I. Course and Instructor Information
Course: WS 3351/CRN 27305 Gender and Religion: Women in the Middle East
Instructor: Dr. Ann Branan Horak
Contact Info: abhorak@utep.edu.

II. Course Description
Religious beliefs and practices have historically provided the justification and philosophy behind cultural constructions of gender, race, and class. Gender and Religion explores the diverse practices and beliefs that form religious views of not only gender and gender identity, but the divine and the role of religious belief in cultural practice. In this class, we will explore the sacred texts, beliefs, and traditions of a variety of religions that developed in the middle east, seeking to understand the ways in which these religions have created systems which both discriminate against and empower groups based on their gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation. We will study Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Baha’i, with a special focus on Islam and its shaping influence on women in the middle east.

III. Course Expectations
I expect every student in this class to be fully engaged with the subject matter and with their peers.
- Read all assigned material from the book and the Blackboard.
- Complete all course assignments on time – some of the assignments for this class cannot be made up so DO NOT fall behind.
- Follow the syllabus and course calendar to stay on track with all due dates – the syllabus and calendar are available on Blackboard so check them regularly.
- Remain respectful and open minded to the material, to me, and to your fellow students.

Within the discipline of Religious Studies, all belief systems are analyzed historically, culturally, philosophically, and practically - how they are lived by their followers. No one belief system is assumed to be correct or true. You are not being asked to give up your personal beliefs, but to remain aware that others may not share your beliefs and to approach this class with a respectful open mind.

Do not attempt to convert or proselytize a classmate to your own religion beliefs. Do not insult or belittle your classmates beliefs (religious or not). Engaging in this type of behavior will result in lower grades and may be grounds for removal from the class. Remember, the purpose of this class is the academic study of religion.

Do not take this class if you cannot meet these expectations.
What you can expect from me: Every student in this class can expect that I will be fully engaged with the subject matter of this class, with each of you, and with the class as a whole.

- I will be available via email – contact me at any time!
- I will grade all assignments in a timely manner.
- I will respond in a timely manner to all questions and class communications.
- I will inform the class if there are any changes to the syllabus or course calendar.
- I will remain respectful and open minded to the material and the students.

IV. Learning Goals and Outcomes
With full participation, after completing this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate basic familiarity with the beliefs and practices of the religions covered.
- Appreciate the rich religious diversity and heritage of our global village.
- Analyze the positive and negative contributions of various religions to self-identity and the creation of identities based on social class, gender, race, and sexual orientation.
- Evaluate claims of absolute truth and discuss the assumptions and perspectives underlying such claims.
- Interact with persons of differing religions and belief systems in a way that is respectful and promotes mutual understanding.

With full participation, after completing this course, students will have improved their skills in:

- Reading – Students will become critical and careful readers of both primary and secondary source material and learn to synthesize what they are reading by responding to it in writing and in class discussion.
- Writing – Students will write responses to the material being covered. Students will learn to develop and support an argument through their writing and incorporate the arguments and thoughts of others.
- Critical thinking – Students will be asked to critically evaluate texts, the perspectives articulated in those texts, and the assumptions underlying the arguments being made. Students should become comfortable with differences of opinion and confident in expressing their own point of view.
- Lifelong learning – Students should feel motivated and confident in seeking out new and unfamiliar religious and cultural experiences with the goal of learning more about themselves and their world.

V. Textbook
There is no textbook for this class but there will be weekly readings and videos on Blackboard. You are expected to read and view ALL of the materials on Blackboard each week.
VI. Required Technology
You will be required to use the UTEP Blackboard system for this class. You should check Blackboard frequently!

- **Blackboard** - You can access Blackboard by logging in to www.my.utep.edu. Once you are on the home page, click on the Blackboard link then look for our Gender and Religion class. On the right hand side is a column entitled Course Tools. We will use many of these tools.
  - Learning Modules – This is where the readings, assignments, and blogs for each week can be found.
  - Announcements - Check Blackboard often, even when you don’t have an assignment due, for class announcements.
  - Syllabus and Assignment schedule - Click on this tab to access the syllabus or assignments sheet.
  - Experiencing Religions – The Experiencing Religions worksheet is here as well as the rubric.
  - Blackboard Help – This link takes you to an online blackboard help site. You can also call the UTEP HELP desk at 915-747-5257.

- **UTEP email account** - Please use your UTEP email account to email me at abhorak@utep.edu.
  - Students must use proper email etiquette - Write a clear, concise message using Standard English with proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Provide all necessary information – for example, your name, student ID, which class you’re in, etc… Provide all necessary contact information.

- **Technical Support:** UTEP offers technical assistance https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/ or call the UTEP HELP desk at 915-747-HELP.

VII. UTEP Resources

- **CASS (Center for Accommodations and Support Services)** – If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu. Or visit the CASS website at https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/

- **Military Student Success Center** – If you are active military, a veteran, or a family member of military personnel, please contact the Military Student Success Center at UTEP at 747-5342, or visit their website at https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/mssc/

- **University Counseling Center** – If you are in need of mental health services, please contact the Counseling and Psychological Services at 747-5302 or visit their website https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/counsel/. They provide one-on-one counseling as well as many helpful workshops.
VIII. Course Assignments
1. Reading Journals
   - **Reading Journals** are short written responses to questions about the material presented in each week's learning module - this may be power points, videos, book chapters, and/or essays. The questions are designed to help you go further into the readings, make interesting connections, identify main ideas, and provide a place to ask questions.
   - **Journals must be at least 500 words long**; longer responses are welcome. Shorter journals will receive lower grades.
   - **Due dates** are on the syllabus and in the learning modules. Reading Journals are turned in via the Reading Journal link in each week’s Learning Module.
     - Please note: Reading Journals will only be available for the week they are assigned.
   - **Reading Journals** will be graded based on the effort you put into them. Your answers to the questions must demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the material. The Reading Journal sheet and rubric is available on Blackboard. Each Reading Journal is worth 100 points and all RPs together are worth 25% of your overall grade.
   - **Learning Goals** –
     - Students will become more active readers by looking for and appreciating meaningful material, recognizing information they don’t understand or want to discuss, and linking new information they’re gaining to what they already know and have experienced.
     - Students will gain practice in discussing the material they’re reading and sharing their thoughts.
     - Students will become comfortable with not knowing all the answers and be willing to engage in further research and learning.

2. Journal Responses
   - **Journal Responses** are your opportunity to become co-teachers and co-learners as you discuss each others’ journal posts and the questions you and your classmates ask around each topic we’re covering.
   - **You must response to TWO of your classmates’ journal posts.**
   - **Each Journal Response must be at least 200 words long; longer responses are welcome.** Shorter responses will receive lower grades.
   - **Due dates** are on the syllabus and in the Learning Modules. Journal Responses are turned in via the Journal link in each week’s Learning Module.
     - Please note: Journal responses will only be available for the week they are assigned.
   - **Journal Responses** will be graded based on the effort you put into them. Your response should demonstrate substantial interaction with the questions being asked and the material being discussed. What you write in your
response must demonstrate thoughtful interaction with your classmates and go beyond simple agreement with what is being said. An assignment sheet and rubric is available on Blackboard. Each Journal Response is worth 100 points and all together are worth 25% of your overall grade.

- Disrespectful or rude language – towards students or their beliefs - or any attempts at proselytizing fellow students will cause you to lose all points for that week’s discussion!

- Learning Goals –
  - Students will practice thinking about and then writing about sensitive or challenging issues.
  - Students will become comfortable discussing these issues with others who may not share their beliefs, developing an appreciation for the viewpoints of others even if they do not agree with them.
  - Students will be able to engage with others of differing belief systems and cultural practices in a manner that is non-judgmental, respectful, and mutually beneficial.

All students must observe proper online “Netiquette”

- Always consider your audience – your classmates and I will be reading your posts.
- You must be respectful in your responses to all posts. You don’t have to agree with each other, and lively discussion is encouraged, but you can never be rude.
- No inappropriate or harassing posts will be tolerated.
- All posts must be written in Standard English and edited for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- Inappropriate language, shortened “texting” words, or all caps posts will not be allowed.
- Read through all the posts before adding your response. Don’t repeat what someone else has said or ask a question that has already been answered. Add something new to the discussion!
- When responding to a class mate’s post, be sure to respond to the ideas and perspectives being presenting and not to the person. **Do not engage in personal judgments or attacks.**
- **Do not attempt to convert or proselytize a classmate to your own religious or cultural beliefs.** Do not insult or belittle your classmates beliefs (religious or not). Engaging in this type of behavior will result in lower grades, a conference with the professor, and may be grounds for removal from the class. Remember, the purpose of this class is the academic study of religion.

3. Experiencing Religions Report

- During the course of this class, you need to **attend one religious service and write a report on your experience.** You are strongly encouraged to attend a service from a religious tradition with which you are unfamiliar. Attending a service from one of the religions we are studying is ideal.
• The assignment sheet for the Experiencing Religions report and the Experiencing Religions rubric are on the Blackboard under the Experiencing Religions link. Your report should be at least 1000 words (single or double spaced is fine, longer is fine) with one inch margins and a standard font size. You can either type your report straight into Blackboard or type it on your computer and then attach the file on Blackboard.

• An information sheet with addresses and websites for a number of religious institutions in the El Paso area can be found under the Experiencing Religions Report link. You are not limited to visiting these sites. For those of you who do not live in the El Paso area, places to visit are usually easy to find via the internet, but I am happy to help you locate a place to visit if you need me to. Send me an email at abhorak@utep.edu and we can look together.

• The Experiencing Religions report is due on the Experiencing Religions link on Blackboard by Monday, April 22nd at 10pm, but you are welcome to turn them in earlier. The Experiencing Religions report is graded on the effort you put into it and on the depth of your insights and analysis. Go beyond easy observations. Think of yourself as a social scientist studying a unique social group and give careful attention to experience. The Experiencing Religions report is worth 100 points and 25% of your total grade.
  ➢ You may attend additional services and write additional Experiencing Religions reports for extra credit. You will receive 10 points of extra credit for each additional Experiencing Religions report up to 30 points. These points can be used to replace a Response Paper or Blog Post grade.

• Learning Goals –
  ➢ Students will gain practice encountering new and different situations and interacting with unfamiliar people in unfamiliar settings.
  ➢ Students will become more observant of their surroundings and more thoughtful about how the setting, behaviors, rituals, worship etc… of a group demonstrates the values and beliefs of that group.
  ➢ Students will be able to engage with others of differing belief systems and cultural practices in a manner that is non-judgmental, respectful, and mutually beneficial.

4. Final Paper or Project

• Your final assignment for this class will be to write either a paper on a topic of your choosing that addresses the subject of Gender and Religion: Women in the Middle East or to create a project that is based around the topic of Gender and Religion: Women in the Middle East.

• If you chose to create a project, you should consider how that project will creatively and thoughtfully address important aspects of the topics we’ve covered in class or topics related to our class.
  ➢ Project ideas could include: a recipe book; a graphic novel; an art book; a guide to religious holidays; a drawing, stained glass or sculpture; music or a book of collected religious songs, etc...
A 500 word essay explaining your project and how it fits into the topic of Gender and Religion: Women in the Middle East must accompany your project.

- **All Project ideas need to be approved by me on or before Monday, April 15th.**

  - If you chose to write a paper, you should select a topic that further develops an issue we've discussed in class or an issue of relevance to the class that we were not able to address.
  - Papers need to be at least 2,000 words long (no maximum requirement), with 1 inch margins, standard font size, and all sources cited correctly.
  - Outside research will be necessary for this paper. At least 3 sources need to be used. You may use MLA or APA format to cite your sources.

Your final paper or project is due via email (abhorak@utep.edu) by **Monday, May 6th at 10pm**, but you are welcome to turn them in earlier. I am happy to read a rough draft of your paper or provide feedback on the early stages of your project any time before the due date. Your final project or paper is worth 100 points and 25% of your total grade.

**Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.**

- If I suspect a student of plagiarism, I will submit his or her paper through plagiarism detection software. If you turn in plagiarized work, I will report you to the Dean of Students. You will receive an F on the plagiarized assignment and may fail the course. You may also be subject to other academic penalties including suspension from UTEP and notation of your academic dishonesty on your permanent record.

  - Please familiarize yourself with what constitutes plagiarism. I'm happy to answer any questions you have about plagiarism or your paper in general as well as read a rough draft of your paper ahead of time!

    - [https://www.plagiarism.org/article/what-is-plagiarism](https://www.plagiarism.org/article/what-is-plagiarism)
    - [https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/_Files/docs/Avoiding-Plagiarism.pdf](https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/_Files/docs/Avoiding-Plagiarism.pdf)

**Learning Goals** -

- Students will engage creatively and critically with an issue of personal interest within the field of gender and religion.
- Students will develop their own argument and perspective with regards to issues they've encountered through the study of gender and religion and share their insights with their fellow students.
- Students will strengthen their writing skills through continual focus on high level, critical writing.

**IX. Assignment Schedule**
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week and Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Journal Responses</th>
<th>Other Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mar 18-24&lt;br&gt;Intro to the Course &amp; Understanding Religion</td>
<td>Blackboard Learning Module and Videos on <em>Understanding Religion</em></td>
<td>Due by 10pm Fri Mar 22nd Journal #1 Introduction</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Sun Mar 24th Responses to Journal #1</td>
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<td><strong>Week 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mar 25-31&lt;br&gt;Pre-Islamic Arabia, Zoroastrianism &amp; Monotheism</td>
<td>Blackboard Learning Module, Readings, and Videos on <em>Pre-Islamic Arabia, Zoroastrianism &amp; Monotheism</em></td>
<td>Due by 10pm Fri Mar 29th Reading Journal #2 on Pre-Islamic Arabia, Zoroastrianism &amp; Monotheism</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Sun Mar 31st Responses to Journal #2</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;Apr 1-7&lt;br&gt;Judaism, Christianity &amp; Gender</td>
<td>Blackboard Learning Module, Readings, and Videos on <em>Judaism &amp; Gender</em>&lt;br&gt;Blackboard Learning Module, Readings, and Videos on <em>Christianity &amp; Gender</em></td>
<td>Due by 10pm Tue Apr 2nd Reading Journal #3 on Judaism &amp; Gender&lt;br&gt;Due by 10pm Fri Apr 5th Reading Journal #4 on Christianity &amp; Gender</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Thu Apr 4th Responses to Journal #3&lt;br&gt;Due by 10pm Sun Apr 7th Responses to Journal #4</td>
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<td>Week</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Blackboard Learning Module, Readings, and Videos on <em>Islam &amp; Gender</em></td>
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<td>Apr 8-14</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Tue Apr 9th Reading Journal # 5 on <em>Islam</em></td>
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<td>Islam</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Fri Apr 12th Reading Journal #6 on <em>Islam and Gender</em></td>
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<td>Islam &amp; Gender</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Thu Apr 11th Responses to Journal #5</td>
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<td>Due by 10pm Sun Apr 14th Responses to Journal #6</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Blackboard Learning Module, Readings and Videos on <em>Creation</em></td>
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<td>Apr 15-21</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Tue Apr 16th Reading Journal #7 on <em>Creation</em></td>
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<td>Creation</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Fri Apr 19th Reading Journal #8 on <em>The Veil</em></td>
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<td>The Veil</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Thu Apr 18th Responses to Journal #7</td>
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<td>Due by 10pm Sun Apr 21st Responses to Journal #8</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Blackboard Learning Module, Videos and Readings on <em>Gender and Honor</em></td>
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<td>Apr 22-28</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Tue Apr 23rd Reading Journal #9 on <em>Women and Honor</em></td>
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<td>Gender and Honor</td>
<td>Due by 10pm Thur Apr 25th Responses to Journal #9</td>
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<td>Due by 10pm Mon Apr 29th Experiencing Religions Report Submit via email to <a href="mailto:abhorak@utep.edu">abhorak@utep.edu</a></td>
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<td>Apr 29-May 5</td>
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<td><strong>Bahá'í &amp; Gender</strong></td>
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Blackboard Learning Module, Primary Readings, and Videos on *Bahá'í & Gender*

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<tr>
<td><strong>Tue Apr 30th</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal #10 on <em>Bahá'í and Gender</em></td>
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<td><strong>Thu May 2nd</strong></td>
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<td>Responses to Journal #10</td>
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<td><strong>Mon May 6th</strong></td>
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<td>Final Paper or Project</td>
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Submit via email to abhorak@utep.edu

I'm always available via email. Contact me - abhorak@utep.edu