



Texas A&M
UNIVERSITY
Central Texas

RELS 3304
World Religions
Summer 2021

Class Location: Online
Class Term: June 7 – July 30, 2021
Instructor: Floyd Berry, PhD
Office: HH 204 S (not used during pandemic)
Email: (*prefer Canvas message*) fberry@tamuct.edu
NOTE: If contacting instructor *outside* of Canvas, students must use their official TAMUCT emails.

1.0 Course Description

Examines the philosophical, ethical, and social dimensions of the religions of the world. Special emphasis is given to the major world religions, but lesser known religions will be explored to gain a broad view of the diversity of religious experience and tradition.

2.0 Accessing Canvas

This is an online course that meets each week during the 8-week summer term. The student accesses Canvas at <https://tamuct.onecampus.com/> or on the TAMUCT website ("MY CT") at <https://www.tamuct.edu>.

3.0 Course Objectives

1. Students will demonstrate a basic understanding of religious concepts and practices.
2. Students will demonstrate writing skills appropriate to the discipline of religious studies.
3. Students will submit prose reactions to material and topics covered in class discussions.
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of religion as an aspect of one's culture.
5. Students will submit acceptable essays for mid-term and final exams. To be accepted, the student shall discuss all aspects of an essay question, using standard English prose and grammatical construction.
6. Students will demonstrate multicultural awareness, an understanding of bias, and a respect for cultural diversity.

4.0 Textbook

Esposito, J. L., Faching, D. J., & Lewi, T. T. (2018). *World religions today* (6th ed.). New York: Oxford.

5.0 Course Requirements

5.1 Exams (400 pts)

The student will take two exams, a mid-term and a final. The exams are “take-home” exams in that the student has a few days to answer the questions that are presented. Students type on a Microsoft Word document and submits the exam by attaching it to an email (message in Canvas), sent to the instructor. Each exam is valued at 200 points. Students are encouraged to review their work before submission. The mid-term exam will receive comments from the instructor and will be returned to the student. The following rubric will guide the instructor:

Qualities & Criteria	Poor	Good	Excellent
Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of topics to be addressed • Information is correct • Coherency <i>(Weight: 70%)</i>	Not objective and poorly addresses the issues. Information is unnecessary or insufficient to discuss the issues. (0-109 pts)	Mostly objective and addresses most of the issues. Information is mostly necessary and sufficient to discuss the issues. (110-131 pts)	Objective and addresses all the issues. Information is necessary and sufficient to discuss the issues. (132-140 pts)
Quality of Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity • Grammar and English usage • Organization and coherence <i>(Weight: 30%)</i>	Poorly written and contains flagrant spelling and grammatical errors. Poorly organized, lacks clarity, and is incoherent. (0-40 pts)	Mostly well-written, without egregious spelling or grammatical errors. Organized, clear, and ideas are presented in coherent ways. (41-55 pts)	Well-written, without egregious spelling or grammatical errors. Well organized, clear, and ideas are presented in coherent ways. (56-60 pts)

A week before each exam, the instructor will provide students with two exam questions. This practice provides the student with a few days’ worth of preparation and composition.

NOTE: Upper-level undergraduate students are expected to have adequate knowledge of the essentials of grammar, writing style, and essay organization in accordance with writing manuals. If the student does *not* have adequate knowledge in these areas, then the purchase and use of additional books are highly recommended. The University Writing Center is also available to students. Failure to provide written work in accordance with the essentials of acceptable, English writing style will result in poor grades. Examples of non-standard English usage include, among other things, sentence fragments, run-ons, dangling modifiers, lack of agreement between pronouns and their antecedents or subjects and verbs, bulleted items, slashes, flagrant misuse of punctuation, slang or abbreviated expressions, “etc.” or “*et cetera*,” and excessive use of

metaphorical language. In Canvas under Modules, there is a Power Point on “Typical Problems with Essay Exams.” Students should review this Power Point.

How to Submit Exams: Students shall use Times New Roman 12 point, double spaced. Neither citations nor quotations are expected. Students attach their Word documents to a message in Canvas and sends them to your instructor. Both essay questions are included on the one document.

5.2 Class Participation (300 pts)

Students are expected to participate in class discussions, indicating an understanding of the reading material and how to apply it. Students are to read assigned material before class. Students earn a point for each of two questions that are posted by the instructor. Thus, the student earns 0-2 points on each class day (total of 6 days), which correspond to the following grade:

Points	Grade	Points	Grade
12	300	6	150
11	275	5	125
10	250	4	100
9	225	3	75
8	200	2	50
7	175	1	25

The student answers two questions that are posed by the instructor, under Discussions in Canvas. The student is not to quote or cite sources. All information is from the course textbook. Extra credit is given for students who reply to other students’ posts.

5.3 Academic Integrity Document

During the first week of class, the student is to read the section in the syllabus on Academic Integrity (§ 8.0) and the link provided in that section regarding plagiarism. The student must sign the document (also in Canvas, under Modules) pertaining to Academic Integrity and send emails to the instructor that they understand Academic Integrity. **NOTE: Students will not be allowed to continue in the course without notifying the instructor of their comprehension of this material.** Examples of academic dishonesty in this course might be having someone do the student’s work or plagiarizing from internet sites.

5.4 Reaction Comments (300 pts)

After participating in class discussions for a topic, students will submit a Reaction Comment (RC) by the due date noted in the Course Calendar (§ 7 of Syllabus). *In Canvas, the student will send an email to the instructor, reacting to material discussed or experienced in class.* A paragraph or two is sufficient. Students

express their reactions to something discussed or experienced in class. **A mere summary of material discussed in class, however, is insufficient for credit.** Students should make some comments on assigned reading and discussion, coupled with their reactions. Students shall identify their email with the headings of RC1, RC2, etc., as indicated in the course calendar (§ 7.0). Using headings other than RC1, RC2, etc. may result in no credit. **Obviously, students must attend the online class before they can react to material presented or discussed in class.** RC's correspond to the following grades:

# of RC's	Grade
6	300
5	250
4	200
3	150
2	100
1	50

6.0 Grading Matrix and Conversion

6.1 Matrix

	Points
Exams (2 @ 200)	400
Class Participation	300
Reaction Comments	300
Academic Integrity Document	-----
<i>Total:</i>	1000

6.2 Conversion to Course Letter Grade

Points	%	Grade
900 – 1000	90 – 100	A
800 – 899	80 – 89	B
700 – 799	70 – 79	C
600 – 699	60 – 69	D
0 – 599	0 – 59	F

7.0 Course Calendar¹

Date	Topic	Readings ²	Assignments Due
6-7 through 6-11	Syllabus Academic Integrity Religious Studies	Syllabus Academic Integrity/ plagiarism readings (§ 8.0 of syllabus) Power Points on Religious Studies, Religious Populations, Religion in Istanbul, and Levels of Tolerance	RC1 due before midnight on 6-11 Academic Integrity acknowledgement due on 6-11 at midnight
6-14 through 6-18	Introduction Indigenous Religions	Chs 1-2	RC2 due before midnight on 6-18
6-21 through 6-25	Judaism	Ch 3	RC3 due before midnight on 6-25
6-28 through 7-2	Christianity	Ch 4	RC4 due before midnight on 7-2
7-6 through 7-10	Mid-term exam		Mid-term exam due by midnight on 7-10
7/12 through 7-16	Islam	Ch 5	RC5 due before midnight on 7-16
7-19 through 7-23	Religions of India	Chs 6-7	RC6 due before midnight on 7-23
7-26 through 7-28	Final exam		Final exam due by midnight on 7-28

¹ Events are subject to minor revision (see § 15.0)

² Readings are to be completed before classtime; **Ch** = chapter from textbook; **Chs** = chapters

8.0 Academic Integrity

TAMUCT expects all students to maintain high standards of personal and scholarly conduct. Students guilty of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, self-plagiarism (“recycling”), or collusion. The instructor shall initiate action for each case of academic dishonesty and report it to the Associate Director of Student Conduct. Zero points will be assigned for any course product that violates academic honesty. The student should access this link for more information: <https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html>.

9.0 Disability Support

If students believe that this course may present barriers to learning due to a disability, they must contact Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831 in Warrior Hall, Ste. 212. For more information, students may visit their website at <https://www.tamuct.edu/student->

[affairs/access-inclusion.html](#). Any information that the student provides is private and confidential and will be treated as such. The instructor cannot accommodate students' disabilities unless they first communicate with Access and Inclusion. The director of Access and Inclusion is Donald Norman.

10.0 Diversity in the Classroom

Respect for cultural and human biological diversity are core concepts within the social sciences. In this course, each voice in the classroom has value in contributing to class discussion. The student should respect the different experiences, beliefs, and values expressed by one's fellow students and instructor, and refrain from derogatory comments about other individuals, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. In this course we welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, citizenships, disabilities, education, ethnicities, family statuses, genders, gender identities, geographical locations, languages, military experiences, political views, races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences.

11.0 Classroom Etiquette

Students shall show respect to other students and to the instructor in all communications, whether verbal or in writing (e.g., online). For example, making rude or threatening remarks or gestures, arguing, complaining, and challenging that is not based on readings, rationality, and the course objectives are all violations of classroom etiquette.

12.0 Writing Center

The University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University-Central Texas is a free workspace open to all TAMUCT students. The UWC is located in Warrior Hall, Rm 416. One may contact Dr. Bruce Bowles at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu for more information.

13.0 Late Work

As a rule, make-up work for exams is not offered. *The mid-term exam may be made up with instructor approval; however, in no instance will that make-up be given later than one week from the original exam date. To be considered as a prospect for making up the mid-term exam, the student must contact the instructor within 24 hours of having missed the exam for purposes of making it up.* The final course grade will be posted within a few days of the final exam; therefore, *no incompletes will be awarded for this course.* If students foresee that they will be unable to complete the course, then they should either drop the course or accept the posted grade.

14.0 Student's Expectation of Grades

If students foresee that their scores in class participation, reaction comments, or essays are unacceptable, they may wish to drop the course. Absences for any reasons, including medical, cannot be used to exempt one from the requirements of the course. For example, students may inform the instructor that they will not or did not attend class(es) for some reason. While the instructor appreciates the information about

absences, students should not expect that they will be afforded leniency or a recalculation of grades based on this information. All students in a class must be treated fairly and equally. If students foresee that they will be unable to earn the grade they desire, then they should either drop the course or accept the posted grade.

15.0 Modification of the Syllabus

This syllabus may be revised in minor ways at the discretion of the instructor. The student is responsible for noting any changes in the syllabus. More than likely, a change in the syllabus will pertain to typos or events in the course calendar (§ 7.0). If modified, a revised course calendar will be posted on Canvas and will replace § 7.0 of the syllabus.

16.0 Contact with the Instructor

The student should contact the instructor via the message feature of Canvas about any topic or issue that pertains to the course. If students contact the instructor through the instructor's official TAMUCT email, they must use their own official TAMUCT email. Many personal emails find their way to the junk folder by default.

17.0 Announcements

The student is responsible for checking Canvas for ongoing announcements or messages pertaining to the course. For example, if a class is cancelled due to inclement weather, students would benefit from checking messages about the class cancellation and thus be able to alter their travel schedules.