

# REL 130EA Introduction to Religions

DePauw University, Spring 2012



TR 2:20 P.M. – 3:50 P.M.  
AH 222  
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Religious Studies Department  
Emison 205  
Office hours: 10:15 a.m. – 11:45 p.m.

## Course Description:

This course is an introduction to world religions, with an emphasis on a comparative study of traditions commonly associated with the “East”: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Sikhism. In this survey, students will gain an understanding of the importance of the major texts and practices, historical trajectories, and key terms and concepts of these traditions. We will pay close attention to how these religions present their foundational concepts, major figures, the human condition, and ultimate reality. Source materials for this course include primary and secondary texts, films, websites, podcasts, and lectures. By means of the study of these traditions, students will consider the meaning of the term *religion* as it may apply to the various worldviews encountered, as well as further the development of writing, analytical, interpretation, and critical thinking skills.

## Course Objectives:

It is expected that by the end of the course students will have achieved the following:

1. increased religious literacy so as to have greater knowledge of, awareness about, and respect for these religious traditions;
2. ability to examine the context of these traditions and learn the various human factors that influenced their creation/ change;
3. ability to read, analyze, and discuss source materials to identify and evaluate main points, supporting evidence, and perspectives.
4. increased facility to successfully communicate course knowledge in oral and written form.

## Required Texts:

- *Religions of Asia Today*. John L. Esposito, Darrell J. Fasching, Todd Lewis. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-19-975949-1
  - Listed on the syllabus as “ROA.”

- *Bhagavad Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*. Barabara Stoller Miller. Bantam Books [1986]. ISBN 0-553-21365-2
- *Guru Nanak*. Amar Chitra Katha comic book. India Book House PVT LTD, 1973. ISBN 81-7508-153-8
- Other required course readings are available on Moodle and are listed in *italics* in the schedule.

Course grade is based on the following:

Participation: 35% of total grade (Two areas)

1. *Class engagement*: your consistent and alert presence in the classroom; preparation of the course readings and discussion topics; active and thoughtful verbal and written reflections; and thorough preparation of any assignments. You will bring the required readings to each class session, and you will be prepared with questions and comments in order to engage in informed discussion. You are expected to come to class on time, attend class, and to attend the entire class. (Fulfills course objectives 1, 2, 3, 4).

- Unless I provide you with directed questions, your objective in reading is to analyze:
  - who is the speaker/author?
  - what is the purpose of the reading (*i.e.* why did the author write the selection)?
  - what are the main points of the reading?
  - how are those main points proven in the text?
  - how does the reading enhance what you know about the subject?
  - what questions does the reading prompt for you?

2. *One-minute papers*: At the end of some class sessions, you will be presented with a question relevant to class topics. If you have prepared the assigned readings and paid close attention in class you will have no problem answering the question. Your papers will be graded on a plus/minus/zero scale. (Fulfills course objectives 1, 2, 3, 4).

Exams 1, 2 and 3 (15% each) = 45% of total grade

The in-class exams will cover *all* the course materials to that date. Exam questions may be multiple choice, T/F, matching, fill in the blank, short answer and/or brief essay. A study guide will be distributed one week prior to the exams. (Fulfills course objectives 3, 4).

Final Exam: 20%

The final examination is a cumulative exam that pertains to *all* material addressed in the course during the semester. The questions may be multiple choice, T/F, short answer, fill in the blank and/or brief essay. A study guide will be distributed prior to the exam. (Fulfills course objectives 3, 4).

Important Course Notes:

E-mail and communication: E-mail is the best way to communicate with me outside of class. I generally check e-mail and respond to messages between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on most days however, please allow up to 24 hours for a response.

Moodle is used for this course and I will post items of interest to the class. You are expected to check your DePauw e-mail regularly. Contact me with questions pertinent to class content and topics, and to seek clarification on course content.

Office hours: Make use of my office hours; this practice will benefit the your course participation grade. I have an open-door policy for office hours, so feel free to visit.

Absences and lateness:

Course attendance is a must. You are responsible for obtaining class notes from classmates if you miss class. There are no make-ups for missed work due to illness or tardiness.

- If you have an extended illness or if you have a serious emergency that may impact your performance in the course, contact the Dean of Student Support and the instructor as soon as possible.
- A penalty for tardiness is counted against your participation grade, therefore habitual lateness will adversely your grade.

Classroom conduct:

Laptops and e-readers are welcome in class on the condition that the device is used to take notes and access course readings. All other electronic devices are to be turned off and stowed for the duration of class. This is for the purpose of providing me and your fellow students with your undivided attention during class. If, at any time, you are found to be texting, e-mailing, blogging, vlogging, Facebooking, Tweeting, e\*Trading, or otherwise engaged in activities not immediately related to course participation, you will earn a zero participation grade for that day.

Over the course of the semester we will address a variety of topics on religion and subjects that intersect with religion. It is of utmost importance that students listen and speak to each other with respect and speak from an opinion that is founded on course preparation. Disagreement on course topics is acceptable and welcome as long as that opinion is informed, prepared, and respectful.

Grade scale:

My philosophy regarding grading is that you *earn* your grade; I do not *give* grades and I do not grade on a curve.

A: 93-100	B-: 80-82	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-92	C+: 77-79	D: 63-66
B+: 87-89	C: 73-76	D-: 60-62
B: 83-86	C-: 70-72	F: 59 and below

Academic Honesty

You are responsible for submitting work of your own creation and that uses a proper citation format. You are responsible for informing yourself about the DePauw student code regarding academic integrity and plagiarism, per the DePauw University Student Handbook:

<http://www.depauw.edu/handbooks/student/>

Any work submitted for this course that is found to contain plagiarized content (copied, not cited, or claiming the work of another as a your own) or is found to be the result of cheating will earn a grade of zero, and your standing in this course and in the University will be in jeopardy. Claiming ignorance of the DePauw code is not a valid excuse. If you require additional help in recognizing plagiarism, the library provides additional help.

Disability Accommodation

If you require course modification and/ or accommodation, you must provide me with appropriate documentation within the first two weeks of the course. Contact Student Disability Services for further information and instruction.

<http://www.depauw.edu/academics/academic-resources/student-guidance/students-with-disabilities/>

**Course Schedule**

*Readings, assignments and exams are listed on their due date.*

*The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus at any time.*

Week	Date	Unit	Topic	Reading	Assignment
1	T 31 Jan	Course Introduction	What Is Religion?		
	Th 2 Feb		Performance and Experience	ROA 38-61; Blackfoot, Japanese and Siberian myths	
2	T 7 Feb		Ritual: Sacred Space and Time	ROA 13-18;	Start reading the <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>
	R 9 Feb	Hinduism	Foundational concepts: Karma, Dharma, Samsara	ROA 75-77, 82-87, 90- 96	
3	T 14 Feb		Sacred text	ROA 96-101; 121-124, 145-146; <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> ;	
	R 16 Feb		Practice: Darshan and Bhakti Film: <i>Pūjā</i>	ROA 125-144, 148; <i>Personal Worship</i> ;	
4	T 21 Feb		Body and Identity: Yoga	ROA 87-90, 155-156, 157-164	
	R 23 Feb		Film: yoga		
5	T 28 Feb				<b>Exam #1</b>
	R 1 Mar	Buddhism	Foundational concepts: Life of the Buddha	<i>First Sermon</i> ; ROA 169-198	
6	T 6 Mar		Foundational concepts: Mahayana	<i>Bodhisattva's Vows</i> ; ROA 199, 201-211; 232	
	R 8 Mar		Practice: Monks and lay community	<i>Burning House Parable</i> ; ROA 211-219; 245-246	
7	T 13 Mar		Practice: Tibetan Buddhism	ROA 210-211; 240-245	
	R 15 Mar		Film: <i>Unmistaken Child</i>		
8	T 20				<b>Exam #2</b>

	Mar				
	R 22 Mar	Islam	Introduction to Islam; film	ROA 349-355	
9	T 27 Mar				<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
	R 29 Mar				<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
10	T 3 Apr				<b>No class</b>
	R 5 Apr				<b>No class</b>
11	T 10 Apr		Foundational concepts: Life of Muhammad	ROA 355-357	
	R 12 Apr		Practice: 5 Pillars	ROA 363-366	
12	T 17 Apr		Sacred text	<i>Qur'an and Hadith</i> ; ROA 358, 360-361, 366-367	
	R 19 Apr		Body and identity	TBA; ROA 374-380	
13	T 24 Apr				<b>Exam #3</b>
	R 26 Apr	<b>Sikhism</b>	Foundational concepts: Beginnings of Sikhism	<i>Guru Nanak</i> ; Nanak's <i>Death</i> ; ROA 91	
14	T 1 May		Sacred text and practice	<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i> ; ROA 105-110, 136	
	R 3 May		Body and identity	ROA 113-115, 116- 117, 156-157	
15	T 8 May		Film: <i>Locks of Love</i>		
	R 10 May	Course wrap- up		Closing thoughts	
<b>Finals Week</b>	T 15 May				<b>Scheduled Final Exam 1-4pm</b>

*Have a great semester!*