



**HISTORY 535.01W: INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES
COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2017
Online Course**

Instructor: Professor John Howard Smith
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:00-11:30 a.m., or by appointment
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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
Julian Baggini, *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN10 0-19-280424-3
The Bible (any version will suffice)
The Qur'an (any translation will suffice)
Other texts as required (see "Course Outline / Calendar" below)

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., 50% 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.

Participation will take place on eCollege discussion boards each week, following the schedule on the syllabus. Each week's discussion will open on Sundays and conclude on Saturday, beginning with responding to the professor's question prompt no later than Wednesday before 11:59 p.m. Students are expected to engage heavily in these threaded discussions throughout each week. Students must make direct references to the course readings in their posts in support of their insights and observations.

Short Analytical Essay: (100 pts., 20% 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.

This assignment will be a 10-page comparative analysis of two of the religious systems studied prior to our study of Judaism on the week of October 23 (see below), with an eye to explaining points of commonality and divergence.

Composite Book Review: (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 composite book review will be a 15-to-20-page comparative analysis of Jack Miles's books *God: A Biography* and *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God* that analyzes either Judaism or Christianity against one of the other religious systems studied in the course (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc.).

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.)	50%
Analytical Essay (100 pts.)	20%
Composite Book Review (100 pts.)	30%

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

To fully participate in online courses you will need to use a current Flash enabled internet browser. For PC and Mac users the suggested browser is Mozilla Firefox.

You will need regular access to a computer with a broadband Internet connection. The minimum computer requirements are:

- 512 MB of RAM, 1 GB or more preferred
- Broadband connection required courses are heavily video intensive
- Video display capable of high-color 16-bit display 1024 x 768 or higher resolution

You must have a:

- Sound card, which is usually integrated into your desktop or laptop computer
- Speakers or headphones.
- *For courses utilizing video-conferencing tools and/or an online proctoring solution, a webcam and microphone are required.

Both versions of Java (32 bit and 64 bit) must be installed and up to date on your machine. At a minimum Java 7, update 51, is required to support the learning management system. The most current version of Java can be downloaded at: [JAVA web site](http://www.java.com/en/download/manual.jsp)
<http://www.java.com/en/download/manual.jsp>

Current anti-virus software must be installed and kept up to date.

Run a browser check through the Pearson LearningStudio Technical Requirements website.
[Browser Check](http://help.ecollege.com/LS_Tech_Req_WebHelp/en-us/#LS_Technical_Requirements.htm#Browse) http://help.ecollege.com/LS_Tech_Req_WebHelp/en-us/#LS_Technical_Requirements.htm#Browse.

Running the browser check will ensure your internet browser is supported.

- Pop-ups are allowed.
- JavaScript is enabled.
- Cookies are enabled.

You will need some additional free software (plug-ins) for enhanced web browsing. Ensure that you download the free versions of the following software, if you do not already have them:

- [Adobe Reader](https://get.adobe.com/reader/) <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
- [Adobe Flash Player](https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/) (version 17 or later) <https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>
- [Adobe Shockwave Player](https://get.adobe.com/shockwave/) <https://get.adobe.com/shockwave/>
- [Apple Quick Time](http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/) <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/>

At a minimum, you must have Microsoft Office 2013, 2010, 2007 or Open Office. Microsoft Office is the standard office productivity software utilized by faculty, students, and staff. Microsoft Word is the standard word processing software, Microsoft Excel is the standard spreadsheet software, and Microsoft PowerPoint is the standard presentation software. Copying and pasting, along with attaching/uploading documents for assignment submission, will also be required. If you do not have Microsoft Office, you can check with the bookstore to see if they have any student copies.

For additional information about system requirements, please see: [System Requirements for LearningStudio](https://secure.ecollege.com/tamuc/index.learn?action=technical) <https://secure.ecollege.com/tamuc/index.learn?action=technical>.

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.tamuc-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@tamuc-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.

eCollege Technical Support

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support for the use of Pearson LearningStudio.

Technical assistance is available 24/7 (24 hours, 7 days a week).

If you experience LearningStudio (eCollege) technical problems, contact the LearningStudio helpdesk at 1-866-656-5511 (toll free) or visit [Pearson 24/7 Customer Support Site](http://247support.custhelp.com/) <http://247support.custhelp.com/>

The student help desk may be reached in the following ways:

- **Chat Support:** Click on '*Live Support*' on the tool bar within your course to chat with a Pearson LearningStudio Representative.
- **Phone:** 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with Pearson LearningStudio Technical Support Representative.

Accessing Help from within Your Course: Click on the '*Tech Support*' icon on the upper left side of the screen inside the course. Then you will be able to get assistance via online chat or by phone.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

Policy for Reporting Problems with Pearson LearningStudio

Should students encounter Pearson LearningStudio based problems while submitting assignments/discussions/comments/exams, the following procedure must be followed:

1. Students must report the problem to the help desk. You may reach the helpdesk at 1-866-656-5511.
2. Students must file their problem with the helpdesk and obtain a helpdesk ticket number.
3. Once a helpdesk ticket number is in your possession, students should email me to advise me of the problem and provide me with the helpdesk ticket number.
4. I will call the helpdesk to confirm your problem and follow up with you.

PLEASE NOTE: Your personal computer and internet access problems are not a legitimate excuses for filing a ticket with the Pearson LearningStudio Help Desk. Only Pearson LearningStudio based problems are legitimate reasons to contact the Help Desk.

You strongly are encouraged to check for your internet browser compatibility **BEFORE** the course begins and take the Pearson LearningStudio tutorial offered for students who may require some extra assistance in navigating the Pearson LearningStudio platform.

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.

"Campus Carry" Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. **Pursuant to Penal**

Code 46.035 and Texas A&M University-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to (<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/or consult your event organizer. **Pursuant to Penal Code 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses.** Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

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@tamuc-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

Aug. 28-Sept. 1: Introduction—What Is Religion?

Hopfe, et al., chap. 1
 Armstrong, "Introduction"

Sept. 4-8: The Religions of Precolumbian North America

Hopfe, et al., chap. 2
 Joel W. Martin, *The Land Looks After Us: A History of Native American Religion* (entire)

Sept. 11-15: The Tribal Religions of Africa

Hopfe, et al., chap. 3
 Jacob K. Olupona, *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction* (entire)

Sept. 18-22: The Tribal Religions of Europe

Helen Morales, *Classical Mythology: A Very Short Introduction* (entire)

Sept. 25-29: Hinduism and Jainism

Hopfe, et al., chaps. 4-5
The Upanishads (entire—any version will do)

Oct. 2-6: Taoism and Confucianism

Hopfe, et al., chap. 8
 Lao Tse, *Tao Te Ching* (entire)
 Kung Fu-Tse (Confucius), *The Analects* (entire—any version will do)

Oct. 9-13: Buddhism and Sikhism

Hopfe, et al., chaps. 6-7
 Rupert Gethin, trans., *Sayings of the Buddha* (entire)

Oct. 16-20: Shintoism and Zen Buddhism in Japan

Hopfe, et al., chap. 9
 Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (entire)
Analytical Essay due Oct. 21

Oct. 23-27: Judaism

Hopfe, et al., chap. 10
 Armstrong, chaps. 1-2
 The Old Testament—The Pentateuch (first five books), the Book of Job, the Book of
 Ezekiel, the Book of Daniel
 Miles, *God: A Biography* (entire)

Oct. 30-Nov. 3: Christianity

Hopfe, et al., chap. 11

Armstrong, chaps. 3-4

The New Testament—The Gospels, the Book of Acts, the Book of Revelation

Miles, *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God* (entire)**Nov. 6-10: Apocalypticism**Norman F. Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos & the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (entire)**Nov. 13-17: Islam**

Hopfe, et al., chap. 12

Armstrong, chap. 5

The Qur'an, Sura 1 ("The Cow"), plus ten additional suras of your choosing**Nov. 20-24: Thanksgiving Break****Nov. 27-Dec. 1: Religion, Enlightenment, and Ecumenism**

Hopfe, et al., chap. 13

Armstrong, chaps. 6-9

David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Webliography)**Dec. 4-8: Atheism**Baggini, *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction* (entire)

Armstrong, chaps. 10-11

Composite Book Review Due Dec. 8**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.