# RS 100: Introduction to Religious Studies

Spring 2018 – California State University, Northridge

Syllabus dated: 01/22/2018

Instructor: Timothy Kuns  
Email: timothy.kuns@csun.edu  
Office Hours: TBD – Please make and confirm appointments by email.  
Religious Studies department Office – SN 224

Course Description: This course examines the elements of religion and selected contemporary religious issues. Additionally, it examines subjects such as myth and ritual, the sacred and profane, dreams and theophanies, priests and prophets, science and religion, history and religion, and the expansion of religion today.  

### RS 100 Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to recognize and to articulate (orally and in writing) the difference between an academic approach to religion and a personal, devotional approach.  
2. Students will be able to demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in recognizing the major contributors to the modern study of religion and their models/theories for the study of religion.  
3. Students will be able to understand the following terms in their conventional, popular usage, and then discuss the variety of ways that religious studies scholars have critiqued, expanded, or problematized these: religion, religions, myth, ritual, symbol, philosophy, subjectivity contrasted with objectivity, secular/secularization, cult, sect, mysticism, theism, atheism, polytheism, monotheism, spirituality, magic, paganism, canon, religious violence, post-colonialism, process thought, syncretism and hybridity, and individualistic compared to community-based religions.  
4. Students will be able to explain and give basic examples of the social function of religion with regard to gender.  
5. Students will be able to recognize religiosity in an aspect of modern culture such as different forms of media, art, music, films, politics, sports, and the public discourse on science.  
6. Students will be able to demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in describing two specific religious traditions (perhaps one from North America, one outside of it), including their historical development, major beliefs and practices, and demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in interpreting religious texts and rituals from each religious tradition.  
7. Students will be able to discuss how human experiences such as community, suffering, love, doubt, joy, birth and death; and human issues such as gender, violence, culture, etc. are understood through the various prisms of religious experience.

### General Education Student Learning Outcomes (Arts and Humanities):

Goal: Students will understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions, and philosophy. Students will:

1. Explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures  
2. Analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities  
3. Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms  
4. Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities  
5. Use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression, literature, philosophy, or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged  
6. Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerge
Required Textbooks:

Class Preparation: Students are expected to keep up with the weekly reading requirement, and any assignments such as online discussions, and reading quizzes.

Course Work: In addition to weekly reading and quizzes, and assignments, there will be at least one written assignment and a religious visit paper.

Evaluation:
- 25% - Midterm 1 (material from weeks 1 – 5)
- 25% - Midterm 1 (material from weeks 6 – 10)
- 25% - Final (material from weeks 11 – 15)
- 25% - Reading quizzes, assignments and other written work

Grading: Grading will be based on the following scale
- 94-100 = A
- 90-93 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 84-86 = B
- 80-83 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 74-76 = C
- 70-73 = C-
- 60-69 = D
- <60 = F

Plagiarism and cheating: Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated and will result in failing the class. Additionally, faculty members are required to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. Refer to the most recent addition of the Student Handbook for a more complete discussion of Cheating and Plagiarism.

Accommodation for Disabilities: If you require special accommodation for a disability, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD). The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684. The NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2611.

Personal Difficulties: If you are having personal difficulties (e.g. health, emotional issues, or family problems) during the semester which interfere with your ability to perform the necessary assignments or attend classes, please notify me as soon as possible.

Religious Observances: If an assignment due date or a test conflicts with a religious observance, then please complete and turn in the assignment early.

Participation: It is expected that students will participate in online and/or class discussions via Canvas. This will be incorporated into your grade.

Email Communications: Please use the following convention in the Subject Line when communicating with me by email: RS 100 – <your name as registered for the class> - <brief reason for the email>
An example:
Subject: RS 100 – John Doe – Schedule an Appointment

Canvas: Please consult Canvas regularly for course updates, news, and handouts. Class materials, lecture notes, discussion posts, articles, etc will be posted throughout the week.

### Weekly Class Schedule
(subject to change to accommodate the needs of the class)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>READING/TOPIC/ASSIGNMENTS</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/22-28  The Sacred Quest (SQ) Introduction  Many Peoples Many Faiths (MPMF) – Ch. 1 Understanding the World’s Religious Heritage Ch. 2 (Indigenous Peoples &amp; Religion)</td>
<td>Quiz or Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date 1-Date 2</td>
<td>Reading/Assignment</td>
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| 2    | 1/29-2/4     | SQ – Ch. 1 Defining Religion  
MPMF – Ch. 3 (Hinduism), pp. 47-79 | Quiz or Assignment |
| 3    | 2/5-11       | SQ – Ch. 2 The Nature of the Sacred  
MPMF – Ch. 3 (Hinduism), pp. 79-109 | Quiz or Assignment |
| 4    | 2/12-18      | SQ – Ch. 3 The Appearance of the Sacred  
MPMF – Ch. 4 (Buddhism), pp. 113-142 | Quiz or Assignment |
| 5    | 2/19-25      | SQ – Ch. 4 The Language(s) of the Sacred  
MPMF – Ch. 4 (Buddhism), pp. 142-159 | Quiz or Assignment |
| 6    | 2/26-3/4     | SQ – Ch. 5 Ritual  
MPMF – Ch. 5 (Other Religions of East Asia) | Quiz or Assignment  
MT 1 (Wks 1-5) |
| 7    | 3/5-11       | SQ – Ch. 6 Sacred Communities  
MPMF – Ch. 5 (Other Religions of East Asia) | Quiz or Assignment |
| 8    | 3/12-18      | SQ – Ch. 7 The Problem of Evil  
MPMF – Ch. 6 (Three Monotheistic Religions) | Quiz or Assignment |
|      | 3/19-25      | SPRING RECESS | |
| 9    | 3/26-4/1     | SQ – Ch. 8 Religion and Morality  
MPMF – Ch. 7 (Judaism) | Quiz or Assignment |
| 10   | 4/2-8        | SQ – Ch. 9 The Quest for Salvation  
MPMF – Ch. 7 (Judaism) | Quiz or Assignment |
| 11   | 4/9-15       | MPMF – Ch. 8 (Christianity) | Quiz or Assignment  
MT 2 (Wks 6-10) |
| 12   | 4/16-22      | MPMF – Ch. 8 (Christianity) | Quiz or Assignment |
| 13   | 4/23-29      | MPMF – Ch. 9 (Islam) | Quiz or Assignment |
| 14   | 4/30-5/6     | MPMF – Ch. 9 (Islam) | Quiz or Assignment |
| 15   | 5/7-13       | MPMF – Ch. 10 (New Religious Movements)  
MPMF – Ch. 11 (What have we learned?) | Quiz or Assignment |
| FINALS | 5/14/20    | Final Exam: Online TBD | Final (Wks 11-15) |

End of Syllabus