PHIL 3640-070: World Religions

Course Syllabus
Meeting dates: January 11 - 15, 2021
Meeting times: 9 AM - 5 PM (IVC-Hybrid model)
Location: IVC via Zoom and Online
3 credit hours

Instructor: Landon McBrayer, Ph.D.
- Email: landon.mcbayer@utah.edu
- 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 one with 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.

IVC-Hybrid Class Model: This class will utilize an Interactive Video Conferencing/online hybrid instruction model. For the first half of each day, we will meet synchronously (live) via Zoom, which will provide us with the time needed to cover the essentials of each religious tradition and to have some engaging class discussions about them. Attendance is required for each session. The remainder of each day will be online and on your own time. For this online portion of the day, students will watch and engage with short video lectures and have an online discussion (via Canvas) where we will interact with various religious sacred texts.

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 (conflicts, interfaith relationships) and social issues (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)

**Evaluation and Grading:** Final grades will be determined by the following categories of assignments: Pre-Work, Class-Work, and Post-Work:

- **Pre-Work** (Work due *BEFORE* January 11th) - 30% of the final grade:
  - **Inquizitive Assignments:** This class is moderately reading intensive. To ensure that class time is effective during the week we meet, students are expected to read the relevant chapters from both texts *before* that week. (See schedule below for readings.) For each assigned reading from the *Religion Matters* text, there is a corresponding Inquizitive quiz assignment; the Inquizitive assignments may be found via either the 'Modules' or 'Assignments' tabs on our course Canvas page.

- **Class-Work** (Work due *DURING* our class week) - 30% of the final grade: Passive and active participation will be graded during the week of class. Passive participation involves attendance during the lecture period and/or viewing the video lectures. Active participation during class will take place through various assignments, such as in-class discussions, discussion assignments via Canvas, etc.
  - **Religious Text Shallow Dive Discussions** (10% of the final grade): On four of the five days that we meet, I'll post some discussion questions in Canvas asking you to engage with primary religious texts and offer your own insight(s) about the prompt.
  - **Three-minute Papers** (20% of final grade): The video lectures for this class provide unique material distinct from that in the assigned readings. Students are expected to watch all lectures posted for each religion. For each lecture, there will be a corresponding three-minute paper assignment. For these assignments, you are expected to summarize the content of each video lecture as best you can in just three minutes. The idea is to give a concise summary in a few paragraphs that shows you have watched the lecture in full.

- **Post-Work** (Work due *AFTER* January 15th)
  - **Exams** - 20% of final grade, each: There will be two exams. One will cover the monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and the other will
cover Hinduism and Buddhism. 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, including short answer, fill-in-the-blank, matching, and multiple-choice. Study guides for each exam will be posted in Canvas before the week of class meetings. 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. The exams will be available after the week of class meetings, and must be completed by the end of the first week of February—by 2/6 at 11:59 PM. The exams can be found in Canvas under the ‘quizzes’ tab; both exams are timed and digitally proctored.

[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.]

Ground Rules, University Policies and Recommendations, etc:

- **COVID-19 Related Policies:**
  - **Face Coverings Requirement:** 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 and 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.

**Schedule and Readings:**

**Day One** (1/11)
- Course introduction - What is religion? What is philosophy? How can studying religion be doing philosophy? (Optional reading: *Religion Matters*, chapter 1)
- Judaism (Background reading: *Religion Matters*, chapter 5)

**Day Two** (1/12)
- Christianity (Background reading: *Religion Matters*, chapter 6)
- Exclusivism (Background reading: McKim, Ch. 4)

**Day Three** (1/13)
- Islam (Background reading: *Religion Matters*, chapter 7)
- Inclusivism (Background Reading: McKim, Ch. 5)

**Day Four** (1/14)
- Hinduism (Background reading: *Religion Matters*, chapter 2)

**Day Five** (1/15)
- Buddhism (Background reading: *Religion Matters*, chapter 3)
- Pluralism (Background reading: McKim, Ch. 6)