RS 150: World Religions

California State University, Northridge

MW 9:30-10:45 SH 342 13506 Spring 2015

Instructor: Brian Clearwater

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818-677-6878 Hours: Mondays 12:45-1:45 pm

Wed. 3:30-5:00 pm

**Course Description**

Study of selected major world religions, with emphasis on tribal religions and the historic international faiths of Asia and the Near East. Investigates rituals, ethics, institutional structures and the cultural ethos of religions, as well as their myths, doctrines and sacred texts. (Available for General Education, Comparative Cultural Studies.)

**Student Learning Objectives for World Religions 150:**

1. Think empathetically and critically about conflicting religious claims.

2. Acquire knowledge of the history and culture of more than one major religious tradition.

1. Become familiar with the broad outlines of several world religions that continue to shape major civilizations and which have important influences on the culture of Southern California.
2. Grasp the phenomenological approach (as exemplified in the textbook) to the study of religion and culture through the study of clear descriptions and sympathetic insights into the religion of others.
3. Become a more proficient and critical reader through careful study and discussion of a masterfully written survey of selected world religions.

**General Education Student Learning Outcomes:**

**Comparative Cultural Studies/ Gender, Race, Class, Ethnicity Studies and Foreign Languages**Goal: Students will understand the diversity and multiplicity of cultural forces that shape the world through the study of cultures, gender, sexuality, race, religion, class, ethnicities and languages with special focus on the contributions, differences, and global perspectives of diverse cultures and societies.

Students will:  
1. Describe and compare different cultures;  
2. Explain how various cultures contribute to the development of our multicultural world; 3. Describe and explain how race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion , sexuality and other

markers of social identity impact life experiences and social relations;  
4. Analyze and explain the deleterious impact and the privileges sustained by racism,

sexism, ethnocentrism, classism, homophobia, religious intolerance or stereotyping

on all sectors of society;  
5. Demonstrate linguistic and cultural proficiency in a language other than English.

**Course text**:

*Invitation to World Religions,* by Jeffrey Brodd, et al.

Essays and Articles available on Moodle

**Course Requirements**

Grading:

Class Attendance and Participation 20%

Quizzes (3) 15%

Mid-Term Exam 20%

Annotated Bibliography 10%

Site visit to a place of worship 10%

Final Exam 25%

92-100 = A 78-79 = C+

90-91 = A- 72-77 = C

88-89 = B+ 70-71 = C-

82-88 = B 60-69 = D

80-81 = B- Below 60 = F

**Quizzes** will be administered 3 times throughout the semester at the beginning of class. You may make-up quizzes that you fail. You are required to come to class and arrive on time. In general you are required to complete the reading before class. Quizzes will reflect this expectation.

**Midterm and Final Exams** will be multiple choice and essay questions.

**Class attendance and active participation**: I highly value your verbal participation in the classroom. Getting better at articulating your thoughts through speech is one of the missions of the university and will provide a substantial portion of your grade in this class.

**Annotated Bibliography:** During the course of the semester, gather 10 news articles that relate to world religions. Summarize each article and assemble them together into one document arranged alphabetically by author’s last name. This will give you a basis to evaluate how religion is portrayed in the media and also for comparison between the traditions we will study.

**Final Exam**: Wednesday May 13 – 8:00–10:00 am

**Other Requirements:**

Respectful behavior towards yourself and others during all class-related activities. Course material will range over contentious topics over which there is wide disagreement in our society. It is imperative that we create a non-judgmental space in which to discuss and explore those topics that are also of great importance in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom without disrespecting others. You will be expected to engage in collegial debate with your instructor and peers without getting personal. We will have disagreements; you will be taught new tools to compare ideas but will never be told what to believe.

This also requires the respectful use of devices in the classroom. You are welcome to have course materials open on your tablet or phone during class discussions, or to take notes on your laptop, but do not engage in any other online communications/activities during class time as this will negatively impact your participation grade and distract your classmates.

Course schedule:

Week 1:

Jan. 21 What is Religion?

Week 2: The study of religion

Jan. 26 Film: “[A Personal Philosophy](http://suncat.csun.edu/record=b2903934)” with Huston Smith, Bill Moyers

Jan. 28 Brodd, Ch. 1

Week 3: Indigenous Religions of North America

Feb. 2 Brodd, Ch. 2 pp. 29-41

Feb. 4 Brodd, Ch. 2 pp. 42-51

Week 4: Native American Spirituality

Feb. 9 Lee Irwin, “Freedom, Law, and Prophecy” in Moodle

Feb. 11 Joel Martin, “The Land Looks After Us”

Week 5: Indigenous Religions of Africa

Feb. 16 Brodd, Ch. 3 pp. 55-66

Feb. 18 Brodd, Ch. 3 pp. 67-79(**Quiz 1**)

Week 6: Hinduism

Feb. 23 Brodd, Ch. 4 pp. 83-105

Feb. 25 Brodd, Ch. 4 pp. 106-116

Week 7: Hindiusm 🡪 Buddhism

Mar. 2 Brodd, Ch. 4 pp. 117-139

Mar. 4 Brodd, Ch. 5 pp. 145-165

Week 8: Buddhism

Mar. 9 **Midterm Due on Moodle**

Brodd, Ch. 5 pp. 166-187

Mar. 11 Brodd, Ch. 5 pp. 187-206

Week 9: Sikhism

Mar. 16 Brodd, Ch. 7 pp. 237-252

Mar. 18 Brodd, Ch. 7 pp. 253-259

Week 10: Chinese Religions

Mar. 23 Brodd, Ch. 8 pp. 263-290

Mar. 25 Brodd, Ch. 8 pp. 291-310 (**Quiz 2)**

Week 11: Judaism

Mar. 30 Brodd, Ch. 10 pp. 341-376

Apr. 1 Brodd, Ch. 8 pp. 377-395

Apr. 6-11 Spring Break

Week 12: Christianity

Apr. 13 Brodd, Ch. 11 pp. 401-429

Apr. 15 Chapter 10, pp. 430-453 (**Quiz 3**)

Week 13: Islam

Apr. 20 Brodd, Ch. 12 pp.459-483

Apr. 22 Brodd, Ch. 12 pp.484-495

Week 14: Islam

Apr. 27 Brodd, Ch. 12 pp.496-510

Apr. 29 Reading TBA

Week 15 New Religious Movements

May 4 Brodd, Ch. 13 pp. 515-552

May 6 Review

May 11 **Final Exam** 3:00–5:00 pm

**SITE VISIT GUIDE TO A PLACE OF WORSHIP**

At each place you visit during the semester, observe/participate during the service and write a 1-2 page summary and response. (DUE MAY 1, 2015):

Use the tools you have gained in class to look for myth, ritual, sacred space, images of the sacred, and cultural differences.

**Hinduism:** Venkateswara Temple

1600 Las Virgines Canyon Road

Calabasas, Ca.

Hindu Temple Society

18700 Roscoe Blvd.

Northridge

Hindu Temple and Indian Cultural Center

21213 Devonshire Blvd.

Chatsworth

**Buddhism:** Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple

3456 Glenmark Drive

Hacienda Heights, Ca

West Los Angeles Buddhist Church

2003 Corinth Avenue

West L.A.

Wat Thai Temple

Corner of Coldwater Canyon and Roscoe Blvd.

**Judaism:** Stephen S. Wise Reform Temple

15500 Stephen Wise Dr. (Mulholland and 405)

Los Angeles

Valley Beth Shalom Temple

15739 Ventura Blvd,

Encino

Sinai Temple

10400 Wilshire Blvd, West L.A.

**Christianity:** Our Lady of Lourdes Church

18405 Superior Street, Northridge

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church

15444 Nordhoff Street

Northridge

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church

1324 South Normandie

Los Angeles

Any Calvary Chapel or Pentecostal Church

**Islam:** The Islamic Center of Granada Hills

11439 Encino Ave. (corner of Encino and Rinaldi)

Granada Hills

The Islamic Center of Southern California

434 South Vermont Avenue

Los Angeles

Please note: For all visits, please wear regular ‘church’ clothing (Hindu temple: clothes comfortable to sit on the floor, if need be). For Islamic centers or mosque, women need to wear loose pants or full skirt and bring a large scarf for head covering. Please bring at least one dollar to all sites as an offering.