Religion 101 Religions of the World ∼ Fall 2016

Newhouse 1 101
MW 10:35-11:30 am plus Friday discussion sections

This course is restricted to freshmen and sophomores


Office: HL 521 (In the central staircase)

Email: jpwaghor@syr.edu (I check my email frequently). This is the best and quickest way to contact me. Please do not leave messages on my office phone.

Teaching Associates: Discussion section instructors

Mallory Hennigar (MA Religion, Syracuse University 2014; BA McGill University, World Religion & English Literature 2012). My research interest is modern South Asian Religions, particularly Dalit/Scheduled Caste Buddhism and globalization. My field research takes place in Nagpur, Maharashtra at a Buddhist training center for young people of low caste backgrounds, which is a part of a British-founded transnational Buddhist organization.

I am interested in the ways that this global relationship affects Dalit understandings of their Buddhist identities and the development of Buddhism in India.

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Diana Brown (Began Ph.D. program in 2015. B.A. German, Grinnell College, 2008; M.A. Religious Studies, The University of Kansas, 2015). I have research interests in Paganism, Western Esotericism, New Religious Movements, and the esoteric in modern poetry, and have written papers on yoga and the "qabalah" according to Dion Fortune, the role of translation in the Book of Mormon,
ON TERMINOLOGY

IMAGINE a field where the topic itself is in question—the term Religion (or religions) has many connotations and preconceived definitions that challenge any study in the context of a college classroom. In this class, I begin with certain assumptions—think about the implications:

Think about this...

• Religion is not a thing but a process embodied in human life.
• Traditions are concepts and ideas that can be taught—I will use the term sampradāya

Sanskrit word—very useful also
impressive

• God is not central to every tradition or to every person
• The sacred or sacrality can be located in many places, persons, and things
  • Spirituality implies (for many people) an inner process/ religion implies external processes – the term religiosity covers both.

KEEP IN MIND THAT IT IS NOT ALWAYS EASY TO DRAW THE LINE BETWEEN WHAT IS RELIGIOUS OR SACRED AND WHAT IS NOT.

Is this OLYMPIC stadium sacred or secular?

I will return to this discussion in the first week of class.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “STUDY” RELIGION?

The very phrase "to study religion" presents complex problems. The phrase can be heard in many settings: in a church, temple, and mosque; or in a late night session in a college dorm; or in a classroom. What difference do these various settings make in the way questions are posed and answered? Within the American and European-style universities, the academic study of religion has a history of methods, questions and controversies.

Remember that this course is an introduction not only to new "data" but also to a new discipline. CLOSE ATTENTION TO NEW METHODS OF STUDY WILL BE IMPORTANT.
To consider religious expression and experience in global context also demands some sense of geography. In most world religions textbooks the “major religious traditions”—such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism—are associated with some geographical area. But within any of these areas, religions never occur in a “pure” state. Especially in the last centuries, people have encountered and absorbed varieties of religions often borrowing and trading in religious ideas and practices. Certainly in any given geographical area, a single religious system may be dominant but it is rarely exclusive.

The most popular way to discuss difference and similarity centers on the "Traditions" (usually called Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, etc.) assumed to define the distinctions between religious people. This is the perspective of Stephen Prothero, God is not One: Eight Rival Religions that Run the World and Why Their Differences Matter. But there are other categories to use. There is an older and very popular book by Huston Smith, The World's Religions, which is now in its 50th anniversary edition. Smith, like Prothero, begins with the major religions but then sees an underlying commonality among them, a perennial commonality. However Ninian Smart in Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs (3rd ed.) proposes very different set of categories based on world-view analysis. Smart delineates different DIMENSIONS of religious life: doctrinal/philosophical, mythical/narrative, ethical/legal, ritual/practice, experiential/emotional, social/institutional.

Finally in the last three centuries, Europe and then the United States have dominated the world economically, often politically, and certainly culturally. The study of religion in the university system as we know it is a product of the European Enlightenment. British imperial control over the many colonies meant that British universities described and defined the religions of colonies like India and Egypt. “Islam,” “Hinduism” and “Buddhism” as defined in many popular world religions textbooks are intellectual products of this period. No contemporary study of religion can ignore the effects of colonialism. But at the same time, as the economic and culture control of “the West” wanes, the borrowing may reverse with major religious changes within the United States and Europe.

HOW IS THE COURSE DESIGNED?

Unlike many courses in the religions of the world, this course will not move week-by-week through the so-called “major religions”—Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity, etc. Rather we will guide you in learning how to understand the religious life of others and towards imagining what life would be like within other religious worlds. “Religion” in this sense does not exist apart from the lives of human beings and remains grounded in history and culture. I have organized the course into case studies in three key geographic areas in the world during a specific historical period, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
have chosen this period when an intense encounter between religions that accompanied the spread of British imperialism, and the development of new worldwide interconnections lead to new understandings of religion/s. In each case, you will meet leaders and ordinary people who lived through these changes and who helped to form the religious worlds we now inhabit. In the case of India and Egypt, the revolt against British colonialism forged new definitions of modern Muslim and Hindu life that continue today. Although Japan escaped British imperial control, a forceful nudge from Yankee gunboats opened the country to world trade and to American culture.

Especially this year, I have also added two Interludes, to consider our current world and ask the question-how does anyone live a world with so much religious diversity and deeply held religious identities on the one hand and yet so much shared culture on the other. I see two models, pluralism and spirituality—we will talk about these,

KEEP IN MIND THAT ALL OF THESE CASES ARE ABOUT RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTERS: PERSONAL, POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL.

CASE ONE will focus on Mohandas K Gandhi, later known as Mahatma Gandhi, who led India to independence from British rule in 1947. As a crucial part of the freedom struggle from the 1920s to the 1940s, he developed a modern understanding of religion that combined elements of his own Hindu tradition with facets of Islam and Christianity. We will read his famous autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Kim Knott's, *Hinduism: A Short Introduction* will help to place Gandhi within the history of Hinduism. Gandhi framed his crusade against British colonialism in the context of his own inner struggle for self-control. His quest aimed at both the ethical and the mystical aspects of religion.

INTERLUDE engages a Swiss, Muslim, intellectual who teaches now at Oxford. This is his discussion of the search for “the meaning of life” and a way to consider how to live in a religiously plural world.


CASE TWO will center on the modern multi-religious city of Cairo the capital of Egypt in the early 20th century, the setting for the novel *Palace Walk* by an Egyptian Nobel laureate, Naguib Mahfouz. In the novel Mahfouz describes the conflicts within a Muslim family in Cairo and highlights the important social dimension of religion especially of gender and family life. Mahfouz’s critique of the treatment of women in his novel caused controversy in Egypt. We will read online materials on women in Islam from a variety of perspectives. *Islam: A Very Short Introduction* by Malise Ruthven will provide basic background on modern Islam. With the complex events in Egypt today, this case will be provocative.

CASE THREE will begin close to home in Boston at the turn of the century with America’s profound encounter with Japanese Zen Buddhism especially though art and artifacts. Here one woman’s leadership brought Asian perspectives to American culture. Isabella Stewart Gardner used her vast wealth to collect art and build a grand Venetian-style mansion to house her collection. She patronized many promising and later famous creative talents. Among these was Kakuzo Okakura, whose *Book of Tea* remains a popular introduction to Japanese aesthetics for many non-specialists. Richard Pilgrim’s *Buddhism and the Arts of Japan* explains exactly how and why aesthetic creations such as painting and poetry embody Zen Buddhism in the Japanese context. It was through art forms that Americans encountered and continue to be immersed in things Japanese. In turn, modern and contemporary Japanese rebuilt their national consciousness using Buddhist aesthetics especially Zen styles. The Zen center in Syracuse shares in this legacy.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE COURSE?

- to gain literacy in religious traditions and in the basic terms in the study of religion
- to understand the difficulties of studying religions
- to discern and acknowledge your own religious or irreligious presumptions
- to learn to consider religious issues and practices from multiple points of view
- to be able to understand forms of religious practice and concepts that you may find problematic without either distorting the facts or feeling compelled to condone them.
- to find your own perspectives as a scholar within the material in the course
- to find your own perspectives as a person within the material of the course

WHAT ARE THE REQUIRED BOOKS? Please get the new editions!

Available in textbooks section of the university bookstore only: note most are in Kindle editions


Kakuzo Okakura. *The Book of Tea*. There are multiple print versions now available pick the least expensive. (Now available on Kindle or free)


**Interlude books are for your purchase as Kindle Books**


**WEBSITE FOR THE COURSE:**
Is on BLACKBOARD
All paper assignment, reading assignments, reading guides will be posted on Blackboard, as well as important announcements. Please check frequently

**WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?**

- The reading for each week must be completed by Wednesdays at class time. We cannot hope to have informed discussions unless each of the class members is prepared to contribute by speaking or by *actively listening*.
- I will prepare six topics for short paper/projects (between 2-3 pages 12 point Times Roman 600–900 words) and ask you to complete four out of the six. Papers will *have different formats* but will always cover the reading from the previous weeks. I will post the paper topics on Blackboard a week before the due date. *Take care not to procrastinate too long!* **Note that the first paper is required of all freshmen**; sophomores may also choose to do this as part of their four papers. *There is no extra credit.*
- *Three vocabulary-centered exams* to test your comprehension of the basic terms and concepts. The terms/concepts will be taken from the reading *and the lectures*. **There is no final exam.**
- Active participation in discussion sections. Your TA will often give an in-class writing assignment to see if you have basically understood the reading assignments for the
week. You may also be asked to begin a discussion or participate on a panel. These assignments will be graded on point system and will count toward your discussion grade.

- **We cannot change session assignments.**

**COURSE POLICIES**

*Please Read Carefully now!*

- Attendance is required at all class sessions. I can allow only 3 unexcused absences total. Please plan your schedule to allow for religious holidays within this allowance. Because this is a MW class with discussions sections on Friday morning, those on sports teams should not be affected. **However if you take more than 3 class days for sports events (with proper documentation) then I can allow NO additional unexcused absence.**

- Each unexcused absence over the allotted three absences **will lower your final grade by 3 points** (for points see below). This requirement is important in this class because tests and papers are only part of the material in a course. Your presence assures us that you have at least heard and participated in the discussions, which will be essential for your understanding.

- An excused absence means that you have emailed both the TA and myself and received approval for absences in advance due to special circumstances. Please if you speak to me in class—confirm any conversation with an email. In case of illness, you must talk with us immediately afterwards. The policy of the Health services is to provide a note only when the student has been advised to miss classes.

- **Common Courtesy:** (I should not have to mention these points but sad experience makes this necessary.) The class begins at 10:35 am. Please be on time; walking in late shows little respect for your fellow student or for me. If you have a tight connection between classes let us know and we can seat you accordingly. **All cell phones are to be turned entirely off including text messaging and all I-pods shut down.** I have also decided to exclude computers from the class--new research has shown that taking notes in class by using paper and pen or pencil is the most effective way of learning! In some cases, I will provide an outline of the lecture. Repeated lack of courtesy will also result in loosing points from your final grade under the participation points.

- **Academic Integrity:** “Syracuse University’s academic integrity policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The university policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same written work in more than one class.
without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. The presumptive penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty by an undergraduate student is course failure, accompanied by a transcript notation indicating that the failure resulted from a violation of academic integrity policy. The presumptive penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty by a graduate student is suspension or expulsion. SU students are required to read an online summary of the university’s academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on My Slice.”

• For this course, I expect the work presented in both the papers and the exams to be totally your own with all sources, which you have used, fully acknowledged. I will provide full instructions as to citation and form. Both the TAs and I are willing to help you if you have any doubts. If we find any evidence of academic dishonesty of any kind, I will report the incident to the Academic Integrity Office. The sanctions will include lowered points on the paper including minus points (i.e. -5 or -10), or failure for the entire course depended on the severity. Please check http://academicintegrity.syr.edu for more information.

• Disability Policy: Any students that need accommodation because of disability should discuss it with the professor during office hours or by appointment and be prepared to provide documentation to the Office of Disability Services (ext. 4498 or 1371)

• Paper Deadlines: There are no extensions on papers. The papers will be due on Blackboard at the time designated on the assignment. If you miss the deadline you cannot submit the paper—please take care to submit the paper before the deadline—do not wait until the last minute and be certain that you understand the Blackboard and how to submit your paper.

Evaluation

The following is a basic guide that I will use to determine the grade that you earned in the class:

In each category it will be possible to earn the following points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four Paper/projects (10 each)</td>
<td>=40 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation: active listening, speaking, courtesy in the lecture class</td>
<td>=10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 vocabulary/comprehension exams 10 points each</td>
<td>=30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in Discussion section points</td>
<td>=30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 points</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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HOW WILL MY WORK BE EVALUATED?
Course work and class participation will be important because interpretation will be a joint effort in class. In the large class as well as in the discussion sections, we will build opportunities for you to ask questions and engage in discussion throughout the term. Although I will "lecture" in class, I will always allow time for your questions and reflections. "Lectures" will include audio and visual material—please take these images and sounds seriously; they are part of the "vocabulary" of religious life. *I will grade your papers along with the TAs.*

*PLEASE NOTE THAT BY REMAINING IN THIS CLASS YOU ARE ACCEPTING THE SYLLABUS AS DISTRIBUTED—ALONG WITH THE REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE COURSE—WELCOME ABOARD!*

**WHAT IS THE GENERAL SCHEDULE FOR THE COURSE?**

*The reading assignments/reading guides will appear on Blackboard for each case.*

**INTRODUCTION: THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND RELIGIONS**

Week 01. Aug 29, 31 [Sept 2]: What does it mean to study religion?
Week 02. Sept 5 (holiday), Sept 7 [Sept 9]: How can we study religion?

**PAPER #1: Due Wed Sept 14 [PAPER ONE IS REQUIRED FOR ALL FRESHMEN]**

**CASE A: GANDHI: INDIA, A CLOTH OF MANY COLORS**

Week 03. Sept 12, 14 [16]: Who was Mohandas K. Gandhi and why is he still relevant?
Week 04. Sept 19, 21 [23]: Reading Gandhi in the Context of "Hinduism"
Week 05. Sept 26, 28 [30]: Reading Gandhi in the Contemporary World

**Paper 2 due: Oct 3, 2016**

**INTERLUDE**


**Paper 3 due: Oct 10, 2016**

**CASE B: THE WORLD OF AMINA AND AHMAD Abd AL-JAWAD: CAIRO ISLAM AND COLONIALISM**

Week 07. Oct 10, 12 [14]: Meeting Naguib Mahfouz and Cairo and Egypt in the Greater Islamic World {Oct 3 Rosh Hashanah} {Oct 12 Yom Kippur}
**VOCABULARY EXAM 1: OCTOBER 14 IN DISCUSSION SECTIONS (On weeks 1-5)**

Week 08, Oct 17, 19 [21: Islam in Practice: The Qur’an, The Law, and the Modern Period
Week 09. Oct 24, 26 [28]: Amina and the Issues of Women in Islam
{Oct. 30-Diwali}

**Paper 4 due: Oct 31, 2016**

**INTERLUDE:**
(TED books, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014. Available in Kindle and also in an audio
version with Iyer narrating.

**Paper 5 due: Nov 7, 2016**

**CASE C: JAPAN AND AMERICA--THE WORLD IN A TEACUP**

Week 11. Nov 7, 9 [11]: A “New” City and a Renewed Nation--Boston and Japan, 1868-
1912 and the art of collecting art.

**VOCABULARY EXAM 2 ON NOVEMBER 11 IN DISCUSSION SECTIONS**

Week 12, Nov 14, 16 [18]: The Religious Roots of Japanese Aesthetics

Thanksgiving Nov 21-25

Week 13. Nov 28, 30 [Dec 2]: Okakura and the Way of Tea

**Paper 6 due: Dec 5, 2016**

Week 14: Dec 5, 7 [9]: Religion in the contemporary world?

**VOCABULARY EXAM 3 in DISCUSSION SECTIONS DECEMBER 9**

**THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM FOR THIS COURSE.**