INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS
REL 1103.29670
spring 2019

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Overview: Major world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam with the goal of understanding the general nature of religion and its various dimensions.

Texts:

[A] The World’s Religions by Smith (available through the university bookstore).
[C] Various handouts, slides and videos on Brightspace (D2L).

Computer Requirements: All students must have access to a desktop or laptop computer, equipped with an internet browser (such as Chrome, Firefox or Safari). Brightspace chat will be used for virtual office hours, so all class participants should be prepared to access chat if they need to meet with either the grader or myself.

Structure of the Course: This course is online, and posts to the discussion board are essential since they replace the interactive dialogue that occurs in the traditional classroom. On average, you will be expected to make 1 post per week. With some exception, most posts are due Thursdays by 5:00pm; please note that the final week of class has a significantly different posting schedule than the previous weeks in the semester. The styles of writing required for your posts will vary somewhat, as will the format – be advised! Some prompts will require a style of self-reflection, others argumentative/persuasive, while several of your posts will simply utilize an informative style. A few of your posting assignments will require you to respond to the posts of your peers. In these cases, students are required to respond to their classmates’ posts in a meaningful way.

Students are expected to engage in reasoned discourse that takes into account opposing views, and they must be able to separate issues and positions from the persons advocating them. Philosophy and religious studies are best done through civil discussion. Each student will be expected to treat one another with respect and tolerance. I will not abide rude and disrespectful behavior.
It would be to your benefit to consult Brightspace (D2L) on a daily basis. Announcements will be given in the News section. All of the reading assignments are posted in the Content section, as are all of the additional materials for the course; lectures will follow the order and structure of the readings as they appear in this section. I will also post videos in this section that will help explain the material. The dates of the quizzes are listed in D2L’s Calendar. Finally, all grades for the semester are recorded in the Grades portion of D2L, so that you may keep track of your progress throughout the semester.

Prior to making a post, you should complete all reading and viewing assignments relevant to your topic.

All of your posts must include your original writings. **DO NOT** copy and paste the writings of other students (or websites) into your posts – this is considered plagiarism. You may only quote the textbook or the other required materials (no outside sources), but any quotations must be cited. It is also important not to quote too much (some people attempt to fill up their posts primarily with quotes – this will cost you points). Regarding citations, simply insert parentheses with the quoted work, with page number (when applicable); the format of citation shown immediately below will extend to slides, handouts, and podcasts.

For instance:

*Example #1*: Joe uses a brief quote from page 10 of the textbook. At the end of the quotation he inserts: (Smith, pg. 10)

*Example #2*: Lulu uses an idea from one of the required videos named, “Buddhism”. At the end of the sentence she credits the video for the idea by inserting: (Buddhism, video)

**Discussion Board Etiquette:**

- Make an effort to be engaged throughout the week
- **REFRAIN FROM USING ALL CAPS. IT IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING**
- Respect others’ opinions. If you disagree with what another has said, post your thoughts in an objective, respectful manner. Do not make remarks that can be taken personally
- Reflect upon the text you have entered before posting
- Keep the discussion within the scope of the course material
- Communication should be grammatically correct. Adhere to correct sentence structure, grammar, and spelling conventions
- Before you respond to a threaded message, read all the messages related to that message that have been previously posted.

**NOTE:** The TA and I will participate as facilitators and guides in each discussion as well. We may not respond to every discussion post, but we will read each and every one of them. We will have extensive discussion throughout the course, so students are expected to keep up the assigned readings each week.

**Course Requirements:**

**Discussion Posts:** 320 points total. As stated above, every week I typically provide 1-3
prompt options, and you will respond to one of them (for a total of 8 posts). Unless otherwise stated, each prompt is worth 40 points, and should be between 400-450 words (remember, formats will vary, so be sure to read each post topic carefully); there are a total of 8 posts. See grading rubric below. Note that some posts will require you to respond to your peers.

**Quizzes:** 210 points total. You will have 6 quizzes; each quiz is worth 35 points. Quizzes may be accessed either through the Quizzes or Content sections of D2L. You may take your quiz at any point during the week it is due (they open Mondays at 7:00am), but it must be completed no later than 10:00pm on that Thursday. All quizzes will be some combination of T/F, multiple choice, matching, and fill-in-the-blank. Please note that the final quiz will be comprehensive.

To be prepared for the discussion posts and quizzes, complete all required materials for the respective units, such as the readings and any other required materials (slides, videos, etc.). If it’s required material, it’s likely to be on a quiz.

**Final Discussion Post:** 70 points total. This assignment comes in two parts: a slideshow which is posted in the Discussions section (worth 40 points, due 8/1) and a posted response to the slideshow of a peer (worth 30 points, due 8/3). More information is available in the description of the post, which can be found in the Discussions section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion posts:</th>
<th>320 pts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes:</td>
<td>210 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Post:</td>
<td>70 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>600 pts</strong></td>
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* **Grading Scale:** A = 600-540 B = 539-480 C = 479-420 D = 419-360 F = Below 360

**NOTE:** To calculate your grade at any given time in the semester, simply add up the points you have earned and divide that total by the total number of points offered at the time of your calculation. For example, if you have earned 42 out of 50 points, you would divide 42 by 50 and get .84 (which is 84 percent or a ‘B’). Since all grades will be posted on D2L, you can do this calculation whenever you like.

**Grading Rubric for Discussion Posts:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Not Adequate</th>
<th>Failing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40-36</td>
<td>35-32</td>
<td>31-28</td>
<td>27-24</td>
<td>23-0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality Level</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>Meets the length requirement. Clearly answers the question while connecting it to and analyzing the assigned material (readings, videos, podcast, etc.). Can explain the concepts in question without either endorsing or attacking them. Superb spelling and grammar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meets the length requirement. Demonstrates a capacity to grapple with the material, though the student’s writing may be a bit vague or ambiguous. More than three spelling or grammar errors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meets the length requirement. Some understanding of the material, but the fundamental question is not answered in depth. Perhaps enough bias to muddy your discussion. More than four spelling or grammar errors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word count only comes to 75% of the assigned length. Lack of understanding of the lecture, no connection with the eastern religions. Perhaps enough bias to muddy your discussion. Numerous spelling or grammar errors.</td>
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<td>Either a complete failure to turn in the assignment, or meet the length requirement by 50%. Perhaps all opinion, no critical thinking about the issue at hand. Numerous spelling or grammar errors.</td>
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**Policies:**

**Email:** Please allow up to two business days for an email response from us. Make sure you provide your first and last name in the email. Importantly, when you email us, you must state the name of the course in the subject line of the email. Failure to follow these requirements will likely result in a delayed response to your email.

**Extra Credit:** I do not offer extra credit. If you are having a hard time in class, talk to either your TA or myself.

**Late Work:** Regarding missed assignments, we accept work only from those students who have a genuine, school sanctioned emergency. We require some official form of documentation (note from a doctor, funeral program, etc.). If you miss an assignment, send the official documentation to your TA. If the TA can verify the documentation, he will then send the student makeup instructions and details on how to complete the assignment. Otherwise, we will not accept late work – no exceptions!

**Students with Physical or Learning Disabilities:** If you need special accommodations the University will try to make appropriate arrangements. These arrangements will need to be made ahead of time through the Student Disability Services Office, 315 Student Union (phone: 744-7116)

**Academic Integrity:** All written assignments will be electronically checked for plagiarism. If I discover academic dishonesty of any kind, I will seek the appropriate punishment. The University has a syllabus attachment available online that provides information about the official academic integrity policy, important deadlines, and University resources:

http://osu.okstate.edu/acadaffr/aa/PDF%20Files/SYLATFA.pdf

**Please Note:** I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus. If any major changes are made (i.e., the due date of an assignment being moved), they will be announced in class and on Brightspace/D2L.