

REL 1300 Introduction to World Religions Fall 2017

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

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

Web-site: <http://myweb.fsu.edu/bmurphy/>

Office Hours: Mon and Wed, 2:30-4:00. Tues and Thurs 4:00-5:00

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

Liberal Studies for the 21st Century:

FSU's Liberal Studies for the 21st Century Program is designed to help you to thrive intellectually and professionally and to support yourself, your family, and your community through a broad and critical engagement with the world in which you live and work. Liberal Studies thus offers a transformative experience. This class has been designed to help you become a thoughtful patron of and participant in cultural practice – so that you are able to interpret intellectual or artistic works within a cultural context and to use a philosophical approach to analyze some aspect of human experience. As a cross-cultural class, it is designed to help you become a culturally conscious participant in a global community.

Course Description: This course is an introduction to the academic study of world religions. It is designed to acquaint students with religious traditions practiced throughout the world. Particular attention will be given to the historical development of various religious traditions, their role(s) in world history, and their relevance in current events.

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. You will compare and interpret intellectual and artistic expressions of a variety of cultures, and interpret cultural artifacts that function as widely varied reflections of human perspectives.

Set Text: *Invitation to World Religions*, Brodd, Little, Nystrom, Platzner, Shek, Stiles, Oxford University Press, 2nd Edition.

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.

Grading:

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

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

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

Note that since 60% of the grade depends on written work, it is impossible to get a passing grade (C- or higher) without getting at least a C- for the written work.

Quizzes are there to make sure you keep up with your reading, and that you acquire a basic knowledge about the religions we are studying. Each quiz will be in multiple choice format, questions taken from the text-book. The purpose of the quiz is to check that you are *reading*; questions will not be limited to material that I have mentioned in class.

Papers are divided into three categories, historical, cultural and comparative. The best paper that you submit in each of those categories will be counted towards the final grade. You will have the chance to submit up to 3 historical papers, 2 cultural papers and 1 comparative paper during the semester.

All papers should be printed on plain white paper, stapled, with no binding, cover or folder. All papers should have proper citations. I provide on the web-site a more detailed guide to citations: please remember that **giving a list of sources cited is not enough**. You will find, in the library, a folder of useful readings for each paper, and links on the web-site.

All papers will receive a mark out of **30**.

5 marks will be given for grammar. Remember that you are expected to be able to communicate ideas clearly in flawless English. By the time you graduate, you should be able to write English as well as any native speaker. *This is for all papers.*

5 marks will be given for composition, that is, organization. Do not repeat yourself unnecessarily. All information should be relevant to your thesis. Think carefully about the proper order to present your ideas. *This is for all papers.*

The remaining 20 marks will be assigned in different ways for each type of assignment. I have indicated below the kind of questions you should be thinking about as you prepare these papers,

but getting a good grade does not mean writing one paragraph answering each of the questions I've set out below – these are meant to be starting points, to set your minds rolling.

Cultural Papers:

The cultural papers give you an opportunity to respond to a film/television program that tells a religious story, and which was made for an audience in a different culture, either India or Japan. This demonstrates your ability to interpret intellectual or artistic works within a cultural context.

10 marks will be given for the knowledge that you display of the other culture. You will need to demonstrate that you have done some research that will enable you to understand the religious and cultural environment in which this work was produced. What gods/goddesses/saints appear? What rituals are used? What elements of the story may have been surprising to the original audience and why?

10 marks will be given to your own response to the film/television program. Did it hold your attention, and if so, why? Was the story told with skill? How did elements such as music and dance contribute to the experience?

Cultural papers should be 1000-1500 words long.

Historical Papers

10 marks will be given for your use of source material. You must exercise good judgment in choosing secondary sources (they should be reliable, academic sources) and you should show some first-hand knowledge of primary sources.

10 marks will be given for your level of understanding. You must demonstrate the ability to make reasonable judgments of the available evidence, to consider more than one point of view, and provide good reasons for choosing the best theory, and an ability to understand deep explanations of the history of religions – connecting religious change to economic and political factors, for example.

Historical papers should be 1000-1500 words long.

Comparative Paper:

The comparative paper gives you an opportunity to reflect on at least three answers to the problem of evil – why do bad things happen to good people, and how should we respond? This enables you to demonstrate your ability to use a philosophical approach to analyze some aspect of human experience.

10 marks will be given for demonstrating an understanding of writers from three different religions. This means that you must learn to understand their technical terminology and consider how their environment shaped their way of thinking about evil. Are they more concerned with comforting people who have suffered, or scaring people who are prone to misbehavior, or are

their concerns more theoretical than practical – demonstrating that the existence of evil does not undermine their basic beliefs?

10 marks will be given for your evaluation of the writers you have studied. Do they provide helpful responses to the issue of evil? You need to explain what you think makes for a helpful response. At the very least, it should be consistent with our experience, and with what we know about human nature. It should also help people to find a way to cope with such situations – by giving us hope, or by helping us find the inner resources to handle such situations with dignity. The evaluation should involve a comparative element – did all three writers basically say the same thing? Or was one of them more helpful than the others, and if so, why? Were they all a waste of time, and if so, is that because they all shared some assumption that you reject?

The comparative paper should be at least 2000 words long. This is the most challenging assignment, and I suggest that you work on it throughout the semester.

Final Examination: The first section of the final will consist of 30 multiple choice questions, covering the same sections of the text-book that you studied for the quizzes. The second section will consist of an essay. I will give a set of essay titles, most of which will ask you to compare two of the religions we have studied. You will choose one essay. The marks for the exam will be evenly divided between those two sections.

Writing Center:

You are required to take a first draft of at least one paper 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.*

Provisional Schedule:

Quizzes are based on the material in the text book. I guarantee that every question will be based on information that appears on the stated pages of your text-book – it is up to you to study all that material carefully, not just parts we have discussed in class.

28th August: Introduction to the class

30th August: Start Packet 1, Hinduism

4th September: Quiz 1, pp.89-125

8th September, 9 am, Special Screening of *Jai Santoshi Ma*

11th September: Quiz 2, pp.125-140

13th September: **Paper 1 Due (Cultural Paper), *Is Jai Santoshi Ma A Feminist Film?*** Start Packet 2

25th September: Quiz 3, pp.143-155

9th September: Quiz 4, pp.155-186

2nd October: **Paper 2 Due (Historical Paper), *Is Buddhism An Atheistic Religion?*** Friday 6th October, 10am, special screening of *Monkey!*

9th October: Quiz 5, pp.245-269 Start Packet 3

13th October: LAST DAY TO DROP WITHOUT SPECIAL PERMISSION

16th October: Quiz 6, pp.269-294

18th October: **Paper 3 Due (Cultural Paper), *How Are Skillful Means Used In “Monkey!”?*** Start Packet 4

23rd October: Quiz 7pp.351-362

30th October: Quiz 8, pp.362-408

6th November: Quiz 9, pp.411-431

13th November: Quiz 10, pp.431-467

20th November: **Paper 4 Due (Historical), *Why Did Judaism And Christianity Become Two Separate Religions?*** Start Pack 5

27th November: Quiz 11, pp.469-488.

17th April: Quiz 12, pp.488-523

4th December: **Paper 5 Due (Historical). *Is Firestone correct in his assertion that Muhammad was responsible for a shift from economic to ideological warfare? If Firestone is wrong, explain why. If he is right, evaluate this historical shift.***

6th December: Paper 6 Due (Comparative): ***Compare, contrast and evaluate the responses of two major thinkers, each from a different one of the religions we have studied, to the fact that sometimes, bad things happen to good people.***

May 1st-5th: Final Exam Week. The exact date of your final is to be announced.

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 in the classroom before the lesson begins. By the time I call roll, you should be sitting 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".

Students With Disabilities:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (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. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the: Student Disability Resource Center 874 Traditions Way 108 Student Services Building Florida State University Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167 (850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD) sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

Sexual Harassment Policy:

It is the policy of the University that its employees and students neither commit nor condone sexual harassment in any form.

http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/info/university_notices.htm

Student eligibility for an incomplete grade:

Incomplete ("I") grades will not be assigned, except in the case of exceptional unforeseen circumstances that occur within the last three weeks of the semester and your work has otherwise been satisfactory (C average).

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>.)

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 2017. 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):

