Course: RS 3350 CRN 23597 Religion, Race & Gender/WS 3351 CRN 26195 Gender & Religion

Semester Offered: Spring 2021

Instructor: Dr. Ann Horak

Instructor Email and Phone: abhorak@utep.edu, 915.549.5164

Instructor Office Hours: office hours on Blackboard Collaborate – send me an email to arrange a one-on-one meeting on either BB Collaborate or by phone. I’m happy to meet with you any time throughout the semester.

Course Description
The history of religion cannot be separated from the history of ideologies about race and gender. This class will explore the intersection between religion, race, and gender to better understand the ways in which beliefs and practices have been shaped by doctrines and definitions of all three categories. We will also discuss sexuality, sexual orientation, and class identification.

Course Objectives or Expected Learning Outcomes
With full participation, after completing this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate basic familiarity with the concepts of race, class, empathy, self-efficacy, and intersectionality.
- Analyze the positive and negative contributions of world 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.

Required Materials

**Technology Requirements**

This is a fully online class and will take place within the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser. You will need to have access to a computer/laptop, a webcam, and a microphone. The camera and microphone embedded in your laptop should be sufficient for this class. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course. If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP’s Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about [Microsoft Office 365](https://www.office.com) and follow the instructions.

IMPORTANT: If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. You can call the Help Desk at 915.747.4357 or reach them here: [https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/about/HelpDeskChat.html](https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/about/HelpDeskChat.html)

**COVID-19 Precautions** – This class is fully online but there are Covid precautions we should all follow during this time.

You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at [screening.utep.edu](https://screening.utep.edu). If you know of anyone who should report any of these three criteria, you should encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to [COVIDaction@utep.edu](mailto:COVIDaction@utep.edu).

For each day that you attend campus—for any reason—you must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website ([screening.utep.edu](https://screening.utep.edu)) prior to arriving on campus. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible so we can make accommodations for any classes or assignments missed. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.

Wear face coverings when in common areas of campus or when others are present. You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times in this class. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow
preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 1.2.3 Health and Safety and Section 1.2.2.5 Disruptions in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures.

Course Structure and Attendance
This course is fully online with one synchronous class meeting a week, each Wednesday from 1:00-2:30. Attendance at this class meeting will be taken and will be treated as if we were meeting face-to-face. Attendance is hugely important to your learning, but I do understand issues can arise, particularly at this time. If you cannot make a class meeting, please let me know. You become sick or become the caregiver for a sick family member, please let me know so we can work together to ensure your success in this class.

Course Communication
Email me any time using the email link inside Blackboard or at abhorak@utep.edu. I will respond within 24 hours. You can also schedule an appointment – send me an email giving me a couple of days/times when you will be available; we will choose a time that works for both of us. We’ll use Blackboard Collaborate, just like when we meet as a class, to talk one-on-one.

After each virtual class session on Wednesdays, I’ll hang out for a while in Blackboard Collaborate - just as I would hang out in the classroom if we were meeting face to face - for any student who would like to ask a question, make a comment, chat for a minute, or set up a time for a longer meeting.

Don’t freak out about this class! If you are confused about course materials and are thinking “I’m just not getting this” or if you’re unclear on assignments and feeling “I’m just not sure I know what she wants” then please get in touch and ask me! I’m here to help you succeed in this class.

Netiquette - 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 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 should 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 because they can cause confusion or misunderstandings.
- 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 classmate’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 may result in lower grades. Remember, the purpose of this class is the academic study of religion.

If you’re ever concerned about the appropriateness of a post, comment, or question, I’m happy to look over it for you and give you judgement free feedback before you add it to the class Blackboard. Send any such posts to me via email.

A good rule of thumb to keep in mind is that, if you would not say it in a face-to-face classroom discussion, do not post it in our online classroom discussions.

Student Resources

There are many resources at UTEP to help you be successful during your time here and beyond. Please see links on the Blackboard for: UTEP’s Blackboard help, the Student Success Helpdesk, the Center for Accommodations and Support Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, the Military Student Success Center, and UTEP’s Career Center.

Course Assignments

1. Reading Journals

Reading Journals are private – shared only between you and me. They are written responses to the material we are covering each week and they’re meant to help you reflect upon what you’re reading or watching. Reading Journals will also help set the tone for our weekly class meeting. A Reading Journal form will be posted in each week’s learning materials.

- Journals should be at least 500 words long, with longer responses welcome. Shorter journals will receive lower grades.
- Due dates are on the assignment calendar and in the learning modules. Reading Journals are turned in via the Reading Journal link in each week’s learning materials.
- Reading Journals will be graded based on the effort you put into them. Your answers to the questions should demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the material. A rubric is available on Blackboard. Each Reading Journal is worth 100 points and all RJs 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. Blog Posts and Blog Post Responses
Blog posts are public – shared with the entire class. Blog Posts provide an opportunity to approach the topics we’re discussing from a different angle and respond to each other’s thoughts, perspectives, and insights. Blog Posts and BP Responses are your opportunity to become co-teachers and co-learners as you discuss each other’s observations and share questions and ideas. Blog Post Responses are your responses to your classmates’ blog post – your online class discussion. Blog Post topics will be posted in each week’s learning materials.

➢ Blog Posts should be at least 500 words long, with longer responses welcome.
➢ For your Blog Post responses should be at least 200 words long and you should respond to at least two of your classmate’s posts; feel free to respond to more.
➢ Due dates are on the assignment and in the Learning Modules. Blog Posts and Responses are turned in via the Blog Post link in each week’s learning materials.
➢ Blog Posts and Responses will be graded based on the effort you put into them. Take the opportunity to interact with the material presented and the questions asked. Engage in thoughtful interaction with your classmates and go beyond simple agreement with what is being said. A rubric is available on Blackboard. Blog Posts and Blog Posts responses are graded together. They are 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 points for that week’s discussion!
➢ Learning Goals –
➢ Students will practice thinking about and writing about sensitive or challenging issues.
➢ Students will become comfortable discussing these issues with others who may or may not share their beliefs.
➢ Students will develop 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 looking for mutually beneficial opportunities to appreciate these differences.

3. Interview

Discussing topics like religion, race, and gender is difficult but can also be extremely rewarding. For your interview assignment, chose a friend, family member, co-worker, fellow student, teacher – whomever you feel comfortable with – and ask him or her about the issues we’re discussing in class. Your interview should cover some of the topics of religion, race, gender, identity, empathy, self-efficacy, sexual identity, class or whatever else you’d like to discuss.

➢ Your interview can be submitted as a written document or as a video. Instructions for recording a video on Blackboard will be provided but you can also use other recording platforms as long as you can share the link in the Interview assignment page on Blackboard. You can also turn in your interview in as a written document. You may choose to conduct the interview in person and then transcribe it into writing or you may choose to conduct the interview through writing, such as via email. Please follow covid19 safety precautions and do not spend time in close proximity with someone outside your household.
Video interviews should be at least 15 minutes long, but can be longer. Written interviews should be at least 1000 words, but can be longer. Videos and written interviews can be turned in on the Interview link on Blackboard. A rubric is available on the Blackboard. Interviews are worth 100 points and 25% of your overall grade. **The Interview is due Sunday, April 11th**

The Interview will be graded on the effort you put into it. Use this opportunity to have a substantive conversation with someone about some of the issues we’re covering in a way that helps you learn more about that person and perhaps build greater empathy for that person or a group they represent.

Interviews with individuals from various identities and walks of life will be featured throughout the semester on the Blackboard.

**Learning Goals** -
- Student will gain confidence and comfort in discussing difficult, sometimes controversial, topics.
- Students will appreciate the diversity of identities, perspectives, and ideas in their world.
- Students will be better able to engage with different types of learning and different types of expertise through lived experience.
- Students will reflect on their own relationships with people similar to and different from themselves.

4. Monument Presentation

Monuments honor important individuals or events in our culture. Monuments have been challenged as well for upholding individuals or events that demean or oppress others. Monuments are important teaching tools because through their presence, they signal who and what is valued and remembered by the people living in a specific area. For this assignment, you will create a presentation that makes a case for a new monument in our region. Your monument can be to a person or group of persons or to an event. This person, group, or event should have relevance to the border region – El Paso or Juarez or southern New Mexico or all three. This person, group, or event should be public figures, living or dead. This is an opportunity to consider public history and public art and who should be honored in our part of the country and why.

- Your presentation can be in the form of a written paper, a PowerPoint, a Prezi, or a video. Your presentation will need to include a Bibliography or Works Cited page and each presentation needs to use at least three sources.
- Your presentation should be substantive with research about the person, group, or event and images. Your presentation should provide both a justification of why this person, group, or event deserves to be honored and memorialized and it should also provide a written description or an artistic drawing of what the monument would look like and where it should be placed.
- If you are writing a report, your report should be at least 1000 words long. If you are creating a PowerPoint or Prezi or video, your work should have an adequate number of slides and information to justify your argument for a new monument. A rubric is available on the Blackboard. **The Monuments presentation is due Wednesday, May 12th**
- Students need to let me know, via email, what the topic of their Monument presentation will be by Wednesday, April 21st so I can ensure no one is covering the same person, group, or event and that there is adequate information on your topic.
➢ In our last class meeting on Wednesday, May 5th, all students will share their Monument presentation topic and provide the class with some information about their person, group, or event along with one or two photos.

➢ **Learning Goals**

➢ Students will intellectually, creatively, and thoughtfully consider, research, and present upon public history, public art, and the individuals that should be honored by a society.

➢ Students will research and actively think through the many elements that should be considered for a monument or piece of public history.

➢ Students will expand their own understanding of the history of our region and will contribute to their classmate’s greater understanding of important individuals, groups, and events in our borderland area.

**Scholastic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as one’s own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act.

Plagiarism Detecting Software

Some of your course work and assessments may submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](https://www.utep.edu/studentconduct/).

**Incomplete Grade Policy**

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.