

**Texas A&M University - Central Texas  
RELS 3304 -110 WORLD RELIGIONS**

**INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Instructor:** Ross P. Ponder

**Office:** Online

**Phone:** 512-765-4690 (*prefer messages through Canvas*)

**Email:** [rponder@tamuct.edu](mailto:rponder@tamuct.edu) (*prefer messages through Canvas*)

**Office Hours:** *Since I am an adjunct faculty member and this is an online class, I do not have an office on campus. Digital communication is the best way to reach one another. I am available for messages anytime between 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on weekdays. Usually I will get back to you within 24 hours, or on Mondays for weekend emails. Again, I prefer messages to go through Canvas.*

**Mode of instruction and course access:** *This course is a 100% online course and uses TAMUCT Canvas Learning Management System: <https://tamuct.instructure.com>. You will use the Canvas username and password communicated to you separately to logon to this system.*

**Student-instructor interaction:** *I will login to Canvas each weekday to respond to student messages.*

**UNILERT:** Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University – Central Texas  
UNILERT is an emergency notification service that gives Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate health and safety emergency information quickly via email, text message, and social media. All students are automatically enrolled in UNILERT through their myCT email account. Connect at [www.TAMUCT.edu/UNILERT](http://www.TAMUCT.edu/UNILERT) to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in UNILERT, university officials can quickly pass on safety-related information, regardless of your location.

**COURSE INFORMATION**

**Course Overview**

Catalog Course Description

This course examines the history, beliefs, and practices of various religious traditions of the world and their meanings for the past and present. The following traditions will be studied: prehistoric religions, religions in preliterate societies, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and New Age religions. The concept of globalization and religion in the global village will be examined as well. This course also satisfies a course requirement for a minor in Religious Studies.

### The Discipline of Religious Studies

Religious Studies is the study of religions and religious phenomena from a secular perspective, drawing on a number of academic disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, political science, and history. In the past, this type of interdisciplinary study was called comparative religion and history of religions. Religious Studies courses are prefixed RSK or may be found with other disciplinary prefixes. One should consult the Religious Studies webpage for more information regarding courses, course rotations, and the minor:

<http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/religiousstudies/index.php>

### Accessing Canvas (Canvas)

This is an online course, and the student accesses Canvas on the Texas A&M-Central Texas website: [www.tamuct.edu](http://www.tamuct.edu). The student should click on “Canvas” under “Quick Links” and then log in.

### **Competency Goal Statements**

- 1 Students will demonstrate writing skills appropriate to upper-level college work in general and the discipline of religious studies in particular.
- 2 Students will demonstrate proficiency in the use of technology appropriate to upper-level college work in general and the discipline of religious studies in particular.
- 3 Students will be able to analyze and interpret beliefs, practices, and social structures in religious traditions from an interdisciplinary perspective.
- 4 Students will understand key concepts in the academic and research field of religious studies.
- 5 Students will appreciate various forms of religious expression as adaptations to environmental and social conditions.

### **Textbooks**

#### Required Textbook

Esposito, J. L., Fasching, D. J., & Lewis, T. (2018). *World religions today* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Assignments

**1. Journal Postings** – there will be eight in total.

The Study of Religion is an activity, not just a set of doctrines. Every student is encouraged to ask questions and add insight to the classroom. Class preparation and participation requires that all assignments are read and that journal postings are engaged throughout the week.

**Journal Postings** are the primary contribution to this grade. You will each week have a discussion question to answer on Canvas. Each assignment will be given at the start of the week and must be completed by the end of the week. Students must make an initial post that answers the question. Replies must be full answers with in-depth information that states more than your own agreement or disagreement, but must add to the discussion of each topic. Posts will be graded on a **4-point scale per week**.

A **Rubric and Grading Criteria** document has been included at the end of the Assignments and Outline document as well as under the course information link in Canvas.

**2. Quizzes** – there will be eight in total.

An online quiz will be posted by the middle of the week to Canvas. Students must complete the quiz and submit the assignment prior to midnight on each Friday.

**3. Exams:**

A **Midterm** and **Final** will be given in which the student must demonstrate an understanding of not only the reading but also the comparative aspects of each religion.

**Midterm will be week of July 6.**

**Final will be on the week of August 10.**

### Grading Criteria and Rubric

- 1. Discussion board – 32 points in total.**
- 2. Quizzes – 32 points in total.**
- 3. Midterm and Final – 36 points in total; 18 points each.**

**If you add up all of the points, you'll figure out your numerical grade for the course.**

### Conversion to Course Letter Grade for Posting

A = 100% - 90%

B = 89% - 80%

C = 79% - 70%

D = 69% - 60%

F = 59% - 0%

### **Discussion Board Rubric and Grading Criteria**

Journal postings that meet all criteria for a grade level will receive the highest points possible at that level. Postings that meet mixed levels of criteria will receive a score within the point range of the appropriate levels. Participation in discussion activities can only be measured by the date on the discussion posting. Journal postings Boards will be graded on a 4-point scale. Postings cannot be made up after the designated week. This is accordance to the no late submission procedures listed in the assignments and outline document.

#### **A Discussion (3.6-4): Distinguished/Outstanding**

Students earning an “A” for discussion activities have posted outstanding information.

##### *“A” discussion postings*

- are made in time for others to read and respond
- deliver information that is full of thought, insight, and analysis
- make connections to previous or current content or to real-life situations
- contain rich and fully developed new ideas, connections, or applications

#### **B Discussion (3.2-3.5): Proficient**

Students earning a “B” for discussion activities have posted proficient information.

##### *“B” discussion postings*

- are made in time for others to read and respond
- deliver information that shows that thought, insight, and analysis have taken place
- make connections to previous or current content or to real-life situations, but the connections are not really clear or are too obvious
- contain new ideas, connections, or applications, but they may lack depth and/or detail

#### **C Discussion (2.8-3.1): Basic**

Students earning a “C” for discussion activities have posted basic information.

##### *“C” discussion postings*

- may not all be made in time for others to read and respond
- are generally competent, but the actual information they deliver seems thin and commonplace
- make limited, if any, connections, and those are often cast in the form of vague generalities
- contain few, if any, new ideas or applications; often are a rehashing or summary of other comments

#### **D-F Discussion (0-2.7): Below Expectations**

Students earning a “D-F” for discussion activities have posted information that was below expectations.

##### *“D-F” discussion postings*

- may not all be made in time for others to read and respond
- are rudimentary and superficial; there is no evidence of insight or analysis
- contribute no new ideas, connections, or applications
- may be completely off topic

**Posting of Grades:**

- *All student grades should be posted on the Canvas Grade book and students should monitor their grading status through this tool.*
- *Assignments will be graded and posted to Canvas Grade book within a week's time.*

**COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENTS DUE</b>
<b>Class 1:</b> June 4	Introduction	Chapter 1, pages 3–33	Canvas Post 1; Quiz 1 Due on June 12
<b>Class 2:</b> June 11	Indigenous Religions	Chapter 2, pages 35–65	Canvas Post 2; Quiz 2 Due on June 15
<b>Class 3:</b> June 18	Judaism	Chapter 3, pages 67–123	Canvas Post 3; Quiz 3 Due on June 22
<b>Class 4:</b> June 25	Christianity	Chapter 4, pages 125–181	Canvas Post 4; Quiz 4 Due on June 29
<b>Class 5:</b> July 2	Islam	Chapter 5, pages 183–259	MID TERM Due on July 6
<b>Class 6:</b> July 9	South Asian Religions	Chapter 6, pages 261–335	Canvas Post 5; Quiz 5 Due on July 13
<b>Class 7:</b> July 16	Buddhism	Chapter 7, pages 337–411	Canvas Post 6; Quiz 6 Due on July 20
<b>Class 8:</b> July 23	East Asian Religions	Chapter 8, pages 413–485	Canvas Post 7; Quiz 7 Due on July 27
<b>Class 9:</b> July 30	New Age Religions	Chapter 9, pages 487–518	Canvas Post 8; Quiz 8 Due on August 3
<b>Class 10:</b> August 6	FINAL EXAM	Review your notes!	FINAL EXAM Due on August 10

## COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

### **Copyright Notice.**

Students should assume that all course material is copyrighted by the respective author(s). Reproduction of course material is prohibited without consent by the author and/or course instructor. Violation of copyright is against the law and Texas A&M University-Central Texas' Code of Academic Honesty. All alleged violations will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

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### **Drop Policy.**

If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete a Drop Request Form, found through the [Registrar's web page](#):

<https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/business-office/droppolicy.php>

Professors **cannot** drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The record's office will provide a deadline for which the form must be returned, completed and signed. Once you return the signed form to the records office and wait 24 hours, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. Should you still be enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the records office immediately? You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course.

### **Academic Integrity.**

Texas A&M University -Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M-Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Academic integrity is defined as a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. Academic misconduct is any act that improperly affects a true and honest evaluation of a student's academic performance and includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism and improper citation of sources, using another student's work, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. All academic misconduct concerns will be reported to the university's Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the university's standards and expectations is never an excuse to act with a lack of integrity. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

**Academic Accommodations.**

At Texas A&M-Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier free education. The Department of Access and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the University's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations please contact the Department of Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

For more information please visit our [Access & Inclusion webpage](http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/access-inclusion):  
<http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/access-inclusion>.

TAMUCT supports students who are pregnant and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of Title IX and guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the Dean of Student Affairs' Office can assist students who are pregnant and/or parenting in seeking accommodations related to pregnancy and/or parenting. For more information, please visit <https://www.tamuct.departments/index.php>. Students may also contact the institution's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to read more about these [requirements and guidelines](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf), please visit: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf>

**Tutoring.**

Tutoring is available to all TAMUCT students, both on-campus and online. On-campus subjects tutored include Accounting, Advanced Math, Biology, Finance, Statistics, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Tutors are available at the Tutoring Center in Warrior Hall, Suite 111.

If you have a question regarding tutor schedules, need to schedule a tutoring session, are interested in becoming a tutor, or any other question, contact Academic Support Programs at 254-519-5796, or by emailing Kim Wood at [k.wood@tamuct.edu](mailto:k.wood@tamuct.edu).

Chat live with a tutor 24/7 for almost any subject on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables TAMUCT students to log-in and receive FREE online tutoring and writing support. This tool provides tutoring in over forty subject areas. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.

**University Writing Center.**

Located in 416 Warrior Hall, the University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University – Central Texas is a free workspace open to all TAMUCT students from 10am-4pm Monday-Thursday during the Summer semester. Students may arrange a one-on-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by visiting the UWC during normal operating hours (both half-hour and hour sessions are available). Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process.

While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. By providing a practice audience for students' ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students' texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process. In addition, students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs the Microsoft Office suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting our resources on writing, including all of the relevant style guides. Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a quiet place to work, the University Writing Center is here to help!

If you have any questions about the University Writing Center, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu).

### **University Library.**

The University Library provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 200 electronic databases containing approximately 250,000 eBooks and 82,000 journals, in addition to the 72,000 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at TAMUCT are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On-campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.

Research assistance from a librarian is also available twenty-four hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place on Skype or in-person at the library. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.

Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the TAMUCT main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group work spaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our homepage: <https://tamuct.libguides.com/>

## **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPORT**

### **Technology Requirements.**

This course will use the TAMUCT Instructure Canvas Learn learning management system.

Logon to <https://tamuct.instructure.com> access the course.

Username: Your MyCT username

(xx123 or everything before the "@" in your MyCT e-mail address)



Initial password: Your MyCT password

Check browser and computer compatibility by using the “Test Your Browser” button, found in the “Check Your Browser” module on your Canvas dashboard, once you have logged in.

### **Technology Support.**

For technology issues, students should contact Help Desk Central.

24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

Email: [helpdesk@tamu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamu.edu)

Phone: (254) 519-5466

Web Chat: <http://hdc.tamu.edu>

*When calling for support please let your support technician know you are a TAMUCT student.*  
For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

## **OTHER DETAILS**

### **Late Work**

As a rule, make-up work for any class assignment—that includes quizzes, discussion board postings, and exams—will not be offered or accepted. In rare instances, however, one make-up exam may be offered, but with a two letter grade deduction (written documentation pertaining to a serious emergency will be considered for such a makeup). *In no instance will a make-up be offered for the final exam, and in no instance will a make-up for an exam be given after two weeks from the original exam date.* It is the student’s responsibility to contact his instructor within 24 hours of having missed an exam for purposes of making it up. A request for make-up may or may not be granted. The final course grade will be posted within a few days of the final exam, *period*. No incompletes will be awarded for this course. If the student foresees that he will be unable to complete the course, then he should drop the course or accept the posted grade.

### **Modification of the Syllabus**

The syllabus is subject to minor changes at the discretion of the instructor. It is the responsibility of the student to note any changes that are made during the semester.

### **Contact with Instructor**

The student should contact the instructor via the message feature on Canvas about any topic or issue that pertains to this course.

### **Announcements**

It is the student’s responsibility to check for announcements on Canvas and in class. The student should check for announcements daily on Canvas.



# IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

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