Course Description: On the one hand, it appears that religious experiences are universal phenomena which cannot be reduced to cultural, linguistic, gendered, racial, religious, and other socially constructed markers of differentiation. From this viewpoint, the ubiquity of religious, mystical, and transcendental experiences affirms our common humanity inasmuch as it suggest each of us may access the ultimate, divine, and the sublime. On the other hand, it could be argued that religious experiences are prescribed, narrated, and practiced by us within our communities, which provide a social and linguistic context to anticipate and interpret our experiences. From this vantage point, it is argued that religious experience is bound up with language, beliefs, culture, and other factors which provide the expectation and explanation of what we define as religious experience. These two divergent viewpoints and scholarly approaches – known as Perennialism and Constructivism – will be employed and evaluated throughout this course on religious experience. Committed to an interdisciplinary approach, we will employ a range of frameworks across the historical; philosophical; sociological and theological disciplines for interpreting and interrogating experience. Amongst the canon of scholars who have written on religious experience, we evaluate the contributions of Friedrich Schleiermacher, William James, Rudolf Otto, Aldous Huxley, Ann Taves and Wayne Proudfoot. We will evaluate historical writings across several religious traditions, including the Christian tradition (e.g., Gregory of Nyssa; Augustine of Hippo; Meister Eckhart; Teresa of Ávila; Jonathan Edwards; Pentecostalism); Muslim tradition (e.g., Rabi`a Al-`Adawiyya; Rumi; Sufism; and Malcolm X); Buddhist tradition (e.g., Zen; D.T. Suzuki); and Transcendentalism (e.g., Ralph Waldo Emerson; Henry David Thoreau). Recognizing that religious experiences are embodied and culturally located, we will reflect upon the role of race and gender by evaluating the contributions of Valerie Saiving; Ada María Isasi-Díaz; Delores Williams and James Cone. Other than these two textbooks, all assigned readings will be provided on Canvas.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Upon completing this course, students will:

- have developed a critical understanding of the importance of and difference between interpretive frameworks for the study of religious experience by reflecting upon and employing various methods (e.g., historical, theoretical, theological, literary, etc.) for evaluating religious experience.
- learned how to recognize, discern, and evaluate the role that culture, gender, race, and other social factors play within the production and/or interpretation of religious and awe-inspiring experiences.
- have extensively practiced reading, interpreting, and writing responses to narratives of religious experience across various traditions, including the Buddhist, Christian, Muslim traditions, and transcendentalism.
- have practiced asking questions related to, along with reflecting upon the importance of social and cultural location in the shaping of religious experience.
- have sharpened their analytical skills related to listening, reading, writing, and verbal articulation.
- become acquainted with several seminal theorists, theologians, and writers of religious experience.

PARTICIPATION (100 POINTS): Practicing eloquence in both listening and speaking is an important academic discipline in Religious Studies and the Humanities at-large. Participation will count for 10% of the overall course grade. I recognize that some students are more apt and quicker to speak than others, so here, with participation, note that demonstrating eloquence and skill in listening is valued just as much as loquaciousness. Indeed, if you are one who is quick to speak, that is great and appreciated, but we need to also learn how to be still and quiet in order to attentively listen to our fellow students in the classroom.

DISCUSSION BOARD (100 POINTS): Ten discussion questions will be provided on our Canvas homepage on various Fridays throughout the semester. Brief responses (no more than a paragraph is needed here) are required for each discussion question by the Monday after the question has been provided on Friday.
TWO CO-FACILITATIONS WITH THE INSTRUCTOR (100 POINTS / 50 POINTS EACH): Students will be required to co-facilitate two discussions alongside the instructor throughout the course of the semester. By the end of the first week of the semester, we will establish a schedule with set dates for the respective co-facilitations. Each student to co-facilitate one session on Augustine’s *Confessions* and another session of their choosing in collaboration with the instructor.

REFLECTION ESSAY ONE: TERESA OF ÁVILA (200 POINTS): Students will be required to write a five-page essay that explores the mysticism of Teresa of Ávila’s *Interior Castle* by placing it in dialogue with William James’ lectures on mysticism (and if the student chooses, other theorists of religious experience). The select writings by Teresa of Ávila and William James will be provided and discussed during our class. The essay should be written in Times New Roman with a 12-point font. Guidelines will be provided at least two weeks before the due date of this assignment. **Due Date: February 4, 2022**

REFLECTION ESSAY TWO: AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X (200 POINTS): Students will be required to write a five-page essay on select chapters from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* in collaboration with select chapters from James Cones’ *Martin & Malcolm & America*. The select writings by Malcolm X (as told to Alex Haley) and James Cone will be provided and discussed during our class sessions prior to this assignment. The essay should be written in Times New Roman with a 12-point font. Guidelines will be provided at least two weeks before the due date of this assignment. **Due Date: March 21, 2022**

ANALYTICAL ESSAY: AUGUSTINE’S *CONFESSIONS* (300 POINTS): In place of a final exam, students will be required to write a seven-page analytical essay related to a theme located in Augustine of Hippo’s *Confessions*. Students will be required to incorporate at least two secondary (scholarly) sources. I will provide a good number of high-quality scholarly sources related to themes located throughout Augustine’s *Confessions*, including love and lust; friendship; death and suffering, etc. Students will be invited to choose a theme and use the provided secondary sources, at the same time, you may choose to seek out and use other reputable scholarly sources. The essay should be written in Times New Roman with a 12-point font. Guidelines will be provided two weeks prior to the due date. **Due Date: May 6, 2022**

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 me.

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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Board</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Co-Facilitations</td>
<td>100 (50 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay One: Theresa of Ávila</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Two: Autobiography of Malcolm X</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analytical Essay: Augustine’s Confessions</td>
<td>300</td>
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COURSE STRUCTURE: This course is structured as a blend of lectures, discussions, and co-facilitations between students and the instructor.

RECORDED LECTURES (WHEN ON-LINE): Whenever the class is on-line, the lectures will be recorded.

MASKS ARE EXPECTED TO BE WORN IN THE CLASSROOM: Per OSU policy and considering the worldwide pandemic, masks are expected to be worn within the classroom. Please consider the fact that some students and professors have underlying medical conditions, and perhaps, we should do unto others as we hope would be done unto us if we were more vulnerable to severe illness due to contracting COVID.

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 | telephone: (405) 744–7116 | Website: https://sds.okstate.edu/.
The assigned readings should be completed prior to class on the assigned dates provided below. Since there are different editions of both of our textbooks, I have provided the chapters rather than the page numbers for the assigned readings in the calendar below. If you have any questions, please let me know.

**Week 1** **Introduction to the Course and the Study of Religious Experience**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/10</td>
<td>Introduction to Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>A. Taves, <em>Religious Experience Reconsidered</em>, pp. 3–15</td>
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**Week 2** **William James, “Mysticism” in The Varieties of Religious Experience**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/17</td>
<td>University Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>William James, “Lectures XVI &amp; XVII,” in <em>The Varieties of Religious Experience</em> [Canvas]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>Theresa of Ávila, <em>The Interior Castle</em> (excerpts) [Canvas]</td>
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**Week 3** **Seminal Writers of Religious Experience: Schleiermacher and Otto**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/24</td>
<td>Fredrich Schleiermacher, <em>On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers</em> (excerpts)</td>
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**Week 4** **Ann Taves, (Concluding) Religious Experience Reconsidered**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>A. Taves, <em>Religious Experience Reconsidered</em>, pp. 120–155</td>
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<td><strong>Due: Essay One: Theresa of Ávila</strong></td>
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**Week 5** **Revivals: First Great Awakening to Contemporary Evangelicalism**

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<th>Topic</th>
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**WEEK 6**

**DEBATING EXPERIENCE: PERENNIALISM AND CONSTRUCTIVISM**


**WEEK 7**

**MYSTICISM IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITIONS**


**WEEK 8**

**THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X**

2/28 Chapter 1: Nightmare, in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley* (1965), pp. 1–23 [Canvas]

James Cone, “I See a Nightmare,” in *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare*, pp. 89–119 [Canvas]

James Cone, “White Man’s Heaven Is a Black Man’s Hell,” in *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare*, pp. 151–180 [Canvas]


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**WEEK 9**

**Feminine Experience: Theological and Biblical Interpretation**


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**WEEK 10**

**MARCH 14TH – 18TH NO CLASSES | SPRING BREAK**

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**WEEK 11**

**Transcendentalism: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau**

3/21 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836), excerpts [Canvas]


Due: Essay Two: Autobiography of Malcolm X


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**WEEK 12**

**Experiencing the Spirit: Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements**


**WEEK 13  AUGUSTINE’S CONFESSIONS (BOOKS I – III)**

4/4 Book I: Early Years, in Augustine’s *Confessions*, pp. 3–23

4/6 Book II: Adolescence, in Augustine’s *Confessions*, pp. 24–34

4/8 Book III: Student at Carthage, in Augustine’s *Confessions*, pp. 35–51

**WEEK 14  AUGUSTINE’S CONFESSIONS (BOOKS IV–VI)**

4/11 Book IV: Manichee and Astrologer, in Augustine’s *Confessions*, pp. 52–71

4/13 Book V: Carthage, Rome, and Milan, in Augustine’s *Confessions*, pp. 72–89

4/15 Book VI: Secular Ambitions and Conflicts, in Augustine’s *Confessions*, pp. 90–110

**WEEK 15  AUGUSTINE’S CONFESSIONS (BOOKS VII – IX)**

4/18 Book VII: A Neoplatonic Quest, in Augustine’s *Confessions*, pp. 111–132

4/20 Book VIII: The Birthpangs of Conversion, in Augustine’s *Confessions*, pp. 133–154

4/22 Book IX: Cassiciacum: to Monica’s Death, in Augustine’s *Confessions*, pp. 155–178

**WEEK 16:  PRE-FINALS WEEK**

Open Office Hours to Discuss Essay on Augustine’s Confessions

**WEEK 17:  FINALS WEEK**

**DUE: ANALYTICAL ESSAY ON AUGUSTINE’S CONFESSIONS (BY 5 PM, MAY 6, 2022)**

**Tentative Nature of 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.