**syllabus: RS 150 Intro to World Religions, Spring 2015**

Catalog number: 14279 Classroom: SH390 11am to 1:45 pm

Ingrid Wilkerson, PhD **REVISED: 1/5/2015**

Email: ingrid.wilkerson@csun.edu (Please put "RS150" in subject line of email)

Office hours: SN 229 6:45 to 7:45 AM and 2 - 3 PM Friday and via Skype by appointment

**Description:** This course takes you on a whirlwind “tour” of the world, stopping to investigate religions of various regions. The introductions will start with a brief history and then take a general look at the beliefs, practices, and texts or images associated with each religion. The goal of this overview is not to simply “know” some facts about each religion, but rather to attempt to view them without personal culturally constructed presumptions. In other words this class will not view these beliefs through a western or Eurocentric religious lens, but rather the student should understand the various practices and philosophies within the context of their origins. This class should help the student recognize “religious” responses to historical processes including politics, culture, economics, and time.

Students will also read primary sacred texts to get a sense of the sacred for followers. Students will be introduced to the images, places, rituals, and symbols that play an important role in defining the sacred around the world

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**:

**CLASS WORK:** attendance, preparation, interpretation, and discussion are an important part of your grade, which also includes following instructions. Participation means speaking in class and you must actively and effectively contribute during class if you want to work toward the full 100 points.

You get ONE unexcused absence, then your grade will be reduced by 1/3 for each subsequent unexcused absence. To be considered for excuse, 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. It is your responsibility to sign the class roll sheet.

**READING**: All assigned reading below must be read BEFORE class the following week.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

*A Concise Introduction to World Religions*, edited by Oxtoby. Additional reading will include excerpts of sacred texts from various religions that will be available online. Students will print these and bring them for class discussion, along with their textbook. Please check Moodle for the "Read everything but..." for the edition of the book that you have. This tells you what parts you can skip in the reading.

**QUIZZES:** 7 x 50 points each for 350 points. These can include a variety of short answer, ids, and/or paragraph “essay,” and will be taken directly from the vocabulary and reading. Final map quiz 50 points.

POINTS: A 500-465 A- 464-450

B+ 449-435 B 434-415 B- 414-400

C+ 399-385 C 384-365 C- 364-350

D+ 349-335 D 334-315 D- 314-300

THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN THIS CLASS IS TO NEVER BE LATE WITH YOUR QUIZZES! Points add up, no matter how many. ASK QUESTIONS NOW IF THIS IS NOT CLEAR TO YOU.

FINALLY, I only give 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. There are 2 extra credit options, of which you may pick ONE. These are on Moodle, in the information section at the top of the weekly breakdown and will only be worth up to 20 points depending on how exceptional the quality and information included in the submission are deemed by me. This can only make up for a bad quiz grade, but not replace a quiz. For a legitimate (my discretion) absence, you may arrange with me to make up a missed assignment within 2 weeks of its original due date.

1. **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 sending me an email by midnight September 5th of the first paragraph of the PDF which starts, “The maintenance of academic integrity and quality education is the responsibility of each student within this university and the California State University system.” Do not pick the faculty one. YOU WILL LOSE 10 points if you do not turn this in. **NO OUTSIDE SOURCES except when requested by the assignment**, so if I find any copying (and pasting) in your submissions you will get 0 for the assignment without chance for a make-up.

**COURSE SLOs:**

1. Think empathetically and critically about conflicting religious claims.

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

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Become a more proficient and critical reader through careful study and discussion of a masterfully written survey of selected world religions.

**GE SLOs:**

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.

Student Learning Outcomes

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;

**WEEKLY DISCUSSION GROUP INSTRUCTIONS:**

**Each week we will take 15 minutes for each group to pool their information from their homework/reading. 9 groups of 5 will work together all semester and be pre-assigned which segment they will be responsible for. After 15 minutes each group spokesperson will have 5 minutes to present the groups KEY information. The spokesperson will change each week so that everyone presents.**

**The 9 discussion groups for each religion:**

**1) Place of origin/geography/early culture/diaspora**

**2) Founder (moment of conversion)/Religious professionals (key responsibilities)**

**3) Core beliefs/cultural differentiation**

**4) Texts/stories (example)**

**5) Rituals/Rites**

**6) Holidays/group practices**

**7) Congregational services/individual practices**

**8) Gender**

**9) In the news todayRS 150 Intro to World Religions SCHEDULE (Subject to change as needed)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| WEEK 1  Jan 23 | **LECTURE:** Introduction to the course, subject matter, and introduction to methodology for notebook and making this a successful class. Assigning discussion groups.  **IN-CLASS WRITING SAMPLE:** Epic of Gilgamesh  **LECTURE:** Harappa (2700 BCE) to today.  **READING**: Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 5/Oxtoby 2 Ch 6 |
| WEEK 2  Jan 30 | **LECTURE:** Religions of India (Hinduism)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session.  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 6&7/Oxtoby2 7&9 |
| WEEK 3  Feb 6 | **LECTURE:** Religions of India (Finish Hinduism, then Jain and Sikhism)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session.  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Sep 14:** QUIZ #1 HINDUISM  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 8/Oxtoby 2 Ch 8 (pages 373-398) | |
| WEEK 4  Feb 13 | **LECTURE:** Religions of India (Buddhism)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session.  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Sep 21:** QUIZ #2 Jain & Sikhism  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 8/Oxtoby2 Ch 8 (pages 399-434) | |
| WEEK 5  Feb 20 | **LECTURE:** Religions of China (Buddhism)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session.  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 9/Oxtoby2 Ch 10 | |
| WEEK 6  Feb 27  WEEK 6  Feb 27  Continued | **LECTURE:** Religions of China (Daoism and Confucianism)  **DISCUSSION:** The answer and response in Chinese world views  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Oct 5:** QUIZ #3 Daoism & Confucianism  **READING:**  Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 10/Oxtoby2 Ch 11 | |
| WEEK 7  Mar 6 | **LECTURE:** Religions of Japan (Shinto and Buddhism)  **DISCUSSION:**  Politicizing of religion  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Oct 12**: QUIZ # 4 Buddhism & Shinto (Japan)  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 1/Oxtoby2 Ch 2 | |
| WEEK 8  Mar 13 | **LECTURE:** Indigenous peoples of (student choice from Australia, North, Central, or South American, Polynesia and headhunting)  **DISCUSSION:** Handouts  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 2/Oxtoby2 Ch 3 | |
| WEEK 9  Mar 20 | **LECTURE:** Religions of the Middle East and Europe (Judaism)  **DISCUSSION:** The first born, can Jews in Jerusalem ever have peace?  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 3/Oxtoby2 Ch 4 | |
| WEEK 10  Mar 27 | **LECTURE:** Religions of the Middle East and Europe (Christianity)  **DISCUSSION:** The middle child, will the Christianities continue to splinter?  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Oct 26 (or Nov 2):** QUIZ #5 Judaism and Indigenous peoples  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 4/Oxtoby2 Ch 5 | |
| WEEK 11  Apr 3 | **LECTURE:** Religions of the Middle East and Europe (Islam)  **DISCUSSION:** The last sibling, responses to modernity  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Nov 9:** QUIZ #6 Christianity | |
| WEEK 12  Apr 6-11 | Spring break!!!  . | |
| WEEK 13  Apr 17 | **DISCUSSION:** Relations between the big 3.  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM NOV 16:** QUIZ #7 Islam  **BRING IN NEXT WEEK April 24:** A news article on any religion today.  ARTICLES: Instructions  This is an ACADEMIC course so all articles must be from a national or international news source, like Al Jazeera, CNN, MSNBC, New York Times, BBC, Reuters, Associated Press (AP), PBS, etc. Many major media sources have a "Religion" section, this is fine.  These do not have to be within a certain time period, other than being relevant to the world today. They can be "good" or "bad" news. They should be "interesting" or offer a contentious or controversial issue, though many events can reveal covert issues once analyzed.  You need to read these articles carefully AND understand all sides of the issue. You need to be able to discuss the event/issue/topic without overt judgment (saying something is wrong/stupid/weird), instead you should be able to ask questions about the issue, that are general or point out things you see that are unclear. You will need to be able to explain either/any side of the issue when asked. If your article seems unbalanced or biased, that should raise questions for you.  **DO NOT USE!**  Any source that is from a particular religious site/paper/church/etc. This includes any online source that is ONLY about religion, even if it claims to be unbiased. That would be like going to a religious document to look up general history.  Op Ed pieces or blogs. These are opinion pieces, not news pieces. | |
| WEEK 14  Apr 24 | **DISCUSSION:** What are the most critical religious issues today? We will use the articles you brought in. | |
| WEEK 15  May 1 | DISCUSSION: What did you learn in this class? Review for map quiz. | |
| WEEK 16  May 8  Last class | In-class map Quiz and last discussion. I will have participation points estimated. Class will held for the full time! Anyone leaving early will lose 10 participation points. | |
| Finals week  May 9-15 | CHECK YOUR EMAILS UNTIL midnight May 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 when grades will be submitted so you can check one last time. | |