



**HUM 216: INTRODUCTION TO WORLD RELIGIONS HCD1
SUMMER
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE**

Instructor: Dr. Pamela Beattie

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Office Hours: By appointment

Catalog Description: The study of the principal world religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and indigenous traditions) in their cultural contexts.

Course Description:

Introduction to World Religions will teach students key concepts and elements of religious studies in general as well as introducing them to the basic vocabulary, beliefs and practices of some of the world's major religious traditions. In this class we will take a historical approach to the study of world religions and carefully consider the development of religious traditions in their historical and cultural context. The study of world religions and the ability to think critically about religious traditions is an important tool for understanding both the history of human civilizations as well as one's own society and culture. By the end of this course, students also should be able to compare and contrast how different religious traditions provide humans with a framework to find meaning for life's questions.

Required Text:

Living Religions: A Brief Introduction, 3rd edition, Mary Pat Fisher (Boston: Pearson Education Inc., 2012).

All other texts studied will be posted on Blackboard. Occasionally students will be asked to print materials and bring them to class in paper form.

Several films will be screened during the course and will be the basis of class discussion and written assignments. Most are not available on the internet, therefore students will need to attend class faithfully.

Students will complete a total of three Critical Film Reviews, due on the dates given in the syllabus.

Additional film reviews may be turned in for extra credit.

Students are responsible for the content of all films, assigned readings in the textbook and materials posted on Blackboard.

This course fulfills both a (H) Humanities General Education requirement and a (CD1) Cultural Diversity requirement.

General Education and Cultural Diversity Outcomes:

1. **Practice and develop critical thinking skills.** In part, this will be (explicitly) modeled during class discussions and/or group discussion sessions. Key elements of critical thinking include: identifying the question or problem, analyzing evidence and developing arguments, integrating knowledge and

demonstrating an awareness of multiple points of view, and drawing conclusions based upon reasons, arguments, and evidence.

2. **Practice and develop effective communication skills.** In the course of studying world religions, students will also be introduced to key elements of effective communication including clear articulation (oral and written), strategies for clear organization of arguments and evidence, demonstration of analysis and/or synthesis of the concepts and/or evidence, and use of appropriate conventions and style. Student progress in this area will be assessed through in-class assignments, class discussions and critical analysis of differing religious traditions and ideas.
3. **Understand and appreciate cultural diversity.** Students will be exposed to a variety of social systems, cultures and subcultures through the study of world religions. This curriculum encourages an appreciation and understanding of the realities of a racially and culturally diverse world. In particular, students will:
 - learn to recognize some of the ways that social and cultural systems develop out of adaptation to environmental and historical circumstances
 - learn that members of different cultures may hold different views of the same issues and how to communicate that understanding in a manner sensitive to this diversity
 - learn strategies to evaluate pertinent information and assertions for relevance, bias, stereotyping, manipulation and completeness.

Humanities General Education Goals (H). Students will be expected to learn how to:

1. communicate an understanding of vocabulary, concepts, materials, techniques, and methods of intellectual inquiry within the arts and/or humanities
2. describe and evaluate texts using primary and secondary materials
3. analyze and synthesize texts, recognizing the diversity of cultures and historical contexts

Assessment:

Student progress towards all these General Education (HCD1) goals will be assessed on the basis of tests, writing assignments, and class discussions.

Objectives for Humanities 216:

Upon successful completion of the course, student will be able to:

- 1) Identify fundamental concepts of religion and religious studies
- 2) Understand the points of view found within the major religions
- 3) Identify and explain the key concepts and vocabulary of the religions covered in this course.
- 4) Demonstrate awareness of their biases towards any particular religion and how their perceptions of specific religions have changed as a result of this class.
- 5) Analyze, interpret and evaluate religious phenomena as both a product of, and influence on, the cultures of which they are a part.

Grading and Standards of Evaluation:

- 1) Grading scale: For examinations and written assignments are as follows:

A Excellent work showing not only mastery of required material and
100-90 analytical skills, but expressed in coherent, well written and well argued English. (A+ 100-98 A
 97-94 A- 93-90)

- B** 89-78 Competent mastery of required material and analytical skills, adequately expressed in coherent English. (B+ 89-86 B 85-82 B- 81-78)
- C** 77-66 Adequate mastery of required material and analytical skills, evidencing difficulty with written English expression.
(C+ 77-74 C 73-70 C- 69-66)
- D** 65-55 Work evidencing some, but inadequate, mastery of required material and analytical skills, as well as inadequate written expression in English.
(D+ 65-62 D 61-58 D- 57-55)
- F** (Below 55) Insufficient mastery of material exhibited for passing grade.

2) Course requirements: Final grade will be calculated based on the following:

- Exams = (2 - Midterm and Final) 15 points each = 30 points total
- Written Assignments = (3 Critical Film Reviews) 10 points each = 30 points total
- Primary Source Discussion/Questions = (2) 5 points each = 10 points total
- Homework (Discussion Questions); Presentation; and Participation in Class Discussions (daily) = 20 points
- Final short essay (about 3 pages) to be turned in via email (pamela.beattie@louisville.edu) by 5 pm on Monday June 26 = 10 points

EVALUATION

- **Attendance** A student's successful completion of a university course is directly related to their rate of class attendance. This is especially the case with a course like this, the content of which may well be unfamiliar to most students in the class. All students will be given two absences for which they are not required to provide a valid excuse. **Students who miss more than one class without a valid excuse will have 2 points deducted from the attendance grade, three points per absence without a valid excuse. Up to two points will be deducted for arriving unreasonably late to class or leaving early.**
- **Impromptu Records of Informal Group Discussion** At several points during the course, students will be required to have informal group discussions on topics set by the instructor. All students will be required to submit a short write up of their ideas and responses resulting from this discussion. The write up may be submitted as either an individual or a group. If an individual wishes to submit their own version of the write up, it will be due no later than the beginning of class the day after the group discussion. The assignments will not be graded on whether the answers are factually right or wrong, but on whether or not they exhibit critical engagement with the materials.
- **Critical Film Reviews** Students will be required to submit **three** critical film reviews of the films screened in class, based upon questions provided by the instructor.
- **Primary Source Discussion Assignments** Students will prepare two Primary Source Discussion Assignments. Detailed instructions will be provided in class and materials will be available on Blackboard.

- **Identification Tests** Two short identification tests, lasting no more than one hour, will be given. Sixteen items will be listed. Students will choose 10 of the 16 items and provide full definitions, provide examples (when relevant) and explain their significance in the religion to which they belong.
- **Final Take Home Essay** A take home final essay completed out of a choice of two questions will be due by email on the Monday (by 5 pm) following the end of the class (June 26). The questions will require students to compare aspects of at least three of the religions covered in class. **Note: Specific examples to illustrate general points are always required in test essay answers to get a top grade. You cannot get a good grade on a test by repeating general statements with no specific examples.**

Humanities General Education Courses may not be taken Pass/Fail.

Important Issues and classroom policies:

1. This instructor will follow all U of L policies, including the policy on Excused Absences and Sexual Harassment. Students can find these policies posted on Blackboard and on the University of Louisville website.
2. Student use of computers, e-readers, and other similar electronic devices in the classroom can be restricted at any time if the instructor judges that it is impeding progress towards the learning outcomes of the course. Use of cell phones and texting are forbidden at all times and will result in a deduction from the participation grade. We will have two 15 minute breaks during each class which should give students adequate time with their personal electronic devices.
3. Students who are caught cheating and/or plagiarizing will receive a grade of 0 (zero) for the plagiarized assignment and may receive a failing grade for the course. According to the University of Louisville College of Arts and Sciences Statement on Student Conduct, Discipline, and Academic Grievance Procedures: "Plagiarism, in submitting individual work for academic evaluation, means simply to borrow someone else's ideas without citing the source, and to use them as one's own. It is a particular kind of cheating. Plagiarism in this sense is not limited to the use of direct quotations without a citation; a paraphrase is indebted to the author's ideas just as a direct quotation is. Nor is plagiarism limited to the use of published materials; borrowing from the written or oral work of others without citation, or downloading information from the internet without citation are equally dishonest. If you have ANY QUESTIONS AT ALL about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask the instructor and err on the side of caution.
4. Students with Disabilities: In the event that you have a condition that will adversely influence your performance in the course, please contact the instructor so that appropriate accommodations can be made according to U of L policies.
5. Students are responsible for all announcements made in class and for all class materials.

The instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus at any time to facilitate learning or to make syllabus items clearer. Any changes will be announced in class and on Blackboard.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- Class 1 -- June 12** Introduction: Studying Religion, Indigenous Religions, and the Challenges of Modernity
Readings: *Living Religions*, Chapter One (2-18); *Living Religions*, Chapter Two (19-40).
Assignment: Prepare the **Discussion Questions** at the end of each chapter (1&2) of your textbook. Each answer should be complete, using complete sentences and specific examples from class discussion and your textbook. These questions are due before the first test (Monday, June 19).
- Class 2 -- June 13** Indigenous Religions: Brief Overview
Introduction to Hinduism
Readings: *Living Religions*, Chapter 3 (41-70)
Film #1: *Water* (see Blackboard for Critical Film Review instructions and questions)
Assignment: Prepare the **Discussion Questions** on p. 70 of your *Living Religions* textbook. Answers should be no more than two paragraphs each, using complete sentences and specific examples.
- Class 3 -- June 14** Hindu Devotional Tradition and Introduction to Buddhism
Film #2: *Bearing the Heat: Mother Goddess Worship in South India* (See Blackboard for Critical Film Review instructions and questions.)
Readings: Review *Living Religions*, Chapter 3, 61-63; Read *Living Religions*, Chapter 5 (81-108)
Assignment: Work on Discussion Questions for Buddhism (*Living Religions*, p. 108).
- Class 4 -- June 15** Buddhism cont.
Film #3: *Travelers and Magicians* (See Blackboard for Critical Film Review instructions and questions.)
Readings: *Living Religions*, Chapter 5 (81-108)
Assignment: Turn in Critical Film Review of EITHER Film #1 or Film #2
Turn in Discussion questions for Buddhism (*Living Religions*, p.108)
- Class 5 -- June 16** Daoism and Confucianism
"Learning Cell" Discussion on Primary Source Materials
Readings: *Living Religions*, Chapter 6 (109-130)
Primary Source exercise--in class. Readings will be posted on Blackboard
Assignment: Turn in Discussion Questions for *Living Religions*, Chapters 1 & 2
- Class 6 -- June 19** **Midterm Exam (First Hour and 15 minutes of Class)**
Judaism
Film #4: *Ushpizin* (See Blackboard for Critical Film Review instructions and questions.)
Readings: *Living Religions*, Chapter 8 (147-184)
Assignments: Work on Discussion Questions for Judaism (p. 184)
Turn in Critical Film Review of EITHER Film #3 or Film #4
Turn in Discussion Questions for *Living Religions*, Chapter 6 (p. 130)
- Class 7 -- June 20** Judaism cont.; Introduction to Christianity

"Learning Cell Discussion" on Primary Source Readings (Blackboard)
Readings: *Living Religions*, Chapter 9 (185 - 238)
Assignments: Turn in Discussion Questions for Judaism (*Living Religions*, p. 184)
Work on Discussion Questions for Christianity in class (*Living Religions*, p. 238)

Class 8 -- June 21 Christianity cont.
Film: #5: *Visions: Hildegard of Bingen* (See Blackboard for Critical Film Review Instructions and questions.)
Readings: Review *Living Religions*, Chapter 9
Assignments: Turn in Discussion Questions for Christianity (*Living Religions*, p. 238)

Class 9 -- June 22 Islam
Film #6: *Mohammed: The Legacy of a Prophet*
"Learning Cell Discussion" on Primary Source Readings (Blackboard)
Readings: *Living Religions*, Chapter 10 (239-274)
Assignments: Work on Discussion Questions for Islam (*Living Religions*, p. 274)

Class 10 -- June 23 Islam cont.
Review basic concepts.

Final Exam - Last Half of Class