

Syllabus: Contemporary Practices of the World's Religions

CPRL 306, Spring Semester, 2011 01 LEC (19306)

Time and Place: Tuesday (T) and Thursday (Th) from 1:00 pm to 2:15 at H 128

Instructor

Deborah Barrett, J.D., Ph.D.

Email: Barrett@zcoc.org (Please do not use my Fullerton.edu email)

Home office voicemail: 949-722-7818, Ext. 2. (Not earlier than 9 am or later than 9 pm)

Email and phone messages will be answered on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Campus office hours: Thursdays, 2:15 pm to 4 pm & Tuesdays, 2:15 pm to 2:30

Office location TBA

My mailbox is located at the Comparative Religion Department office at UH-313.

Course Description

This course uses a phenomenological approach to the study of the contemporary practices of world religions by focusing upon how religions are visibly expressed by their external activities. The practical-ritual, ethical-legal and material dimensions of religion will be examined, rather than the doctrinal aspects except insofar as inner attitudes and beliefs contribute to an understanding of the practices. The course will explore the themes of image, ethics, birth, death, marriage, food, clothing, daily, yearly or seasonal rituals, religious buildings and sacred journey. We will use a comparative template for each theme, enhancing appreciation for common bonds and diversity. Although we will emphasize the five major religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, there will be some opportunities to explore the practices of other religions.

The course will consider the unique place the practice of religion has in American society. The First Amendment, the history of religious freedom and the doctrine of separation of Church and State all influence religious practices in the United States. We will examine how the Constitution applies to religious practices involving the use of religious images, sacred texts and ethics, especially in current controversial issues such as the posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools or court houses, the placement of a cross on public property on a hill overlooking a city, the display of crèche and Menorah at civic centers, prayer before football games, etc. We will consider how the Constitution protects religious minorities and contributes to cultural diversity.

Objectives

By the end of the semester, students should:

- 1) Have specialized information about the practices of each of the world's five religious traditions, for example, birth, death, marriage, architecture, ethics, clothing, food and use or prohibition of sacred images.

- 2) Have more detailed knowledge of specific religious practices selected for further research.
- 3) Have increased ability to compare and contrast religious practices, revealing the common bonds and universality of the human experience, as well as appreciating its unique and diverse expressions.
- 5) Be proficient in First Amendment religious liberty principles and their relationship to contemporary religious practices.
- 6) Be able to apply First Amendment principles to the current controversies about the practice of religion in society.
- 7) Have increased awareness of the contemporary situation and influence of religious traditions in the United States by focusing upon their practices.

Learning Outcomes

- 1) Increased ability to conduct research in comparative religion.
- 2) Increased appreciation of the cultural and religious diversity of American society.
- 3) Increased appreciation of First Amendment religious liberty principles.
- 4) Increased understanding of the religions examined in class and the problems facing them today.

Catalogue Course Description

"The course meets the learning goals of GE Category E. Lifelong Learning and Self-Development (previously Category IV). Courses in Lifelong Learning and Self-Development provide the opportunity to equip learners for lifelong understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological, social, and psychological beings. To accomplish this goal, students would:

1. *Further their own critical self-understanding and acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to engage and reflect in learning and self-development practices.*
2. *Develop strategies to be integrated physiological, socio-cultural, and psychological beings to promote a holistic awareness of lifelong learning throughout their lives.*
3. *(Does not apply to this course)*
4. *Develop themselves as responsible citizens, employees and employers, family members and members of the global society.*

Prerequisite: completion of General Education Category III.B.2. A comparative study of how the beliefs, practices and moral codes of the world's major religions influence the way nations and individuals behave in the spheres of daily life, culture, ethics, business and politics."

Emergencies

Please read: http://www.fullerton.edu/emergencypreparedness/ep_students.html

Disabled Student Services

Please let me know if I can be of help with any special needs for testing, taping, etc. Various kinds of assistance are available at The Disabled Student Service Office, UH 101 (657) 278-3117 or see www.fullerton.edu/disabledservices/

Texts

Gwynne, Paul. *World Religions in Practice: A Comparative Introduction*. Maldon: Blackwell Publishing, 2009. (Paperback ISBN 978 1 4051 6703 1)

Irons, Peter. *God on Trial: Dispatches from America's Religious Battlefields*. New York: Viking, 2007. (Paperback ISBN 978 0 670 03851 0)

Both texts are required. They have been ordered from the Little Professor Book Center.

Recommended reference:

Hubbard, Benjamin, et al. *An Educator's Classroom Guide to America's Religious Beliefs and Practices*. Westport: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. (Paperback ISBN-978 1 59158 409 4)

Grading Assessment

Method	Date	Percent of Grade
Midterm Test	Mar. 3	20
Single Topic Research Paper	Mar. 24	20
Comparative Final Research Paper	May 12	30
Final Exam (Take Home)	May 17	30

Midterm: Multiple choice, short answer and essays on weeks 1-6.

Final Exam: Take home, short and long essays. 60% on weeks 11 – 16 and 40% comprehensive. (Double-spaced, 5 to 10 pages, hard copy) The exam questions will be distributed on May 12, the last day our class meets before final exam week. Exams are due no later than 12:30 pm on May 17. I will be at class from noon to 12:30. If you wish, you may turn in your final early at the Comparative Religion office on or before the 16th. (If you are turning it in on the 16th, please bring it to our classroom.) No late finals will be accepted.

Content Assessed in Test and Final Exam: Questions for the Midterm and the Final Exam will be based on reading assignments from the texts, lectures, guest speakers, discussion questions from the text, any additionally assigned material (websites or handouts), videos and classroom discussions. Bring large "blue books" (or similar books) for the in-class test, and use black or blue pen.

Make-up tests

The midterm test may not be made-up unless there is a serious medical or other reason. If you have such an excuse, I usually need to be informed no later than two days after the missed due date. Incompletes will not be given.

Grading Scale

Plus/minus +/- grading will be used.

Grade	Points	Description	Explanation
A	93-100	Excellent	Distinguished work
A-	90-92		
B+	89-87		
B	86-83	Above Average	High quality work in most areas
B-	80-82		
C+	77-79		
C	73-76	Average	Adequate work in most areas
C-	70-72		
D+	69-67		
D	63-66	Below Average	Below average work. May have missed a test. Single Topic Paper late
D-	60-62		
F	Below 60	Fail the Course	Failure to meet minimum course requirements

A. Research Papers

Two research papers are assigned, a short one due at the middle of the semester and a longer one due the last day of our regularly scheduled class, before final exam week begins. The research papers are your opportunities to supplement and customize the course. Rather than surveying topics, the papers also allow you to explore a subject in more depth. You are welcome to choose any topics related to our course, but if you have any question about whether it is suitable, please consult me.

The Single Topic Research Paper provides an opportunity for you to get feedback before the Final Research Paper. It is intended not only to be shorter, but also less complex than the final paper. The Final Research Paper calls for a comparison of practices from at least two religious traditions.

The following requirements apply to both papers:

The Rubrics for Assessment and Grading of Research Papers (found below in Section D)

Use MLA format and style (plus cover page)

12 point Times Roman or similar font

1 ¼ inch margins and ½ inch headers and footers

Include a cover page and references section (bibliography) which are not counted toward

the length requirement

Use a good mixture of sources (books, newspaper articles, journals, web sites, etc.)

Staple the pages (no folders or binders)

Turn in hard copy only.

B. Single Topic Research Paper

In addition to the requirements above in Section A under "Research Papers," the following requirements apply to the Single Topic Research Paper:

3 pages (not more than 4)

2 or 3 sources (mixture of at least two types of source, for example, books, journals, websites)

One grade lowered for each day late

When considering topics, you may choose to focus on a specific practice. Some examples are: Vision Quest in the Native American Tradition; The Use of Dance in the Roman Catholic Mass; Gospel Singing in African American Churches; The Destruction of Buddhist Art in Afghanistan.

Instead, you may wish to consider a specific practice from a religious tradition we are not covering in this course. Examples are: Mormon Weddings; Quaker Meetings; B'hai Temples.

You might choose to focus upon two or three distinctive practices from one religious tradition we are not covering: Jehovah's Witnesses; Christian Scientist, Seventh-Day Adventist; Church of Scientology; Rastafarianism; Confucianism, Taoism; Sikhism; etc.

Finally, you may choose to study some additional areas exploring the role of religious practices in society: Examples are: The 9/11 Islamic Center Controversy; Restrictions on Churches Receiving Tax Exempt Status; and The Wearing of Religious Head Garb by Disney Employees.

Note: You may find it helpful to consider discussion questions at the end of each chapter of *World Religions in Practice* for paper ideas.

C. Final Comparative Research Paper

In addition to the requirements above in section A under "Research Papers," the following requirements apply to the Final Research Paper:

8 pages (not more than 9)

6 sources (mixture of at least three types of source, for example, books, journals, websites)

No late papers accepted

The Final Research Paper requires the comparison of a practice from at least two religious traditions. Some examples are:

- A Comparison of Marriage Preparation in the Hindu and Jewish Traditions
- Buddhist and Muslim Wedding Ceremonies Compared
- Group Gatherings for Centering Prayer and Zen Meditation: Similarities and Differences
- Burial Practices for Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jews
- The Role of Drumming in Native American and African Religious Traditions
- Catholic and Protestant Church Interiors Compared
- Two Walking Practices: The Labyrinth in Episcopal Churches and Buddhist Walking Meditation at Thich Nhat Hahn's Plum Village
- Comparison of Ramadan and Lent

D. Rubrics for Assessment and Grading of Research Papers

	Component to be assessed	Description	Points
1	Effectively addresses writing task	Choice of topic, thesis, intro.	20
2	Development of topic	Well-organized, support of ideas, evidence, examples, details, clear, coherent	20
3	Appropriate Use of Language (Mechanics)	Use of MLA format plus cover page, grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, pagination, sources	20
4	Effectiveness of Language	Syntactic variety, vocabulary, complexity, concise	20
5	Synthesis	Integration with the course, consideration of subtle issues, implications, analytic, conclusion	20
		Total Score	100
		Grade	A
	Comments:		

Academic Dishonesty

For an explanation of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams or plagiarism of written materials, see <http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/PDF/300/UPS300-021.pdf> Students guilty of academic dishonesty will receive an F for the test or paper, and possibly an F for the course. Incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students Office, Judicial Affairs. Do not collaborate on the take home final or research papers. Research papers will be computer checked for plagiarism.

Extra Credit Policy

Extra Credit will not be offered. There are ample opportunities in the syllabus for improvement throughout the semester.

Classroom participation and attendance

Students are expected to attend class, read assignments in advance and participate in discussions. Attendance and classroom participation will not be graded. However, to be successful in meeting the learning objectives of this class, it is recommended that students be absent for no more than four classes during the semester, and that students take an active part in classroom discussions.

Classroom Management

Please do not come late, leave early or step out to use the phone or restroom. To reduce distraction, do not use electronic devices during class, such as cell phones, texting devices, laptops, earphones, reading devices, etc. Do not video or audio tape the class, teacher and students, without permission (arrangement by the disabled student service office). Remember to turn off electronics which will make an audible signal and put them out of sight. Reading and writing during class should be for this class, not other classes. Please don't eat in class.

Class Topics, Readings and Assignment Schedule

WRP (*World Religions in Practice: A Comparative Introduction* text)

GT (*God on Trial: Dispatches from America's Religious Battlefields* text)

Q (Questions for discussion at the end of each chapter in WRP)

Week	Day	Date	Topic	Reading Assign.	Other
1	T	1/25	Course	Syllabus	
	Th	1/27	Intro.	WRP, Preface, Introduction	
2	T	2/1	Image	WRP, Chap. 1 The Second Commandment (Judaism) Shirk (Islam) Incarnate Son (Christianity) Murti (Hindu) The Three Bodies (Buddhism)	Q 3, 5, 7, 8 (p. 52)
	Th	2/3	Image		In Class Video: Modern Icons "Windows to the Soul" (Robert Lentz)

3	T	2/8	Image	GT, The Mount Soledad Cross Case, Chap. 4	
	Th	2/10	Book	WRP, Chap. 2 Shruti and Smriti (Hinduism) The Three Baskets (Buddhism) New Testament (Christianity) Tanach (Judaism) Qur'an (Islam)	Q 7, 8, 9, 10 (p. 82)
4	T	2/15	Ethics	WRP, Chap. 3 Dharma (Hinduism) Pancasila (Buddhism) The Ten Words (Judaism) A New Commandment (Christianity) The Greater Jihad (Islam)	Q 1, 2, 3 (p. 111)
	Th	2/17	Guest Speaker	http://www.zcoc.org/schetee.htm Read all Tea Ceremony pages	
5	T	2/22	Ethics	GT, The Ten Commandment Cases, Chap. 6	
	Th	2/24	Practice in U.S.	GT, Preface (xi-xx), The Establishment Clause, Chap 1	Outline distributed in class
6	T	3/1	Practice in U.S.	GT, Separation of Church and State, Chap. 2	Outline distributed in class
	Th	3/3		Midterm Test	Bring L. Blue Book
7	T	3/8	Birth	WRP, Chap. 4 Baptism (Christianity) B'rit Milah (Judaism) Aqquah (Islam) Birth Samskaras (Hinduism) The Buddhist Exception	All Q (p. 136-137)
	Th	3/10	Birth		
8	T	3/15	Death		Video <i>Heaven on Earth/ Monuments to Belief: Hinduism</i>
	Th	3/17	Death	WRP, Chap. 5 Wheel of Rebirth (Buddhism) Last Sacrifice (Hinduism) Resurrection of the Body (Judaism) Salat al Jenazah (Islam) First Fruits (Christianity)	Q 1, 2, 4, 8 (p. 16)

9	T	3/22			Film Clip: <i>The Amish: A People of Preservation</i>
	Th	3/24	Selected Practices	Single Topic Research Papers Due	Discussion of Paper Topics
10	T	3/29	Recess	No class	
	Th	3/31	Recess	No class	

11	T	4/5	Marriage	WRP, Chap. 6 Nikah (Islam) Under the Huppah (Judaism) Householder/Forest-Dweller (Hinduism) Bride of Christ (Christianity) The Renunciation (Buddhism)	All Q (p. 199-200)
	Th	4/7	Marriage		
12	T	4/12	Food	WRP, Chap. 7 Ahimsa & Samadhi (Buddhism) Blessed Leftovers (Hinduism) Bread and Wine (Christianity) Kosher (Judaism) Halal (Islam)	All Q (p. 229)
	Th	4/14	Food		
13	T	4/19	Clothing	WRP, Chap. 8 The Veil of Modesty (Islam) Kippah, Tefillin, Tallit (Judaism) Thread and Mark (Hinduism) Vestments, Habits (Christianity)	Q 1, 2, 3, 6, 9 (p. 258)
	Th	4/21	Clothing		
14	T	4/26	Day	WRP, Chap. 9 Uposatha (Buddhism) Tithi (Hinduism) Sabbath (Judaism) The Lord's Day (Christianity) Salat (Islam)	Q 1, 2, 6, 9 (p. 285)
	Th	4/28	Year	WRP, Chap. 10 Four Seasons (Christianity) Full Moons and Monsoons (Buddhism)	Q 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (p. 318)

				Day of Brahma (Hinduism) Harvests, History, High Holy Days (Judaism) Lunar Year (Islam)	
15	T	5/3	Building	WRP, Chap. 11 Mosque (Islam) Synagogue (Judaism) Church (Christianity) Mandir (Hinduism) Temple Complex (Buddhism)	Q 1, 6, 7, 8, 9 (p. 245)
	Th	5/5	Building		Film: <i>Heaven on Earth/ Monuments to Belief: Judaism</i> (Temples)
16	T	5/10	Journey	WRP, Chap. 12 The Sacred Ford (Hinduism) Traces of Tathagata (Buddhism) Quest of the Magi (Christianity) Aliyah (Judaism) Hajj (Islam)	Q 1, 3, 7, 8 (p. 376)
	Th	5/12	Journey	Final Research Papers Due & Final Exam distributed	Film: <i>Inside Mecca</i> (Hajj)
17	T	5/17		Turn in Final Exam from noon to 12:30 pm at class (H-128)	

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