

PHIL 3640-001 Fall 2019 World Religions

PHILOSOPHY 3640-001: WORLD RELIGIONS

Fall 2019

Prof. Brandon R. Peterson

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TA: Carter Call

Meetings:

Mon., Wed., Fri.:
10:45am - 11:35am
Union Theatre

Office Hours (in person):

Tues 10:00am - noon
and by appointment
CTIHB 463

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

In many and diverse ways throughout the world, people have asked ultimate questions in the face of great difficulties: Why do human beings suffer? Why is there evil in the world? How can we bring about peace, both between communities and within the human heart? What is the “self” and what is one’s final purpose in this world? Are there supernatural beings, and if so, what do they have to do with us? What is human salvation and liberation? Likewise, answers to questions like these have been proposed by a wide variety of people in different cultures and traditions. The subjects of this World Religions course are five such traditions, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students who successfully complete this course will be able (i.) to better understand the history, sources of authority, doctrines, and practices of these traditions, (ii.) to appreciate the distinctive cultural and spiritual elements within each tradition, identifying points on convergence as well as divergence between them, and (iii.) to think critically and effectively communicate (orally as well as in writing) about these five religious traditions.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The two main sources of information for this course are the assigned readings and video lectures. '

- The main textbook will offer students foundational background knowledge about a particular religious tradition; sacred texts from each tradition will also be studied.
- The lectures will offer an expanded look at particular points raised in the readings and thus presuppose that reading has already been completed. In other words, the lectures are not a substitute for the reading. The slides used during the lectures will be available under Files → Lecture Slides (.pptx).

None of the five traditions considered in this course are reducible to abstract philosophical positions; rather, the particular shape of each tradition depends on how it is lived out in a specific setting. Four units will thus include readings from Bradley Malkovsky’s book, *God’s Other Children*, which describes Malkovsky’s encounter with the variety of religious traditions in India. The remaining unit will include A.J. Levine’s account of her experience as a Jew growing up in a Christian-dominated setting. Each unit on the five traditions will conclude with a review day during which student questions regarding any of the reading and/or study guide material will be discussed.

COURSE READINGS

The required textbooks for the class are

- Brodd et al, *Invitation to World Religions* (Oxford, 2nd ed., 2015). Three possible formats
 - Soft-cover: 978-0-19-937836-4 (3rd ed.: 978-0-19-069081-6)
 - **OR** loose-leaf: 978-0-19-061774-5 (3rd ed.: 978-0-19-069084-7)
 - **OR** eBook: 978-0-19-937842-5 (3rd ed. 978-0-19-069083-0 available for [here](https://www.redshelf.com/book/924214/invitation-to-world-religions-924214-9780190690830-jeffrey-brodd-layne-little-bradley-nystrom-robert-platzner-richard-shek-erin-stiles) (<https://www.redshelf.com/book/924214/invitation-to-world-religions-924214-9780190690830-jeffrey-brodd-layne-little-bradley-nystrom-robert-platzner-richard-shek-erin-stiles>) & [here](https://www.vitalsource.com/products/invitation-to-world-religions-jeffrey-brodd-v9780190690830?term=9780190690830) (<https://www.vitalsource.com/products/invitation-to-world-religions-jeffrey-brodd-v9780190690830?term=9780190690830>))
- Bradley Malkovsky, *God's Other Children* (HarperOne, 1st edition, 2013) 978-0-06-184068-5
 - **OR** eBook: 978-0-06-209861-0 (available [here](https://www.amazon.com/Gods-Other-Children-Personal-Encounters-ebook/dp/B009NG2C9E/), (<https://www.amazon.com/Gods-Other-Children-Personal-Encounters-ebook/dp/B009NG2C9E/>) [here](https://redshelf.com/book/338481/gods-other-children-338481-9780062098610-bradley-malkovsky) (<https://redshelf.com/book/338481/gods-other-children-338481-9780062098610-bradley-malkovsky>), and [here](https://www.vitalsource.com/products/god-39-s-other-children-bradley-malkovsky-v9780062098610?term=Malkovsky+God%27s+other+children) (<https://www.vitalsource.com/products/god-39-s-other-children-bradley-malkovsky-v9780062098610?term=Malkovsky+God%27s+other+children>))

Other readings (mostly consisting of excerpts from various sacred and scriptural texts) will be posted electronically on Canvas (utah.instructure.com) under Files → Readings or distributed as handouts in class.

Examinations will follow each unit on the five traditions covered in this course. Together, the five exams will make up 60% of the student's final grade; the lowest of the five exam scores will be dropped, in lieu of any extra credit (which is not offered). Study guides are available on Canvas under Files → Exam Review Sheets. Exams will include questions in the form of multiple choice, true/false, matching, and fill in the blank, in addition to short answer and lists. Examinations must be taken on the scheduled day, except in cases of official university obligations, family emergencies, etc., of which I should be made aware as soon as possible. Since exams taken after the exam window give an advantage of extra preparation time, late exams will be penalized 10 points per day (excepting emergencies, etc.) and must be completed within one week. Answers to questions about an upcoming exam are only assured if the question is submitted to the instructor at least 24 hours before the exam begins.

Class attendance and participation are expected. Outstanding participation (including engagement in-class as well as at office hours) can earn a "bump" to the next level for a student's final grade (e.g. B to B+).

Attendance will be taken daily in the form of **mini-quizzes** which will be administered electronically in class. These quizzes (which can only be taken for credit during the class time window and require an access code to be announced in class) can be found under "Quizzes" on Canvas and will pertain to information covered in class that day, as well as any assigned readings specific to that day (e.g. Malkovsky, a scriptural excerpt posted as a .PDF; not the Brodd text). In total, attendance/mini-quizzes account for 10% of the final grade. To take the mini-quizzes, students will need to use an electronic device (phone or tablet with the Canvas app or a laptop computer) in class; if students need access to a device, they are available to borrow from the 2nd level of the Marriott Library. Please contact me as early as possible regarding excused absences (e.g. official university events, family emergency, illness).

Short essays (About 650 words, or roughly 2 pages) can be submitted after each of the 5 units on the first class meeting after the end of that unit. In other words, an essay on Buddhism should be submitted on the first class day after the Buddhism exam (see below for a note about automatic extensions in certain cases). Students must complete **3 of the 5** possible essays; each is worth 10% of the final grade (30% total). At least one essay must be submitted by the end of the second unit. Each essay must correspond to one of the following five options below (*no repeats!*) and *only one* essay can be submitted for *each* unit / religious tradition.

Option 1: Research – Using at least two academic sources (i.e., written by a trained expert in the field and/or from a scholarly publication), go beyond the textbook and lectures in order to shed further light on a particular historical period, doctrine, or ritual practice within a religious tradition. In other words, don't just rehash material covered in the lectures or readings; also, you're welcome to cite required readings in your paper, but they *cannot* count toward your two sources. You should include full bibliographical information for each source and utilize in-text citations, especially for quotations. (Please note: secondary sources can be print or electronic but should be written by a scholar/expert; Wikipedia is a fine starting place for identifying further sources, but it should not be used as a source itself. I recommend searching for articles through the databases on lib.utah.edu or scholar.google.com and books.google.com).

Option 2: Interview – Consult a member of a religious tradition *different from any past or present affiliation of your own** and use their insights as a foundation for exploring questions you have about that tradition. Try to pay special attention to how their *particular* experience supports and challenges some of the *general* information presented in class and the textbook. Finally, don't just provide a Q&A transcript – their answers should function as a basis for your own commentary and analysis!

Option 3: Observe – Attend a worship service or ceremony from a religious tradition *different from any past or present affiliation of your own** in order to both (i.) report on significant actions in the service itself and (ii.) analyze those actions in light of the teachings and beliefs we've learned about the religion; you may also compare the service to other religious services with which you're familiar. A non-exhaustive and non-restrictive list of possible places to visit is available under Announcements / "Resources" on Canvas. Please be sensitive to the degree in which you, as a non-member, are welcome to participate by contacting the place of worship beforehand; it is also prudent to inquire about proper attire.

Option 4: Lecture – Attend an academic lecture or presentation (make sure to clearly state the date, place, and speaker in your essay) which directly addresses a religious tradition and then (i.) report on the content of the lecture and (ii.) analyze and evaluate the speaker's position. A list of suggested lecture opportunities will be updated as the semester unfolds under Announcements / "Resources" on Canvas, though you are by no means limited to lectures listed here. If in doubt about whether a particular lecture qualifies, please inquire with the instructor.

Option 5: Experience – Draw on your own experience with this particular religion (whether as a member or non-member) in order to reflect on its impact on the daily practice of people's lives.

* Note regarding options **2** and **3**: Different denominations, but not different particular communities of the same denomination, qualify as "a religious tradition different from any past or present affiliation of your own" for the purposes of this assignment. For example, an Eastern Orthodox interviewee or worship service

would be fair game for a student who is or was a Lutheran (even though the two are both Christians). However, a Reform Jew living in Salt Lake should not interview a Reform Jew living in Wisconsin, even though they belong to different congregations. If you have specific questions, please inquire with the instructor.

Past submissions of each option are available for reference as examples on Canvas. These essays should be submitted electronically (.doc, .docx, or .pdf attachment uploaded to "Assignments" on Canvas) *by their due dates*. Again, please inform me of extenuating circumstances (e.g. emergencies and illnesses) as early as possible.

Note: If papers are based on an event which only occurs later in the semester than its corresponding unit (e.g. the Holi Festival or Diwali), students receive an automatic extension without penalty *so long as* their papers are submitted within **one week** of that event. Late papers will be penalized two points per day. Students are expected to abide by the University's Standards of Academic Conduct (University Regulations, Ch. 10, Sec. 5) throughout the course. "Borrowed" text, whether from a fellow student or another source without attribution, constitutes a serious offense; such instances of plagiarism will be punished severely.

Grading Scale

A	95 – 100 (please note the higher cutoff for an "A")
A-	90 – 94.999
B+	87 – 89.999
B	83 – 86.999
B-	80 – 82.999
C+	77 – 79.999
C	73 – 76.999
C-	70 – 72.999
D+	67 – 69.999
D	63 – 66.999
D-	60 – 62.999
E	0 – 59.999

Extra credit is not offered in this course. The closest thing to "extra credit" is the possibility of submitting more than the required number of short essays, in which case only the highest scoring three essays will count (the other lower will be dropped). No special due date extensions are given for submitting any such "extra" essays.

Canvas grades are meant as a helpful tool for students to monitor their progress in the course, and when all required assignments have been submitted and graded, the Canvas gradebook provides an accurate report of student scores. However, if an assignment is missing / not submitted, Canvas will not factor the "0" into a student's grade until it is manually entered by the instructor later in the semester -- keep this in mind when checking your the status of your grade. Also, seniors are not given any special accommodations (e.g. special extensions, exam retakes, etc.) to help them pass in order to graduate.

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801)581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to visit <http://disability.utah.edu/> (<http://disability.utah.edu/>)

Statement of civility

Classrooms should be spaces where people with conflicting points of view can engage respectfully with one another. Please be polite. Please think before you post. Please do not engage in side discussions. Please listen carefully to what others say.

Campus Safety

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

[\(http://disability.utah.edu/\)](http://disability.utah.edu/)

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Introduction

Mon., Aug. 19: Introduction to the Course & General Overview (Day 1)

- No readings

Wed., Aug. 21: Philosophy, Theology, & Religious Studies (Day 2)

- No readings

Fri., Aug. 23: The Quest for Meaning (Day 3)

- Malkovsky, "First Arrival in Asia" pp. 19-35

Reading begins at the start of ch. 3; reading stops at the words "now known as Swami Veda Bharati."

Unit 1: Hinduism – read Brodd, *Invitation to World Religions*, Chapter 4

Mon., Aug. 26: Hinduism – History (Day 4)

Wed., Aug. 28: Hinduism – Doctrine & Anthropology (Day 5)

Fri., Aug. 30: Hinduism – Ritual & Practice (Day 6)

Mon., Sep. 2: No classes at the U (Labor Day Holiday)

Wed., Sep. 4: Hinduism – *Bhagavad-Gita* (Day 7)

- "The Bhagavad-Gita" [*Canvas*], pp. 1282-1301

Fri., Sep. 6: Hinduism – Malkovsky's Experience (Day 8)

- Malkovsky, "Yoga," pp. 125-145 (pp. 146-152 optional)
Required reading starts at beginning of chapter and ends at "align ourselves to God's will here on earth."

Mon., Sep. 9: Hinduism – Review (Day 9)

- Go over "Exam Review Sheet" (in "Files")

Wed., Sep. 11: Hinduism – Exam (Day 10)

Unit 2: Buddhism: read Brodd, *Invitation to World Religions*, Chapter 5

Fri., Sep. 13: Buddhism – History (Day 11)

- NOTE: NO CLASS MEETING (instructor out of town)
 - Please watch "Day 11 - Buddhism - History" video under "**Media Gallery**."
 - Afterwards, please take corresponding "attendance" quiz -- must be completed between Thu 9/12 and Sun 9/15)
- (Unit 1 paper due)

Mon., Sep. 16: Buddhism – Doctrine & Anthropology: Theravada (Day 12)

Wed., Sep. 18: Buddhism – Doctrine & Anthropology: Mahayana (Day 13)

Fri., Sep. 20: Buddhism – *Lotus Sutra* (Day 14)

- "Simile and Parable" [*Canvas*], pp. 25-40

Mon., Sep. 23: Buddhism – Mahayana Denominations; Ritual & Practice (Day 15)

Wed., Sep. 25: Buddhism – Malkovsky's Experience (Day 16)

- Malkovsky, "Buddhist Vipassana Meditation," pp. 99-124
(The required reading is the entire chapter.)

Fri., Sep. 27: Buddhism – Review (Day 17)

- Go over "Exam Review Sheet" (in "Files")

Mon., Sep. 30: Exam (Day 18)

Unit 3: Judaism – read Brodd, *Invitation to World Religions*, Chapter 10

Wed., Oct. 2: Judaism – History (Day 19)

- (Unit 2 paper due)

Fri., Oct. 3: Judaism – Doctrine & Anthropology (Day 20)

(FALL BREAK - NO CLASSES AT THE U)

Mon., Oct. 14: Judaism – Ritual & Practice (Day 21)

Wed., Oct. 16: Judaism – Hebrew Bible excerpt (Day 22)

- Amos 2:4-16; 4:1-5; 5:6-27; 7:10-17; 9:7-15 [*Canvas*]

Fri., Oct. 18: Judaism – Messianic Expectations (Day 23)

- Krieg, *Treasure in the Field* [*Canvas*], pp. 96-100

Mon., Oct. 21: Judaism – Levine's Experience (Day 24)

- Levine, "Introduction" to *The Misunderstood Jew* [*Canvas*], pp. 1-16

Wed., Oct. 23: Judaism – Review (Day 25)

- Go over "Exam Review Sheet" (in "Files")

Fri., Oct. 25: Judaism – Exam (Day 26)

Unit 4: Christianity – read Brodd, *Invitation to World Religions*, Chapter 11

Mon., Oct. 28: Christianity – Jesus' Life & Ministry (Day 27)

- (Unit 3 paper due)

Wed., Oct. 30: Christianity – Jewish & Gentile Christianity (Day 28)

- Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1 – 7:29) [*Canvas*]

Fri., Nov. 1: Christianity – History & Doctrine: Councils (Day 29)

Mon., Nov. 4: Christianity – History & Doctrine: Denominations (Day 30)

Wed., Nov. 6: Christianity – Ritual & Practice (Day 31)

Fri., Nov. 8: Christianity – Malkovsky's Experience (Day 32)

- Malkovsky "Crossover Communion," pp. 59-67
 - (*Required reading includes this entire chapter.*)
- Malkovsky, "First Arrival in Asia" pp. 35-45
 - *Reading beings at phrase "I was now twenty three years old"; it concludes with the end of the chapter.*

Mon., Nov. 11: Christianity – Review (Day 33)

- Go over "Exam Review Sheet" (in "Files")

Wed., Nov. 13: Christianity – Exam (Day 34)

Unit 5: Islam - read Brodd, *Invitation to World Religions*, Chapter 12

Fri., Nov. 15: Islam – History: Traditional & Revisionist (Day 35)

- (Unit 4 paper due)

Mon., Nov. 18: Islam – Doctrine & Anthropology (Day 36)

Wed., Nov. 20: Islam – Ritual & Practice (Day 37)

Fri., Nov. 22: Islam – Excerpt from the Qur'an (Day 38)

- Sura 5, "The Table" [*Canvas*], pp. 50-60

Mon., Nov. 25: Islam – Malkovsky's Experience (Day 39)

- "Return to India," pp. 3-4, 11-12
- "Khatijah's Death," pp. 251-265

Wed., Nov. 27: ISIS - An Intra-Islamic Conflict (Day 40)

- Kermani – "Beyond the Borders" [*Canvas*]

Fri., Nov. 29: No classes at the U (Thanksgiving Holiday)

Mon., Dec. 2: Review Day: Islam (Day 41)

- Go over "Exam Review Sheet" (in "Files")

Wed., Dec. 4: Islam Exam (= Final Exam) (Day 42)

Mon., Dec. 9: (Unit 5 paper due)