



HISTORY 535.01B: INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF RELIGION COURSE SYLLABUS: SPRING 2021

Instructor: Professor John Howard Smith

Class Location/Time: Zoom / Wednesdays, 7:20-10:00 p.m.

Office Hours: By appointment only

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
- Julian Baggini, *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN10 0-19-280424-3
- Norman F. Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos & the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*, 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale/Nota Bene, 2001. ISBN10 0-300-09088-9
- Rupert Gethin, trans., *Sayings of the Buddha*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN13 978-0-19-283925-1
- Joel W. Martin, *The Land Looks After Us: A History of Native American Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. ISBN10 0-19-514586-0
- Jack Miles, *Miles, God: A Biography*. New York: Vintage, 1996. ISBN10 0-679-74368-5
- Jack Miles, *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God*. New York: Vintage, 2001. ISBN10 0-679-78160-9
- Helen Morales, *Classical Mythology: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. ISBN13 978-0-19-290476-1
- Jacob K. Olupona, *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN13 978-0-19-979058-6
- Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen*
- The Bible (any version will suffice)
- The Qur'an (any translation will suffice)
- The Upanishads* (any version will do)
- Lao Tse, *Tao Te Ching* (any version will do)
- Kung Fu-Tse (Confucius), *The Analects* (any version will do)
- Various journal articles accessed through JSTOR (see "Course Outline / Calendar" below)

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the study of the history of religion by examining various religions and their histories through the exploration of 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 through Zoom sessions 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.

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 an 8-page comparative analysis of **two** of the religious systems studied prior to our study of Judaism on the week of March 10 (see below), with an eye to explaining points of commonality and divergence.

Long Analytical Essay: (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 Long Analytical Essay will be a 15-20-page intensive comparative analysis of two religious systems examined in the course, one of which must be either Judaism, Christianity or Islam (Group 1), and the other must be either Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, Sikhism, or Shintoism (Group 2). **The purpose of this essay is not to argue for one religion to be superior to the other, but rather to highlight various points of commonality and divergence.** Course texts and outside sources are to be used in the writing of this essay.

Citations of sources must be in the form of footnotes formatted according to the Turabian Style explained in the Style Guide (to be distributed at the start of the course). See below for further parameters.

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%
Short Analytical Essay (100 pts.)		20%
Long Analytical Essay (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 Learning Studio Technical Requirements website.
[Browser Check](http://help.D2L/Brightspace.com/LS_Tech_Req_WebHelp/en-us/#LS_Technical_Requirements.htm#Browse) http://help.D2L/Brightspace.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.D2L/Brightspace.com/tamuc/index.learn?action=technical) <https://secure.D2L/Brightspace.com/tamuc/index.learn?action=technical>.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

This course will be facilitated using D2L/Brightspace, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: <https://leo.tamuc.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.edu.

Consistent and reliable access to the Internet is a fundamental requirement for this course. ***Lack of such ability will make participating in the course difficult—if not impossible—and the Instructor is not responsible for accommodating students who are unable to log onto the course when it is necessary to do so.***

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

Email is the most reliable method of reaching me. Expect a reply within 36 hours.

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). **However, 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. If the Instructor determines that a student is not being respectful toward other students or the Instructor, or is otherwise behaving in an inappropriate 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.

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

COVID-19 Statement

Texas A&M-Commerce requires the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories. Exceptions may be made by faculty where warranted. Faculty have management over their classrooms. Students not using face-coverings can be required to leave class. Repetitive refusal to comply can be reported to the Office of Students' Rights and Responsibilities as a violation of the student Code of Conduct.

Students should not attend class when ill or after exposure to anyone with a communicable illness. Communicate such instances directly with your instructor. Faculty will work to support the student getting access to missed content or completing missed assignments.

"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:

Texas A&M-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

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.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
Jan. 13: Introductions**Jan. 20: Introduction—What Is Religion?**

Hopfe, et al., chap. 1

Armstrong, "Introduction"

Kevin Schilbrack, "What *Isn't* Religion?" *The Journal of Religion* 93 (Jul. 2013), 281-318

Jan. 27: The Religions of Precolumbian North America

Hopfe, et al., chap. 2

Martin, *The Land Looks After Us* (entire)

Feb. 3: The Tribal Religions of Africa

Hopfe, et al., chap. 3

Olupona, *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction* (entire)

Feb. 10: The Tribal Religions of Europe

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

Feb. 17: Hinduism and Jainism

Hopfe, et al., chaps. 4-5

The Upanishads (entire)

Feb. 24: Taoism and Confucianism

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

Mar. 3: Buddhism and Sikhism

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

Mar. 10: Shintoism and Zen Buddhism in Japan

Hopfe, et al., chap. 9
 Watts, *The Way of Zen* (entire)
Analytical Essay due Mar. 13

Mar. 17: 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)

Mar. 24: 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)

Mar. 31: Apocalypticism

Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos & the World to Come* (entire)

Apr. 7: Islam

Hopfe, et al., chap. 12
 Armstrong, chap. 5
The Qur'an, Sura 1 ("The Cow"), plus **ten** additional suras of your choosing

Apr. 14: Religion, Enlightenment, and Ecumenism

Hopfe, et al., chap. 13
 Armstrong, chaps. 6-9
 David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779)
<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hume1779.pdf>

Apr. 21: Atheism

Baggini, *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction* (entire)
 Armstrong, chaps. 10-11

Composite Book Review Due May 1

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 will be distributed during the first week of class.