Rel 1300-09: Introduction to World Religions

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the academic study of “world religions.” We will be looking at the historical processes and factors that have shaped these world religions. We will think critically about the historical development, systems of belief, ritual practices, institutional structures, and cultural expressions of each religion covered in the course. As an introductory course, this class is hardly all-encompassing when it comes to world religions, but we will investigate a variety of religions as time permits. It also seeks to introduce you to college level work, the concept of religion, and the academic study of religion.

This course is a general education course that fulfills the Gordon Rule Requirement. You will do a significant amount of reading and writing in this class. Students who do not read should not expect to receive a passing grade. In order to fulfill FSU’s Gordon Rule “W” Designation (Writing) credit, the student must earn a “C-” or better in the course, and in order to receive a “C-” in the course, the student must earn at least a “C-” on the required writing assignments for the course. If the student does not earn a “C-” or better on the required writing assignments for the course, the student will not earn an overall grade of “C-” or better in the course, no matter how well the student performs in the remaining portion of the course.

HOW THIS HELPS YOU GRADUATE

In addition to fulfilling the Gordon Rule Requirement, this course is also part of the Liberal Studies Area IV (Humanities and Fine Arts). The Liberal Studies Program at Florida State University has been designed to provide a perspective on the qualities, accomplishments and aspirations of human beings, the past and present civilizations we have created, and the natural and technological world we inhabit. This course has been approved as meeting the requirements for Liberal Studies Area IV, Humanities and Fine Arts, and in combination with your other Liberal Studies courses, provides an important foundation for your lifelong quest for knowledge. This class also meets the X (“Cross-cultural Studies”) Multicultural Requirement.

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YOUR INSTRUCTOR:
- Emily Clark
- esclark@fsu.edu
- Office: Dodd 206
- Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 9:30-11:00, and by appointment
COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. For students to learn about major religions in world history and the world today.
2. Furthermore, the two non-textbooks will help students to recognize the role American history and culture plays in how these world religions are lived in the US.
3. For students to observe how the practice and beliefs of these world religions affect culture and history more broadly and how culture and history affect these religions.
4. For students to be able to critically read, historically contextualize, and interpret arguments about religious history and religious studies.
5. As a Gordon Rule course, students will work on developing their writing skills by writing three 1000 word essays, each arguing a thesis statement.

“Everybody, in effect, seems to know what ‘world religions’ means, more or less, that is to say, generally, vaguely.” - Tomoko Masuzawa

COURSE TEXTS


In addition to going to the campus bookstore or Bill’s, consider checking out Amazon.com, Half.com, or Abebooks.com for used copies of the texts. Additionally, Virtual Orientalism is available in Kindle/e-book form. Additional readings will be uploaded to the Course Library on the Blackboard site.

Reading Key for Course Schedule: \( WRR = A \) World Religions Reader; \( JAJ = Jazz Age Jews; \) \( VO = Virtual Orientalism; \) \( BB = pdf \) on Blackboard in the Course Library.

The \( WRR \) will either list pages or list the chapter followed by the document you are to read. For example: “\( WRR: 2.4 \)” refers to chapter 2, document 4 “Excerpt from Our Voices, Our Land” on page 16. You will be expected to read both the primary source document excerpt and the short introduction preceding the piece.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Getting all three of the required texts will be necessary in order to succeed in this class.
- I do not tolerate plagiarism or cheating. All violations of the FSU Academic Honor Code will be reported to the Dean.
- A hangover is not an excusable absence. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.
- When tallying your final letter grade for the course, I will use the standard Florida State University grading scale.

A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 88-89; B: 83-87; B-: 80-82; C+: 78-79; C: 73-77; C-: 70-72; D+: 68-69; D: 63-67; D-: 60-62; F: below 60
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1) Three Papers: Each paper should be around 1000 words. The first paper is worth 75 points and the second two are worth 100 points. You will upload your papers to SafeAssign, and you will be required to bring a hard copy to class. The first paper (Study of Religion) is due September 25th; the second (Virtual Orientalism) is due October 30th; the third (Jazz Age Jews) is due December 4th.

2) Two Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam, each worth 100 points. The midterm will be October 18th; the final exam will be December 11th at 10am. These will include both multiple choice questions and a short in-class essay.

3) Preparation: Worth 200 points. The least boring and most effective way to learn is to participate fully in the process. You are expected to contribute to the success of this course by: Reading the assigned materials and thinking about them before class, Bringing the assigned readings to class ready to discuss them, Attending every class (arriving on time and staying until the end), Listening respectfully to each other and the instructor, and Contributing to class discussions!

Including in your preparation grade will be 11 short reading quizzes each worth 15 points. If you do the assigned reading, you should do fine on the quizzes. If you do not do the assigned reading these quizzes will be difficult if not impossible to answer. The quizzes will never be over Jazz Age Jews or Virtual Orientalism; the page assignments for those are suggestions to keep you from reading the book at the last minute. The books will also occasionally intersect with class discussions.

At the end of the semester your lowest quiz grade will be dropped and your total quiz score determined from the remaining quizzes. There will only be make-up quizzes for excused absences.

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Exams</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
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Grading Scale

A range = 607-675 points
B range = 540-606 points
C range = 472-539 points
D range = 405-471 points
F range = 404 points and below

No animals were harmed in the making of this syllabus, though some students may have been.

IMPORTANT DATES

September 25th: Paper 1 Due
October 18th: Midterm
October 30th: Paper 2 Due
December 4th: Paper 3 Due
December 11th: Final Exam (10:00-12:00) in HCB 312

I will only allow extensions or alternative exam dates for in distressing cases of family emergencies and extreme illness. All late papers will be docked one letter grade for everyday late starting at 8:05am the day the paper is due.
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

As a student enrolled in this course, you agree to do the following:

1) **Come to class, on time, and stay for the entire meeting.** Make-up accommodations will only be offered for excused absences. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

2) **Complete assigned readings, in their entirety, on schedule.** You should complete assigned readings by the start of the class meeting.

3) **Contribute to class discussions.** You should come to class with questions and comments, prepared to participate in a lively discussion.

4) **Complete all assignments, in a timely manner.** I will allow extensions for distressing cases of family emergencies and extreme illness. Otherwise late papers will be deducted a full latter grade for every day it is late, starting immediately after the deadline. In other words, if your paper is due at the beginning of class at 8am and you turn it in at my office hours after class, you are already a day late. Mark deadlines and important dates in your calendar, iPhone, etc.

5) **Obey the FSU Honor Code.** Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic violations. The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “... be honest and truthful and ... [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University” (Florida State University Academic Policy, found at [http://fsa.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy](http://fsa.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy)).

The policy of the Department of Religion is that all violations of the FSU honor code, even first offenses, will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of the Faculties. Additional sanctions may be imposed by FSU as part of the procedure for resolving academic honor allegations.

6) **Ask for help when you need it.** I am happy to assist students in their attempts to master course materials and successfully complete course assignments. I hold weekly office hours and am available via email. Please contact me if you have questions about readings, lectures, or topics raised in class discussions.

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COURSE POLICIES

Students are expected to uphold the [Academic Honor Code](http://fsa.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy) published in The Florida State University Bulletin and the Student Handbook. The Academic Honor System of Florida State University is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student’s own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community.

**Americans with Disabilities Act Policy:** Students with disabilities who need academic accommodations should:

1. Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC).
2. Bring a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done within the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request for students requiring accommodations.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact: sdrc@admin.fsu.edu, Student Disability Resource Center, 874 Traditions Way, 108 Student Services Building, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167, (850) 644-9566 (voice); (850) 644-8504 (TDD).

Email: sdrc@admin.fsu.edu. See also [http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/](http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/).
COURSE POLICIES

Lastly, this is a course in religion at a public, state institution. Thus, it is not confessional in nature; that is, we are not here to promote a particular religious viewpoint or to debate religious “truth.” Rather, we will be engaging religious materials as scholars—as historians, anthropologists, and sociologists—in order to understand their meanings for the people who have produced and used them. You may have your own religious commitment; if so, throughout this course you will likely encounter opinions and religious beliefs and activities with which you do not agree. I ask you to imagine yourself in the shoes of someone else whose practices and beliefs may differ from your own and yet carry immense meaning and value for that person. If your personal religious commitment is causing you to have difficulties doing this, please feel free to discuss it with me privately.

Furthermore, students will be expected to communicate in a civil manner at all times, both in and out of the classroom. This means that interactions are to be carried out in a polite, courteous, and dignified way. Treat your peers and the subject material with respect and understanding.

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and subject to change with advance notice.

COURSE SCHEDULE

August 28th: Course Introduction; Syllabus; Class Expectations

August 30th: Introduction to the Academic Study of “Religion”

September 4th: Case Study: The Problem of “Religion” and American Law
    Reading: BB: “The Bare Facts of Ritual” (We will discuss this at the beginning of class to continue our discussion from last time before launching into law.)

September 6th: Introduction to “World Religions” and “Indigenous” Religions
    Reading: BB: “The Invention of World Religions”

September 11th: Indigenous Religions of North America
    Reading: WRR: 2.4, 2.7, 2.8, 2.16

September 13th: Indigenous Religions of West Africa
    Reading: WRR: 2.1, 2.3, 2.5

September 18th: Indigenous Religions Case Study: Vodou and Haiti; or, That Religion that Caused an Earthquake According to Pat Robertson
    Reading: BB: “Haitian Zombies”

September 20th: No Class; work on those papers

September 25th: Confucianism;
    Reading: WRR: page 128’s “A Selected Summary of Beliefs;” 6.57, 6.58, 6.60, 6.64, 6.68
    Paper 1 Due

September 27th: Hinduism
    Reading: WRR: page 64’s “A Selected Summary of Beliefs;” 3.17, 3.18, 3.19, 3.20, 3.23; VO: pgs 3-22 (chapter 1)

October 2nd: Hinduism
    Reading: WRR: 3.22, 3.28, 3.29, 3.32

October 4th: Buddhism
    Reading: WRR: page 101’s “A Selected Summary of Beliefs;” 5.43, 5.44; VO: pgs 23-62 (chapter 2)

October 9th: Buddhism
    Reading: WRR: 5.51, 5.54, 5.55

October 11th: Shinto
    Reading: WRR: page 151’s “A Selected Summary of Beliefs;” 7.81, 7.82, 7.87; VO: pgs 63-110 (chapter 3)
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

If anything in class sparks your interest, feel free to come talk to me during my office hours for further discussion on the topic. Also, check out the Department of Religion’s homepage. Chances are, there will be a class offered next semester that expands upon your interest. Our department offers courses in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Religion in the US, Philosophy of Religion, Religion and Gender, Religious Ethics, Religion and Human Rights, and more.

Get in contact with one the department’s undergraduate advisors: Dr. Gaiser, Dr. Kalbian, or Dr. Hellweg. If you’re interested in majoring in Religion, contact them or me for more information. Also, consider a minor in Religion. After taking this class, you’re a quarter of the way to the required hours. Answers to frequently asked questions about the major or minor can be found here.

COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTINUED

October 16th: Taoism; and Midterm Review
   Reading: WRR: 6.62, 6.63, 6.66; VO: pgs 111-166 (chapters 4 and 5)

October 18th: Midterm

October 23rd: Judaism

October 25th: Judaism

October 30th: Special Topics Day: World Religions and Horror
   Reading: BB: “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)”

   Paper 2 Due

November 1st: Late Radical Judaism and Early Christianity

November 6th: Christianity
   Reading: WRR: page 208-209 “Selected Summary of Beliefs” and “Key Terms,” 10.125, 10.128, 10.130; JAJ p11-64 (part 1)

November 8th: Christianity
   Reading: WRR: 10.132, 10.133, 10.134, 10.138, 10.142

November 13th: Islam

November 15th: Islam
   Reading: WRR:11.165-170, 11.171, 11.174, 11.176

November 20th and 22nd: No Class
   Reading: JAJ p127-183 (part 3 and conclusion)

November 27th: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
   Reading: WRR: page 270’s Facts on Mormonism, 13.182, 13.183, 13.184

November 29th: The People’s Temple
   Reading: BB: “Salvation and Suicide”

December 4th: Open Topic to be voted on
   Reading: To be determined

   Paper 3 Due

December 6th: Review

December 11th: Final; 10:00 am in HCB 312