



# World Religions

## HUM 2093

*The Thou encounters me by grace—it cannot be found by seeking. — Martin Buber, I and Thou*

*This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness. — The 14th Dalai Lama*

Fall 2020 • Aug 24 – Dec 11 • Internet/Online

Final Project: due by Dec 11, 11:59 p.m.

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Office hours by appointment via Zoom

210-363-8230

Class website: <http://rosetta.reltech.org/UTSA/HUM2093/>

This course is fully online in an asynchronous format.

Fall 2020 Attendance: This course has no required meeting times. All materials, activities and evaluations are provided asynchronously. There will be two optional synchronous sessions on Thursday, Aug 27, at 12:00 noon, and Friday, Aug 28, at 5:00 p.m. These sessions are optional and not part of your final grade.

### Public Health Considerations - Fall 2020

The health and safety of our campus community is a shared responsibility of all Roadrunners. It is important to note that none of us can guarantee a COVID-19-free environment. We all must, however, follow the guidelines outlined in the [UTSA Public Health Task Force Report](#) ("Report"), and any other applicable policies as may be communicated by the University from time to time. This will include regulating behaviors outlined in the Report including face coverings, daily symptom checks and other appropriate public health behaviors associated with a shared responsibility of reducing transmission of COVID-19. Students, staff and faculty must complete a [mandatory compliance training module](#) and self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms using the [UTSA Health Self-Assessment tool](#) before coming to campus (Refer to [UTSA's Coronavirus website](#), the UTSA mobile app, and the LiveSafe app). In addition, students, staff and faculty must get tested if you are showing COVID-19 symptoms and communicate any COVID-19 related health concerns to your supervisor or professor. Failure to abide by these guidelines and requirements may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the student code of conduct or applicable employment policies and procedures. Violations should be reported to the Office of Institutional Compliance via the [UTSA Hotline](#) for appropriate action.

## **I. Course Description**

What is religion? What are its origins? How do its current practitioners live? Are the major world religions really all that different? How does religion interact with the modern world? These are some of the questions we will explore as we delve into the history, beliefs, practices, and phenomenology of religion. We will examine in detail several of the largest religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Chinese folk religions (including Daoism and Confucianism), Judaism, Christianity, Islam—as well as other selected religious traditions. Through personal exploration, individual and group research projects, and online classroom discussion, we will also explore issues that cut across several different religious traditions.

## **II. Course Aims and Objectives**

### Aims

Students will learn about selected religious traditions from around the world; will analyze issues and concepts such as good and evil, divine and human, war and peace, science, and ethics from a variety of religious perspectives; and will understand the religious traditions studied on their own terms and in the context of other religious traditions.

### Specific Learning Objectives

- Students will gain a basic knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the world's largest religious traditions.
- Students will gain a basic knowledge of the beliefs and practices of other selected religious traditions.
- Students will learn to identify and reject pejorative stereotypes associated with specific religious traditions.
- Students will observe and/or participate in organized religious services of at least three religious traditions.
- Students will analyze current topics that concern people in many or all religious traditions.

## **III. Format and Procedures**

This is an online, asynchronous class that is based on a weekly schedule of assignments, including readings, prescribed viewing of videos, and written papers to be submitted through Blackboard. Students are expected to read or view assigned material by the due date listed on the class website. Assigned papers, projects, and discussions are also due by the designated date. Class announcements, assignments, and supplementary material will be available on Blackboard and/or the class website.

Assignments should be submitted to Blackboard on the due date no later than 11:59 p.m. on the due date. Assignments are due on the assigned date regardless of illness, work schedule, or other complications. Late work will be penalized one letter grade per week (or portion of week), with a minimum penalty of half a letter grade (e.g., for work submitted after the assigned time on the due date). Students experiencing extraordinary circumstances (e.g., an excused absence lasting an entire week) that prohibit turning in an assignment on time may contact the instructor for guidance.

**Students who email the instructor should include HUM 2093 at the beginning of the subject line of the email,** followed by whatever other subject information is relevant.

## **IV. Course Requirements**

### 1. Class Attendance, Participation, and Assignments

Students will endeavor to turn in every assignment on time, every week, and participate in all online class discussions. Students who fail to participate in class discussions will be penalized as part of their Class Participation grade. Excused absences are illness, death in the family, and officially sponsored UTSA activities. The student will be expected to provide documentation for all excused absences. Students who are absent, whether the absence is excused or unexcused, are expected to complete assignments on time (see previous section). Students who know in advance they will be absent may make arrangements to turn in assignments or take tests early.

Unless otherwise specified, all written assignments should be printed in Times or Times New Roman font, 12 point type, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all four sides, and follow MLA specifications. Papers with a minimum page count specified will be considered short of the required minimum if they employ excessive margins. For example, a two-page paper must extend to the bottom of the second page, or it will be considered a one-page paper. Charts, illustrations, and other non-textual material may be included in a paper when appropriate—in fact, they may well improve a paper in some instances—but the non-textual material will not be counted toward the total page count, so students should adjust the length of their papers accordingly.

### 2. Course Readings

The class text is:

Urubshurow, Victoria Kennick. *Introducing World Religions: The eBook*. JBE Online Books, 2008.

This eBook may be purchased and downloaded from <http://www.jbeonlinebooks.org/eBooks/worldReligions>.

Students may also use the print version:

Urubshurow, Victoria Kennick. *Introducing World Religions*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Students will write a book review of the following book:

Martel, Yann. *Life of Pi*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2003.

Other readings will be assigned, and videos will be assigned for students to watch as well.

### 3. Encountering Different Religious Traditions

Over the course of the semester, students will visit three places of worship representing different religious traditions (e.g, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, etc.). Visits may be in person, or the

student may attend an online virtual service. Students will submit a “visit report” describing the activities witnessed and reactions to the experience. Each visit report will be a minimum of three pages, double-spaced. Up to two additional visit reports will be accepted for extra credit. Although students may choose houses of worship from any three religious traditions, they are strongly encouraged to choose religious traditions with which they are not already extremely familiar. For example, a student who was raised as a Protestant Christian who wants to visit a Christian house of worship should consider visiting a Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox congregation. A list of suggested houses of worship will be posted on the class website, but students are free to visit any congregation or community they like. One visit report is due on or before the first exam, and the second is due on or before the second exam. The third visit report and any extra credit reports are due on or before the last regular class day, Dec 3 (not the day of the final exam). **Make sure to include the name of the place of worship you visited, the religious tradition represented, and the date of the visit.**

**Please note that while students are free to visit Messianic Jewish congregations for their visit reports, these congregations (for the purposes of this class) count as groups related to Christian, not Jewish, traditions.**

When visiting place of worship or religious activity, especially in person:

- contact the house of worship in advance and let them know you would like to attend a service, and ask if they have any suggestions about dress or conduct
- listen more, talk less
- watch & take notes
- do not record either audio or video (including photos) unless you have permission beforehand
- when asking questions, allow the interviewee to use his/her own language to describe things
- avoid questions that compare one religion to another; think about each religion in its own terms
- be friendly and gracious to your hosts
- feel free to join in activities if invited to do so, but if it makes you uncomfortable, it's fine to decline

#### 4. Interviews

Each student will interview three practitioners of different religious traditions, preferably people who are congregational or other types of leaders in the religious community. Students will develop a questionnaire or script to be followed during the interview, which will include a minimum of ten questions, but it is fine to deviate from the questionnaire as long as at least ten questions and answers are recorded. The interviewees may be members of the houses of worship visited during the course of the semester, but they don't have to be. There is no specified length for the interview reports, and they may be single-spaced. At least one interview must be conducted in person or by phone, video chat, etc.; the others may be conducted in person, by phone, or by email or other means of correspondence (e.g., social media). Up to two additional interview reports will be accepted for extra credit. One interview report is due on or before the first exam, and the second is due on or before the second exam. The third interview report and any extra credit reports are

due on or before the last regular class day, Dec 3 (not the day of the final exam). **Make sure to include the name of the person you interviewed, the religious tradition the interviewee represents, and the date of the interview. If the interviewee doesn't want his/her name included, put "name withheld at interviewee's request."**

#### 5. Book Report and Discussion

Students will read *Life of Pi* and write a book report on it, focusing especially on the way in which the book deals with the topic of religion. The book report will be a minimum of five pages, double-spaced. It is due on Nov 20. Part of the grade on the book report will be based on student participation in the class discussion of the book.

#### 6. Individual Report and Group Presentation on Other Religious Traditions

It is obviously impossible to cover every religious tradition in a one semester class, and many of the smaller religious traditions—or minority subtraditions within larger traditions—are both interesting and influential. In lieu of a final exam, students will work in groups of five or six to examine selected religious traditions not otherwise dealt with in class. Each person in the group will submit a report on one of the selected religious traditions (minimum of 8 pages, double-spaced, with at least 8 scholarly bibliographic entries—see “Sources for Academic Research” on the class website for a discussion of appropriate scholarly resources). In addition, the group will do a class presentation during the assigned final exam period. Both the report and the presentation will count 50% of the grade for this project.

#### 7. Exams

Students will have two regular exams, at the beginning of the 6th and 11th weeks of class. In lieu of a final exam, students will turn in an **individual** report and submit their **group** presentations by the last day of the Fall semester (Dec 11, see #6 above).

#### 8. Class participation

Participation in class discussions (the Blackboard Discussion Board) and work with others on the final group project is an important part of the learning process. Class participation will count 15% of the overall grade for the semester.

### **V. Grading**

The student's grade will be determined as follows:

- a. Reports on visits to houses of worship: 15% (+ up to 2% apiece for up to two additional visits)
- b. Interviews: 15% (+ up to 2% apiece for up to two additional interviews)
- c. Book report on and class discussion of *Life of Pi*: 10%
- d. Individual religious tradition report and group presentation: 15%
- e. Exam 1: 15%
- f. Exam 2: 15%
- g. Class participation: 15%

Rubric for visit reports, book report, and individual religious tradition report:

spelling, grammar, and style: 20%

organization: 20%

content and originality: 60%

points may be subtracted for submissions below the minimum page length

Rubric for interviews:

spelling, grammar, and style: 20% (note: feel free to quote the interviewee directly, even if their response doesn't follow the rules of Standard Written English)

quality and interest of questions: 80% (if interviewees give one-word answers, like "yes" or "no," use follow-up questions to try to obtain more information)

points may be subtracted for submissions with fewer than ten questions and answers

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following table:

A+: 97-100	B+: 87-89	C+: 77-79	D+: 67-69	F: below 60
A: 93-96	B: 83-86	C: 73-76	D: 63-66	
A-: 90-92	B-: 80-82	C-: 70-72	D-: 60-62	

## **VI. Subject to Change**

Assignments, grades, schedules, and other items detailed in this syllabus are subject to change at the instructor's discretion. The instructor will give students reasonable notice of any changes that are made.

## **VII. Supplemental Information**

UTSA offers many services to help students succeed in their classes. Some of the offices that provide these services are Counseling Services, Student Disability Services, and the Tomás Rivera Center, which offers Supplemental Instruction and Tutoring. Information on these services, as well as the Student Code of Conduct and Scholastic Dishonesty policies, can be found on the following web page: <http://provost.utsa.edu/syllabus.html>. Please read the information on this page, which may be considered an appendix to this syllabus.