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Description: Religion is on the rise and at the same time changing rapidly in our globalizing world. From New York to Singapore, newspapers that once headlined “The Death of God” now report on a new religious fervor among well-educated people. New religious movements appear; new leaders emerge within established traditions and call for change. Some worldwide fundamentalist movements espouse violence but many engage in important social service work as part of an emerging global civil society. Technology, especially the worldwide web, replaces print as the primary form of religious communication. New immigrants from Asia, Europe and America bring an unexpected religious pluralism to formerly Judeo-Christian populations. The modern lines between religion and politics are challenged everywhere. How can we understand this new world?

Books (Available in the book store):

- Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2003 ISBN 0-415-94487-2
Also available on Kindle for \$4.94
- Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd ed., 2003. ISBN-13: 9780520240117
Also available on Kindle for \$13.72
- Linda Woodhead, ed., *Religions in the Modern World*, Routledge, 2nd ed. 2009 ISBN-13: 9780415458917
Available on Kindle from Amazon.com; can be rented
- Richard Hughes Seager, *Encountering the Dharma: Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai, and the Globalization of Buddhist Humanism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. ISBN-13: 9780520245778
- Rachel Wagner, *Godwired: Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality*. New York, Routledge,
Kindle edition 31.96 (the paperback edition is only a few dollars more)

Requirements:

- Attendance is required at all class sessions** (see below for details)
- 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. We will give unannounced exercises to persuade you to keep up. These will count toward your final grade.
- I will prepare six topics for short paper/projects (between 2-3 pages 12 point Times Roman (600 minimum–900 words maximum) 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 distribute the paper topic one week prior to date that paper will be due—giving you a week to do the paper. Papers must be submitted on Blackboard. Take care not to procrastinate too long! NOTE THAT PAPER #1 is required of everyone
- I am also asking each of you to work in groups on a common project called “Contemporary Religious Movements in New York State.” I will prepare a list but you may also have suggestions. Your group will present your findings to the class in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, or another similar format. Your final paper will be done individually but based on this project. There is no final exam in this course.

Course Policies: Please Read Carefully now!

Attendance is required at all class sessions. We will keep records. I will allow only 2 unexcused absences. Because this is a M-V class, those on sports teams should not be affected. However, if you take any class days for sports events (with proper documentation) or for religious holidays, then I can allow only ONE unexcused absence in addition to your commitments. Each unexcused absence over the allotted 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 the case of an illness, you must talk with us afterwards. The policy of Health services is to provide a note only when the student has been advised to miss classes.

Please carefully note the University Policy on Religious Holidays:

This is a reminder that students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes when they will be observing their religious holiday(s). In fall and spring semesters, students fill out their notification forms online. Students will have update access to the notification form through MySlice beginning the first day of classes. It will be available through the end of the second week of classes.

Common Courtesy: (I should not have to mention these points but sad experience makes this necessary.) The class begins at 12:45. Please be on time; walking in late shows little respect for your fellow students 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 iPods shut down—NO computers are allowed in class**—yes there still are pencils pens, and paper—you are all paying too much for your classes to be only half present. Repeated lack of courtesy will also result in losing points from your final grade under the participation points.

Academic Integrity: There are writing assignments in the class with no formal tests outside of the short in-class exercises. I expect the work presented 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 TA 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 depending on the severity. Please check <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu> for more information.

Paper Deadlines: There are no extensions on papers. If you miss the deadline you can always wait for the next but take care here that you do not wait until the end.

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:

In Class "Exercises" (likely 3 or 5)	15 points
Four Paper/projects (10 each)	40 points
Final presentation	10 points
Final individual paper	20 points
Participation: active listening, speaking, and courtesy in class	15 points
	100

Schedule: Subject to change with reasonable notice

Week One (Jan 12, 14): Thinking About the Rapidly Changing World

The course will ask each of you to look at the world around you, to learn to describe the religious practices and ideas that you see and hear. In this sense each of you will be involved as a keen observer of yourselves and of others. This does not mean that I will be asking for purely subjective opinions. Rather, I assume that everyone has experience with contemporary religions in some way through family, friends, and neighbors at home or in your dorms. You may not participate in any of these movements but no one can avoid seeing the new religiosity that surrounds us in modern America and indeed in the world. During this first week, we will try to consider how to characterize the increasingly globalizing world. The conversation will begin with some photos and the introductory chapters in Woodhouse plus an essay *Runaway World* by Anthony Giddens, an influential social theorist from the UK. He first gave this as a talk on the BBC.

Reading: Read in this order—Woodhead, *Religions in the Modern World*, Introduction and Chapter 1; then, Giddens, *Runaway World*, preface to the second edition and the introduction.

Week Two (Jan 19, 21): Runaway World continued.

Be prepared to discuss and debate the Giddens essay and to begin to offer your own sense of today's world and the possible interrelations of "religion" with the issues Giddens suggests (especially "globalization," "tradition," and "family")

Reading: *Giddens, Runaway World*

Paper/Project 1 on Giddens: Due on Blackboard: due dates will be posted on Blackboard

Required of everyone; failure to do this assignment will result in **5 points deducted from your final grade.**

Week Three (Jan 26, 28): What is Globalization for religions?

At the same time that the economies of the world experience unprecedented levels of interconnectedness, most societies seem to be undergoing 'de-secularization' with religious values, ideas, practices, and people increasingly reentering public life. Many scholars and policy makers also assume the gradual development of a 'Global Culture'" with emerging cosmopolitan values, which are not necessarily connected to any one religious tradition or possibly not to any religion at all. Yet these worldwide values such as human rights and gender equality are transforming the world's older religious traditions, not always peacefully (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, and indigenous American and African traditions) at the same time that movements within major traditions (in terms of numbers and distribution) transform local as well as global society.

Reading: (Read in this order) Woodhead chapter 16 "Religion and globalization", and 21 "Secularization and secularism; Selections on Blackboard (TBA)

Week Four (Feb. 2, 4): Rethinking the popular distinction between Religion and Spirituality.

The study of contemporary religion is complicated by many different uses of the term religion. We need to pay close attention to the increased use of the term 'spiritual' as an alternate to 'religion' and often understood as quite distinct. What do those who use these terms mean and does this changing terminology signal a worldwide change in the practice and profession of religiosity?

Reading: Please read in this order: Woodhead, Chapter 12 "Spirituality" and selections on BLACKBOARD (TBA).

Week Five (Feb. 9, 11): Creating new religious spaces within global commodity culture:

"Religion" often occurs outside of any traditions or religious movements. The process of "sacralizing" new spaces adds a religious dimension to consumer life that even the participants may not name as religious including architecture, use of urban land, and creation of new "sacred" spaces within shopping centers.

Reading: Reading on Blackboard (TBA)

Paper/project 2:

Week Six (Feb. 16, 18): Technological revolution within religious communication including new styles of print medium and use of the Internet.

In the last two decades, even mainstream churches, mosques, and Hindu temples have websites. Religious education often includes cartoons and comic books. Websites offer everything from religious posters to goddess dolls. Recently religious groups form as new communities solely on the Internet.

Reading: Rachael Wagner, *Godwired: Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality*

Paper/project 3:

Week Seven (Feb. 23, 25): Worldwide rise of evangelical Christianity

Even during the days of the colonial empires, conversion to Christianity in Africa and Latin American was not as extensive as now. This rapid conversion of so many, however, is not to so-called mainstream churches but to new evangelical movements, which is also true within the United States. Evangelicals are often conflated with "fundamentalist," which is not always true.

Reading: Woodhead, Chapter 8 on Christianity and then the posted readings on Blackboard.

Week Eight (Mar. 2, 4): Worldwide rise of Buddhist 'evangelical' movements

Buddhists have always allowed and encouraged conversion but only recently have Buddhist movements arisen that actively seek converts on a grand scale. In Singapore, the Soka Gokkai movement is one of the fastest growing religious organizations in the city-state.

Reading: Woodhead, Chapter 8 (recommended: as a reference if you need to learn terms etc)

Woodhead, Chapter 6 (Religions of Japan) p.148-157)

Richard Hughes Seager, *Encountering the Dharma: Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai, and the Globalization of Buddhist Humanism*.

SPRING BREAK

Paper/project 4 due:

Week Nine (Mar. 16, 18): Understanding religion and violence.

Although not always the case, conservative trends toward "fundamentalism" within many older religious systems shaped new often-violent global movements and altered religious authority at the local level. Understanding both the rise of fundamentalism and its association with violent protest can be difficult but clearly all-major religious systems have developed forms of violence and terrorism.

Reading: Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*

Paper/project 5 due:

Week Ten (Mar. 23, 25): New Religious Movement in the United States

Many new religions form within a global context with new values and new perspectives sometimes in contention but more often in confluence with sciences sharing issues of health, well being and personal fulfillment that adherents claim to be missing in the mainstream traditions.

Reading: Woodhead, chapters 13, 14, 15

Paper Project 6: Due

Declaration of topic for final project due on MARCH 25—more instructions will follow.

Week Eleven (Mar 30-April 1): WORK ON PROJECTS

NO formal class but and I will be available in our classroom, which will be open for you to begin to organize your groups and projects

Week Twelve (April 6, 8): New Religious Movements in Asia

This week I will talk about my own research in India and Singapore on the spread of new Hindu-based religious movement usually associated with a living guru (teacher).

Reading: Woodhead, chapter 2, Hinduism.

Project reports: Contemporary Religious Movements in New York State

Week Thirteen (April 13, 15)

Week Fourteen (April 20, 22)

Week Fifteen (April 27-last day of class)

This is 5 class sessions of (80 minutes) with 2-3 presentations per class—20-30 minutes each with time for questions

FINAL PAPER DUE ON BLACKBOARD THE DATE OF THE SCHEDULED FINAL FOR THIS COURSE: FRIDAY MAY 1—I WILL GIVE YOU UNTIL 10 PM