

RELIGION 1000W-Understandings of Religion

Spring 2021 Syllabus¹-- 4 credits

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Office Location and Office Hours: LH 207, MWF 12:30-2:30 pm

Course Description: “A Study of the religious dimension in the lives of individuals, communities, and cultures. Students will explore understandings 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 multiple religious traditions.”

Hybrid Course Format: Since we are still laboring under pandemic restrictions and some of the class members are fully remote, this semester’s class meetings will be in a hybrid format this semester, with some students each day in-person, and others connected by ZOOM. We will figure out the best way to do this safely and effectively, but it is your responsibility to be available at class time for one of these two options. **If you are not feeling well or have been exposed, stay home and Zoom in. I will not second-guess your decision to do this.**

Communication: Please post all course-related questions in the General Q&A Discussion forum so that the whole class may benefit from our conversation. Please email me for matters of a personal nature. I will endeavor to course-related questions and email within 24-48 hours.

****My “Basic Needs” Policy*: Your safety and well-being are more important than anything in this class. Please feel free to reach out to me if you are struggling for any reason – including issues securing food, housing, or personal safety. In addition to my personal support, I will help you find every resource available to you at Carthage.***

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities: Carthage College is committed to making learning accessible for everyone. Accommodations for students with disabilities are determined and approved by [Learning Accessibility Services \(LAS\) at Carthage College](#). If you, as a student, believe you are eligible for accommodations but have not obtained approval please contact the LAS. The LAS notifies students and faculty members of approved academic accommodations and coordinates implementation of those accommodations. While not required, students and faculty members are encouraged to discuss details of the implementation of individual accommodations.

Required Texts and Materials

- Roy C. Amore, *A Concise Introduction to World Religions* (Oxford University Press, 2019).
- Kent Richter, *Religion: A Study in Beauty, Truth, and Goodness* (Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Multiple E-texts (.pdf files and Kanopy Films), for which links can be found in the syllabus, and in “Course Readings” file on Schoology.

¹ I reserve the right to change this syllabus if necessary. I will always endeavor to communicate changes promptly and clearly.

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Schoology: Schoology, this course's learning management system, can be accessed at lms.carthage.edu or with the Schoology app on a mobile device. Schoology gives you continuous access to course related materials, including announcements, course documents, video links, and the gradebook. As a student, **it is your responsibility to check Schoology regularly**. If you have any difficulty accessing Schoology, please contact me immediately.

Student Learning Outcomes: This class studies religious communities in an academic setting--no prior knowledge is assumed or required, nor any explicit or implicit confession of faith. Students ARE required to study the course materials critically and carefully—as in any other academic course—although I hope that students will try to understand these ideas in their own context. At the same time, please keep in mind that *ALL* religious ideas are potentially transformative, and have been doing this for thousands of years. Given our brief time and the topic's breadth, this course can only provide an overview, yet within these limitation there are several specific learning objectives

By the end of the course, students 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 (Historical/Global)*
2. *Identify the underlying structural components of religious worldviews, and articulate how these are expressed in varying religious traditions (Methodological).*
3. *Articulate the interaction between religious beliefs and daily life for individuals and communities, and how such interaction can both promote and resolve conflict. (Religion and Contemporary Life/Ethics).*
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*

Course Grading Scale: Your grade will be calculated based on the total number of points you have earned plus any extra credit points divided by 1000. Your grade will be based on the following scale:
A+= 96.67-100%, A= 83.33-96.66%, A- = 70.0—93.33%
B+= 86.67–89.99%, B= 83.33-86.66%, B- = 80.0–83.33%
C+= 76.67-79.99%, C = 73.33-76.66%, C- = 70.0-73.33%
D+ = 66.67-69.99%, D = 63.33-66.66%, D- = 60.0-63.33%
F = below 60%

Course Requirements: Your class performance will be evaluated on these criteria:

A) 25%-- Attendance and Participation: The first essential element is being physically present during our class time (either in person or through ZOOM). Far more important is the energy and curiosity that you bring to the classroom to show your engagement with the material. Another factor in that will help to determine participation is timely completion of all assignments and requirements, which I can learn from Schoology's Classroom Analytics function. Each student is allowed three absences **for any reason whatsoever** without penalty, though I ask that you let me know this as a courtesy. More than three absences will usually lower this portion of your grade, unless there are clear mitigating circumstances.

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B) 5%--A Multiple-Choice Quiz on the Course Syllabus. This should be completed before the first class meeting. *This can be found in the "Welcome to this Course" Folder on the default Schoology page.*

C) 10%--A Map Exercise of Global Sacred Sites: One part of this assignment is to correctly identify sacred places with their location on various maps. The second part is to describe three of these sites in greater detail. *This assignment can be found in the "Course Information" folder on the Schoology default page ("Sacred Sites"). Although the assignment will remain open all semester, it **should ideally be completed by M Feb. 1**, since it is an easy thing to get out of the way quickly and to start with a good grade in the class.*

C) 25%--Two Reflective Written Exams: the first one (10%) is due on February 5, and the second (15%) is due at the date and time of our scheduled final exam. *The Exams can be previewed in the Schoology "Course Information" folder.*

D) 10%--Your "Religion in the News" oral presentation (5 minutes of talking, and 5 minutes of leading discussion). *Please read the instructions for this on the Schoology "Course Information" folder ("Religion in the News—Assignment Criteria).*

E) 10%--Your "Religion in the News" paper (600 words of description and analysis of your presentation, which you will submit **electronically** to me as an e-mail attachment. **You are encouraged to revise your paper for a better grade.** *Please read the instructions for this on the Schoology "Course Information" folder ("Religion in the News—Assignment Criteria).*

F) 15%--Reflective Formal Written Assignments: In these assignments you will be responding to some sort of writing prompt, often in response to a primary source text, or reviewing an assigned film. You will submit these assignments using Schoology; *a calendar of the written assignments can be found in Schoology's "Course Information" folder.* **Written assignments should be completed by the beginning of class; assignments submitted after that will be accepted with penalty. At 11:59:59 every Sunday evening that week's assignments will close, and any missing assignments will be marked as zero.**

What Can you expect from me? To be on time, to be prepared for every class, to be a careful and courteous listener, to be available outside class for consultation, to take your questions seriously, and evaluate your work *promptly, critically, and impartially.*

Student Evaluation of Teaching

Course evaluation results are extremely important and are used to help me improve this course and the learning experience of future students. Course evaluation results are not made available to instructors until after grades are posted.

Additional Course Policies

Guidelines for a Productive Hybrid Course

Civility: In all aspects of the course—for example, in the classroom, on discussion boards, and in email--students are expected to conduct themselves) in compliance with the College's regulations regarding civility. Civility is an essential ingredient for academic discourse. All communications for this course should be conducted constructively, civilly, and respectfully. Differences in beliefs,

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opinions, and approaches are to be expected. In all you say and do for this course, be professional. Please bring any communications you believe to be in violation of this class policy to the attention of your instructor.

Active interaction with peers and your instructor is essential to success in this hybrid course, paying particular attention to the following:

- Unless indicated otherwise, please review the readings and other instructional materials for each week before completing any assignments.
- Read any public posts carefully before submitting them.
- Be respectful of others and their opinions, valuing diversity in backgrounds, abilities, and experiences.
- Challenging the ideas held by others is an integral aspect of critical thinking and the academic process. Please word your responses carefully, and recognize that others are expected to challenge your ideas. A positive atmosphere of healthy debate is encouraged.

Other Terminology: In line with the idea of respect (and with common practice in this discipline), I will be using the suffixes BCE (“Before the Common Era”) and CE (“Common Era”) in place of BC (“Before Christ”) and AD (“Anno Domini,” The Year of Our Lord). The older terms imply that the birth of Jesus was the most important event in history--for many people around the world this is not so. BCE and CE are more neutral, reflecting the reality that there is a common dating system, although many religious traditions also have calendars and dating systems of their own.

In the field of religious studies the term “religion” generally refers to the overall practice of religion. (“I study religion.”) In speaking of a particular religious community, the term “tradition” (*traditio* or “that which is handed down”) is used. (for example, “Baptism is important in the Christian tradition.”) This is an effort to express the idea that religious traditions are not static, but can and do change over time, and often feature enormous internal diversity.

Incompletes

Incomplete (I) grades will be granted only in emergency cases (usually only for a death in the family, major illness/injury, or the birth of your child), and if you have turned in 85% of the points possible (in other words, everything but the final exam). If you are having difficulties that might prevent you completing the course, please let me know right away.

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS COURSE

- Some students are concerned that they “don’t know anything about the Religion,” or “are not religious,” and are therefore at a disadvantage in the class. This is misplaced--no one learns chemistry first, and then takes a class about it—*the purpose of the class is to teach the material!* The course is designed so that everyone has an equal opportunity for learning. If you work hard to learn the material presented in readings and class, any lack of religious knowledge at the outset will not be a disadvantage.
- It is important that you stay on top of the material from the very beginning. If at any point, you are unclear about something, be sure to ask the instructor (This includes sending an e-mail prior

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to the beginning of the course). Asking questions is an excellent sign that you are trying to learn, not just memorize a bunch of facts. It is also an excellent way to participate in class.

- The importance of regular participation in class discussion cannot be overemphasized.
- In your reading and preparation for class, you are bound to run into some terminology that is unfamiliar. It is your responsibility to make use of dictionaries and other reference works to help you understand words you don't know. Don't just ignore them. They might be very important. Note that each of our texts has a brief glossary at the back, which can help with many terms. You can also consult an online glossary at <http://www.religioustolerance.org/glossary.htm>
- Communicate any problems promptly to the instructor.

Academic Misconduct

Cheating and/or plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Such conduct may result in a failing grade for that assignment, failing the course, and/or a recommendation to the appropriate college officials. You **MUST** abide by the college's academic honesty guidelines found in the *Student Community Code*. See the Carthage Student Handbook - <http://www.carthage.edu/campus-life/code/academic-concerns/>

Course Schedule (please read before class on the assigned day)

For the first part of the course we will be working primarily from Kent Richter's *Religion: A Study in Beauty, Truth, and Goodness*. At the end of this time the class will select FOUR major religious communities for more specific study. Since you will select them, I don't know what they will be, yet.

January 13 Opening Day: If you feel so inclined, send me a copy of the honor pledge, which you can find at <http://personal.carthage.edu/jlochtefeld/gened/honorcode.html>.

January 15 What is Religion (1.0): Amore, pp. 3-4 ("What is Religion?"), pp. 6-13 (From "Basic Human Religions" up to the heading reading "Temple Religion"), then read the text immediately under the BROWN Headings for "Temple Religions," Middle Eastern Prophets and Asian Sages," "The First Principle,," "Mystery Religions," and "Avatar." **Writing Assignment #1**

January 18 What is Religion (2.0): Amore, 4-6, RICHTER 8-11; 18-20

January 20 The Sacred ("Ultimate Being") and Founders: RICHTER, pp. 26-53,

January 22 Myth and Ritual: RICHTER, pp. 70-81, 100-117; **Writing Assignment #2**

January 25 Scripture and The Self: RICHTER, pp. 54-69, 82-94

January 27 Moral Action and Social Order: RICHTER, 118-46. **Writing Assignment #3.**

ALSO: Please review your [choices for further study this semester](#) (pick three groups total, voting will be Mon. 9/26)

January 29 Religious Experience and Beatitude: RICHTER, pp. 152-67, 182-94.

February 1 Religious Art, and Summaries: RICHTER, pp. 169-82, 23-25, 95-99, 147-51;

February 3 The "Nones": Links for the E-texts can be found in the "Class Readings" file.

February 5 Exam 1 due by midnight (SEE attached exam)—no class meeting.

February 8: Indigenous Religions I: AMORE, pp. 27-50 (up to "Colonialism")

February 10: Indigenous Religions II: AMORE, pp. 50-72 ("Colonialism to Chapter End")

Writing Assignment #4

February 12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 26 –Religious Community #1

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March 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12—Religious Community #2

March 17, 19, 22, 24, 26, 29—Religious Community #3

Mar. 31, Apr. 7, 9, 12, 14, 16 —Religious Community #4

Apr. 19 —Reflection and Review

Final Exam Due Dates (at the end of the Registrar's scheduled final exam period)

- 9:15 section: Wednesday 21 April, 10am
- 10:30 section: Thursday 22 April, 12:30 pm

The final deadline to submit Religion in the News papers for full credit is 8 a.m. on Monday, April 19 (the last day of classes). Late submissions will incur a penalty.

Religion in the News—Assignment Criteria

1. What percentage of my final grade will this be?

- Your ORAL PRESENTATION on the topic will be 10% of your final grade.
- The SHORT PAPER (600 words) on the topic will be 10% of your final grade. The paper can be revised for a better grade, which is HIGHLY encouraged.

2. What sort of story can I pick?

Anything at all, as long as it involves religion, and has been in the news in the past 5 years. This can include (but is not limited to) festivals, rites of passage, hard news, politics, society, commentary, mainstream or marginal religious communities--whatever piques your interest.

3. What is my basic task (in both the presentation and the paper)?

To answer two basic questions, namely "What?" and "So what?"--that is, to summarize the content, but also to give some commentary and analysis--why should anyone care about this?

4. Where can I get ideas and material?

- Newspapers, magazines, and television
- Computerized Databases in the Library
- Online sources as [The Religion and Ethics Newsweekly](#), the [BBC Religion and Ethics](#) page, [The On Being Project](#), [Beliefnet](#), [The Pew Research Center](#), and many more.

Important Notice: You should choose your topic early, because I each of you to talk about different things. E-mail your topic ideas to me at jlochtefeld@carthage.edu. First come, first served.

Religion in the News—Oral Presentation Criteria

1. When will my presentation be?

- You can sign up for a presentation day on the Google Document in this folder.
- You may change your presentation day to an open day if an emergency arises (note—procrastination is not an emergency).

2. What are the Requirements for the Oral Presentation?

- **10 minutes of talking: 5 minutes of telling about your topic, and 5 minutes of leading discussion on it--which MUST involve ASKING questions, as well as answering them).**
- **It must be ORAL--you may speak from notes, or use a Powerpoint, but you may NOT read from prepared copy (and this includes Powerpoint slides).**
- **You must lead discussion, and be prepared to ask questions of your audience**
- **The oral presentation should include the following:**
 - o A clear and interesting introduction, to spark audience interest;
 - o A summary of your major ideas, arranged in a clear and organized manner,
 - o A clear and interesting conclusion, which both summarizes your presentation, and leaves the audience with something to think about.
 - o If you can bring in references to class work, so much the better.
- **Your grade will be based on my score (50%) and the average of your classmates' scores (50%). The [oral presentation evaluation criteria](#) can be found below.**

3. ON what criteria will my oral presentation be evaluated?

Oral Presentation Evaluation:

1. On the emailed Google Ballot, please score your colleagues' oral presentations on each of the three areas, based on the criteria below. **Use a scale from ONE to SEVEN (1=Abysmal 2=Disappointing, 3=Poor, 4=Fair, 5=Good, 6=Very Good, 7=Outstanding), and click on the appropriate bubble in each of the scales. Be critical (that is, discerning) in your scoring, and DO NOT give everyone 7's and 6's, unless they deserve them.** Do NOT score your own presentation.

2. The questions in each category are not a checklist to be filled, but issues you should consider in determining your score.

A. Organization _____

1. Did the presentation have an effective introduction, body, and conclusion?
2. Was it well organized? Did the ideas progress in a logical fashion? Were the transitions smooth between various parts?
3. Did the presentation last for 5 minutes? Did the person lead discussion effectively afterwards?

B. Command of The Material _____

1. Did the presentation have a thesis (i.e., a central point)?

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2. Was this thesis supported by appropriate, significant **DETAIL**?
3. Did the speaker present any of his or her own conclusions?
4. Did the speaker have good command over the material (indicating sufficient research)?
5. How smoothly did the speaker handle questions, comments, or objections?

C. Ease and Skill in Presentation _____

1. Was the delivery smooth and natural? Did the speaker seem nervous or ill-at-ease? Was the presentation easy to listen to and easy to understand?
2. Did the speaker read from text, speak from notes, or speak without notes? Did the speaker make significant eye contact with the audience? Did you feel at ease and interested while listening to the presentation?
3. Were the speaker's vocalized pauses (ah, umm, etc.) controlled enough that they did not distract from the presentation?
4. If the speaker used visual aids, did they enhance the presentation, or detract from it?

*Please be sure to identify both the speaker(s) and yourself.
Any additional comments would be very helpful.*

Religion in the News—Paper Criteria

1. What are the Requirements for the Short Paper? (Description/Response)

- Length: 600-660 words--this brief length is to make you focus on brevity and clarity of expression. **This word count does not include your list of sources, but going over this limit will incur a grading penalty.**
- Your paper must draw from at least **three different sources.**
- To receive a grade other than F, **your paper must have appropriate scholarly documentation** (a list of sources at the end, and citations from these sources in the body of your paper).
- **Send your paper electronically to me (jlochtefeld@carthage.edu) as an e-mail attachment (Word or Word-compatible format).**

2. If I don't like the grade I get on my paper, can I revise it and resubmit it?

YES--Because revision is assumed to be a standard part of the writing process.

3. I'm unsure of how to list sources and citations properly. Where can I get some help?

- Any writer's reference text (e.g., Hacker's *Writer's Reference*, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, etc.)
- For an explanation of plagiarism, and examples of ways in which you may be doing this without even knowing it, click on <http://personal.carthage.edu/jlochtefeld/gened/plagiarism.html>: .
- For examples of ways to cite your sources in your text, click on <http://personal.carthage.edu/jlochtefeld/gened/citations.html>:
- For examples of ways to list your sources at the end of your text. click on <http://personal.carthage.edu/jlochtefeld/gened/sourcelist.html>:
- For help with stylistic issues, connected both with writing style, and with the larger structural issues that go into constructing a successful paper. click on <http://personal.carthage.edu/jlochtefeld/gened/style.html>: T

4. On what criteria will my paper be graded?

1. **Mechanical, Grammatical and Stylistic Considerations**
2. **Organization (the parts are in a coherent and logical order).**
3. **Depth and Quality of Research (background information, citations, and sources).**
4. **Depth and Quality of Interpretations (telling not just “what,” but “why”—why this matters, and why we should care about it).**
5. **Conclusions (What this reveals about religious life, and any wider ramifications)**

Each of these criteria counts equally. Each will be scored on a scale ranging from 0 (terrible) to 5 (excellent) and your paper grade will be a composite of these scores.