

RELIGION 2020 A
WORLD RELIGIONS
Madrid, Spain Study Abroad Program
Summer 2009
MW 9:00-11:15 a.m.

INSTRUCTOR: Cristóbal Serrán-Pagán y Fuentes, Ph.D.

OFFICE HOURS: after class

E-mail: cserranpagan@valdosta.edu

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the rich history of religions, particularly those major living religions of the world which originated in Asia (Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Zen and Shinto) and in the Middle East (Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam). The purpose of this course is to explore their historical-cultural origin and development, their beliefs and rituals, their spiritual practices and festivals, and their major impact in today's world (especially in the context of our study abroad program in Spain). We will address important issues such as gender, sex, race, ecology, power, mysticism, and interfaith (East-West) dialogue. By the end of the course students will be able to discern the positive and negative contributions of these living religious faiths to the world of believers and non-believers alike. [See the course description in our VSU Undergraduate Catalog (p. 404)].

II. COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Demonstrate first-hand knowledge of Eastern and Western major religious figures, classic texts, rich history, shared and unshared beliefs, and their cultural impact in our societies (case study in Spain). **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (1, 2, 6, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 1--See pp. 155-156 in the Catalog)**
2. Explain and discuss major themes and motifs of these living religious traditions. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (2, 6); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3)**
3. Collect data and cite good examples of similarities and differences between Eastern and Western religious traditions. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (2, 3, 6, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3, 4)**
4. Critically address the achievements and failures of these world's religious faiths, especially by taking greater responsibility for own learning through the demonstration of curiosity, motivation, and risk-taking characteristics. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (1, 2, 6, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3)**
5. Utilize information technology to do research, specifically the Internet, and express themselves clearly, logically, and precisely in writing and in speaking. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (3, 4, 7; Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 2, 4)**

6. Analyze and synthesize a broad range of material (including ability to make meaningful connections between various academic disciplines). **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (2, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 2, 3)**

7. Produce an original work based on their ability to formulate a problem, develop a plan of action, and prove or disprove a hypothesis. **VSU Gen. Ed. Outcomes (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8); Department Educational Outcomes (Religious Studies Track 1, 2, 3, 4)**

III. REQUIRED TEXT

Fisher, Mary Pat. Living Religions. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson-Prentice Hall, 2008.

IV. RECOMMENDED READINGS (MLA samples)

Bellinger, Charles K. "Internet Guide." 2 Jan. 2008

[Http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/front.htm](http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/front.htm).

Carmody, Denise L., and John T Carmody. Mysticism: Holiness East and West. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Eliade, Mircea, and Ioan P. Couliano, eds. The Eliade Guide to World Religions. San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1991.

Ferguson, Marianne. Women and Religion. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995.

Fisher, Mary P. An Anthology of Living Religions. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000.

---. Religion in the Twenty-First Century. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999.

Haglof, Anthony. "Buddhism and the *Nada* of St. John of the Cross." Carmelite Studies 1 (1980):183-203.

Smart, Ninian. The Long Search. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977.

Smith, Huston. The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Active class participation and attendance are mandatory (1)	20%
Paper Proposal (2)	20%
Final reflection paper (3)	20%
Journal(4)	20%
Final oral individual presentation (5)	20%

- (1) A. Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions. How so? Read the assigned material before coming to class, ask good questions, respond to some of my questions, and share your tangible pieces of information and wisdom with the rest of the class. QUESTIONS: What was the religious teaching or theme that you found the most interesting in our readings? What was the most troubling or confusing religious theme, motif or symbol? Explain them in your own words. Cite sources. For instance, "...” (Fisher 111).

B. Students who are not ill and miss a class or a field trip will lose one letter grade per absence. I will admit excused absences only when the student shows documentation that he or she has been ill (check with the Director of the Madrid program for any possible notes or documentation). You are responsible for all the material covered in class during your absence. **You will get an “F” grade (0) on any course material not submitted in time.** I highly recommend you complete and turn any academic task before the deadline if you are planning to miss a class. **I will not accept late papers or assignments under any circumstances.** Also my policy on tardiness is the following: **students will drop one letter grade if they come late to class three times.**

- (2) **Paper Proposal:** 20% of the overall grade (paper is due Monday, JUNE 1 before noon--late papers will not be accepted). Thus students will fail this assignment if they do not submit the paper in time. Make sure you send your copy electronically to my e-mail cserranpagan@valdosta.edu and get a signature confirmation that I open it.

Write in one or two pages a suggested **title**, a **thesis statement**, an **example** for each comparison [one example for your similarity and one example for your difference], and **four** selected **quotations** to back up your examples [**two** for the similarity and **two** for the difference] using the proper citation in parenthesis. For instance, “. . . “ (King 111). Or if you have more than one book by the same author then change the format to: “. . .” (King, Strength to Love 33). You should cite at least **four** sources (**three** from scholarly books—including some of our textbooks--and **one** from an internet source) in the Works Cited. Follow the format below!

- 1) **Title**-For example, A Hindu-Christian Look at Non-Violence: Gandhi and King on *Ahimsa*.
- 2) **Thesis Statement**-Write in one or more paragraphs the purpose of your reflection paper. What are you trying to prove in your paper? Which Western and Eastern religions did you choose? Which is the topic that you are planning to write on? Why? Narrow down the topic. Be specific!
- 3) **Examples**-- Give an example for each similarity and each difference on how an Eastern and a Western religious tradition are alike and dislike using the same researched topic in question. For instance, if nonviolence is your selected topic, how similar and different are your religious thinkers, schools of thought, or religious traditions (be specific if you can! name them! Ex.

Gandhi and Jesus on nonviolence)? What do they share in common? What is unique about their religious language, methods, styles, historical contexts, etc.?

4) **Sources-AVOID PLAGIARISM!!!** Make sure that you give proper credit to all your sources if you are quoting directly or paraphrasing from any text. Open parenthesis, name the author's last name (if there is no author's name cite the website, www.hinduism.com), and write the page number. Ex. ". . ." (Fisher 130). If you are quoting more than one page, use the following format: ". . ." (Fisher 130-131). Then include all your sources in the last page of your reflection paper as Works Cited. Use alphabetical order. Check the samples using [the MLA Handbook Manual Style](#) in **Section IV!**

(3) **Final Reflection Paper:** 20% of the overall grade (**paper is due Monday, June 15 before noon**--late papers will not be accepted).

Students will write a short comparative paper (no more than **4 pages**) based on a specific topic (for instance, on poverty, global warming, stem cell, euthanasia, homosexuality, role of women, men, homosexuals, mysticism of love, religious art, war and peace, nonviolence, animal rights, education, the media, sports, sacred texts, rituals, places of worship, etc.) using one major Eastern (Hinduism, [Zen] [Tibetan] Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism, or Shinto) religion and one Western (Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity or Islam) religion. Choose a topic that you are passionate or curious about it!!! You can start working on it in terms of doing some preliminary research and checking with me for feedback before you start writing about it. I will ask all of you to send me a **proposal** after our first class meeting (deadline by **Monday, June 1 before noon**).

Also start reading some of the chapters from our textbook. Choose the **two** religions (one from the East—Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen?, one from the West—Judaism, Christianity, Islam?) that you are most interested in comparing and contrasting. You will need to find out at least **one** major similarity and **one** major difference between two religious traditions. Start your paper with a good introduction; then state as clear as possible **one** example for the similarity and **one** example for the difference; cite at least **two** quotes for each example and **two** scholarly sources using in-text citation (sacred texts like the Bible are excluded from these sources unless you want to add it as one more source in parenthesis) for each comparison; use the pronoun "I" such as I agree or I disagree and explain why throughout the paper; have a good conclusion at the end; and finally, list **four** scholarly sources in your Works Cited (use MLA style, double spaced, alphabetical order, etc). I will give you more specific instructions at the day of our meeting. Bring any questions you may have about writing a good reflection paper.

A) Write a thesis statement **at the beginning** of your paper explaining why you chose this topic and what you found interesting about it. One good paragraph will do it. Have a good conclusion **at the end** explaining what you have learned after doing research on your topic.

B) Students will select **one** major religious or spiritual theme or motif (for instance, the role of women in an Eastern religion and in a Western religion). Find out **one** major similarity and **one** major difference between one Eastern (ex. Hinduism) and one Western (ex. Judaism) religious tradition based on your researched topic. Cite good examples and rational arguments to back up your opinions with scholarly sources throughout your paper. Avoid plagiarism.

Document all your sources. Plagiarized assignments will receive a failing grade and will be reported to the Dean of Students in your respective school. Check the link below this text for further information on academic dishonesty. (Please also see pp. 93-94 in the VSU Undergraduate Catalog.)

All answers must be in print. Use MLA style. The maximum of pages allowed is **four**. Use pagination numbers (ex. Serrán-Pagán 1). Use double spaced. You are required to use the pronoun 'I' (such as "I think," "I agree," "I disagree") in all your papers. Combine facts, personal input and scholarly sources throughout your reflection paper. Select at least **four** quotes and cite the sources in parenthesis throughout your paper. For instance, "....." (Fisher 112). Then cite at least **four** complete sources (one from our textbook, two from scholarly books, and one from the internet) in the Works Cited (at the end of your reflection paper). You will lose **one** point for each mechanical error (grammar, spelling, and format).

FAQ's

How can I get an A in my final reflection paper?

An "A" reflection paper must 1) demonstrate mastery of the topic in question, 2) balance good critical-thinking skills ("write your thoughts on paper") with facts, 3) have few spelling and/or grammatical errors, and 4) cite all sources properly throughout paper using parentheses and having them at the end in your Works Cited.

What are the minimum and the maximum number of pages in my reflection paper?

4 pages minimum and **4 pages** maximum. The first page should include the introduction of your topic (thesis statement) and the history of the problem you are trying to tackle. The second page should address the similarity (give an example with a quote and a source, and your personal input). The third page should focus on the difference (give an example with a quote and a source, and your personal input). And the fourth page should be the conclusion. Have a paragraph at the end explaining the most interesting thing you have learned about your researched topic.

Can I use "I" throughout the paper?

Yes, it is required to use the personal pronoun "I" because this is a reflection paper. I highly recommend to use expressions such as "I agree," "I disagree," "I think," "I believe," "It is my understanding," etc. In doing so, I can recognize quickly your own ideas. Do not wait until the end of your paper to state your own ideas.

Any other expectations?

An "A" paper must include 1) a good introduction and conclusion, 2) at least one good comparison for each similarity and for each difference between the two religious traditions, based on your selected topic in question), and 3) page numbering. Also **DO NOT USE bold** letters or underlining in your title and in the Works Cited. Type your proposal and reflection paper. I will not accept handwriting papers!!! Use double spaced. Do not forget to check

spelling!!! Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

(4) **Journal** (20%): Students will submit **one** page (can use both sides) in handwriting for each field trip. The question that needs to be addressed is: After your visit to a specific location, what is the most valuable learning experience that you can take with you in connection with our field of study? For example, “My trip to Segovia has helped me better understand the spiritual and religious geography of the Spanish Carmelites. I have gained new insights on why St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross use in their mystical language the symbol of an aqueduct. After visiting the famous Roman aqueduct in Segovia I can see the impact that this image may have had on the Spanish mystics. For instance,”

(5) **Individual oral presentations** (20%) will be graded according to the following:

creativity (use visuals like posters and/or play different character roles via theatrical performances—use your creative imagination!!!);

accuracy (“be clear and concise”--state the facts and comment on them);

oral skills (keep eye contact with the whole class, avoid reading off notes, do not use verbal pauses like “um”);

well-cited sources (give credit to your sources in handwriting and/or orally);

and **time limit** (max. **10 minutes** per presenter--loss of 1 point for each extra minute).

Once you are done with your presentations, invite the audience to ask you questions and to share their thoughts or comments with the whole class. Each student will evaluate the performance of his or her classmates. You will give presenters an overall grade and will provide a short list of comments explaining why you like or dislike their individual and team presentations and will assign a final grade (from F to A) based on the criteria listed above.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS: It is mandatory that each student meets with the professor so that we can discuss your selected topic before it gets my approval. The meeting should take place at least one week before the final oral presentations. Do your research before talking to me. Make sure you rehearse before your oral presentations. Gather ideas together and put them into practice before the date of your presentation. Manage time wisely. Be well prepared and dress appropriately (you can use costumes). Avoid chewing gum. Bring objects or anything that aids you to create the right atmosphere for your overall presentation. **Remember the purpose of this oral presentation is not to give a chapter summary from the book but rather to focus on one specific topic that you are interested in doing research and go deeper into it. Be creative, informative, and entertaining. Share your passion with us. Be enthusiastic! Check with me if you need further help in finding out an interesting topic.**

GRADING SCALE: A (100 to 90); B (89 to 80); C (79 to 70); D (69 to 60); and F (59 to 0)

VI. COURSE CALENDAR

May 16--Read syllabus and watch slides of Spain

Paper Proposal is due Monday, JUNE 1 before noon

Final Reflection Paper is due Monday, JUNE 15 before noon

July 6--Read Chapter 1--Religious responses (pp. 1-31), Chapter 13--Religion in the 21st C. (pp. 496-517), and Read Chapter 2--Indigenous and Shamanistic religions (pp. 32-71)

July 7--Trip to El Escorial and Valle de los Caídos--**Journal is due at the beginning of next class**

July 8--Read Chapter 3--Hinduism (pp. 72-119)

July 13--Read Chapter 5--Buddhism (pp. 134-181)

July 14--Visit to Museo Arqueológico in Madrid--**Journal is due at the beginning of next class**

July 15--Read Chapter 6--Confucianism (pp. 182-185, 199-213) and Daoism (pp. 186-199) and Read Chapter 7--Shinto (pp. 214-230)

July 20--Read from Zoroastrianism (pp. 231-234) and Read Chapter 8--Judaism (pp. 235-294)

July 21--Visit to Museo Nacional de Antropología in Madrid--**Journal is due at the beginning of next class**

July 22--Read Chapter 9--Christianity (pp. 298-321)

July 27--Read Chapter 9--Christianity (pp. 321-375)

July 28--Trip to Segovia--**Journal is due at the beginning of next class**

July 29--Read Chapter 10--Islam (pp. 376-433)

August 3--Read Chapter 12--New Religious Movements (pp. 459-495)

August 5--**Final Oral Presentations**