

Religion 20
Introduction to the Study of Religion: Comparative
Spring 2007

Sections: 10853 Section C TR 11:00-12:15 Lafayette L102
 10855 Section D TR 12:30-1:45 Lafayette L100
 10856 Section E TR 3:30-4:45 Lafayette L111

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Office Hours: W 12:30-2:00 and by appointment

Our department offers five introductory courses in the study of religion: REL 20 (Comparative), REL 21 (Asian), REL 22 (Western), REL 23 (Bible), and REL 24 (US Ethnic Religions). The common goal of all courses is to introduce students to the humanistic, academic study of religion rather than to convince students of the truth of any tradition. This semester we consider three religions: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Each of these traditions is now practiced in every corner of the globe, but in their origins and early development these religions dominated a large swathe of territory in Eurasia, from Ireland to Indonesia. In this course you will learn a little about the history and contemporary practice of each tradition, but we will focus our attention on themes that are common to many or all world religions: ritual practice; the use of scripture in justifying ritual practice and religious belief; the social context of religion and the power of orthodoxy in defining religious communities.

Textbook

Required Textbook: Noss, David, *A History of the World's Religions*, Prentice Hall.
A copy is on reserve in the library. The current edition is the 11th, 2003; page numbers below are to this edition. The text of other, recent editions of this book is probably similar, but if you have another edition you should make sure you cross-check page numbers with an 11th edition copy. Like my lecture notes (see below), I view the textbook as a tool: use it as it is helpful.

Other required readings can be found online on UVM's WebCT system. You don't need to bring the textbook to class unless I tell you ahead of time, but you should bring the current readings from WebCT (hard or digital copy) because we will often refer to these in class.

Course Requirements

Your grade for this course will be calculated as follows:

- Attendance (10%)
- quizzes (5%)
- first midterm exam (15%)
- second midterm exam (20%)
- final exam (30%)
- four take-home essays (5% each)

Note that for all assignments, Carl's rule applies. This rule states: *if Carl can't read it, it's wrong.*

Regular **class attendance** is expected. I will pass a signup sheet around every day, except when I can take attendance another way (on quiz or exam days, for example). If you do not **sign** it, you will be counted as absent. ("Sign" means you must write your name in longhand. It should be legible, and you should use the same style of signature every class.) If classes are cancelled (for example, due to weather), all students will be counted as present. Your attendance grade will be based on the number of classes you attend, as follows:

<u>Attendance Grade</u>	<u># of Classes</u> <u>Attended</u>
A = 100	≥ 25
B = 85	≥ 22
C = 75	≥ 20
D = 65	≥ 17
F = 0	≤ 16

For dates and subjects of **quizzes**, see schedule below. They are intended primarily to help you prepare for the exams.

The **exams** will be partly objective, and will also contain essay questions. Part of the final exam will focus on the final unit of the course (Islam), and part will be **comprehensive**. Times and locations for final exams will be posted on the registrar's website, and announced in class.

Take-home essays #2-4 are due a week before each exam, and are intended to prepare you for the main essay question. Bring five copies of your essay to class with you on the day it is due. We will split into small groups and you will read your peers' essays. Then we'll convene as a group and talk about what constitutes a good essay. You'll have a choice of several options for the take-home essay; but only one of these take-home questions will then appear on the exam. If you cannot compose your essay in **MS Word .doc** format, you must submit your essay in **Rich Text Format (.rtf)**.

Take-home essay #1 is intended to help you learn what I expect for subsequent essays. It will be graded differently than subsequent essays. Details on this assignment are given on WebCT.

Take-home essays will only be accepted electronically and **only through WebCT**. Essays that are submitted **on time** and that address the topic will receive full credit (essays #2-4). Late or off-topic essays will not be accepted and will receive no credit. Essays are due at the start of your class, but will be accepted until 5pm through WebCT. Network delays and problems using WebCT will not constitute grounds for an exemption, so you are advised not to wait until the last minute to submit your essays.

Email

Official communications for this class will be made through UVM email and posted on WebCT. If you use another email account regularly, please make sure your **UVM email account** automatically forwards to that account.

Computing

Lecture notes will be available through WebCT, in PowerPoint and .pdf format. The .pdf format is two slides per page; if you have PowerPoint you can print these notes in other ways.

Use of lecture notes: Lecture notes are intended as a **tool**. I display them during class to help students follow my lectures, and I give them to you online to assist in your note-taking and in reviewing for exams. I recommend you read slides before class, and print them in hard copy, then take your own notes on these printouts.

I try to make my notes relatively self-explanatory, because student feedback indicates that makes them better for use in studying. But they are not intended to be a textbook, nor are they entirely self-contained. Because they serve a dual purpose, they are more narrative than I would like for use in class, and not sufficiently comprehensive to replace class attendance. They outline and review what I plan to do during class, but they don't (and can't) contain everything you are supposed to learn in the course. Like any tool, use them to the extent they are helpful.

Words (names, technical terms) that you will be tested on are boldfaced in the lecture notes. The notes also contain brief audio clips. These are intended to help you learn words, on the principle that knowing how to pronounce a word will help you memorize it. You are responsible for being able to **spell** these words correctly.

If you have not been **added to** the **WebCT** site by the start of the term, or within a couple of days of adding the course for late adds, feel free to drop me an email to remind me to add you.

Students are advised to check **WebCT** every couple of days during the semester, and in any case at least once a week. As I add information to the site, I list it on the front page so that you'll quickly know what is new.

Take-home essays must be submitted through WebCT. They must be submitted on time, so you need to be able to use WebCT. There is a sample assignment on WebCT (not required), with which you can practice using the system before you need to submit your first, for-credit essay.

If you do not have PowerPoint, you can download a free **PowerPoint** Viewer from the Microsoft website. The easiest way to locate the site is to Google "PowerPoint Viewer".

Macintosh users who don't have Microsoft Word should be able to save documents in .doc format from the program **TextEdit**, which comes preinstalled on Macs, or with **iWork Pages**. Other students who do not have Microsoft Word might consider using **OpenOffice** (www.openoffice.org), which is freeware but requires substantial installation.

Academic Integrity

All students should be familiar with and abide by the University's Code of Academic Integrity. This is found in the student handbook *The Cat's Tail* and also online at <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.html>. As regards this course, please note the following: on **exams**, all work should be your own, and should represent your own knowledge of the subject. This means that you should not talk to another student during the exam; and you cannot use notes or other assistance during the exam. The rules are different for **take-home essays**. These are educational rather than evaluative exercises: they should help you

learn the content and skills of the course. Write your essays by yourself, without outside help. But since you will not be graded on the content of take-home essays, there should be no reason to violate this rule. In class you will share your essays with your peers, and they with you. You can freely adopt any ideas or language from your peers and use that on the exam essay the following week: if you can remember it, you can use it.

The use of any **electronic devices** during exams will result in a grade of F for that exam. Therefore, you should turn off any cell phones, PDAs, laptops, calculators, and other devices prior to the start of the exam and keep them off for the duration of the exam. Similarly, all exams in this course are **closed-book**, and any reference to books, notes, or other written materials will result in an F for the exam. Students should not **talk** to one another in the exam room after the first examination has been passed out, and until such a time as the last exam has been collected. Violations of this rule will result in an F as well. If you need to **leave the room** during an exam, please tell me and leave your exam face down on your table. If I have reason to believe that any students are using outside assistance on an exam, I will also pursue normal university procedures for violations of academic integrity.

So please note: any student using an electronic device or referring to any printed material not part of the exam, or speaking to another student during the exam period, will receive the exam grade of F even if I do not have reason to believe the intent of that action was improper.

Individual Circumstances

Students who wish to observe **religious holidays** on regularly scheduled class days must inform me during the **first two weeks** of the semester of your intent to observe the holiday even when the exact date of the holiday will not be known until later so that alternative arrangements convenient to both you and me can be made at the earliest opportunity.

Accommodations may be provided to eligible students with disabilities; please obtain an accommodation letter from ACCESS, and see me during the first two weeks of the semester to discuss what accommodations will be necessary. ACCESS contact information: 6-7753 or access@uvm.edu, A170 Living/Learning Center.

Members of UVM varsity and junior varsity **teams** are responsible for listing for me, in writing and by the end of the **second full week** of classes, any conflicts between their planned athletic schedule and our class schedule.

Assignments

Please note that I may make slight alterations in the following assignments as the semester progresses. These may be necessitated by school closings, my feeling that the assignments below are too onerous, or my judgment that course goals will be better served by modest changes. I will do my best not to increase the quantity of work required for the course or to change key dates such as exam days. Any changes will be announced in class and on WebCT.

Below are dates on which your work is **due**.

Introduction

The first three classes introduce some of the themes that we will be considering later in the course. The class is organized largely on historical grounds, introducing you to some of the key periods in the development of our three religious traditions. You will have a chance to read brief selections from sacred texts (“scripture”) in each tradition, and look at some of the ways these texts are read and used. But we’ll also consider religious practice, looking at ways in which rituals are performed and also looking at descriptions (“ethnographies”) of the lives of religious people and their social interactions.

Jan 16: First Class, No Homework Due Today

Jan 18: Ethnography
Rao, *Negotiating the Divine*, selections
Read Syllabus

Jan 23: Scriptural Interpretation
Buckley and Angell, eds., *The Quaker Bible Reader*, selections

Hinduism

In this unit we will consider a common view of Hinduism, according to which it derives in relatively straightforward, linear fashion from the Vedic religion. Then we will look at some of the varieties of contemporary Hindu practice and consider some arguments against this linear model of development. The unit will be primarily organized historically, but it will allow us to think about the question of whether a religion can be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions regarding doctrine, theology, or practice.

Jan 25: Vedic Religion
Noss 80-91 (section I)
Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology*, selections
Rigveda, selections
Quiz on syllabus (open notes)

Jan 30: Brahmanism
Noss 91-98 (to That Art Thou), 100-102 (Karma to end), 110 (Code of Manu)
Upanishads, selections

Feb 1: **Writing Assignment #1 Due**

- Feb 6: Tantra
McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls*, selections
Quiz on Vedic Religion and Brahmanism (closed notes)
- Feb 8: Context of Brahmanism: Jainism and Buddhism
Noss, 157-163 (sections II-III)
Noss 164-166 (through Siddhartha), 174-179 (section II through Dukkha)
Puranas, selections
- Feb 13: Hinduism
Noss 113-114 (Four Stages), 125-135 (section VI)
selections from bhakti poetry
- Feb 15: Defining Hinduism
Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*, selections
Frykenberg, "Emergence of 'Hinduism' as a concept and as an institution"

Christianity

Our historical overview of Christianity will focus on the development of the scriptural canon and the early centuries, then skip to the Reformation and the role of Christianity in the modern world. We will conclude by looking at a case study on the use of scripture in justifying ritual practices.

- Feb 20: Context of Early Christianity
Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*, selections
Quiz on Rest of Hinduism Section (closed notes)
- Feb 22: Jesus and the New Testament
Noss 446-448 (Sources), 450-464 (sections II-IV)
New Testament, selections
- Feb 27: **Writing Assignment #2 due**
- March 1: Adaptions of Christian Scripture
Heliand, selections
Quiz on Context and Christian Origins (closed notes)
- March 8: **Midterm #1 (Hinduism)**
- March 20: Growth of Christianity
Noss, 465-474 (from Jerusalem Church)
Noss 476-482 (through Christological Controver.), 485-488 (Augustine to Doctrinal Rift)
Augustine, selections
- March 22: Reformation
Noss 501-516 (sections IV –V)
Luther, selections

March 27: Christian Worship and Scripture
Kimbrough, *Taking Up Serpents*, Ch. 1
Quiz through Reformation (closed notes)

March 29: Christianity and Modernity
McMullen, "Galileo on Science and Scripture", selections

Islam

Our historical overview of Islam will focus on the development of the scriptural canon and the early centuries, then skip to the role of Islam in the modern world. We then look at a case study on the use of scripture in justifying ritual practices, and we conclude with the topic of defining religion, which we previously considered at the end of the Hinduism unit.

April 3: Islamic Origins
Noss 532-551 (sections I-III)
Koran, selections

April 5: **Writing Assignment #3 due**

April 10: Uses of Islamic Scripture
El-Gamal, *Islamic Finance*, selections

April 12: **Midterm #2 (Christianity)**

April 17: Growth of Islam
Noss 552-558 (through Sunnis and Sharia)
Noss 568-575 (section I)
Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, selections

April 19: Islamic Worship and Scripture
Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse*, selections

April 24: Islam and Modernity
Noss 581-584 (section IV)
Moaddel and Talattof, eds., *Fundamentalist and Modernist Debates in Islam*, selections

April 26: Defining Religion: Hindu-Moslem Interactions
Gottschalk, *Beyond Hindu and Muslim*, selections

May 1: **Writing Assignment #4 due**