

RELG 102: Introduction to World Religions Winter Session 2022

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Overview:

This online, accelerated course is both an introduction to World Religions and an introduction to the academic study of those religions. We will explore the history and development of religions around the world, and examine how those traditions are practiced today in a variety of contexts.

The textbooks will set forth the basics of each religious tradition, and give you a general background. To further explore specific ideas and issues I will be uploading powerpoint lectures and videos on particular topics.

We're on an accelerated schedule, and you should always expect both Internet and computer malfunctions -- keep copies of all your work-in-progress (preferably on a cloud drive), and have a backup plan in case you lose your Internet connection! I will accept late papers with a 10% per day penalty, but there is no exception to that penalty for computer or Internet problems. There are several free "cloud" services including Dropbox, which can be used to semi-automatically backup your work

Texts:

- Mary Pat Fisher, Living Religions: A Brief Introduction
- Cunningham & Kelsey, The Sacred Quest
- Articles/websites as assigned.
- Streaming videos as assigned. You will need a computer and Internet connection capable of streaming.

Goals and Learning Outcomes:

- Gain a basic understanding of the major world religions, evaluated primarily through tests in each section of the course.
- Explore how different situations, times, and places impact the development and practice of religion, through reading the texts, and viewing lectures and videos.
- Examine and develop themes and ideas which may impact the practice of religions worldwide, evaluated through discussion papers and responses.
- Engage critically with the ideas and issues in Religious Studies as a discipline, evaluated through tests and discussion papers/responses.

Requirements:

Discussion Board Papers and Responses

50% of overall grade: graded credit/no credit: 300 points possible

For each section of reading in the course, you will have a chapter prompt question to answer. Your two-paragraph answers will be due on the discussion board no later than the date listed in the schedule. I am referring to these as short papers to distinguish them from your responses, below.

You must also respond to two other papers in each section, at one paragraph per response (two paragraphs total).

Expectations and Grading: Chapter Papers (25 points per section)

- These should be two well-developed paragraphs, with clear points (and examples, where appropriate). See the OWL link (below) for additional tips on paragraph writing.
- Use appropriate language, spelling, and grammar. Discussion board posts are likely to be less structured in language than a traditional paper, but need to be clearly written. Text abbreviations are not acceptable.
- Some general things to consider when creating a response:
 - Why is this question important for understanding the ideas in the section?
 - How do you think this question or concept is understood (or misunderstood) in daily life?
 - What still needs clarification, and why?

Expectations for Responses (12.5 points each; 25 points per section total)

- Show critical engagement, but not criticism. This is not intended as a place for you to critique or grade each others' responses. If you don't feel a point is clear, focus on adding to the point to make it clearer. (For example: If you were having a discussion with someone, would you say "you could use an example for that point"? Likely not: you'd probably say "oh, do you mean like..." and give one of your own.
- "No credit" responses generally fall into one of these categories:
 - Response is too short, underdeveloped, or off-topic.
 - Response levels criticism at the question (or at another post) rather than engaging in discussion.
 - Please note: personal attacks of any kind will result in a zero for the discussion, regardless of any other/additional posts. You will not be able to replace the zero with additional credit.
 - Response "grades" or evaluates another student, rather than adding to discussion.
 - Response proselytizes, or otherwise shuts down discussion.
 - Response repeats or rehashes a previous answer.

Purdue's OWL website is very useful for all types of writing assignments. Their "paragraph" page is at: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/> (Links to an external site.).

Please note: because this is an accelerated course, you cannot skip any of the discussion boards without penalty; there is, however, extra credit available for the course -- see the [wrap-up assignment](#) below.

Section Tests

50% of grade: graded on a standard percentage scale (see "grading scale," below).

In each section, you will have a multiple choice test. The number of questions per section may vary, but the tests are always worth the same, percentage-wise.

I will drop your lowest grade on the tests. This does mean that make-up test will rarely be allowed, and only under extreme circumstances. If you miss a test, it will count as a zero but will automatically drop (so long as you don't have more than one zero on a test!)

Wrap-up Assignment

Extra Credit Option: up to 2% added to your final grade.

Find at least one recent news article (within the last year) related to one of the *Sacred Quest* topics (Appearance of the Sacred, Ritual, etc.), post the link, and write a two-paragraph response addressing the connections you see between the article and the chapter topic. You might not find something that perfectly fits the topic for section, but it should somehow develop or reflect a key point.

Grading Scale: Please note, professors at WVU are free to assign + and - grades on STAR, even though the standard system calculates those grades simply as 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, etc. Other systems (for example, graduate schools) may calculate grades differently than WVU. "Borderline" grades, as referenced above, means grades on or between one of these levels.

93 - 100	A	77 - 79.9	C+
90 - 92.9	A-	73 - 76.9	C
87 - 89.9	B+	70 - 72.9	C-
83 - 86.9	B	67 - 69.9	D+
80 - 82.9	B-	60 - 66.9	D
		59.9 and below	F

Schedule

In Readings: LV = Fisher, Living Religions A Brief Introduction. SQ = Sacred Quest

Section	Readings	Requirements	Section Due Dates
Welcome	Syllabus	Post: Introductions	Dec 24
One: Studying Religions	SQ Ch. 1 - Toward a Definition of Religion LV - Ch.1 "Religious Responses"	Discussion Board Post Discussion Board Responses Section Test	Dec 27 Dec 28 Dec 28
Two: Judaism	SQ Ch. 2 - Nature of the Sacred LV - Judaism	Discussion Board Post Discussion Board Responses Section Test	Dec 29 Dec 30 Dec 30
Three: Christianity	SQ Ch. 3 - Appearance of the Sacred LV - Christianity	Discussion Board Post Discussion Board Responses Section Test	Dec 31 Jan 2 Jan 2
Four: Islam	SQ Ch. 4 - Language of the Sacred LV - Islam	Discussion Board Post Discussion Board Responses Section Test	Jan 3 Jan 4 Jan 4

Five: Hinduism	SQ Ch. 5 - Ritual	Discussion Board Post	Jan 5
	LV - Hinduism	Discussion Board Responses	Jan 6
		Section Test	Jan 6
Six: Buddhism	(no SQ reading) LV - Buddhism	Discussion Board Post	Jan 7
		Discussion Board Responses	Jan 8
		Section Test	Jan 8
		Extra Credit (wrap up assignment)	Jan 8

Course Policies

Academic Integrity: Dishonesty and/or plagiarism are serious offenses. Clear cases will result in appropriate academic discipline and an unforgivable “F” may be given for the entire course. Please see the following: [http:// eberly.wvu.edu/current_students/advising_resources/avoiding_plagiarism](http://eberly.wvu.edu/current_students/advising_resources/avoiding_plagiarism). I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing actions, please see the students conduct code at University Student Conduct Code, Policy Bulletin 31, or [http://studentlife.wvu.edu/ office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code](http://studentlife.wvu.edu/office_of_student_conduct/student_conduct_code). Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Contact/E-mail Policy: All emails should include your full name, course number, and section (these can all be in your “signature”); If you are including an assignment or other time-sensitive material, do not assume that I received it until I respond (if something is sent and doesn’t come through on time, you will need to forward the already-sent mail); You must turn in a hard copy of any assignment sent by email, unless I’ve specifically said otherwise; I will usually respond to emails within a few hours during the week, but if you email me at night/on weekends I may not respond until the next morning/weekday; Please follow normal rules of grammar, including spell-checking your emails—in general: remember that your emails contribute to people’s impression of you and of your work!

Inclusivity Statement

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate

arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see

Adverse Weather Commitment Statement

In the event of inclement or threatening weather, everyone should use his or her best judgment regarding travel to and from campus. Safety should be the main concern. If you cannot get to class because of adverse weather conditions, you should contact me as soon as possible. Similarly, if I am unable to reach our class location, I will notify you of any cancellation or change as soon as possible (at least 1 hour before class starts), using MIX/Gmail to prevent you from embarking on any unnecessary travel. If you cannot get to class because of weather conditions, I will make allowances relative to required attendance policies, as well as any scheduled tests, quizzes, or other assessments.

Changes in the Course Syllabus

The instructor has the right to make changes in the syllabus throughout the semester as deemed necessary and appropriate. I will let you know of any such changes.

Student Services

I am always available to discuss students' concerns and progress during individual appointments. As well, WVU has the following services for students needing additional assistance:

WELLWVU Students Center of Health WVU Writing Center
<http://www.wvu.edu/~cocenter/> <http://english.wvu.edu/centers-projects/writing-center>

WVU Student Support Services/TRIO Office of Student Life
<http://sss.wvu.edu/> <http://www.studentlife.wvu.edu>

Revised University Attendance Policy

(Please see — <http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/enrollmentandregistration/#Attendance>):

University Sanctioned Absences

- University sanctioned absences are absences in which instructors provide opportunities to make up missed substantial class work or activities (e.g., assignments, exams) and will not penalize students for those absences. University sanctioned absences include mandatory military obligation, COVID-19 related absence, mandatory court appearances, and participation in university activities at the request of university authorities. Quarantined students are not to be penalized for physical absence, but may be expected to complete class work and activities as assigned. Instructors are expected to be flexible in allowing students to make up work missed due to university sanctioned absences. Instructors and students may consult with their Dean's Office on events that constitute official university sanctioned events.
- WVU supports its students who are also members of the United States armed forces, reserve units, and National Guard. Absences of less than three weeks of course work for military obligation (i.e., drill or training) are university sanctioned absences. WVU's Center for Veteran, Military, and Family Programs website has additional information on the drill schedule for the

West Virginia National Guard and can provide official verification of a student's military orders upon request.

- For university sanctioned absences totaling more than three weeks of course work resulting from military obligation, see WVU's Military Leave section of the undergraduate catalog.
- Students who will miss more than a week of course work due to health condition or personal trauma should refer to WVU's Emergency Leave Policy.
- Students wishing to appeal an instructor decision regarding an absence for a university sanctioned event may appeal to the Dean of the college/school for the relevant course.
- Final course grades affected by attendance in an individual course may be appealed using the normal course grade appeal process located on the Appeals tab of the Academic Standards section of this catalog.

New Emergency Leave Policy

(Please see — <http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/enrollmentandregistration/#Attendance>):

Long Term Leave

- Students who will miss more than three weeks of course work due to a health condition or personal trauma should notify the appropriate Dean of the College, found on the Office of the Provost website under the Level 2 Reviewers webpage, where their major is housed. The student should explain the circumstances of their absence and, with the assistance of the Dean, work with each of faculty members to agree upon a plan of action. In most cases, students will be asked to provide documentation or other evidence.
- If necessary, these students may withdraw from the university and will go through one of the two following processes depending upon when the student withdraws.
- Withdraw from the University up to and including the 13th week of instruction. Students who withdraw before the end of the 13th week of instruction may need to return portions of their financial aid award. A W will be placed on all courses.
- Withdraw from the University after the 13th week of instruction. Students who leave the University after the 13th week of instruction should work with their home college/school's Dean's Office.
- The relevant Dean's Office will assist the student in reviewing the student's eligibility for credit for their courses on a course-by course basis with the instructors.
- If the course is substantially complete and the student has done passing work, the student should receive the grade earned at that time.
- If the instructor establishes that the course is not quite substantially complete and the student requests it, the instructor can follow the procedure for an Incomplete, with the agreement of the department chair and the Dean of the College where the course is housed.
- When it is deemed that no credit can be awarded, the student can be administratively withdrawn from the course.

Academic Policies and Syllabus Statements

can be found here: <https://tlcommons.wvu.edu/syllabus-policies-and-statements>

Specifically, the COVID-19 Syllabus Statement reads as follows:

- WVU is committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Should campus operations change because of health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible that this course will move to a fully online delivery format. If that

occurs, students will be advised of technical and/or equipment requirements, including remote proctoring software.

- In a face-to-face environment, our commitment to safety requires students, staff, and instructors to observe the social distancing and personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines set by the University at all times. While in class, students will sit in assigned seats when applicable and wear the required PPE. Should a student forget to bring the required PPE, PPE will be available in the building for students to acquire. Students who fail to comply will be dismissed from the classroom for the class period and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for further sanctions.
- If a student becomes sick or is required to quarantine during the semester, they should notify the instructor. The student should work with the instructor to develop a plan to receive the necessary course content, activities, and assessments to complete the course learning outcomes.