**syllabus: RS 100 Intro Religious Studies, Fall 2015**

**REVISED: 6/27/2015**

Catalog number: 14399 Classroom: SH390 8am to 10:45am

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Office hours: SN 229 6:40 to 7:40 AM and 2 - 3 PM Friday and via Skype by appointment

**Description:** This course introduces students to the discipline of Religious Studies via a look at the sacred texts and tales from a wide range of world views. Analytical tools of the discipline will be introduced and applied to the reading. Students will learn how to analyze a variety of beliefs academically, and strive to avoid filtering things through their personal belief systems. Because Religious Studies is an interdisciplinary field, students will be able to utilize the skills from this class in other disciplines, as well as in everyday critical assessments of information.

**Key Goals:** Students will familiarize themselves with the vocabulary of religious studies and the diversity of concepts about the sacred in the world. This will be accomplished by analyzing primary texts and mythologies regarding the divine and then comparing them to what we define as human. The interaction between humanity and divinity will show cultural specificity and reveal possible commonalities between seemingly disparate belief systems. Through actual analysis, students will develop a sense of examining the sacred outside of a faith-driven understanding. A variety of theoretical tools will be given to them to aid in their analyses of unfamiliar religious thought and students must develop their own sets of analytical questions while reading and “discuss” them with others.

**Key Skills:** Students will learn how to analyze primary texts, interpret and compare key concepts. These analytical skills outline a methodology of inquiry and application that can be utilized in any field (G.E. F.2 or S.5)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**:

**ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION:** will be **25% of your grade!** (Sleeping in isn’t an option ;-) 100 points. You get ONE unexcused absence, then your grade will be reduced by 1/3 for each subsequent unexcused absence. To be considered a legitimate excused absence, I have to receive an email from you NO LATER than the day of the absence. No email /no excuse. I make the determination whether it is an acceptable reason or not. ALSO, it is your responsibility to sign the class roll sheet.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** 7 2-page essay papers written and turned in during class, regarding the reading. 10-20 points each for 120 points total. The number of writings depends on how much effort and understanding the class seems to be putting into understanding the readings.

**QUIZZES:**  There is a syllabus quiz the first week you attend class worth 25 points so get used to checking your syllabus. WARNING: you don't want to start the class 25 points behind do you? There are 2 major quizzes: an online (Moodle) vocabulary quiz worth 50 points due midnight September 11th. The **MAP test and final quiz** are also worth 50 points each and will be done in-class on our LAST CLASS, Dec 4th. Quizzes are 175 points total.

**TOTAL POINTS for the class = 400.**

Grade point ranges:

A 400 -- 372 B+ 359 -- 348 C+ 319 – 308 D+ 279 – 268  
A- 371 – 360 B 347 – 332 C 307 – 292 D 267 – 252

B- 331 – 320 C- 291 – 280 D- 251 - 240

**WRITING FORMAT** will be a part of your grades when part of an assignment. ALL writing will be in your best college form and language. Most importantly, it MUST BE YOUR OWN ORIGINAL WORK and there are **NO OUTSIDE SOURCES ALLOWED**, instead you will only use your own analysis and the background given in the book and in class. Each in-class writing will use at least 2 examples from the myths you read specifically for that topic. If we have combined 2 topics then you will use a minimum of one example from each topic. You will need to find a common thread that you can use for both topics for your thesis. You will **NOT** just write 2 separate sections. Let me repeat, both topics will be written about with a single cohesive thesis. Instructions for the homework writing assignment will be on Moodle. **POINTS or NO POINTS grading will be in effect!!! If you fail to follow any of the instructions from the 3rd week until the end of the semester, I will not grade the work and you will receive 0 pts for not being conscientious about your work.**

THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN THIS CLASS IS to keep up with the work and, you have one (1) week to make up any missed in-class writing. ASK QUESTIONS NOW IF THIS IS NOT CLEAR TO YOU.

Everyone has a bad day, if you were behind or had a particularly difficult time with a group of the readings then I may give you a chance to rewrite...HOWEVER coming to class unprepared should not be a habit. Anyone who doesn't know what reading is to be used for an assigned writing will be considered unprepared. MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND HOW THE CLASS WRITINGS WORK.

FINALLY, I only allow one extra credit as I’ve noticed that students think it is a substitute for applying themselves to the regular assignments. If you want a certain grade, keep up with the work assigned. The extra credit will be the assignment you see listed on Nov 13th and will only be worth 10 points IF the questions and comments are deemed good enough by me, which might make up for part of a missed in-class writing. For a legitimate (my discretion) absence, you may arrange with me via email to make up a missed assignment that will be due NO LATER THAN 1 week after the original due date. No late work may be turned in after November 20th.

**PLAIGIARISM:** YOU ARE REQUIRED to find CSUN’s Academic Dishonesty policy (just type “academic honesty” in the Search CSUN box and then pick the PDF titled “ACADEMIC DISHONESTY.” The only copying and pasting you will do in this class is pasting the first full sentence into the syllabus quiz, which starts “The maintenance of academic integrity and quality education...” Do not pick the faculty one. Let me make it very clear, **NO OUTSIDE SOURCES**, so if I find any copying (and pasting) in your submissions you will get 0 for the assignment without chance for a make-up.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Mircae Eliade, *Essential Sacred Writings From Around the World*, Harper, San Francisco, 1991. You are expected to bring your book to every class.

Online reading will also be provided during the semester, as well as “lecture” Powerpoints.

**COURSE SLOs:**

Study of the elements of religion and selected contemporary religious issues. Examines such subjects as myth and ritual, the sacred and profane, dreams and theophanies, priests and prophets, science and religion, history and religion, and the possibility of religious faith today**.**

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 SLOs:**Goal: Students will understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions, and philosophy.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

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

2. 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. Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;

5. 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;

**GE SLOs continued:**

6. Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.

**GENERAL GRADING RUBRIC:  
Qualities of A writing:**1) Contains a well-developed, clearly stated thesis or statement sentence.  
2) Stays focused on topic and completely answers prompt (when applicable).

3) Uses evidence from assigned texts, with quotes and explanations of those quotes.

4) Is logically organized and information is accurate.

5) Is written at a college level, paying attention to style, word choice, flow, transitions, paragraph cohesion, and is PROOFREAD. Also follows all instructions given by instructor.

6) Shows independent and critical thought.

**Qualities of B writing:**

1) Clear statement, but underdeveloped.

2) Generally addresses topic.

3) Evidence is not always relevant or forgotten.

4) Some organizational problems.

5) Not proofread, weak transitions, other marks of rushed or inadequately considered work.

**Qualities of C writing:**

1) Some attempt to answer the question/issue but no real thesis or statement.

2) Disorganized, stream of consciousness writing, no transitions, irrelevant or wrong evidence.

3) Lack of originality, simply parrots texts or over-generalizes.

4) Too short/long, doesn’t follow instructions, misuse of language or terminology, not proofread.

**Qualities of D writing:**

1) Late or untyped work.

2) No statement, little if any evidence, off topic.

3) Sloppy writing, grammatical errors, frequent misspellings, ignored previous corrections.

**Qualities of F writing:**

1) Not turned in or very late.

2) Extemporizing, pejorative or offensive statements, ignored previous corrections.

**RS 100 Intro to Religious Studies SCHEDULE (Subject to change as needed)**

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| **CLASS DATE** | **Due this week.**  **Due next week.** | **READ THIS SYLLABUS CAREFULLY and always ask ME (instead of another student) any questions you might have. Activities are in class, assignments are homework. (please note that readings of a particular group appear between the red paretheses, along with the topic.)** |
| WEEK 1 Aug 28 | **Introduction**  **Tools for Study** | **LECTURE:** Introduction to course and go over syllabus and expectations for the course. 75 min  15 min break  **WRITING #1:** First in-class written assignment DOES NOT require any previous knowledge. Answer the “Epic of Gilgamesh” essay prompt. 30 min. (10 pts)  **DISCUSSION:** What is Religious studies? 30 min  **READING DUE NEXT WEEK:** Ch 1-2 from Livingston. (Transcripts for Powerpoints are also in the “Powerpoint” folder) |
| WEEK 2 Sep 4 | **Tools for study** | **LECTURE and DISCUSSION:** Theory #1 and #2 Powerpoints with vocabulary for the first quiz. (Tools for study) 75 min, then 15 min break, 75 min  **ASSIGNMENT: ONLINE QUIZ #1** on the vocabulary is DUE no later than 11:45pm, next Friday Sep 11th.  **READING DUE NEXT WEEK: from *Essential Sacred Writings (ESW)***: **(**Jain #263 on p. 536-538; Nahuatl #270 & 271 on p. 548-550; Indian #225 on p. 471-5 "**WHAT IS HUMAN LIFE?" readings)** |
| WEEK 3 Sep 11  Points/no points starts now!  WEEK 3  Sep 11 continued | **Discuss vocabulary "Tools for study" and think about "What is human life?"**  **REVIEW** | **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:** Ch 1 & 2 of the Livingston reading and bring in your questions about the quiz.  **LECTURE:** Introduces "WHAT IS HUMAN LIFE?"Powerpoint. How to read original myths as a Religious Studies scholar.  **EXERCISE:** Write a thesis for your first assignment and discuss how to make an argument. These must be attached to your first essay.  Don't forget vocabulary quiz due tonight (50 pts).  **ASSIGNMENT due Sep 18:** RE-READ the "WHAT IS HUMAN LIFE" myths and review your statement/thesis sentence (a point of discussion) that you will use for your focus in next week's in-class writing. Review the instructions under Writing Format in the syllabus, p 2.  **READING DUE Sep 18:** Then read through for the first time: **(**Melanesian, Indonesian, Australian, Polynesian section D. “Myths of the Origin of Death” #68-72 on p. 139-144; Hindu, Buddhist, Tibetan “Death and the intermediate state” #160-162 on p. 335-341. **"WHAT IS DEATH?")** Don’t forget to take notes/questions for your in-class writing next week. |
| WEEK 4 Sep 18 | **Write about and discuss "What is human life?" and think about "What is death?"** | **WRITING #2:** Your observations about this week’s question, "WHAT IS HUMAN LIFE?" Don't forget, 2 examples. 40 minutes (15 pts)  **DISCUSSION:** This week’s thoughts on "WHAT IS HUMAN LIFE?" 40 min  **LECTURE:** “WHAT IS DEATH” Powerpoint. Look at your own notes for questions and points. 40 min  **ACTIVITY:**  Write a statement of point or thesis that you will focus on for next week's in-class writing on "WHAT IS DEATH." 30 min  **READING DUE Feb 20 *ESW:*** Review the "WHAT IS DEATH?" myths. And read through for the first time: **(**Native American #174-5 on p. 365-7; Polynesian #177 on p. 369-70; Taoist “Great Awakening” and “Butterfly Dream” on p. 604-5; Greek #181-3 on p. 375-7. **"IS THERE SOMETHING AFTER DEATH?")** Don’t forget to take notes and jot down questions you have. |
| WEEK 5 Sep 25  WEEK 5 Sep 25 continued | **Write and discuss “What is death?” and think about “Is there something after death?”** | **DISCUSSION:** of this week’s topic, "WHAT IS DEATH?" 75 min and break 15 min  **LECTURE:** “IS THERE SOMETHING AFTER DEATH?" Powerpoint  **DISCUSSION/EXERCISE:** How is this different than the last question and you should write a thesis for the "IS THERE SOMETHING AFTER DEATH?" myths during this time.  **READING FOR NEXT WEEK *ESW:*** Review the myths for "IS THERE SOMETHING AFTER DEATH?" Then read through for the first time: **(**African, Native American #1-10 on p. 5-13; Hindu #21 on 31-2; Buddhist #30 on p. 48-9; Zoroastrian #38 on p. 70-1. **"WHO IS DIVINE?")** Notes/questions |
| WEEK 6 Oct 2 | **Discuss “Is there something after death?” and think about “Who is divine?”** | **WRITING #3:** Your observations about **BOTH** "WHAT IS DEATH" AND "IS THERE SOMETHING AFTER DEATH?" 20 pts  **DISCUSSION:** of this week’s topic, "IS THERE SOMETHING AFTER DEATH?"  **LECTURE:** “WHO IS DIVINE” Powerpoint  **READING FOR NEXT WEEK *ESW:*** Review the myths for "WHO IS DIVINE?" Then read through for the first time **(**Hindu #101 on p. 226-8; Jain #84 on p. 175-6; Native American, Australian #77 &78 on p 161-2; and Amerindian #82 on p. 173-4. **"WHAT IS DIVINE?")** Don’t forget notes… |
| WEEK 7 Oct 9 | **Discuss “Who is divine?” and think about “What is divine?”** | **DISCUSSION:** of this week’s topic on "WHO IS DIVINE?"  **LECTURE:** “WHAT IS DIVINE” Powerpoint and how to combine 2 topics for a short essay.  **DISCUSS/EXERCISE:** How are you going to combine "WHO IS DIVINE?" and "WHAT IS DIVINE?". Start by picking 1 myth from each set of readings that seems to work together.  **READING FOR NEXT WEEK *ESW:*** Review "WHO AND WHAT IS DIVINE?" readings. Then do first reading of **(**Hindu #264 on p. 538-9; Australian #86 on p. 185-7; Greek #238 on p. 491-2. **"ARE HUMANS DIVINE?")** |
| WEEK 8 Oct 16 | **Discuss “What is divine?” and think about "Are humans divine?"** | **WRITING #4:** Your observations about both the combined topics of "WHO IS DIVINE?" and "WHAT IS DIVINE?" 20 pts  **DISCUSSION:** of this week’s topic, "WHAT IS DIVINE?"  **LECTURE:** “ARE HUMANS DIVINE?” Powerpoint  **READING FOR NEXT WEEK *ESW:*** Review "ARE HUMANS DIVINE?" Then do the first reading of **(**Ainu #92 on p. 206-211; Roman #90 on p. 223-4; Shinto & Aztec #108 & 109 on p. 237-9; Amerindian #194 on p. 403-413. **"HOW DO HUMAN GROUPS INTERACT WITH THE DIVINE AND WHY?")** |
| WEEK 9 Oct 23 | **Discuss “Are Humans Divine?” and think about "How and why human groups interact with the divine?"** | **WRITING #5:** Your observations about this week's topic, "ARE HUMANS DIVINE?" 20 pts  **DISCUSSION:** of this week’s topic, "ARE HUMANS DIVINE?"  **LECTURE:** “HOW AND WHY DO HUMAN GROUPS INTERACT WITH THE DIVINE?” Powerpoint  **READING FOR NEXT WEEK *ESW:*** Review myths for "How and why human groups interact with the divine?" Read for the first time **(**Siberian & Inuit #208 &209 on p. 440-2; Norse & Irish #145 & 146 on p. 294-6; Sufi #253 on p. 521-2; Greek #267 on p. 542-546. **"HOW DO INDIVIDUALS INTERACT WITH THE DIVINE AND WHY?")** |
| WEEK 10 Oct 30 | **Discuss "How and why human groups interact with the divine?" and think about "How and why do human individuals and the divine interact?"** | **DISCUSSION:** of this week’s topic, "HOW AND WHY DO HUMAN GROUPS INTERACT WITH THE DIVINE?"  **LECTURE:** “HOW AND WHY DO INDIVIDUALS INTERACT WITH THE DIVINE?" Powerpoint  **READING FOR NEXT WEEK *ESW*:** Review "HOW AND WHY DO HUMAN GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS INTERACT WITH THE DIVINE?" Read for the first time **(**Section E. Prayers and Hymns of South African Bushmen #125 on p. 268; Amerindian #128 on p. 270; Hawaiian #131 on p. 272; Mesopotamian #133 on p. 274-6; Hindu #135 on p. 278-9; Amerindian #105 on p. 231-4: Chinese Confucian #106 on p. 234-6; Egyptian #110 on p. 239-41. **"RITUALS")** |
| WEEK 11 Nov 6 | **Discuss “How and why do individuals and the Divine interact?” AND think about "Rituals"** | **WRITING #6:** Your observations about both topics, "HOW AND WHY DO HUMAN GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS INTERACT WITH THE DIVINE?" 20 pts  **DISCUSSION:** of this week’s topic, "HOW AND WHY DO INDIVIDUALS INTERACT WITH THE DIVINE?"  **LECTURE:** “RITUALS” Powerpoint  **READING FOR NEXT WEEK *ESW:*** Review "RITUALS"  **ASSIGNMENT for NEXT WEEK for Nov 20*:*** BRING AN ARTICLE TO CLASS, See Moodle for detailed instructions. |
| WEEK 12 Nov 13 | **Discuss “Rituals” and think about "Modern times and religion"** | **WRITING #7:** Your observations regarding "RITUALS" 25 pts  **DISCUSSION:** of this week’s topic, "RITUALS." and then move on "Religious Issues Today." |
| WEEK 13 Nov 20 | **“Modern times and religion”** | **DISCUSSION:** Continue looking at and debating the sides of various articles and issues.  **REVIEW:** for final quiz and map quiz. |
| WEEK 14 Nov 27 |  | **Happy Thanksgiving!** |
| WEEK 15 Dec 4 | **Any last observations, FINAL QUIZ and MAP QUIZ** | Final observations on how we study religion. WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?  Both FINAL and MAP quiz will be given in class. I will tell you what your participation grade is.  I don’t “round” grades up, because then I’d also have to round them down. Your point total is what it is AND it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to know where you stand in the class. (In case you don’t know how to figure out a point system…you take your total points and divide them by the ACTUAL TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE for the assignments completed. Still don’t understand, ask me.) AGAIN, CHECK all your points to make sure everything graded has been posted to Moodle. If anything is missing or incorrect it is YOUR responsibility to show me the graded paper to verify it was done and the points.  DO NOT THROW AWAY anything from any class during the semester until AFTER grades are submitted. BACK UP everything you have typed for a class by emailing to yourself as an attachment or putting it on a flashdrive as soon as it is done. |
| Dec 9-15 | **Finals week** | CHECK YOUR EMAILS UNTIL midnight Dec 20th FOR ANY FROM ME JUST IN CASE SOMETHING IS MISSING OR INCOMPLETE. I WILL ALSO SEND OUT A GENERAL EMAIL WHEN THE FINAL POINTS ARE TALLIED and tell you when I will be submitting the grades so **YOU** can check them one last time. |