

Religious Studies 1010
Introduction to Religious Studies

Professor Philip Barlow
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Office Hours: Monday 10-11 a.m.; Wednesday 9-11 a.m.; or by appointment

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Classroom: Main 121

COURSE DESCRIPTION and OBJECTIVES

The course is intended to introduce Religious Studies as a field by considering the religions of the world. Through case studies, discussion, lectures, films, reading, conversations with guest practitioners, and research, we shall think together about both "religion" (its nature and dynamics) and particular "religions."

Because of their broad influence in the world, we will survey the beliefs, practices, history of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. More briefly, we will also encounter Daoism, Confucianism, Shinto, certain tribal religions, and new religious movements in the United States.

Some of the questions we examine will be generated by you—by your curiosity and thoughtfulness. As we acquaint ourselves with the several religious traditions, however, we will also gain competence in questions such as these: By what process do religions sacralize portions of their literature as "scripture"? Or portions of their practice as sacred ritual? How do religion and culture influence one another? Why do religions thrive or fail over time? Why do some religions, such as Hinduism, remain "national religions," while others (e.g., Buddhism) spread and flourish in many lands? How have religions dealt with one another? How ought they? How have the religions of the world adapted, without losing their essence, to life in our own land—the U.S. the most religiously diverse and complex nation in human history?

REQUIRED texts: Order NOW.

1) Victoria Urubshurow, Introducing World Religions: The e-Book (2008)
ISBN 978-0-9801633-08

The eBooks may be purchased in one of two ways. You may go to the Journal of Buddhist Ethics Online Books website at www.jbeonlinebooks.org and order the books online by paying with a credit card. If you choose this option, the eBooks can be downloaded to your computer directly from the website. If you prefer, you may print out an order form from the website and mail it, with your check or money order, to the address indicated. You will then receive a CD-ROM with the eBooks on it by return mail.

2) Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha* (Bantam Classics, 1981) **ISBN-10:** 0553208845; **ISBN-13:** 978-0553208849

3) The Bible (You will need access to a Bible, but need not purchase another if you own one. If you do choose to purchase, get a good modern translation, rather than an antique or denominational Bible. I will give suggestions in class.)

4) Additional texts will be available as handouts, Library Reserve, or made available online.

LECTURES

Lectures and discussions are not intended to duplicate what you have read in preparation. Rather, our class time will complement your reading by probing key doctrinal notions and matters

of historical and institutional development. Please feel free to raise questions at any point during the lectures, and I will be raising question for you to think through with me.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be two mid-term examinations during the semester, as per the course CALENDAR, which will be handed out separately for each section of the course. The examinations will not be comprehensive; they will cover only the material discussed since the previous examination. These two examinations will be primarily objective in nature.

There will also be a final examination, which will consist of an essay (or essays). This **examination is** scheduled for Wednesday December 9 from 1:30 to 3:20 p.m. in our classroom. Please do not make end of the semester travel plans that would prevent you from taking the final.

Each of the three examinations will count 100 points (and thus are equally weighted). As such, each component counts one-third of the PROVISIONAL course grade.

The other component of your FINAL grade will consist of a participation dimension, which can lower or raise your Provisional grade. My sense of your participation will consist of your accomplishment of short assignments or projects I will describe in class, your daily attendance (see below), abiding by the Class Rules, and the extent to which you help the rest of us by thoughtful engagement with the class, such as asking good questions based on your reading or reflection. Those who talk the most do not necessarily help elevate

Make-up examinations will be granted only for medical problems or family emergencies, and must be properly documented. Medical excuses offered at the conclusion of the course are] retroactive. If you have an ongoing medical or psychological problem, you must notify the professor as soon as the problem is identified. Notification of non-attendance for an examination must be filed prior to, or no later than one hour after, the examination. Excuses such as oversleeping or failed alarm clocks are not valid excuses for missing an examination. Non-excused absences for examinations will yield a grade of "F" for that item.

COURSE ATTENDANCE

As with your professional workplace, you should plan to attend every class session. I construe that we are together responsible for the quality of our course. Unexcused absences will damage your participation quotient.

GRADES

As noted above, your PROVISIONAL course grade will be determined by your total performance on all graded course activities. You are not graded in this course on a "curve." I hope you all get an "A." The grading scale is:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	70-76
D	60-69
F	59 and Below

It is your responsibility to keep all graded work which is returned to you in case there is a discrepancy in grading.

CALENDAR:

Our schedule for readings and assignments will be passed out separately, but following our introductory sessions, we will begin a consideration of Judaism and its antecedents. For Friday August 28, we will discuss early Israelite religion. In preparation, please read: From the Hebrew Bible,

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity, it should go without saying, is expected. Dishonesty in our context includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Please see the USU General Catalog for explicit descriptions of Academic Dishonesty. Any instances of Academic Dishonesty in this class will result in an automatic grade of "F."

DISABILITY ACCESS

The university encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by university policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible.

CLASS RULES:

- Religion is a personal, sometimes sensitive topic. All questions you may have about anything we discuss are legitimate to bring up, at least initially. But please do so respectfully. We're talking ABOUT religion here; we are not trying to convert anyone to or from any form of religion.

- Turn cell phones off before class starts. We can't afford distractions in our limited time for dealing with important and complex matters.

- You may use a computer if it helps you to take notes, but any other use (Facebook, etc.) is a distraction to me, to others, and, of course, to you.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the instructor, provided that verbal or written notice is given.