Religious Studies 101

World Religions

MWF 1100-1150

NH100

Fall Semester 2011

Prof. S. L. Stewart lori.stewart@mail.sdsu.edu

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Class Email: wr101_f11@gmail.com -- all assignments go to this address!!!

Office Location: AL636 Telephone: 619-594-1767 (41767)

Office Hours: MW 12:00-1:00 pm, Fri./alternate times by appointment

Required Text: Warren Matthews, World Religions, SDSU Custom Edition

Course Description

Religious Studies 101 - World Religions - is a survey course designed to help students familiarize themselves with the basic tenets, philosophies, and practices of the world's major religious traditions. We will examine the historical development of and sociocultural worldview arising from each tradition as documented in the main course text, occasionally supplemented by relevant visual media. The main intent of this course is to both provide students a broad-based knowledge of world religions and to present an opportunity for them to deepen their awareness regarding their own thoughts, beliefs, and assumptions about religion and spirituality.
This course is one of four Foundations courses that you will take in the area of Humanities and Fine Arts. Upon completing of this area of Foundations, you will be able to: 1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments; 2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures; 3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance; 4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.

Learning Objectives

- To gain a working knowledge of the basic tenets, core beliefs and essential teachings of the world’s major religious traditions in order to improve multicultural literacy and sensitivity.
- To further develop critical thinking skills through comparative study by identifying both differences and similarities of religious teachings, practices, symbols, mythology, etc.
- To develop self-reflective abilities and heighten self-awareness through the practice of identifying and articulating thoughts, beliefs, and assumptions regarding religion and its influence on human history and modern culture.
- To develop integrative cognitive and expressive communication skills through preparation and composition of written assignments.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirements:</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grading Scale:</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>94-100 A</td>
<td>Belief-o-Matic Quiz</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<td>90-93 A-</td>
<td>Journals (50 pts. each)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<td>87-89 B+</td>
<td>Chapter Tests (7@40pts ea.)</td>
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<td>83-86 B</td>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
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<td>80-82 B-</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>77-79 C+</td>
<td>Total</td>
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Grades
During the course of the semester you will be able to view your grades by checking the "Gradebook" section of Blackboard. Your final grade is determined by the accumulated points indicated on the above grading scale chart. This is an introductory course, so with dedicated application of study and effort, an “A” is not beyond reach. If you are taking the course for C/NC, please note that the university considers a "C-" as an NC or failing grade. *If you register for this course on a Credit/No Credit option, please note that you must complete all assignments (meaning, you may not skip any chapter tests to count as a lowest dropped grade) and obtain a cumulative 73% or higher to be issued a “C.”

- **“I” – Incomplete** – I will only issue an Authorized Incomplete when a small portion of the required coursework has not been completed due to unforeseen, but fully justified reasons. You must sign an “Authorized Incomplete” Agreement contract and complete the required work within one calendar year immediately following the end of the term in which it was assigned. If this is not done, you will receive an F.

* Computer and internet access are required for this course, and you must have an active, working email account in order to access Blackboard, view announcements and assignments, and receive email communications from me. I regularly communicate with the class as a whole and with individuals via email; therefore, it is essential that you regularly check your email to stay current and aware of class-related changes or issues.

Ground Rules:
Students and teachers have particular obligations to each other, and successful teaching and learning largely depends upon our honoring of these obligations.

**This is what I expect from my students:**
- Since you have chosen to be a part of this class, you will enter every session prepared to give your full attention.
- You will complete the required readings, and submit all assigned work on time.
- You will treat everyone in the class, including the instructor, with the respect rightly due all human beings.
  - If someone in our class is treating you with disrespect, you will alert me immediately.
• Acknowledge that your perception of effort by itself is not enough to justify a distinguished grade (A); and understand that grades are not personal value judgments, but are objective assessments of the work you have submitted.
• You will not make excuses for your failure to do what you ought to do, and accept the consequences of your actions or lack of action.
• You will turn off ALL electronic devices for the duration of the class period.

This is what you can expect from me:
• I will treat you with absolute respect.
• I will come to class organized, prepared, and ready to teach on that day.
• I will return papers and tests within a reasonable time frame (1-2 weeks).
• I will maintain office hours and be available during those hours, or set up an appointment when scheduling conflicts occur.
• I will allow each student one lame excuse per semester.
• I will pursue to the fullest extent the university imposed penalty for plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic integrity.
• I (and my graders) will maintain appropriate confidentiality concerning your journals and class performance.
• I will support your learning efforts and answer your questions and concerns thoughtfully and with care.

Reading Assignments
All reading assignments listed on this syllabus are required readings, and completion of these is necessary for successful participation in discussions and performance on exams.

Classroom Participation

Regular attendance is necessary for you to gain the full benefit of instruction and to prepare for exams. If you do not wish to come to class, that is your decision; however, do realize that all decisions have consequences, so be prepared to reap the benefits or liabilities of them by the end of the semester when it is time to calculate your final grade.

**Participation grading is based upon timely completion of all assignments, tests, and exams; level of effort shown in content of written work; attendance; and participation in class discussion and Q & A. We will conduct a mid-term evaluation and debriefing that will count for 20 of the 40 possible points.**
Journals (2 @ 50 points each)
Students will be given two “Reflection Exercises” that require active participation in mindfulness practices and written personal responses. You will be expected to write AT LEAST 3-4 pages = 1,000-1,300 words (i.e. the minimum requirement equaling a “C”) in a self-reflective manner. Journals will be submitted via the gmail account for credit by 1159 pm on the Friday they are assigned. Submission of late journals will be allowed for two days after the due date, however, there will be a substantial point penalty (-2 points per day late), and any entries submitted after 6 pm Sunday will NOT be accepted under any circumstances. (Period. Do not test me on this. ☹) These entries will reflect your grasp of the material covered, how you are synthesizing information, and how you may or may not be applying what you are learning to your life process.

Journal due dates are as follows:
Journal #1 - Friday, 10/7/11  Journal #2 - Friday, 11/18/11;
You are responsible for keeping track of due dates and times for your assignments.

Belief-O-Matic Quiz (5 points)
To complete the quiz, go to www.beliefnet.com, click on the tab marked “Faiths and Prayers”, then choose “belief-o-matic” from the drop-down menu. Complete the quiz, print the results and bring them to class no later than the third class meeting (Friday, 9/2).

Chapter Tests (7 @ 40 points each)
Each chapter of study will culminate in a 40-question test. At the end of the semester, each student’s (with the exception of credit/no credit students) lowest test grade will be dropped from the total points. I do not allow make up tests except for athletes &/or other students who are compelled to miss class for university sponsored or sanctioned activities, or for recognized religious holidays: a student may choose to have their next test grade counted twice - one grade for the current test, and the same grade for the missed test. The doubled-score option will be made available only once during the semester.

Exams (2 @ 100 points each)
The Mid-term exam will be cumulative from material covered during the first half of the semester, and the Final exam will be cumulative for material covered during the second half of the semester. No makeup exams will be allowed, and final exams cannot be administered before the scheduled date for that class.
**GRADEBOOK SCORE TIME LIMIT:** After test and journal scores are posted on Blackboard, Steven and/or Michael will send out an all-class email announcing such. IT WILL BE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK YOUR SCORE FOR ACCURACY, AND COMMUNICATE ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS TO STEVEN or MICHAEL WITHIN ONE WEEK OF POSTING. NO CHANGES WILL BE MADE AFTER THE ONE WEEK DEADLINE.**

Extra Credit

I have come to strongly dislike extra credit. I believe that student grades should reflect their engagement in class lecture/discussion and effort toward successful completion of assignments and tests. In short, I have seen too many students who have not put forth the required effort to learn about World Religions make grades they did not rightfully earn toward that end. There are occasionally campus academic events relevant to our study for which I will offer a few points of extra credit, but nothing beyond that. Just do the work I have assigned, and your grade will honestly reflect your efforts toward developing knowledge and understanding of World Religions.

A few words about grade inflation:

If you have read the above paragraph, you will already have an idea of how much I value accurate and honest grading. With this in mind, know that I will not respond to any requests, no matter how desperate, for additional points to be added to your final score to bump up your letter grade to the next level. The grade you have at the end of the term is the grade you earned. That’s about it.

Class Etiquette

In all matters pertaining to this class and whatever our situation from day-to-day, I expect everyone to conduct themselves with an attitude of respect for self and others. To follow are some guidelines you will be expected to apply in your class-related interactions:

- I do not allow the use of laptop/notebook computers in my classes. Additionally, all phones, IPods, and other electronic devices must be turned off (and I am so serious about this) before entering class, and side-conversations limited to class materials. If you wish to listen to music or carry on a conversation with your friends or family in person or via phone or text, you are welcome do so outside of the classroom.
• Discussions and debates will be conducted in a reasonable manner with absolute respect for the differing beliefs, understandings, opinions, and perspectives of others. You do not have to agree with or condone another’s beliefs, but you must learn to express your disagreement in a way that is not harmful to self or others.

• If you send an email message to me, please include a polite salutation (i.e., "Hello Professor Stewart") and your name somewhere in the message. I will not respond to mails that start out with something like, “Hey...”, and/or do not include clear identification of the sender.

• If you need to leave class early, please let me know before the beginning of class, and seat yourself near an exit to minimize disturbance of the class when you leave.

• If you are ill or strongly feel you are becoming ill (especially with something infectious), please do not come to class, and notify me as soon as you know you will be absent. Networking with your classmates will assist you in catching up on missed lecture material. I strongly urge you to not abuse this particular concession - your classmates will become very cranky about sharing their notes with chronic absentees, and I notice these things.

• If you are a student with a documented disability on record with SDSU, and require special accommodations made for you in this class, please see me immediately --you may be exempt from the laptop prohibition.

Class Schedule:

*NOTE: This schedule is meant to act as a general guideline for the course of our study together this semester, and is subject to change at any time. You will be responsible for obtaining information regarding changes from Blackboard announcements.

Week One

Mon. 8/29 First day of class - Orientation
Why Study Religion? - Examining thoughts, beliefs, and assumptions
Wed. 8/31 Tribal Religions - North American Native Traditions
Reading: Matthews, Chapter 1: Religions of the Americas, pp. 13-37
Fri. 9/2  North American Native Traditions  
**Belief-o-Matic Quiz due**

Week Two  
Mon. 9/5  Labor Day Holiday - No Classes  
Wed. 9/7  Religions of Africa  
Reading:  Matthews, Chapter 2: Religions of Africa. Pp. 41-60  
Fri. 9/9  Religions of Africa

Week Three  
Mon. 9/12  Chapter Test #1 - Indigenous Religions/post-test review  
Wed. 9/14  Introduction to Hindu Dharma  
Reading:  Matthews, Chapter 3: Hinduism, pp. 65-98  
Fri. 9/16  Hindu Dharma

Week Four  
Mon. 9/19  Hindu Dharma  
Wed. 9/21  Hindu Dharma  
Fri. 9/23  Chapter Test #2 - Hindu Dharma/post-test review

Week Five  
Mon. 9/26  Introduction to Buddhism  
Reading:  Matthews, Chapter 4: Buddhism, pp. 103-140  
Wed. 9/28  Buddhism  
Fri. 9/30  Buddhism

Week Six  
**Journal #1 due by Friday, 11:59 pm**

Mon. 10/3  Buddhism  
Wed. 10/5  Chapter Test #3 - Buddhism/post-test review  
Fri. 10/7  Introduction to Jainism  
Reading:  Matthews, Chapter 5: Jainism, pp. 146-155

Week Seven  
Mon. 10/10  Conclude Jainism/ Introduction to Taoism  
Reading:  Matthews, Chapter 6: Daoism, pp. 174-181  
Wed. 10/12  Taoism
Fri. 10/14  Chapter Test #4 - Taoism & Jainism/post-test review

Week Eight
Mon. 10/17  Mid-Term Exam Review
Wed. 10/19  Mid-Term Exam
Fri. 10/21  Mid-Term Evaluation/Debriefing - worth 20 participation points!

Week Nine
Mon. 10/24  Introduction to Judaism
Reading:     Matthews, Chapter 8: Judaism, pp. 237-276
Wed. 10/26  Judaism
Fri. 10/28  Judaism

Week Ten
Mon. 10/31  Judaism
Wed. 11/2   Judaism
Fri. 11/4   Chapter Test #5 Judaism/post-test review

Week Eleven
Mon. 11/7   Introduction to Christianity
Reading:     Matthews, Chapter 9: Christianity, pp.279-321
Wed. 11/9   Christianity
Fri. 11/11  Christianity

Week Twelve
**Journal #2 due by Friday, 1159 pm
Mon. 11/14  Christianity
Wed. 11/16  Christianity
Fri. 11/18  Chapter Test #6 - Christianity/post-test review

Week Thirteen
Mon. 11/21- Fri 11/25  - No classes
Week Fourteen

Mon. 11/28 Introduction to Islam
Reading: Matthews, Chapter 10: Islam, pp. 325-361
Wed. 11/30 Islam
Fri. 12/1 Islam

Week Fifteen

Mon. 12/5 Islam
Wed. 12/7 Chapter Test #7 - Islam/post-test review
Fri. 12/9 Final Exam Review

Final Exam: Day/date: Wednesday, December 14th
Time: 1030 am-1230 pm
Location: NH100