



Course Code: REL 2300 - 0W61

Course Name: World Religions

Credit Hours: 3.0

Semester: Spring 2018

Mode: Web (Fully Online)

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1. Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Nick Shrubsole

Virtual Office Hours: Available By Appointment via Skype or Conferences (Webcourses)

E-mail: Nicholas.Shrubsole@ucf.edu (Preferred method of contact)



Biography

Hello everyone! My name is Nick Shrubsole and I am your instructor for this course. Professionally, I hold a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of Waterloo (2013), which is located just outside of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Yes, I am a Canadian living in Florida. How novel, right? I moved to Orlando in 2015 after teaching for a few years back in Canada. I have extensive teaching experience in a broad range of Religious Studies courses, including World Religions and Politics, Religion, and the Law, Religion and Popular Culture, Evil, and a number of others. I am not a traditional scholar of religion who studies one particular tradition. You'll find that out soon enough as we get into this course. Instead, I tend to focus on the intersections of religions and the secular. My specific area of research is Indigenous Religious Freedom claims. I'll have more to say on this subject in our unit on Indigenous Religions.

On a more personal note, I like to let my students know that I am a disabled person. I have had a visual impairment since I was quite young. In my face-to-face classes, this usually means that I need to tell students that they need to be a bit more assertive when they need a question answered, but that won't be the case here. Even though you could go this whole course without ever knowing I have a visual impairment, I think it's important to let you know when diverse experiences are leading the class. I also hope that my disclosure can make others with disabilities feel comfortable in this class and beyond. Every disability is unique, so it is important to share our stories and let people know that we are here.

Aside from my professional credentials and disclosure, I do have a life outside of work, although it is difficult at times in this kind of employment. I played a lot of music back in Canada, so I am actively trying to continue that here in Florida. I enjoy watching live music and try to get to at least one show every couple of weeks. I enjoy going out with the wonderful friends I have met in this city as much as I enjoy taking a break and watching any number of quality shows.

I look forward to learning more about you in the opening discussion! Please don't ever hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

2. Course Description

Instructor Description

This course examines the basic features and historical backgrounds of a variety of religious traditions (such as Buddhism and Islam) and collections of religious traditions (such as indigenous religions and new religious movements) with a particular emphasis on the local and the global in the

modern world. For this reason, we will step beyond the traditional parameters of studying religions in isolation from each other to explore the intersections of mobile, transnational, publicly-engaged religions today. Additional subjects include religion and politics, religion and violence, religion and gender, and secularization.

Course Catalog Description

Basic features and historical background of Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

3. Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able:

- To develop a critical perspective on the concept of "religion" and "world religions" (Introductory Module)
 - To demonstrate a basic knowledge of major religious traditions emerging from India, China, and Japan (Module 1)
 - To demonstrate a basic knowledge of the Abrahamic Traditions (that is Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Module 2)
 - To gain an appreciation for the very diverse religious traditions that fall under the broader category of Indigenous Religions (Module 3)
 - To demonstrate a basic knowledge of new religious traditions (Module 4)
 - To demonstrate an understanding of the contemporary, global religious landscape beyond the insular study of single traditions (Discussion Module)
 - To critically engage with others on relevant subjects such as religion and violence, religion and gender, and religion and politics (Module 5)
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4. Required Text

Please note that there is one (1) required textbook for this class. The required text is the following:

- Linda Woodhead, Christopher Partridge, and Hiroko Kawanami, eds. *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations* 3rd Edition. New York: Routledge, 2016.
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5. General Expectations in a Fully Online Course

This is a fully online course. For this reason, students must develop their time management skills effectively. As an online course, you are still expected to dedicate the same amount of time you

would in a face-to-face course. The major difference is that there is no scheduled class time. The work that you conduct outside of the classroom remains relatively the same, but the experience of the classroom is a little different. In a classroom, you may attend class at a scheduled time at which point you can listen to a lecture and engage with your fellow classmates in meaningful discussion. When you leave the class, you may independently set up study groups, but many students may just take that time to read their text, complete assignments, and make study guides for in-class tests. In an online course, you will continue to engage with your classmates, listen to some lectures, and participate in small group assignments. The difference is that this is completed online at a time that is more conducive for your schedule. Here are some helpful hints at the beginning of this course to make sure you stay on schedule:

- **Write down the critical dates for all assignments in the course.** You may choose to just use the calendar function in Webcourses, but I would encourage you to use a calendar that you encounter regularly (i.e., on your phone, laptop, tablet, or, wall calendar).
- **Note the opening and closing dates for assignments.** In an online course, you have windows to complete assignments rather than a specific due date. Note both the opening and closing dates of all assignments.
- **Ensure that you login at least twice a week.** Even if there is nothing scheduled that week, it is crucial that you stay engaged with the course.

6. Description of Assignments and Tests

We operate on a Monday to Sunday week in this course. All quizzes are due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. on their scheduled week. Late penalties are listed below.

Assignment	Percentage of Grade	Description
Syllabus Quiz and Introduce Yourself Discussion	Ungraded	Before you Begin in the Course, you are required to complete a syllabus quiz. You are also required to provide a brief introduction to your group members who you will be working with extensively over the semester.
Contemporary Issues Discussion	20%	<p>During the final module of the course, students are required to engage in an online discussion regarding the contemporary religious landscape (e.g., religion and violence, religion and politics). Each prompt will appear at the top of the discussion board for each week.</p> <p>Note that this is not an essay assignment. This means you are not expected to simply respond to the prompt in a single post and return the next week to do the same. This is a discussion so you are meant to engage with your classmates in the small groups you have been working with the entire semester.</p>

		<p>You will be assessed based on the following rubric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated knowledge of the reading material for the week (10 marks) • Engagement with Classmates (that is, your ability to engage in a discussion over the course of the entire discussion period) (5 marks) • Grammar and Spelling (3 marks) • Demonstration of Respect for other Perspectives (2 marks) <p>There is no need to post every single day. But, do not expect a good grade if you only post on the final day of the discussion. The best advice is to check the discussion every day or two and prepare to post at least three times. If someone asks you a question, respond! And, don't be too worried about posting early. Your professor will be actively engaged in these discussions so there will always be something to respond to within 24 - 48 hours of your post.</p>
Public Awareness Projects	20%	<p>Please choose what two projects you want to do in advance. Only the first two submissions will be graded. If you submit a third, it will not be graded.</p> <p>In each of the three content modules, students will have the opportunity to share something with their fellow group members. Each module will be a little different. Students are required to complete ANY TWO (2) of the following three assignments. Note that only two assignments will be graded so choose your assignments in advance. Do not complete all three assignments.</p> <p>All submission windows close on the final day of the module (at 11:59 P.M. EST). Late assignments will be assessed a penalty of 10% per day for up to five days.</p> <p>Module 1: Wiki Fix (Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Chinese Religions)</p> <p>Since you are reading such a new textbook, it might be a good idea to give Wikipedia an update! After reading your chapters on Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, or Chinese Religions, go to a related Wikipedia page and edit it! Ensure that you cite your textbook properly. When you're done, share your fixes with your group on the appropriate message board. More instructions on how to do all of this will be listed on the specific assignment discussion page.</p>

		<p>Module 2: Campaign Against Islamophobia</p> <p>Student will be responsible for creating a small poster and posting it for their group. This poster should utilize material from the textbook and lecture material to contribute to a more complex understanding of the world's second largest religion, Islam. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, Islam has been categorized as backward, violent, and hateful toward women. This has led to the assault and death of many Muslims around the world, including here in the United States. While it is important to understand how extremist groups emerge within religious communities, it is imperative that we recognize that, in whatever community they arise, they do not represent the majority. Create a poster that speaks out against Islamophobia by offering some important facts about Islam. Keep the information on the poster short and to the point.</p> <p>Module 3: Religion on the Internet</p> <p>Were there any groups this module that you found particularly fascinating? If so, go find them on the internet! Provide a link to any official religious community's website. Then, in 250 words, offer a summary of who the group is and what can be found on their website. All of this information should be able to be found on that very website!</p>
Mini-Quizzes	30%	Weeks 2 through 11 contain mini-quizzes that must be completed before a designated date. These short quizzes function to ensure that students keep up with their readings. Pay close attention to the due dates for each quiz. Quizzes will remain open for 5 days after they are due, but students will receive a late penalty of -1 for every day the quiz is late. For example, if a student submits a quiz three (3) days late, they will receive a -3 to their score for that quiz (that is, if you scored 10 / 10 you would receive a 7/10).
Final Exam	30%	The final cumulative exam will take place in the final week of class. There will be a five (5) day window in which the test can be completed. Once the window closes, students will no longer be able to take the exam. You are expected to use your notes for this test which will cover content from weeks 2 through 11.
Total	100%	

7. Grading Scene and Description

Letter Grade	Percentage Range	Brief Description of Assigned Grade
A	94% – 100%	Reserved for excellence, far exceeds average understanding as evidenced in course work and goes significantly beyond basic understanding.
A-	90% – < 94%	Excellent, exceeds average understanding as evidenced in course work and goes well beyond basic understanding.
B+	87% – < 90%	Very good. Far above average, fully meets or exceeds average understanding as evidenced in course work, fully understands the basics and goes beyond that level.
B	83% – < 87%	Very good. Above average, fully meets average understanding as evidenced in course work, fully understands the basics and can engage material somewhat beyond that level.
B-	80% – < 83%	Very good. Just above average, fully meets expectations for basic understanding as evidenced in coursework and fully understands the basics and can engage material at that level.
C+	77% – < 80%	Slightly above average, fully meets expectations for basic understanding as evidenced in coursework and understands the basics.
C	73% – < 77%	Average, meets minimum expectations and satisfies course requirements.
C-	70% – < 73%	Slightly below average, meets bare minimum expectations and satisfies course requirements.
D+	67% – < 69%	Lacking in quality. Below average, meets most minimum expectations and satisfies all or most course requirements.
D	64% – < 67%	Lacking in quality. Below average, meets many minimum expectations and satisfies all or most course requirements.

D-	60% – > 64%	Greatly lacking in quality. Far below average, but meets most minimum expectations and satisfies most course requirements with minimal understanding evidenced in course work.
F	0% – < 60%	Fails to meet minimum expectations in understanding and course work as evidenced by performance and submission of graded elements.

8. Instructor Policies

E-mail correspondence

1. Please use the inbox located to the left of this page to correspond with your instructor.
2. Think of an e-mail as a formal letter when corresponding with instructors (as opposed to a text message). Begin with a salutation (a greeting) and conclude with your name. Be respectful and considerate in your language and re-read your e-mail before sending.
3. Review the course syllabus to ensure that your question is not answered there.
4. For technical support, contact Online@UCF by clicking the following link: [UCF Online Support](#).

No Extra Credit Policy

There is no extra credit available in this course.

Missed Assignments and Tests Policy

One important lesson you will learn at university is time management. Tests and Assignments must be completed within a predesignated time span. All assignments and tests must be completed by the closing date and time. No late discussions, assignments, or tests will be accepted. Of course, exceptions will be made for those with documented, extenuating circumstances.

Virtual Open Door Policy

Your instructor is here to help! I encourage you to contact me at any time to discuss your questions and concerns about the course. .

Maintaining a Respectful Environment

This course will be guided by an ethic of mutual respect and responsibility. At times, the topics may become controversial and online debate rather tense. While disagreement is part of a healthy university environment, please engage your colleagues (including the instructor) with respect and in such a way to promote a response. Agreement should not be the task in online discussions, but rather education and, where possible, consensus.

9. University Policies and Important Information

Academic Honesty

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](#) for further action. See the [UCF Golden Rule](#) 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.

Disability Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with [Student Disability Services](#), Ferrell Commons, 7F, Room 185, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Diversity Statement

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.

UCF Cares

During your UCF career, you may experience challenges including struggles with academics, finances, or your personal well-being. UCF has a multitude of resources available to all students. Please visit [UCFCares.com \(Links to an external site.\)](#) [Links to an external site.](#) if you are seeking resources and support, or if you are worried about a friend or classmate. Free services and information are included for a variety of student concerns, including but not limited to alcohol use, bias incidents, mental health concerns, and financial challenges. You can also e-mail ucfcares@ucf.edu with questions or for additional assistance. You can reach a UCF Cares staff member between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. by calling 407-823-5607. If you are in immediate distress, please call Counseling and Psychological Services to speak directly with a counselor 24/7 at 407-823-2811, or please call 911.

A Note on Copyright

This course may contain copyright protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used with regard to the Fair Use doctrine in order to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download or distribute these items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder.

Warning about Third-Party Software and FERPA

During this course you might have the opportunity to use public online services and/or software applications sometimes called third-party software such as a blog or wiki. While some of these could be required assignments, you need **not** make any personally identifying information on a public site. Do not post or provide any private information about yourself or your classmates. Where appropriate you may use a pseudonym or nickname. Some written assignments posted publicly may require

personal reflection/comments, but the assignments will not require you to disclose any personally identity-sensitive information. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your instructor.

10. Course Schedule

The course schedule has been created on its own page as it may be a document you refer to regularly. To access the course schedule you can follow this link: [Course Schedule](#).