

**Fall 2022 | OSU Stillwater Campus**  
**Religious Studies 1103 | Section Number 66793**  
**Introduction to World Religions**  
**Syllabus**

**About the Instructor**

**Instructor:** Adam Soltani

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**Office hours:** By appointment only

**Contact information:**

For fastest response call or text on my cell. If no immediate response is needed, you can reach me by email.

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**About the Course**

**Class meeting days and times:** Tuesday and Thursday 1:30 pm - 2:45 pm

**Class location:** Agricultural Hall 108

**Required texts and materials:**

*World Religions Today Seventh Edition* by John L. Esposito, Darrel J. Fashing, et al. ISBN: 9780197537657

**Course Goals and Learning Outcomes**

**Course description:**

The purpose of this course is to study major world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam with a view to understanding the general nature of religion and its various dimensions.

**Learning outcomes:**

Upon successfully completing this course, the following outcomes will have been met:

1. Students will be able to identify the varied religions of the world and how they are similar, different, and interconnected.
2. Students will be able to understand the chronology of religions and their evolution over time.
3. Students will have an overview of ongoing challenges of coexistence amongst religions in the world throughout history.

4. Students will improve upon their interdisciplinary approach to the study of religion by asking a range of questions across the theological, economic, racial, gendered, political and cultural spheres.
5. Students will have improved upon their analytical writing and research skills.
6. Students, in writing and class discussions, will learn how to critically engage in discussions as it relates to religion.
7. Students will practice developing their own sense of critical self-awareness as the evaluator of religious traditions.

### Structure and Method of the Course:

In this course, we will connect to the key themes and issues discussed in the textbook by engaging additional content and media. This course will be a mixture of lectures with small and large group discussions.

## Grading

### Course expectations and the final course grade

Assignment	Due Date	Percent of Final Grade
Attendance and Participation	Ongoing	15%
Weekly Quizzes	Ongoing	20%
Midterm Exam	10/13/2022	25%
Cultural Reflection Paper	11/1/2022	15%
Final Exam Paper	12/15/2022	25%

**Attendance and Participation (15%):** Attendance is mandatory. With the proper documentation, absences will be excused for school related activities, illness, and/or COVID positive exposure or test. Students will be expected to participate in classroom discussions on topics related to world religions.

**Weekly Quizzes (20%):** There will be weekly quizzes posted to Canvas that will cover assigned readings and handouts.

**Midterm Exam (25%):** The mid-term is multiple choice, true or false, short answer, and essay. The assessment covers all the material discussed with the class and the textbook prior to the day of the exam, which is scheduled to take place on **October 13<sup>th</sup>**.

**Cultural Reflection Paper (15%):** See details in the Cultural Reflection Paper portion of the syllabus.

**Final Exam (25%):** See details in the Final Exam Essay portion of the syllabus.

## Course Policies

**Attendance:** You will be expected to attend class sessions and engage in classroom discussion. Attendance is a part of your final grade and you will not be able to succeed in this course without attending class or alternatively engaging in Canvas and keeping in touch with the instructor on a regular basis *with prior, written approval from the instructor*.

**Use of electronic devices in class:** In order to cultivate an engaged classroom culture, thank you for refraining from the use of your cell phone during class time. If you must use your phone, please step outside of class. Laptops and tablets will be permitted for the purpose of note taking. Negative consequences for violating this policy could include a reduction in the student's grade.

**Late Work:** Late work will not be accepted past the due date unless prior approval has been given by the instructor for extenuating circumstances.

**Extra Credit:** Extra credit opportunities will be discussed in class and details posted to Canvas.

**Academic Integrity:** OSU is committed to maintain 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 violate academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, fabricating information, 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. You have the right to appeal the charge. 101 Whitehurst | Phone: (405) 744-5627 | Website:

<http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu>

**Students with 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: (405) 744 – 7116 | Website:

<https://sds.okstate.edu>

## Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>To Prepare for Class</b>	<b>In-Class Activities and Topics</b>
Week 1 8/23 – 8/25	<i>Read Esposito Pages 8 – 20</i>	Introduction to course, Overview of Syllabus
		Understanding Religion
Week 2 8/30 – 9/1	<i>Read Zoroaster and his teachings PDF</i>	Introduction to Zoroastrianism
	<i>Read Establish of Mazda Worship PDF</i>	Zoroastrianism in Modern Times
Week 3 9/6 – 9/8	<i>Read Esposito Pages 35 – 50, 55 – 59</i>	Introduction to Indigenous Religions Traditions
		Focus on Native American Traditions of North America
Week 4 9/13 – 9/15	<i>Read Esposito Pages 67 – 70, 73 – 87</i>	Introduction to Judaism
		History of Judaism in the World
Week 5 9/20 – 9/22	<i>Read Esposito Pages 96 – 103</i>	The Major Branches of Judaism
		Judaism in Oklahoma
Week 6 9/27 – 9/29	<i>Read Esposito Pages 125 – 130, 132 – 136</i>	Introduction and History of Christianity
		Fundamentals of Christianity
Week 7 10/4 – 10/6	<i>Read Articles Posted to Canvas</i>	The Coptic Christian Tradition
	<i>Read Esposito Pages 171 – 178</i>	Modern Day Christianity in America
Week 8 10/11 – 10/13	<i>See Study Guide on Canvas</i>	<b>Review for Midterm Exam</b>
	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
Week 9 10/18 – 10/20	<i>Read Esposito Pages 191 – 204</i>	Introduction to Islam
		The Five Pillars and Six Articles of Faith
Week 10 10/25 – 10/27	<i>Read Esposito Pages 245 - 249</i>	The Qur'an, Hadith, and Shariah Law
	<b>Cultural Experience: Mosque Visit</b>	<b>Cultural Experience: Mosque Visit</b>
Week 11 11/1 – 11/3	<i>Read Esposito Pages 261 - 273</i>	Introduction to Hinduism
		Focus on Hindu Practices and Beliefs
Week 12 11/8 – 11/10	<i>Read Esposito Pages 287 - 291</i>	Overview of Sikhism
		Overview of Jainism
Week 13 11/15 – 11/17	<i>Read Esposito Pages 342 - 355</i>	Introduction to Buddhism
		Buddhism in Oklahoma
Week 14 11/21 – 11/25	<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
	<i>Fall Break/University Holiday</i>	<i>Fall Break/University Holiday</i>
Week 15 11/29 – 12/1	<i>Will be posted to Canvas</i>	East Asian Religions: Confucianism & Daoism
		East Asian Religions: Shinto
<b>12/15</b>	<b>Final Exam Due</b>	<b>Final Exam Due</b>

## Cultural Reflection Paper

### Description of assignment or project:

Students will visit a local Mosque and write a 1 – 2 page reflection paper on their experience and what they learn from the visit. If you are unable to attend the Mosque visit on the assigned day, contact your instructor to arrange a separate time to visit or alternative cultural experience.

In your reflection, consider the following:

- How does a Mosque compare to religious institutions you may be more familiar with (for example, a church)?
- What surprised you most when you visited a Mosque?
- What are some of the highlights of your visit?
- What unanswered questions linger in your mind from the Mosque visit?

This paper must be double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman or Arial.

### Due Date:

The cultural reflection paper is due on or before **November 1<sup>st</sup>**.

## Final Exam Essay

### Description of assignment or project:

Students will complete a 4 - 5 page paper on one the following topics for the final exam. Please choose Option A, B, or C and make sure to include which option you chose

**A) Create your own religion or way of life, be creative!** Use the information you have learned in class about religions of the world and construct your own from the ground up. When designing your religion (or way of life) consider the following:

- a. What will be the name.
- b. What are the core beliefs and practices.
- c. What rituals will it have including holidays.
- d. What things will be allowed, what things will be forbidden.
- e. What does the power structure look like within the religion.
- f. Can people convert to or join the religion.
- g. How will this religion interact with other religions.
- h. For help, check out this link: <https://www.instructables.com/How-To-Start-Your-Own-Religion/>

**B) Explain one of the following religions that you have learned about in class to an alien. You can choose from the following: Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism.** Imagine an alien crash landed on earth and wants to learn more about one of the major

belief systems. This alien knows absolutely nothing about religion in general, let alone the specific religion you choose to explain to them. Give a comprehensive overview and explanation of the religion you choose, from the list provided, in such a way that would leave no questions unanswered. When writing your explanation, consider the following:

- a. The name of your religion.
  - b. The core beliefs and practices.
  - c. The rituals and holidays.
  - d. The followers of the religion and what they look like (their cultural, racial, and/or ethnic background).
  - e. Things that are allowed and things that are forbidden in the religion.
  - f. The hierarchical or power structure in your religion.
  - g. How can people convert or join your religion, if they can at all.
  - h. And more... be creative!
- C) **Three religious leaders or notable figures in history go out to a meal.** Pick any three notable religious leaders or figures in history and give a detailed description of what it would be like for them to have a meal together. Examples of religious leaders and/or figures you could choose from: Abraham, Jesus, Moses, Muhammad, Mother Theresa, Malcolm X, etc. *Be creative with the individuals you decide to choose from, and ensure that they are not all from the same religions tradition.*

When writing your description and overview of their meeting, consider to following:

- a. Who are the figures, what religious tradition are they from, and why did you choose them.
- b. Where did they go to eat and why.
- c. What did they order to eat and why (consider dietary restrictions).
- d. What did they talk about or discuss over dinner.
- e. Where there any major disagreements.
- f. What things did they find in common with one another.
- g. What faith-based perspectives do they have on current events in our world today such as the COVID pandemic, police brutality, politics, etc.
- h. What faith-based perspectives do they have on modern-day challenges such as anti-Semitism, Islamophobic, the military-industrial complex, poverty, the welfare system, access to healthcare, etc.
- i. What advice to they have for humanity.

Use your course textbooks and in-class presentations as a foundation for your understanding of the topic. This topic will require further research on the topic. If you struggle with approaching the topic, reach out to your instructor for assistance.

**The paper will consist of the following:**

- Cover Page
- 4 - 5 page written paper to be completed in MLA or APA format. Font must be double-spaced, 12 pt, Times New Roman or Arial.
- Reference Page including a minimum of 4 references, one of which can be your textbook.

**Due Date:**

The entire paper including the cover page, paper, and references is due no later than **December 15<sup>th</sup>**.

**Grading criteria:**

Your paper will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Did you cover the topic?
- Did you follow the proper format?
- Did you include the appropriate number of references?

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**Tentative Nature of the Syllabus:**

If necessary, the syllabus and its contents are subject to revision. Students will be held responsible for any changes or modifications distributed in class time, or communicated by an email correspondence, or on Canvas. Usually, all three of these mediums will be employed to communicate any changes.