

Course Last Updated 11/29/2024



World Religions

Section I: Course Overview

Course Code: REL310BCN

Subject Area(s): Religious Studies, Cultural Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Philosophy, and History

Prerequisites: None

Language of Instruction: English

Total Contact Hours: 45

Credits: 3

Course Fees: none

Course Description

This course gives students an understanding of contemporary global religious traditions and their impact within their societies. This course firstly introduces major western & eastern religions in a global context, especially in Europe and North America. Students will explore and analyze the origins, development, central teachings, devotional practices, institutions, and cultural expressions of world religions such as Aboriginal Spirituality, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and more. This course will include visits to historical and contemporary religious sites to embrace opportunities for interaction across cultures.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students are able to:

- Critically trace the basic history of major religious traditions
- Compare the influences of different religions on society
- Develop interpersonal skills to engage in respectful and fruitful dialogue with other religions

Section II: Instructor & Course Details

Instructor Details

Name: [See term syllabus]

Contact Information: [See term syllabus]

Term: [See term syllabus]

Course Day and Time: [For term syllabus, enter the day and meeting times of the course]

Office Hours: [By appointment, or specified in term syllabus]

Grading & Assessment

The instructor assesses students' mastery of course learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted toward the final grade. The Assessment Overview section provides further details for each.

Engagement – 15%

Oral Presentation - 20%

Independent Learning Activities - 10%

Research Paper - 20%

Mid-Term Exam - 20%

Final Exam - 15%

Assessment Overview

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Forms of assessment may be slightly modified in the term syllabus.

Engagement (15%): Students are expected to be engaged in class, to have read the [CEA CAPA Engagement Policy](#), and to understand the [Class Engagement Rubric](#) that outlines how engagement is graded.

Oral Presentation (20%): Throughout the term, you will be given various homework assignments that will collectively constitute 10% of your total course grade. All homework assignments must be completed prior to class on the scheduled due date assigned by the instructor. Homework assignments will ask you to summarize central themes and related specific subject matter to the discussions explored in class.

Independent Learning Activities (10%): The midterm exam will serve to assess your progress towards meeting the course's learning objectives. It will be a multiple-choice test with four essay-response questions.

Research Paper (20%): You will be required to write a research paper to expand that which has been covered in the course contents and readings from the course syllabus. Papers should include an introduction that states the central thesis of the paper that each student chooses for the final project. The body of the paper should be divided into discrete paragraphs with topic and transition sentences where general points are supported by specific and concrete examples. The conclusion should summarize the central thesis in light of the central arguments and point to further questions posed. Rules against plagiarism will be strictly enforced, and any student caught plagiarizing will fail the course and be reported to the academic director.

Mid-Term Exam (20%): For this assignment, you will work in small groups. Each group will focus on one of the areas of research and practice presented in the course. Groups will select one of the areas outlined and developed throughout the course and expand the content in a creative project in which theoretical concepts previously discussed in class are applied to specific objects of inquiry

with special emphasis on new knowledge. All presentations must be prepared in advance and must proceed in an organized and coherent fashion within the time allotted.

Final Exam (15%): The final exam will serve to assess your progress towards meeting the course's learning objectives. It will be a multiple-choice test with four essay-response questions.

Active Learning

Experiential learning is an essential component of education abroad, and participation in field studies is a required part of coursework. In this course, students explore the city in which they are studying using a variety of methods. This provides the opportunity to gain nuance and perspective on the host context and course content, as well as to collect information and resources for assigned papers, projects, and presentations.

Field Studies:

- Visit to *Fundacion Tres Culturas* – F3C
- Another field study may be confirmed during the course.
- Revisiting the Three Cultures – Overnight excursion to Granada
- Mosaic of Cultures – Day excursion to Córdoba
- Breaking Out in Iberia – Overnight excursion to Lisbon

Guest Speakers: TBD

Readings and Resources

The below readings and resources are representative of what will be assigned as required in this course, but may vary slightly in the term syllabus.

All students are given access to the online library of the University of New Haven (UNH), accessible [here](#), and are expected to comply with [UNH Policies](#) regarding library usage.

Wherever possible, required readings are made accessible through the online library or Canvas. Students are responsible for obtaining all required readings.

Each course utilizes Canvas as its LMS. Students are expected to check Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines. Canvas is also the primary platform for contacting your instructor in case of questions or concerns about the course.

Required

Oxtoby, W.G. et al. (eds.), *A Concise Introduction to World Religions* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2019, 4th ed.).

SELECTED READINGS:

500 BC, Buddha, The Word (The Eightfold Path), The Four Noble Truths, in: <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/buddha2.htm>

Hitchens, C. (ed.), *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2007), p. XIII-XXV.

Smart, N., *The Religious Experience* (New York et al: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1997, 4th ed.), p. 3-21.

The Bhagavadgîtâ with the Sanatsugâtîya and the Anugîtâ, in: *The Sacred Books of the East* (1882), in: <https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe08/index.htm>

Yang, M., *Postcoloniality and Religiosity in Modern China*, in the following [link](#)

Recommended

Burke, T.P., *The Major Religions: An Introduction with Texts* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, 2nd ed.).

Cassidy, E., *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005).

Coogan, M.D. (ed.), *World Religions* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003).

DiNoia, J.A., *The Divinity of Religions: A Christian Perspective* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992).

Dupuis, J.S.J., *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

Eliade, M., *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, 1987, first published 1957).

Espín, O. & Nickoloff, J.B. (eds.), *An Introductory Dictionary of Theology and Religious Studies* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2007).

Friesen, J.W., *Aboriginal Spirituality and Biblical Theology: Closer than You Think* (Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd, 2000).

Griffiths, P.J., *Christianity through Non-Christian Eyes* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990).

Harari, Y.N., *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (London: Harvill Secker, 2014).

Hawking, S. & Mlodinow, L., *The Grand Design* (New York: Bantam, 2010).

Hick, J., *The Rainbow of Faiths: A Christian Theology of Religions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

Hitchens, C. (ed.), *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2007).

Johnston, B., *The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway* (Vancouver, BC: Key Porter Books, 1995).

Knitter, P., *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005).

Markham, I.S., *A World Religions Reader* (Malden: Blackwell, 2000, 2nd ed.).

Otto, R., *The Idea of the Holy: an Inquiry Into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, (Pantianos Classics, 2012, first published 1917).

Samartha, S.J., *Courage for Dialogue: Ecumenical Issues in Inter-religious Relationships* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1981).

Smart, N., *The Religious Experience* (New York et al: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1997, 4th ed.).

Smith, H., *The World's Religions* (New York: Harper One, 2009, 50th anniversary ed.).

Stark, R., *Why God? Explaining Religious Phenomena* (West Conshohocken: Templeton Press, 2017).

Van Voorst, R.E. (ed.), *Anthology of World Scriptures* (Cengage Learning, 2013, 8thed.).

Yang, M., *Postcoloniality and Religiosity in Modern China*, in:

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.930.280&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Online Resources

The Internet Sacred Text Archive:

The largest freely available archive of online books about religion, mythology, folklore and the esoteric on the Internet. The site is dedicated to religious tolerance and scholarship, and has the largest readership of any similar site on the web.

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>

ARDA:

The Association of Religious Data Archives ARDA "strives to democratize access to the best data on religion. Founded as the American Religion Data Archive in 1997 and going online in 1998, the initial archive was targeted at researchers interested in American religion. The targeted audience and the data collection have both greatly expanded since 1998, now including American and international collections and developing features for educators, journalists, religious congregations, and researchers. Data included in the ARDA are submitted by the foremost religion scholars and research centers in the world."

<http://www.thearda.com/>

Full text Theology Journals Online:

Blume Library, St. Mary's University

<http://library.stmarytx.edu/acadlib/subject/theology/theoejrn.htm>

Concise Dictionary of Religions:

<http://people.ucalgary.ca/~nurelweb/books/concise/>

Sacred sites website:

An informative website on sacred topology aimed at the general public that includes an image gallery and a scholarly bibliography for many of the locations covered.

<http://sacredsites.com/>

Aboriginal links international:

A link to websites of various indigenous religions organized geographically

<http://www.bloorstreet.com/300block/aborintl.htm#4>

The Website of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue:
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/index.htm

The Wabash Center's Internet Guide to Religions:

A selective, annotated guide to a wide variety of electronic resources of interest to those who are involved in the study and practice of religion, including syllabi, electronic texts, electronic journals, web sites, bibliographies, liturgies, reference resources, and software. The purpose of the Guide is to encourage and facilitate the incorporation of electronic resources into teaching.

<https://atla.libguides.com/wor>

Religious Worlds:

An internet resources about religion and religious traditions for scholars and students.

<http://virtualreligion.net/vri/>

University of Calgary Religious Studies Web Guide:

Additional scholarly websites with resources arranged according to religious group provided by the University of Calgary.

<http://people.ucalgary.ca/~lipton/subject.html>

Scholarly websites devoted to a particular religious tradition, for instance:

Islam and Islamic Studies Resources:

<http://islam.uga.edu/>

Academic Jewish Studies Internet Directory:

<http://www.jewish-studies.com/>

Internet Resources for the Study of Christianity:

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~jtreat/rs/resources.html>

Finally, scholarly articles can be accessed online from the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Religion*, and other journals available via the JSTOR database.

Course Calendar

Session 1	
Topics	Course Presentation The syllabus, the course and their details
Activity	General overview and discussion
Readings & Assignments	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure textbooks

Session 2	
Topics	Defining religion Approaches to the study of religion Categories of religion A definition
Activity	Lecture and Discussion
Readings & Assignments	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 3-25 • Smart, The Religious Experience, p. 3-21

Session 3	
Topics	Religion Today Impact of secularism & globalization of religion (general)
Activity	Discussion Group activities: to be religious today, religion in our own lives
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about your own religious life or traditions you preserve

Session 4	
Topics	Judaism Historical development Central teachings Institutions Devotional practices Cultural expressions
Activity	Oral Presentation Lecture and Discussion
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 81-134

Session 5	
Topics	Judaism Diversity Anti-Semitism
Activity	Discussion Group activities
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 81-134

Session 6	
Topics	Christianity Historical development Central teachings Institutions Devotional practices Cultural expressions
Activity	Oral Presentation Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 141-167, 182-187, 197-202

Session 7	
Topics	Christianity Diversity
Activity	Documentary viewing: Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela Lecture and Discussion
Readings & Assignments	Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 167-182, 187-197

Session 8	
Topics	Islam Historical development Central teachings Institutions Devotional practices Cultural expressions
Activity	Oral Presentation Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 209-268 Qur'anic recitation : http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnwJuUGZ-Lk&feature=related

Session 9	
Topics	Islam Islam in the modern World Islam and Western Culture
Activity	Discussion Group activities
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare: Internet research on Islam and politics

Session 10	
Topics	Indigenous Religions Introduction Aboriginal Spirituality
Activity	Documentary viewing: Aboriginal Dreamtime Lecture and Discussion
Readings & Assignments	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 29-33, 74-77

Session 11	
Topics	Native Indigenous Religions
Activity	Oral Presentation Documentary viewing: Native American Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 33-74

Session 12	
Topics	Hinduism Historical development Central teachings Institutions
Activity	Oral Presentation Documentary viewing: Religions of the World - Hinduism Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 273-329 • "The Bhagavad Gita"

Session 13	
Topics	Hinduism Devotional practices Cultural expressions
Activity	Discussion Group activities
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare: Internet research on Hinduism and diversity within practice

Session 14	
Topics	SYNTHESIS
Activity	Group discussion Field Study F3C
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare review for mid-term exam

Session 15	
Midterm	

Session 16	
Topics	Buddhism Historical development Central teachings Institutions Devotional practices Cultural expressions
Activity	Oral Presentation Documentary viewing: Buddhism Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 373-432 • “The Four Noble Truths”

Session 17	
Topics	Vajrayana Buddhism Tibetan Buddhism
Activity	Lecture and Discussion
Readings & Assignments	Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 407-432

Session 18	
Topics	Buddhism FIELD STUDY 1
Activity	Visit to Buddhist Temple
Readings & Assignments	Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddha, The Word (The Eightfold Path), The Four Noble Truths, in: https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/buddha2.htm

Session 19	
Topics	Jainism Historical development Central teachings Institutions Devotional practices Cultural expressions
Activity	Oral Presentation Documentary viewing: Jainism Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 337-369

Session 20	
Topics	Sikhism Historical development Central teachings Institutions Devotional practices Cultural expressions
Activity	Oral Presentation Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 437-469

Session 21	
Topics	Confucianism Historical development Central teachings Institutions Devotional practices Cultural expressions
Activity	Oral Presentation Documentary viewing: 5 relationships of Confucianism Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 473-504, 525-528

Session 22	
Topics	Daoism (Taoism) Historical development Central teachings Institutions Devotional practices Cultural expressions
Activity	Oral Presentation Documentary viewing: Daoist ritual for Prosperity; Tai Chi; The Mysterious Taoist Temple Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 504-530 Yang, Postcoloniality and Religiosity in the following link

Session 23	
Topics	New Religions Religions Sects Cults
Activity	Oral Presentation Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions Research Papers and Independent Learning Activity Papers to be handed in
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 573-612

Session 24	
Topics	New Religions Religions Sects Cults
Activity	Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 573-612

Session 25	
Topics	Criticism to Religion Philosophical Scientific
Activity	Lecture and Discussion
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, pp. 610-611 • Hitchens, The Portable Atheist, p. XIII-XXV.

Session 26	
Topics	Criticism to Religion Philosophical Scientific
Activity	Lecture and Discussion
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 337-369

Session 27	
Topics	Jainism Historical development Central teachings Institutions Devotional practices Cultural expressions
Activity	Oral Presentation Documentary viewing: Jainism Lecture and Discussion Group activities: comparison to other religions
Readings & Assignments	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxtoby & Segal, World Religions, p. 337-369

Session 28	
FINAL EXAM	

Section III: Academic Policies and Standards

Academic Policies

Students are expected to review and understand all CEA CAPA student policies, including our [Academic Policies](#) and [Engagement Policy](#). CEA CAPA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time. Additional requirements that may be associated with a specific course or program are addressed in the term syllabus.

Student Learning & Development Objectives

CEA CAPA has identified [Student Learning and Development Objectives \(SLDOs\)](#) for all programs in all locations: content in context, navigating differences, power and equity, critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, career and professional development, and sustainability and migration. These are meta-level learning objectives that transcend coursework and are infused across all elements of program delivery, beyond specifics of course offerings, addressing student learning holistically and framing it a larger learning context.