Don’t. Please re-read the Statement on Academic Honesty in your syllabus. Remember: copying fragments of internet sources/books without citing them is plagiarism and will be treated as such. Use the rule: if the wording isn’t yours, quote it; if the wording is yours but the idea isn’t yours, footnote it.

Late assignments will be docked one letter grade (10% of total points) per day late. If you’d like to turn it in early, go for it. The reports must be handed in as a hard copy in class.
### Site Visit Grading Rubric
#### RELS105 – Spring 2018 (Tepera)

**PRINT AND ATTACH TO REPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Exceptional</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Failure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site Description report &amp; presentation 30 pts</td>
<td>Shows exceptional understanding of the site; thick descriptions, insightful observations, evidence of substantial time spent at the site, conversations</td>
<td>Shows consideration in choosing the site and appropriate observations and examples.</td>
<td>Shows evidence of having visited the site, but observations are inadequate.</td>
<td>Fails to describe site, shows evidence of having not visited site, improper site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Context &amp; Analysis report &amp; presentation 30 pts</td>
<td>Places the site accurately in its historical/religious context insightfully. Shows exceptional understanding of relevant sources. Uses any quotes well, shows insight in explaining the concepts and defining terms.</td>
<td>Shows an adequate understanding of the site’s historical/religious context and the concepts and terms found in acceptable sources. Uses quotes reasonably.</td>
<td>Shows some misunderstanding of site’s historical/religious context. Mis-defines words, abuses quotes, misunderstands concepts, or mis-represents concepts.</td>
<td>Fails to use any readings/outside sources, or uses unacceptable sources. Fails to create any connection between the site and it’s context, over-summarizes without analyzing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Structure 20 pts</td>
<td>Structures the report well. Includes a well thought out thesis and defends it with substantial skill. Report is free of any major errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation, or formatting, and has &lt; 3 minor errors.</td>
<td>Report is structured in a way that integrates the material well. Flow is adequate, with overall good transitions between topics. Thesis is present and defended, with some weaknesses. Report has 3 – 6 minor errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation, or formatting, OR one major error.</td>
<td>Report has substantial errors of structure and flow. Thesis is absent or undefended. Report is choppy, disorganized, lacks analysis, or fails to achieve a coherent goal. Report has 3 – 6 minor errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation, or formatting, AND 1-2 major errors.</td>
<td>Report is stream of consciousness narrative or otherwise unacceptable. Report has excessive errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation, or formatting. Too short or long.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation Skills &amp; Deliverables 20 pts</td>
<td>Slides/video &amp; handout are exceptionally well crafted, with useful material for the class. Presenter is confident and well spoken. Discussion questions generate good discussion.</td>
<td>Slides/video &amp; handout are acceptable. Presenter is confident and well spoken with some minor errors. Discussion questions are used.</td>
<td>Slides/video &amp; handout have major errors/sloppy. Presenter reads from the slides or rambles, is clearly unprepared. Yes/no discussion questions.</td>
<td>Presentation is unacceptable, too short, too long, missing components.</td>
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**Student Grade:** _______/100

**Comments:**

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