

REL 3308
STUDIES IN WORLD RELIGIONS

Department of Religious Studies, FIU

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

Office and Office Hours: DM 301C, Mondays 2-4 PM.

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 Thursday 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 Thursday, 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 Thursday afternoon 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 a religious ritual in a religious site of their choice. 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).

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.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

Week 1

August 23: Overview

August 25: The Study of Religion

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

Week 3:

September 6: Hinduism I

Hopfe, Chapter 4

September 8: Hinduism II

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

Week 4:

September 13: Hinduism III

September 15: Jainism

Quiz 2 due

Discussion 3 due

Quiz 3 posted (on Hinduism and Jainism)

Discussion 4 posted: Buddhist Sutras from Tripitaka

Week 5:

September 20: Buddhism

Hopfe Chapter 6

September 22: Buddhism II

Quiz 3 due

Discussion 4 due

Quiz 4 posted (on Buddhism)

Discussion 5 posted

Week 6:

September 27: Buddhism III

Hopfe Chapter 9

Hopfe Chapter 8

September 29: Buddhism IV, 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 II

October 6: Shintoism, Taoism, Confucianism III

Quiz 5 due

Discussion 6 due

Week 8:

October 11: Midterm Review

October 13: MIDTERM POSTED (no class)
Site Visit Project guidelines posted

Week 9 :

October 18: Religions of the Middle East
Midterm Due

October 20: Religions of the Middle East, early Judaism
Hopfe, Chapter 11
Quiz 6 posted (on Judaism)
Discussion 7 posted: The Hebrew Bible

Week 10:

October 25: Judaism II

October 27: Judaism III
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
Hopfe Chapter 12

November 3: Christianity II
Quiz 7 due
Discussion 8 due
Quiz 8 posted (on Christianity)
Discussion 9 posted: Augustine, Luther

Week 12:

November 8: Christianity III

November 10: Modern Christianity
Quiz 8 due
Discussion 9 due
Quiz 9 posted (on Christianity)
Discussion 10 Posted

Week 13:

November 15: Islam

Hopfe Chapter 13

November 17: Islam II

Discussion 9 due

Discussion due

Quiz 9 posted (on Islam)

Discussion 11 posted: Qur'an

Week 14

November 22: Islam III

November 24: THANKSGIVING

Discussion 10 due

Quiz 9 due

Week 15:

November 30: New Religions

December 1: Exam Review, Presentations

FINALS WEEK

Site Visit Project due

Final Exam