

REL2300: Introduction to World Religions
Fall 2025 (3 credit hours)

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Office Hours: Fridays 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm via [Zoom](#)

Meeting Time: None - Asynchronous Online Class (strict deadlines outlined below)

*****Please be advised that you must use Canvas for all course communications; please include Dr. Narayanan and the TAs on every message.*****

Course Description

Introduces key themes, figures, and sacred texts in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the religions of South and East Asia. We will look at the history and important moments in the religions, scriptures, beliefs, and practices, the Athens-Jerusalem heritage of Christianity and Judaism, and see how some of these religions are present in Florida.

Course Learning Outcomes

When you complete this course, you will be able to:

- Explain basic worldviews, rituals, and beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Chinese religions, Japanese religions, Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and Indigenous Religions.
- Recall and describe the category of *religion* and identify key definitions. Problematicize the category of *religion* and determine your own working definitions.
- Identify the social, political, and cultural factors that come into play in the formation and understanding of a given religion.
- Equipped with this knowledge of different religious traditions and the contexts in which they thrive, identify your own vantage point, as well as engage with different cultures and countries in an informed and respectful manner.
- Investigate and illustrate the presence of selected religious institutions in Florida .

The course engages with the Western canon in several ways, including highlighting concepts and themes that emerge from:

- The Hebrew Scriptures (in the study of Judaism), such as the connection between the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israelite Religion,
- The New Testament (specifically the Four Gospels, as seen through the lecture by Dr. Richard Horner).

- Students will become familiar with the history and beliefs of Christianity, the historical Jesus, and the relationship between Western Ethics and Christianity.

Gen Ed Humanities Learning Outcomes

Humanities courses afford students the ability to think critically through the mastery of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy. They must include selections from the Western canon.

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and analyze the relevant factors that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

Please see the following links for more on GE area-specific objectives:

<https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-program/subject-area-objectives/>

and GE area-specific student learning outcomes:

<https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-courses/structure-of-gen-edcourses/slos-and-performance-indicators/student-learning-outcomes/>

****All learning objectives are provided within the individual modules throughout the course.****

Course Readings and Required Texts

- A Concise Introduction to World Religions: Fourth Edition-Edited by Roy C. Amore, Amir Hussain, and Willard G. Oxtoby. Oxford University Press 2019. ISBN-13: 9780190919023

Please do not use any other edition. The content and page numbers will be different.

****Other supplemental materials, such as videos, will be provided on Canvas.****

Materials and Supplies Fee N/A

Instructional Methods

There are readings, videos, and other materials corresponding to each course module, but this course is designed to be as interactive as possible. So, as a member of this class, you will be required to contribute to weekly discussion posts and peer responses based on the material for each week. You will also be required to complete quizzes that will test your comprehension of the material in each course module. The deadlines for all assignments and quizzes are clearly stated in Canvas (in the Calendar). There will be a midterm and final exam, and a final paper (project). Please see the **Modules** tab in Canvas to view all videos, readings, and other course materials.

*****It is recommended to use Canvas using Chrome on a computer and not a mobile device*****

Course Requirements and Policies

Quizzes

Weekly quizzes will be administered in Canvas on Saturdays. You can access them through the Modules tool, in the *Modules* page, or through *Assignments*. Except for the first quiz, which is due two days after the course starts, quizzes will open at midnight on Sunday of the week that they are due, and will close at 11:59 pm on the day that they are due (i.e., begins on Sunday, August 24 at midnight, and closes on Saturday, August 30 at 11:59 pm). The first quiz will cover the *Syllabus* and *Start Here* sections. You are responsible for completing your quizzes by 11:59 pm on the due date. Quizzes are non-cumulative and are worth **20%** of your overall grade.

Once you have completed the readings and discussion and viewed the lectures for that week, make sure you study this material thoroughly. After you've learned the material, you should be ready to begin. The quiz is timed, so you must know all the material before you start (**i.e., there will not be enough time to look up each answer in your notes, so you should prepare as if your notes were not available to you**). You will have 10 minutes to complete each quiz.

If you are still taking the quiz when the due time passes, you will not be allowed to finish it – the system will auto-submit your quiz. Thus, you **MUST** finish the quiz before the deadline. No makeups are permitted, except for medical or family emergencies.

****If you have any technical issues regarding your quizzes and/or other assignments, you must contact the UF Computing Help Desk immediately at 352-392-4357, option 2. Once you have done so, email your instructor and TA with the details of your problem along with your Help Desk ticket number. -- Please do not contact the instructors without the help desk ticket number.****

Before taking your first quiz, view the [Canvas video tutorial on taking quizzes](#).

Online Discussion Posts

Every week, students are expected to write a minimum of two posts on the online course discussion forums in Canvas. **This assignment opens each week on Monday and closes on Saturday at 11:59 pm.** The first post will respond to the course readings and/or lectures required for that week. The first post must be uploaded **before Thursday, at 11:59 pm**. The second post will respond to a classmate and must be submitted **before Saturday at 11:59 pm**. Students should feel free to post about a topic from the readings and/or videos for that week that most interests them. A few example topics and questions will also be made available to students should selecting a topic prove too difficult.

****Grading for online discussion posts:** For credit, the reflection post must be submitted by the appropriate deadlines. Both the initial post and the peer response are required for full credit. Each discussion assignment is worth 2 points. One point will be docked if you do not respond to another student's post. Half a point will be docked if your post lacks a citation (see below). ***You will receive no credit for late or missing posts.*****

In every initial post, you must cite (at least) one of the videos and/or the texts corresponding to the appropriate Module. **All initial posts must include precise in-text citations. The citation must be from the text or video assigned to the particular module. You must mention sources and include page numbers and/or video-stamps.** The Chicago author-date style is

recommended, but other formats (such as MLA or APA) are also accepted. Please review these conventions and utilize them in your posts.

All posts should be articulate, thorough, and adhere to the rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling of the English language. They should be respectful, well-written, and carefully edited, and should exhibit your analytical thinking. You are welcome to go beyond the minimum requirements and respond to multiple students, but you should post at least two responses. And, both responses must be thoughtful! A simple "*I agree*" or "*I like what you wrote*" will not suffice. Instead, both the initial post and response must contribute to and provide something substantive for a helpful discussion to receive credit. While there is no maximum word limit for these posts, there is a minimum requirement of 250 words for the initial post and 150 words for the response. Additionally, all posts should be courteous, academic, and non-aggressive. Please note that this course approaches religion from a scholarly perspective, not personal or theological. Be sure to review the information on the academic study of religion while completing your assignments. Rude and demeaning online behavior will not be tolerated for any reason and could adversely affect your grade. While students may certainly be critical, responses and observations should be presented professionally and academically. Students are encouraged to make multiple (relevant) posts, although this is not mandatory. Discussion posts will comprise **30%** of your overall grade for the course. You can use audio, video, and/or written mediums of communication in the discussion section.

Please be warned that factual inaccuracies will result in a score of 0 for that particular discussion response. Please refer to <https://guides.instructure.com/m/4152/1/50010-how-do-i-reply-to-a-discussion> for guidance on replying to discussion posts.

Project

For this assignment, you should first choose a particular religion you wish to learn more about. The religion you select should **NOT** be one with which you are familiar. This means, for example, if you are Hindu or your family is Hindu, you should not choose a Hindu site of worship even if you consider yourself now to be non-religious. *If you belong to a particular denomination, do not choose another denomination within the same tradition.* The purpose of this assignment is to help you understand a different religious tradition in ways that cannot be fully explained through a textbook or video. It also allows you to learn about the various cultures and traditions that are available in your community. It is advised that you begin this project as soon as possible because, unlike similar observation papers, this paper includes several parts.

For the detailed assignment, see

<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/512420/assignments/6124241>.

The project consists of several parts, including a 6+ page reflection paper that summarizes your findings. It is advised that you begin this project as soon as possible since it includes several parts. This project is worth **20%** of your total grade. **No late papers will be accepted. The project is due Wednesday, November 19, at 11:59 pm.**

Midterm Exam

This course will conduct a **midterm exam that will be administered online via Canvas on Wednesday, October 15**. You will have from 12:00 am to 11:59 pm on exam day to start and complete the exam. Please make sure to start your exam with enough time to finish it, as the exam will close at 11:59 pm, regardless of whether you have completed it. The exam will cover the first half of the class (Modules 1-7), and the questions will consist of a mixture of multiple choice, true/false, matching, and other question types. Once started, students will have 40 minutes to complete it. The midterm exam will comprise **15%** of your overall grade for the course.

Final Exam

This course will conduct a **final exam that will be administered online via Canvas starting from Saturday, December 6, to Wednesday, December 10. The exam will be available from midnight on the first day that it is open until 11:59 pm on the day that it is due**. Please make sure to start your exam with enough time to finish it, as the exam will close at 11:59 pm on the due date, regardless of your completion status. This exam will only cover the second half of the class (Modules 8-11), and the questions will consist of a mixture of multiple choice, true/false, matching, and other such short-answer question types. Once started, students will have 40 minutes to complete it. Just like the Midterm, the final exam will comprise **15%** of your overall grade for the course. Additional details on the final exam will be provided later in the semester. All course activities will be conducted via Canvas (<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>).

Course Schedule

Under the 'modules' tab on Canvas, you will find all of the readings, videos, assignments, discussions, and quizzes for each module of the course, along with their respective due dates. The semester starts on **Thursday, August 21**, and you will be expected to engage with the course material right away.

Please note the following holidays observed by the University of Florida: **Monday, September 1 (Labor Day); Friday, October 17- Saturday, October 18 (homecoming); Monday, November 11 (Veterans Day); Monday, November 24- Friday, November 28 (Thanksgiving)**.

Course Technology

Frequent access to a computer with a good broadband connection is required. See the [Start Here](#) section for details on the technology used in the class.

Gator Evals

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways: [1] The email they receive from GatorEvals; [2] Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals; or [3] The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com>. Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Policies

Disability Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See “Get Started With the DRC” Disability Resource Center webpage (<https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>). Students must share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the [Dean of Students Office](#).

The Disability Resource Center will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation before submitting assignments, taking quizzes, or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

Attendance

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. See <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/> for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies.

University Policy on Academic Misconduct

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies several behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. See the UF Conduct Code website for more information. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the [UF Student Honor Code](#).

Note on Plagiarism

A student shall not represent as the student’s work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- Quoting oral or written materials, including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution
- Submitting a document or assignment that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authorized by the student
- Unauthorized use of materials or resources
- Prohibited collaboration or consultation
- Submission of paper or academic work purchased or obtained from an outside source

All written assignments, including discussion posts and papers, must include the proper method of citation from the citation style of your choosing. Please see

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

For more information on how to cite your work. Please go through the guidelines for [preventing plagiarism](#).

The use of ChatGPT or other AI software is forbidden and goes against the university honor code.

Grading Breakdown

Quizzes: 20%

Discussion Reflection/Response Postings: 30%

Final Paper: 20%

Midterm Exam: 15%

Final Exam: 15%

Please see the [Assignments](#) tool for the points value of each assignment. Grades will be made available in the [Grades](#) tool shortly after each assignment is graded. If, at the end of the semester, your grade is within 1 point of the next letter grade, your grade will be rounded up.

****Please note: A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.****

Grading Scale

GRADE POINTS

A 93-100

A- 90-92

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D/ Unsatisfactory 65-69

F/Fail- 64 and below

Refer to UF-Academic Regulations on Grade points here

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Resources at a Glance

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [the U Matter, We Care](#) website to refer or report a concern, and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

University Police Department: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care, call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.](#)

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

UF General Education Criteria Page: All undergraduate students (except those transferring to UF with an A.A. degree from a Florida public college or an A.A. certificate from a Florida public state university) are required to complete UF's general education requirement to graduate—requirements [listed here.](#)

Academic Resources:

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

[Career Connections Center:](#) Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

[Library Support:](#) Various ways to receive assistance with library use or finding resources. Call 866-281-6309 or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.

[Academic Resources:](#) 1317 Turlington Hall, Call 352-392-2010, or to make a private appointment: 352-392-6420. Email contact: teaching-center@ufl.edu. General study skills and tutoring.

[Writing Studio:](#) Daytime (9:30 am-3:30 pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138 | Evening (5:00 pm-7:00 pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds; Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information.

Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): [View the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information.](#)

UF Student Success Initiative: Visit <https://studentsuccess.ufl.edu/> for resources that support your success as a UF student.

Campus Health and Wellness Resources:

UF Whole Gator Resources: Visit <https://one.uf.edu/whole-gator/discover> for resources that are designed to help you thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally at UF.

Course Schedule

Week 1

- The Syllabus Quiz is available from August 21 at midnight and is due on August 23 at 11:59 pm.
- Discussion post on the [Religious Literacy Test](#) is due August 22 at 11:59 pm, the reply is due August 23 at 11:59 pm.

Week 2

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Recognize different ways of defining religion and approaches to the study of the subject in an academic context.
- Describe the differences between monotheism and polytheism and gain an understanding of dualism.
- Elaborate on the role of missionary expansion in the spread of religious traditions.
- Entertain different opinions on the study of "World Religions"

Instructional Materials

- Readings
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 2 - 25
 - [McCutcheon Academic Study of Religion.pdf](#)
- Overview
 - Watch: [What is the difference between theology and religious studies?](#)

[Course Introduction Quiz](#) Due on August 30 at 11:59 pm

[Course Introduction Discussion](#) Due on August 28 at 11:59 pm, response due August 30 at 11:59 pm

Week 3 and Week 4: Hinduism

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Describe the significant Hindu festivals of Navaratri, Deepavali, and Holi
- Explain the Hindu concepts of karma, samsara, and moksha
- Identify the different categories of Hindu scriptures
- Explain the role of dance and music in Hindu religious practices
- Describe the different gods and goddess and their relationship to each other

Instructional Materials

- Reading
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 302-363
- Overview
 - [Introduction to Hindu Traditions](#) (28:14) by Dr. Vasudha Narayanan, [PDF](#)
 - [Hindu Festivals and Sacraments](#) (16:00) by Dr. Vasudha Narayanan
- Spotlight
 - [Hindu Sacred Texts](#) (28:13) by Dr. Vasudha Narayanan
- Video

- [Classical Indian Dance and Hinduism](#) (06:42) Commentary by Dr. Vasudha Narayanan
- [Classical Indian Dance and Hinduism performance](#) (10:26)
- [Yoga](#) (07:31) by Laura Ahrens James

*Note: The first quiz and discussion question focus on the reading from Oxtoby, while the second quiz and discussion are focused on all the videos (including the video lecture)

[Hinduism Discussion 1](#) due on September 4, response due September 6

[Hinduism Quiz 1](#) due on September 6

[Hinduism Discussion 2](#) due on September 11, response due September 13

[Hinduism Quiz 2](#) due on September 13

Week 5: Jainism and Sikhism

Jainism Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Identify the shared characteristics among *shramana* traditions.
- Name the five *mahavratas*, the three jewels, what the four-fold community consists of, and the three major Jain festivals.
- Recognize and discuss differences within the Jain tradition.
- Define specific key terms like: *ahimsa*, *Jina*, *Jiva*, *pudgala*, and *anekantavada*.
- Identify social, political, and cultural factors that have come into play throughout the history of Jainism.

Instructional Materials

- Reading
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 400-433
 - [Jainism by Coral Rodriguez.pptx](#)
- Video
 - [India's Jains](#) (07:37)
 - [Introduction to Jainism by Carol Rodriguez](#) (17:56)
- Internet Resources
 - [BBC, Religions, Jainism](#)

Sikhism Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Recognize the social and political environment in which Sikhism arose.
- Identify the Ten Gurus and the significant events that transpired during their guruships.
- Name the primary texts.
- Define terms like: *Akal Purakh*, *nan*, *dan*, *ishan*, *Punjab*, *Sikh*.
- Identify the meaning of Khalsa, the conditions in which it was created, the ‘five Ks,’ and the Khalsa’s changes over history.
- Recognize worship practices and the major festivals.
- Discuss and analyze contemporary Sikh identity through the actions of one of its historical gurus.

Instructional Materials

- Reading
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 364-399
- Video
 - [On Common Ground - Law Enforcement Training Video on Sikhism](#) (17:16)

[Jainism & Sikhism Discussion](#) due on September 18, response due September 20

[Jainism Quiz](#) due on September 20

[Sikhism Quiz](#) due on September 20

Week 6: Buddhism

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Describe the life and enlightenment of the Buddha
- Identify and describe the three branches of Buddhism
- Explain Buddhism's notion of God and the self
- Identify the Four Sights, Four Noble Truths, and Three Gems of Buddhism

Instructional Materials

- **Reading**
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 434-495
- **Spotlight**
 - [Buddhism and Theodicy](#) (23:18) by Dr. Mario Poceski
- **Video**
 - [The Life of Buddha](#) (49:47)

[Buddhism Discussion](#) due on September 25, response due September 27

[Buddhism Quiz](#) due on September 27

Week 7: Chinese Religions

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this module, students will:

- Name the major thinkers and schools of Confucianism
- Name the major thinkers and schools of Daoism
- Identify the changes that arose during the different dynasties into the modern period
- List the six arts, the five relationships, and the five forces
- Recognize the significant texts of Confucianism and Daoism
- Define the terms *qi*, *wuwei*, and *sanjiao*
- Identify the roles and contributions of women to these systems
- Recognize the rites and festivals performed
- Analyze the difference between the Confucianists and the Daoists' understanding of similar key concepts
- Discuss Confucianism and Daoism

Instructional Materials

- Reading
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 496-559

- Overview
 - [Introduction to Chinese Religions](#) (32:26) by Kendall Marchman, [PDF](#)
- Video
 - [Opening Doa: A Documentary Film on Taoism and Martial Arts](#)
 - (23:49)
 - [Confucianism in Korea](#) (5:05)

[Chinese Religions Quiz](#) due on October 4

[Chinese Religions Discussion](#) post due on October 2, response due by October 4

Week 8: Japanese Religions

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Discuss how Shinto, Buddhism, and other traditions interact and overlap in Japanese Culture
- Evaluate the role that state Shinto played in World War II and its aftermath
- Demonstrate how Japanese Traditions have changed in the 20th century.
- Illustrate how religion can help individuals who are recovering from loss/disaster

Instructional Materials

- Reading
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 560-591
- Overview
 - [Introduction to Japanese Religions](#) (22:56) by Kelsie Stewart, [PDF](#)
- Videos
 - [Buddhism after the Tsunami - The Souls of Zen](#) (1:03:40)
- Internet Resources
 - [After the Tsunami, the Japanese Turn To Ancient Rituals](#) (04:06)
 - ["Can Religion be based on Ritual Practice without Belief?"](#)

[Japanese Religions Discussion](#) due on October 9, response due October 11

[Japanese Religions Quiz](#) October 11

[Midterm Exam](#) Due on October 16

Week 9: Judaism

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Describe the basic Jewish celebrations
- Describe how Jews pray
- Explain Jewish dietary restrictions
- Identify the significant books of Judaism

Instructional Materials

- Reading
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 126-181
- Overview
 - [Introduction to Judaism](#) (18:57) by Rabbi Gail Swedroe, [PDF](#)
- Spotlight

- [The Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israelite Religion](#) (24:15) by Dr. Robert Kawashima
- Video
 - [The Jewish Path](#) (5:49)

[Judaism Discussion](#) due on October 20, response by October 22

[Judaism Quiz](#) due on October 20

Week 10 & Week 11: Christianity

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Outline the history and beliefs of Christianity
- Explain the life of the Historical Jesus
- Distinguish the theological arguments that contributed to the numerous splits within Christianity
- Recognize contemporary issues Christianity is facing and engaging with
- Discuss the relationship between Western Ethics and Christianity

*Note: Quiz and Discussion 1 focus on the videos, while Quiz/Discussion 2 focuses on the reading.

Instructional Materials

- Reading
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 182-243
- Overview
 - [Christianity as a Global Religion](#) (16:33) by Sarah "Moxy" Moczygemba
 - Watch Dr. Richard Horner's [Introduction to the Four Gospels](#)
- Spotlight
 - [Theodicy and the Problem of Evil in Christianity](#) (27:38) by Dr. Anna Peterson
- Recommended
 - [From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians \(part 1\)](#) (1:51:05) on PBS
 - [From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians](#) (part 2) (1:52:46) on PBS

[Christianity Discussion #1](#) due on October 23, response by October 25

[Christianity Quiz #1](#) due on October 25

[Christianity Discussion #2](#) due on October 30, response by November 1

[Christianity Quiz #2](#) due on November 1

Week 12 & Week 13: Islam

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- List the five pillars of Islam
- Differentiate between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims
- Recall the sources of authority in Islam
- Describe the role of the Prophet Muhammad in Islam

- Explain how the Sufi tradition differs from the other forms of Islam

Instructional Materials

- Reading
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 244-301
- Overview
 - [Introduction to Islam](#) (34:23) by Dr. Gwendolyn Simmons
- Spotlight
 - [Islam and Ethics](#) (26:03) by Dr. Terje Ostebo
- Video
 - [Inside Mecca](#) (55:51)
 - [Me and the Mosque](#) (52:45)
- Recommended Videos
 - [Islam Empire of Faith Part 1 Prophet Muhammad and rise of Islam full PBS Documentary](#)
 - [Islam Empire of Faith Part 2 The Awakening full PBS Documentary](#)

[Islam Discussion](#) due on November 13, response by November 15

[Islam Quiz](#) due on November 15

Week 14: Indigenous Religions

Objectives

Upon completion of this module, the student will be able to:

- Describe how scholars classify and study Indigenous Religions
- Describe major concepts found in the Indigenous traditions in particular geographic regions
- Recognize how these traditions interacted with, mixed with, and/or resisted European domination
- Relate the role artifacts play in our contemporary understanding of Indigenous beliefs
- Analyze the role of space in Indigenous understandings of self and cosmology

Instructional Materials

- Reading
 - Amore, Hussain, Oxtoby: pg. 26-75
- Overview
 - [The Art of World-Making](#) (22:07) by Dr. Robin Wright
- Spotlight
 - [Cosmology Among the Baniwa Jaguars](#) (24:15) by Dr. Robin M. Wright
 - [Religions of the Andean Region](#) (25:36) by Dr. Maya Stanfield-Mazzi

[Indigenous Religions Discussion](#) due on November 20, response by November 22

[Indigenous Religions Quiz](#) due on November 22

Week 15: Project & Final Exam

Project due November 19

For this assignment, you should first choose a particular religion you wish to learn more about. The religion you select should NOT be one with which you are familiar. This means, for

example, if you are Hindu or your family is Hindu, you should not choose a Hindu site of worship even if you consider yourself now to be non-religious. *If you belong to a particular denomination, we strongly recommend not choosing another denomination within the same tradition.* The purpose of this assignment is *not* to convert you in any way, but for you to understand a different religious tradition in ways that cannot be fully explained through a textbook or video. It also allows you to learn about the various cultures and traditions that are available in your community. It is advised that you begin this project as soon as possible because, unlike similar observation papers, this paper includes several parts.

Part 1: Websites

(3/15

points)

After choosing which tradition you would like to learn more about, visit at least three websites that are focused on that tradition. The websites can be blogs, “about” sites, religious institutions, organizations, Facebook pages, etc. Look at the “about sections,” the events listed, the information provided, the images, and the terms the sites are using. How are they presenting the tradition? What words/images/ideas/beliefs/practices seem to be most prominent? What does the site tell you about the religious community? How do the different sites compare? Pay special attention to who may be the creators of the site and who their intended audience may be. If you have already chosen the church/temple/synagogue/mosque you would like to visit, see if they have a website and include it as one of your three. You may work on this part before or after your site visit; however, researching the sites beforehand will provide you with some necessary knowledge of the tradition before your visit, while looking at websites after you visit your site might help you better compare the two.

Part 2: Site Visit

(3/15

points)

You are required to visit the organization of your choosing TWICE. There is some flexibility here. Suppose the site you decide to visit has both a morning and evening service, for example. In that case, you may go to the morning service the first time and then the evening service the second time, or you can go to one of the services and then an event they are having at some other time. For example, you may visit a Hindu temple for your first visit and then go to a dance performance that is part of a festival. You may also choose to visit two different organizations of the same tradition. For example, there are two large Pentecostal churches in Gainesville (there are many other smaller ones, too). You can choose to attend one for your first visit and another one for your second visit so that you can compare the two. If you have any questions about what counts as a site visit or if you need suggestions for places to visit, contact the instructors. Additionally, at the end of these instructions are some suggested questions for you to use as guidelines.

Part 3: Interview

(3/15

points)

This is NOT a formal interview, but while you are at the place of worship or event, talk to the people next to you or whoever you find interesting. Ask them questions about things you did not understand. Find out how long they have been attending that particular site. Think about how their answers might compare to what we have learned in class. You only have to talk to one person, although you may find it helpful to talk to others to compare their answers. Again, the

objective of this is *not* to convert you to any tradition. You are a researcher and should attempt to be objective. You are more than welcome to discuss your thoughts and impressions in your final paper.

Part 4: Pictures

(1/15

points)

Include at least one picture of yourself on the site. Some places do not allow you to take photos inside. That is okay – take a picture of the outside or the sign. You are welcome to include more pictures if you think it is helpful and/or interesting, but you **MUST** be in one of the pictures. This provides proof of your attendance.

Part 5: Analysis

(5/15 points)

After you have looked at the websites, completed your site visits, and conducted your interview, you can now compile your thoughts in a final paper.

The paper should be a minimum of 6 pages (NOT including pictures, bibliography/works cited, or title page). *All essays should feature a strong, simple, and clear thesis statement.* Students are responsible for visiting the sites and websites with adequate time to complete the assignment -- no late assignments will be accepted. All sources used **MUST** be cited using an academic form (MLA, Chicago, etc.), and students who fail to do so may violate the University of Florida Honor Code. You do not have to use outside sources other than the class materials and the websites visited. Still, if you do decide to use additional sources, these references should come from academic sources and must also be appropriately cited. All papers should be double-spaced, size 12 Times New Roman font with 1" margins.

Here are some suggested questions to which you may respond. You do not need to answer each of these, but you may use them as a guide for your writing:

- What were the central religious ideas emphasized in the event and in the conversations you engaged in?
- How did the event you observed differ from your own experiences of religious practice?
- What was the most notable or memorable part of the event you observed?
- What are some crucial beliefs or ideas about the Sacred/God (and its/his/her relation with humans) being communicated?
- What religious symbols or images of the Divine are visible? What is their significance (feel free to ask)?
- How is the sacred space arranged?
- What is the sequence of events?
- What rituals are performed, individually and/or collectively?
- How are the leader(s) dressed? What is his/her/their role?
- What is the size and nature of the congregation (sex, age, ethnicity, etc.)?
- What is the role of the congregation in the service?
- How are particular roles, seating, segregated? (age, race, gender, etc.) Why?
- What use, if any, is made of sacred scripture in this service?
- What use, if any, is made of secular literature in this service?
- What use, if any, is made of music or sound?
- How did you feel being a part of this setting?

- What was particularly new or unusual?
- What did you learn about this group's religious beliefs?
- What did you learn about your own religion/religious beliefs? What did you learn about yourself?
- How does the event you observed relate to broader issues in the study of religion?

Helpful Hints

Consider consulting the book: *How to Be a Perfect Stranger: A Guide to Etiquette in Other People's Religious Ceremonies* before your visit.

- Dress appropriately for the setting. If you do not know whether there is a dress code, call beforehand (e.g., women may have to cover their hair in specific settings). It is generally better to be overdressed than underdressed.
- If you do not understand what is happening, ask someone sitting nearby. Of course, you do not want to interrupt someone during a moment of silence or prayer. Use your good judgment. Follow the group – if it stands to sing, or kneels to pray, do likewise.
- It can be helpful to arrive slightly early to give yourself time to become acclimated and observe preparations. You should introduce yourself to the religious leader or participants, if appropriate.
- Do not rely on your memory to draft your report. Bring a pen and some paper. If writing seems inappropriate, note details after you leave.
- If an offering is collected, contributions are usually voluntary.

Total Points: 15

Criteria	Pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Website	3 pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Site Visit	3 pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Interview	3 pts

This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Picture	1 pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Clear Introduction/Thesis/Conclusion	1 pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Material is organized and flows in an easy-to-understand manner (transitions are included from one section to the next)	1 pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Analysis is provided with ample reflections	2 pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Punctuation/Grammar	1 pts

Final Exam due on December 10