PHIL 3640-001: World Religions
Course Syllabus
Spring 2021; January 19 - May 5
This is an online class administered through Canvas

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Office hours: via Zoom by appointment
Preferred Contact: Canvas email function or Umail

Course Description: This course primarily serves as an introduction to the vast diversity of the world’s great religious traditions. More specifically, we will examine the core teachings, history, major schools, and contemporary practice of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. Becoming acquainted with such diversity naturally presents the philosophical problem of how best to deal with the facts that (i) the world is a very religious place and (ii) the major religions of the world apparently make conflicting claims about what is true. This problem, or set of problems, will be explored alongside our study of the world’s religions.

Learning objectives:
- Develop critical thinking and analysis of religious ideas, concepts and texts
- Develop effective communication skills through writing and discussion
- Foster an understanding of core beliefs and lived experiences of the traditions studied
- Foster a comparative approach to understanding religious traditions and the cultures that arise within religious communities
- Foster an awareness of how religious tradition influences people’s thought and behavior on key global issues (e.g., conflicts, interfaith relationships) and social issues (e.g., marriage, race, gender)
- Foster a dispassionate grasp of the core ideas and ideals that motivate people from diverse cultures

Required texts:
- Religion Matters, by Stephen Prothero (Norton, 2020) (*note: students can purchase the Ebook + InQuizitive by following the instructions provided in the Canvas Module)


1 Note: The syllabus is not a binding legal contract. It may be modified by the instructor when the student is given reasonable notice of the modification.
**Evaluation and Grading:** This class is divided topically into six Blocks—with each Block devoted to a different religious tradition. For each Block, there are three types of assignments:

- **Inquizitive Content quizzes (30% of final grade):** Completion of the assigned readings is crucial for success in this class; students are expected to enter each Block prepared by having done the assigned readings for that Block (listed below in the schedule). For each Block's assigned reading, there is a corresponding InQuizitive assignment; the InQuizitive assignments may be found via either the ‘Modules’ or ‘Assignments’ tabs on our course Canvas page. Refer to the syllabus video supplement for more details on Inquizitive. **The InQuizitives for each Block must be completed by the final Saturday at 11:59 PM**

- **Video Quizzes and Exit Tickets (30% of the final grade):** For each Block, a series of video lectures will be posted on that Block’s religion. Embedded in each of these video lectures will be a few multiple-choice questions about the content and one ‘Exit Ticket’ question at the end asking for your view on something discussed in the lecture. The purpose of this assignment is to incentivize students to watch the video lectures in full and critically engage with their content. For each Block, the video quizzes must be completed by the final Saturday at 11:59 PM.

- **Religion Discussion Posts (10% of final grade):** Over the length of the course, a series of discussion questions will be posted to Canvas—one for each Block we cover a new religion (5 total) plus one for each lecture on the problem of religious diversity (3 total). For these 8 discussion questions, each student must offer a thoughtful contribution in response; original contributions should be at least 150 words. Apart from your original contribution, feel free to further respond to other students’ comments, to continue the dialogue, if desired. For each Block, the discussion posts must be submitted by the final Saturday at 11:59 PM.

Additionally, there will be two exams during the semester:

- **Exams (15% of final grade, each):** There will be a midterm exam (Block Four) and a final exam (Final Exam Period). These exams cover the key concepts and teachings, historical figures, practices, and timelines/demographics of each religion covered. Each test will consist of a variety of question types. For each exam, a study guide will be posted in the ‘files’ tab of our Canvas page. The study guides will exhaust the material on the tests; as such, one’s level of mastery of the study guides should correspond to one’s success on the tests. No makeup tests will be given, barring serious circumstances (illness, family emergency, etc.). In such circumstances, legitimate documentation detailing the reason for the absence must be provided in order to make up the test. **The exams must be completed by 11:59 PM on Saturday in the weeks they are posted. The exams will be timed.**
- **Participation in Discussions**: A helpful learning tool for a class like this is interaction and discussion with your peers. As such, apart from me posting discussion questions on canvas, you are welcome to post your own discussions as well. It is required that you participate in the discussions I post (see above), but you will not be penalized by not participating in any posts from another student. That being said, thoughtful and consistent contributions to the posted discussions (beyond the required) might result in a positive grade bump at the end of the semester, at my discretion.

[A standard grading scale will be used—including + and – grades (90’s = A range; 80’s = B range; 70’s = C range; 60’s = D range; <60 = F).] The lowest and highest two values in each range will constitute minus and plus grades, respectively.

**Schedule:**

**Block One** (1/19 - 2/6): JUDAISM + Course Intro
- (Reading: Prothero, ch. 5 (Part II intro optional))

**Block Two** (2/7 - 2/20): CHRISTIANITY
- (Reading: Prothero, ch. 6)

**Block Three** (2/21 - 3/6): ISLAM
- (Reading: Prothero, ch. 7)

**Virtual Spring Break!** (3/7 - 3/13) No assignments!

**Block Four** (3/14 - 3/27): HINDUISM
- (Reading: Prothero, ch. 2 (Part I intro optional))
  - **MIDTERM EXAM** - on Canvas

**Block Five** (3/28 - 4/10): BUDDHISM
- (Reading: Prothero, ch. 3)

**Block Six** (4/11 - 4/24): The Problem of Religious Diversity
- Religious Exclusivism (Reading: McKim, chs. 1 and 4)
- Religious Inclusivism (Reading: McKim, ch. 5)
- Religious Pluralism (Reading: McKim, ch. 6)
Final Exam Period (4/29 - 5/5)

- **FINAL EXAM** - on Canvas

Ground Rules, University Policies and Recommendations, etc:

- **COVID-19RelatedPolicies:**
  - **FaceCoveringsRequirement:** Based on CDC guidelines, the University requires everyone to wear face coverings in shared public spaces on campus, including our classroom. As a reminder, when I wear a face covering, I am protecting you. When you wear a face covering, you are protecting me and all of your classmates. If you forget your face covering, I will ask you to leave class to retrieve it. If you repeatedly fail to wear a face covering in class, I will refer you to the Dean of Students for a possible violation of the Student Code. Note that some students may qualify for accommodations through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you think you meet these criteria and desire an exception to the face covering policy, contact the Center for Disability Access (CDA). Accommodations should be obtained prior to the first day of class so that I am notified by CDA of any students who are not required to wear a face covering.
    - Please note that face shields alone are not an acceptable form of face covering unless also worn with a covering or mask for the nose and mouth.
    - Students are encouraged to wash their hands, use hand sanitizer and clean their desks with wipes, which will be available at classroom entrances and at “sanitizing stations” in multi-use buildings, including Marriott Library.

- Students may elect not to attend class in-person with no penalty and do not need to seek an official accommodation to participate online, rather than in-person.

- If you are in need of technology resources to succeed in this course, you may consult the Marriott Library’s equipment checkout/delivery resource.

- Students must self-report if they test positive for COVID-19; this can be done here.

- During our first in-person meeting, a seating chart will be created. Students are requested to sit in the same place for each class period. This will simplify contact tracing should the need arise.

- Students should be prepared to move class to a fully online format should the need arise based on recommendations by the University of Utah senior leadership or state of Utah health officials.

- Updated planning on returning to Campus in the Spring can be found here.

- **Civility:** Some of the content of this course may be construed as controversial. Each student needs to do their best to be respectful of opposing viewpoints and the
ethical, social, and religious convictions of others. Behavior that runs counter to civil discussion will not be tolerated.

- **Academic Honesty**: All student projects and papers submitted for this class must be the student’s own work. Plagiarism of any kind will result in a failing grade for the assignment—no exceptions.

- **Academic Code of Conduct**: More generally, all students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, as spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content.

- **ADA statement**: 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 the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). 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.

- **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.

- **Addressing Sexual Misconduct**: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean
of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677 (COPS).

- **Diversity/Inclusivity Statement:** It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students’ learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

- **Veterans Center:** If you are a student veteran, the U of Utah has a Veterans Support Center located in Room 161 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. Please visit their website for more information about what support they offer, a list of ongoing events, and links to outside resources: http://veteranscenter.utah.edu/. Please also let me know if you need any additional support in this class for any reason.

- **Wellness Statement:** personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student’s ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at www.wellness.utah.edu or 801-581-7776.