

Southern Polytechnic State University
Department of Social and International Studies

WORLD RELIGION (RELG 1200, 3 Hrs)
Fall 2009 Semester: Aug. 24, 2009–Dec. 10, 2009
Class Meetings: Mon & Wed., Room J-156
Time: Sec 1: 6.00–7.15pm; Sec 2: 7.30–8.45pm

Instructor: Robert Yaw Owusu, Ph.D.
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Office: J-319
Hours: MW 3.50–4.20pm & mostly by appointment

Course Description

An introductory study of the major religions of the world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Attention will be given to their history, beliefs, spirituality, practices as well as their sociological and political roles. The course examines how these religions manifest themselves not only as sources of conflict and violence, but also as means of peace, justice, and life enhancement.

Course Objectives (Goals)

Students should be able to:

1. Develop an understanding of the relationship between religion and everyday life
2. Develop an ability to think about and conduct basic theological research
3. Develop relational skills through group study and project preparation
4. Become acquainted with the basic themes, beliefs, and practices of major world religions
5. Understand the spiritual, social, and political significance of religions both historically and in contemporary society

Course Expected Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Understand the relationship between religion and everyday life.
2. Identify the basic themes, beliefs, and practices of major world religions.
3. Conduct fundamental theological research.
4. Understand spiritual, social, and political significances of religion both historically and in contemporary society.

Texts: Study Notes (must be requested; class tests and final examination will be focused on the study notes and Fisher's book). **Required:** Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions*, 5th or 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall), 2002. **Recommended:** Lewis M. Hopfe and Mark R. Woodward, *Religions of the World*, Tenth Edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2007); Thomas A. Robinson and Hillary Rodriguez, *World Religions, A Guide to the Essentials* (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2007).

Course Requirements

1. **Class attendance and participation:** Students are expected to attend and participate in all classes and activities to be held as part of the course requirements.
2. **Class tests:** Students will take five tests (one for each major religion studied) and will focus on basic themes and terminologies (concepts, names, etc).
3. **Group Project:** The class will be divided into groups of 3-4 persons each. Each group will receive topic(s) to research on one of the religions or on a basic theological question. There will be a time for the groups to present their finding. The group who has demonstrated the best command of information about the religion and thought concerning the topic(s) assigned will receive the highest grade for the

competition. All members of each group will receive the same grade (for the competition). A paper about the instruction on the group project will be given on the first day of class.

Make-up Policy: Make-ups will be allowed only if arranged with the instructor in advance or in case of a genuine, verified emergency.

Absences: Only two absences and two tardies will be permitted with no penalty, except in case of a genuine, verified emergency. After one absence and /or two tardies, a grade penalty will be assessed for each absence or tardy (2 points for each absence, 1 point for each tardy off your final average for the course; [official SPSU business excluded, however, trips and activities for another course is NOT considered official SPSU business]).

Emergence Plan: How I will conduct my classes in case of campus closure

1. By Email:
 - a. Individual reading assignments including lecture notes that will require a completion of short written tests; OR
 - b. Group project(s) (each class divided into 6 small groups) which will require group members working together to complete a specific project; group members will evaluate each member's participation; the project and each member's evaluation will be emailed to the instructor.
2. By Free Teleconference (this will be used together with either one of the above)
Hold teleconference on one of the class days (e.g., Monday at the time assigned for the class); the procedure will be as follows:
 - a. Divide class or combine 3 small groups to form two teleconference groups;
 - b. Hold conference for each group for 35 minutes; this will enable all my classes to participate in the teleconference during their assigned class period for that day.

Grading

1. Your class attendance and participation is worth 10% of your final grade.
2. The tests carry 75% of your final grade. (Best 5 out of 6 tests)
3. The group projects are worth 15% of your final grade.

The Grading scale is as follows:

A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: below 60

The following guide is followed when grading your written test/work: A grade of "A" provides an outstanding/excellent answer that shows wide appropriate knowledge, understanding and insight as outlined in the course or contains particular appropriate examples or to be technically well written, the best to be expected under examination conditions at this stage. A grade of "B" provides a complete answer that shows wide appropriate knowledge and understanding, contains no lapse in detail or limited evidence of appropriate reading as outlined in the course. A grade of "C" shows appropriate knowledge and understanding that meet the course requirements but with lapses in recall, accuracy, etc. A "D" work has serious omissions and/or mistakes, poor presentation and in parts illogical, but has evidence of sound knowledge.

Academic Dishonesty: This class takes seriously the section on academic dishonesty described in the university catalog and any student found acting improperly in this regard (cheating or using another's work) receives the potential penalties prescribed.

Cell Phone Usage & Other Class Distraction: All cell phones must be put on silent mode or be turned off during class session. Also, for the interest of the class students may try to avoid doing anything that may disrupt the class.

Fall 2009 Class Schedule

August 24, 2009:	Introduction
Aug. 26–Sep. 14:	Understanding Religion (Reading: Fisher, chapter 1 & 2)
September 7:	<i>Labor Day Holiday (No Class)</i>
September 16:	<i>Test on Chapters 1 and 2</i>
Sep. 16–30, 2009:	Hinduism (video & lectures, Reading: Fisher, chapter 3)
October 5:	<i>Test in Hinduism ((30 minutes; class continues after test)</i>
Oct. 5–Oct. 19:	Buddhism (video & lectures; Reading: Fisher, chapter 5)
October 21:	<i>Test in Buddhism ((30 minutes; class continues after test)</i>
Oct. 21–Nov. 4:	Islam (video & lectures; Reading: Fisher, chapter 10)
November 9:	<i>Test in Islam ((30 minutes; class continues after test)</i>
Nov. 9–18, 2009:	Judaism (video? & lectures; Reading: Fisher, chapter 8)
November 23:	<i>Test in Judaism ((30 minutes; class continues after test)</i>
Nov. 23–Dec. 7:	Christianity (video & lectures; Reading: Fisher, chapter 9)
November 26:	<i>Thanksgiving Day (No Class on November 25)</i>
December 9, 2009:	<i>Test in Christianity (This is the last test)</i>