

Wat Muang Anghong Temple Thailand.



Matthew J. Pereira, Ph.D.

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Days and Time: M, W, F 1:30 – 2:20 pm

Location: NRD 236

Matt's Office Hours: SSH 160; T 1:00–3 :00 PM;
TH 10:00-11:30AM or by appointment:

Zoom Address: <https://zoom.us/j/8690502942>

Zoom ID: 869 050 2942

Teaching Assistants: Trevor Allee,

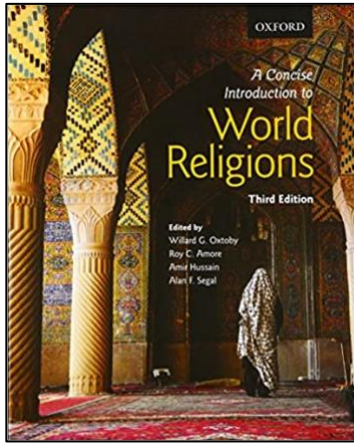
trevor.allee@okstate.edu; office hours: M, W, F

3:00–5:00 pm; Madelyn Dixon, madelyn.dixon@okstate.edu; office hours: TH, 9–12 pm.

Course Description: This survey course begins with an introduction to the field of Religious Studies, which as an academic endeavor, continues to encourage and invites analysis, questions and exploration from multiple perspectives, commitments and cultural locations. From the distribution of a wide range of beliefs, practices, customs, rituals to politics, science, economics, the arts, our bodies, language and popular culture – just about all aspects of our lives – are inflected by what may be called the religious. On the one hand, religious traditions and their actors who have competed against scientific, political and other spheres of authority and influence; then, on the other hand, religious traditions have cooperated and developed alongside other institutions of power and influence. Following an introduction to the nature of religion and its academic study, we will survey five of the major world religions in the following order: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Each section of this course begins with an overview of the historical, geographical and cultural background in which the respective religious tradition first emerged, then each unit transitions to an overview of the sacred writings, teachings, rituals and practices within, throughout and across the aforementioned religious traditions. In this introductory course in Religious Studies, we will evaluate how religious traditions have established (and continue to establish) ways of belonging, believing and becoming related to what may be known as the sacred and the profane, the divine and the humane, the transcendent and the immanent. We will conclude this survey course with an introduction to New Religious Movements with special attention afforded to The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints and The Nation of Islam. Recognizing that religious traditions continue to diversify when proliferated and transmitted, we shall seek to evaluate how these religious traditions are colored and textured within historical contexts. The underlying goal of this course is to encourage greater curiosity, appreciation, and cultivation of the interrelated disciplines of listening, reading, reflecting and writing to demonstrate an informed, nuanced and empathetic understanding of world religions.

“Normally persons talk about other people’s religions as they are, and about their own as it ought to be.”

- Wilfred Cantwell Smith, 1962



REQUIRED TEXTBOOK: *A Concise Introduction to World Religions*, by R. Amore, et. al, 4th Edition. 9780190919023 Oxford University Press, 2019.

ADDITIONAL READINGS: See Files Folder in Canvas Homepage.

“Religions are treasure chests of stories, songs, rituals, and ways of life that have been handed down for millennia - not covered in dust but evolving all the way- so that each new generation has something to choose from when it is time to ask the big questions in life. Where did we come from? Why do bad things happen to good people? Who is my neighbor? Where do we go from here? No one should have to start from scratch with questions like these. Overhearing the answers of the world's great religions can help anyone improve his or her own answers. Without a religion, these questions often do not get asked.”

- Barbara Brown Taylor, *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Upon successfully completing this course, the following objectives will have been met:

1. Students will gain an understanding of methods and issues in the study of religion.
2. Students will learn how to engage in an interdisciplinary approach to the study of religion.
3. Students will identify, summarize, compare and contrast the beliefs, rituals and practices across the world religions.
4. Students will have improved upon their analytical reading of historical and religious texts.
5. Students will have improved upon their critical and empathetic interpretation of a range of beliefs and practices across the religious traditions.
6. Students will practice being self-reflexive and reflective as part of developing critical self-awareness as the evaluator (and possible practitioner) of a religious tradition.

COURSE STRUCTURE: This is a lecture intensive course. There will be 30 terms (identifications) or less provided for each unit covered within this course, which will be highlighted in lectures. For the purpose of evaluation, students will respond to discussion questions, complete six quizzes, one analytical essay, and a final exam.

ATTENDANCE (100 POINTS): We will be using I-clicker for taking attendance beginning the second week of the course. More details to come via an announcement on Canvas at the end of the first week of the semester.

DISCUSSION BOARD (FOUR RESPONSES; 25 POINTS EACH; 100 POINTS TOTAL): In place of taking attendance, there will be discussion board questions provided at the end of each unit (see the calendar below). Students are to write responses to four of the discussion prompts throughout the course of the semester. Each discussion prompt is worth 25 points, thus, in total, the discussion board counts for 100 points (10% of the overall grade). Guidelines will be provided with the first discussion question, to be given at the end of the second week of the semester.

6 QUIZZES (50 POINTS EACH; 300 POINTS TOTAL): There will be six quizzes throughout this semester. There will be one quiz for each of the units covered throughout this semester except for the final section on the New Religious Movements. Quizzes may be in the form of multiple choice questions; true or false; and/or essay and reflections. Quizzes focus on identifications, lectures, and readings. All quizzes will be provided on Canvas. Students will have up to one week to complete the quiz from the date of its publication on Canvas.

ESSAY: OSU HOMECOMING AS A RELIGIOUS EVENT (200 POINTS): The OSU Homecoming takes place in the fall semester. The OSU Homecoming Week in 2022 will take place between October 16–22nd. Here is the website: <https://www.orangeconnection.org/s/860/18/hc-home.aspx?pgid=9658&gid=1&cid=24753>. In a creative and analytical essay, students are invited to provide a reflection that argues and explains how Homecoming may be described as a religious event/holiday. Students may draw from their own experiences in participating in the Homecoming and other material, including reports from media sources, and perspectives from other students and people (whether through an interview or informal conversation). This essay should be no less than five complete pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point font. Guidelines will be provided at least two weeks before the due date of the essay. **Due date: October 28th, 2022**

ESSAY: MARTYRDOM OF PERPETUA (200 POINTS): Students are invited to write an analytical essay that draws from at least one secondary (scholarly) source, to be provided by the instructor, on the *Martyrdom of Perpetua*. This essay should be no less than five complete pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point font. Guidelines will be provided at least two weeks before the due date of the essay. **Due Date: November 28th, 2022**

FINAL EXAM (100 POINTS): The Final Exam will consist of essay questions. More details for the Final Exam will be provided later in the semester.

EXTRA CREDIT (REFLECTIONS ON PRIMARY SOURCE READINGS | UP TO 20 POINTS EACH): For each unit except the first one on Studying Religions, there will be a primary source reading provided as an Extra Credit opportunity. Each reflection could be awarded up to twenty points, however, please note these are not free points, indeed, I intend to personally evaluate all extra credit reflections and am glad to reward 20 points when the student demonstrates strong engagement with the primary source reading. Lesser points will be rewarded if there is a lack of strong engagement. To earn twenty points, the student should first summarize the reading and thereafter reflect upon what they learned, found interesting, significant, and what questions were generated by reading the document. The student should also cite select passages from the Primary Source Document. Each reflection should be at least two pages (and no more than three pages), single-spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman. Each primary source document is located in a folder in the Files titled “Primary Source Documents” within our Canvas Homepage.

EXTRA CREDIT (ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS STUDIES STUDENT ORGANIZATION MEETINGS; 10 POINTS EACH MEETING): There will be Religious Studies Student Organization (RSSO) meetings convened from 6:00–7:30 pm on the following dates in the Fall semester of 2022: Sept. 1; Sept. 15; Sept. 29; Oct. 13; Oct. 27; Nov. 10; Dec. 1. Students must sign in to the meeting (a sheet will be provided) in order to receive the ten points extra credit. Announcements will be made throughout the semester with details regarding the topic and meeting place for each meeting. Here is the OSU link for RSSO: <https://campuslink.okstate.edu/organization/rsso>

Extra Credit (1–2 Page Reflections on Public Lectures in Religious Studies; up to 20 points): Up to 20 points extra credit could be earned by attending and then writing a 1–2 page reflection(s) on the invited public lectures sponsored by the Religious Studies program. More details will be provided as the dates and locations of the public lectures become solidified throughout the semester.

LATE WORK ASSIGNMENTS: Late work will be accepted up to one week after the due date. Late work may be penalized up to 20% prior to evaluating the work. After one week, zero (0) grade will be submitted for all missing work. If you have any issues or concerns regarding assignments, please reach out to myself and/or Trent and Chris. We will do our best to support each of you throughout the semester, but it is important, that you remain in contact with us if any issues arise. Thank you.

OSU PROTOCOLS FOR A POSITIVE CASE OF COVID IN CLASSROOM (FALL 2022)

During the fall semester, instructors will continue to have the same three options to temporarily shift the delivery mode should there be a positive case reported in class. Specifically, for up to **two weeks**, instructors must choose from among the following options:

- Move the course online.
- Teach in a hybrid format (part online/part in-class) to ensure social distancing and reduce further exposure. For students and instructors attending a face-to-face class, masks will be required for the duration of the two weeks.
- Continue the course face-to-face with masks required of all students and instructors attending.

If there is a new positive case in a class while the class is meeting fully in-person or in a hybrid format, the two-week period restarts if the person who tested positive has been attending in-person. If there is a new positive case while the class is meeting online, the two-week window will not restart since there were no additional potential exposures in class.

Here is the link to OSU’s Fall 2022 COVID-19 Dashboard, which contains current statistics related to the number of cases of COVID, hospitalizations, deaths, etc.: <https://go.okstate.edu/coronavirus/statistics.html>

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Please place all of your electronic devices, including laptops, cell phones, away and out of sight once the class has started. If you need to make a phone call or send a text, please feel free to step out of class and return when ready to be present. Points could be deducted from the attendance grade if a student is disruptive or distracting due to the use of electronics in class (I do not anticipate any issues). Thank you in advance.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE GRADED POINTS (COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION):

Attendance:	100 points
Discussion Board:	100 points
Quizzes	300 points (50 points each)
Essay: OSU Homecoming	200 points
Essay: Martyrdom of Perpetua	200 points

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: OSU is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, helping another person cheat, unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and altering academic records) will result in an official academic sanction. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript, and being suspended from the University. To appeal any charge: 101 Whitehurst Phone (405) 744-5627 | <http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu>

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 | (405) 744-7116 | Website: <https://sds.okstate.edu/>.

WEEKS 1–2 | STUDYING RELIGIONS

(AUGUST 22ND – SEPTEMBER 2ND)

What is Religion? Methodological & Theoretical Approaches to Studying Religions

Basic Human Religion: Origins of Faith

Basic Human Religion: Patterns of Faith

Why Are People Religious?

Quiz 1: Studying Religions

WEEKS 3–4 | HINDU TRADITIONS

(SEPTEMBER 5TH – SEPTEMBER 16TH)



Holi Festival, Wat Muang Anghong Temple

Origins and Overview

Sacred Texts (*Vedas* and *Upanishads*)

Hindu Epics (*Ramayana* and *Bhagavad Gita*)

Classical Teachings

The Varna System

The Stages of Life

Schools of Theology

Rituals, Practices and Festivals

Primary Source Reading: *The Bhagavad Gita*

Quiz 2: Hindu Traditions

WEEKS 5–6 | BUDDHIST TRADITIONS

(SEPTEMBER 19TH – SEPTEMBER 30TH)



Overview & Origins

The First Gem (The Buddha)

The Second Gem (Dharma)

The Sacred Texts

The Third Gem (The Sangha)

Theravada (First Vehicle)

Mahayana (Second Vehicle)

Vajrayana (Third Vehicle)

Primary Source Reading: Dalai Lama, “The Source of Happiness,” in *The Art of Happiness*

Quiz 3: Buddhist Traditions

WEEKS 7–8 | JEWISH TRADITIONS

(OCTOBER 3RD – OCTOBER 14TH)



Overview & Origins

The Hebrew Bible

The Second Temple Period

Rabbinical Judaism

Jewish Life under Christianity and Islam

Haskalah and Branches of Judaism

Jewish Life in the 20th century

Primary Source Reading: Primo Levi, “The Down and the Saved,” in *Survival in Auschwitz*

Quiz 4: Jewish Traditions

WEEKS 9–11 | CHRISTIAN TRADITION

(OCTOBER 17TH – NOVEMBER 4TH)

Origins & Overview

New Testament & Early Church

Monasticism

Medieval Christianity

The European Reformation

Roman Catholicism

Eastern Orthodoxy

Christianity in Colonial America

Holy Mount Grabarka, Poland. Pilgrimage



Primary Source Reading: *The Martyrdom of Perpetua*

Quiz 5: Christian Traditions

Due: October 28th: Essay on the OSU Homecoming as a Religious Event/Holiday

WEEKS 12–13 | MUSLIM TRADITIONS

(NOVEMBER 7TH – NOVEMBER 18TH)

Origins and Overview

The Qur'an

Muhammad and the Hadith

The Five Pillars

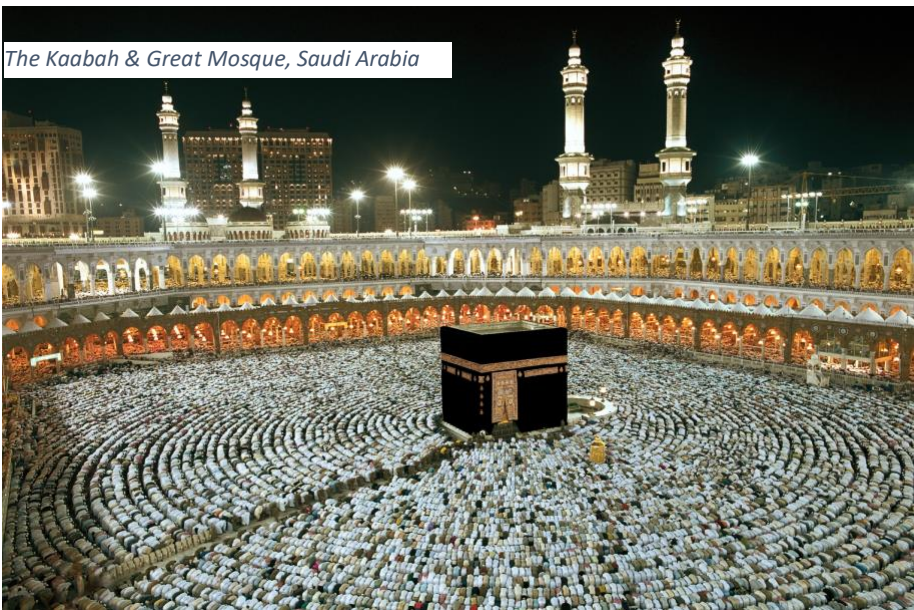
Sharia (Islamic Law)

Sunnis and Shi'ites

Philosophy and Science

Sufism

The Kaabah & Great Mosque, Saudi Arabia



Islam in the Contemporary World

Primary Source Reading: *Selections from the Sufi (Mystical) Tradition*

Quiz 6: Muslim Traditions

WEEK 14 | NO CLASSES: FALL BREAK AND UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY (NOVEMBER 21ST – NOVEMBER 25TH)

WEEK 15 | NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS (NOVEMBER 28TH – DECEMBER 2ND)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah



New Religions, Sects & Cults

New Religions (Eastern traditions)

New Religions (Abrahamic Religions)

Wicca, Raëlians, Scientology

The New Age Movement

Primary Source Reading: “Mecca” in
The Autobiography of Malcolm X

**Due: November 28th: Essay on the
Martyrdom of Perpetua**

WEEK 16 | PRE-FINALS WEEK (NOVEMBER 28TH – DECEMBER 2ND)

WEEK 17 | FINALS WEEK

MONDAY, DECEMBER 12TH, 10:00 – 11:50 AM, LOCATION: SSH 035

Tentative Nature of Course Syllabus: If necessary, this syllabus is subject to revision. Students will be held responsible for modifications distributed in class time, and/or communicated by an email correspondence, and/or provided on Canvas. Usually, all three of these mediums will be employed to communicate any changes.