REL 1300 Introduction to World Religions Fall 2014

Class Time: Monday and Wednesday, 1:00-2:15pm

Instructor: Dr. Benjamin Murphy, bmurphy@fsu.edu, 317-0367 ext. 230, Office A

Web-site: http://mailer.fsu.edu/~bmurphy/

Office Hours: Mon and Wed: 2:30-4pm. Tues and Thurs: 4:30-6pm.

Prerequisites: None. The course is suitable for all students, from the first semester of university study onwards.

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should; (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center, Dean of Students Department
+00(850) 644-9566 (voice), +00 (850) 644-8504 (TDD)
SDRC@admin.fsu.edu
http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/

Course Description: An introduction to the major religious traditions of the world, with attention to their origins in the ancient world and traditional beliefs and practices.

Course Objectives: Most people in the world practice some form of religion, and most of these religions originated hundreds or even thousands of years ago. By the end of this course, you will know the basic facts about the origins of the world’s most influential religions. You will also start to learn some of the skills that are needed in the study of religions and, indeed, of ancient history in general. You will learn how to seek good sources of information, how to distinguish good sources from bad sources, and how to make the maximum use of ancient sources by careful study. You will also learn some of the skills that enable us to turn factual knowledge into understanding, such as how to assess the influence of environmental and political factors on religious history, and how to evaluate the role of religion in shaping civilizations. Your mastery of these skills will be demonstrated by your ability to write scholarly papers about topics in the history of religions.


Primary Sources: You will receive five pdf files containing primary source material. You do not need to read these before class, but you must bring the appropriate file to class – you may print the files up or bring in a laptop or other portable reading device.

When doing research for papers, further material is available in the REL 1300 folders kept on reserve in the library, and useful links appear on the web-site. Remember that these are research papers – one of the main purposes of such a paper is to give you a chance to demonstrate that you are good at tracking down information using the library and the internet.
Grading:

So, you want an A? Here’s what you need to do:

Papers: 60%
Quizzes: 20%
Final Examination: 20%

Each paper will receive a mark on 30; the best three will count towards the 60% for papers, with one exception: if you plagiarize, you will receive 0/30, and this will be counted towards the final grade, however well you do on other papers. If the average grade for all 5 papers is higher than 25/30, you will receive extra credit, one extra point for every point by which your average is higher than 25. More information about how to write good papers, and how they will be graded is available on the web-site. Suggested length: 2000 words.

The best ten quizzes will count towards 20% of the final grade. If you miss a quiz, it is as if you received 0, and that becomes a grade you can drop. You may therefore miss two quizzes without your grade being affected: there will be no other opportunities to take quizzes. Each quiz consists of 10 simple factual questions in multiple choice format.

94+ A
90+ A-
86+ B+
82+ B
78+ B-
74+ C+
70+ C
66+ C-
64+ D+
60+ D
56+ D-

In order to fulfill FSU’s Writing Requirement (“W” Designation) credit, the student must earn a “C-” or better in the course, and in order to receive a “C-” or better in the course, the student must earn at least a “C-” on the required writing assignments for the course. If the student does not earn a “C-” or better on the required writing assignments for the course, the student will not earn an overall grade of “C-” or better in the course, no matter how well the student performs in the remaining portion of the course.

Writing Center:

You are required to take a first draft of any one of the first three papers to the writing center, where you will work through a check-list to make sure you are meeting certain basic requirements. If you fail to do this, you will receive a 2% penalty on your final grade.
Course Schedule: Any alterations to this schedule will be posted on the web-site.

25th August: Introduction to the class
27th August: Start packet 1
3rd September: Quiz 1, pp.83-106
10th September: Quiz 2, pp. 106-140

15th September: Paper 1 due: Explain why devotion to goddesses has become such an important part of Hinduism. Start packet 2
17th September: Quiz 3, pp.145-187
24th September: Quiz 4, pp.187-205

1st October: Quiz 5, pp.263-279
8th October: Quiz 6, pp.279-307

10th October: Last day to drop without special permission
15th October: Paper 3 due: Explain changing attitudes to death in China during the Han Dynasty. Start packet 4
22nd October: Quiz 7, pp.341-367
29th October: Quiz 8, pp.367-394
3rd-5th November: National Holidays 😊
10th November: National Holiday
12th November: Quiz 9, pp.403-421
19th November: Quiz 10, pp.421-451

24th November: Paper 4 due: Explain why Judaism and Christianity became two separate religions. Start packet 5
26th November: Quiz 11, pp.462-488
3rd December: Quiz 12, pp.488-509, Paper 5 due: Was Muhammad responsible for a move from economic to ideological warfare, and, if so, was this a positive development?
10th December: Final Exam, 12:30-3:00

Policies: So, you want to receive an F? Just ignore the following rules.

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.
I allow 6 excused absences. I assume that all absences are excused – I will not ask to see any documentation: if you miss a class or arrive late, I assume it is for a good reason and ask for no explanation. If you miss 7-9 classes, for whatever reason, you will lose 5% of your grade. If you have compelling reasons for missing more than one third of the course, then you should drop the class: if you miss 10 or more classes, you will automatically fail.

At the start of the class, I will close the door and then call roll. If you arrive when the door is closed, please wait patiently and quietly. Do not disturb the class. After one hour, I will open the door, giving a chance for latecomers to enter and early-leavers to depart – in each case, receiving a half-credit for attendance.
Clocks on this campus are unreliable: I set my watch by the computer in my office – this is the same time as is displayed on computers in classrooms and in the library. (Administrative computers, e.g. in the Student Affairs Office are on a different server, although the time-difference is only a few seconds.)
Remember, you should always aim to be the classroom before the lesson begins. By the time I call roll, you should be sat at your desk waiting.

Cell phones must be switched off in class. You will be penalized for breaking this rule. Food is prohibited, but you may quietly imbibe non-alcoholic drinks.

Late Work: Work must be handed in during class on the date given. If you know that you will be unable to make a class, you may arrange for a friend to deliver the work to me, but the responsibility is yours. I will only consider
grading late work in exceptional cases (e.g. serious illness, with a doctor’s note). If I consider it appropriate, I will penalize late work. Unless you have a very good reason for presenting the work late, it will receive an F.

**Highlights/Lowlights:** To help all students in the class produce better papers, I intend to select the best and worst pieces of work that are submitted on the web-site along with my comments. These extracts will be presented anonymously. Please indicate on every paper you submit whether you are willing for parts of it to be used in this way. “Y” indicates “Yes”, “N” indicates “No”.

**THERE IS A FATE WORSE THAN F!**

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “…be honest and truthful and…[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at [http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm](http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm).)

If you deliberately violate the Academic Honor Code, you are trying to get more credit for your work than you deserve by deceiving your instructor. I do not tell my students lies, and it makes me angry when students try to deceive me. Furthermore, you are attempting to gain an unfair advantage over honest students. Taking steps to deal with plagiarism takes up a lot of my time, and slows down the whole process of grading. So, please read the following instructions and follow them carefully.

If you are using *any* words taken directly from any book, or web-site, or CD-ROM, they must be enclosed in inverted commas - “...”, or else clearly indicated by an indented margin and change of format:

As with this piece of text, which clearly stands apart from the rest of this paragraph. This is how a quotation from another source should appear in your paper when printed, unless it is just a “couple of words” that you want to mention. You must state from which book they were taken, preferably including a page number. The reference must be given in the text, when the quotation is used, so that I can see when grading your paper exactly what is your work and what is taken from another source. Use either footnotes¹, or (parentheses). It is *not* sufficient to list sources at the end of the paper, although you should also do this.

If you are using ideas or information taken from a book, a web-site, a lecture or a conversation with a friend, acknowledgement must be given in the text, at the point in which the idea or information is used. Even if you are not quoting directly, there should still be a clear acknowledgement of your sources: this is known as paraphrasing – you explain someone else’s ideas in your own words. By giving a footnote, you give credit to the person whose information you are using. You also advertise to the professor that you have been reading about the subject.

If you have any doubts about meeting these requirements, contact me as soon as possible. Further notes are available on my web-site.

Papers must be written by you in English. If you write it in Spanish, you must translate it yourself: you are being graded, in part on your ability to communicate effectively in English. You are allowed to have help with “proof-reading” - i.e. you may ask someone to read what you have written in English and point out any mistakes. You must acknowledge your gratitude to your proof-reader at the start of the paper. Plagiarism also includes the use of illicit material in closed book quizzes and final examinations. If I discover that you are guilty of plagiarism, you will receive an F for the piece of work in question, and it will be counted towards your final grade. As required by the General Bulletin, I will inform the Vice-Rector in writing, and this will remain on your file. Repeated offenses may result in your being expelled from the university. If I discover a second offence, you will receive an F for the entire course.

¹ This is a footnote. It would state the exact source of the quotation. If you are using Word, you can Insert footnotes and they will automatically be numbered. Footnotes are numbered consecutively throughout the paper. If you refer twice to the same book, you do not repeat the same number.
I have read and understood the syllabus for REL 1300, Fall 2014. If I fail to follow the instructions given here, particularly those which relate to violations of the Academic Honor Code, I accept responsibility.

Signed:

Name (print):