

WORLD RELIGIONS (RS 142)

Westmont College

Dr. Charles Farhadian

Adams 216, T/Th, 10:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course provides an overview of the world's religious traditions. We will begin by discussing the nature and study of religion. Then we will launch into an introduction to the various world religions. Given the breath of the subject matter, we will want to strike a balance among the texts, traditions, and practices of each religion. Among the religious traditions we will consider this semester will be the following: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Islam, Shinto, and Mormonism. We will seek to understand these traditions sympathetically, with a goal of appreciating the world's diverse religious communities. This is a General Education course that satisfies a part of the "Thinking Globally" component of the curriculum. As such, the course exposes students to the beliefs, cultures, and histories of a variety of non-Western peoples and encourages students to think about the presence and significance of religious traditions worldwide, comparing and contrasting religions trans-nationally.

Commented [CF1]: Multiple Perspectives: this course introduces major world religious traditions and includes an exploration of their connectedness across cultures and time. Consistency and variety of each religion is highlighted to demonstrate that these world religions are trans-regional, providing meaning and community identity to majority and minority peoples worldwide.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Confucius, *Analects* (any edition)

Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)

Farhadian, Charles, *Introducing World Religions: A Christian Engagement* (Baker Academic)

Lao-tzu, *Tao-te-Ching* (any edition)

Qur'an (Oxford University Press, 2008)

Stoler Miller, Barbara (trans.), *Bhagavad Gita* (any edition)

Tsoukalas, Steve, *The Neglected Trinity* (Wipf & Stock)

Handouts retrieved from Canvas

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

Walpole Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

A. Relative to General Education: The main learning outcome for this GE requirement is that students who take Thinking Globally will understand the interconnectedness of our world through the ascension and recession of various global religions.

B. Relative to the Department of Religious Studies goals: With this course, students will learn about the world's major religions (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Shinto, Taoism, Confucianism). The course a) helps students to think "Christianly" about the various religions, b)

Commented [CF2]: Accessed through 2 formal papers assignments and in-class discussion.

helps students think critically about the nature of religion and cultures and their connections globally, c) and to help students learn to appreciate and engage the world's religions to gain confidence to encounter and engage people and cultures from different religions and regions.

Commented [CF3]: Assessed through an essay question on the final examination.

In this course, students should expect to be able to engage in the following:

1. Describe the similarities and differences between the global religions.
2. Analyze the contributions of religions to society, culture, and to personal and communal betterment. Analyze drawbacks to how religions might curtail these domains.
3. Analyze Christian uniqueness in the context of global religions.

Commented [CF4]: Assessed through written assignments, in which students need to articulate social and cultural impacts of religion across the globe.

Commented [CF5]: Both papers require reflection on the similarities and differences between a given religion and Christianity, with a view of seeking to underscore transnational religious and cultural dynamics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and Participation (10%). Attendance is mandatory and subject to the policies of Westmont College. Failure to appear for any examination will result in an "F" for that examination. Toward your attendance grade, you are asked to attend the site visitation to the Hindu Temple (see Reading Schedule for date).

2. Two Papers (30%). Each paper counts 15%. Papers will be graded on the basis of content, grammar, style, and presentation (see *Grading Information* and *Instructions for Paper Formatting* sections below). Rules regarding plagiarism will be strictly enforced. Papers should be 2000 words in length. Please italicize all book titles and foreign words. Note: as a reminder, backup all your work, especially your papers, as extensions will not be given due to computer problems.

Commented [CF6]: Both papers are comparative in nature, seeking to explore Christian uniqueness as well as similarities between Christianity and other religious traditions: e.g., Compare the biblical notion of "God" with the quranic notion of "Allah, describing how those conceptions impact societies across the globe.

3. Two Examinations (30%). Each examination counts for 15% toward your course grade.

4. Final Examination (30%). The final examination is cumulative.

GRADING INFORMATION

Grading criteria include correctness, completeness, precision, depth, grammar, presentation, and coherence of your answer. The importance of the argument is also important in evaluating papers. The following is a brief explanation of how I distinguish among grades.

100-90%: Superior work that involves something more than mere competence. This work entails depth of analysis, imaginative insight, careful synthesis of the material, and an attention to detail that hints at a nuanced and subtle analysis. This level work requires superb grammar, presentation, and content. This level of work is distinguished from lower levels by its qualitative difference.

89-80%: Good work that is solid, on target, and competent. It does not mislead. This level work states the important points and explains them adequately and competently. Work at this level attends carefully to the assignment, fulfilling each component of it. In examinations this requires

answering the question in full. In papers it means exploring a carefully delineated topic or text as carefully and as fully as space allows.

79-70%: Acceptable but flawed work. This work may be flawed in different respects: missing the target, not quite seeing the point, misunderstanding what the question asks for, struggling for clarity. The work still demonstrates a grappling with the material and ideas in a plausible manner. In examinations, such work may make ambiguous points or use imprecise terms and concepts. Such work typically does not construct arguments well or misses some crucial points implied in the question. This level of work still evidences a general sense of the issues and a capacity to think about them. This level essay frequently is quite short in length.

69-60%: Unacceptable but passing work. This work usually demonstrates only a rudimentary awareness of the issues or problems, but even this is often confused by acute writing difficulties or an inattentiveness to the question. This level essay is typically quite short.

59-50%: Unacceptable and unpassable work.

INSTRUCTION FOR PAPER FORMATTING

1. In the upper left-hand corner type your name, the date, the course number, and the number of words in the paper. Never use a cover sheet.
2. Two lines down, centered, type the title of your paper; use Times New Roman 12-point font.
3. Follow MLA formatting.
4. Set your line spacing to double.
5. Use one-inch margins on all sides.
6. Do not use contractions (unless in original quotation). (Don't.)
7. Place page numbers in the lower center of all pages, except the first.
8. Italicize book titles and non-English words (no need to underline)
9. Write the paper as though the reader knows nothing of the material. You will need to define terms.

OTHER

1. Westmont College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students who have been diagnosed with a disability are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by the Office of Disability Services. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your equal access to this course. Please contact Seth Miller, Director of Disability Services (310A Voskuyl Library, 565-6286) or visit the website for more information: <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability>.

2. Writers' Corner at Westmont, the campus writing center, is an academic support service free for all students. Peer tutors are available to help you with invention (getting started), arrangement (getting organized), style, genres of writing, thesis statements, paragraph development and structure, integrating sources, and common citation styles. One-on-one tutorials are held in

Voskuyl Library (VL 215). Open hours are typically from 4-11 p.m. on Monday through Thursday and from 6-11 p.m. on Sunday. Drop-ins are welcome, though keep in mind that the writing center will be busier during peak times of the semester (before mid-term and each holiday break) as well as later in the evening (9-11 p.m.). For more information, visit the writing center website: (http://www.westmont.edu/_academics/departments/english/writers-corner.html).

3. Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

- Westmont's [academic integrity policy](#) prohibits us from “present[ing] another’s work as our own.” Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT attempt to do the work of writing and other creation for their users. Therefore, **students should NOT substitute AI-generated content or ideas for original academic work.** Westmont faculty members design assignments for students’ incremental and active learning through methods such as reading, summarizing, discussion, and an authentic generative process in which a student does the work of critical thinking and message construction.
- It is possible for original academic work (e.g., a student-authored essay) that has been grammar-checked or proofread by AI editing tools (including ChatGPT and Grammarly) to be flagged by AI detection tools on Turnitin.com, etc. Our [academic integrity policy](#) does not prohibit students from using AI editing tools unless the extent of usage meets the threshold for plagiarism. However, **a student should seek permission from an instructor PRIOR to an assignment submission if considering using an AI tool for editing or another assignment-related task.** Failing to do so may result in that student’s work being flagged for disciplinary action.

4. Role will be taken at the beginning of each class period. Failure to appear for an examination will result in an “F” for that examination.

5. Lectures may not be recorded, unless with the permission of the professor.

6. Please check Canvas for handouts. Print them.

7. Please do not use computers or cell phones in class (*not be on desks*). If you need to use your cell phone, please leave the classroom or wait until break. Be fully human.

8. Please contact the professor if you have any questions or concerns:

Office: PC10, Email, farhadian@westmont.edu; Phone, x7094; office hours by appointment.

9. Be happy in class. (Countless people around the world would give up everything to be sitting in your seat to learn.)

READING SCHEDULE

| Date | Topic | Assignment |
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| 8/29 (Tu) | Welcome & Introduction to the <u>course</u> | |
| 8/31 (Th) | Class Discussion | Prepare and discuss your assigned chapter from <i>Neglected Trinity</i> with your team. |
| 9/5 (Tu) | Introduction to the Nature and Study of Religion: Theories | 1) Farhadian, pp. 1-38 2) Eliade, Introduction, chapters 1-2 3) Miller (<i>Bhagavad Gita</i>), pp. 21-47 |
| 9/7 (Th) | The Nature and Study of Religion: Mircea Eliade | 1) Farhadian, pp. 38-58 2) Eliade, chapters 3-4 3) Miller, pp. 49-87 |
| 9/12 (Tu) | Hinduism: Indus Valley Civilization: <u>Veda</u> | 1) Farhadian, pp. 59-78 2) Miller, pp. 89-154 |
| 9/14 (Th) | Hinduism: <i>Upanishad</i> | 1) Farhadian, pp. 78-86 |
| 9/19 (Tu) | Hinduism: <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> | 1) Farhadian, pp. 87-101 2) Note: Take <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> to class |
| 9/21 (Th) | Guest: Josh Michaels, Pakistan and elsewhere | The Bible in Islam: readings, TBD |
| 9/26 (Tu) | Hinduism: Modern Reformers | 1) Farhadian, pp. 101-114 2) Handouts: Modern Hindu Reformers |
| 9/28 (Th) | Examination #1 | Study |
| 10/3 (Tu) | Jainism | Farhadian, pp. 175-214 |
| 10/5 (Th) | Buddhism: Life of the <u>Buddha</u> & Early Buddhism | Farhadian, pp. 115-137 |

Commented [CF7]: Course is framed to model empathetic engagement with non-Christian religious traditions as well as underscoring Christian uniqueness in ethical demands, notions of "the Divine, and more.

Commented [CF8]: Ethical demands: By comparing the immensely diverse Hindu traditions with Christianity, the course highlights how Christian understandings of the soul and sin often lead to different ethical demands for Christians.

Commented [CF9]: Ethical demands: Considering the no-self concept in Buddhism helps us appreciate Christian uniqueness and the opportunity to engage the world ethically based in part living in, with, and through Jesus Christ.

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| 10/10 (Tu) | Fall Holiday | No class |
| 10/12 (Th) | Buddhism: Theravada Buddhism | Farhadian, pp. 137-153 |
| 10/17 (Tu) | Buddhism: Mahayana Buddhism | 1) Farhadian pp. 153-174 2) Begin reading Lao-tzu, <i>Tao-te-Ching</i> , for Taoism lecture |
| 10/19 (Th) | Film: <i>Golden Kingdom</i> (2015, dir. Brian Perkins, Burma) | Film about Buddhism 1) Handout: Dan Smyer Yu, "Buddhist Conversion in the Contemporary World" 2) PAPER #1 DUE (moved to Oct. 31) |
| 10/24 (Tu) | Student-led Discussion of Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism | Canvas: 1) Gavin Flood, "Reading Christian Detachment through the <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> " 2) Steven Tsoukalas, "Krishna and Christ: The Body-Divine Relation in the Human Form" |
| 10/26 (Th) | Examination #2 | Study |
| 10/26 (Th) | Guest: Dr. Daniel Tropsf (World Team) | Worldviews: Readings TBD |
| 10/31 (Tu) | Taoism | 1) Farhadian, pp. 253-289 2) Lao-tzu, <i>Tao-te-Ching</i> (entire book; take book to class) PAPER #1 DUE |
| 11/2 (Th) | Confucianism | 1) Farhadian, pp. 289-306 2) Confucius, <i>Analects</i> (entire book; take book to class) |
| 11/7 (Tu) | Shinto | Canvas: "Shinto" |
| 11/9 (Th) | Islam | 1) Farhadian, pp. 415-437 2) Quran 33:22-57 |
| 11/14 (Tu) | Islam | 1) Farhadian, pp. 437-452 2) Quran 3:18, 63:1, 21:73, 29:45, 2:183-187, 22:27-28, 2:197, 2:184 |
| 11/14 (Tu) | Islam | 1) Farhadian, pp. 452-466 2) Quran 5:45-50, 6:153, 45:18, 9:29, 5:33, 4:88-89 |
| 11/16 (Th) | Comparing themes in the Quran and the Bible | Read Quran, chapters 1-9, 14-19, 22, 25, 32-35, 39-45, 53, 70, 91, 101, 112 (<i>take Quran to class</i>) |
| 11/21 (Tu) | Reading & Research | No Class – read ahead |
| 11/23 (Th) | Thanksgiving | No Class |

Commented [CF10]: Ethical demands: Compares ways that Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Christians engage the world, social realities, and the natural world, seeking to discover similarities and differences between Christianity and the other religious traditions.

Commented [CF11]: Ethical demands: the challenge and opportunity put to Christian ethical behavior in light of Islam's worldwide strength and influence, morally and politically.

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| 11/28 (Tu) | Islam: Film, <i>The Color of Paradise</i> (Iran) | PAPER #2 DUE |
| 11/30 (Th) | Guest: Dr. Viji Cammauf (Founder, Little Flock Children's Homes, India) | Canvas: Selection from Maharaj, <i>Death of a Guru</i> |
| 12/5 (Tu) | Mormonism | 1) Farhadian, pp. 468-479 2) Handouts |
| 12/7 (Th) | Last Day of Classes Introduction to Theology of Religions | Newbigin, <i>Finality of Christ</i> (in its entirety) -student presentations on <i>Finality of Christ</i> |

FINAL EXAMINATION

RS-142-1: Dec. 13 (Wednesday), 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Note: Final Examinations will not be rescheduled to accommodate travel arrangements