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

Catalog number: 14504 Classroom: SH390 11am to 1:45 pm

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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, texts, and 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" changes to historical processes including politics, culture, economics, and time. In other words, religion both impacts and is impacted by everyday world events.

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. Attendance without participating will only merit a "C" grade.

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. When you are in class, it is your responsibility to sign the class roll sheet.

**READING**: Assigned readings 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, lecture, 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 opportunity 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 potential ways to get some extra points and you can only earn up to 25 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 Sep 4th 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 10 minutes while each group pools 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 10 minutes prep, each group spokesperson will have 3 minutes to present the group's 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 today (Extended instructions on Moodle)RS 150 Intro to World Religions SCHEDULE (Subject to change as needed)**

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| WEEK 1  Aug 28 | **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  Sep 4 | **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  Sep 11 | **LECTURE:** Religions of India (Finish Hinduism, then Jain and Sikhism)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session.  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Sep 13:** QUIZ #1 HINDUISM  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 8/Oxtoby 2 Ch 8 (pages 373-398) | |
| WEEK 4  Sep 18 | **LECTURE:** Religions of India (Buddhism)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session.  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 8/Oxtoby2 Ch 8 (pages 399-434) | |
| WEEK 5  Sep 25 | **LECTURE:** Religions of China (Daoism and Confucianism)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session.  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Sep 27:** QUIZ #2 Jain & Sikhism  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 9/Oxtoby2 Ch 10 | |
| WEEK 6  Oct 2  WEEK 6  Oct 2  Continued | **LECTURE:** Religions of China (Buddhism)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session (Confucianism)  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Oct 4:** QUIZ #3 Daoism & Confucianism  **READING:**  Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 10/Oxtoby2 Ch 11 | |
| WEEK 7  Oct 9 | **LECTURE:** Religions of Japan (Shinto and Buddhism)  **DISCUSSION:**  Group information session  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 1/Oxtoby2 Ch 2 | |
| WEEK 8  Oct 16 | **LECTURE:** Indigenous peoples of (student choice from Australia, North, Central, or South American, Polynesia and headhunting)  **DISCUSSION:** Handouts of myths  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Oct 18**: QUIZ # 4 Buddhism & Shinto (Japan)  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 2/Oxtoby2 Ch 3 | |
| WEEK 9  Oct 23 | **LECTURE:** Religions of the Middle East and Europe (Judaism)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 3/Oxtoby2 Ch 4 | |
| WEEK 10  Oct 30 | **LECTURE:** Religions of the Middle East and Europe (Christianity)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Nov 1:** QUIZ #5 Judaism and Indigenous peoples  **READING:** Due before Friday of next week: Oxtoby1 Ch 4/Oxtoby2 Ch 5 | |
| WEEK 11  Nov 6 | **LECTURE:** Religions of the Middle East and Europe (Islam)  **DISCUSSION:** Group information session  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Nov 8:** QUIZ #6 Christianity | |
| WEEK 12  Nov 13 | Jeopardy! (This is your only chance for extra credit.)  **DUE BEFORE 11:55 PM Nov 8:** QUIZ #7 Islam  . | |
| WEEK 13  Nov 20 | **DISCUSSION:** Relations between the big 3.  **BRING IN THIS WEEK Nov 20th:** 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. Please attach the checksheet from Moodle to your article. | |
| WEEK 15  Nov 27 | **HAPPY THANKSGIVING!** | |
| WEEK 16  Dec 4 | **DISCUSSION continued:** What are the most critical religious issues today? We will use the articles you brought in.  Map quiz: last 1/2 hour of class. | |
| Finals week  May 9-15 | CHECK YOUR EMAILS UNTIL grades are submitted for any from me just in case I have a question for you. I will also send out a general email when the final points are tallied and tell you when grades will be submitted so you can check one last time. | |