**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**RS 100: Introduction to Religious Studies (14197)**

**Fall 2015**

**Instructor:** Albert Tevanyan, Ph.D.

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**Class hours & Classroom:** Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 am -12:15 pm. SH 390

**Office hours:** Tuesday 12:30-1:30. SN 419

**Course Description**: This course will examine religion in historical, sociological and metaphysical perspective. This course will introduce students to the major religious terminology, to the methodology of studying religion, and will also explore such concepts as sacred texts, rituals, spiritual vs. secular, religion and current ethical issues, religion and government, religion and politics, science and religion etc. It will also examine and compare various religious traditions.

**RS 100 SLO’s**:

1. Students will be able to recognize and to articulate (orally and in writing) the difference between an academic approach to religion and a personal, devotional approach.

2. Students will be able to demonstrate a *basic level of proficiency* in recognizing the major contributors to the modern study of religion and their models/theories from philosophy, theology, the history of religions, and the social sciences.

3. Students will be able to understand the following terms in their conventional, popular usage, and then discuss the variety of ways that religious studies scholars have critiqued, expanded, or problematized these: religion, religious, myth, ritual, symbol, philosophy, subjectivity, objectivity, secular/secularization, cult, sect, mysticism, theism, atheism, polytheism, monotheism, spirituality, magic, paganism, animism, canon, religious violence, post-colonialism, individualistic compared to community-based religions.

4. Students will be able to explain and give basic examples of the social function of religion with regard to gender, ethnicity, and nationality.

5. Students will be able to recognize religiosity in an aspect of modern culture such as different forms of media, art, music, films, politics, sports, and the public discourse on science.

6. Students will be able to demonstrate a *basic level of proficiency* in describing two specific religious traditions (perhaps one from North America, one outside of it), including their historical development, major beliefs and practices, and demonstrate *a basic level of proficiency* in interpreting religious texts and rituals from each religious tradition.

**GE SLO’s:**

1. Students will explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures.

2. Students will analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities;

3. Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms;

4. Students will demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;

5. Students will be able to use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression, literature, philosophy, or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged;

6. Students will learn to describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.

**READINGS:**

**Required Textbook:**



*Introduction to Religious Studies***,** Paul. O. Myhre, ed.Anselm Academic, 2009

Other supplemental materials will be provided online for reading.

Course Requirements:

 • **Tests and Exams:**

Midterm and Final.

There will be two main examinations: a midterm and a final exam. For the dates of the exams see Moodle. All exams are on the Moodle, however students need to be present in class during the test.

Midterm: 40 questions. 20 multiple choice (2 points each) and 20 true and false (1 point each). Total: 60 points.

Final: 40 questions. 20 multiple choice (2 points each) and 20 true and false (1 point each). Total: 60 points. The final grade for the course will be calculated based on the average of online quizzes, the midterm and the final.

Online quizzes:

Besides the Midterm and the Final there will also be online quizzes, which will constitute the 20% of your grade. All online quizzes will be based on the reading material from the textbook. We will have one online quiz before the midterm and one before the final. Students will take total of 2 online quizzes during the entire course.

Each online quiz will have 20 questions (1 point each question, multiple choice). All tests are online, however students need to be present in class during the test (open book). A Study guide for the Midterm and the Final exams will be posted on the Moodle a week prior to the test.

Attendance will constitute 20% (40 points) of your total grade. Present – 2 points, Late – 1 point. Absent – 0 points.

**Grading**: your grades will be computed based on the following:

a. Your final grade will be based on the average of the online quizzes, the midterm and final tests.

b. An **extra credit** (optional) oral presentation in class will be available for the course. It will give you 20 extra points for the overall grade. Students need to submit/upload (see Moodle link for uploading) a 5 page minimum written paper on the Moodle and present the paper orally in class. You may choose a topic of your interest, (consult with the lecturer) or select one from the list of suggested topics (see Moodle: Topics).

Presentations are 15-20 minutes long, followed by a Q&A with the class. Failure to submit the written version of your presentation online will result in 0 extra credit. It is important to inform the instructor about your decision to do the presentation to get an assigned date. Those who sign up early will get the latest date possible.

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| --- | --- |
| Extra Credit papers + oral presentations | 20 extra points |
| Midterm Reading quiz | 20 points |
| Midterm Test  | 60 points |
| Final Reading Quiz  | 20 points |
| Final Exam  | 60 Points  |
| Attendance  | 40 points |
| **Course total**  | 200 +(20 extra credit. Optional)  |

Total maximum points for this course is 200. (20 extra points not included)

Grading scale: Plus/minus grading system will be implemented. There will be no A+ grade.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Highest** | **Lowest** | **Letter** |
| 100.00 % | 93.00 % | A |
| 92.99 % | 90.00 % | A- |
| 89.99 % | 87.00 % | B+ |
| 86.99 % | 83.00 % | B |
| 82.99 % | 80.00 % | B- |
| 79.99 % | 77.00 % | C+ |
| 76.99 % | 73.00 % | C |
| 72.99 % | 70.00 % | C- |
| 69.99 % | 67.00 % | D+ |
| 66.99 % | 60.00 % | D |
| 59.99 % | 0.00 % | F |

 **Exam Policy:**

Make-ups are possible only in the case of unusual and extraordinary circumstances. Students, who have been granted a make-up opportunity, may take the test after the class time or in my office during office hours.

**Academic Integrity:**

Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. Any form of plagiarism will result in a failing grade. The following violations of academic integrity will be addressed formally:

* Submitting the same work in whole or in part in more than one course
* Submitting as one’s own work material (s) obtained from another source;
* Unattributed quotations or ideas from published, unpublished or electronic sources;
* Unauthorized collaboration in preparing assignments;
* Cheating on exams by any means: using search engines, lecture notes etc. during the test
* During the tests, logging in and taking the test not being present in class.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

Aug. 25-27

**Week 1**

Introduction: Syllabus.

Defining and Studying Religion.

Read textbook*:* Introduction, Chapter 1

Sept. 1-3

**Week 2**

Methods of Studying Religion: Various Approaches

Textbook: Chapter 2

Sept. 8-10

**Week 3**

Formation of Religions

Common features of Religions

Textbook: Chapter 3

Sept. 15-17

**Week 4.**

 Religion and Truth Claims

Inclusive vs. exclusive

Comparing Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam

Textbook: Chapter 4

Sept 22 - 24

**Week 5.**

Religion and Language

Religion and the Sacred Narrative: Scriptures and Stories

Textbook: Chapter 5

Sept 29 – Oct. 1

**Week 6.**

Religion, Human senses and psychology

Religion, Eternity and Afterlife

Textbook: Chapter 6

March 3 to 5

**Week 7**

March 3: Preparation for the Midterm Reading Quiz

Textbook: Chapter 7

March 5: Midterm Reading Quiz (*in Class online, open book. 7 chapters only*)

Oct. 6- 8

**Week 8**

March 10: preparation for the Midterm

March 12: **MID-TERM EXAM (***online, in class, not open book. Lectures only***)**

Oct. 13 – 15

**Week 9**

Religion, Ethics and Morality

Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim views on Spirituality

Textbook: Chapter 8

Oct. 20-22

**Week 10**

Religion and Morality continued

Contemporary ethical issues and rational foundations for morality

Reading: Chapter 9

**Oct. 27-29**

**Week 11**

Religion and Violence

Religion, Politics and ethics of War

Christian and Muslim views on Religion and Government

Textbook: Chapter 10

Nov. 3-5

**Week 12**

Religion and Society

Social Justice and Environment

Racial and Gender issues

Textbook: Chapter 11

Nov. 10-12

**Week 13**

Religion, Metaphysics and Mysticism

A study of various religious traditions and practices

Textbook: Chapter 12-13

Nov. 17-19

**Week 14**

Science and Religion

Cosmology, Materialism, Evolution and Creationism

Religion and Post-Modern society

Globalization and Modern spirituality

Preparation for the Midterm Reading Quiz

Textbook: Chapter 14

Nov. 24th

**Week 15**

**Final Reading Quiz (***in class, online, open book. Chapters 8 to 14***)**

Nov. 26th Thanksgiving Holiday no Class

Dec. 1-3

Student Presentations

Preparation for the final exam

**Final Exam: See Moodle for the date**