

California State University Northridge
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
COURSE SYLLABUS (FALL 2017)
Course: RS 150 World Religions (G.E. S5)
(Class number:15088; Online Course)
From August 28 to December 10, 2017

Thursday (11:00 AM -1:45 PM)

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Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm
Friday 3:30-4:30 pm

Website: <http://moodle.csun.edu> (our course)
and
<http://www.csun.edu/religious.studies/> (our Department)

FACTOID (DATES TO KEEP IN MIND):

Monday, September 4: Labor Day Holiday (Campus Closed)

November 23-24 (Thursday-Friday): Thanksgiving Recess (Campus Closed)

MIDTERM EXAM: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5 (1:00 pm – 5:00 pm)

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14 (1:00 pm – 5:00 pm)

VERY IMPORTANT:

All your assignments shall be posted on Moodle on Thursday before midnight

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an overview of various world religious traditions in their historical and cultural developments. As such it satisfies the S5 general education requirements for comparative cultural studies/gender, race, class, ethnicity studies.

The Purpose of this course is to introduce students to the diversity and complexity of the religious phenomenon in our pluralistic Global village. This is a study of selected major world religions with emphasis on the historic international faiths of Asia and the Near East. We will investigate rituals, ethics, institutional structures and the cultural ethos of religions as well as their myths, doctrines and sacred texts.

Given that it fulfills a General Education requirement in the Humanities, this course is taught in a perspective that takes into account the current context of our pluralistic, multicultural and democratic societies.

Although we will focus on the major world religions of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, we will also briefly address other forms of spirituality, mainly the ancestral spiritual ways of cosmotheandric religions which predate the current dominant religions and influenced them in a variety of ways.

II. REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Robert S. Ellwood and Barbara A. McGraw, *Many Peoples, Many Faiths: Women and Men in the World Religions*. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 10th edition, 2014).
2. MOODLE website : <http://moodle.csun.edu/>
Assignments, Study questions for quizzes and exams are posted here to help you in your study.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. YOUR GRADE

The grade of each student will be determined as follows:

Mid-term Exam (20%)	Class participation (40%)
Final Exam (30%)	Student's Journal (10%)

All the exams will be in multiple choice format. Study questions for your exams are posted on the website.

Class participation includes the 3 major assignments (papers), and participation in the short Forum Discussions every week (saying what you found interesting in the assigned readings)

3. FOUR MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

I have designed 4 assignments but you have to do only 3, because you have a choice between assignments 2 and 3 (you do not have to do both, pick only one)

You shall write 2 to 3 pages (single space) for each paper. Always mention the most important thing you learned from the assignment and specify the kind of SLOs that the assignment helped you achieve.

Week 3 Thursday, September 14: *Assignment 1 due: Religious Landscape of the US and the World*

Week 7 Thursday, October 12: *Assignment 2: Sacred Texts*

Week 10 Thursday, November 2: *Assignment 3: On ATR and the Origins of Monotheism*

Week 15 Thursday, December 7: *Assignment 4 due: Journal
Synthesis of your learning during the semester, followed by class presentation*

Important Note and Basic Guidelines for the Assignments

No paper will be rewritten in this course. Once you get a grade in a paper you cannot rewrite it for a better grade. You can only try to do better on other assignments.

All assignments and guiding questions are on the moodle website. You will find there the guidelines for readings and reaction papers, and the study questions for your quizzes and exams.

Class presentations will receive a grade based on oral presentation and the written paper.

3.CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF YOUR ASSIGNMENTS

- Mastery of the material in the context of our course (What? Who? When? Where?)

Why? How?)

- Critical thinking (creativity and appropriate criticism): Your ability to develop a mature thought process, to appreciate and assess the various world views which have played a central role in human culture in general, and in American life in particular.
- Style and presentation of papers:
 - * systematic organization of ideas.
 - * Analytic and synthetic skills.
 - * Clarity and coherence in the development of ideas.
 - * The use of powerful intellectual arguments.
 - * Grammar, spelling, and punctuation are the “mechanics” of good writing, and therefore will be considered in the grading process.
- How well you specify the achieved SLOs and the most important thing you learned from each assignment

4. GRADING SCALE AND STANDARDS

Grading scale:

95-100: A	87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+
90-94: A-	85-86: B	75-76: C	65-66: D
	80-84: B-	70-74: C-	Below 65: F

The Meaning of your Grade:

“A” Work, Outstanding: The student has mastered the content of the course (or a specific subject matter) and was able to express his or her knowledge in an outstanding fashion, in well written papers which demonstrate a tremendous ability in critical thinking, original thinking, and the capacity to analyze and synthesize knowledge harmoniously. “A” also means that the student perfectly understood the purpose of the course and addressed the assignments properly.

“B” Work, Very Good: Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.

“C” Work, Average: The student has some good understanding of the subject matter or the course; but does not address the assignments in a comprehensive way or does not write in a systematic and thoughtful fashion. It also means that the student is weak in critical thinking or did not well master the readings or the lectures. A paper replete with minor errors or flaws could also fall in this category.

“D” Work, Barely Passing: The student is “intellectually poor.” The student has some familiarity with the subject matter, but is very weak in analytical and synthetic skills or simply ignores some fundamental points of the course.

“F” Work, Failure: The student is confused, does not understand properly the readings, the assignments or the course; and can’t express ideas in a meaningful way. Students who cheat, miss the course too often, or who do not do most of the assignments also fall in this category.

IV. COURSE OBJECTIVES and STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

In order to better understand the teaching perspective of this course, students should understand from the outset the educational goals of our university by reading carefully the mission statement of the Department of Religious Studies (<http://www.csun.edu/religious.studies/>), and the mission statement of the College of Humanities (<http://www.csun.edu/humanities/1lev/mission.php>).

RS150 STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (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.

- We will accomplish our goal through lectures, intensive reading of the textbook, videos, class discussions, class presentations, and research papers.

G.E. and CULTURAL STUDIES SLOs

RS 150 is a course designed for the purpose of “General Education,” and “Comparative Cultural Studies.”

The vision of General Education (GE) is to ensure that all CSUN students have a broad background in disciplines at the university level in order to appreciate the breadth of human knowledge and the responsibilities of concerned and engaged citizens of the world. Students must become lifelong learners and leave the University with a set of skills that include the ability

to read critically, to write and communicate orally with clarity and persuasiveness, to evaluate and draw appropriate inferences from limited information and to access the wealth of technical, scientific and cultural information that is increasingly available in the global community. Students must gain an understanding of the major contributions made by individuals from diverse backgrounds in the sciences, business and economics, the arts, literatures, politics, and technologies. It is through the GE Program, that CSUN ensures that all students gain a sincere appreciation of how the diverse cultures housed in the United States, and specifically Southern California, lead to creative thinking and expression during a time in human history when cultural diversity provides different perspectives and insights from which to view human endeavors.

The goal of General Education is to understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions, and philosophy.

COMPARATIVE CULTURAL STUDIES/GENDER, RACE, CLASS, ETHNICITY STUDIES

RS150 fulfills the requirement of comparative cultural studies in our university.

Goal:

Comparative Cultural Studies

Comparative Cultural Studies coursework provides students with an introduction to the cultures and languages of other nations and peoples, the contributions and perspectives of cultures other than their own, and how gender, race, and ethnicity are viewed in these cultures.

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 (SLOs)

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.

V. Why should any one take this course

and consider a Religious Studies Major, Double Major, or Minor?

Most students enjoy Religious Studies courses but wonder what they can do with a degree in Religious Studies. Here are some answers:

1. Go to graduate school, including Law School and Medical School. Learn important skills sought after by employers.
2. Teach a variety of topics in the humanities and social sciences.
3. Be employed in Human Resources, Social Service, Law Enforcement, Ministry.
4. Gain personal insight and knowledge to last a life time.

Come to my office hour and learn more about Religious Studies or contact the Department Chair, Dr. Rick Talbott at ex. 2741.

Setting the Record Straight on Liberal Arts Grads' Employability (January 22, 2014):

A report released by the Association of American Colleges and Universities dispels the popular notion that liberal arts graduates are subject to lower earnings and higher rates of unemployment than those with "practical" degrees. Liberal Arts Graduates and Employment: Setting the Record Straight cites U.S. Census data from 2010-11 to show that humanities, arts, and social sciences majors who earned advanced or undergraduate degrees are on average making more money by their mid-50s than those who studied in professional fields, and they are employed at similar rates.

<http://www.csun.edu/humanities/news/setting-record-straight-liberal-arts-grads-employability>

Religious Studies are part of the College of Humanities (specializing in what it means to be human and humane). The College of Humanities teaches students to read, write and think. Our graduates are prepared for a 21st-century workforce that advances those who have the power not just to achieve and innovate but to communicate their ideas to an audience beyond their applied field. Humanities students master the arts of thinking critically and creatively, analyzing information, and accommodating diverse ideas to understand and interpret our increasingly complex world. Degrees in the Humanities disciplines deliver a well-rounded education along with life skills that are always in demand, preparing students to pursue an endless variety of vocational goals and careers, including business, journalism, law, politics, medicine, etc. According to a recent article in the *Harvard Business Review*, ("Want innovative thinking? Hire from the Humanities") business leaders worldwide are seeking people trained in the humanities because they "are able to apply new ways of thinking to difficult problems that can't be analyzed in conventional ways."

VI. COURSE PERSPECTIVE:

“Man cannot live by the bread of science and politics alone; he also needs the vitamins of ethics and morals, faith and hope, love and security, comfort and attention in the face of death and misfortune, a feeling and experience that as a person he matters infinitely, and assurance that he is not immediately ‘forgotten’ or even annihilated when he dies. These are the elements that religion tries to offer... Religion makes a contribution in man’s search for identity and security... It provides a basis for a direction of life for humans in a great many societies.”

John S. Mbiti, ***African Religions and Philosophy***.
London: Heinemann, 1989, Second edition. (first edition in 1969), p.270

*“No peace among the nations without peace among the religions.
No peace among religions without dialogue between the religions.
No genuine dialogue among religions without an accurate knowledge of one another.”*
(Hans Kung)

“He who knows One, Knows None” (Max Muller)

“The change that the new situation (of the global village) requires of us all – we who have been suddenly catapulted from town and country onto a world stage is staggering. Twenty-five hundred years ago it took an exceptional man like Diogenes to exclaim, “I am not an Athenian or a Greek but a citizen of the world.” Today we must all be struggling to make those words our own. We have come to the point in history when anyone who is only Japanese or American, only Oriental or Occidental, is only half human. The other half that beats with the pulse of all humanity has yet to be born.”
(Huston Smith, *The World’s Religions*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1991; p.7)

- *“Dein Christus ein Jude
Dein Auto ein Japaner
Deine Pizza italienisch
Deine Demokratie griechisch
Dein Kaffee brasilianisch
Dein Urlaub türkisch
Deine Zahlen arabisch
Deine Schrift lateinisch
Und Dein Nachbar nur ein Ausländer?”*

UNESCO DECLARATIONS ON TOLERANCE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity

Adopted by the 31st Session of the General Conference of UNESCO; Paris, 2 November 2001:

“The cultural wealth of the world is its diversity in dialogue... Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.... Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone; it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.”

UNESCO DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES ON TOLERANCE

Adopted by the Member States of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, meeting in Paris at the twenty-eighth session of the General Conference, from 25 October to 16 November 1995:

Education is the most effective means of preventing intolerance...

Education for tolerance should be considered an urgent imperative;

that is why it is necessary to promote systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance – major roots of violence and exclusion. Education policies and programmes should contribute to development of understanding, solidarity and tolerance among individuals as well as among ethnic, social, cultural, religious and linguistic groups and nations. Education for tolerance should aim at countering influences that lead to fear and exclusion of others, and should help young people to develop capacities for independent judgment, critical thinking and ethical reasoning.

In the modern world, tolerance is more essential than ever before. It is an age marked by the globalization of the economy and by rapidly increasing mobility, communication, integration and interdependence, large-scale migrations and displacement of populations, urbanization and changing social patterns. Since every part of the world is characterized by diversity, escalating intolerance and strife potentially menaces every region. It is not confined to any country, but is a global threat... Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.

Tolerance involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism and affirms the standards set out in international human rights instruments.

The practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behaviour and values, have the right to live in peace and to be

as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others. It is essential for international harmony that individuals, communities and nations accept and respect the multicultural character of the human family. Without tolerance there can be no peace, and without peace there can be no development or democracy. ..Intolerance may take the form of marginalization of vulnerable groups and their exclusion from social and political participation, as well as violence and discrimination against them. As confirmed in the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, 'All individuals and groups have the right to be different' (Article 1.2).

VII. THE COMMANDMENTS OF OUR COURSE:

1. All your assignments shall be posted on Moodle on Thursday before midnight
2. After reading each chapter of our textbook, you shall participate in the Forum Discussion, by saying what you liked or disliked the most about the religion under consideration and how the reading helped you achieve the educational goals of our course
3. Late assignments will receive an "F" grade.
4. If you do not turn in an assignment, I will not ask you for it. I will assume that you are content with a "F" grade for that assignment.
5. The university policy on academic dishonesty, particularly with regards to cheating and plagiarism, are taken for granted.

Keep in mind the Student Conduct Code of our University:

<http://www.csun.edu/a&r/soc/studentconduct.html#responsible>

Students are expected to be good citizens and to engage in responsible behaviors that reflect well upon their university, to be civil to one another and to others in the campus community, and to contribute positively to student and university life.

Dishonesty is therefore an unacceptable Student Behavior:

By dishonesty, we mean, among other things:

- Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty that are intended to gain unfair academic advantage.
- Furnishing false information to the faculty member,
- Forgery or alteration of documents

VIII. ROAD MAP FOR THE LECTURES

For details on all the assignments see our moodle website: you will find here the guidelines and guiding questions for your papers)

Week 1 (August 28 – September 3):

General Introduction to the Course

No paper required this week, but do the following readings to get some sense of the direction of this course:

Epistemological Foundation of the course:

Why study world religions? And How?

Context and Methodology of the course

Educational goals of the course and course requirement

Readings:

- 1) Educational Goals (Library's website):
- 2) Epistemological Foundation of the Course (see Moodle)
- 3) Allegory of the Cave (see website)
- 4) Textbook, chapter 1 (focus on pp.1-11;18-19: Modernism, Postmodernism, and Joachim Wach's theory)
- 5) Definition of religion (Library's website)
- 6) Chronology of World Religions

Preliminary readings (Understanding the Religious Phenomenon):

Ellwood, chap.1 and 10, and Final Word and Appendix

Week 2 (September 4 – 10): A PANORAMA OF WORLD RELIGIONS

You will find on moodle specific guidelines for reading the textbook

(Monday, September 4: Labor Day Holiday, Campus closed, No Class!)

The Religious Landscape of the US and the World and Attitude toward “other” religions

Ellwood, chap.1 and 10, and Final Word and Appendix

Class discussion on Preliminary Readings

Week 3 (September 11 – 17) Spiritual Paths of India

Hinduism (Reading: Ellwood, chap.3)

Jainism and Sikhism (Reading: Ellwood, chap.3)

Assignment 1 due
Assignment 1 : Religious Landscape of the US and the World

Week 4 (September 18 – 24): Spiritual Paths of India
Buddhism (Reading: Ellwood, chap.4)

Week 5 (September 25 – October 1): Spiritual Paths of China
Confucianism and Taoism (Reading: Ellwood, chap.5)

Week 6 (October 2 – 8): MIDTERM EXAM (THURSDAY)

Week 7 (October 9 - 15): Judaism
Reading: Ellwood, chap.7

Assignment 2: Sacred Texts

Week 8 (October 16 - 22): Judaism
Reading: Ellwood, chap.7

Week 9 (October 23 – 29). Judaism

Reading: Ellwood, chap.7

Week 10 (October 30- November 5): Christianity
Reading: Ellwood, chap.8

Assignment 3 : On ATR and the Origins of Monotheism

Week 11 (November 6 – 12): Christianity
Reading: Ellwood, chap.8

Week 12 (November 13 - 19): Christianity
Reading: Ellwood, chap.8

Week 13 (November 20 - 26): Islam
Reading: Ellwood, chap.9

Week 14 (November 27 – December 3): Islam
Reading: Ellwood, chap.9

Week 15 December 4-10: Last week of Class Instruction

December 7: Assignment 4 due: Journal

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14 (1:00 pm – 5:00 pm)

IX. INTERNET RESOURCES

Some useful websites on Religions, Population, and Social and Religious Issues In the US and in the World

STUDENT RESOURCES:

<http://www.csun.edu/religious.studies/studentresources.html>

<http://www.csun.edu/catalog/religiousstudies.html>

<http://www.csun.edu/catalog/generaleducation.html>

UNESCO UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF CUTURAL DIVERSITY

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127161e.pdf>

SACRED TEXTS

1. SACRED TEXTS

<http://www.sacred-texts.com>

2. THE BIBLE ON LINE (Read it here)

<http://www.allonlinebible.com/>

<http://st-takla.org/Bibles/Holy-Bible.html>

<http://www.catholic.org/bible/>

<http://www.bible-researcher.com/links02.html>

<http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Links.htm>

2. THE KORAN

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/index.htm>

<http://quran.com/>

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF US PRESIDENTS

<http://www.usconstitution.com/presbyreligion.htm>

http://www.adherents.com/adh_presidents.html

Faith on the Hill: The Religious Composition of the 112th Congress

<http://www.pewforum.org/Government/Faith-on-the-Hill--The-Religious-Composition-of-the-112th-Congress.aspx>

THE PEW FORUM ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE

<http://pewforum.org/>

INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES OF RELIGION (BAYLOR UNIVERSITY)

<http://www.isreligion.org/>

American Piety in the 21st Century:

<http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/33304.pdf>

ADHERENTS OF ALL RELIGIONS

<http://www.adherents.com>

World Evangelization Research center and Global Christianity:

<http://www.gem-werc.org/gd/gd.htm>

WORLD POPULATION

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/popclockw

also see the “International Data Base” at

<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html>

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION DIVISION

<http://esa.un.org/unpp>

Population Reference Bureau (PRB)

<http://www.prb.org>

Population clock:

Office of Population Research, Princeton University (New Jersey)

<http://opr.princeton.edu/popclock>

SOME MAJOR RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION:

<http://www.aarweb.org/>

THE VATICAN (ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH):

http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm

THE US CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS:

<http://www.usccb.org/>

World Council of Churches (WCC):

<http://www.oikoumene.org/>

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/english.html>

AMERICAN NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES:

<http://www.nccusa.org/>

PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS:

<http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/>

<http://www.cpwr.org/>

The World Council of Religious Leaders:

http://www.millenniumpeacesummit.org/faiths_indigenous.html

EATWOT

(Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians):

<http://eatwot.org/>

The UN and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu6/2/fs9.htm>

RELIGIOUS CONSULTATION ON POPULATION,

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND ETHICS:

<http://www.religiousconsultation.org/>

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Resolution adopted by the General Assembly
[without reference to a Main Committee (A/61/L.67 and Add.1)]

http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

On RELIGION, TOLERANCE AND DIALOGUE

<http://www.religioustolerance.org>

<http://global-dialogue.com/>
(GLOBAL DIALOGUE INSTITUTE)

<http://institute.jesdialogue.org/>

VIDEOS

Videos on the Bible

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/april-22-2011/king-james-bible-400th-anniversary/8666/>

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/by-topic/the-king-james-bible-“masterpiece-by-committee”/8673/>

What would Jesus cut? (Religious Leaders and the Budget Debate):

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/july-15-2011/religious-leaders-and-the-budget-debate/9148/>

Heaven and Hell:

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/july-8-2011/heaven-and-hell/9108/>