**RS 150: WORLD RELIGIONS**

California State University, Northridge

FALL 2015

THURS: 4:00-6:45PM in Sierra Hall 390

Class #14387

**Instructor: Vikas Malhotra**

[vikas.malhotra@csun.edu](mailto:vikas.malhotra@csun.edu)

Office Hours: SN 419 THURS 3:00-4:00 PM

**Course Description**

This course provides an introduction to significant and varied forms of living religions around the world. Through a combination of lectures, class discussions, writing exercises, films, slides, and readings of sacred texts, we will develop a better understanding of and appreciation for the diverse religious traditions of the world. As we study these traditions, we will also have an opportunity to reflect critically upon some thematic connections that tie various traditions together, while at the same time illustrate their differences. This class is available for General Education/Global Studies/Comparative Cultural Studies.

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

1. To think empathetically and critically about a vast variety of religious claims, paradigms, practices, and theoretical presuppositions.
2. How to acquire extensive knowledge and utilize state-of-the art research techniques pertaining to the histories and cultures of the major world religions
3. To articulate sophisticated and nuanced understandings of the role religion plays in society, individual lifestyles, various vocational options, and the world community
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. To become a much more interesting human being and global citizen.

**GE 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;
5. Demonstrate linguistic and cultural proficiency in a language other than English.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

Class Attendance and Participation 20%

Assignments 20%

Quizzes (4) 20%

Mid-Term Exam 20%

Final Exam 20%

92-100 = A 78-79 = C+

90-91 = A- 72-77 = C

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

82-88 = B 60-69 = D

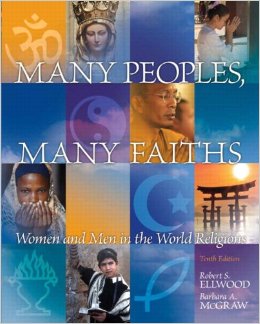
80-81 = B- Below 60 = F

**General Expectations:**

*Academic Integrity*: Academic honesty is a core value at CSUN. As such, students are expected to perform their own work. When practiced, academic honesty ensures that all students are fairly graded. Cheating, plagiarism, and other dishonest practices undermine the educational process and will not be tolerated. Cheaters and all who assist them will be subject to disciplinary action with could result in suspension, expulsion, or other disciplinary actions.

You are required to come to all classes and arrive on time. Each unexcused absence will result in lowering your grade, up to a maximum of 20%. Taking good notes and paying full attention in class is also expected and will only help you in the long run. You are required to complete all the readings before class and full participation and engagement with the class is an absolute must. This means no cellphones and no “sneakily” browsing the web. 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 activities during class time as you will be distracted and potentially distracting others. Any breach of this will force me to kick you out of class and you will not receive credit for attendance.

Also, in general, please respect others around you at all times as you would expect to be respected (this includes me). Course material may sometime involve contentious and often sensitive topics. It is imperative that we create a non-judgmental space where we can discuss and explore those topics in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom and without disrespecting others or getting personal.

**Course Text**:

**Ellwood and McGraw. *Many Peoples, Many Faiths* (10th edition), Prentice Hall.**

All other essays and articles listed below will be available as pdf's on Moodle; they are subject to change so be sure to check the schedule or any emails I may send out each week.

**Assignments, Quizzes and Exams**

***Assignments:***

* Videos: An important component of this class will be the weekly videos you must watch and write a response to (links are given below). Video is an wonderful way and tool to convey abstract concepts and transmit knowledge that cannot be solely understood from reading texts alone. Of course, these need to always be watched with a critical and “suspicious” eye. After watching each video reflect on it and write a one page response – your reactions, new information you learned from it or were surprised about, critiques, revelations (did the video change your previously held views), etc. Be specific rather than general (use examples from videos).
* Team Presentation: There will also be one graded team assignment on one of the religious traditions. Teams will be formed at the end of week one and each team (4-5 members) will be assigned to do a brief PowerPoint presentation (15-20 mins.) on one of the religious traditions during the week that religious tradition is covered in class. This presentation should only discuss **current** events/practices/issues associated with the religion in the world today. Each student will pick a topic and find a few current news articles on it and present to the class, taking into consideration what you have learned from the readings and lecture. The team must put together a ppt presentation and each student will come up when they are presenting their slides. Team presentations will be given during the last week of corresponding religious tradition covered. Only those members who participate will receive points for the team presentation. PowerPoint slides with names of those who participated must be submitted in moodle on the day of the presentation. Creative presentations are encouraged!

***Quizzes:*** will be administered 4 times throughout the semester at the end of class. They will be questions that I choose and will come straight out from the “Questions for Review” sections found at the end of each chapter we read from ***Many Peoples, Many Faiths***. To be prepared make sure you go over these each week.

***Midterm and Final Exams***: will be non-cumulative, multiple choice, true or false, & short-essay questions

**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1: Aug 27th** **Introduction and Theory: The Study of “Religion”**

**Week 2: Sept 3rd Indigenous People and Religion**

* Ellwood & McGraw, p 14-46 (“Religion through Time” & “The Sacred in Nature”
* Malotki and Gary. Hopi Stories of Witchcraft, Shamanism, & Magic p 231-250
* Watch “Native American Spirituality” and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YE7jkE8YNuM>

**Week 3: Sept 10th** **Indigenous Religions of Africa**

* Aloysius M. Lugira. African Traditional Religions (on Moodle)
* Watch film, “The Bridge of Spirits” documentary and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1O2VTxr4qE>
* **QUIZ 1**

**Week 4: Sept 17th** **South Asian Traditions: Early Hinduism**

* Ellwood and McGraw, p 47-79
* Selected readings from primary sources ie. Vedas, Upanisads etc.
* Watch “Hindu Nectar: Spiritual Wanderings in India” and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLvr80ZrCqo>

**Week 5: Sept 24th** **South Asian Traditions: Hinduism Today and Sikhism**

* Ellwood and McGraw, p 79-110
* Selected readings from primary sources ie. Bhagavad Gita, Siva Purana etc.
* Watch “Around the World in 80 Faiths, Episode 6: "India" and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPaHoJHc8qM>

**Week 6: Oct 1st South Asian Traditions: Jainism and Buddhism**

* Embree. "Basic Doctrines of Jainism" (readings from primary sources)
* Ellwood and McGraw, p 113-136 (Buddhism)
* Watch film, “BBC The Story of India – Part 2 The Power of Ideas” and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcT5J0l3HNU>
* **QUIZ 2**

**Week 7: Oct 8th** **Buddhism outside India (Tibetan/Chan)**

* Ellwood and McGraw, p 136-159 (CH on Buddhism continued); 187-189; 211-215
* Selected readings from primary sources (on Moodle)
* Watch “Yogis Of Tibet” and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFSjxc2Vg14>

**Week 8: Oct 15th Midterm in class**

**Week 9: Oct 22nd** **East Asian Religions: China**

* Ellwood and McGraw, p 162-187; 190-207
* Selected primary readings from the Tao Te Ching (on Moodle)
* Watch “Taoism: A Question of Balance – China” and write a one page response <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URC4RoLdNJ8>

**Week 10: Oct 29th** **East Asian Religions: Japan, Mongolia, Vietnam, and Korea**

* Ellwood and McGraw, p 207-211; 215-226
* Selected primary readings from Shintoism (on Moodle)
* Watch “Shinto Documentary” and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mngja5o_eko>
* **QUIZ 3**

**Week 11: Nov 5th** **Zoroastrianism and The Abrahamic Traditions: Judaism**

* Ellwood and McGraw, p 229-270
* Levenson, “Israel’s Exodus from the Grave” p. 55-64 (on Moodle)
* Watch “Judaism full documentary” and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23rbmtZ5c0I>

**Week 12: Nov 12th** **The Abrahamic Traditions: Christianity**

* Ellwood and McGraw, p 273-312
* May and Metzger, “Creation in the Book of Genesis: Genesis 1-3”, New Oxford Annotated Bible. (on Moodle)
* Watch “Path of Faith” and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=1202&v=S-4ob8y3pB0>

**Week 13: Nov 19th** **The Abrahamic Traditions: Christianity**

* Ellwood and McGraw, p 312-340
* Norget. “Days of the Dead in Oaxaca” (on Moodle)
* Watch Around the World in 80 Faiths, Episode 7: "Latin America" and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0G9yyGVwxsk>
* **QUIZ 4**

**Week 14: Nov. 26th** **The Abrahamic Traditions: Islam**

* Ellwood and McGraw, p 344-394
* Dawood. “Koran: The Heights” (on Moodle)
* Watch “Islam: Empire of Faith. Part 1: Prophet Muhammad” and write a one page response: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yX3UHNhQ1Zk>

**Week 15: Dec 3rd** **New Religious Movements**

* Ellwood and McGraw, p 397-410
* Around the World in 80 Faiths, Episode 5: "USA"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzCPg9UwF-4>

* Watch at least 15 mins of “Interview with a Channeler – Darryl Anka/Bashar” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7u0gD0Cpde8>
* Write a one page response on both of these

**Final Exam**: **THURSDAY** **DEC. 10, 2015 05:30 PM - 07:30 PM in SH390**