

REL 3308
STUDIES IN WORLD RELIGIONS

Department of Religious Studies, FIU

Professor: Dr. Carlos Grenier (cagrenie@fiu.edu)

Office and Office Hours: DM 301C, by appointment

OVERVIEW:

This class will explore many religious traditions practiced throughout the world. By paying constant attention to their similarities and differences, it is hoped that this course will acquire a large-scale picture of global religious diversity. We will examine the practices of major and minor world religions – from Native American traditions, through Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and East Asian religions, and finally the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We will discuss the historical contexts of their emergence and spread, the points of contact and dialogue with each other, the nuances of their belief systems and institutions, and their individual contributions to world civilization. This course will also place a great emphasis on discussion of primary texts.

AIMS:

- a) To provide the student with a large amount of details and information on the beliefs, rituals, symbols, and scriptures of major world religions.
- b) To facilitate cross-cultural comparisons of religious faith and practice.
- c) To broaden the intellectual and spiritual horizons of the student by exposure to the beauty, vitality, truth, and power of religious approaches to reality, especially within non-Western frameworks.
- d) To challenge the student to enter sympathetically into the worldviews of the religious traditions selected for study.
- e) To prepare the student for informed, ethical participation in our religiously plural world.

EVALUATION:

1. Weekly Discussion Responses (20%)
2. Weekly Quizzes (20%)
3. Midterm Exam (15%)
4. Final Exam (15%)
5. Site Visit (15%)
6. Attendance and participation (15%)

Weekly Discussion Responses (20%):

Every Friday afternoon, I will post a passage on the discussion board, usually a primary text from a religious tradition. I may also post a few guiding questions. By class time the following Friday, you must a short response to the original posting on the discussion board, summarizing your thoughts on the text and what it is meant to communicate.

Thursday online quizzes (20%):

Every Friday I will post a short online quiz on the week's material. The quiz will comprise of simple multiple-choice and matching questions and should take less than ten minutes to complete. The quiz must be completed by the following Thursday.

Midterm (15%) and Final (15%):

These exams will consist of both objective and essay portions. The objective portions of the midterm and final are both online, time-restricted examinations. **Students will have only one attempt to complete the both portions of these exams.** The essay prompts for the exams will become available in the "Quizzes" area during the exam availability period. The essay portions of these exams must be submitted via Canvas.

The Midterm Objective portion will cover Indigenous religions, Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism.

The Final Objective portion will cover Daoism/Confucianism, Shinto, Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and New Religions

Religious Site Report (15%):

At any time prior to Week 12 of the semester, students will observe (preferably remotely) a religious ritual. Many religious groups are currently performing remote religious gatherings, on Youtube or Zoom or via other remote platforms. The student will then complete two assignments based on this "visit".

1. **Site Visit Report:** Guidelines for this 3-4 page report will be posted on Canvas.
2. **Site Visit Presentation:** Students will execute an extremely short (<5 minutes) presentation of their "visit".

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:

Lewis M. Hopfe and Mark R. Woodward, *Religions of the World*, 13th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2014). **You may use any available edition of this textbook!**

Other readings will be posted on the discussion forum.

POWERPOINTS:

Powerpoints will be posted on the Canvas site in the MODULES section after each class.

SCHEDULE:

Week 1

August 23: Overview

August 25: The Study of Religion

August 27: continued

Hopfe Chapters 1, 2,
Discussion 1 posted

Week 2

August 30: Indigenous Traditions I

Hopfe Chapter 2, 3

September 1: Indigenous Traditions II

Discussion 1 due
Quiz 1 posted
Discussion 2 posted

September 3: NO CLASS

Week 3:

September 6: Hinduism I

Hopfe, Chapter 4

September 8: continued

September 10: continued

Quiz 1 due
Discussion 2 due
Quiz 2 posted (on Hinduism)
Discussion 3 posted

Week 4:

September 13: Hinduism II

September 15: Hinduism, Jainism

September 17: Jainism II

Quiz 2 due

Discussion 3 due
Quiz 3 posted (on Hinduism and Jainism)
Discussion 4 posted: Jain texts

Week 5:

September 20: Buddhism
Hopfe Chapter 6

September 22: continued

September 24: Buddhism II
Quiz 3 due
Discussion 4 due
Quiz 4 posted (on Buddhism)
Discussion 5 posted (Buddhist sutras)

Week 6:

September 27: Buddhism III
Hopfe Chapter 9
Hopfe Chapter 8

September 29: Buddhism IV,

October 1: Sikhism
Quiz 4 due
Discussion 5 due
Discussion 6 posted: *Daodejing*
Quiz 5 posted (on East Asian religions)

Week 7:

October 4: Shintoism, Taoism, Confucianism I

October 6: Shintoism, Taoism, Confucianism II

October 8: Shintoism, Taoism, Confucianism III
Quiz 5 due
Discussion 6 due

Week 8:

October 11: Midterm Review

October 13: MIDTERM POSTED (no class)

October 15: Religions of the Middle East

Week 9 :

October 18: Religions of the Middle East, early Judaism

October 20: Judaism II

October 22: Judaism III

Hopfe, Chapter 11

Quiz 6 posted (on Judaism)

Discussion 7 posted: The Hebrew Bible

Week 10:

October 25: Judaism (continued)

October 27: Judaism (continued), early Christianity

October 29: Christianity

Hopfe Chapter 12

Discussion 7 due

Quiz 6 due

Quiz 7 posted (on Judaism)

Discussion 8 posted: *Gospel of John, Gospel of Mark*

Week 11:

November 1: Christianity II

November 3: Christianity III

November 5: Christianity IV

Quiz 7 due

Discussion 8 due

Quiz 8 posted (on Christianity)

Discussion 9 posted: A Kempis, Augustine, Luther

Week 12:

November 8: Christianity III

November 10: Islam I

November 12: Islam II

Week 13:

November 15: Islam III

November 17: Islam in the Modern World

November 19: Islam in the Modern World II

Hopfe Chapter 13

Quiz 8 due

Discussion 9 due

Quiz 9 posted (on Islam)

Discussion 10 posted: Qur'an

Week 14

November 21: New Religions, other religions

November 23: New Religions, other religions

Discussion 10 due

Quiz 9 due

THANKSGIVING

Week 15

Exam Review