

Major World Religions

RS 3310:16673

University of Texas at El Paso Department of Religious Studies

Fall 2024

Instructor: Dr. Glen J. Fairen

Time: N/A

Room: N/A

Office: Somewhere in the wilds of Oklahoma....

Office Hours: N/A...just email me. I am always around.

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Course Description and Objectives:

This introductory survey course is designed to offer an introduction to various religious traditions and acquaint students with the academic study of religion. A variety of cultural expressions that can be classed as “religions” (such as the academic powercords of Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity but also alternative and counter expressions such as Satanism, Jediism, and Wicca) will be examined from a variety of perspectives including some of the methodological issues that are hallmarks of Religious Studies, such as the problem of defining religion in the first place, in both theory and in practice. By the end of the course, students should:

- 1) Have an understanding of the history of the broad spectrum of human artifacts and constructions generally understood as “religion.”
- 2) Develop a critical and scholarly attitude in discussions of the various “religions” covered in class.
- 3) Be able to critically think about not just the various “religions” covered, but the process of what makes something “religious” or not, and what discursive tidbits can be smuggled in with this kind of classification.

Required Text Book:

In lieu of a textbook, we will be using a few selected readings that I will provide on Canvas.

Assignment Notes:

Midterm and Final Exam: The midterm examination will be based on any readings and lectures from the beginning of the course up to the midterm date. It will include definition and short answer style questions. The Midterm will be held on **July 2 from 12:01 AM until 11:59 PM**. Your final will be the exact same format as the midterm but will only cover material from the midterm up to the end of class. The final will be held from **Aug 6 from 12:01 AM until 11:59 PM**. Your midterm and final are worth 25% each of your final grade.

Written Assignment: You will be required to **write 5 journals / short reflection papers**

at the end of each week. **Each journal will need to be min of 1 page long, but no more than 3. The format of the journals/reflection papers needs to be 12 pt font, Times New Roman, with 1 inch margins all around.** Also, while not research per se, will nonetheless require you to think crucially about the material and engage with the prompt question in such a way as to require analysis. Simply stating “I feel” or “I believe” while of course valuable, is not something that is all that helpful or academic in a class like this. Each Journal/Reflection paper will be worth 10% of your final grade (for a total of 50%)

AI and written assignments: Students are prohibited from using any generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Bing AI, or Bard when completing course assignments. Use of these tools, or other similar generative AI tools, will not be tolerated, will be considered plagiarism, and could result in the student failing the course. Any incident detected will be addressed through the university’s academic integrity procedures.

Course Outline:

The following schedule/outline is tentative. Time constraints, unforeseen events, and class interest may result in slight alterations. Nonetheless, please note that all readings should be done before the beginning of the topic covered as listed.

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Due Dates</i>
Topic 1 <i>Aug 26-Sept 8</i>	Introduction and Hinduism(s)	McCutcheon (on Blackboard)	
Topic 2 <i>Sept 9-15</i>	Satanism(s)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AOX-_HdFKQ&t=2s	Journal/Reflection Paper # 1(Due Sept 15 by 11:59 PM)
Topic 3 <i>Sept 16-29</i>	Judaism(s).	Bruce Lincoln (on Blackboard)	Journal Reflection Paper #2 (Due Sept 29 by 11:59 PM)
Topic 4 <i>Sept 30-Oct 13</i>	Buddhism(s)		Midterm (Oct 10 12:01 AM- Oct 13, 11:59 PM)
Topic 5 <i>Oct-14-27</i>	Christianities		Journal / Reflection Paper #3 (Due Oct 27 by 11:59 PM)
Topic 6 <i>Oct 28-Nov 3</i>	Heaven’s Gate, Raelism, and “Jediism”		Journal / Reflection Paper #4 (Due Nov 3 by 11:59 PM)
Topic 7 <i>Nov 4-17</i>	Islam(s).		Journal / Reflection Paper #5 (Due Nov 17 by 11:59 PM)
Topic 8 <i>Nov 18-Dec 6</i>	Wicca		Final Exam (Dec 6 from 12:01 AM - Dec 9 11:59 PM)

Students who consult with me in advance regarding expected issues preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at my discretion, be granted an extension. Please note that assignments may be handed in one class-day after the stated deadline without penalty, with a 10%-per-class-day penalty assessed for each subsequent class-day of lateness.

Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

Grade	Percentage Earned
A	90 – 100%
B	80 – 89.9%
C	70 – 79.9%
D	60 – 69.9%
F	0 – 59.9%

Academic Standing and Integrity:

“Academic Integrity

The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In all matters of intellectual pursuit, UTEP faculty and students must strive to achieve excellence based on the quality of work produced by the individual. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of scholastic dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all graduates of UTEP. It is imperative, therefore, that the members of this academic community understand the regulations pertaining to academic integrity and that all faculty insist on adherence to these standards.

Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, use of AI (such as ChatGP), and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the [Handbook of Operating Procedures](#) (HOP) (available through the [Dean of Students Office](#)) may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to failing a grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.” (“Academic Standing,” for more information, please visit <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=61879&submenuheader=1>)

Policy for Late Assignments:

Students who consult with me in advance regarding expected issues preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at my discretion, be granted an extension. Otherwise, if you miss an exam or Journal window there is very little I can do...

Special Needs

If you have a disability and require special needs classroom accommodations, please contact *The Center for Accommodations and Support Services* Monday through Friday 8:00a.m. – 5:00p.m. at the Union East Room 106. You can also reach the center by phone at (915) 747-5148 or by email: cass@utep.edu