

Introduction to Eastern Religions

Course Syllabus

CRN 21809 R103 / 01 3 credits

ONLINE MWF 9 AM - 9:50

Your ZOOM Coordinates:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84312580209>

Fall TERM 2020

About this Class:

This is our agreement with one another. I will generally follow this course outline, but might make changes if needed. I want you to succeed in this class and have a good time learning what I think is a very exciting subject. Religion is often very subjective, which is why it is important that we keep an open mind and respectful tone with one another. Remember, this class is much like the practice of religion; it has much to do with what you put into it. Also, I hope that this class will be a dialogue, not my monologue. Your input and participation is expected!

This class is completely redesigned for online learning this semester. There are many new things happening. I look forward to your feedback on how I can do things better.

Instructor Information

Matt Gordon

Office Hours: By appointment via ZOOM

gordonm@linnbenton.edu -- a word about email: Please use your linnbenton email address for correspondence with me. The college takes your privacy seriously and I'm not allow to share any information unless I know for sure it is you.

541-829-3003 – call or text

Instructor Website: http://cf.linnbenton.edu/artcom/social_science/gordonm/web.cfm?pgID=7938

You will find access to this syllabus, course information, weblinks, study materials, and classroom slides here.

Course Description and Expected Outcomes:

Religion 103 surveys cultures and religions of the eastern world with a focus on the teaching of compassion and tolerance in these religions. Includes understandings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Jainism, Taoism, Shinto and Sikhism.

Goals:

- Discover an understanding of the history, beliefs and practices of major Eastern religious traditions
- Discover an understanding of the impact and influence of Eastern religions on western culture
- Discover an understanding of the importance of studying, knowing and appreciating world religions in a 21st century context

Required Text:

Prothero, Stephen. Religion Matters: An Introduction to the World's Religions. W.W. Norton and Company: 2020.

Optional or Further Inquiry Texts:

These will be the books, texts that I will be referencing frequently. If you find yourself wanting to dig deeper on a particular topic, this is a good place to start.

The Sacred Gaze: Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice. David Morgan.

Ethics for a New Millenium. Dalai Lama.

A Flock of Fools: Ancient Buddhist Wisdom. Kazuaki Tanahash and Peter Levitt.

The Faces of Buddhism in America. Charles Prebish and Kenneth Tanaka.

Buddhism After Patriarchy. Rita Gross.

The Evolution of God. Robert Wright.

Tao te Ching. Lao Tzu.

Bhagavad Gita. *Multiple translations online*.

Eight Theories of Religion. Daniel Pals.

The World's Religions. Huston Smith.

Why Religion Matters. Huston Smith.

Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living. Pema Chodron.

Course Requirements

Weekly Reflection Paper: You will have weekly reflection papers centered around a few questions related to the term.

Mid-Term: The mid-term will reflect your understanding of our course work up to this point, the study of religion in general and Indian religions. This mid-term will be mostly multiple choice with a few essay questions.

East Meets West Paper: This research paper will engage your critical thinking skills to explore eastern practices in western culture. Some examples might include: a paper on the American Buddhist Church, a paper on American yoga's connection with Eastern practice, new age spiritualities that engage meditation as practice, the Free Tibet movements on college campuses, a paper on the Baha'i in the U.S., how the Unitarian Universalists incorporate Eastern religious practices in their faith traditions, Eastern religion centers of practice in the Pacific Northwest (i.e., Sikh temples, Zen Centers, etc). Papers are 6-7 pages double-spaced.

Final Exam: The final exam will reflect your understanding of the entire course and is designed to engage your critical thinking skills. This final will be mostly essay questions with a few multiple choice questions.

Grading

(see above for descriptions)

Weekly Reflection Papers -	30%	105 – 90 = A
East Meets West Presentation –	25 %	89 -80 = B
Mid-Term –	25 %	79-70 = C
Final Exam—	25 %	69 – 60 = D
=105 % (this allows some flexibility if there any deficiencies in your work)		Below 60 = F

Extra Credit/Make up/Late Work Policy: Late work is not offered, but early work is accepted. The course outline offers you every chance to excel, if for a good reason you know you will be missing class, please communicate with me to make arrangements BEFORE you miss a quiz or exam, not AFTER. I can offer extra credit opportunities in the form of writing assignments for students concerned about their grade.

College Policies:

Disability Services: Students who may need accommodations due to documented disabilities, who have medical information which the instructor should know, or who need special arrangements in an emergency, should speak with the instructor during the first week of class. If you have not accessed services and think you may need them, please contact Disability Services, 917-4789.

Waitlist Policy: Students not in attendance for the first class meeting may be dropped to allow for those wishing to add at that time.

Drop Policy: Students are responsible for knowing the last day to drop the course for a full refund. Also, be aware of the last day to officially withdraw from this course for transcripts to show a 'W.' *Incomplete Grades:* You may be eligible for an 'Incomplete' grade if you have finished 90% of the class work. Should you receive an 'Incomplete,' all course work must be finished by the end of the next term. Please contact the instructor prior to term's end with appropriate documentation for requesting an 'Incomplete.'

Diversity Policy: The LBCC community is enriched by diversity. Everyone has the right to think, learn, and work together in an environment of respect, tolerance, and goodwill. I actively support this right regardless of race, creed, color, personal opinion, gender, sexual orientation, or any of the countless other ways in which we are diverse.

Course Schedule

(NOTE: I reserve the right to change, add or delete, so please come to class)

- Week 1: Introduction to Religious Studies and the Importance of
Social Context, Why Eastern and Western? Orientalism and Occidentalism
:
Pew Research on World Religion, look at website
Worldviews, Geography, Guiding Definitions
- Week 2: *Creation Myths*
Creation Myths, Intro to Hinduism
Hinduism
- Week 3: Bhagavad Gita and more on Hinduism

Introduction to Buddhism and its Branches, Ancient Buddhist
principles

Week 4 The “Rafts” of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana Buddhism
Contemporary Buddhist Practice

Week 5: Jainism
Jainism, Sikhism
Mid-term Study Guides given

Week 6: Mid-term Review
MID-TERM

Week 7: Daoism
Confucianism

Week 8: Shinto

Week 9: Shinto
FINAL EXAM review guides given

Week 10: FINAL THINGS, Eastern perspectives on heaven/hell
East meets West Paper Due

Week 11: **FINAL EXAM**

Extra Credit Options (10 points possible – one of each activity)

Up to 10 points available for extra credit. If you have questions about your choice of activity / program you will use (or, if you have an idea of your own), please do not hesitate to ask me. I hope you take advantage of the extra credit opportunities offered for this course. This is your chance to experience religion and the ongoing dialogue about religion happening presently in our community -- which can be easily accessed by the curious-minded!

Attend an event/service (5 points): You may attend a religious service or event (outside of your own tradition or closely related denomination) at any point during the term and write a 2-page, double-spaced paper including your thoughts and impressions on the experience. If you would prefer to attend a lecture about religion (for example, a debate on Jesus hosted by the Socratic Society at OSU would be a great option), I will accept a 2-page, double-spaced paper outlining the main points of discussion and your thoughts on the subject.

Listen to a Podcast or Watch a Documentary (5 points): You may enjoy streaming a radio program or watching a documentary while earning extra credit. I will accept a full 1-page, double-spaced, paper outlining the main points of discussion and your thoughts on the subject.

Some examples....

On Being, hosted by Krista Tippett onbeing.org (Click on Archive, pick a program that interests you personally. This is one of my favorite radio programs.)

Philosophy Talk, hosted by Ken Taylor and John Perry of Stanford University

<http://www.philosophytalk.org/> (Click on past programs. These are not all specifically related to religion per se, so here are a few that will meet the religion requirement: St. Augustine; Faith, Reason and Science; Islamic Philosophy; Worship; Challenges to Free Will; Gandhi; Believing in God; The Problem of Evil; Jewish Philosophy; Concept of God; Confucius; Zen; The Existence of God; Religion

Thich Naht Hanh Dharma Talks: Archives of his dharma talks at Plum Village.

Dalai Lama Audio Podcast: Basically, recordings of his talks around the world.

Wild, Wild Country - Documentary on the Rajneesh movement in Oregon (Netflix)

The Mormons: Documentary on PBS on the mormons, several parts:

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/mormons> --- Or, find your own!---