REL101: Religions of the World

Hall of Languages 211
MoWe 2:15-3:35

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Office Hours: HoL 514 MoWe 3:45-4:45 or by appointment

Course Description:
Religions are living, changing things, inseparable from the cultures that practice them, and are a key force in human motivation both historically and in the present day. This course will explore some major world religions; it will also interrogate the common-sense understanding of “religion” itself. We will examine points of contact, exchange and co-existence in order to think critically about religion’s role in framing knowledge about the world and in shaping the communities we live in.

Course Objectives:
To give a basic sense of some major religious traditions in a global context
Think critically about the assumptions embedded in popular understandings of these traditions and of what religion is
To consider the ways that religion helps to shape one’s point of view and frame knowledge about the world
To develop critical thinking and analytical skills in reading and writing

Texts:
There are two required books available at the bookstore:
Stephen Prothero. *God is Not One.*
Brent S Plate. *Religion in 5 ½ Objects*
Other readings will be available on the class Blackboard site.

*Please bring the assigned reading to each class!*

Assignments & Evaluation:

**Short paper Due Week 5 & 13 15%**
No more than one double-spaced page, reinforcing concepts and information you’ll need in the exam/s. See hand-out. Papers are due (post to BB) by 11.59PM Friday.

**Midterm Exam In Class 3/9 25%**
This exam will cover material from the beginning of class until 3/7. Expect multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

**Reading/Comprehension Quizzes (Week 4, 6,11, 13) 20%**
Short, in-class quizzes intended, not to promote great anxiety, but to ensure understanding of the reading and class material.
Final Project or Exam In Class 5/3 30%
You may choose between a written exam or a final project connected to the course material.

Participation 10%
This includes attendance and class performance.

Tests
This course includes a midterm & a final exam. In lieu of the final exam, students may choose to do a final project (see below). The midterm will be short answer questions focusing on key terms and ideas, and an essay portion focusing on larger themes of the course. The final exam will be semi-cumulative, with most focus on the second half of the semester. Format as midterm. Both exams will be in-class.

Final Project
This project is optional, in lieu of the final exam. Most likely an essay of 1600 -1800 words, using class material; discuss other formats with me. Topics to think about might include: writing on a religious tradition we did not discuss in class; an analysis of a film, book, etc., in light of class material; deeper consideration of the theoretical problems surrounding the study of religion ... But I encourage you to think creatively about your topic. If you choose to do a final project, please submit a short description of your topic and format no later than Week 14.

Late Papers, Missed Quizzes or Exams
I will not accept late papers. Ensure that you submit them by the assigned deadline. Be sure you understand how to submit your paper to BB, be sure it is formatted as .rtf or .doc – if I cannot read it, it will count as late. Missed quizzes or exams cannot be made up – if you have a conflict, speak to me in advance.

Please bring physical copies of the readings to class. I ask that you not use laptops, tablets, cell phones, etc. in the classroom.

Academic Integrity
I expect your exam and paper works to be entirely original with all of your sources fully acknowledged. I will report any academic dishonesty to the Academic Integrity Office; sanctions will vary by severity but include grade penalty on the paper/exam or a failing grade for the course. If you are unsure please ask. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work.
they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university policy. 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 offense by an undergraduate student is course failure, accompanied by a transcript notation indicating that the failure resulted from a violation of Academic Integrity Policy. For more information and the complete policy, see [http://academicintegrity.syr.edu](http://academicintegrity.syr.edu).

**Students with Disabilities / Special Needs**

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), [http://disabilityservices.syr.edu](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu), located at 804 University Avenue, room 309, or call 315-443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities "Accommodation Authorization Letters,” as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

**Faith Tradition Observances**

Syracuse University does not have non-instructional days for any religious holiday and students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes when they will be observing their religious holiday(s).

SU’s religious observances policy, found at [http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm), recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes.

**Inclusive Language Policy**

It is expected that all participants use inclusive language in conversation and written assignments especially with respect to humanity, cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, races, and religions, with regard to characteristics such as sex, gender, sexual identities, social class, age, and dis/abilities. Religion is famously a sensitive topic – we approach it here as an academic study, but thinking carefully & being conscious of the words and language that we use is an important part of
understanding our own self-presentation and respecting others.

Related Links:

Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language, from the website of National Council of Teachers of English.
http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/genderfairuseoflang

This schedule is subject to change at my discretion; I will clearly communicate any changes in class and on BB.

Schedule of Readings & Assignments

Week 1 – World Religions
1/20 W

Week 2 – The Problem of World Religion
1/25 M: Eck, Introduction (BB)
1/27 W Prothero, Intro

Week 3 -- Islam
2/1 M: Prothero, “Islam”
2/3 W: Quran readings on BB

Week 4 -- Islam
2/8 M: See BB
2/10 W: See BB
Quiz #1 Wednesday 2/10

Week 5 -- Christianity
2/15 M Prothero, “Christianity”
2/17 W New Testament readings on BB
#1 Paper due 2/19

Week 6 -- Christianity
2/22 M See BB
2/24 W See BB
Quiz #2 Wednesday 2/24

Week 7 -- Judaism
2/29 M Prothero, “Judaism”
3/2 W Hebrew Bible readings on BB
Week 8 -- Judaism
3/7 M See BB

3/9 W Midterm Exam

Week 9 -- Spring Break

Week 10 -- Hinduism
3/21 M Prothero, “Hinduism”
3/23 W Veda etc readings online

Week 11 -- Hinduism
3/28 M Film: *Sita Sings the Blues* (2004) *in class*
3/30 W See BB

**Quiz # 3 Wednesday 3/30**

Week 12 – Buddhism
4/4 M Prothero, “Buddhism”
4/6 W Primary text readings on BB

Week 13 -- Buddhism
4/11 M See BB
4/13 W Prothero, “Conclusion”

**Quiz # 4 Wednesday 4/13**

**#2 Paper Due Friday 4/15**

Week 14 – Religion & Culture
4/18 M Plate, Introduction
4/20 W Plate, “Stones”, “Incense”

Week 15 Religion & Culture
4/25 M Plate, “Drums”, “Crosses”
4/27 W Plate, “Bread”, “Soul”

Week 16

5/3 M In class exam / Hand in Final Project