Religions of the World

Religious Studies 2110

Mon/Wed 1-1:50pm

Allen Auditorium (A&S 110)

Friday Discussion (various)

Instructor:

Dr. Carrie Duncan ([duncance@missouri.edu](mailto:duncance@missouri.edu))

Dept of Religious Studies

221D Arts & Science Building

Office Hours: M/W 2-3; F 10-11&1-2 OBA

Teaching Assistant:

Alexandra Goans (anggzd@mail.missouri.edu)

Required Books (available at the bookstore or on reserve at Ellis):

Kim Knott, *Hinduism:* *A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd ed.(OUP, 2016)

Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd ed. (OUP, 2013)

Norman Solomon, *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd ed. (OUP, 2014)

Linda Woodhead, *Christianity: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd ed. (OUP, 2014)

Carl Ernst, *Following Muhammad* (UNC Press, 2004)

Elie Wiesel, *Night* (edition of your choice)

Course Assignments:

**Weekly Quizzes** (100 pts)

Every week (with a few exceptions) there will be a five-minute quiz at the beginning of your discussion section. You will be given two terms from that week’s lecture or the previous week’s discussion section and asked to write 3-4 sentences on ONE of them, defining the term, giving examples or illustrations as appropriate, and explaining its significance. Quizzes cannot be made up in the event of your absence; there is an extra quiz built into the semester so that missing your one permitted discussion section (see attendance policy below) does not result in a penalty in your quiz grade. Although each quiz is worth only 10 points, cumulatively they are worth as much as your final exam, so it will be important for your final grade to do well consistently on these quizzes. Potential quiz terms will be highlighted in red during lecture and verbally identified during discussion sections. These terms will be helpful for your final exam preparation, so keeping a running list will be a good idea.

**Weekly Writings** (100 pts)

Every week (with a few exceptions) in discussion you will turn in a single-spaced, 12 pt font, one-page, normally margined paper based on that day’s assigned reading and the provided discussion prompt (prompts are provided each week in section and posted on Canvas). These assignments are intentionally short, but should reveal both your thoughtful engagement with the readings as well as your careful execution (in other words, use spell check, read it over for embarrassing auto-correct changes, make it a respectable reflection of your knowledge and abilities). Papers are graded out of 10 points

When I say one page, I mean one ***full*** page, from top to bottom. Put your name in a header and start writing on the first line of the document: don’t take up a third of the page with your name, the class name, the TA’s name, the date, etc.

If you are not going to be in discussion section, you must email your paper to your TA prior to the beginning that discussion. In other words, if you can’t make your 10am discussion, your paper must be in your TA’s inbox by 9:59am. Otherwise it will not be accepted. Remember that printers run out of ink and get other kinds of gremlins, usually right when you are in a rush and need to print before hustling off to class. Don’t get caught in the conundrum of choosing between 1) missing the quiz at the beginning of discussion because you were trying to print your paper and 2) not printing out your paper because you didn’t want to miss the quiz. Choose 3) printing your paper well ahead of class so that you are on time with paper in hand.

**Site Visit** (100 pts)

During the semester you must attend a religious service or ceremony of one of the traditions we are studying this semester. You may not visit a site that falls within your own tradition (that is, if you are Jewish you cannot attend services at a synagogue for your site visit, and so forth). You cannot go to a campus event for this assignment (you can’t go to services at Hillel, for example, in lieu of going to a synagogue): you have to go somewhere off campus that serves primarily non-college student populations.

You MUST call the church, synagogue, mosque, temple, etc. you wish to visit ahead of time to explain your assignment and ask if it is permitted for you to visit. You must dress appropriately, stay the entire time, be unobtrusive and respectful of the individuals attending the service. Do not go with a large group of fellow students – you do not want your presence to be disruptive. This assignment will likely put many of you far outside your comfort zones. That is part of its purpose. Be open, respectful, and curious and you will likely find the experience very rewarding.

After your visit, you will write a 2-3 page paper (spacing, margins, other details per weekly assignment parameters) about your experience, drawing on your observations as well as on your knowledge from class. These papers are due in hard copy to your TA on the dates noted below, depending upon which tradition’s site you choose to visit for this assignment.

**Interview** (100 pts)

During the semester, you must plan, execute, and write up an interview with someone belonging to one of the traditions we are studying this semester (you cannot interview someone who belongs to the same tradition you do and you cannot interview someone from the same tradition as that you chose for your site visit). This assignment will occur in two parts.

First, you must submit a list of 8 interview questions to your TA for approval. This draft of questions is worth ¼ of the total project grade, so make them thoughtful, respectful, intelligent questions (don’t ask someone info you could find on the internet, for example). Put work into it. Your TA might suggest changes or ask for a revision of questions prior to giving approval.

As you are working on your questions, you must identify someone willing to be interviewed. You are free to interview a fellow student, a member of the MU or Columbia community, or someone from your hometown if you are there for a visit at the appropriate time. Make arrangements to meet your interviewee at a time and place convenient to that person.

SHOW UP! Take notes on your experience, but DO NOT record the conversation unless your conversation partner gives you explicit permission. You must assure them that their identity will be kept anonymous if they choose, that they can decline to answer any of your questions they do not care to address, and that they can end the interview at any point for any reason. Do not take more than one hour of their time and remember to thank them when you are finished.

After the interview, you must write a 2-3 page description (same parameters as other writing assignments) of the experience, which includes but is not limited to the questions you asked and the answers you received.

Like the site visit, this assignment might push you outside your normal social spheres, but if you approach the experience with genuine interest and openness, you should find it rewarding. Remember that the person you are talking to does not represent the entirety of the tradition to which they belong. You are talking to them to gain insight into their experience of their tradition, not to demand that they explain or justify the beliefs or actions of others within that tradition or of the tradition as a whole and CERTAINLY not to suggest that they consider following an alternative tradition, like yours.

\*\*\* a note on the Site Visit and Interview assignments\*\*\*

You can choose which traditions to use for either assignment, BUT: 1) you can’t do both on the same tradition; 2) you have to do one on Hinduism or Buddhism and the other on Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. In other words, you have to do one of the assignments in the first half of the semester. So, if you are Jewish, you could do an interview on Hinduism or Buddhism and a site visit on Christianity or Islam (or vice versa) but you cannot do an interview on Hinduism and site visit on Buddhism or a site visit on Christianity and an interview on Islam (and, of course, as a Jewish student you can’t do either on Judaism).

**Final Exam** (100 pts)

The final exam is scheduled for Tuesday, December 12 at 10am and will take place in our regular Allen Auditorium lecture hall. The final exam will consist of ID terms (like the weekly quizzes) as well as an essay. A list of potential essay questions will be distributed during the final week of classes to aid you in your preparation. Two of those questions will appear on the exam and you will have to write on one of them.

**Attendance**: Although attendance will be taken every day, there are no points awarded for coming to class. Your presence, in both lecture and discussion, will be necessary for you to be successful in this class but does not, on its own, merit points. We simply expect you to be in class.

OF COURSE, life happens: sickness, weddings, funerals, job interviews, etc. You’ll be happy to know that you may miss TWO lecture classes over the course of the semester and ONE discussion section without penalty and without needing to provide any documentation or reason for your absence. Yes, this means you could simply not show up just because you felt like sleeping in a few times. But if you blow off class in September and then get the flu in November, you’ll have wasted your permitted absences and those otherwise legitimate November absences will not be excused.

If your absences exceed your allotted amount, your final course grade will lower by half a letter grade for each unexcused absence. In other words, if you earn a B+ in the class over all, but miss two discussion sections, your final grade will be a B. If you miss four lectures, it will be a B-. This is how much your attendance matters to me. The choice of whether or not to come to class is, of course, yours: you are all independent adults. Choices do have consequences, however; do keep in mind how excessive absenteeism will affect your grade in this class.

OF COURSE, exceptions will be made on an individual basis in cases of documented ongoing health, family, or personal emergencies. Please be in contact with me immediately if circumstances beyond your control require your absence from class beyond the permitted number of days.

**Grade Distribution**:

A 465-500 pts

A- 450-464 pts

B+ 435-449 pts

B 415-434 pts

B- 400-414 pts

C+ 385-399 pts

C 365-384 pts

C- 350-364 pts

D+ 335-349 pts

D 315-334 pts

D- 300-314 pts

F 0-299 pts

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor.

Students with Disabilities:

If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible. If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please register with the Office of Disability Services (http://disabilityservices.missouri.edu), S5 Memorial Union, 882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for students with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.

Technology in the Classroom:

You may not use laptops, ipads, iphones, or other mobile devices during class unless specifically told otherwise. Phones should be set on silent prior to class and should not be visible at any time. I reserve the right to call you out publically for using your phone during class. Exceptions will be made for peer note takers if they are required or for students with exemptions from the Office of Disability Services.

Respect and Courtesy: This course and its environs, both physical and online, are intended to be a safe place for all people regardless of background, experience, race, religion, biological sex, gender identity, or gender expression. Religion is a subject in which many people have a strong personal stake. Be mindful of how your words might sound to others who do not share your world-view. Likewise, when listening to others assume that they are speaking with best intentions, and that any misspeaking results from ignorance rather than malice. If you have any concerns regarding these issues, please see me immediately.

Self-Care:

As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. MU services are available and **treatment does work**. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at either: http://studenthealth.missouri.edu/services/mental.html or https://counseling.missouri.edu/student-services/crisis.php#help or by calling **573-882-6601**. 24 hour emergency help is also available through the Missouri Crisis Line: **1-888-761-4357** or text assistance available by texting “HAND” to 839863. The Missouri Crisis Line is staffed by local volunteers who are trained to respond to a wide range of difficulties including suicide, self-injury, sexual assault, relationship violence, and emotional distress. If these or other issues are affecting your performance in class, please tell your professors and work with them to develop strategies for your success. Do be aware, however, that all MU professors are Title IX mandatory reporters and must report information shared about sexual assault to university administrators. Do not let this fact deter you from seeking help; simply begin by asking whether or not the person to whom you are speaking is a mandatory reporter. If the answer is yes, just ask for help to identify an individual to whom you can speak in confidence.

Class Schedule (prepare the day’s reading prior to attending class):

Monday, August 21 **No Class**: Eclipse

Wednesday, August 23 Religion and the Public University

Readings: Syllabus & 50 Years After Abington vs. Schempp (**Canvas**)

Friday, August 25 Discussion: What is Religion?

Reading: Definitions of Religion (**Canvas**)

Hinduism

Monday, August 28 The Veda and Hindu textual traditions

Reading: Knott chs. 1-2

Wednesday, August 30 Philosophical Traditions: Vedanta

Reading: Knott ch. 3

Friday, September 1 Discussion: Bhagavad Gita

Reading: Knott ch. 4 and selection from Bhagavad Gita (Canvas)

Monday, September 4 **No Class**: Labor Day

Wednesday, Sept 6 Theisms: Vishnu and Shiva

Reading: Knott ch. 5

Friday, September 8 Discussion: Devi (the Goddess)

Reading: Devi Mahatmya (Canvas)

Monday, September 11 Karma, reincarnation, and liberation

Reading: Knott ch. 7

Wednesday, Sept 13 Dharma and Ritual Practice

Reading: Knott ch. 9

Friday, September 15 Discussion: Hindu Nationalism and Globalization

Reading: Knott chs. 6 & 8

HINDUISM SITE VISIT OR INTERVIEW DUE MONDAY SEPTEMBER 18

Buddhism

Monday, September 18 Life of the Buddha

Reading: Keown chs. 1 & 2

Wednesday, September 20 Karma, the 4 Noble Truths, and the 8-Fold Path

Reading: Keown chs. 3-4

Friday, September 22 Discussion: Teachings of the Buddha

Reading: Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma (Canvas)

Monday, September 25 Theravada and Mahayana Buddhisms

Reading: Keown ch. 5

Wednesday, September 27 Buddhism around the world

Reading: Keown chs. 6 & 9

Friday, September 29 Discussion: Buddhist Meditation

Reading: Keown ch. 7

Monday, October 2 Buddhist Ethics

Reading: Keown ch. 8

BUDDHISM SITE VISIT OR INTERVIEW DUE WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 4

Judaism

Wednesday, October 4 Judaism’s ancient roots

Reading: Solomon pgs. 1-30

Friday, October 6 Discussion: Visit to Campus Sukkah

Reading: Solomon ch. 4

Monday, October 9 Synagogues and sages

Reading: Solomon ch. 3

Wednesday, October 11 Jews in the medieval world

Reading: Solomon ch. 5

Friday, October 13 Discussion: Primary text (rabbinic literature)

Reading: Selection from Talmud http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/pol/pol39.htm (Canvas) (H. Polano, Talmud)

Monday, October 16 Orthodox/Conservative/Reform movements

Reading: Solomon ch. 7

Wednesday, October 18 Modern Jewish experiences

Reading: Solomon chs. 6 & 8

Friday, October 20 Discussion: Night/post-Shoah theology

Reading: Elie Wiesel, *Night*

JUDAISM SITE VISIT OR INTERVIEW DUE MONDAY OCTOBER 23

Christianity

Monday, October 23 Jesus and the Early Church

Reading: Woodhead chs. 1-2

Wednesday, October 25 Christianity and Empire

Reading: Woodhead ch. 3

Friday, October 27 Discussion: Special Collections visit

Monday, October 31 Reformation and Counter-Reformation

Reading: Woodhead ch. 4

Wednesday, November 1 Monasticism and Ritual

Reading: Woodhead ch. 5

Friday, November 3 Discussion: The War on Christmas

Reading: The Puritan War on Christmas (Canvas) and <http://religiondispatches.org/trendwatch-thieves-taking-the-christ-out-of-christmas-literally/>

Monday, November 6 Latter Day Saints

Reading: Woodhead ch. 6 & Moore, How to Become a People (Canvas)

CHRISTIANITY SITE VISIT OR INTERVIEW DUE WEDNESDAY NOV 8

Islam

Wednesday, November 8 Muhammad and his revelation

Reading: Ernst ch. 3

Friday, November 10 Discussion: text analysis of Quran

Reading: Selection from Quran

Monday, November 13 Islam and the study of Religion

Reading: Ernst ch. 2

Wednesday, November 15 The Five Pillars

Reading: Ernst pgs 108-139

Friday, November 17 Discussion: veiling, feminism, and Islam

Reading: Leila Ahmed, The Veil Debate – Again (Canvas)

November 20-24 **No Class**: Thanksgiving Break

Monday, November 27 Sunnis, Shiites, and Sufis

Reading: Ernst ch. 5

Wednesday, November 29 American Muslim experiences

Reading:

ISLAM SITE VISIT OR INTERVIEW DUE MONDAY DECEMBER 4

Friday, December 1 Discussion: TBD

Reading: TBD

Monday, December 4 The Problem of World Religions

Wednesday, December 6 Wrap Up, Evaluations, etc.

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Did you enjoy our class this semester? Are you looking to take classes that challenge you to think in new and different ways? Would you like to take small classes and make more personal connections with professors? CONSIDER MAJORING IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES! A religious studies major is a great complement to studies in biology, journalism, or other professionally directed degrees. **Employers overwhelmingly seek job applicants who can think critically, argue persuasively, and write well** – Religious Studies will teach all those skills in a small, supportive, friendly environment. Stop by 221 Arts & Science for more information!