

# Introduction to World Religions

PHIL 2130-01 and -02, Fall 2018

## About this Course

### Course Description

This course revolves around two central questions: how has the world shaped religion(s), and how have religions shaped the world? As we move through an introductory survey of some of the world's major religious traditions, including indigenous religious traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and selected new religious movements, we will pay special attention to the ways in which these traditions have been shaped by historical, political, and geographical changes in the world—and will also consider how these traditions and their communities have influenced these changes. Over the course of the semester, we will seek both to understand the significance and relevance of religion in world history and to begin to grapple with some of the important philosophical questions addressed within religious communities as well as by those who study them.

### Learning Objectives

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- define basic concepts of the discipline of religious studies.
- describe and compare the discourse, practices, communities, and institutions of selected religious traditions.
- provide examples of both diversity and continuity within religious communities and traditions.
- analyze historical and contemporary political issues around the world in terms of their connection to religious discourse, practice, communities, or institutions.

These course-specific learning outcomes contribute to the departmental learning outcomes of the Philosophy Program by enabling students better to:

- discuss the views of at least three major historical figures of philosophy; and
- critically analyze a philosophical issue in written communications.

These course-specific learning outcomes contribute to the Core Area E learning outcomes by enabling students better to:

- demonstrate understanding of political, social, and cultural dimensions of world history.
- demonstrate knowledge of the fundamental concepts of a discipline examining the social world.

### Skills and Competencies

Some of the competencies you will further develop in this course include:

- reading comprehension.
- clear and effective written communication.
- critical thinking.
- cultural literacy.
- the ability to work with diverse others.

## Instructor and Contact Information

Instructor: [Dr. Rosemary Kellison](#)

Email: [rkelliso@westga.edu](mailto:rkelliso@westga.edu)

Phone: 678.839.5514

Office Hours in TLC 2245: Tues./Thurs. 8:45–9:20 am, 1:00–1:50 pm, & 3:20–5:00 pm. See CourseDen Announcements for any changes in usual office hours.

Virtual Office Hours via Google Hangouts: by appointment (instant message or video chat)

Meeting Time: section 01: Tues./Thurs. 11:00 am–12:15 pm; section 02: Tues./Thurs. 2:00–3:15 pm

Classroom: section 01: Pafford 204; section 02: Humanities 134

[Course Website on CourseDen](#)

English & Philosophy Department: 678.839.6512; TLC 2255

## Assessment

### Weekly Assignments (50%)

In these open-book, open-note assignments, you will be asked questions requiring you to explain, analyze, and/or critically reflect on what we covered in the readings, lectures, and class discussions of the previous week. Therefore, to succeed on these assignments, you must read the week's readings and pay attention in the week's class sessions. These assignments are an important way for you to deepen your learning by actively engaging with the material, and will also help you prepare for exams. Each assignment will be made up of several detailed short-answer questions. Over the course of the semester, there are 13 weekly assignments. Your lowest 3 grades will be dropped, meaning that 10 assignments will count toward your final grade. Assignments are due on Mondays at 12 pm (noon). Assignments will be completed on CourseDen and will be available only until they are due. Because you are required to complete only 10 of 13 assignments, no late assignments will be accepted. Each assignment is worth 5% of your final course grade, so it is important that you invest time in these assignments and provide thorough responses. Responses should refer directly to class readings and lectures and should demonstrate understanding of, and critical reflection upon, the material. It should take you 1–2 hours to complete each assignment.

### Midterm and Final Exams (38%)

The midterm exam will take place in class on Tuesday, October 9, and will cover material from the entire course up to that point. The final exam, covering material only from after the midterm, will take place in our usual classroom from 11 am–1 pm (sec. 01) or 2–4 pm (sec. 02) on Tuesday, December 11. Detailed study guides will be provided a week prior to each exam. Exams cannot be made up except in cases of documented emergencies. Each exam is worth 19% of your final course grade.

### Engaged Attendance (12%)

Regular attendance is expected in this course. I will take attendance each day. Documentation must be provided for an excused absence. After two unexcused absences, each additional absence will result in a ½-point deduction from your final course grade. Repeated late arrivals will also result in deductions. To earn an excellent grade, you should:

- be attentive and respectful during class.
- avoid sleeping, talking to students around you, or using electronic devices (phones, laptops, etc.) during class.
- take notes and ask questions when you have them.
- arrive on time and stay the entire class period.

You will receive an Engaged Attendance grade 3 times over the course of the semester; each of these grades is worth 4% of your final course grade.

## **Grading Scale**

90–100: A; 80–89: B; 70–79: C; 60–69: D; <59: F

## **Course Policies**

### **University Policy on Academic Dishonesty**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Violation of the honor code will incur serious consequences. Please review the academic honor policy at the link below and consult with Dr. Kellison if you have any questions. If you commit a violation of the honor code, you will receive a minimum penalty of a 0 for the assignment. The violation will also be reported to the Student Conduct Specialist in the Division of Student Affairs. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

### **University Email Policy**

For privacy and security reasons, you must email professors only from your MyUWG email account. You are expected to check that account regularly.

### **University Closure Policy**

Should UWG cancel classes for any reason, our course will continue. You are responsible for checking CourseDen and your UWG email for information on how our course will proceed.

### **For Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability, you are entitled to accommodations. Contact UWG Disability Services for more information, and email Dr. Kellison your SAR immediately in order to obtain accommodations.

### **For Honors Students**

Any student wishing to receive honors credit for this course must bring the appropriate paperwork and ask Dr. Kellison for approval immediately; Honors Contracts are due by the end of the second week of classes.

For more details on these and other UWG policies, see the [Common Language for Course Syllabi](#).

## **Course Calendar (subject to change with advance notice)**

<b>Course Unit</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading/Assignment Due</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	R 8/16	Intro and course syllabus	
	T 8/21	Colonialism and the early study of religion	David Chidester, "Animism"
	R 8/23	The academic study of religion	Russell McCutcheon, "What Is the Academic Study of Religion?"
	M 8/27		<i>Assignment #1 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
<b>Indigenous Religious Traditions</b>	T 8/28	IRTs of Africa Religious adaptation: Santeria	Kimberly Thorpe, "A Court Case Forced a Santeria Priest to Reveal Some of His Religion's Secrets"
	R 8/30	IRTs of North America	Raymond A. Bucko, "Lakota"
	M 9/3		<i>Assignment #2 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 9/4	Religious adaptation: New Age and Lakota religion; Native American Church	Johnny P. Flynn, "New Age Tragedy in Sedona: Non-Indians in the Sweat Lodge"
<b>Hindu Traditions</b>	R 9/6	Hindu textual traditions	Selections from the Upanishads
	M 9/10		<i>Assignment #3 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 9/11	Hindu textual traditions, cont. Hindu devotional traditions	Selections from <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>
	R 9/13	Hindu devotional traditions, cont. History of "Hinduism"	"Hindu Festivals" photo essay
	M 9/17		<i>Assignment #4 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 9/18	The invention of "Hinduism" and the rise of Hindu nationalism	Pankaj Mishra, "How the British Invented Hinduism" Rama Lakshmi, "...A Rising Tide of Hindu Nationalism in Modi's India"
<b>Buddhist Traditions</b>	R 9/20	Origins of Buddhism	"The Four Noble Truths" sutra
	M 9/24		<i>Assignment #5 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 9/25	Theravada and Mahayana	"Discourse on the Land of Bliss" sutra
	R 9/27	Mahayana and Vajrayana	"The Flower Sermon"
	M 10/1		<i>Assignment #6 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 10/2	Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet and the Tibet-China conflict	Jeffrey Bartholet, "Aflame"
	R 10/4	<i>No class—Fall Break</i>	
	M 10/8	<i>Last day to withdraw with a grade of W</i>	
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	T 10/9		<i>Midterm Exam covering all material up to this point</i>

<b>Course Unit</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading/Assignment Due</b>
<b>Jewish Traditions</b>	R 10/11	Hebrew Bible tradition Second Temple Judaism	Genesis 12, 15, 17 excerpts 2 Maccabees 5–8 excerpt
	M 10/15		<i>Assignment #7 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 10/16	Rabbinic Judaism & Jewish law Orthodox Judaism	D. Pettman, “Working around God: Technology, the Pace of Life...”
	R 10/18	Antisemitism and modern Jewish responses	Johann David Michaelis, “Arguments against Dohm” Theodor Herzl, <i>The Jewish State</i> excerpt
	M 10/22		<i>Assignment #8 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 10/23	The state of Israel	“The Arab-Israeli Conflict” timeline News article on Temple Mount
<b>Christian Traditions</b>	R 10/25	Jesus and development of Christian sect of Judaism	Matthew 5–7 (“Sermon on the Mount”)
	M 10/29		<i>Assignment #9 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 10/30	Development of Eastern Orthodoxy & Catholicism	“The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity” (secs. 3–10)
	R 11/1	Reformation and Protestantism	Martin Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian” excerpt
	M 11/5		<i>Assignment #10 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 11/6	Contemporary charismatic Christianity in the Global South	Mac Margolis, “Father Marcelo Rossi, Brazil’s Celebrity Priest” Samantha Shapiro, “The Child Preachers of Brazil”
<b>Islamic Traditions</b>	R 11/8	Muhammad and early Islam	Daniel Brown, “The Life of Muhammad”
	M 11/12		<i>Assignment #11 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 11/13	Quran and sunna; five pillars	Quran excerpts
	R 11/15	Islamic law (sharia)	Noah Feldman, “Why Shariah?”
	T 11/20 R 11/22	<i>No class—Happy Thanksgiving!</i>	
	M 11/26		<i>Assignment #12 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 11/27	Islamism and the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria	Robin Wright, “A Short History of Islamism”
<b>New Relig. Movements</b>	R 11/29	NRMs (TBD by class vote)	Reading TBD
	M 12/3		<i>Assignment #13 due 12 pm (noon)</i>
	T 12/4	NRMs (TBD by class vote)	Reading TBD
	R 12/6	NRMs (TBD by class vote)	Reading TBD
<b>Final Exam</b>	T 12/11		<i>Final Exam covering everything after Midterm Exam—sec. 01: 11 am–1 pm; sec. 02: 2–4 pm</i>