

Texas A&M University - Central Texas

RELS-4330-110-Religions of the Middle East

## INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

**Instructor: Ross P. Ponder**

**Office: Online**

**Phone: 512-461-6888** (*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 Learn system (<https://tamuct.Canvas.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.*

**911 Cellular: Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University – Central Texas**  
**911Cellular** 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 911 Cellular through their myCT email account. Connect at **[911Cellular](https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management)** [<https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management>] to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in 911Cellular, 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 Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The critical lens of comparative religious studies will examine and compare each tradition. 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>

### **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

Amir Hussain, Roy C. Amore, and Willard Oxtoby. *World Religions: Western Traditions*, Fifth Edition. Oxford University Press, 2018.

John L. Esposito. *Islam: the Straight Path*. Fifth Edition. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Aaron W. Hughes. *Abrahamic Religions: On the Uses and Abuses of History*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Assignments

1. Discussion board – there will be fourteen 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 Discussion Boards are engaged throughout the week.

**Discussion Board 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. Discussion boards will be graded on a **2-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 fourteen 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: 60 points

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 March 16–20.**

**Final exam will be on the week of May 4-8.**

## **Grading Criteria and Rubric**

- 1. Discussion board – 28 points in total.**
- 2. Quizzes – 28 points in total.**
- 3. Midterm and Final – 44 points in total; 22 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**

Discussion 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. Discussion Boards will be graded on a 2-point scale. Discussion Board 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 (1.8-2): 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 (1.6-1.79): 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 (1.4-1.59): Basic**

Students earning a “C” for discussion activities have participated at least 1 time during the week and 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 (0-1.39): Below Expectations**

Students earning a “D-F” for discussion activities have participated at least 1 time during the week and 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.*

### **Important University Dates:**

## **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPORT**

### **Technology Requirements:**

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

- This course will use the A&M-Central Texas Instructure Canvas learning management system.
- Logon to A&M-Central Texas Canvas [<https://tamuct.instructure.com>].
  - Username: Your MyCT username (xx123 or everything before the "@" in your MyCT e-mail address)
  - Password: Your MyCT password

## Technology Support:

- For log-in problems, 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): [<http://hdc.tamu.edu>]
- *Please let the support technician know you are an A&M-Central Texas*
- For issues with **Canvas**, select “chat with Canvas support,” submit a support request to Canvas Tier 1, or call the Canvas support line: 1-844-757-0953, links to all are found inside of Canvas using the “Help” link.

## Important University Dates:

January 13, 2020	Classes Begin for Spring Semester
January 15, 2020	Deadline for Add, Drop, and Late Registration for 16- and First 8-Week Classes
January 20, 2020	Martin Luther King, Jr Day (University Closed)
January 21, 2020	Deadline to Drop First 8-Week Classes with No Record
January 29, 2020	Deadline to Drop 16-Week Classes with No Record
February 21, 2020	Deadline to Drop First 8-Week Classes with a Quit (Q) or Withdraw (W)
March 1, 2020	Deadline for Teacher Education and Professional Certification Applications
March 6, 2020	Classes end for 1st 8-Weeks
March 9-12, 2020	Spring Break (No Classes - Administrative Offices Open)
March 13, 2020	Spring Break (University Closed)
March 10, 2020	Deadline for Faculty Submission of First 8-Week Final Class Grades (due by 3pm)
March 15, 2020	Deadline for Clinical Teaching/Practicum Applications
March 16, 2020	Add, Drop, and Late Registration Begins for Second 8-Week Classes \$25 Fee assessed for late registrants
March 16, 2020	Classes Begin for Second 8-Week Session
March 16, 2020	Class Schedule Published for Summer Semester
March 18, 2020	Deadline for Add, Drop, and Late Registration for Second 8-Week Classes
March 23, 2020	Deadline to Drop Second 8-Week Classes with No Record
March 27, 2020	Deadline for Graduation Application for Ceremony Participation
March 30, 2020	Registration Opens for Seniors, Post-Bacc, and Graduate Students for Summer Semester
April 3, 2020	Deadline to Drop 16-Week Classes with a Quit (Q) or Withdraw (W)

April 6, 2020	Registration opens for all students for the Summer and Fall Semesters
April 24, 2020	Deadline to Drop Second 8-Week Classes with a Quit (Q) or Withdraw (W)
May 8, 2020	Deadline for Applications for Tuition Rebate for Spring Graduation (5pm)
May 8, 2020	Deadline for Degree Conferral Applications to the Registrar's Office. \$20 Late Application Fee.
May 8, 2020	Deadline to Withdraw from the University for 16- and Second 8-Week Classes
May 8, 2020	Spring Semester Ends
May 9, 2020	Spring Commencement Ceremony
May 11, 2020	Classes Begin for Minimester
May 12, 2020	Deadline for Faculty Submission of 16-Week and Second 8-Week Final Class Grades (due by 3pm)

## COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
<b>Class 1:</b> January 13	Studying Western Religions	<i>World Religions</i> , pages xii–23; <i>Abrahamic Religions</i> , pages 1–56	Canvas Post 1; Quiz 1 Due on January 17
<b>Class 2:</b> January 20	Religions of Antiquity	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 24–79	Canvas Post 2; Quiz 2 Due on January 24
<b>Class 3:</b> January 27	Indigenous Traditions	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 312–383	Canvas Post 3; Quiz 3 Due on January 31
<b>Class 4:</b> February 3	New Religions and Traditions	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 384–425	Canvas Post 4; Quiz 4 Due on February 7
<b>Class 5:</b> February 10	Current Issues	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 426–449; <i>Abrahamic Religions</i> , pages 57–79	Canvas Post 5; Quiz 5 Due on February 14
<b>Class 6:</b> February 17	Judaism	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 80–159	Canvas Post 6; Quiz 6 Due on February 21
<b>Class 7:</b> February 24	Judaism	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 80–159	Canvas Post 7; Quiz 7 Due on February 28
<b>Class 8:</b> March 2	Judaism	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 80–159	Canvas Post 8; Quiz 8 Due on March 6
<b>Spring Break!!!</b>	Review	Your	Notes!
<b>Class 9:</b> March 16	MIDTERM EXAM	Review your notes!	MIDTERM EXAM Due on March 20
<b>Class 10:</b> March 23	Christian Traditions	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 160–241	Canvas Post 9; Quiz 9 Due on March 27

<b>Class 11:</b>	Christian Traditions	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 160–241	Canvas Post 10; Quiz 10
March 30			Due on April 3
<b>Class 12:</b>	Christian Traditions	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 160–241	Canvas Post 11; Quiz 11
April 6			Due on April 10
<b>Class 13:</b>	Muslim Traditions	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 242–311; <i>Islam</i> , introduction, chapters 1+2	Canvas Post 12; Quiz 12
April 13			Due on April 17
<b>Class 14:</b>	Muslim Traditions	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 242–311; <i>Islam</i> , chapters 3+4	Canvas Post 13; Quiz 13
April 20			Due on April 24
<b>Class 15:</b>	Muslim Traditions	<i>World Religions</i> , pages 242–311; <i>Islam</i> , chapter 5+6	Canvas Post 14; Quiz 14
April 27			Due on May 1
<b>Class 16:</b>	FINAL EXAM	Review your notes!	FINAL EXAM
May 4			Due on May 8

## COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

### Drop Policy.

If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete a [Drop Request Form](https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf) [https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop\_Request\_Form.pdf].

Professors cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Registrar's Office will provide a deadline on the Academic Calendar for which the form must be completed, signed and returned. Once you return the signed form to the Registrar's Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Registrar's Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

### 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 University-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](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html) webpage [https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html].

Texas A&M University-Central Texas 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) online, please visit the website [http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf].

## **Tutoring.**

Tutoring is available to all A&M-Central Texas 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 Larry Davis at [lldavis@tamuct.edu](mailto:lldavis@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 A&M-Central Texas 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.

## The 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-5pm Monday-Thursday with satellite hours in the University Library on Mondays from 6:00-9:00pm. 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) or by making an appointment via [WOnline](https://tamuct.mywconline.com/) [https://tamuct.mywconline.com/]. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu) to schedule an online tutoring session. 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 A&M-Central Texas 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 A&M-Central Texas 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 [Library website](https://tamuct.libguides.com/) [https://tamuct.libguides.com/].

**A Note about Sexual Violence at A&M-Central Texas.** Sexual violence is a serious safety, social justice, and public health issue. The university offers support for anyone struggling with these issues. University faculty are mandated reporters, so if someone discloses that they were sexually assaulted (or a victim of Domestic/Dating Violence or Stalking) while a student at TAMUCT, faculty members are required to inform the Title IX Office. If you want to discuss any of these issues confidentially, you can do so through Student Counseling (254-501-5955) located on the second floor of Warrior Hall (207L).

Sexual violence can occur on our campus because predators often feel emboldened, and victims often feel silenced or shamed. It is incumbent on ALL of us to find ways to actively create environments that tell predators we don't agree with their behaviors and tell survivors we will support them. Your actions matter. Don't be a bystander; be an agent of change. For additional information on campus policy and resources visit the [Title IX webpage](https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/compliance/titleix.php) [https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/compliance/titleix.php].

## 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.