

**College of Charleston
Department of Religious Studies
Spring 2023**

RELS 105-03: INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS
MWF 10-10:50, ECTR 116

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler

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Office Hours: MWF 11:00-12:00, 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:

Religion Matters, by Stephen Prothero; ISBN: **978-0393422047**

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 2 pp. paper due in class Feb 20: **5%**

* One 3-4 pp. paper due in class March 13: **10%**

* One 5-6 pp. paper due in class April 24: **15%**

* 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 March 1: **15%**

* A final exam on May 1: **20%**

OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

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 day 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 replies to my emails!

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 1/11: What is this Class About?

Fri 1/13: Why Study Religion?

Read: religiousstudies.cofc.edu; studyreligion.org; RM 6-9

MLK Day Holiday

UNIT II: Theories in the Study of Religion (see also RELS 210)

Wed 1/18: What is Religion? What are Religions?

Read: RM 9-18

Fri 1/20: How can we explain Religion using Psychology?

Read: RM 518-519; OAKS #1

Mon 1/23: 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)

Wed 1/25: What is Hinduism?

Read: RM 29-41

Fri 1/27: What are the Vedas? What is Yoga?

Read: RM 42-55; OAKS #3

Mon 1/30: Lived Hinduism

Read: RM 59-63, 68-75

UNIT IV: The Buddhist Tradition (see also RELS 240, RELS 205 and RELS 340)

Wed 2/1: What is Buddhism?

Read: RM 79-91; OAKS #4

Fri 2/3: What is impermanence?

Read: RM 91-109

Mon 2/6: Lived Buddhism

Read: RM 117-126

UNIT V: Religious Traditions of China and Japan (see also RELS 248)

Wed 2/8: What is Confucianism?

Read: RM 343-369; OAKS #5 pp. 1-4

Fri 2/10: Chinese Religions Today

Read: RM 375-381, 383-385

UNIT VI: The Daoist Tradition (see also RELS 247)

Mon 2/13: What is Daoism?

Read: RM 391-415; OAKS #5 pp. 5-11

Wed 2/15: What Is Immortality?

Read: RM 418-226, 432-436

Fri 2/17: Catch Up and Free Discussion

UNIT VII: The Jewish Tradition (see also RELS 225 and RELS 201)

Mon 2/20: What is Judaism?

Read: RM 173-186

First Paper Due

Wed 2/22: What is Torah?

Read: RM 186-197; OAKS #6

Fri 2/24: Judaism Today

Read: RM 200-220

UNIT VIII: Review

Mon 2/27: Catch-up, Discussion and Midterm Exam Review

Wed 3/1: **Midterm Exam**

Fri 3/3: Paper Workshop

SPRING BREAK

UNIT IX: The Christian Tradition (see also RELS 230 and RELS 202)

Mon 3/13: What Is Christianity?

Read: RM 225-240

Second Paper Due

Wed 3/15: How Did Christianity Spread?

Read: RM 240-257; OAKS #7

Fri 3/17: Christianity Today

Read: RM 276-289

UNIT X: The Islamic Tradition (see also RELS 235)

Mon 3/20: What is Islam?

Read: RM 293-307

Wed 3/22: What is Sunni, Shi'a, and Sufism?

Read: RM 307-319

Fri 3/24: Islam Today

Read: RM 322-325, 328-337

UNIT XI: Religions in America (see also RELS 250)

Mon 3/27: Is the United States a Christian Nation?

Read: RM 260-266, 271-276, 520-522, 525-530

Wed 3/29: What is American Civil Religion?

Read: OAKS #8

Fri 3/31: How Are Religion and the Law Connected in the US?

Read: RM 482-487; OAKS #9

UNIT XII: Native American Religions (see also RELS 260 and RELS 305)

Mon 4/3: What Are Native American Religions?

Read: RM 441-446, 453-461

Wed 4/5: What is Sacred to the Navajo?

RM 462-468, 472-479, 480-482

UNIT XIII: African American Religions (see also RELS 270)

Fri 4/7: What is African American Religion?

Read: OAKS #10

Mon 4/10: What is Black Nationalist Religion?

Read: RM 326-328; OAKS #11

UNIT XIV: Asian Religions in America (see RELS 348)

Wed 4/12: 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)

Fri 4/14: How Did Chinese Religions Develop in America?

Read: RM 381-382, 426-432; OAKS #12

Mon 4/17: Paper Workshop

UNIT XV: New Religious Movements (see also RELS 315)

Wed 4/19: What are Cults/ New Religious Movements?

Read: OAKS # 13

Fri 4/21: Which Cults/New Religions Began in America?

Read: RM 266-267 (LDS), 109-110 (Theosophical Society), 468-472, 479-480 (N.A. Church); OAKS #14

Mon 4/24: Which Cults/New Religions Began in Asia?

Read: RM 64-67 (Vivekenanda, ISKCON), 110-111 (SGI), 436-438 (FLG); OAKS #15
Third Paper Due

Wed 4/26: Final Discussion and Exam Review

Mon 5/1 10:30am- 12:30pm: Final Exam

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Class Policies and Important Information

In-person attendance is required, this is not a hybrid course. If you must miss class, you can get notes from someone in class. (If I must isolate, we will meet at our regular time on Zoom.) If you are coming out of isolation, please wear a mask to class (and feel free to wear a mask anytime for any reason). Find out more about C of C's current COVID-19 policies [here](#).

Help for writing papers: A good resource for how to write a religious studies paper is <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/religious-studies/>.

The Center for Student Learning on campus has writing labs and consultations: <https://csl.cofc.edu/> or 953-5635.

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are **violations of our Honor Code** that, when identified, are investigated. Any acts of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students and addressed through the conduct process. Students can find a complete version of the Honor Code and all related processes in the [Student Handbook](#).

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 953-143 or at snap@cofc.edu. You can find additional information and request academic accommodations at the [Center for Disability Services/SNAP website](#).

Diversity and Inclusion in the classroom: I am committed to creating an inclusive and accessible classroom environment for all students. I view the diversity that students bring to this class as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity. Any suggestions for promoting a positive and open environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration. I will gladly honor your request to address you by the name and gender pronouns of your choice. The **Multicultural Student Programs and Services** provide a safe haven for students to develop connections with other students.

Mental & Physical Wellbeing: We take every student's mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at [CofC Counseling Center](#) or 843.953.5640 3rd Floor of Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, or meet with them in person 411 (4th Floor) Stern Center). Learn more about [Students 4 Support on CofC's Hub](#). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health.

Food & Housing Resources: Many CofC students report experiencing food and housing insecurity. If you are facing challenges in securing food (such as not being able to afford groceries or get sufficient food to eat every day) and housing (such as lacking a safe and stable place to live), please contact the Dean of Students for support ([SALT - Student Affairs Leadership Team](#)). Also, you can go to [Student Food and Housing Insecurity](#) to learn about food and housing assistance that is available to you. You can visit the Cougar Pantry in the Stern Center (2nd floor), a student-run food pantry that provides dry-goods and hygiene products at no charge to any student in need.