

# World Religions

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS  
University of Virginia, Academic Sponsor

**Voyage: Fall 2015**

**Discipline: Religious Studies**

**RELG 1005-501 & 502: World Religions (Sections 1 & 2)**

**Division: Lower**

**Faculty Name: John Nemeč**

**Credit Hours: 3; Contact Hours: 38**

## **Pre-requisites:**

There are no prerequisites for students who wish to take this course.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The purpose of this course is to survey the foundational ideas and practices of the world's major religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism (and to a lesser extent Buddhism), and African Religious Traditions. We will consider the place of religion in shaping and influencing cultural, social, and political norms across the world. The key concern we will be occupied with is more intimately to come to know the ideas and values of the world's various religious traditions, and how and why, precisely, those who adhere to those ideas and values could do so thoughtfully, reasonably, and with deep conviction. Because of the great number of peoples who have migrated across the Atlantic basin over the centuries, bringing with them their own religious traditions and ideals, we will also examine the role of globalization in religion in antiquity and today.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To develop greater informed empathy for the religious ideas and ideals of others.
2. To gain fluency in the ideas and practices of the world's various religious traditions.
3. To understand the influences of religious ideas and practices on political, social, and cultural life, in antiquity and today.
4. To come to know the role of globalization in religious thought, life, and practice.
5. To learn to think critically and read analytically in the context of the study of comparative religion.

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

**AUTHOR:** Oxtoby, Willard G., Ed.

**TITLE:** World Religions: Western Traditions

**PUBLISHER:** Oxford University Press

**ISBN #:** 0195427173

**DATE/EDITION:** 2010/3<sup>rd</sup> edition

**AUTHOR:** Juergensmeyer, Mark, Ed.

TITLE: The Oxford Handbook of Global Religions  
PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press  
ISBN #: 9780195137989  
DATE/EDITION: 2006/paper

## TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Depart Tilbury—September 13

### **A1—September 15: Religion, Religions, and the Study of Religion**

Read: World Religions, pp. 1-10.

### **A2—September 17: The History and Development of Christianity (I)**

Read: World Religions, pp. 198-277.

### **A3—September 19: The History and Development of Christianity (II)**

Read: World Religions, pp. 277-350.

Civitavecchia—September 21-23

Naples—September 24-26

### **A4—September 27: The History and Development of Islam (I)**

Read: World Religions, pp. 352-417.

### **A5—September 29: The History and Development of Islam (II)**

Read: World Religions, pp. 417-491.

Istanbul—September 30-October 5

### **A6—October 7: The History and Development of Judaism (I)**

Read: World Religions, pp. 13-101.

Study Day—October 8

### **A7—October 10: The History and Development of Judaism (II)**

Read: World Religions, pp. 101-196.

Barcelona—October 11-16

### **A8—October 18: “Traditions in Contact,” or, Shared Presuppositions and Interactions of Religious Traditions**

Read: World Religions, pp. pp. 530-557.

Study Day—October 20

**A9—October 21: “Rivals, Survivals, Revivals”:** how the West views “traditional” religions.  
Read: World Religions, pp. 492-530.

**A10—October 23: Islam and Religions in Africa: A Case-Study in Senegal**

Read: (1) Roman Loimeier, “L’Islam ne se Vend Plus: The Islamic Reform Movement and the State in Senegal,” Journal of Religion in Africa 30.2(2000): 168-190 (pdf).  
(2) Jean-Louis Triaud, “Islam in Africa Under French Colonial Rule” in History of Islam in Africa, ed. by Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, Athens, OH.: Ohio University Press, 2000, pp. 153-168.  
(3) Codou Bop, “Roles and the Position of Women in Sufi Brotherhoods in Senegal,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion 73.4(2005): 1099-1119.

Dakar—October 24-28

**A11—October 30: Colonialism and Western Religions**

Read: David Chidester, “Colonialism and Religion,” Critical Research on Religion 1.1(2013): 87-94 (pdf). Hilary M. Carey, God’s Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c. 1801-1908, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 3-39 (pdf).

**A12—November 1: Christianity and Religions in Africa: A Case-Study in Ghana**

Read: Thinking Globally about Religions, pp. 527-556. Philip Jenkins, “Christianity Moves South” (pdf) in Franz Wijssen and Robert Schreier (eds.) Global Christianity: Contested Claims, 15-34. David Chidester, “African Christian Communities” in Thinking Globally about Religions, pp. 349-356.

Takoradi—November 2-6

**A13—November 8: Thinking Globally about Religion**

Read: Thinking Globally about Religions, pp. 3-14, 557-574.

Study Day—November 10

**A14—November 11: Religion, Globalization, and Religion in the “New World”**

Read: Thinking Globally about Religions, 597-630.

**A15—November 13: The History and Development of Christianity in Brazil**

Read: Sheila Walker, “Everyday and Esoteric Reality in the Afro-Brazilian Candomble,” History of Religions 30.2(1990):103-128. José Casanova, “Brazil: From Oligarch Church to People’s Church,” chapter five in Public Religions in the Modern World, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 114-134.

Salvador—November 15-20

**A16—November 21: The Globalization of Religions: Judaism**

Read: Thinking Globally about Religions, Part III, pp. 175-230.

**A17—November 23: The Globalization of Religions: Christianity**

Read: Thinking Globally about Religions, Part IV pp. 245-298, 325-348, 389-400.

Study Day—November 25

**A18—November 26: The Globalization of Religions: Islam**

Read: Thinking Globally about Religions, Part V, pp. 401-456, 507-526.

**A19—November 28: Hinduism, and Hinduism in the Caribbean**

Read: T. N. Madan, “Thinking Globally about Hinduism,” in Thinking Globally about Religions, pp. 15-24. Vasudha Narayanan, “Hindu Communities Abroad,” in Thinking Globally about Religions, pp. 57-68.

Arrive/Depart Port of Spain—November 29

**A20—December 1: Religion and Political Life: Liberation Theology in Central America**

Read: “The Process of Liberation in Latin America,” chapter 6 (pp. 49-58) of Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books [1973] 1988. “A New Way of Encountering God,” chapter 3 (pp. 51-68) of Robert McAfee Brown, Liberation Theology: A Guide, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. “God’s Justice” by Bishop Romero, chapter 6 (pp. 119-136) of James R. Brockman (ed.), The Violence of Love, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004.

Study Day—December 2

**A21—December 4: Christianity in Costa Rica**

Read: Elsa Tamez, The Bible of the Oppressed (excerpts in pdf). Victorio Araya, The God of the Poor: The Mystery of God in Latin American Liberation Theology (excerpts in pdf).

Puntarenas—December 6-11

**A22—December 12: Contemporary Religion and Secularism**

Read: Charles Taylor, A Secular Age (excerpts in pdf), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

**A23—December 14: Contemporary Religion and Secularism**

Read: “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms” by José Casanova in Craig Calhoun, et. al, Ed., Rethinking Secularism, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 54-74. “Rethinking Fundamentalism in a Secular Age” by R. Scott Appleby in Craig Calhoun, et. al, Ed., Rethinking Secularism, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 225-247.

Study Day—December 16

## **A24—December 17; A-Day Finals**

Arrive San Diego—December 21

### **FIELD WORK**

Field lab attendance is mandatory for all students enrolled in this course. Do not book individual travel plans or a Semester at Sea sponsored trip on the day of your field lab.

Students should use the fieldwork component of this class to visit some among the innumerable religious centers and sites that could be visited on the voyage. These include of course the Vatican in Rome, the Dome of the Rock in Istanbul, Gaudí's Basílica i Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família in Barcelona, and so on.

I propose as a field lab to visit the Waterloo Temple, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago with students. It is a Hindu temple in Chaguanas, a few miles outside of Port of Spain. Here we can see diaspora religion in action—Caribbean Hinduism.

As an alternative, I would propose a trip to the Dome of the Rock in Istanbul. These of course would offer vastly different experiences. My sense is the first would give a more immediate and intimate encounter, this alternative offering something more touristy that students frankly could do on their own.

### **HONOR CODE**

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University's honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager's Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: "On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment." The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed "[signed]."