

RELS 105 World Religions Spring 2019

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Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the idea of “World Religions” and the cultures of belief and practice to which the category refers. In service of this goal, we will examine several of the most widely practiced religious cultures, exploring both historical and contemporary practices, objects, and beliefs. As we explore this “data,” however, we will also keep in our minds two foci: (1) *the reality of variety within these religious cultures*, and (2) *the cultural and political stakeholders*. The course will be delivered using both lectures and frequent in-class discussions as well as music, film, and other media.

Course Objectives

The primary objectives of the course include:

- 1) The course aims to cultivate an appreciation for the variety of thought, practice, and values associated with many of the most dominant world religious cultures.
- 2) The course also aims to develop a critical-analytical approach to thinking about “religion” and religious cultures around the world.
- 3) Finally, the course will help students recognize the impacts of religion and religious difference in contemporary global political economy.

General Education SLOs (Student Learning Outcomes)

- 1) ***Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture.*** This SLO will be evaluated with a 5-6 page analytical, interpretive, or comparative essay worth 200 points (20% of final grade). See “Assignments” section for details and due dates.
- 2) ***Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the humanities area under study and interpret the material in writing assignments.*** This SLO will be evaluated in an interpretive “Religion in the News” writing assignment worth 150 pts (15% of final grade). See “Assignments” section for details and due dates.

Religious Studies SLOs (Student Learning Outcomes)

1. *Students will demonstrate effective writing skills with the ability to craft a persuasive argument in defense of a coherent thesis statement using and analyzing supporting evidence from primary and secondary sources.* This SLO will be evaluated with a 5-6 page analytical, interpretive, or comparative essay worth 200 points (20% of final grade). See “Assignments” section for details and due dates.

Required Texts

Prothero, Stephen. *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World*. New York: Harper One Publishers, 2010.

All other readings will be provided via OAKS Course Page

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The nature of our course requires participation, and participation requires your actual physical presence as much as is possible. To that end, I expect that you will be present and on time always. I will take attendance daily at the start of the class session, and students absent more than 6 times will be dropped from the course. In instances of extraordinary or emergency situations, please simply talk to as soon as you can about the situation and provide documentation if it is reasonable to do so.

ACCESSIBILITY

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of CofC. If any student requires assistance or academic accommodations for a disability, please contact me during office hours or by appointment as early as possible in the semester, and be sure to visit the Center for Disability Services to obtain proper documentation prior to our meeting. More information can be found at <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu>

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Religious observances will be accommodated in accordance with the Student Attendance Policy. Some care has been given to avoid obvious conflicts with prominent religious holidays. However, if you need to be absent for any given class for a specific observance please submit requests in writing to me by the end of the second week of the semester so that we can agree upon accommodations.

COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON HONOR CODE AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

If the instructor determines the student's actions are related to misunderstanding, it will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

YOU SHOULD:

- 1) Come to class regularly, on time, and prepared. Preparation means reading, *to the best of your ability and with strategy and attention*, all materials prior to the class meeting. Additionally, you should have thought critically about the materials and be ready with questions.
- 2) Put away all possible distractions including but not limited to: *cell phones, cell phones, cell phones, and cell phones*. Laptop computers will be provisionally permitted for taking notes, accessing readings, and saving trees.
- 3) Engage in discussion with classmates and professor in a way that is, affirmative, open, and above all, respectful. The classroom is a safe place to ask questions and express ideas, so never hesitate. However, words matter, and we are surrounded by differences. So, think carefully before you speak, and cultivate a curious, thoughtful, respectful way of engaging in the classroom.
- 4) Turn assignments in on time. In extraordinary circumstances, please contact me in advance or as soon as possible.

I WILL:

- 1) Always be on time, prepared, and happy to see you.
- 2) Patient, empathetic, energetic, and interesting.
- 3) Concerned about your academic success and also your personal well-being and happiness.
- 4) Fair in my policies and respectful of your time and energy.
- 5) Available throughout the semester at most times of the day (notice...not the night, though maybe) to sit with you, listen to you, and help you with whatever you need.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Our course will utilize an alternative style of grading, commonly called “Specifications Grading.” In this model of grading, each assignment will come with clear “specifications.” If those specifications are met and if the assignment is turned in on time, then it is marked as **complete**. You will receive qualitative feedback, but you will NOT receive individual grades on assignments.

Your final grade will be determined on the basis of the number of complete and incomplete assignments. Our total list of assignments can be found below:

Writing Projects

- #1 – Religion in the News
- #2 – Site Visit Paper

Discussion Threads

- 10 online semi-formal discussions.

Revisions

- 3 Revisions, one on each Project

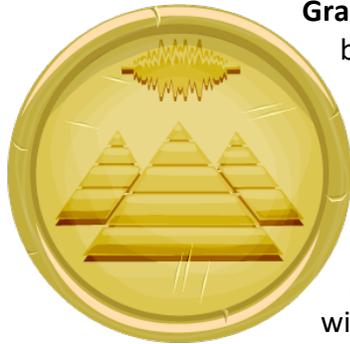
Fact-Checks (Midterm and Final Exams)

- Midterm
- Final Exam

The Grading Chart below is a guide for how to earn the final grade you desire:

FINAL GRADE EARNED	# of COMPLETE PROJECTS	# of COMPLETE DISCUSSIONS	# of PROJECT REVISIONS	# of Complete Exams
A (95%)	2 of 2	10 of 10	2 of 2	2 of 2
A -(90%)	2 of 2	10 of 10	1 of 2	2 of 2
B+ (88%)	2 of 2	9 of 10	1 of 2	2 of 2
B (85%)	2 of 2	9 of 10	0 of 2	2 of 2
B- (80%)	2 of 2	9 of 10	0 of 2	1 of 2
C+ (78%)	2 of 2	8 of 10	0 of 2	1 of 2
C (75%)	2 of 2	7 of 10	0 of 2	0 of 2
C- (70%)	2 of 2	6 of 10	0 of 2	0 of 2
D+ (68%)	1 of 2	5 of 10	0 of 2	0 of 2

D (65%)	1 of 2	5 of 10	0 of 2	0 of 2
D- (60%)	1 of 2	5 of 10	0 of 2	0 of 2
F	0 of 2	4 of 10	0 of 2	0 of 2



Grace Tokens: Each student will receive 3 magical “Graces” at the beginning of the course. **Grace Tokens** can be redeemed to submit a) a late assignment for credit or b) a redo for an “incomplete” assignment. (Note: **Tokens** cannot be redeemed after the final class period, so plan accordingly).

Starting “B”: Each student will start with an 85% B, and you will only move up or down as assignments are completed (or not). Most of you will stay at this “B” for most of the semester, as you can only climb with revisions.

Course Schedule

Week 1	INTRO	
January 9	Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Print and Bring Syllabus</u> (OAKS) • <u>Explore and Share:</u> <i>Be prepared to briefly introduce yourself to the class.</i>
January 11	Models of Thinking About Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read:</u> Horace Miner, “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” (OAKS) • <u>Explore and Share:</u> <i>Discuss the potential dangers of representing entire cultures and summarizing religious histories.</i>
Week 2	INTRO PT. 2	
January 14	What are “World Religions”?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read:</u> Nongbri, <i>Before Religion</i> (ch. 1) on OAKS • <u>Explore and Share:</u> <i>Find a “Map” of World Religions online or in the library. Examine its data sources and analyze the impact of its organization and representation</i>
January 16	Imagining “Religions”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u> Prothero, “Introduction”

January 18 Many Paths, Many Mountains

- Martian Anthropologist Exercise

****DISCUSSION #1 Due SUNDAY at 11:59pm**

Week 3 ISLAM | SUBMISSION

January 21 Abrahamic Monotheism or a Threat to Civilization? Historicizing Islam

- Read: Prothero pp 25-49
- Explore and Share: *Read and Be Prepared to Discuss* Bowker, The Qur'an (OAKS)

January 23 Life and Teachings of Muhammad; The Five Pillars of Islam

- Read: Prothero pp. 49-63

January 25 Islam in America from Early Colonies to Post 9-11

****DISCUSSION #2 Due SUNDAY at 11:59pm**

Week 4 CHRISTIANITY | SALVATION

January 28 Early Christianity: Jesus, Judaism, and Orthodoxy

- Read: Prothero pp. 65-79
- Explore and Share: *Read "Nicene Creed"* (OAKS) and Prepare to discuss in class

January 30 Renaissance, Reform and Enlightenment

- Read: Prothero pp. 80-99

February 1 Revivalism and Charisma

- Explore and Share: *Watch and Discuss "What is an Apostolic Pentecostal"*
<https://youtu.be/vfFeBgVz8yU>

****DISCUSSION #3 Due SUNDAY at 11:59pm**

Week 5	CONFUCIANISM I PROPRIETY	
February 4	History and Context; Religion or Philosophy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Prothero pp. 101-118 • <u>Explore and Share</u>: <i>Read and be prepared to discuss</i> “Excerpts from The Analects” (OAKS)
February 6	Visions of Confucius	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Prothero pp. 119 – 130
Feb. 8	Contemporary Confucianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Explore and Share</u>: <i>Read and be prepared to discuss</i> Wendell Berry, “Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community” excerpts (OAKS) <p style="text-align: right;">**DISCUSSION #4 Due SUNDAY at 11:59pm</p>

Week 6	HINDUISM I DEVOTION	
Feb. 11	Subcontinental History and Objects; That Art Thou	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Prothero pp. 131 – 150 • <u>Explore and Share</u>: <i>Read “The Vedas” PDF (OAKS); prepare to discuss the importance of “written” texts for building religious traditions</i>
Feb. 13	Hinduism and the Global Scene; Mono or. Poly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Prothero pp. 150 – 168
Feb. 15	Religion in the News (review draft in class)	** WRITING #1 – RELIGION IN THE NEWS – DUE SUNDAY at 11:59pm
Week 7	BUDDHISM I AWAKENING	

Feb. 18	The Life of the Buddha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Prothero pp. 169 – 186 • <u>Explore and Share:</u> <i>Watch in class: “The Life of the Buddha”</i> https://youtu.be/nsN7NLS-0jI
Feb. 20	The Middle Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Prothero pp. 186 – 201 • <u>Explore and Share:</u> <i>Read and be prepared to discuss “The Buddha: The first and final addresses” (OAKS)</i>
Feb. 22	Many Vehicles	**DISCUSSION #5 Due SUNDAY at 11:59pm
Week 8	YORUBA CONNECTION	
Feb. 25	Ancestors and Spirit Possession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Prothero pp. 203 – 241
Feb. 27	Authenticity and Africanity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Explore and Share:</u> <i>Examine and be prepared to discuss the content contained at http://www.oyotunji.org. Consider specifically the term “authentic.”</i>
March 1	Midterm Exam	IN CLASS
Week 9	BLACK ATLANTIC ROOTS & ROUTES	
March 4	What is the “Black Atlantic”?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read:</u> “Black Saints Go Marching In” from <i>Flash of the Spirit</i>. (OAKS)
March 6	Haitian Vodou Redux; Creole Doubles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read:</u> “Les Morts...” in <i>The Divine Horsemen</i> (OAKS)
March 8	“World Religion” or Witchcraft? The Status of African Diaspora Tradition	**DISCUSSION #6 Due SUNDAY at 11:59pm

Week 10	JUDAISM EXILE AND RETURN	
March 11	History and Context; The Jewish-Christian Schism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Prothero pp. 243 – 260 • <u>Explore and Share</u>: <i>Read and react to “Jewish Expulsion from Spain”</i> (OAKS)
March 13	Contemporary Judaisms; Judaism after WWII	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Prothero pp. 261 – 278
March 15	Jews and Evangelicals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Explore and Share</u>: <i>Read and react to “Christian Zionism”</i> (OAKS)
**DISCUSSION #7 Due SUNDAY at 11:59pm		
Mar 17-23 NO CLASS **SPRING BREAK**		

Week 11	DAOISM FLOURISHING	
March 25	The Eight Immortals; Being and Becoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Prothero pp. 279 – 296 • <u>Explore and Share</u>: <i>Read</i>
March 27	From Alchemy to Asheville;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Prothero pp. 296-315
March 29	Contemporary Transnational Daoism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Siegler (OAKS)
**DISCUSSION #8 Due SUNDAY at 11:59pm		

Week 12	ATHEISM REASON	
April 1	Nietzsche and the Shadows of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Nietzsche, <i>The Gay Science</i>, 108, 109, 125
April 3	Atheism as Religion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Read</u>: Prothero pp. 317-329
April 5	Site Visit Planning Session	
**DISCUSSION #9 Due SUNDAY at 11:59pm		

Week 13	AMERICAN INDIANS & NEW AGE	
April 8	What is New Age? What is 'Spirituality'?	<u>Read</u> : "Spiritual But Not Religious" (OAKS)
April 10	Cultural Appropriation or Spiritual Exploration?	<u>Read</u> : " <i>Hucksters and Wannabes..</i> " (OAKS)
April 12	NRM's	Film and Discussion **DISCUSSION #10 Due SUNDAY at 11:59pm
Week 14	RELIGION & POLITICS	
April 17	Examining the issues; the case for religious literacy	• <u>Read</u> : Prothero pp. 331-340
April 19	Site Visit Paper Draft Discussion	IN CLASS
Week 15	READING/EXAM	
APRIL 22	Conclusions – Many Paths, Many Mountains	*Site Visit DUE Tuesday 23rd 11:59pm
APRIL 23	Evals, and Final Exam Instructions	
FINAL EXAM	TBA	

Resources for "Religion in the News"

Any journalism may be considered, but please exercise discretion and avoid sensationalism to the extent that you can. A reliable news/journal will not aim to express an "opinion" but rather highlight information, historical connections, or cultural implications.

The following curated list may help you:

- "Religion and Politics" from the Danforth Center at Wash U: <http://religionandpolitics.org>

- “Religion News Service”: <http://religionnews.com>
- “Religion Dispatches”: <http://religiondispatches.org>
- “The Revealer”: <https://wp.nyu.edu/therevealer/>
- “Religion” from *The Guardian*: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/religion>
- “The Immanent Frame”: <https://tif.ssrc.org>
- “Religious Freedom Institute”: <https://www.religiousfreedominstitute.org/cornerstone/>