

Class Time: TuTh 10:30-11:45AM | Location: VAB Room 132

Instructor: Jeanine E. Viau, Ph.D. | Email: [jeanine.viau@ucf.edu](mailto:jeanine.viau@ucf.edu)  
Office Hours: TuTh 12:30-1:30PM or by appointment | Location: PSY 224

## **Course Description**

In this class, we will look at the five major world religions and several minority traditions, seeking a basic literacy of the history, central tenets, and practices of each tradition. Across cultures and global contexts, religion plays a significant role in shaping interpersonal and social values, and subsequently, public life. For example, consider the significance of abortion and same-sex marriage debates in the U.S. or the tide of violence besetting Buddhist and Muslim communities in Sri Lanka. These issues and others, and the religious ideologies that seem to fuel these tensions require careful reflection. We will adopt an academic posture in our considerations of the entanglement between religious identification and social life. This means breaking-down assumptions and working toward understanding through critical engagement – critical engagement of our own beliefs and social contexts, as well as those of others. The textbook is meant to provide a backdrop, whereas the films and case studies we will engage are meant to take us into the intimate worlds of religious practitioners. These immersions should reveal the interesting and surprising, heartrending and ecstatic ways that people are religious in historical and contemporary societies.

## **Learning Objectives**

- To develop an understanding of the distinctive nature of several major world religious traditions through intellectual inquiry into their beliefs and practices in their specific historical and socio-cultural context
- To analyze the challenges faced by religions in the modern and postmodern periods and some characteristic responses of religions to those challenges
- To develop a cross-cultural awareness and openness that is a mark of the global citizen and which will enable the student to engage in informed and respectful dialogue with other religious traditions
- To introduce students to some of the main themes and issues involved in the academic study of religion

## **Required Texts**

*Living Religions*, Mary Pat Fisher, 10th edition  
Various readings available through Webcourses

## **Required Tools**

We will be using the Top Hat ([www.tophat.com](http://www.tophat.com)) classroom response system in class. You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or through text message. You can visit the Top Hat Overview (<https://success.tophat.com/s/article/Student-Top-Hat-Overview-and-Getting-Started-Guide>) within the Top Hat Success Center which outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as providing a brief overview to get you up and running on the system.

An email invitation will be sent to you by email, but if don't receive this email, you can register by simply visiting our course website: <https://app.tophat.com/e/470196>. Our Course Join Code is 470196.

Top Hat will require a paid subscription, and a full breakdown of all subscription options available can be found here: [www.tophat.com/pricing](http://www.tophat.com/pricing).

Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, due to the fact that they require specific user information to troubleshoot these issues, please contact their Support Team directly by way of email ([support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com)), the in app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

## **Evaluation & Grading**

Your course requirements will count for the following percentages of your final grade:

- |       |                        |     |                    |
|-------|------------------------|-----|--------------------|
| (i)   | Participation          | 10% |                    |
| (ii)  | Online Reading Quizzes | 25% |                    |
| (iii) | Exams                  | 65% | (average of three) |

**Total                    100%**

### **Grading Scale.**

A	100-94%	B	85-80%	D+	69-66%
A-	93-90%	C+	79-76%	D	65-60%
B+	89-86%	C	75-70%	F	59-0%

**\*\*\*You must have a 70% or higher to pass this class.**

**Attendance.** Attendance and participation will be recorded through the Top Hat classroom response system. See above under Required Tools for information about using this system. The expectation is that you will attend every class unless you are ill or have an emergency, similar to any professional setting. Also, regarding exam preparation, there will be material discussed in lecture that is not in the textbook. I do not excuse absences in this course. However, I will drop the equivalent of two missed classes at the end of the semester. Two absences should be sufficient to accommodate general emergencies, illness, and extenuating obligations.

**\*\*\*IMPORTANT** - As of Fall 2014, all faculty members are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete the Syllabus Quiz no later than Friday, January 13th at 11:59PM. **Failure to do so will result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.**

**Emergencies.** Make sure that any health or personal emergencies are properly documented, and please come and talk to me **as soon as possible** if difficulties arise during the semester.

**Late Work.** Ten percentage points will be deducted for each day an assignment is late.

**Extra Credit.** There is one scheduled opportunity for extra credit in this course. This will be the only opportunity for extra credit, so please take advantage it as it is offered. **I will not give extra credit opportunities for close grades at the end of the semester, so please do not ask me for unfair opportunities.** The GEP Assessments are ungraded assessments in the form of a pre-test due at the beginning of the semester and a post-test due at the end of the semester. Both of these assessments will be available through Webcourses in the GEP section of REL2300. You will receive full credit as long as you complete them within the respective windows. Completion of both assessments will result in 1 percentage point (.5 each) added to your final average.

## **Course Requirements**

**Participation.** Attendance and participation will be recorded through the Top Hat classroom response system. See above under Required Tools for information about using this system. Exercises may include pop-quizzes, surveys, or simple attendance checks. The expectation is that you will attend every class unless you are ill or have an emergency, similar to any professional setting. Also, regarding exam preparation, there will be material discussed in lecture that is not in the textbook. I do not excuse absences in this course. However, I will drop the equivalent of two missed classes at the end of the semester. Two absences should be sufficient to accommodate general emergencies, illness, and extenuating obligations.

**Online Reading Quizzes.** There is a quiz assigned for each of the subsections including a Syllabus Quiz at the start of the course. The quizzes are to be completed in Webcourses on the date listed in the course schedule by 11:59PM. Each quiz will be available for 48 hours prior to the deadline. You will have 30 minutes to complete each quiz once begun, and each quiz is 5-10 questions and open book, with the exception of Reading Quiz 8, which is an online

group discussion. For Reading Quiz 8, you are required to respond to the discussion prompt and at least two classmates in the discussion. Your initial post is due by Tuesday, April 18th at 11:59PM, and your responses to classmates are due by Friday, April 21st at 11:59pm. You must post your initial response to the prompt before viewing your classmates' responses.

**\*\*\*IMPORTANT** - As of Fall 2014, all faculty members are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete the Syllabus Quiz no later than Friday, January 13th at 11:59PM. **Failure to do so will result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.**

**Exams.** Course exams will combine objective style questions, including multiple-choice, matching, and true/false formats. Exams will be administered using scantron forms. **You are required to bring your own scantron form to each exam along with your student ID card.** You must purchase the pink/raspberry form with the UCF logo from either the campus bookstore or pick-up one free from the Technology Product Center. Scantrons must be filled out with pencil, blue or black ink.

## **Etiquettes**

**Communication.** In this class our official mode of communication is through email. Please include the course and section number in the subject line of all email communications. All communication between student and instructor and between student and student should be respectful and professional. As of 2009, Knightsmail is the only official student email at UCF. Class rosters list Knightsmail addresses rather than external email addresses, and all official class communications will be sent only to the Knightsmail addresses. Students are responsible for checking their Knightsmail accounts regularly. Because this is a large section, there will be limited opportunities to ask questions during lectures, and before and after class. If you have questions about the course material or your assessments, please email me or visit me during my office hours.

**Technology.** We will be using personal electronic devices as a medium for participation in this class. However, cell phones, laptops, and digital reading devices are allowed for class related activities only. If I find that you are using them in class for any other reason, you will not be allowed to use any devices in class for the duration of the semester.

**Accommodations.** It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students, including those with disabilities that may impact learning in this class. If anyone believes the design of this course poses barriers to effectively participating and/or demonstrating learning in this course, please meet with me (with or without a Student Accessibility Services (SAS) accommodation letter) to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. During our discussion, I may suggest the possibility/necessity of your contacting SAS (Ferrell Commons 185; 407-823-2371; sas@ucf.edu) to talk about academic accommodations. You are welcome to talk to me at any point in the semester about course design concerns, but it is always best if we can talk at least one week prior to the need for any modifications.

**R-E-S-P-E-C-T.** In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different from ourselves. Each and every voice in the classroom is important and brings with it a wealth of experiences, values and beliefs. In this time we share together over the semester, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow classmates, and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from each other. Please respect your fellow students' opinions and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind.

The University of Central Florida recognizes that our individual differences can deepen our understanding of one another and the world around us, rather than divide us. In this class, people of all ethnicities, genders and gender identities, religions, ages, sexual orientations, disabilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, regions, and nationalities are strongly encouraged to share their rich array of perspectives and experiences. If you feel your differences may in some way isolate you from UCF's community or if you have a need of any specific accommodations, please speak with the instructor early in the semester about your concerns and what we can do together to help you become an active and engaged member of our class and community.

**Academic Integrity.** Plagiarism and cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be subject to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct (<http://osc.sdes.ucf.edu>) for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule (<http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu>) for further information. I will assume for this course that you will adhere to the academic creed of this University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. In other words, don't cheat by giving answers to others or taking them from anyone else. I will also adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, so please do not ask me to change (or expect me to change) your grade illegitimately or to bend or break rules for one person that will not apply to everyone.

Many incidents of plagiarism result from students' lack of understanding about what constitutes plagiarism. However, you are expected to familiarize yourself with UCF's policy on plagiarism. All work you submit must be your own scholarly and creative efforts. UCF's Golden Rule defines plagiarism as follows: "whereby another's work is used or appropriated without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own."

**Turnitin.** In this course we will utilize [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com), an automated system which instructors can use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. Accordingly, you will be expected to submit all assignments in electronic format. After the assignment is processed, as an instructor I receive a report from [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com) that states if and how another author's work was used in the assignment. For a more detailed look at this process, visit [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com).

**Keep calm and read the syllabus.** Please take the time to read the syllabus at the start of class and note important deadlines, procedures, and policies. Also, before sending me an email, please take the time to check to see if your question is answered in the syllabus.

## Course Schedule

**\*\*\*All deadlines and exam dates are firm. However, please be advised that additional readings may be posted in Webcourses, and adjustments to the reading schedule may be made at the start of each unit. Additions and adjustments will be announced in class and in Webcourses.**

UNIT I – THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION & INDIGENOUS SACRED WAYS		
DATE	READINGS	DUE
Tuesday, January 10	Syllabus; Introductions	
<b>The Academic Study of Religion</b>		
Thursday, January 12	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 1, pp. 1-18 and Chapter 13 pp. 507-508	<b>Syllabus Quiz due by 11:59PM on Friday, January 13th</b>
Tuesday, January 17	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 1, pp. 19-31; Fieldwork materials available on Webcourses	
Thursday, January 19	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 13; Creationism vs. Evolution debate materials linked through Webcourses	<b>RQ1 due by 11:59PM in Webcourses</b>
<b>Indigenous Sacred Ways</b>		
Tuesday, January 24	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 2	
Thursday, January 26	Robert Davidson and Haida materials linked through Webcourses	<b>RQ2 due by 11:59PM in Webcourses</b>
Tuesday, January 31	Musa Dube's "Fifty Years of Bleeding"	
Thursday, February 2	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 7	
Tuesday, February 7		<b>Exam I</b>
UNIT II – HOUSEHOLDERS, RENUNCIATION, & OTHER LIFE WAYS		
<b>Hinduism</b>		
Thursday, February 9	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 3 pp. 71-95; The Myth of the Cosmic Man from the Rig Veda	<b>RQ3 due by 11:59PM in Webcourses</b>

	via Webcourses	
Tuesday, February 14	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 3 pp. 95-119	
<b>Jainism</b>		
Thursday, February 16	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 4	<b>RQ4 due by 11:59PM in Webcourses</b>
Tuesday, February 21	Satish Kumar materials linked through Webcourses	
<b>Buddhism</b>		
Thursday, February 23	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 5 pp. 137-161	<b>RQ5 due by 11:59PM in Webcourses</b>
Tuesday, February 28	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 5 pp. 162-186	
Thursday, March 2	Materials for Nati Baratz' film <i>Unmistaken Child</i> (2008) linked in Webcourses	
<b>Daoism &amp; Confucianism</b>		
Tuesday, March 7	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 6	<b>RQ6 due by 11:59PM in Webcourses</b>
Thursday, March 9		<b>Exam II</b>
<b>SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS MARCH 13-17TH!!</b>		
<b>UNIT III – THE MONOTHEISTIC TRADITIONS</b>		
<b>Judaism</b>		
Tuesday, March 21	<i>Living Religions</i> Chapter 8, pp. 246-270	
<b>WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE – MARCH 22<sup>ND</sup></b>		
Thursday, March 23	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 8 pp. 270-300	<b>RQ7 due by 11:59PM in Webcourses</b>
<b>Christianity</b>		
Tuesday, March 28	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 9 pp. 302-341	
Thursday, March 30	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 9 pp. 341-375	<b>RQ8 due by 11:59PM in Webcourses</b>
<b>Islam</b>		
Tuesday, April 4	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 10, pp. 377-399	
Thursday, April 6	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 10 pp. 399-432	<b>RQ9 due by 11:59PM in Webcourses</b>
Tuesday, April 11	Amina Wadud chapters via Webcourses	
Thursday, April 13	<b>NO CLASS - Dr. Viau @conference</b>	
Tuesday, April 18	MLK's "Letter From Birmingham Jail" and Omid Safi's "Where Does It Hurt, O City of Light" linked through Webcourses  <b>NO CLASS - Be sure to complete the assigned discussion in Webcourses.</b>	<b>RQ10 – Religion and Violence Discussion in Webcourses</b> Initial post is due by Tuesday, April 18th at 11:59PM, and responses to classmates are due by Friday, April 21st at 11:59pm.
<b>New Religious Movements</b>		
Thursday, April 20	<i>Living Religions</i> , Chapter 12	

**\*\*\*FINAL EXAM – TUESDAY, MAY 2, 10AM-NOON**