

World Religions RELS 102 Syllabus

Fall 2022 ONLINE

Dr. Arjana

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***Please put "RELS 102" in the subject line of all emails to me.**

Welcome!

Welcome to class! I look forward to us spending the next several months together **online**. As part of this welcome, I invite you to a learning community where we will explore several of the world's religions.

This class is asynchronous — meaning, we do not meet at a designated class time. However, I strongly urge you to attend the Zoom Meetings on Mondays that are offered.

Here are a few important notes to begin with. First:

Approximately half of college students experience food insecurity. WKU has a food bank for students and other community members who need food supplies.

https://www.wku.edu/sustainability/food_pantry.php

Secondly, college is expensive.

With the expense of college education in mind, I have kept the cost of texts for this class low. You only have one book to purchase for this class and may have a video or two to rent online.

Third, this syllabus is critical to your learning. Think of it as a map for a journey you are taking to a new country. You will need to refer to it constantly or get lost! Please check the syllabus carefully before asking me a question that may be in this document.

Lastly, I should be addressed as Dr. Arjana. This is the proper way to address a professor with a PhD. And this is how you pronounce my name:

Dr. Arjana (AHR-JAH-NAH)

Course Description

This course introduces a selection of religious traditions around the world. We begin with units on the concept of religion and the history of religious studies in Europe and North America. This is followed by units on Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This course places special attention on ritual, iconography, and pilgrimage. By the completion of this class, you should be able to have informed and intelligent discussions on several world religious traditions, as well on important ideas and perspectives on the study of religion.

Learning Objectives

To recognize the historical development of religion and religions

To have a broad mastery of the diversity of religious traditions from around the world

To articulate one's personal and social responsibility in light of our multicultural and multi-religious society

To engage in the study of religious ideas and practices as part of the personal journey towards self-cultivation and empowerment

Achieve all of the above by practicing to conduct research and to write competitive undergraduate essays

Course Readings and Resources

This book is **required** for the class:

Sharon Suh, *Occupy This Body: A Buddhist Memoir*

I also *recommend* that you purchase this book for this class:

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Eighth Edition*

All course readings are provided by the instructor and posted on Blackboard. Please refer to the schedule of classes in this syllabus and the Modules on Blackboard for the exact date when we will discuss these readings. You will be asked questions in class discussions about these readings. You also will have at least one video to rent online on Amazon or through another venue.

The following list is organized by unit. See last two pages of syllabus for the schedule of readings.

**** You will read ALL of these readings for the discussions **AND** you will write on the readings from each unit for your Reading Reflections.**

Hinduism: Diana Eck, "'India's Tirthas': Crossings in Sacred Geography"

Buddhism: Gregory Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism"

Judaism: Boaz Huss, "All You Need Is LAV: Madonna and Postmodern Kabbalah"

Christianity: Peter Brown, "The Invisible Companion"

Islam: Sophia Arjana, "Sufi and Shared Pilgrimages: Contestations of Identity"

Academic Integrity

Regarding *cheating*, the University states, "No student shall receive or give assistance not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination." In this course, specific examples of unauthorized assistance include sharing reading notes with other students, including those enrolled in subsequent sections of this course.

Students must work independently on papers and writing assignments and avoid *plagiarism*, which the University defines as "any use of another writer's words, concepts, or sequence of ideas without acknowledging that writer properly." Violations almost always result in a zero on the paper or an automatic F in the course.

Title IX, Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy Statement

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy (#0.2070) and Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040). Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121. Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

Accommodations

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, Room 1074. The SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

Diversity Statement

My courses are designed to serve students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The diversity that students bring to class is a wonderful resource and contributes to everyone's learning experience. I strive to present materials that are respectful of people's gender, sexuality, age, socioeconomic status, race, religion, ethnicity, and culture. Please notify me of any classes that conflict with religious events, commemorations, or holidays, so that I can make appropriate arrangements for you that allow you to honor your religious commitments.

Course Expectations

First, read the syllabus. Every semester I get emails with questions answered by looking at the syllabus or Blackboard. If you email me with a question that shows me you have not read the syllabus, I will simply reply *Read the Syllabus*.

You need to be prepared for class by having the assigned readings done by their discussion date (which are listed in the syllabus). For example, where it states "Discussion of King" in the Christianity unit, this means you should have read *Letter to Birmingham Jail* and be prepared to discuss it.

No late submissions of assignments, including class discussion posts, will be accepted unless there is documented illness or other (i.e. family emergency) situation. While this may seem strict, keep in mind that it is impossible for me to keep up with grading if students don't submit assignments on time.

Also, you can contact me via email if you have any questions and I am very responsive — you will likely hear back from me within 24 hours. Do keep in mind that I have over 100 students a semester and do my best to communicate with all of them in a timely manner.

My email is: sophia.arjana@wku.edu. *Please put "RELS 102" in the subject line of all emails to me. I have five classes this semester and it is helpful if you place the course title you are in, so I can answer you quickly. And email me from your Topper account only.

Please keep in mind that I do not answer (or even read) email on the weekend, on holidays, or at night. Generally, I turn off email at 5 p.m. on weekdays. And as a reminder, don't email me before looking at the syllabus and Blackboard.

An Important Reminder on Religious Studies in the Public University

"The school's approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*.

The school strives for student *awareness* of religions but does not press for student *acceptance* of any religion.

The school sponsors *study* about religion, not the *practice* of religion.

The school may *expose* students to a diversity of religious views but may not *impose* any particular view.

The school *educates* about all religions; it does not *promote* or *denigrate* religion.

The school *informs* students about various beliefs; it does not seek to *conform* students to any particular belief."

A Teachers Guide to Religion in the Public Schools, First Amendment Center, Nashville, 1999, p. 3].

Course Requirements

All assignments are noted in this syllabus. Please read the syllabus carefully and refer to it often.

Syllabus Quiz 10% (10 points)

Weekly Discussions 40% (40 points – 10 discussions @ 4 points each)

Reflection Essay 12% (12 points)

Reading Reflections 20% (20 points – 5 @ 4 points each)

Mapping Religious Places 10% (10 points)

Course Reflection 8% (8 points)

Your grade in this class is computed on a 100-point scale. 10% is 10 points, 40% is 40 points, and so on. You can figure out your grade yourself from the assignments I hand back. At any point, you can determine your own "average" or "running grade" by looking at what you have earned on graded assignments. No grades are weighted.

The following assignments are required. **Due dates are listed in the schedule of classes and on Blackboard.** It is your responsibility to keep up with assignments and I **do not accept late work** because students failed to read the syllabus or use Blackboard.

THERE IS NO MIDTERM OR FINAL EXAM IN THIS CLASS. THERE ARE NO QUIZZES OR TESTS. THERE IS NO EXTRA CREDIT.

Examples of assignments are posted on Blackboard. These are taken from the work of top students from previous semesters.

Syllabus Quiz

Rationale: You cannot do well in this class without reading the syllabus.

Objective: To understand the expectations for this class.

Weekly Forum Discussions

48 points, 4 points a week with 10 discussions total

Rationale: This assignment assesses your comprehension of the readings in this class.

Objective: We will have forum discussions most weeks, which are required for all students. I will pose a question for most weeks you will respond to. You will also be required to respond to another student's original post as well.

Initial post always due TUESDAY by noon.

Response to another student's post always due THURSDAY by noon.

I grade on Thursday afternoons through Friday afternoons.

*Please note that given the number of students I have, I cannot and will not accept late posts. If your posts are not up by Thursday afternoon, I will **not** grade it. *Except for documented cases of illness.

Both posts (to me, and to another student in this class) must be a minimum of ten sentences long and you MUST refer to the reading(s) for that week by providing quotes with page numbers. If you do not refer to the readings in your posts, you will receive a ZERO for that week's post.

I will post a WEEKLY MESSAGE through an "announcement" (Blackboard's version of email) that lifts up some of the main themes of the week's discussion, the readings, and more. You should read these as they are part of your learning.

Both posts (to me, and to another student in this class) must be a minimum of ten sentences long and you MUST refer to the reading(s), lecture(s), and other materials for that week.

If you do not refer to the readings in your posts with quotes from the readings and page numbers, you will receive a ZERO for that week's post. No exceptions.

I will post an Announcement every week that lifts up some of the main themes of the week's discussion, the readings, and more. MAKE SURE you read these as they are part of the course resources and contribute to your learning.

Reflection Essay

12 points

Rationale: This assignment assesses your reading of the assigned text and what it teaches us about Buddhism. It also assesses your use of citations (footnotes).

Each semester I choose a book about religion for students to read and reflect upon. This semester you will be reading Sharon Suh's *Occupy This Body: A Buddhist Memoir*.

For your essay, you will be required to write an essay reflecting upon the Buddhist teachings contained in this book. You will also comment on how the book helped you understand Buddhism.

Requirements: Five pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman, Chicago Style Footnotes.

You are required to use at least ten quotations from the book in your essay and cite these quotes using Chicago Style Footnotes.

Reading Reflections

20 points total at 4 points each (5 journals)

Rationale: This assignment assesses your comprehension of the readings in this class and your ability to use citations (footnotes).

You are required to write journal entries on FIVE readings in this class. You must choose ONE reading from each of the five units below for your journals. So, one reading from the units on Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Requirements: Typed, 12-point Times New Roman, two pages, double-spaced. Journal entries should include the following: (1) A summary of the reading, (2) How the reading contributed to your understanding of religion (either in general, or of a specific tradition). Each entry should be no less than two-pages typed (double-spaced), including the author and title of the text you are journaling on. You **must cite the reading in Chicago Style footnotes. The book I suggested for purchase for this class provides a guide for footnotes. I will also post a footnote guide to help those unfamiliar with footnotes.**

An example of a journal will be posted on Blackboard. A footnote guide will also be posted on Blackboard.

Please note that failing to do the requirements outlined above will result in a zero for the assignment.

Assignment Rationale: Reading summaries are designed to help students think about the readings in this course, demonstrating both that you have done the readings and can engage with them. They also require solid writing skills and use of footnotes.

Mapping Religious Places

10 points

Rationale: This assignment assesses your research and writing skills while allowing you to focus on a topic you are interested in.

Create a map of an important religious place, with an annotated Bibliography.

What do I mean by a “religious place”?

Mecca

Jerusalem

Lumbini

Adam’s Peak

Devil’s Tower

Effigy Mounds

Ayodhya

Varanasi

Borobudur

Mathura

House of the Virgin Mary (Meryem Ana Evi)

Requirements: Create a piece of visual map from any material of your choice (or on your computer) and with any techniques/software you are familiar with. **5 points**

It has to be accompanied by an annotated bibliography with a minimum of two academic sources (no internet sources, no Wikipedia). These sources are what you use to create your map. An annotated bib. is where each entry has a one-paragraph summary of the source, in the Chicago Style. **5**

points

Assignment Rationale: Investigating a religious site provides a way for you learn about a part of the world you are unfamiliar with, use research skills, and focus on something you are interested in.

All of these assignments should reflect college level writing, which includes proper grammar and spelling. You are **required to use Chicago-Turabian footnotes**.

College-level writing requires proper spelling, grammar, and citation of academic sources. *What is an academic source? A peer-reviewed article or an academic book published by a reputable press.* If you are not familiar with how to cite sources using Chicago Style. As for sources, only use academic sources, such as books, book chapters, and articles from journals. Do NOT use an encyclopedia as a source and do not use Wikipedia.

No internet sources (no websites or web articles) allowed. Academic articles from journals obtained through WKU's online library are acceptable.

Only use academic books and articles.

What is an academic source? A book or article written by a scholar.

What is NOT an academic source? Wikipedia, websites, blogs.

Course Reflection

8 points

Rationale: This reflection provides a way for you to think about what you have learned and how it may serve you in your education.

Write a two-page reflection (double-spaced) on the following question using quotes from the readings and lectures:

How did this class help you understand the diversity of religious traditions around the world?

Schedule of Classes

Week One

Religion

Definitions of Religion

Read This: <https://religion.ua.edu/links/the-students-desk/what-is-the-academic-study-of-religion/>

Read This: <https://hazine.info/crafting-the-syllabus-representation-expertise-and-student-learning/>

Listen to this Podcast "World religions, but Better" <https://keepingit101.com/e401>

Religious Studies in North America: A Brief History

Syllabus Quiz Thursday August 25th (submitted online)

Week Two

Religious Studies, Hinduism, and Buddhism

Readings: Schopen

Discussion: Define Orientalism. How does Orientalism contribute to the "myth of Hinduism." List a minimum of two of the problems in Buddhist Studies outlined by Schopen and explain how they impacted the study of Buddhism.

Week Three

Hinduism: Part One

Watch *The Rolling Saint* @ Blackboard

Reading: Eck

Discussion: What is a tirtha? List the different types of tirthas and include the places tirthas are located. Explain how tirthas form the sacred geography of India.

Week Four

Hinduism: Part Two

Hinduism in Bali

Watch *Sita Sings the Blues* (Part One) @ <https://www.sitasingingtheblues.com/watch.html>

Week Five

Buddhism: Life of the Buddha

Reading: Schopen

Lecture on Buddhism

Discussion: Tell the story of the Buddha's life. What lessons does it give to the followers of Buddhism?

Week Six

Buddhism: Buddhist Practice

Watch *Blessings: The Tsoknyi Nangchen Nuns of Tibet*

*Rent on Amazon for \$2.99 @ <https://www.amazon.com/Blessings-Tsoknyi-Nangchen-Nuns-Tibet/dp/B076JH8V8M>

Or watch here for free: <https://www.kanopy.com/product/blessings> (WKU has access)

Discussion: Provide a film review of *Blessings* that includes three specific details on Buddhism in Tibet, such as its teachings, rituals, and traditions.

Week Seven

Basics of Judaism

Major Jewish Religious Themes

What to Expect at a Jewish Synagogue @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Z_gyc7yG_c

Watch Lecture by Meira Kensky @ Blackboard

Discussion: Research a Jewish religious item from The Jewish Museum and explain how it is used, what its role is in Jewish life, and include an image of it.

Website: <https://thejewishmuseum.org>

Week Eight: Fall Break

Week Nine: Modern Judaism

Reading: Huss

Watch Judith Butler Lecture @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeHPfXUmY3g>

Watch Judith Butler Conversation w/ Sunaura Taylor @

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0HZaPkF6qE>

Discussion: Provide a critique of the Kabbalah Center. How does it use Judaism to create a new religion that is open to non-practicing and non-Jewish people? What does the Center tell us about contemporary religion?

Reflection Essay on Occupy This Body DUE by 5 p.m. on Friday October 21

Week Ten

Early Christianity

Christian Sainthood and Pilgrimage

Reading: Brown

Watch Documentary on Canterbury Pilgrimage @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLkmoHiSIIQ>

Watch Lecture by Dr. Rob Von Thaden @ Blackboard

Listen to this Podcast, "Early Christianity Is Actually Kind of Interesting" <https://keepingit101.com/e306>

Discussion: Describe sainthood in Christianity. What do saints provide to people? How is sainthood related to pilgrimage in Europe?

Week Eleven

Modern Christianity: The Black Church

Lecture: The Black Church and Liberation Theology

Watch Reverend William Barber, “The Call to Be Positioned as Powerful Prisoners of Prophetic Hope” @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vbSA2RxRrE>

Discussion: Describe the relationship of theology and social liberation of the Black Church as communicated by King and Barber.

Week Twelve

Foundations of Islam

Reading: Arjana

Pilgrimage and Ritual

Watch Inside Mecca @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwFZucL7PsE>

Discussion Prompt: Describe at least two Islamic pilgrimage traditions. What do they teach us about Islamic practice? How is pilgrimage related to memory in these traditions?

Week Thirteen

Islam in America

Watch Mipsterz Video @ <https://vimeo.com/79645532>

Watch Bean Pie Video @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWjDBWXzBLQ>

Discussion Prompt: Describe at least two African American contributions to Islam in America. How do these contributions reflect the experiences of Muslims of African descent? How and why is Black Islam an important part of Muslim American culture and more generally, an important part of American culture?

Mapping Religious Places Due Friday November 18th at 5 p.m.

Week Fourteen: Reading Reflections DUE

Reading Reflections Due on Tuesday November 22nd at 5 p.m.

Thanksgiving Break Wednesday – Friday

Week Fifteen

Course Reflections Due by Friday December 2nd at 5 p.m.

NO CLASSWORK ACCEPTED AFTER 5 p.m. on DECEMBER 2nd.

Important Dates

August 25th: Syllabus Quiz Due by 5 p.m.

October 21st: Reflection Essay on Occupy This Body Due by 5 p.m.

November 18th: Mapping Religious Places Assignment Due by 5 p.m.

November 22nd: Reading Reflections Due by 5 p.m.

December 2nd: Course Reflections Due by 5 p.m.

***Also, check syllabus and Blackboard for Discussion Prompts. Posts are Due Each Week There Is a Discussion.**