



HISTORY 597.01E: INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES COURSE SYLLABUS: SUMMER I 2016

Instructor: Professor John Howard Smith
Class Location/Time: Ferguson Social Sciences 150 / M & W, 12:00-3:05 p.m.
Office Location: Ferguson Social Sciences 117
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:00-11:30 a.m., or by appointment
Office Phone: 903-886-5219
Office Fax: 903-468-3230
University Email Address: John.Smith@tamuc.edu

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Prerequisite/Co-requisite: None

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Textbooks Required:

Lewis M. Hopfe, Mark R. Woodward, & Brett Hendrickson, *Religions of the World*, 13th ed.
Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2016. ISBN13: 978-0-13-379382-6
Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993. ISBN10 0-345-38456-3

Supplemental Reading:

Selected items downloadable from the course's eCollege site, or distributed as handouts.

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the study of religion by looking at topics and themes such as doctrine, ritual, scripture, mysticism, pilgrimage, and myth across the major religions in the world, including Christianity, while also introducing methodological approaches to the comparative study of religion.

Student Learning Outcome:

Students will develop a familiarity with the world's major religious traditions and systems, and be able to discuss their various similarities and differences in a comparative fashion.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments

This course consists of a series of activities and assessments to assist students in achieving the outcomes/objectives for the course and instructional units/modules. Each week students will work on various combinations of readings, discussions, and research.

Participation: (100 pts., 40% of course grade)

Student Learning Outcome: Students will develop a familiarity with the world's major religious traditions and systems, and be able to discuss their various similarities and differences in a comparative fashion.

Participation in class discussions is intended to allow students to talk about issues pertaining to the topics at hand concerning various aspects of religious studies, and will serve to inform the Instructor about how well students are absorbing course content. They will also allow students to further develop and refine skills in scholarly debating, as they will be required to answer questions posed by the Instructor and by their classmates in coherent and insightful ways.

Analytical Paper: (100 pts., 30% of course grade)

Student Learning Outcome: Students will develop a familiarity with the world's major religious traditions and systems, and be able to discuss their various similarities and differences in a comparative fashion.

The analytical paper will be a 15-page comparative analysis of one of the "Big Three" monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, or Islam) with one of the non-Judeo-Christian religions that emphasizes three significant points of similarity and three significant points of divergence, and the reasons why those points of similarity and divergence are significant.

Grading

Grading will be calculated using a standard 10-point scale, with course elements weighted accordingly:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

Participation (100 pts.)	60%
Analytical Paper (100 pts.)	40%

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

As this course is web-enhanced through eCollege, students will require the following hardware and software:

Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. Windows XP or newer, and Internet Explorer 6.0 or newer is best.

Internet access/connection—high speed preferred (not dial-up).

Word Processor (preferably Microsoft Word 1997-2003 or newer).

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

This course will be facilitated using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: <https://leo.tamu-commerce.edu/login.aspx>.

You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamu-commerce.edu.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

Office hours are given at the top of this syllabus, and are posted outside of my door. Arrangements can be made if a student cannot meet with me during regular office hours for consultations. Email is the most reliable method of reaching me outside of my office. Expect a reply within 24 to 48 hours, and replies will only be sent to students' LeoMail accounts. **Do not email me from your personal email account.** Students may also be able to reach me by phone during office hours, and at other times do not leave a callback number as I do not return students' phone calls.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Academic Honesty

It is the policy of the University, the History Department, and the instructor that no form of plagiarism or cheating will be tolerated. Plagiarism is defined as the deliberate use of another's work and claiming it as one's own. This means ideas as well as text, whether paraphrased or presented verbatim (word-for-word). **Anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing will automatically fail the assignment in question, may summarily fail the course, and could be subject to disciplinary action by the University.**

*The instructor's evaluative judgment of tests and examinations is **final**, and will not be subject to revision except in cases of mathematical error.*

Class Decorum

All students must show respect toward the Instructor and the Instructor's syllabus, presentations, assignments, and point of view. Students should also respect each others' differences. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. If the Instructor determines that a student is not being respectful toward other students or the Instructor, or is otherwise behaving in a disruptive manner, it is the Instructor's prerogative to remove the student from the class either temporarily or permanently, as the case requires.

Note: Failure to comply with any of the Instructor's policies will result in immediate deregistration from the course.

University Specific Procedures:

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things,

this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu
[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

June 6 Introductions

Hopfe, et al., *Religions of the World*, chap. 1
 Armstrong, *History of God*, Introduction

June 8 Tribal Religions of Africa and the Americas

Hopfe, et al., *Religions of the World*, chaps. 2-3
 Selections from *American Indian Myths and Legends* (handout)

June 13 Religions of South Asia

Hopfe, et al., *Religions of the World*, chaps. 4-7
 Selections from *The Upanishads* (handout)
 The *Dhammapada* (Doc Sharing)

June 15 Native Religions of China and Japan

Hopfe, et al., *Religions of the World*, chaps. 8-9
 Selections from the *I Ching*, *Tao Te Ching*, and *Analects of Confucius* (handout)

June 20 Judaism

Hopfe, et al., *Religions of the World*, chap. 10
 Armstrong, *History of God*, chaps. 1-2
 Selections from the Old Testament of *The Bible* (handout)

June 22 Christianity

Hopfe, et al., *Religions of the World*, chap. 11
 Armstrong, *History of God*, chaps. 3-4
 Selections from the New Testament of *The Bible* (handout)

June 27 Islam and Baha'i

Hopfe, et al., *Religions of the World*, chap. 12
 Armstrong, *History of God*, chaps. 6-7
 Selections from *The Qur'an* (handout)

June 29 Monotheism and Enlightenment

Armstrong, *History of God*, chaps. 8-9
 David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Webliography)

July 4 Independence Day—No Class**July 6 The Rise of Atheism**

Armstrong, *History of God*, chaps. 10-11
 Baggini, *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction* (entire)
 Selections from *God is Not Great* (handout)

Paper Parameters

All papers must be composed using Microsoft Word (any version published since 1997).
 Text must be in 12 pt. Times New Roman font (10 pt. for footnotes).
 Margins must be one inch on top and bottom, left and right, with full justification of text.
 Disable the “extra space between paragraphs of same type” function.
 Documentation must take the form of footnotes (no parenthetical citations or endnotes).
 Bibliography must begin on a separate page, not on the same page as the end of the text.

Consult the Style Guide, “Wade Mecum,” for detailed information about how a proper history paper should look and what it should contain. The guide is downloadable from the “Doc Sharing” section of the course’s eCollege site.