



Understandings of Religion -- Religion 1000
J-term 2022

Instructor: Prof. Anita Lang **Email** alang1@carthage.edu

Class Time: MTWRF 1PM to 4 PM

Classroom: Lentz Hall 229

Office Hours: Tuesday by Appointment

Office: Lentz Hall 235/241

Required Text:

A Concise Introduction to World Religions (4th Edition)
Other Articles as Assigned by Instructor (Schoology)

Course Description

Understandings of Religion is a study of the religious experience in the lives of individuals, communities, and cultures. Students will explore the role of religion, along with commonalities and differences in expressions and discussions of religion. Topics such as Transcendent reality, scripture, ritual, values, ethical issues, moral values and social justice issues will be examined within several religious traditions.

Student Learning Outcomes

Understandings of Religion exposes the student to a variety of religious ideas and concepts through reading, discussion, and interactive writing. This course does not intend the student confess to a certain creed nor does it attempt to convert one to a particular perspective. Rather, it expects to facilitate the empowerment of the student as he/she/they discover why religious experience is important to each person as expressed in her/his/their own cultures and communities. The course will have a substantial social justice and diversity component, requiring the students to think outside their own religious and cultural traditions while identifying and analyzing systemic biases and discrimination against religious traditions that are unfamiliar. Understandings of Religion will teach students the proficiency/skills to articulate their own religious beliefs in a way that is respectful to the beliefs of others. By the end of this class, students will be able to:

1. Discuss with objectivity and distinction the religious dimensions that have been part of the human experience and understand how these dimensions contribute to both the identity of the individual and the community.
2. Identify how the interactions between religious beliefs and their expression in daily life by individuals and communities can both promote and resolve conflict.
3. Understand the underlying structural components of religious worldviews and discuss how diverse religious traditions express themselves.
4. Develop a religious vocabulary that allows self-reflection on their own religious beliefs in the context of an increasingly pluralistic world.
5. Display critical thinking and analysis skills by completing a substantial research paper, which

develops their scholarly voice.

Covid-19 Concerns

We understand at any time, this class may be interrupted by quarantining, self-isolation, illness or fear of exposure to Covid -19. We will as a class follow the rules that the college has put into practice in order to keep all of us safe. Please be aware we may have to Zoom some classes if the virus gets a foothold at Carthage and know that we will always do what is best for us as a class.

There will be sanitation supplies in the classroom and please be prepared to clean your space before and after classes. If we follow these protocols, we should have a safe classroom.

Masks will be worn in the classroom at all times unless otherwise decided by the College, State or Federal governments or the CDC. Carthage will follow best practices as set out by the Center for Disease Control.

If necessary, your instructor will only unmask at a 6 ft. distance in order to give better instruction, but those instances will be rare. Be advised that your instructor has had both Pfizer vaccine shots. This is the ultimate protection for your instructor and for you.

If at any time, you have any concerns regarding any of these rules, please feel free to contact your instructor, or any of the staff in the Student Affairs Office.

** Please be patient as we maneuver through this first semester post-vaccine of the pandemic.*

** Please know that your instructor will be patient with your needs as well.*

Course Requirements

This course is based on a 1000-point system and is designed so that each student has multiple opportunities to excel. The point breakdown is as follows:

20% -- Attendance and Participation

100 points – Attendance at class. If in the classroom, this means being on time, engaged with the class material and instruction. It also means respectfully listening to classmates. (See class rules.)

100 points – Participation in class lectures and discussions. It also includes the timely completion of assignments & thoughtful reading of the texts.

20% -- Discussion Board on Schoology

200 pts. – Video responses / Discussion Board posted responses to instructor questions.

40% -- Written Assignments

400 points – Quizzes
Films/Documentary
Group Presentations
Interviews to two "Millennials"

20% -- Final Group Presentation

200 points – Bibliography of Resources (50 pts.)
Presentation Outline (50 pts.)
Oral Presentation (100 pts.)

Attendance

Attendance counts! It is important to attend class whether in person or by Zoom. If for any reason, we have to go to a Zoom class, **cameras must be on**. *If your camera is not on, you will be marked absent.* When in class, cell phones are away. Laptops are allowed if you have books online. Your instructor will let you know when the time is appropriate for laptops; otherwise, they should stay closed.

Participation

Students should be actively involved in-class lectures and discussions. Our class is discussion-based and your input is important. Demonstration of thoughtful reading of the class material is also required, as is prompt completion of all assignments.

Religion in the News Article

Each Student will find an online current news article (less than 6 months old) that involves a religious dimension. The student will send the URL of the article to your instructor one week before you are to lead discussion on it. The URL will be posted to a folder on Schoology so the class can read the article ahead of time. The student will develop two discussion questions (not ones that can be answered too easily or with a yes or no answer) and will lead discussion of the article on the day you are assigned. A list of places to find these articles is at the end of the syllabus. Your instructor will model what a good RIN presentation consists of in class prior to your presentation.

Written Assignments

There will be regular short written assignments as homework, video responses, and take-home quizzes.

Discussion Board Responses

You are required to post **ONE** response per week to questions on the Schoology discussion board posted by your instructor. Your post must be an original response to the questions showing depth of thought and originality. *(In order for your response to be original, you will need to read what the others have posted so as not to repeat what they've said. It is also a good idea to post early in the week and not wait for the deadline in order to insure that someone else hasn't already posted your response)* This post should be at least 5-6 sentences, i.e. a short paragraph. Due dates for the responses are clearly noted in the syllabus.

Final Group Presentation

Student groups will research a **Religions/Justice/ Religion 1000 Presentation Topics** topic from a list provided by your instructor. (Other topics will be considered subject to instructor approval.) You will need at least 3 sources from which you take your information. These can be online articles or E-books from our library or any public library you can access.

Please make sure they are reliable articles or internet sources. Each group will give a 15-20 minute presentation on their topic. Evidence of all members of the group participating impacts the group's final grade. Please choose a topic that interests you enough to want to learn more about it. You may find that many of the videos assigned and available on the Schoology site may be a good starting point for a subject of interest.

Alternate Final Project

Due to Covid-19, there may be a possibility that final group presentations are not feasible, due to quarantining or illness. In those cases, an alternative of a written final report on your topic can take the place of the oral presentation. We will discuss this possibility in class as our semester progresses.

Formal College Writing

In writing essays or response papers, it is important to use good grammar, form and organization. The language used in your writing assignments and papers should be more formal than the language used in common speech. While most of you are used to texting and social networking, please remember that the shorthand code used in chat and texting is not appropriate for formal papers. For example, using the letters “*u r*” instead of the words “*you are*” is not proper in a formally written paper.

In addition, when writing about (or discussing) a religious tradition other than your own, please remember to be respectful. It is inappropriate to characterize another person's beliefs as “weird” or “goofy.” This attitude as well as vocabulary is inappropriate in college writing and in scholarly discourse. Whether you agree or disagree with certain aspects of a religious tradition, please try to speak objectively and with good supporting evidence for your point of view. It will help your reader take your opinions more seriously and will make your writing more effective.

While creative content and sharp critical thinking in your papers is always the primary consideration, multiple mechanical and grammatical errors, which make your papers difficult to read, will affect a small portion of your final grade.

If you have difficulty with writing, please make use of the tutors at the Writing Center located in Hedberg Library. They will help you with organization, grammar and many other aspects of writing. You can email and set up an online appointment that works with your schedule.

Students with Special Needs

Carthage College strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers due to your disability (including mental health, learning disorders and chronic medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, you also need to register with Diane Schowalter in Learning Accessibility Services (dschowalter1@carthage.edu)

Health and Counseling

The Health and Counseling Center (HCC) supports students by addressing physical, mental, and emotional well-being. All services are free and confidential and are available to currently enrolled, full-time undergraduate students. Health services include the assessment and treatment of minor illness and injury. Diagnostic testing, complimentary over-the-counter medications, and referrals to off-campus providers are all available. Our licensed counselors help students with challenges that can be resolved with short-term, solution-focused counseling. Some topics discussed during counseling include depression and anxiety, traumatic experiences, gender and sexuality, relationship concerns, stress management, and academic challenges. More details including info about appointments is found at carthage.edu/health-counseling.

Uwill is a free teletherapy platform for Carthage students. Uwill connects students with licensed therapists from all 50 states. Support is available in a variety of formats; video, chat, messaging, or phone. Counselors are available nights, weekends, and during holidays. Access is quick and easy: app.uwill.com. Students receive free, immediate access to teletherapy through Uwill. It is private, secure & confidential.

Academic Honesty

Please consult the Academic Honesty Guidelines for expectations regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. Research papers are screened on the class Schoology site. This program determines if any part of the paper was copied verbatim without giving credit to the original author in an endnote or footnote.

Class Rules

All class discussion is conducted thoughtfully and respectfully. You may have an opinion/belief that is different from your classmates and you can be assured that you will be provided with a safe environment in which to share that opinion/belief, unless of course, it is racist, anti-Semitic, anti-LGBTQ+, or otherwise, intolerant of any minority, race, gender or religious tradition. Academic discourse allows for a divergence of opinions shared with respect, tolerance and patience.

We will be discussing some topics that are sensitive and timely. Your instructor will give adequate notice of the topics. Please contact your instructor if you feel that any of these topics will be disturbing to you.

Lastly, please do not start packing your belongings up prior to the end of class until your instructor has dismissed the class. Your instructor will give you ample time to get to your next class and to stand up impatiently waiting to leave is not appropriate behavior in the classroom.

Communication

Email is the main medium of the college for mass communication with classes, so please check it often. If any emergencies should arise, this will be the preferred method of communication.

Tentative (subject to change) Assignment Schedule

(Reading to be completed by the earliest day it is listed. Please note carefully the due dates of each assignment.)

The course schedule is subject to revision as time and attention permit, at the instructor's discretion. Any changes to assignments will be shared widely via class announcement, email and Schoology website.

| WEEK 1 | Jan. 6-7 | Chapter 1 Studying Religion.

T & F: Course Introduction

What is Religion? Why Study Religion? (pp. 3-9)

Readings: Concise Introduction to **World Religions Ch. 1 – Introduction**

Questions for Video #1 **It's time to reclaim Religion** in Folder on Schoology

F: **Movie 1** /Film / Documentary movies / Paper due via email by 11:59 PM

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

1. Questions for Video #1 **It's time to reclaim Religion** in Folder on Schoology
View and answer questions for Friday. Upload to Schoology. Due Thursday 6th by midnight.
2. Movie 1 /Film / **Documentary movies** / Paper due on Friday 7 via email by 11:59 PM
3. Quiz # 1 **Chapter 1 Studying Religion**. in Folder on Schoology/ Due on Saturday 8.

| WEEK 2 | Jan. 10-14 | Chapters: 2. Indigenous; 5. Christian and 4. Jewish Traditions.

M: *Readings:* Concise Introduction to World Religions Ch. 2 – Indigenous Tradition

“Indigenous” Religion (pp. 28-40) Colonialism (pp. 50-70)

Discussion Questions in class. (Page 72)

T: *Readings:* Concise Introduction to World Religions Ch. 5 – Christian Traditions

“Origins” (pp. 183-192); “The Medieval Christianity” (pp. 204-222)

W: *Readings:* Concise Introduction to World Religions Ch. 5 – Christian Traditions

“The Modern Era” (pp. 222-234)

Quiz #2 Ch. 5 Christian Traditions (In class.)

T: *Readings:* Concise Introduction to World Religions Ch. 4 Jewish Tradition

Group Presentations about “The Major Branches of Christianity” (page 237)

“When was the Torah Written Down” (pp. 131-138); “Life Cycle Events” (171-177)

F: *Readings*: Concise Introduction to World Religions Ch. 4 Jewish Tradition

Quiz # 3 in class. (See the folder on Schoology.) Writing period in class.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

1. Groups Presentations about **“The Major Branches of Christianity”** (page 237)
2. Quiz #2 **Ch. 5 Christian Traditions (In class.)** See the folder on Schoology. Writing period in class.
3. Quiz # 3 **4 Jewish Tradition (In class.)** See the folder on Schoology. Writing period in class.
4. **Interview to two "Millennials"** / Page (235) Due Sunday, January 16 at 11:59 pm

| WEEK 3 | Jan. 17-21 | Chapters: 6 Muslim Traditions and 7 Hindu Traditions.

M: Islam (Articles as assigned by instructor) Schoology.

Reading: Fisher, Selections in “Islam” in *Living Religions* (pp. 239-253; through “Hajj”).

T: Islam (Articles as assigned by instructor) Schoology.

Readings: Fisher, Selections in “Islam” in *Living Religions* (pp. 253-267; “Sunnis and Shi’as” through “Outreach and Education”); McCutcheon, “The Public Discourse on Religion” in *Studying Religion* (pp. 41-47).

Quiz # 4 in class. (See the folder on Schoology.) Writing period in class.

W: Hinduism Concise Introduction to World Religions Ch. 7 Hindu Tradition
“Origins” (305-316); Ages of Time (322-336)

Questions for Video #2 Decoding the Gita, India's book of answers | Roopa Pai |
in Folder on Schoology (Work in class.)

T: Hinduism Concise Introduction to World Religions Ch. 7 Hindu Tradition
“Practices, Rituals, and Art” (337); Life-Cycle Rites (345-352)

Quiz # 5 in class. (See the folder on Schoology.) Writing period in class.

F: **Movie 2 /Film** / Documentary movies / Paper due via email by 11:59 PM

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

1. Quiz # 4 in class. (See the folder on Schoology.) Writing period in class. 1/18
2. Questions for Video #2 Decoding the Gita, India's book of answers | Roopa Pai |
in Folder on Schoology (Work in class.) 1/19
3. Quiz # 5 in class. (See the folder on Schoology.) Writing period in class. 1/20
4. **Movie 2 /Film** / Documentary movies / Paper due on Friday 21 via email by 11:59 PM

| WEEK 4 | Jan. 24-28 | Chapter: 10 Buddhist Traditions; Chapter 13 New Religions and Movements

M: Buddhism Concise Introduction to World Religions Ch.10 Buddhist Tradition
“The First Gem: The Buddha” (436-450); Cultural Expressions (474)

Movie 3/ Film: Groundhog Day (1993) Paper due via email by 11:59 PM

Quiz # 6 (See the folder on Schoology.)

T: Chapters: 10 Buddhist Traditions

Video 3: How Mindfulness Can Help you live in the Present

Questions for Video #3 How mindfulness can help you to live in the present | Rev. Takafumi Kawakami | in Folder on Schoology (Work in class.) 1/25

W: Chapter 13 New Religions and Movements

Discussion Questions in class. (Page 625)

T: **Movie 4/ Film:** Paper due via email by 10 PM

F: Final Presentations

ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

Movie 3/ Film: Groundhog Day (1993) Paper due via email by 11:59 PM

Quiz # 6 (See the folder on Schoology.)

Questions for Video #3 How mindfulness can help you to live in the present | Rev. Takafumi Kawakami | in Folder on Schoology (Work in class.)

Movie 4/ Film: Paper due via email by 11:59 PM

Final Presentations in groups.

Please work on your assignments on time.

Websites where you can find Religion in the News Articles

<http://www.pluralism.org/>

Click on Religious Diversity News

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/index>

<http://www.religionnews.com/>

<http://www.beliefnet.com/>

<http://pewforum.org/religion-news/religion-news-on-the-web.aspx>

For general unbiased information about religions:

<http://www.religioustolerance.org>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/>

Religion 1000 Presentation Topics

- Nuns on a Bus
- Charter for Compassion (Karen Armstrong)
- Just Mercy and the Innocence Project (Book and Film)
- Exonerated Central Park 5 (When they See Us)
- Serve2Unite & The Gift of our Wounds (Who and Why are They?)
- Hizmet (Service) Movement for Turkey – Fetullah Gulen
- What Atheism can learn from Religion and Vice Versa
- My Life After Hate by Arno Michaelis and other former Neo-nazis (Rationales before/after)
- How to Deal with Holocaust Denial (Films: Never Again and Denial)
- 1991 Brooklyn Jewish/African American Riots
- Bias in Media (Survey of News portrayal of minority religions)
- What does Religious Freedom mean in the USA (What do “we” mean by Religious Freedom)
- Identifying Religious Stereotypes in Film
 - Children’s Films (Disney, etc.)
 - Other Films
- Plight of the Lakota in the U.S.
- Oil company destruction of the Amazon Forest – Ethical/Religious ramifications
- Chapel Hill Shootings of 2015
- What is the Ethical/religious obligation in the destruction of Indigenous Cultures?
- Who were the Freedom Riders? What was the outcome of their mission in the Civil Rights Movement? (How did religion play into this event and the people who chose to participate? For example, Rabbi Heschel, Catholic nuns/priests)

Other topics as approved by your instructor.