REL 105-01: INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS
MWF 10-10:50, ECTR 116

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler
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Office Hours: MW 11:30-1:00, 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. The class is structured around the courses offered by the College of Charleston’s Department of Religious Studies. Several 200-level and 300-level courses will be introduced to the students of this course, at the rate of one per week.

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.

This course will fulfill the General Education Student Learning Outcomes:
Student Learning Outcome #1: Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture.
Student Learning Outcome #2: Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.
These two learning outcomes will be assessed with an essay question the final exam, which will ask students to analyze primary sources in terms of their religious ideas.

Required text:
Any format is OK.

There are also required short readings on OAKS. You should print out these readings. Please bring the book and/or printout to class.

Course Requirements:
* Participation and attendance including in-class group work: 10%
* One 3-4 pp. paper due in class October 13: 10%
* One 5-7 pp. paper due in class November 23: 20%
* Five out of seven “surprise” quizzes, which will be announced the class before. (The two lowest quizzes will be dropped.): 5 x 5% = 25%
* A midterm exam on October 15: 15%
* A final exam on December 10: 20%
Class Policies
C of C policy requires we come to class fully masked. If you are unvaccinated: please get vaccinated now. Remember it takes 5 or 6 weeks from your first dose to be considered fully vaxxed. You can find info about how to get vaxxed on campus here.

In-person attendance is required, this is not a hybrid course. Before the drop/add deadline, students should decide whether the course plan on the syllabus matches their own circumstances. I will divide the class into 9 small discussion groups (or “teams”) with 8 students each that will meet about once a week. The teams should also form email/text groups so if you have to miss class, you can get notes from someone in your team.

We may be required to change tactics and move the course fully online. This may include a shift in course requirements and due dates, but we will do what we need to ensure the safety of students and instructor and you will be given all necessary information in a timely fashion. We will remain flexible and vigilant—we got this!

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.

Expect emails from me the night before most classes with reminders, pro tips, and a preview of questions and issues we will be discussing in the next day’s class. I love getting reply emails!

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. 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. 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 8/25: What is this Class About?

Fri 8/27: Why Study Religion?
Read: religiousstudies.cofc.edu; studyreligion.org; RM 6-9

**UNIT II: Theories in the Study of Religion (see also RELS 210)**
Mon 8/30: What is Religion? What are Religions?
Read: RM 9-18
Wed 9/1: How can we explain Religion using Psychology?  
Read: RM 518-519; OAKS #1

Fri 9/3: How can we Explain Religion Using Sociology?  
Read: RM 516-517; OAKS #2

UNIT III: The Hindu Tradition (see also RELS 245 and RELS 205)  
Mon 9/6: What is Hinduism?  
Read: RM 29-41

Wed 9/8: What are the Vedas? What is Yoga?  
Read: RM 42-55; OAKS #3

Fri 9/10: Lived Hinduism  
Read: RM 59-63, 68-75

UNIT IV: The Buddhist Tradition (see also RELS 240, RELS 205 and RELS 340)  
Mon 9/13: What is Buddhism?  
Read: RM 79-91; OAKS #4

Wed 9/15: What is impermanence? Special Guest: Dr. Zeff Bjerken  
Read: RM 91-109

Fri 9/17: Lived Buddhism  
Read: RM 117-126

UNIT V: Religious Traditions of China and Japan (see also RELS 248)  
Mon 9/20: What is Confucianism?  
Read: RM 343-369; OAKS #5 pp. 1-4

Wed 9/22: Chinese Religions Today  
Read: RM 375-381, 383-385

UNIT VI: The Daoist Tradition (see also RELS 247)  
Fri 9/24: What is Daoism?  
Read: RM 391-415; OAKS #5 pp. 5-11

Mon 9/27: What Is Immortality?  
Read: RM 418-226, 432-436

UNIT VII: Native American Religions (see also RELS 260 and RELS 305)  
Wed 9/29: What Are Native American Religions?  
Read: RM 441-446, 453-461
Fri 10/1: What is Sacred to the Navajo? Special Guest: Dr. Brennan Keegan
RM 462-468, 472-479, 480-482

Unit VIII: The Jewish Tradition (see also RELS 225 and RELS 201)
Mon 10/4: What is Judaism?
Read: RM 173-186

Wed 10/6: What is Torah? Special Guest: Dr. John Huddlestun
Read: RM 186-197; OAKS #6

Fri 10/8: Judaism Today
Read: RM 200-220

UNIT IX: Catching our Breaths
Monday 10/11: Paper Workshop

Wed 10/13: Catch-up, Discussion and Midterm Exam Review
First Paper Due

Fri 10/15: Midterm Exam

Mon 10/18: Fall Break

UNIT X: The Christian Tradition (see also RELS 230 and RELS 202)
Wed 10/20: What Is Christianity? Special Guest: Dr. Lenny Lowe
Read: RM 225-240

Fri 10/22: How Did Christianity Spread?
Read: RM 240-257; OAKS #7

Mon 10/25: Christianity Today
Read: RM 276-289

UNIT XI: The Islamic Tradition (see also RELS 235)
Wed 10/27: What is Islam?
Read: RM 293-307

Fri 10/29: What is Sunni, Shi’a, and Sufism?
Read: RM 307-319

Mon 11/1: Islam Today
Read: RM 322-325, 328-337
UNIT XII: Religions in America (see also RELS 250)
Wed 11/3: Is the United States a Christian Nation?
Read: RM 260-266, 271-276, 520-522, 525-530

Fri 11/5: What is American Civil Religion?
Read: OAKS #8

Mon 11/8: How Are Religion and the Law Connected in the US?
Read: RM 482-487; OAKS #9

UNIT XIII: African-American Religions (see also RELS 270)
Wed 11/10: What is African-American Religion?
Read: OAKS #10

Fri 11/12: What is Black Nationalist Religion?
Read: RM 326-328; OAKS #11

UNIT XIV: Asian Religions in America (see RELS 348)
Mon 11/15: How did Asian Religions Come to America?
Read: RM 129-132 (Intro to Sikhism), 156-160 (Sikhism in US/ Indian immigration), 67-68 (Temple Hinduism in US), 112-117 (Buddhism in US)

Wed 11/17: How Did Chinese Religions Develop in America?
Read: RM 381-382, 426-432; OAKS #12

Fri 11/19: Paper Workshop

Mon 11/22: TBD

Tues 11/23: Second Paper Due

THANKSGIVING BREAK

UNIT XV: New Religious Movements (see also RELS 315)
Mon 11/29: What are Cults/ New Religious Movements?
Read: OAKS # 13

Wed 12/1: Which New Religions Began in America?
Read: RM 266-267 (LDS), 109-110 (Theosophical Society), 468-472, 479-480 (N.A. Church); OAKS #14

Fri 12/3: Which New Religions Began in Asia?
Read: RM 64-67 (Vivekenanda, ISKCON), 110-111 (SGI), 436-438 (FLG); OAKS #15
Mon 12/6: Final Discussion and Exam Review

Fri 12/10 8am to 10am: Final Exam

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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.

Visit the Center for Student Learning for help with study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at https://csl.cofc.edu/ or call 953-5635.
Here is a good resource for writing a religious studies paper: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/religious-studies/

If the College of Charleston closes and members of the community are evacuated due to inclement weather, students are responsible for taking course materials with them in order to continue with course assignments consistent with instructions provided by faculty. In cases of extended periods of institution-wide closure where students have relocated, instructors may articulate a plan that allows for supplemental academic engagement despite these circumstances.