

**WORLD RELIGIONS REL 2020 C  
SPRING, 2010  
VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY**

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West Hall 147

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Section Class Hours: C: MW 18:30 - 19:45

**IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE COLLEGE**

**Spring Semester 2010**

<i>Classes Begin:</i>	<i>January 11</i>
<i>Late Registration Ends 13:30</i>	<i>January 15</i>
<i>MLK Holiday</i>	<i>January 18</i>
<i>Students can view in-progress grades</i>	<i>February 25</i>
<i>Mid-Term &amp; Last Day to Web Withdraw:</i>	<i>March 4</i>
<i>Spring Break (No Classes):</i>	<i>March 15-19</i>
<i>Summer/Fall Early Registration begins</i>	<i>March 29-April 23</i>
<i>Classes End (Last Class Day):</i>	<i>May 3</i>
<i>Final Class Meeting:</i>	<i>May 5</i>

**VSU GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES (AND THIS COURSE):**

The general education outcomes as stated by VSU include the following.

1. Students will demonstrate understanding of the society of the United States and its ideals. They will possess the requisite knowledge of the society of the United States, its ideals, and its functions to enable them to become informed and responsible citizens. They will understand the connections between the individual and society and the roles of social institutions. They will understand the structure and operational principles of the United States government and economic system. They will understand United States history and both the historical and present role of the United States in the world.
2. Students will demonstrate cross-cultural perspectives and knowledge of other societies. They will possess sufficient knowledge of various aspects of another culture, including the language, social and religious customs, aesthetic expression, geography, and intellectual and political history, to enable them to interact with individuals within that society from an informed perspective. They will possess an international viewpoint that will allow them to examine critically the culture of their own nation and to participate in global society.
3. Students will use computer and information technology when appropriate. They will demonstrate knowledge of computer concepts and terminology. They will possess basic working knowledge of a computer operating system. They will be able to use at least two software tools, such as word processors, spreadsheets, database management systems, or statistical packages. They will be able to find information using computer searching tools.
4. Students will express themselves clearly, logically, and precisely in writing and in speaking, and they will demonstrate competence in reading and listening. They will display the ability to write coherently in standard English; to speak well; to read, to understand, and to interpret the content of written materials in various disciplines; and to listen effectively and to understand different modes of communication.
5. Students will demonstrate knowledge of scientific and mathematical principles and proficiency in laboratory practices. They will understand the basic concepts and principles underlying scientific methodology and be able to collect, analyze, and interpret data. They will learn a body of scientific knowledge and be able to judge the merits of arguments about scientific

issues. They will be able to perform basic algebraic manipulations and to use fundamental algebraic concepts to solve word problems and equations. They will be able to use basic knowledge of statistics to interpret and to analyze data. They will be able to evaluate arguments based on quantitative data.

6. Students will demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultural heritages in the arts, the humanities, and the social sciences. They will develop understanding of the relationships among the visual and performing arts, literature and languages, and history and the social sciences. Students will be versed in approaches appropriate to the study of those disciplines; they will identify and respond to a variety of aesthetic experiences and engage in critical thinking about diverse issues. They will be able to identify the components of and respond to aesthetic experiences in the visual and performing arts. They will develop knowledge of world literature within its historical and cultural frameworks. They will understand modern issues within a historical context and the role of the individual in various forms of societies and governments.

7. Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze, to evaluate, and to make inferences from oral, written, and visual materials. They will be skilled in inquiry, logical reasoning, and critical analysis. They will be able to acquire and evaluate relevant information, analyze arguments, synthesize facts and information, and offer logical arguments leading to creative solutions to problems.

8. Students will demonstrate knowledge of principles of ethics and their employment in the analysis and resolution of moral problems. They will recognize and understand issues in applied ethics. They will understand their own value systems in relation to other value systems. They will judge values and practices in a variety of disciplines.

Philosophy and Religious Studies courses at Valdosta State University contribute to the VSU General Education Outcomes listed on page 1 and 2 of the syllabus, with special emphasis on numbers 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8.

## TEXTS

### Required:

**Beliefs that Changed the World, John Bowker, Quercus, 9781847240163**

**Bhagavad Gita, Juan Mascaro, Penguin, 9780140449183**

**Peaceful Action, Open Heart: Lessons from the Lotus Sutra (Paperback), Thich**

**Nhat Hanh, Parallax Press, 9781888375930**

**Tao Te Ching, Mitchell, Francis Lincoln Press, 9780711229648**

**Analects, Waley, Vintage, 9780679722960**

**The Faith Club, Free Press, 0713290488**

**NEEDS STATEMENT/ACCESS OFFICE**

Students requesting classroom accommodations or modifications due to a documented disability must contact the Access Office for Students with Disabilities located in the Farber Hall. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (V/VP) and 219-1348 (TTY).

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

Valdosta State University recognizes that academic honesty is an integral factor in developing and sharing knowledge. I support the concept of academic honesty, practice academic honesty in my classes, and require academic honesty from my students. VSU students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the completion and presentation of all academic assignments and examinations. Any student found guilty of cheating, plagiarism, or other

dishonorable acts in academic work will fail the class and is subject to further disciplinary action by the college and the university

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** Academic dishonesty is cheating and stealing. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- **Using material verbatim from a source without giving credit.**
- **Rewriting material from a source without giving credit.**
- **Using information from an Internet source without giving credit.**
- **Submitting the work of another person as your own work.**
- **Using/copying another student's computer disk.**
- **Copying from another person's paper/test/homework.**
- **Allowing someone else to copy/use your work (paper, homework, quiz, test).**
- **Violating Computer Ethics Guidelines in the pursuit of academic studies.**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Although this is a lecture class, a great deal of discussion is expected from you; on many days, collectively you will lead the class. There may be formal presentations by students, however, for the most part, think of our discussions as an informal seminar. (Seminar classes often have individual students lead the discussion.) Discussions will begin on the first day of class.

The class will also contend with material through an interaction of lecture and discussion. You must be prepared to talk about and are expected to read all of the material that is assigned **BEFORE** a class session. [I do not apologize for the amount of reading. I do not maintain that "more is better" but that "breadth and depth" better inform the student. Take home quizzes delivered through E-mail will be given on a weekly basis. I reserve the right to dismiss a class session when students come unprepared and you will be held responsible for the material not discussed. The next session of class will continue with the assignments for the next session/week. Please bring the texts under discussion to class. **An individual student may not dominate discussions but every student is expected to participate.** I will monitor and record your participatory contributions.

For the most part, this is not a verse-by-verse examination of any of the Religious texts/scriptures but they are the dominant sources for understanding the traditions. The exceptions for the course will be the Tanak, the New Testament, the Qur'an and the Lotus Sutra. Though a seeming contrary approach given the time allotted for the traditions, even a cursory reading of any of these texts cannot be accomplished in 16 weeks as with the other traditions. We will however, address the common and different aspects of the Buddhist tradition and the so-called monotheistic traditions as broached by Bowker in his text "Beliefs that Changed the World". We will also read a contemporary conversation among three women of the traditions (Jewish, Christian, Muslim), in historical chronology, The Faith Club.

## SOME GENERAL RULES OF ORDER

1. Take notes on all your readings and during class discussions and lectures. You are responsible for all material.
2. Obtain the books. If you cannot obtain and do not read the books, do not take the class.
3. After the end of the semester there is no way to improve your grade.
4. If inclement weather ensues during the normally scheduled class period, contact VSU or listen to your local news station for an update concerning class cancellations.
5. If you suffer from the immediacy of a disability and are in need of specific accommodations other than ordinarily found in class or through the access office, please discuss this with me after the initial class meeting.
6. Do not be discourteous to others or to me. Open discussions are emphasized but afford other individuals the opportunity to finish expressing their view.
7. The class will adhere to the schedule of the syllabus but as this is a tentative schedule it is subject to change at my discretion.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1) Attendance – see attendance policy	100 points
2) Participation – active engagement	100 points
3) Quizzes – reading material 10/14	200 points (20 each)
4) Examinations – 4/5	400 points (100 each)
5) Research Paper	<u>200 points</u>
6) Possible Total	1,000 possible points

## RESEARCH PAPER FORMATTING:

- 1) All research papers must be typed, double-spaced, 1" margins only, #12 Times New Roman Font, black ink, and only your name - single-spaced in the upper right hand corner of the paper (see example below) and stapled in the upper left hand corner of the paper.

Your Name

Paper Title

- 2) Do not include a cover page or folder of any kind whatsoever.
- 3) Papers that do not follow the format will be returned the next week with a zero.
- 4) Begin writing two spaces below the paper Title.
- 5) From that point on, double-space, write using strict essay form and grammar – NON CONTRACTIONS OR SLANG -- with a minimum of six or more completed and well-formulated pages.

[Paper Heading Example:

*Harmon Noone*

*Buddhism*

*The Buddha, Siddartha Gautama or Sakyamuni, is thought to have summarized the primary teaching so Buddhism in the framework of "Four Noble Truths." The four noble truths are. . .]*

### **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS:**

6) Your thesis must be clear -- the topic you are discussing and position you are taking or trying to clarify-- and you must have at least three or more ***developed reasons*** supporting your position. The thesis is not simply a re-presentation of your questions and is also not a simple yes or no tagged on to questions you may ask.

7). **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED. A LATE ASSIGNMENT WILL AUTOMATICALLY RECEIVE A ZERO.**

8). Document any paraphrased or quoted material from the assigned texts using footnotes or endnotes. All papers must be a minimum of **six complete** pages. Please note the plagiarism policies above.

9). All pages must be numbered except the first page.

All material must be ***documented***. (Footnotes are preferred in the Chicago style but I will also accept APA and MLA.)

10). A general rule of thumb: Each paragraph must have one (or more) documented notes whether direct quotes or paraphrased material, and approximately three paragraphs per page.

11). You **MAY NOT** use Wikipedia, Encyclopedias or dictionaries of any kind for your sources.

12). Sources must include published books (other than the aforementioned) and juried journal articles or publications. Do not wait to the last minute if you do not know how to find a juried/peer reviewed article. Ask a librarian. They are more than happy to assist you.

13). A bibliography of at least six sources is required. The bibliography is a page or pages included at the end of your paper. It is not part of the 6 page requirement nor added to the content portion of the paper. However, it must be numbered as a part of the paper (i.e. page 7, 8).

14). If you work well in groups you may do a research topic together with no more than three contributing members. All in the group will receive the same grade and a 15 minute thorough presentation must be given in class. You must discuss this with me during the first three weeks of class if you wish to pursue this option.

### **MISSING CLASS/ATTENDANCE:**

#### **Attendance Policy:**

If you attend all classes, note this means beginning on the first day of class not the first day after you registered, you can earn 100 points. I will allow 3 absences gratis – without penalty. After the 4<sup>th</sup> absence the point value for attendance drops to 85 points, 5<sup>th</sup> absence 70 points, 6<sup>th</sup> absence 00 points. **There are no excused absences.**

#### **Missing Class:**

When you miss a class upon your return, do not ask me if you have missed anything. If the class was given handouts you will receive a copy of those handouts. If you miss a class when an assignment is due, make sure it is submitted to me before 5:30 pm the day of the assignment – paper, quizzes or examination(s). No other assignments will be accepted. If class is cancelled due to bad weather on a day an assignment is due, submit your document through Email. Attach it as a **word document or rich text format only (.doc or .rtf)**. **THERE WILL BE NO EXCEPTIONS REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES.** [*Nota Bene* (Note Well): Emailed assignments are only accepted in lieu of inclement weather.]

### **PARTICIPATION:**

Lack of participation and preparedness for class discussions **will** detract from your grade. You can earn up to 100 points for regular participation.

**Email Protocol:**

If you have a question by all means submit an Email if you do not ask in class or come across something in the course of your readings. Do not submit such questions a few days before an assignment is due; prepare. You must use REL 2020 as the Subject heading: **REL 2020** as an example. You must also **address** the Email message to me formally and not with “Hey”. The Email must be **signed** at the end. If any of these standards are not met, the Email will not be answered.

**Quizzes and Examinations:**

Quizzes and Examinations will be E-mailed to the class and done at home. All answers must be documented from the readings. In most cases quizzes and examinations will be E-mailed to you a week in advance. I will not address questions regarding a quiz or examination 48 hours prior to its submission.

**GRADE RANGE**

If you earn a grade (A = 1000 - 895 points; B = 894 - 795 points; C = 794-695 points; D = 694-595 points; F = 594-00 points) you will receive it. NOTE: The highest 10 out of 14 quizzes count and the highest 4 out of 5 examinations count. If you take all quizzes I will count the highest 10 scores earned.

## RELIGION DEFINED AS AN ANALYTIC TOOL FOR ASSIGNMENTS

For the purpose of this class, we will use the following definition of religion: "*Religion is the varied symbolic expression of and appropriate response to that which people deliberately affirm to be of unrestricted value for them.*" Descriptively, definitions of religion are often classified as functional -- how religion works, what it does -- or substantive -- the thing or concept of the sacred - which distinguishes religion from any other phenomena. You may have your own definition such as belief in god which of course begs the questions what is meant by god or which god?

The above definition is both functional and substantive. That which is of unrestricted value for a certain community of believers is the substance of the tradition. It is that thing, concept, idea, ideal and focus that is most important to that group or tradition. The functions include first, varied symbolic expression -- the manner in which the community re-presents that which is of ultimate concern.

Second, appropriate response, is how the community responds to that which is of unrestricted value. Such responses can be as simple as behaviors and as complex as ritualistic practices that take community members and participants back to the sacred times, events and intentions of the teachings. A phrase for this is *in illo tempore* or in that time (Mircea Eliade). Religious rituals remind community members of those exceptionally specific moments, perhaps even *heirophanies*, *epiphanies*, and *theophanies* within the tradition. These practices -- such as baptism and communion (to borrow from the Christian tradition) -- are not only connected to the sacred (that which is of unrestricted value) but also the symbols and re-presentations utilized by the community of believers.

That which people deliberately affirm, essentially, is the last functional aspect of this definition and can be summarized in the word *credo*, or I believe -- the statement of faith. It is clearly not the same as what you believe about your significant other who you argued with this morning. The creed of a tradition is the affirmation of that which is believed to be true but is not necessarily summarized in one statement. The affirmation may include life-style, proper relationships, and cannot be removed or dismissed from the symbols or rituals of the tradition and certainly not dismissed from that which is of unrestricted value. The aspects of the definition, as you can discern, are not mutually exclusive.

Within this conceptual definition -- functional and substantive -- lie the great similarities and distinctions among the numerous traditions of the religions of the world. We will be studying, however briefly, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and the monotheistic traditions Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the quasi-chronological order of their institutionalized appearance in the world viz-viz the appearance of their sacred texts and to an extent their priestly traditions.