

**REL 130B: Introduction to Religions**  
**TR 8:20a-9:50a AH 202**

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What is religion? A source of social power? The practice of certain rituals around the year? The account of the ultimate truths of the universe? A relationship with the god(s)? In this course we will engage these and other questions by surveying the origins, basic practices, beliefs and scriptures of the major religious traditions of the world (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Because we are studying these religions as lived traditions we will also engage with other sources: documentaries, news articles, interviews, memoirs, and pop culture representations of these religions. We will also pay attention to challenges that religion faces in the contemporary world. As a way to frame our conversation, we will also discuss basic notions about the sociology of religion and religious studies as an academic discipline. This course is meant to provide an introduction to the academic study of religion.

### Course Objectives

- To gain an adequate sense of the historical, textual and ritual diversity of the major world religions.
- To develop a basic vocabulary for thinking about major questions in the study of religion and to relate these questions to ones that are of contemporary relevance.
- To expand the ability to engage with and write about unfamiliar texts, i.e., to discern arguments, to perceive crucial distinctions, and to find a point of entry that is of particular interest to you.

### Required Texts

- Stephen Prothero. *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World*. New York: Harper One, 2010.
- Peter L. Berger. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociology of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books, 1990.
- Laurie L. Patton, trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*. London: Penguin Group, 2008.
- Juan Mascaró, trans. *The Dhammapadam*. London: Penguin Group, 1973.
- Edmund Ryden, trans. *Laozi: Daodejing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- D.C. Lau, trans. *Confucius: The Analects*. London: Penguin Group, 1979.
- Harold W. Attridge, ed. *The Harper Collins Study Bible*. San Francisco: Harper One, 2006.\*
- A.J. Arberry, trans. *The Koran Interpreted*. New York: Touchstone, 1996.\*
- G. Willow Wilson. *The Butterfly Mosque*. New York: Grove Press, 2011.
- The rest of the readings will be available electronically in the readings section of Moodle. These readings are labeled (M) in the schedule of classes.

### A Note on the Readings

- There are multiple translations of the primary sources that we will discuss in class, many of them available online. The list above shows the editions that I prefer. If you already own and plan to use another edition of any of the texts mentioned above, please let me know. Most of these readings come from cultural backgrounds and historical settings foreign to our modern experience. Please exercise some patience and care as a reader. Look for those terms that you don't know. Feel free to inquire further in class and outside of it. Let yourself be surprised by the content of these texts and the traditions they represent.

## Course Requirements

- Attendance and participation (5% of the final grade). You are expected to attend class having read the material assigned for each meeting. More than two unjustified absences will result in a reduction of your final grade by half a grade. At least once a week you will provide a brief reflection, a series of questions or reactions on the readings assigned for class (not a summary!). You will post this brief exercise on Moodle by 6:00pm the day prior to class.
- Quizzes (10%). The dates for the quizzes will not be announced. They will center on a specific issue of the primary source materials.
- Three reading responses (10% each). The reading responses will answer one or two questions about the religions discussed in class. The reading responses will be a short paper 2-3 pages and you will have a whole week to prepare it.
- Book report (15%). This assignment will be devoted to G. Willow Wilson's *The Butterfly Mosque*. The book report will be 5-6 pages long. You will have virtually the whole semester to work on it but we will hold some book report briefings after spring break. In these briefings we will discuss some first impressions you have about the book and any questions you have regarding the report.
- Two exams (midterm and final) (20% each). The exams will consist of two parts (a short answer section and a long answer section). The final will be due on the day assigned by the registrar. For each of the exams I will provide a study guide.
- The grading rubrics for the response papers and the book report are available in Moodle.

## Late and Missed Work

- You are responsible for meeting the deadlines regarding the weekly posts, the reading responses, the book review, and taking the exams as scheduled. Late assignments will be accepted without penalty only in the case of medical and family emergencies. Please inform the instructor about such circumstances, through email or during office hours, as soon as possible. The penalty for late work will be 5% of the final grade of that specific assignment per day.

## Academic Honesty

- **Plagiarism Defined:** Plagiarism is turning in or passing off someone else's work as your own. Sometimes, the line between borrowing and stealing is unclear. In an intellectual community, ideas are passed around freely. Most intellectual inquiry could not take place without borrowing from the work of others. Responsible, honest writers indicate their debts to others by clearly citing material that they have borrowed. Irresponsible or dishonest writers often fail to cite their borrowings and thus become guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarized work is easy to recognize because it does not clearly indicate borrowing. It is full of facts, observations, and ideas the writer could not have developed on his or her own and is written in a different style. Experienced writers rely almost as much as plagiarizers on other writers; they know that their ideas are generated in the context of the ideas of others. As a matter of honor, they indicate their debts to other writers and by doing so they more clearly indicate their own original contributions. Sometimes it is difficult to decide whether or not to cite a source. But if you know how to use and cite sources and if you are careful to note borrowings when you are writing your paper, you will never have a problem with plagiarism (for this and other aids regarding what constitutes plagiarism see: <http://www.depauw.edu/admin/arc/W-center/plag.asp>)

### Grade Standards

A (100-93), A-(92.99-90) -Achievement of exceptionally high merit

B+ (89.99-88), B (87.99-83), B-(82.99-80)-Achievement at a level superior to the basic level

C+ (79.99-78), C (77.99-73), C- (72.99-70)-Basic achievement

D+ (69.99-68), D (67.99-63), D- (62.99-60)-Minimum achievement that warrants credit

F (59-0)-Failure: the achievement fails to meet course requirements. The student receives no credit.

### American with Disabilities Act

DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and University administered activities and reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Amendments (ADAAA). Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or learning challenge is strongly encouraged to contact Pamela Roberts, Coordinator of Academic Success and Student Disability Services, for further information on how to receive accommodations and support. Academic Success and Student Disability Services is located in Harrison Hall, 302 A, 765-658-6267. It is the responsibility of the student to share the letter of accommodation faculty and staff members. Accommodations will not be implemented until the faculty or staff member has received the official letter. Accommodations are not retroactive. It is the responsibility of the student to discuss implementation of accommodations with each faculty and staff member receiving the letter.

### Ground Rules:

- Lecture and discussion will begin promptly at the assigned time. Please try to be on time.
- Please bring your readings to class. Think of them as your entrance ticket.
- Cell phones should be in “silent” or “vibrate” mode during class. No texting is allowed.
- Laptops, tablets and e-readers are allowed in class for the purpose of taking notes and accessing the readings that are available electronically. Please do not disrupt class by chatting or visiting websites that are not related to our group discussion.
- On days when bad weather is expected, please verify your email account to verify if class is meeting or not. Whenever class is cancelled I will send a special assignment covering the material of that date. The assignment will be short and based on the texts assigned for class or an extra resource (video, song, news article, etc.)

### Schedule of Classes:

#### Week 1: How did we get world religions?

January 31-Course description

February 2-J. Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious” (M)  
 Prothero, *God is Not One*, 1-25.  
 Yoda Statue is a Mecca (M)

**Week 2: What religion does?**

February 7-Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 3-28, Waking Life (movie)

February 9-Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 29-51

Everett, *Converting the Missionary* (M)

**Week 3: Hinduism**

February 14-Prothero, *God is Not One*, 131-43

Agni (selections) (M)

Altar of Fire (documentary)

February 16-Prothero, *God is Not One*, 144-59

*Upanishads* (selections) (M)

*Bhagavad Gita*, 3-48

Debate over Yoga's Soul (M)

**Questions for the first response paper handed over by the instructor.**

**Week 4**

February 21- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 159-68

*Bhagavad Gita*, 49-122

Hinduism and the Song of God (documentary)

February 23- *Bhagavad Gita*, 123-205

"Hindus Find a Ganges in Queens" (M)

**Response paper workshop. Please bring a draft or outline of your paper to class.**

**Week 5: Buddhism**

February 28- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 169-77

*The Dhammapada*, 35-65

Bourgeois Buddhists (M)

March 1- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 177-86

*The Dhammapada*, 66-93

Steve Jobs' Mantra (M)

**First response paper due.**

**Week 6**

March 6- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 186-201

*Lotus Sutra* (selections) (M)

*Tibetan Book of the Dead* (selections) (M)

Wheel of Time (documentary)

March 8- Midterm

**Week 7: Daoism**

March 13- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 279-99  
*Daodejing*, 5-77

March 15- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 299-315  
*Daodejing*, 81-167  
Ritual in Daoism (selections) (M)

**Questions for second response paper handed over by the instructor**

**Week 8: Confucianism**

March 20- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 101-18  
*Analects*, Books 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10  
Ritual in Confucianism (selections) (M)

March 22- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 119-30  
*Analects*, Books 12, 13, 14, 20

**Second response paper due.**

**Week 9 Spring Break**

March 27-No class

March 29-No class

**Week 10: Judaism**

April 3- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 243-60  
Genesis 1-3, 9, 17  
Exodus 12-14, 19-20  
1Samuel 1-3  
1Kings 18-19  
Amos, 1-2, 9  
Hosea 1-2  
Isaiah 6-9  
Maimonides 13 Principles (M)

April 5-Job (complete)  
A Serious Man (movie; excerpts)

**Week 11**

April 10- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 261-75  
Talmudic Texts (selections) (M)  
Kabbalistic Texts (selections) (M)

April 12- Reform and Zionism (M)  
Mikvah ritual bath (M)  
Holocaust Remembrance Day (M)  
A Life Apart (movie) **Questions for third response paper handed over by the instructor.**

**Week 12: Christianity**

April 17- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 65-76

Gospel according to John 1-2

Gospel of Matthew 3-5

Gospel of Luke 22-24

Acts of the Apostles 1-4

I Thessalonians

Creeds and Confessions Late Antiquity (M)

April 19- Life of Symeon the Stylite (M)

Medieval Christianity in Practice (selections) (M)

Medieval Mysticism (M)

Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer (documentary)

**Third response paper due**

**Week 13**

April 24- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 76-82

Christian Reformations (selections) (M)

April 26- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 82-99

Modern Christianities (selections) (M)

Why I Hate Religion but Love Jesus (video)

Jesus Camp (movie)

**Week 14: Islam**

May 1- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 25-49

*The Koran*, Surah 2 The Cow, Surah 47 Muhammad

Wilson, *The Butterfly Mosque*, (discussion focused on pages 1-72)

Inside Mecca (movie)

**Book report due**

May 3- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 49-57

*The Koran*, Surah 4 Women, Surah 19 Mary

Inside Mecca (movie)

**Week 15 Religion and Modernity: Challenges and Outlooks**

May 8- Prothero, *God is Not One*, 57-63

*The Koran*, Surah 25 Salvation

Wilson, *The Butterfly Mosque* (discussion focused on pages 1-141)

Religulous (documentary)

May 10- Wilson, *The Butterfly Mosque* (discussion focused on pages 142-304)

Zizek, *Defenders of the Faith* (M)

Religulous (movie)

**Final Exam** May 12-1:00p-4:00p