

# INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS

Spring 2019

RELS 105-04 | Tue/Thur 3:05-4:20 pm | Education Center 103

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**Instructor:** Dr. Ian M. Sullivan

**Pronouns:** *they/them/their* or *he/him/his*

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**Office:** 16 Glebe Street, #301

**Office Hours:** Tues/Thur 11-12; 2-3 pm  
Also by appointment

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course surveys the major religions of the world with a dual focus on the nature of religious experience as well as the place of religion in our contemporary, globalizing world. We will spend time on South Asian religions (Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism), Buddhism, East Asian religions (Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism), Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In our historical and philosophical engagement with these traditions, we will focus in equal parts on (1) the premodern development of these religions, (2) their respective challenges from modernity and colonialism, and (3) their postcolonial evolutions, covering the spectrum from fundamentalisms to postmodern iterations. An overarching theme – among others – will be the possibility of a global ethic in a world of religious diversity.

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## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Primary objectives of the course:

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 aims to develop a critical-analytical approach to thinking about “religion” and religious cultures around the world.
3. The course aims to help students recognize the impacts of modernity, colonialism, and globalization on the contemporary evolutions of religious traditions.
4. The course aims to help students normatively assess the roles religions have played, do play, and could play in human societies.

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## GENERAL EDUCATION 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 an analytical, interpretive, or comparative writing assignment worth 30% of the final grade. See Oaks handout for details.
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 with an analytical, interpretive, or comparative writing assignment worth 30% of the final grade. See Oaks handout for details.

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## RELIGIOUS STUDIES 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 an analytical, interpretive, or comparative writing assignment worth 30% of the final grade. See Oaks handout for details.

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## REQUIRED TEXTS

The required text is available in the campus bookstore. The ISBN is provided for those of you who wish to purchase the texts elsewhere. Be sure to obtain the 6<sup>th</sup> edition for this class.

**Required:** *World Religions Today*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Editors John L. Esposito, Darrell J. Fasching, and Todd T. Lewis, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). ISBN 978-0-1906-44192

I have placed a copy of the textbook on reserve in the library as well. You are strongly encouraged to have your own copy (purchased or rented) for the semester. It will be incredibly difficult to keep up in this course without regular access to the textbook. The reserve copy is there primarily so that those who are waiting for their copy to arrive in the mail or at the bookstore can keep up with the course readings.

PDFs will be distributed online throughout the semester. You are required to bring hardcopies or electronic versions to class with you on the appropriate days. Reminders will be given in the class before they are required.

The following website is a good resource for orienting yourself in religious studies:

<http://www.studyreligion.org/why/index.html>

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## ASSESSMENT

Class Participation	15%	A	93% and above
Unannounced Quizzes	15%	A-	90-92.9%
Midterm Exams (20% each)	40%	B+	87-89.9%
Issue Analysis Paper	(30% total)	B	83-86.9%
- Write Ups (2% each)	8%	B-	80-82.9%
- Write Up Bonus	2%	C+	77-79.9%
- Topic Selection	5%	C	73-76.9%
- Written Submission	15%	C-	70-72.9%
		D	60-69.9% (no +/-)
		F	59.9% and below

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## ASSIGNMENTS

**Class Participation (15% of the final grade):** Class participation is essential for this course. In addition to the attendance and electronic device policies below, one must actively engage in class lectures and discussions. Two recognized forms of participation are oral participation and active listening. Oral participation involves engaging one's classmates respectfully and thoughtfully in dialogue during lectures, inquiries, and small group exercises. Active listening involves respectfully and thoughtfully attending to comments and suggestions from one's classmates during lectures, inquiries, and small group exercises. This is an easy 15% of your grade if you are attentive during class meetings.

**Unannounced quizzes (15% of the final grade):** These will occur randomly throughout this semester at the beginning of class (so don't be late!) and will total 15% of the final grade. The quiz question for each day will be taken from the review questions provided for that day's assigned reading. You can find these questions, along with key terms, in the study guides posted on Oaks.

Reading academic scholarship can be difficult. For the most part, our textbook is fairly accessible. However, especially when we read primary sources in the latter half of the semester, it will be important to have a good reading strategy. I will have read the assigned readings multiple times before we meet, and it is expected that you do the same. One approach to reading for this class uses an analogy to medicine. At first we want to understand *anatomy*: What is in front of us? Next we will try to understand *physiology*: How does all of this work? Once we have completed these first two steps, we will turn to *surgery*: How can I correct or improve what is in front of me so that it works better? Readings and class lectures are primarily about anatomy and physiology, and the review questions in the study guides are meant to help with these stages of critique. Community inquiries and writing assignments will focus more on surgery.

For our class, be sure to read through and answer the review questions in the study guides before coming to class. These will help you to get a handle on the anatomy and physiology dimensions of the reading. We will use these as starting points for critical discussion in class (i.e., surgery).

You must provide your own paper for the quizzes. Quizzes cannot be made up if the absence or tardiness is unexcused. These quizzes are meant to make sure everyone is prepared for class so that our discussions are lively and fruitful. This is an easy 15% of your grade if you do the reading, take notes, and get to class on time.

**Midterm Exams (20% each; 40% total of the final grade):** These will be twice during the semester (see schedule below). Each of these exams is worth 20% of the final grade for a total of 40% of the final grade. Midterm exams will test for comprehension of the key terms for all relevant modules as well as the review questions for all module readings. Key terms and review questions can be found in the study guides posted on Oaks. Whereas unannounced quizzes are testing for whether or not readings have been completed (i.e., you still get full credit if you get the answer wrong in a way that proves you did the reading and thought about the question before class), midterm exams will require complete and correct responses for each key term and review question.

It is not possible to begin studying the material the week of the midterm and still do well on the exam. Study guides are provided at the beginning of the semester and should be filled in while you prepare the readings for each class and revised when we go over them in class. Treat the key terms like you would vocabulary for a foreign language. Study them daily and review previous chapters' key terms regularly.

**Issue Analysis Paper (several components totaling 30% of the final grade):** Throughout the semester and especially after the final midterm exam, we will begin researching and writing our Issue Analysis Papers. This assignment has several components that are detailed in the assignment handout on Oaks. They include: (1) two Write Ups per module, (2) a Paper Topic Submission, and (3) a Written Submission.

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## COURSE POLICIES

**This Is A Safe Space:** This class is structured around interactive lectures, discussions, and community inquiries in order to bring philosophical issues to life. This will mean, at times, sharing our own narratives and experiences (if one so desires) in order to assess the validity and desirability of certain normative judgments and perspectives. Ultimately this will result in our developing our own philosophical voices that we can bring out into the world with us. For this to work, however, we must have a space and a community in which we feel safe enough to make mistakes and are strong enough to move forward together in the learning process. On the first day of class, we will have an open discussion of what a safe space means for us and we will sign a Safe Space Pledge promising to maintain that space for ourselves and each other over the course of the semester.

**Accessibility and Support Services:** I take your education very seriously, and I will make every effort to accommodate any disabilities or special needs that may affect your learning or performance.

If you require special arrangements for attending class or doing assignments, please speak with me as soon as possible. Please also apply for accommodation services at the Center for Disability Services / SNAP, located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104 (<http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu>).

If you or someone you know would like to discuss confidential information about health or mental health care, please visit the following College of Charleston websites:

For Student Health Services generally: <http://studenthealth.cofc.edu/health-wellness/index.php>

For mental health generally: <http://studenthealth.cofc.edu/health-wellness/mental-health.php>

For mental health emergencies: <http://counseling.cofc.edu/crisis/index.php>

Anyone who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students office for support (<http://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/student-food-temp-housing-asst/index.php>). Furthermore, please notify me by email or in person if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I may possess.

**Attendance:** The participation portion of the final grade (15%) will be determined primarily through a daily sign-in sheet. Each of you is responsible for signing in for each class meeting. If you are late and arrive after the sign-in sheet has been returned to me, be sure to sign in immediately after class. This is your only record of attendance and cannot be negotiated at the end of the semester. Be sure you sign in every day.

Absences for valid reasons will always be accommodated and will not affect your final grade so long as communication is kept open. This means contacting me about the absence *before* the class period for which you will be absent or, if there is an emergency, contacting me as soon as possible once the situation is stable. Absence memos (<http://victimservices.cofc.edu/absence-memo/index.php>) are required for all excused absences unless I have granted an exception to this in writing.

Missed assignments must be completed within two (2) school days of returning to campus unless explicit written permission for an extension is granted.

Because this class is designed around interactive lectures and group discussions, consistent attendance is paramount. *More than three (3) unexcused absences will result in a 0% for participation for the semester.*

**Course Communication:** The best way to reach me is by email ([sullivanm@cofc.edu](mailto:sullivanm@cofc.edu)). I will check this account routinely between 9 am and 5 pm on weekdays throughout the semester. If you email during the weekend or in the evening, I'll respond the next weekday at the latest.

Please swing by my office this semester! I'm always excited to talk shop or just chat outside of class. Office hours are from 10 to 11 am on Wednesdays and Thursdays, but I'm often in my office (Room 301 in 16 Glebe Street) Monday through Thursday if I'm not in class. If you have a scheduling conflict with the listed office hours, I am more than happy to meet by appointment at another time. If you wish to schedule a meeting outside of office hours, be sure to contact me the day before you'd like to meet at the latest. I cannot guarantee meetings scheduled by email the day of, though I will do my best to coordinate with you if the situation arises.

When emailing me, always use your College of Charleston account. This is a policy meant to protect your privacy. Your CofC account is the only account I can verify as yours and therefore is the only account to which I'll respond.

**Assignment Extensions:** All written assignments are due by the date and time listed in the schedule below in bold. For every 24-hour period beginning the minute after the deadline, late papers will receive a 10% deduction. Extensions will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances and even then only on a case-by-case basis. All extensions must be cleared with me no later than 24 hours *prior to* the deadline. Extensions will not be granted within 24 hours of the due date unless they are required in accordance with the attendance policy above. Any and all extensions required due to a documented disability will of course be accommodated. If in doubt about whether an extension will be permissible, please contact me.

**Electronics:** All electronic devices must be silenced or turned off during class, with the following exceptions: (1) electronic devices required due to disability or another similarly significant situation (please clear these with me at the beginning of the semester); (2) laptops and tablets used for taking notes or reading electronic copies of the class text.

Laptops and tablets used for note-taking and e-reading are a privilege. If one opts to use a laptop or tablet for these purposes, the following activities are *strictly prohibited*: internet browsing, video and audio streaming, messaging, social media curating, reading or writing for other classes, and the like. Your facial expressions and your body language change noticeably when engaging in these activities instead of listening and taking notes. We'll all notice. Violation of this policy will result in a loss of participation points for the class period. Repeated violations will result in the loss of electronic device privileges for the remainder of the semester.

No electronic devices of any sort are permitted during community inquiries or exams.

**Recording and Dissemination:** Recording and disseminating class lectures, discussions, and materials is prohibited without my prior permission. See the safe space policy above.

**Writing Tutors:** Some of your work this semester will be written. Please don't hesitate to utilize the Writing Lab's resources, including the help of a writing tutor. More information can be found at this website: <http://csl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab/>

**Academic Integrity:** Failing to indicate when material is taken from someone else is academically dishonest and will not be tolerated. All work you hand in must be your own and the proper attribution of ideas and language must be done with care. A copy of the College of Charleston Honor Code can be found at <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>. Any instance of plagiarism, cheating, or the like, will result in a failing grade for the assignment and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. Repeat offenses or egregious first offenses will result in a failing grade for the course and be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. I will make use of online plagiarism detection services, and your papers will be archived in their database. If you have any questions about this policy please come talk to me. For more information on academic integrity and how to maintain it: <http://libguides.library.cofc.edu/academicintegrity>

**Concerns Regarding the Course:** You are encouraged to discuss concerns regarding the course with me as soon as they arise. I'd like this semester to be as pleasant and productive for everyone as possible, and the sooner I am aware of concerns the sooner I can address them. If you are more comfortable pursuing a concern with someone else, please contact Dr. Elijah Siegler, Chair of the Department of Religious Studies ([sieglere@cofc.edu](mailto:sieglere@cofc.edu)).

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## SCHEDULE

\*Schedule subject to change. Pay attention to announcements in class, and if you are absent one day, be sure to check in with a classmate regarding any changes to the schedule. Page numbers from the textbook and relevant study guide questions will be provided in class.

\*\*All readings followed by "(PDF)" will be made available through our course website.

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### Module 1: Introduction to Religious Studies

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Tuesday, Jan. 8: Syllabus; Introduction to Religious Studies

Thursday, Jan. 10: Our Methodological Approach

Tuesday, Jan. 15: Indigenous Religions

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### Module 2: Abrahamic Traditions

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Thursday, Jan. 17: Premodern Judaism

Tuesday, Jan. 22: Premodern and Modern Judaism

Thursday, Jan. 24: Modern and Postcolonial Judaism

Tuesday, Jan. 29: Premodern Christianity

Thursday, Jan. 31: Premodern and Modern Christianity

Tuesday, Feb. 5: Modern and Postcolonial Christianity  
Due by 11:59 pm through Oaks dropbox: Write Up #1 on Judaism or Christianity

Thursday, Feb. 7: Premodern Islam

Tuesday, Feb. 12: Premodern and Modern Islam

Thursday, Feb. 14: Modern and Postcolonial Islam

Due by 11:59 pm through Oaks dropbox: Write Up #2 on Christianity or Islam

Tuesday, Feb. 19: Abrahamic Traditions Midterm

Thursday, Feb. 21: Library Instruction on Writing Research Papers

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**Module 3:  
Non-Abrahamic Traditions**

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Tuesday, Feb. 26: Premodern Indic Religions

Thursday, Feb. 28: Premodern and Modern Indic Religions

Tuesday, Mar. 5: Modern and Postcolonial Indic Religions

Thursday, Mar. 7: Premodern Buddhism

Tuesday, Mar. 12: Premodern and Modern Buddhism

Thursday, Mar. 14: Modern and Postcolonial Buddhism

Due by 11:59 pm through Oaks dropbox: Write Up #3 on Indic Religions or Buddhism

*Tuesday, Mar. 19: Spring Break – No Class Meetings or Office Hours*

*Due: Develop your paper topics for the final module*

*Thursday, Mar. 21: Spring Break – No Class Meetings or Office Hours*

*Due: Develop your paper topics for the final module*

Tuesday, Mar. 26: Premodern East Asian Religions

Thursday, Mar. 28: Premodern and Modern East Asian Religions

Tuesday, Apr. 2: Modern and Postcolonial East Asian Religions

Due by 11:59 pm through Oaks dropbox: Write Up #4 on Buddhism or East Asia

Thursday, Apr. 4: Non-Abrahamic Traditions Midterm

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**Module 4:  
Workshops and Discussion**

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Tuesday, Apr. 9: Postcolonial Religions Paper Topic Workshop

Thursday, Apr. 11: Postcolonial Religions Paper Outline Workshop

*Tuesday, Apr. 16: No Class Meetings or Office Hours*

Thursday, Apr. 18: Discussion: What role(s), if any, can and should religion play in our globalizing world?

**Issue Analysis Paper Written Submission Due Dates:**

Thursday, Apr. 25: Issue Analysis Paper Written Submission due through Oaks Dropbox by 4 pm