

The Human Religious Experience
Religion 100-004
Robinson A 248 MWF 2:30-3:20 PM

Spring 2008 Syllabus

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Meetings: By appointment, or before and after class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

It has been said that religion is the soul of a culture—because religious life contains humankind’s deepest and most ancient thinking about our hopes for our lives, whether it be nearness to God, salvation, liberation from suffering, how to live an ethical life, or how to live in harmony with the universe—religious life animates the life of the world. Beginning with a discussion of religious language: myth, symbol, and ritual, then a discussion of premodern, modern, and postmodern approaches to religion; the course is an introduction to the major world religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. The focus is history, major ideas, scripture, and festivals. The goal is to gain a working understanding of each tradition while taking advantage of the rich resources our location near Washington, DC affords GMU students. The course includes two independent field trips to area sanctuaries and one class field trip to the Freer Museum’s exhibition of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

REQUIRED TEXTS

World Religions Today, 2nd eds., John Esposito et al.

A World Religions Reader, 2nd ed., Ian S. Markham.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Textbook Readings: posted on the syllabus below.

6 Tests

2 Field Trip reports: each a paper (3 *full* pages) and a 2-3 minute oral report. Paper format: 12 point font, double-spaced, Microsoft Word or equivalent. Use an academic stylesheet like MLA, APA, or CMS. Late papers lose half a grade for each day late.

In-Class Writing

Class Participation: show familiarity with readings, do in-class writing assignments, participate in class discussion, and attend classes regularly. Habitual absence lowers your grade. **Absences for any reason**: turn in a one-page summary of the readings for the class missed due the next class you attend. Papers that are copied from the book do not receive credit.

GRADING POLICY

Tests 60%

Reports 20%

Class Participation 20 %

Extra Credit *Religion is Always in the News* reports

All plagiarized work receives an “F.” Plagiarism includes cutting and pasting from the Internet, turning in papers written by your roommate, your spouse, your grandmother, etc.,

copying the textbook or any source, and quoting sources without quotation marks. In short, all academic papers that you submit under your name must be your work. Academic rules for quoting sources are strictly observed. For your papers, do not use Wikipedia and ask about using other Web sites as sources. Exceptions to the rule” Web sites of the sanctuaries you visit. Also, limit quotations to one sentence per page (so, a total of 3 quotations). See the GMU Writing Center for detailed information on plagiarism, citing, and using sources correctly: writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources/plagiarism.

COURSE SCHEDULE

	Dates	Readings
January	23	Class Introduction/ Definitions of Religion
	25	Myth, Symbol, and Ritual Esposito 4-22
	28	Impact of Modernity Esposito 22-33
	30	Judaism: History Esposito 65-82
February	1	Judaism: Tanak and Talmud Esposito: 82-88; Markham: 235-7
	4	Rituals/ Festival Year Esposito: 88-89; 91-92; Markham: 232-35, 241-50, 268
	6	Judaism: <i>Ushpizin</i> video/ on Sukkot
	8	Synagogue/ Temple field reports assigned to A-J; papers due Holocaust/ State of Israel Esposito 111-128
	11	Test on Religion/ Modernity/ Judaism
	13	Christianity: History Esposito: 131-136; 140-152
	15	Christianity: <i>Where Jesus Walked</i> video/ on archaeology
	18	Two Church Councils/ Protestant Reformation Esposito: 164-181
	20	Christianity: New Testament <i>bring a Bible to class</i>
	22	Church/Cathedral field reports assigned to K-R; papers due Christianity: Sacraments/Church Year Esposito 157-160
	25	Fr. George Khitiri/ Assistant Priest, St. George Greek Orthodox Church
27	Test on Christianity	
29	Islam: History Esposito 195-209	
March	3	Quran and Sunnah Esposito: 210-211; Markham: 302-306
	5	Islam: Five Pillars Esposito 219-223
	7	Sunni, Shiah, Sufis, Wahhabis Esposito 212-17;226-29; 233-5
Spring Break 10-16		

	17	Mosque/ Islamic Center reports	assigned to S-Z; papers due
		Islam: Festival Year and Mosques	Markham 329-330
	19	Video: <i>Le Grand Voyage</i>	Esposito 250-267
	21	Test on Islam	
	24	Hinduism: History	Esposito 271-282
	26	Hinduism: Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita	Esposito 284-289
	28	Jains, Sikhs, Philosophical Schools	Esposito 282-284; 294-301
	31	Hindu temple field reports	assigned to A-J; papers due
		Bhakti: Gods and Goddesses	Esposito 290-294
April	2	Hinduism: Festivals/ <i>Puja</i> video	Esposito 312-324
	4	Test on Hinduism	
	7	Buddhism: History	Esposito 341-344; 349-355
			<i>Siddhartha</i> / Hermann Hesse 3-10 (handout)
	9	Buddhism: 3-5-4-8	Esposito: 354-357; 362-366
	11	Theravada/ Mahayana/ Vajrayana	Esposito: 367-380
	14	Buddhism: Sacred Texts	Markham: 122-140
			Smokey the Bear Sutra/ Gary Snyder (handout)
	16	Buddhist Temple/ Zen Center reports	assigned to K-R; papers due
		Rituals and Festivals	Esposito: 385-387; Markham: 156
	18	<i>10 Questions for the Dalai Lama</i>	Esposito: 346-348; 404-413
(Saturday)	19	Freer Museum of Art Tour, the Mall, Washington, DC 11:00 AM	
	21	Test on Buddhism	
	23	Confucianism: History	Esposito: 424-432
	25	Confucianism: Analects/ Five Classics	Markham: 172-174; 178-180
	28	Daoism: History	Esposito: 432-435
	30	Tao Te Ching / Art of War	Markham: 183-184
May	2	Shrine/ Acupuncture/ Feng Shui Center reports	S-Z; papers due
		Japan: Shinto	Esposito: 438-441
	5	East Asian: Diffuse Religion	Esposito: 464-482
	9	Test on East Asian Traditions	1:30-4:15 PM