

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Colorado State University, Academic Partner

Voyage:	Spring 2020
Discipline:	Philosophy and Religion
Course Number and Title:	PHIL 479 Topics in Comparative Religions (Focus: Understanding Religious Violence)
Division:	Upper
Faculty Name:	Brian Victoria
Semester Credit Hours:	3

Prerequisites: The standard CSU prerequisite – one (1) lower-division philosophy or religion course – has been waived by instructor

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Far from being a phenomenon of the past, religious violence is as close as today's news headlines. True, at present the relationship of religion to violence often seems related to Islam. However, the truly universal nature of this phenomenon is revealed by the Brexit-related possibility of a return to violent conflict between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, or Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir, or Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar. What are the causes of this evergreen and universal phenomenon?

This course begins with an examination of Buddhism, widely regarded as a religion of peace. Despite its peaceful reputation, Buddhism has nevertheless been involved in religious violence. Concrete historical instances of Buddhist involvement in violence and warfare will be introduced, centering on the rationale for (Zen) Buddhist support of Japanese aggression in WW II as well as Buddhist-related terrorism in prewar Japan. Following this initial examination of Buddhism, students will select a religion of their choice to investigate (including Buddhism), determining whether broadly similar patterns of religious support for violence are present. Students, either individually or as a team, will share their findings in both oral class presentations and written research papers. The course concludes with two class examinations, followed by discussions, identifying both the causes of religious violence and exploring ways to reduce religious violence in the future.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Acquire knowledge of how religions justify the use of violence under certain conditions, both doctrinally and in historical practice.
2. Identify “enabling mechanisms” in each of the world's major world religions that allows it, under certain conditions, to condone the use of violence despite its ostensible commitment to peace.

3. Develop a self-critical consciousness regarding major world religions that facilitates recognizing the normally obscured “dark side” of religion, focused primarily on its involvement in violence and warfare.
4. Develop insight into the commonly shared attributes of religious traditions that allow them to be used to condone violence and war.
5. Develop an ability to suggest ways to bring an end to religious violence, including identifying one’s own role/responsibility in accomplishing this goal.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

AUTHOR: Brian K. Pennington (Editor)

TITLE: *Teaching Religion and Violence (AAR Teaching Religious Studies)*

PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press

ISBN-10: 0195372425 OR ISBN-13: 978-0195372427

DATE/EDITION: 2012/First Edition

**In addition, students must acquire a field notebook.*

TOPICAL COURSE OUTLINE

Depart Ensenada, Mexico — January 5

B1—January 7: Part I: Introduction to Course;
 Part II: Review Interfaith Dialogue Handout
 Part III: What is the nature of Religion?

Handout: “Principles and Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue”

B2—January 9: **Basic Introduction to the Life and Teachings of the Buddha**
 Reading: *The Buddha’s Teachings*, pp. 3-30.
 Handout: Requirements for Student Oral and Written Class Presentations

B3—January 11: **Early Violence-related Developments in Buddhism**
 Reading: Chapter Twelve, *Zen at War*, pp. 192-231.

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA — January 12

B4—January 15: **Japanese Buddhism following the Meiji Restoration of 1868**
 Reading: Chapters One thru Four, *Zen at War*, pp. 3-48.

International Date Line Crossing — January 16 (Lost Day)

B5—January 18: **Japanese Buddhism and Militarism (aka Fascism/Totalitarianism)**
 Reading: Chapters Five thru Nine, *Zen at War*, pp. 57-144.

Study Day – January 19 (No Class)

B6—January 21: The Blood Oath Corps Incident and Trial

Reading: Chapters 8-9, *Zen Terror in Prewar Japan*, pp. 85-123.

B7—January 23: (Zen) Buddhism and Terrorism/Violence

Reading: Chapters 12 thru 15, *Zen Terror in Prewar Japan*, pp. 177-236.

Kobe, Japan – January 24-28

B8—January 30: Film: Zen and War

Reading: Chapters 10-11, *Zen at War*, pp. 147-191; Preface to the Second Edition, *Zen at War*, pp. ix-xii.

Shanghai, China – January 31 – February 5

B9—February 7: Review and Consolidation

B10—February 9: Exam #1

Ho Chi Minh City – February 10-15

Community Programming – February 17 (No Class)

B11—February 18: First Student Presentations (One or more)

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – February 19-24

* [Field Class: Wednesday, 19 February, in Port Klang.](#)

B12—February 26: Second Student Presentations

B13—February 28: Third Student Presentations

* **Field journal for Kuala Lumpur is due.**

Cochin, India – February 29 – March 5

B14—March 8: Fourth Student Presentations

Community Programming – March 8 (No Class)

B15—March 10: Fifth Student Presentations

Port Louis, Mauritius – March 11

B16—March 13: Sixth Student Presentations

B17—March 15: Seventh Student Presentations

B18—March 17: Eighth Student Presentations

Cape Town, South Africa — March 18-23

B19—March 25: Ninth Student Presentations

Study Day — March 26 (No Class)

B20—March 28: Tenth Student Presentations

B21—April 4: Eleventh Student Presentations

Takoradi, Ghana — March 30- April 1

Tema, Ghana — April 2-3

B22—April 6: Twelfth Student Presentations

B23—April 8: Thirteen Student Presentations

B24—April 10: Exam # 2

Part One: The Nature and Causes of Religious Violence (Pass/Fail)

Part Two: Class Discussion: The Nature and Causes of Religious Violence

*** Completed Field Course Journal due**

Casablanca, Morocco — April 11-14

Study Day — April 15 (No Class)

B25—April 17: Exam # 3

Part One: Eliminating Religious Violence (Pass/Fail)

Part Two: Class Discussion: Reducing Religious Violence

Arrive Amsterdam, The Netherlands — April 20

FIELD WORK

Semester at Sea® field experiences allow for an unparalleled opportunity to compare, contrast, and synthesize the different cultures and countries encountered over the course of the voyage. In addition to the one field class, students will complete independent field assignments that span multiple countries.

Field Class:

The field class for this course is on **Wednesday, 19 February, in Port Klang, Malaysia.**

Field Class 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 class. Note that the Field Class/Assignments, both class and independent, and including journal entries, constitute 15% of the final grade for this course.

Title: Sacred Sites of Kuala Lumpur: From Cave Temples to Mosques

Description: We will trace the path of the annual pilgrimage procession between the Hindu temples of the goddess Mariamman and the magnificent Batu Cave Temples to the Tamil deity Murugan. This pilgrimage involves the practice of piercing the body and carrying heavy decorative platforms called Kavadi attached to the skin with hooks. Through this technique, practitioners achieve ecstatic possession by the deities. Both temples are dramatically colorful and teeming with representational imagery. We will see how Hindus employ imagery to achieve direct personal connection to divine beings. Secondly, we will visit the beautiful Putra Mosque and observe a contrasting relationship with the divine that prohibits representational imagery and valorizes sober orderly ritualized group prayer. Lastly, if time allows, we will visit the Thean Hou Daoist temple and observe how the Chinese diaspora engages a plethora of deities through ritualized relationships with images, especially the Queen of Heaven, in their pursuit of human flourishing.

Field Class Assignment and Due Date

Students are required to submit a 2-3-page field journal entry about this trip, comparing the Hindu, Muslim (and Daoist) sites we visit with serious reflection on the interpretive issues stated in the "objectives" below. Please see the following Independent Field assignment description for more guidance. This first field class entry in your journal is due on **Feb. 28**.

Objectives:

1. Analyze the striking contrast between the modes of religious experience constructed by a Muslim site that is bare of representation and Hindu temples of the Tamil diaspora teeming with imagery.
2. Understand and appreciate the way practitioners externalize their values on the spatial environment and physically enact a spiritual "path," using travel to transform the traveler.
3. Compare strikingly different approaches to religious experience. In one case ritualized mass prayer is valorized and at the other ecstatic divine possession by the warrior god Murugan is facilitated by piercing the body and carrying heavy Kavadi pierced into the skin.

Independent Field Assignments

Students are required to *independently* visit two additional religious sites and keep a field journal of what you see. The sites should be at ports other than Malaysia. Ideally, they should be from two different religious traditions or, if not, from two different contexts for the same religion. Each entry should be 2-3 pages in length.

You should make field notes either during or immediately after your visit. State where you went, the date of your visit, what port it was, and what religious tradition. When you adapt your notes to a journal entry, try to describe everything that you saw and did. What techniques were deployed to generate or enhance religious experiences? How were each of your senses affected by the situation [smells of incense, cool stone floors on your bare feet]?

Include at least some of the following: What did you observe? What were people doing? How were they dressed? Were there women? Children? Did you talk to anyone? You are also encouraged to be reflective of your experience. How did it make you feel? Were you excited? Nervous? Shocked? BUT, consider why you had these reactions. Was it because of your own unique background and predispositions (perhaps you are appalled by self-mortification) or is it because you responded in a way intended by the practice you observed (perhaps the practice is meant to be shocking)? When possible, try to be a “participant-observer” during your visits to religious sites, e.g., performing appropriate ritual actions, chanting, bowing, singing a hymn, lighting incense, ringing a bell, etc.

Final journal entries will be evaluated based on:

1. apparent effort in conducting and recording field work,
2. effective writing, and
3. your ability to accurately describe your own observations of religious practices and places of worship or reverence, including your own personal reactions

Note: The two sites must be **other** than the sites visited during the Field Class in Malaysia.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Class participation (w/attendance)	10%
Exam #1	20% (Graded)
Class Presentation	35% (Oral Presentation: 15%; Research Paper: 20%*)
Exam #2	10% (Pass/Fail)
Exam #3	10% (Pass/Fail)
Field Assignments (5%x3)	15%

* Research Papers are due two weeks after class presentation.

GRADING SCALE

The following Grading Scale is utilized for student evaluation. Pass/Fail is not an option for Semester at Sea® coursework. Note that C-, D+ and D- grades are also not assigned on Semester at Sea® in accordance with the grading system at Colorado State University (the SAS partner institution).

Pluses and minuses are awarded as follows on a 100% scale:

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory/Poor</u>	<u>Failing</u>
97-100%: A+	87-89%: B+	77-79%: C+	Less than 60%: F
93-96%: A	83-86%: B	70-76%: C	
90-92%: A-	80-82%: B-	60-69%: D	

ATTENDANCE/ENGAGEMENT IN THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Class Expectations

Attendance will be taken every day. Attendance and class participation make up 10% of your final grade. You may be asked to orally report on your experiences after each port. This is a good opportunity to raise your grade. Students should attend every class having done the reading and prepared for a meaningful discussion of the material. Students are also expected to maintain a respectful learning environment. This includes turning off all distracting electronic devices.

Attendance in all Semester at Sea® classes, including the Field Class, is mandatory. Students must inform their instructors prior to any unanticipated absence and take the initiative to make up missed work in a timely fashion. Instructors must make reasonable efforts to enable students to make up work which must be accomplished under the instructor's supervision (e.g., examinations, laboratories). In the event of a conflict in regard to this policy, individuals may appeal using established CSU procedures.

LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS

Semester at Sea® provides academic accommodations for students with diagnosed learning disabilities, in accordance with ADA guidelines. Students who will need accommodations in a class, should contact ISE to discuss their individual needs. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation.

A letter from students' home institutions verifying the accommodations received on their home campuses (dated within the last three years) is required before any accommodation is provided on the ship. Students must submit verification of accommodations to academic@isevoyages.org as soon as possible, but no later than two months prior to the voyage. More details can be found within the Course Registration Packet, as posted to the [Courses and Field Classes page](#) no later than one month prior to registration.

STUDENT CONDUCT CODE

The foundation of a university is truth and knowledge, each of which relies in a fundamental manner upon academic integrity and is diminished significantly by academic misconduct. Academic integrity is conceptualized as doing and taking credit for one's own work. A

pervasive attitude promoting academic integrity enhances the sense of community and adds value to the educational process. All within the University are affected by the cooperative commitment to academic integrity. All Semester at Sea® courses adhere to this Academic Integrity Policy and Student Conduct Code.

Depending on the nature of the assignment or exam, the faculty member may require a written declaration of the following honor pledge: "I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment."

RESERVE BOOKS FOR THE LIBRARY

AUTHOR: Brian K. Pennington (Editor)
BOOK TITLE: *Teaching Religion and Violence (AAR Teaching Religious Studies)*
VOLUME: First Edition
DATE: 2012
PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press

AUTHORS: Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson (Editors)
BOOK TITLE: *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence (Oxford Handbooks)*
VOLUME: First Edition
DATE: November 1, 2015 (Reprint edition)
PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press

FILMS

None

ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS (Available via Ship Intranet)

AUTHOR: Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu
BOOK TITLE: *The Buddha's Teachings*
VOLUME: First Edition
DATE: 2016
PUBLISHER: Metta Forest Monastery

AUTHOR: Brian Daizen Victoria
BOOK TITLE: *Zen at War*
VOLUME: Second Edition
DATE: 2006
PUBLISHER: Rowman & Littlefield

AUTHOR: Brian Daizen Victoria
BOOK TITLE: *Zen Terror in Prewar Japan: Portrait of an Assassin*
DATE: February 14, 2020

PUBLISHER: Rowman & Littlefield

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

None