About the Instructor

Instructor: Adam Soltani
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Office hours: By appointment only
Contact information:
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(c) 405-248-5853
(e) adam.soltani@okstate.edu

About the Course

This class meets asynchronously - video lectures and assignments will be posted online for students to complete as per the class schedule below.

Location: Virtual via Canvas.

Required texts and materials:


Cloud Miles: A Remarkable Journey of Mercy, Peace, and Purpose by Imad S. Enchassi. ISBN: 9781635280906

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 varied world religions 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 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percent of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation and Discussion Questions</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Quizzes</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>4/6/2023</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Reflection Presentation</td>
<td>4/17/2023</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam Paper</td>
<td>5/11/2023</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**Participation and Discussion Questions (25%):** Participation is mandatory through the viewing of and engaging with video lessons – Canvas analytics will be used to ensure you have viewed video lessons. With the proper documentation, absences will be excused for school related activities, illness, and/or COVID-positive exposure or test. There will be discussion questions posted on a regular basis to Canvas that students will be required to participate in. In order to receive full participation points for each discussion question, student must post one original response and reply to at least two classmates responses. Students will only receive full credit if they follow these instructions, no partial credit will be awarded.
**Weekly Quizzes (20%)**: There will be weekly quizzes posted to Canvas that will cover assigned readings and handouts.

**Midterm Exam (20%)**: 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 before the day of the exam, which is scheduled to take place on **July 1st**.

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

**Final Exam Paper (20%)**: See details in the Final Exam Essay portion of the syllabus.

**Course Policies**

**Participation**: You will be expected to participation in class sessions by viewing and engaging in video lessons and discussion questions. Participation is a part of your final grade and you will not be able to succeed in this course without participating in class and engaging in Canvas and keeping in touch with the instructor on a regular basis.

**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/or posted in the announcements section on Canvas.

**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 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 notion 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](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](https://sds.okstate.edu)
### Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>To Prepare for Class</th>
<th>In-Class Activities and Topics</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Read Esposito Pages 8 - 20</td>
<td>Introduction to course, Overview of Syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/13 – 2/17</td>
<td>Read Zoroaster and his teachings PDF</td>
<td>Understanding Religion</td>
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<td>Read Establish of Mazda Worship PDF</td>
<td>Introduction to Zoroastrianism</td>
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<td>Zoroastrianism in Modern Times</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Read Esposito Pages 35 – 50, 55 – 59</td>
<td>Introduction to Indigenous Religions Traditions</td>
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<td>2/20 – 2/24</td>
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<td>Focus on Native American Traditions of North America</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Read Esposito Pages 67 – 70, 73 - 87</td>
<td>Introduction to Judaism</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/27 – 3/3</td>
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<td>History of Judaism in the World</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Read Esposito Pages 96 – 103</td>
<td>The Major Branches of Judaism</td>
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<td>2/27 – 3/3</td>
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<td>Judaism in America</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
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<td>Fundamentals of Christianity</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
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<td>Read Esposito Pages 171 - 178</td>
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<td>3/20 – 3/24</td>
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<td>Modern-Day Christianity in America &amp; The Coptic</td>
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<td>Christian Tradition</td>
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<td>Read Esposito Pages 191 - 204</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
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<td>Introduction to Islam</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/27 – 3/31</td>
<td>Read Esposito Pages 245 - 249</td>
<td>The Qur’an, Hadith, and Sharia Law</td>
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<td>Cultural Experience: Virtual Mosque and Synagogue Visit</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>The Five Pillars and Six Articles of Faith</td>
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<td>4/3 – 4/7</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Read Esposito Pages 261 - 273</td>
<td>Introduction to Hinduism</td>
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<td>4/10 – 4/14</td>
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<td>Focus on Hindu Practices and Beliefs</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Read Esposito Pages 287 - 291</td>
<td>Overview of Sikhism</td>
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<td>4/17 – 4/21</td>
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<td>Overview of Jainism</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Read Esposito Pages 342 - 355</td>
<td>Introduction to Buddhism</td>
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<td>4/24 – 4/28</td>
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<td>Buddhism in Oklahoma</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Will be posted to Canvas</td>
<td>East Asian Religions: Confucianism</td>
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<td>5/1 – 5/5</td>
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<td>East Asian Religions: Daoism</td>
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<td>East Asian Religions: Shinto</td>
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<td>East Asian Religions: Buddhism in East Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/11</td>
<td>Final Exam Due</td>
<td>Final Exam Due</td>
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Cultural Reflection Presentation

Description of assignment or project:

Students will read Cloud Miles book and watch virtual tours of a Synagogue and a Mosque. While reading the book and partaking in these virtual experiences, students should take note of the following and prepare a presentation to share their findings:

- What did you learn about the role of religion in the lives of people?
- What did you learn about the interconnectedness of religion?
- Islam is considered one of the most misunderstood faiths in America, what did you learn about the Muslim experience that you found enlightening?
- In what ways are non-Christian religions misinterpreted in America?
- Is it possible for faiths to coexist with one another in society?
- How can you utilize your newfound knowledge to help others better understand religion?
- What would you envision to be an ideal world as it pertains to religion?

The presentation can be a video recording, a PowerPoint, a 2 – 3 page written paper, or any other creative means you choose to convey your knowledge. If you have questions on this assignment, run it by Professor Soltani for guidance.

Due Date:

The cultural reflection paper is due on or before April 17th.

Final Exam Essay

Description of assignment or project:

Students will complete a 4 - 5 page paper on one of the following topics for the final exam. Please choose Option A, B, or C, and 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 religions 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 nothing about religion, 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?
   h. And more... be creative!

C) Three religious leaders or notable historical figures go to a meal. Pick any three notable religious leaders or figures in history and describe what it would be like for them to have a meal together. Examples of religious leaders and/or figures you could choose from are 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 religious 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 are any significant 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, Islamophobia, the military-industrial complex, poverty, the welfare system, access to healthcare, etc?
   i. What advice do 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 paper to be completed in MLA or APA format. The 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 textbooks.

Due Date:

The entire paper, including the cover page, paper, and references, is due no later than May 11th.

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?

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.