Your vocation is where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.¹

REL 1000-09: UNDERSTANDINGS OF RELIGION

Instructor: Dr. Andrea Ng’weshemi
Class Location: Lentz Hall Room 223
Schedule: Mo, Fr 11:45 am–1:25 pm
E-mail: angweshemi@carthage.edu

This is generally the best way to reach me.

Office Phone: 262-551-6227
Office Hours: Mo & Fr: 1:40 pm – 2:40 pm; Tu & Thr: 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Office Location: Lentz Hall Room 420

PLEASE READ THIS SYLLABUS CAREFULLY AND KEEP IT WITH YOU WHenever YOU COME TO CLASS. ALL THE INFORMATION ON THE SYLLABUS IS IMPORTANT AND INCLUDES EVERYTHING YOU NEED IN ORDER TO DO WELL IN THIS CLASS. YOU WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO DOWNLOAD THE SYLLABUS ON eLEARNING IF YOU SOMEHOW LOSE THIS COPY.

Course Description

A study of the religious dimension in the lives of individuals, communities, and cultures. Students will explore understandings of religion and roles of religion, along with commonalities and differences in expression of religion. This will be accomplished by examining topics such as God, scripture, ritual, values, ethical issues and cosmology, as expressed within several specific religious traditions, including Judaism and Christianity.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course you will be able to:

1. Discourse with nuance and objectivity on the religious dimensions that have been part of the human experience, and the implications of these dimensions for self- and community identity.

2. Identify the underlying structural components of religious worldviews, and articulate how these are expressed in varying religious traditions.

3. Articulate how religious beliefs can shape daily life for individuals and communities, and how these beliefs can both promote and resolve conflict.

4. Display improved critical and analytical skills in:
   - Reaching independent conclusions based on data and independent reasoning
   - Developing a formal, scholarly voice in public speaking and in writing
   - Using research materials and methods with greater nuance and sophistication

Required Textbooks

2) Various readings provided by the instructor via e-Learning.
3) Videos/films

Teaching Methods and Strategies

This course does not presuppose commitment to a particular religion, and it will involve a significant level of “participation style” through a combination of readings, interactive lectures, PowerPoint presentations, videos, and student led class discussions. Class will start with the professor’s presentation synopsizing key concepts, themes, and ideas, followed by students’ comments, observations, questions, and general discussion.

**Please note too that this is not a faith-based comparative religions class contrasting our “true and right” beliefs to the beliefs and practices of “those other people.” Each of the faith traditions in this course will be presented in such a way as to portray the meaning, value, and worth that each of these religions bring to their followers and practitioners.

Course Website

This class has a course website – eLearning, located in “my.carthage.edu” portal. You can find there announcements, course syllabus and schedule, secondary readings, and other information. It is your responsibility to check and make sure you are up to date with the information. If you have difficulty accessing this site, please contact me.

Course Requirements and Assessment

The following criteria will be used to evaluate and/or assess your success:
1. **Attendance, Punctuality, Participation: 10 points, 10%**
   You are expected to attend all sessions of this course. Be on time for class, and come prepared. “Participation” means (1) wakeful presence, (2) preparation of reading assignments, (3) active involvement in class interactions. On each day of class you will bring one or two questions and/or comments from the reading for discussion. Lack of any of these warrants a lowered final grade.

2. **Discussion: 6 points, 6%**
   Every student (or paired with another student) will be assigned a reading to lead the class in discussion.

3. **8 Tests: 5 points each, 40%**
   At the end of every topic or religion studied there will be a test, administered on eLearning. You will complete tests on your own time and will have 60 minutes to complete each test. Once you begin a test you must complete it – you cannot postpone and return to it at a later time.

4. **7 Writing Exercises: 4 points each, 28%**
   The purpose of these writing assignments is to help you anchor your knowledge through active use of the information that you get from lectures, films/videos, discussions, and readings. You will be required to respond to questions that relate directly to the material studied. The questions will also challenge you to think about the material in a new way. The writing exercises need to be your own creations and presented in your own words. If you decide to enhance your response with relevant quotations or ideas borrowed from other sources, be sure to provide proper citation.

5. **Final Exam: 16 points, 16%**
   The final exam will be cumulative – covering materials from all chapters studied in class. It will consist of multiple choice, true and false, and matching questions. The exam will be administered in class.

### Grading Scale

The grading scale used in this class is as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 - 100</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 - 92.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 - 89.99</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 - 86.99</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>80 - 82.99</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 - 79.99</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>63 - 66.99</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60 - 62.99</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>57 - 59.99</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0 - 59.99</td>
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### Etiquettes

**Attendance**

Class attendance is mandatory. A note from a doctor, dentist, coach, or funeral director will render any absence excused. Without such a note, the absence will not be excused. Please note that a phone call or email message from you, saying that you are ill, is not sufficient; nor is a note from the health center confirming an appointment. The note must indicate that you are unable to attend class and it must include contact information for the individual who provided the note. **Documentation of the absence must be provided to me in the first class that follows the absence.** Late documentation will not be accepted. Assignments must still be completed and/or handed in by the due dates, unless I
have agreed an extension with you beforehand. Absences beyond three will lower your grade one letter for each absence. Three times late to class or leaving class early will result in a marked absence. I reserve the right to fail any student who misses more than five class periods.

**Be prepared for class**
You need to have the assigned readings done before class so that you are prepared to participate in discussions and activities. Also, you need to bring your textbook and other assigned readings to class with you. Not having your course materials for discussions and activities will result in a loss of participation credit. Criteria for evaluation of preparedness include:
1). Daily attendance
2). Preparation for and quality of contributions to discussions
3). Completion of daily assignments

**Technology**
No activated cell phones and other mobile communication devices are allowed in the classroom (so please turn them off).

A laptop (or tablet) can be used during class for note-taking and other class-related work only. No multi-tasking in class, such as checking email, browsing the web, playing games, tweeting friends, updating Facebook, working on assignments for other classes, etc. Should you use a laptop during class for purposes not related to this class, you must leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period and be counted absent.

Audio or visual recording of lectures or members of the class is strictly forbidden.

**Behavior to Avoid**
Please avoid distractions and disruptive behavior during class-sessions, as illustrated by the following examples: (1) private conversation during lectures or discussions; (2) packing one’s things prior to the end of the class; (3) late arrival to class-sessions and, especially, habitual tardiness; (4) early departures from class-sessions; (5) leaving the classroom to get drinks or to use restrooms; (6) sleeping; (7) personal grooming; (8) doing homework or reading (other than as instructed) for other courses; (9) carrying or using active cell-phones; (10) using headphones for electronic devices; (11) searching the internet or checking email for anything other than as instructed during class-sessions; (12) listening to music; (13) side-bar chats with your classmates - they are distracting and annoying to other students who are trying to pay attention. Such behavior will result in dismissal from class-sessions, be assigned an unexcused absence, and loss of attendance and participation points.

**Communication**
E-mail is the primary means of official communication for this course. Please include the course and section number in the subject line of all email communications. All communication between student and instructor and between student and student should be respectful and professional. You are responsible for maintaining your college e-mail account and for checking it regularly.

**Respect**
In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different from ourselves. Each and every voice in the classroom is important and brings with it a wealth of experiences, values and beliefs. In this time we share together over the semester, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow
classmates, and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from each other. Please respect your fellow students' opinions and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind.

**Return of Graded Assignments**
1. I will conscientiously grade all assignments as quickly as possible.
2. I ask you to remain patient as you await the grading of your graded exercises. Evaluating written work requires more time than grading examinations or tests. Furthermore, certain times of the semester will be busier than other times.
3. You should carefully review all marks and comments on your graded assignments before making appeals (either in conversation or in writing) to me with reference to any grades about which you may have questions or concerns. I will not discuss individual graded assignments with students immediately prior to, during, or immediately after class. You should review the entire graded exercise before attempting to discuss questions or concerns with me.
4. You should schedule times to meet with me outside class (preferably during office hours) to discuss questions or concerns about graded exercises.

**Office Hours**
I am available for meetings at the times indicated above. If you wish to see me, but are unable to come to my office hours, I will be happy to make an appointment for another time. Please send me an e-mail (the most reliable option).

**Academic Honesty**
There is a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty in this course. This means that anyone caught taking credit for work that is not his or her own, or cheating in any other way, will receive a failing grade for the entire course. If you are not familiar with the Academic Honesty Guidelines, you can find them here: [https://www.carthage.edu/community-code/academic-concerns/academic-honesty-guidelines](https://www.carthage.edu/community-code/academic-concerns/academic-honesty-guidelines). Penalties for academic dishonesty are available at [https://www.carthage.edu/community-code/academic-concerns/penalties/](https://www.carthage.edu/community-code/academic-concerns/penalties/).

**Special Needs**
Students with special learning needs are encouraged to see me during the first two weeks of class to discuss appropriate accommodations and support. You should also have documentation on file with Diane Schowalter, the campus Learning Specialist, in the Advising Center (x5802; dschowalter1@carthage.edu). This information will be kept confidential.

**Tentative Course Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LR = Fisher, <em>Living Religions</em></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TBD</strong> = To be determined</td>
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**Week 1** Feb. 3  Introductions
- To one another
- To the course, the syllabus
- Pre-knowledge check

**Week 2** Feb. 6  Approaches to the Study of Religion and Dimensions of Religion
- “Basic Characteristics of Religion” (on e-Learning)

Feb. 10 Religious Responses
- LR ch. 1
  Test 1

Week 3 Feb. 13 Judaism
- LR ch. 8, pp. 147-184
  You may skip the following sections: Kabbalah and Hasidism (pp. 162-163); Jewish Feminism (pp. 182-183); Jewish Renewal (pp. 183-184)

Feb. 17 Judaism
- Video
- Essential teachings and practices
  Writing Exercise 1 due
  Test 2

Week 4 Feb. 20 Christianity
- LR ch. 9, pp. 185-238
  You may skip the following sections: Early Monasticism (pp. 202-203); Intellectual Revival and Monasticism (pp. 206-207), Medieval Monasticism (pp. 207-208); The Russian Orthodox Church (p. 216); Contemplative Prayer (pp. 223-224); Creation-Centered Christianity (pp. 236-237); Ecumenical Movement (pp. 237-238)

Feb. 24 Christianity
- Video
- Essential teachings and practices
  Writing Exercise 2 due
  Test 2

Week 5 Feb. 27 Islam
- LR ch. 10, pp. 239-258

Mar. 3 Islam
- LR ch. 10, pp. 258-274

Week 6 Mar. 6 Islam
- Video and discussion

Mar. 10 Islam
- Discussion (Reading TBD)
  Writing Exercise 3 due
  Test 4

Week 7 Mar. 13 Hinduism
- LR ch. 3, pp. 41-56

Mar. 15 GUEST SPEAKER, DR. EBOO PATEL

Mar. 17 Hinduism
- LR ch. 3, pp. 56-70

  SPRING BREAK March 20-24

Week 8 Mar. 27 Hinduism
- Film and discussion

Mar. 31 Hinduism
- Discussion (Reading TBD)

Writing Exercise 4 due
Test 5

Week 9
Apr. 3  Buddhism
- LR ch. 5, pp. 81-95
Apr. 7  Buddhism
- LR ch. 5, pp. 96-108

Week 10
Apr. 10  Buddhism
- Video and discussion
Apr. 14  Buddhism
- Discussion (Reading TBD)

Writing Exercise 5 due
Test 6

Week 11
Apr. 21  Shinto
- LR ch. 7, pp. 131-141
Apr. 24  Shinto

Week 12
Apr. 28  Shinto
- Video and discussion

Writing Exercise 6 due
Test 7

May 1  Indigenous Sacred Ways
- LR ch. 2

Week 13
May 5  Native American religions
- Readings: TBD
- Discussion

May 8  African Native Religions
- Discussion (Reading: TBD)

Writing Exercise 7 due
Test 8

Week 14
May 12  Wrap-up

Week 15
May 15-17  Final Exam - administered in class from 10:30 a.m. on May 15

This order and schedule of the readings, discussions, and assignments listed in this syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor and you will be notified of any and all changes.