

RELS 105: Introduction to World Religions Spring 2005 (Sections 002 & 003)

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Course Description and Goals

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion in general, and a comparative survey of the major world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course will examine each religious tradition thematically by focusing on some of its myths, doctrines, rituals, social institutions, ethical teachings, religious experiences, and its material symbols. These dimensions will be explored primarily through literature. We will read excerpts from the classical scriptures of each tradition, in addition to more recent articles, short stories, and excerpts from novels. We will also make use of documentary films to gain insight into the world views of individuals and the cultural worlds they inhabit. Goals for students enrolled in this course are: 1) to broaden one's understanding of religion; 2) to gain empathy and an appreciation for the diversity of religions; 3) to foster critical thinking about religions and worldviews; and 4) to make what is strange seem familiar, and what is familiar seem strange.

Course Requirements

- **Completion of required reading assignments prior to lecture**

It is strongly recommended that you read the **entire** weekly assignment the weekend **before** we study the topic in class. This will help you understand the lectures, and you can then go back and study specific readings in more detail as well as your class notes.

There is one **required textbook**: *Sacred Texts of the World: A Universal Anthology*, ed. by Ninian Smart and Richard Hecht, available at the CofC Bookstore for \$34.95 new. There is also a **Required Coursepack**, with articles, short stories and selections from novels. It is available on Electronic Reserve online: ereserve.cofc.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?page=instr under **Bjerken** and **RELS 105**. You will need the password to access the material: **darshan** This is a Sanskrit word meaning "seeing, knowing, philosophical view, doctrine"

- **Regular attendance at lecture, and participation in class discussions**

There will be 3 allowed absences; 4 or more absences will negatively affect your grade. If you have excused absences (illness, emergency) please let me know and contact the Undergraduate Dean's Office to document the reason for your absence. You are responsible for making up any absences; get any notes on missed lectures from classmates.

- **Midterm Exam on March 1 (25% of grade)**

- **Final Exam on May 3 (section 02) and May 5 (section 03) (25%)**

Exams consist of multiple choice, short answer, identification of scriptural passages, and essay. The final exam is not comprehensive, but deals with the material from the second half of the semester. If you miss an exam and provide a documented excuse, I do give makeup tests, but they are harder than the original tests. An unexcused missed exam counts as a **0**.

- **One essay of 6-7 pages (25%)**

This essay will be based upon a topic to be assigned in advance. It is due without fail on **April 21** in class.

- **Quizzes and Weekly Question Cards (25%)**

There will be occasional quizzes (announced in advance) and regular homework assignments. Every Tuesday you are to bring to class a thoughtful, written question and/or reflection related to the assigned reading for that week. The question or reflection should be written on a 3x5 card, and be based on a topic or issue that you have found puzzling, thought-provoking, challenging, or interesting. The questions should not simply ask for factual information, but raise significant issues or express concerns about the topic that are important to you.

Grading Scale:	A	90-100 points	C+	76-80 points		
	B+	86-89 points	C	70-75 points		
	B	80-85 points	D	60-70 points	F	Below 60

Academic Integrity: 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**. Note that ignorance of the policy is not considered a mitigating circumstance. I will provide a handout that discusses the ethics of learning, intellectual honesty and plagiarism to remove any ambiguity about what this zero-tolerance policy entails.

Lecture Topics and Reading Schedule for RELS 105

This schedule of topics and the list of readings is tentative. Abbreviations will be used in listing the required reading: selections from the textbook anthology *Sacred Texts of the World (STW)* list the page numbers; selections from the sources on Electronic Reserve [ER] are numbered.

1/13 Introduction: What is a “World Religion?” How do we study them?

Week 1 Classical Hindu Philosophy in India

1/18 The Multiple Dimensions of World Religions; Making the Familiar Seem Foreign (ER #1-3: “The Importance of Understanding the World’s Worldviews”; “Body Rituals among the Nacirema;” “The Sacred Rac”)

Quiz on Seven Dimensions of Religion

1/20 The Worldview of Classical Hinduism: What is Real, What is Illusory? (STW: 192-193, 195-196; ER #4: “The Indian Life”)

Week 2 Hindu Society and Devotion

1/25 The Hindu Social Order: The Caste System (STW: 212-215; begin ER #5 *Darshan*)
Video: *330 Million Gods*

1/27 Hindu Image Veneration and Devotion: Are Hindus “Idolators?” (STW: 193-195; ER #5: *Darshan*)

Week 3 Jain and Buddhist Models of Renunciation

- 2/1 Jain Asceticism and Renunciation
(*STW*: 278-9, 287-289; ER #6: Chapter 1-2 of *A River Sutra*)
- 2/3 The Life of the Buddha and his First Teachings
(*STW*: 233-235, 237-38, 243; ER #7: “Buddhism and Elephants” and “The Buddha”)

Week 4 Buddhist Philosophy and Meditation

- 2/8 Buddhist Philosophy and Ethics
(*STW*: 236-37, 269-271; ER #8: “The Four Noble Truths” and “Ethics”)
- 2/10 Buddhist Meditation
(*STW*: 259-264; ER #9-10: “Meditation” and “Buddhist Meditation”)
Video: *In the Footprints of the Buddha*

Week 5 Buddhism in East Asia

- 2/15 The Mahayana Buddhist Pantheon and Paradises
(*STW* 239-241, 273-274; ER #11-13: “The Mahayana;” “The Buddhist Pure Land;” “Passages on Pure Land Buddhism”)
Quiz on Indian religions (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism)
- 2/17 Life in a Zen Buddhist Monastery: Site of Enlightenment or Buddhist Boot Camp?
(*STW*: 247-250; ER #14-15: “My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk” and “Rites of Passage: Ordination at Pao-hua Shan”)

Week 6 Confucianism in China and Japan

- 2/22 Confucianism: Religion or Humanistic Ethics?
(*STW*: 305-307, 311-312, 315; ER #18: “The Master Kung”)
- 2/24 The Confucian Character of the Corporate World in Japan Today
(ER #19: “Continuing Education”)

Week 7 Religion in Japan Today

- 3/1 **MIDTERM**
- 3/3 Buddhism and New Religions in Contemporary Japan
Video: *The Yamaguchi Story*
- 3/8-10 **Spring Break**

Week 8 The Rise of Monotheism: Biblical Judaism

- 3/15 Early Judaism and the Revelations of the Prophets
(*STW* 45-50, 53-54, 74-75; ER #20: “A History of the Jewish People”)
- 3/17 Jewish Worship and Rituals
(*STW*: 52, 64-5, 69-71; ER #21, 23: “Jewish Beliefs and Practices;” “Rabbi Hanina ben Dossa”)

Week 9 Judaism in the Diaspora and the Life and Teachings of Jesus

- 3/22 Hasidic Judaism in America Today
(ER #24: “Introduction” and “Judaism in the Twenty-First Century”)
Video: *A Life Apart*
- 3/24 Who Was Jesus? The Quest for the Historical Jesus
(*STW*: 93-97, 102-104; ER #25: “Christianity: Jesus Christ is Lord”)

Week 10 Early Christianity

- 3/29 Early Christian Creeds and the Seven Sacraments
(*STW*: 109-110, 112; ER #27: *The Name of the Rose*, pp. 11-39)
Video: *From Jesus to Christ*
- 3/31 Medieval Monks and Mystics: a Mystery
(*STW*: 97-99; ER #28: *The Name of the Rose*, pp. 40-97)
Short paper on *The Name of the Rose* due in class

Week 11 The Protestant Reformation and Early Islam

- 4/5 Protestant Christianity from the Reformation to American Fundamentalism Today
(*STW*: 104-106; ER #29: “Are You a Christian?”)
- 4/7 Life and Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad
(*STW* 130-132, 142-144, 174-176; ER #30: “Islam: There is no god but God”)

Week 12 Islam: Mecca and Jihad

- 4/12 Islam’s Five Pillars and the Pilgrimage to Mecca
(*STW*: 150-158; ER #31: “Mecca”)
Video: *The Hajj: One American’s Pilgrimage*
- 4/14 Islam, Nationalism, and Jihad
(ER #32: “Islam in Today’s World”)
Quiz on Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Week 13 Religion in the Contemporary America

4/19 The Religious Dimensions of American Nationalism
(*STW*: 381-382, 391; ER #33: “The Nature of Secular Worldviews”)

4/21 New Religious Movements in the USA: Religion on the Road in the Twenty-first Century
(CP # 35: “New Religious Movements,” “Religion in the Twenty-first Century”)
Video: *Road Scholar*
Term Paper Due!

Week 14 Walking in Another’s Moccasins: New Age “Indian” Religion in America

4/26 Overcoming Spiritual Colonialism: The New-Age Religion of the “Wannabe” Tribe
(ER #34: “Wanting to be Indian”)
Video: *White Shamans and Plastic Medicine Men*

FINAL EXAM	Section 002 (TR 12:15) on May 3 (Tuesday)	12-3 pm
SCHEDULE	Section 003 (TR 1:40) on May 5 (Thursday)	12-3 pm

Important Terms and Concepts for the Study of World Religions

Note: These are technical terms that you must know in order to do well on the exams and quizzes. Keep this list handy as you read the assignments, and write down their definitions and meanings. This list is subject to change.

Hinduism: samsara, karma, reincarnation, maya, yoga, Brahman, atman, Upanishads
dharma, caste system, the Four Stages of Life, sannyasin
darshan, bhakti, aniconic, puja, Trimurti (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva)

Jainism: Jina, Mahavira, Fordmaker, shramana, asceticism, ahimsa, kevala

Buddhism: Shakyamuni, Siddhartha, Gotama, Four Noble Truths, Three Marks of Existence (impermanence, no-self [anatman], suffering), Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) the Middle Way, nirvana, arhat, bodhisattva, Hinayana, Mahayana, concentration, insight emptiness, skillful means, Buddha field, Western Pure Land, Amitabha, zazen, koan

Confucianism: K'ung tzu, Analects, ancestor worship, filial piety, ritual propriety (*li*) five relationships, benevolence (*jen/ren*), mandate of heaven

Judaism: Judea, Jerusalem, Israel, Yahweh, Moses, Tanakh, Torah, Diaspora, Exodus, Passover Biblical vs. Rabbinic Judaism, covenant with Abraham/Moses, circumcision, 10 Commandments Temple in Jerusalem, Ark of the Covenant, bar mitzvah, kosher, synagogue, Shabbat, gentile Shema, phylacteries, Hasidic Judaism, rabbi, devekht, Rabbi Hanina ben Dossa, Essenes

Christianity: Christ, Messiah, Son of God, Synoptic Gospels, Jesus and Judaism in Matthew's Gospel, Resurrection, creed, dogma, heresy, Nicene Creed, Trinity, Book of Revelation Apocalypse, Benedictine Rule, St Francis, Orders, Inquisition, indulgences, Reformation, Luther, justification by faith, Calvin, predestination, fundamentalism, Legalist vs non-legalist Christianity

Islam: Islam, Muslim, Muhammad, "Seal of the Prophets," Khadija, Gabriel, Mecca, Ka'ba Medina, umma, mosque, Allah, Ninety-Nine Names, Qur'an, Arabic, Hadith, Five Pillars: (Kalima, Salat, Fasting, Zakat, Hajj), Haji, Ramadan, Jihad, theocracy, purdah

Nationalism and New Age Nature religion: nation-building myths, the church/state relationship, theocracy, shamanism, vision quests, spiritual materialism, cultural appropriation

Terms for the Academic Study of Religion: Seven Dimensions of Religion monism, monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, dualism, monotheism, theodicy numinous vs. mystical experience, Prophet, orthodoxy, orthopraxy, hagiography, exegesis, canon scripture, interfaith dialogue, pluralism, atheism, humanism, ecumenicism, eclecticism

Terms to Avoid: supernatural, superstition, primitive, irrational, idolatry, devil worship

INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS: RELS 105 SPRING 2005
TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR COURSE PACK ON ELECTRONIC RESERVE

Week 1: The Academic Study of Religions and Classical Hindu Philosophy

1. Ninian Smart, "Introduction: The Importance of Understanding the World's Worldviews," from *The World's Religions* 2nd edition. (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 10-28.
2. Horace Miner, "Body Rituals among the Nacirema," reprinted from *American Anthropologist*, 58 (1956), pp. 503-507.
3. "The Sacred Rac" an article of unknown authorship but it is widely available on the Web. See <http://pittsford.monroe.edu/staffweb/lyons/Unit1/u1The%20RAC.htm>
4. Herman Hesse, "The Indian Life," from *Magister Ludi* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co.), pp. 468-502.

Week 2: Hindu Society and Devotion

5. Diana Eck, *Darshan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*. Second Edition. (Anima Books, 1985), pp. 1-58.

Week 3: Jain and Buddhist Models of Renunciation

6. Gita Mehta, Chapter 1 & 2 of *A River Sutra* (New York, Vintage Books), pp. 1-41.
7. Damien Keown, "Buddhism and Elephants" and "The Buddha" from *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford University Press, 2000) pp. 1-28.

Week 4: Buddhist Meditation and Philosophy

8. Damien Keown, "The Four Noble Truths" and "Ethics" from *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 44-56; 97-109.
9. Damien Keown, "Meditation" from *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 84-96.
10. Shinzen (Steven) Young, "Buddhist Meditation," from *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*, 3rd edition, ed. by Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1982), pp. 226-235.

Week 5: Buddhism in East Asia

11. Damien Keown, "The Mahayana" from *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, pp. 57-69.
12. Deborah Sommer, "The Buddhist Pure Land," from *Chinese Religion: An Anthology of Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 119-125.
13. "Passages on Pure Land Buddhism" [5.4, 5.4.3, 5.4.4, and 8.3.2] from *The Experience of Buddhism*, ed. by John S. Strong, (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1995), pp. 187-8, 193-196, 307-309.
14. Morinaga Soko, "My Struggle to Become a Zen Monk," from *Zen Tradition and Transition*, ed. by Kenneth Kraft (New York: Grove Press, 1988), pp. 13-29.
15. "Rites of Passage: Ordination at Pao-hua Shan" from *The Experience of Buddhism*, ed. by John S. Strong, pp. 312-316.

Week 6: Confucianism in China and Japan

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- 17.
18. T. R. Reid, "The Master Kung," Chapter 4 of *Confucius Lives Next Door* (New York: Random House, 1999), pp. 91-117.
19. T. R. Reid, "Continuing Education," Chapter 6 of *Confucius Lives Next Door* (New York: Random House, 1999), pp. 153-178.

Week 8: The Rise of Monotheism

20. Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "The History of the Jewish People" from *Judaism* (Prentice Hall, 1999), pp. 34-55.
21. Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "Jewish Beliefs and Practices" from *Judaism* (Prentice Hall, 1999), pp. 75-94.
- 22.
23. Elie Wiesel, "Rabbi Hanina ben Dossa," from *Sages and Dreamers: Portraits and Legends from the Jewish Tradition* (New York: Touchstone, 1993, pp. 175-192.

Week 9: Judaism in the Diaspora and the Life and Teachings of Jesus

24. Dan Cohn-Sherbok, "Introduction" and "Judaism in the Twenty-First Century" from *Judaism* (Prentice Hall, 1999), pp. 15-33; 95-107.
25. Mary Pat Fisher, "Christianity: Jesus Christ is Lord," from *Living Religions*, 5th edition, Prentice Hall, 286-302.

Week 10: Early Christianity

- 26.
27. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (New York: Harcourt Publishers), pp.11-39.
28. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (New York: Harcourt Publishers), pp. 40-97.

Week 11: The Protestant Reformation and the Life and Teachings of Muhammad

29. Bruce Bawer, "Are You Christian?" from *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1997), pp. 1-28.
30. Mary Pat Fisher, "Islam: There is no god but God" from *Living Religions*, pp. 361-375.

Week 12: Islam: Mecca and Jihad

31. Malcolm X with Alex Haley, "Mecca," Chapter 17 of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 323-347.
32. Frederick Denny, "Islam in Today's World," from *Islam* (Harper SanFrancisco: 1987), pp. 107-129.

Week 13: Religion in Contemporary America

33. Ninian Smart, "The Nature of Secular Worldviews," from *The World's Religions* 2nd edition. (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 28-32.
- 34.
35. Mary Pat Fisher, "New Religious Movements" and "Religion in the Twenty-First Century" from *Living Religions*, pp.433-34, 447-454; 464-478.

Week 14: Walking in Another's Moccasins: New Age "Indian" Religion in America

34. Myke Johnson, "Wanting to be Indian: When Spiritual Teaching Turns into Cultural Theft," 1995. Essay available from RESPECT Inc. (Responsible Ethics for Spirituality - Project to End Cultural Theft) P. O. Box 2516, Boston, MA 02130.