

**RELIGION 2020 B**  
**WORLD RELIGIONS**  
Valdosta State University  
Fall 2009  
MWF 10-10:50 a.m. West Hall 147

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

**OFFICE:** Ashley Hall 111

**OFFICE HOURS:** MWF 1-2 p.m., TR 10-11a.m., or by appointment

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## **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. 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 the *Undergraduate Catalog* (p. 404)].

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

1. Demonstrate first-hand knowledge of great Eastern and Western religious figures, classic texts, rich history, shared and unshared beliefs, and their cultural impact in our societies. **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*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson-Prentice Hall, 2008. Print.

### **IV. RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Bellinger, Charles K. "Internet Guide." *Wabash Center*. (date of publication?) Web. 2 Jan. 2008.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Active class participation and attendance are mandatory (1)	20%
<b>One</b> oral presentation (30% individual p. and 10% team p.) (2)	40%
<b>Final</b> reflection paper (30%) (3)*See <u>Proposal Guidelines</u> (10%)	40%

(1) Total attendance grade will automatically drop **twenty** points if you miss more than one week of classes. Afterwards the grade will drop **ten** points for each additional absence. VSU policy of attendance states, “**A student who misses more than 20% of the scheduled classes of a course will be subject to receiving a failing grade in the course**” (See in the Undergraduate Catalog pp. 84-85). I will admit excused absences only when athletes bring ahead of time a written notice from their coach; when a student is ill he or she will have to provide doctor’s name, phone number, and a signed receipt from the doctor; or when a student brings a justification note from a supervisor explaining why he or she was absent from my class. 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 under any circumstances.** You will submit your paper assignments at the beginning of class.

(2) Individual (30%) and Team (10%) oral presentations will be graded according to the following:

**creativity** (use visuals like posters and/or power-point presentations, and play different character roles);

**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 expressions like “um”);

**well-cited sources** (before you start your presentation make sure you bring to the professor a hard copy of your Works Cited page--one copy per person--use MLA style and include **three** scholarly books [the Bible like other sacred texts are excluded from this list] and **one** internet source; late copies will not be accepted and the student may lose up to 22 pts.);

and **time limit** (max. 5 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 in Ashley Hall 111 for getting the topic approved and for getting feedback in time. The meeting should take place at least one week prior to their oral presentations.** Be prepared. Do your research before coming to my office. Bring me a copy of your presentation and I will check it in my computer. I will not correct it but will give you suggestions on how to improve it. Make sure you rehearse before your oral presentations. Work well as a team. 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 (paintings, books, articles from journals) or anything that aids you to create the right atmosphere for your overall presentation. Check the equipment in class before your presentations. Make sure your power-point presentations are compatible with the computer's program. **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.**

(3) (\*)**Reflection Paper Proposal**: 10% of the overall grade (papers due at the beginning of class--late papers will not be accepted).

Write in one page [use both sides preferably rather than submitting two pages--for ecological reasons] a suggested **title**, a **thesis statement**, an **example** for each Eastern-Western comparison [one example for your similarity and one example for your difference], and **two** selected **quotations** to back up your examples [one for the similarity and one 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 **four** sources (three from scholarly books--including our textbook--and one from a website) in the Works Cited page. 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.
- 3) **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](http://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**!

**Final Reflection Paper**: 30% of the overall grade (papers due at the beginning of class--late papers will not be accepted).

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 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. Check the link below this text for further information on academic dishonesty. (Please also see pp. 93-94 in the Undergraduate Catalog.)

<http://www.valdosta.edu/academic/AcademicHonestyPoliciesandProcedures.shtml>

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 page (on the back of each 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) show ability to apply the insights and theoretical models discussed in class, 3) balance good critical-thinking skills (“write your thoughts on paper”) with facts, 4) have few spelling and/or grammatical errors, and 5) cite all sources properly throughout paper using parentheses and having them at the end in your Works Cited page.

### **What is 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 indicating what was the most interesting thing you have learned about your researched topic. Explain it in your own words.

### **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. You may lose more than 20 pts.

### **Any other expectations?**

An “A” paper must include 1) a good introduction and conclusion, 2) at least one good comparison (that is to say, find out a major similarity and a major difference between an Eastern religion and a Western religion 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 page. Type your proposal and reflection papers. 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.

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

### **SUGGESTED SYLLABUS INFORMATION FOR DEPARTMENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE PILOT PROJECT:**

This course is part of a pilot project this semester, testing a new online Student Opinion of Instruction (SOI) form. Student evaluations are extremely important in helping faculty members plan and revise their courses. Rather than completing these evaluations during class time, students will need to access evaluation forms via BANNER and complete them in a period prior to the last day of classes. You will only complete evaluations online for the classes that are part of this pilot project; other classes may still require you to complete a scantron form in class. Please take the time to complete this important evaluation (or opt out of providing an evaluation) during the designated period. If you do not do so, you will not be able to access the grade for this class.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS STATEMENT**

Valdosta State University is an equal opportunity educational institution. It is not the intent of the institution to discriminate against any applicant for admission or any student or employee of the institution based on the sex, race, religion, color, national origin or handicap of the individual. It is the intent of the institution to comply with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent executive orders as well as Title XI in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in the Farber Hall. The phone numbers are (229) 245-2498 (voice) and (229) 219-1348 (tty).

## **VI. COURSE CALENDAR**

Aug. 17--Introduction

Aug. 19--Read Chapter 1--Religious responses (pp. 1-31) and Chapter 13--Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> C. (pp. 496-517)

Aug. 21--Read Chapter 2--Indigenous and Shamanistic religions (pp. 32-71)

Aug. 24--Read Chapter 3--Hinduism (pp. 72-73)--Watch Video--Hinduism

Aug. 26--Read Chapter 3--Hindu school of thoughts (pp. 74-85)

Aug. 28--Read Chapter 3--Religious foundations and the Gita (pp. 85-96)

Aug. 31--Read Chapter 3--The Hindu way of life (pp. 97-108)

Sep. 2--Read Chapter 3--Hinduism in the modern world and Gandhi (pp. 108-119)

Sep. 4--**First Team Presentation--Hinduism**

Sep. 9--Read Chapter 4--Jainism (pp. 120-133)

Sep. 11--Read Chapter 11--Sikhism (pp. 434-458)

Sep. 14--**Second Team Presentation--Jainism and Sikhism**

Sep. 16--Read Chapter 5--Buddhism (pp. 134-140)--Watch Video--Buddhism

Sep. 18--Read Chapter 5--Buddhist *dharma* (pp. 140-147)

Sep. 21--Read Chapter 5--Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist schools (pp. 147-158)

Sep. 23--Read Chapter 5--Vajrayana Buddhism and the Dalai Lama (pp. 164-169)

Sep. 25--Read Chapter 5--Zen, Pure Land, and Buddhism in the West (pp. 158-164, 169-181)

Sep. 28--**Third Team Presentation--Buddhism--Reflection Paper Proposal DUE at the beginning of class**

Sep. 30--Read Chapter 6--Chinese religions--Confucianism (pp. 182-185, 199-213)

Oct. 2--Read Chapter 6--Daoism (pp. 186-199)--Watch Video--Chinese Religions (Confucianism and Daoism)

Oct. 5--**Fourth Team Presentation--Confucianism and Daoism**

Oct. 7--Read Chapter 7--Shinto (pp. 214-230)

Oct. 9--**Fifth Team Presentation--Shinto**

Oct. 12--Read from Zoroastrianism (pp. 231-234)

Oct. 14--**Sixth Team Presentation--Zoroastrianism**

Oct. 16--Read Chapter 8--Judaism (pp. 235-240)--Watch Video--Judaism

Oct. 21--Read Chapter 8--A history of the Jewish people and the Torah (pp. 240-256, 271-275)

Oct. 23--Read Chapter 8--Judaism in the Middle Ages, Kabbalah and Hasidism (pp. 256-262)

Oct. 26--Read Chapter 8--Judaism, modernity, the Holocaust, and Zionism (262-271)

Oct. 28--Read Chapter 8--Sacred practices, contemporary branches and feminism (pp. 275-294)

Oct. 30--**Seventh Team Presentation--Judaism**

Nov. 2--Read Chapter 9--Christianity (pp. 298-313)--Watch Video--Christianity

Nov. 4--Read Chapter 9--The Bible, the early Church and monasticism (pp. 295-298, 314-321)

Nov. 6--Read Chapter 9--The Orthodox Church, Catholicism, and Protestantism (pp. 321-347)

Nov. 9--Read Chapter 9--Sacred practices and contemplative prayer (pp. 347-358)

Nov. 11--Read Chapter 9--Contemporary trends, evangelicalism, and liberation th. (pp. 358-375)

Nov. 13--**Eight Team Presentation--Christianity**

Nov. 16--Read Chapter 10--Islam and Muhammad (pp. 376-384)--Watch Video--Islam

Nov. 18--Read Chapter 10--The Qur'an and the Five Pillars of Islam (pp. 384-399)

Nov. 20--Read Chapter 10--Sunnis, Shi'as and Sufis (pp. 399-406)

Nov. 23--**Ninth Team Presentation--Islam**

Nov. 30--Read Chapter 10--The spread of Islam (pp. 406-433)

Dec. 2--Read Chapter 12--New Religious Movements (pp. 459-495)

Dec. 4--**Tenth Team Presentation--New Religious Movements**

Dec. 7--**Final Reflection Paper DUE at the beginning of class and Student Evaluations**