

Introduction to World Religions Course Syllabus
Dr. Aaron M. Gale

Course Information:

RELG 102-MAY

May 8-26

NO classroom meetings

Maymester 2023

NO Prerequisite Required

Instructor Information:

Office: 144 Arnold Hall

Hours: W 9-12; and by
appointment

E-mail address:

Aaron.Gale@mail.wvu.edu

Phone: 304-293-7733

Required Course Texts:

1. Gale, Aaron M. *Introduction to World Religions: A Clear Path*. ISBN 9781792499906 through Kendall Hunt Publishing. This is our textbook for the course; however, it is an electronic version that requires an access code and online registration.

NOTE: You will need to use your WVU MIX email address to register for the access code. Please do not use any other email address.

Be sure that you register as a student in the RELG 102-MAY section only!

Webcom version available through the bookstore or directly through Kendall Hunt Publishing at:

<https://he.kendallhunt.com/gale>

I do not troubleshoot technical issues with the online book; I am merely the author. If you have trouble accessing the course materials please contact Kendall Hunt Publishing directly at:

websupport@kendallhunt.com. Try also servicedesk@kendallhunt.com

Course Communication:

Please check your university MIX email accounts on a daily basis for important course-related news. This is the primary method I will use to contact the class.

Course Objectives/Expected Learning Outcomes/ GEF and GEC Objectives:

This 3-week course introduces students to five of the most widely recognized religions in the world today: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Despite some commonalities, each religion is unique regarding its history and practice. Therefore, the goals of this course are primarily twofold: 1. to provide students with an understanding of how each religion evolved historically and spiritually 2. to explore the contemporary practice of each religion. In addition, we will study some of the interactions that have taken place among the religions. This will allow students to place two or more religions side-by-side and examine their similarities/differences. Ultimately, then, students will learn the basic tenets of each faith in order that they may gain the ability to discuss each religion and its corresponding history, practice, and relationship to other faiths.

As a part of the WVU General Education Foundations, the course addresses the following objective: objective 7, global studies and diversity. As part of the GEC, the course fulfills objective 3, the past and its traditions and objective 9, non-Western traditions. Students will also be expected to demonstrate critical thinking and communicate effectively.

NOTE: This course only runs for 3 weeks, so the pace of the class is very brisk. Therefore, it is important to keep up with the reading, writing, and quiz assignments. That is the reason why I assign end due dates for units, rather than a “work-at-your-own-pace” methodology. ALL assignments are completed online, through eCampus and email, and the readings are found using the online textbook in the Kendall Hunt Webcom system.

Methodology/Format:

This course will utilize many means of study including historical, sociological, and theological methodologies. The primary source of information will be my textbook, which is listed above. The textbook contains information on the various world traditions, and contains pictures (mostly from my own collection), links to videos, study tools such as flashcards, timelines, etc. I may also post my Power Point lectures that are used in my classroom editions of the course.

Course Policies:

1. Academic Integrity Statement- The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, instructors will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of their courses. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University Academic Standards Policy at:
<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification>

Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see your instructor before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

2. Student Evaluation of Instruction Statement- Effective teaching is a primary mission of West Virginia University. Student evaluation of instruction provides the university and the instructor with feedback about your experiences in the course for review and course improvement. Your participation in the evaluation of course instruction is both strongly encouraged and highly valued. Results are strictly confidential, anonymous, and not available to the instructor until after final grades are released by Admissions and Records. Information about how you can complete this evaluation will be provided by your instructor.

West Virginia University Policies:

1. **Campus Safety Statement**-The WVU Police are committed to creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff. Part of this mission includes educating the campus community on how to respond to potential campus threats, such as the threat of an active shooter on campus or other suspicious behaviors. Fortunately, WVU Police offer training - both online and in-person - on how to handle a variety of campus safety scenarios. All students are encouraged to visit the WVU Police (<https://police.wvu.edu/>) webpage, in particular the content under the Active Shooter (<https://police.wvu.edu/training>) training program. Students are also encouraged to report any suspicious behaviors on campus using the Report a Threat (<https://police.wvu.edu/emergency-management/threat-assessment>) portion of the webpage. Additional materials on campus safety prepared by WVU Police, including special safety tips and training, will also be provided on our eCampus page. [adopted 10-2-17]
2. **Sexual Misconduct Statement**-West Virginia University does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence [BOG Rule 1.6]. It is important for you to know that there are resources available if you or someone you know needs assistance. You may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff; keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator (<https://titleix.wvu.edu/staff>)

If you want to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from the Carruth Center at: 304-293-9355 or 304-293-4431 (24-hour hotline), and locally within the community at the Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center (RDVIC) at 304- 292-5100 or 304-292-4431 (24-hour hotline).

For students at WVU-Beckley, contact the Women's Resource Center at 304-255-1585 (toll free at 1-888-825-7836) or REACH at 304-340-3676. For students at WVU-Keyser, contact the WVU-Keyser Psychological Services Center at 304-788-6976, and locally in Keyser, the Family Crisis Center, 304-788-6061 or 1-800-698-1240 (24-hour hotline).

For more information, please consult WVU's Title IX Office at:

<https://titleix.wvu.edu/resources-offices>

3. **Inclusivity Statement**-The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in your classes, please advise your instructors and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services at

<https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>

More information is available at the Division of Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion and at:

<https://diversity.wvu.edu/>

4. Incomplete Policy-The WVU Catalog contains the full Incomplete Policy-to go:

<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/enrollmentandregistration/#gradestext>

5. Mental Health Statement-Mental health concerns or stressful events can adversely affect your academic performance and social relationships. WVU offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns that you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at the Carruth Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CCCPS) website: <https://carruth.wvu.edu/>.

If you are in need of crisis services, call the CCCPS main number 24/7: (304) 293-4431.

Crisis services are also available through text: Text WVU to 741741 for support 24/7 from a trained Crisis Counselor.

Grades/Grading:

Exams-There will be five timed quizzes (units 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) worth 30 points each (150 points total) respectively. **ALL QUIZZES WILL BE TAKEN IN ECAMPUS.** There is NO cumulative final exam, just the final unit exam that will be on Friday, May 26, of the last week of class. Exam questions will consist of multiple-choice and true/false questions.

Short Response Papers-For Units 1-2 (together), 3, 4, and 5 (separately) I will assign short papers (at least one full page typed, double-spaced, using 12 font) that respond to a particular question regarding the specific unit. Each paper will be worth 10 points, for a total of 40 points (+ 10 for the last paper for a total of 50 points; see below). In these four papers I want you to formulate a thoughtful and complete response to the week's question. Spelling and grammar count. I have outlined a more complete grading scale below. **Due to the short time of the course, I will give everyone a 10 for the last paper on Unit 6, so you do NOT need to write a paper for it.**

Papers can be turned in electronically via email to me in Word or PDF (NO Google Docs, please) format by midnight on the assigned date. I will send a return email acknowledging that I have received the paper. Late papers will be penalized 3 points per day up to a maximum of 9 points.

Paper Grading Rubric:

An A paper (9-10 points) is an outstanding essay which fulfills the entire assignment and reflects a perceptive and thoughtful response. It is well-organized and well written, with

excellent development of its ideas, and reflects the writer's command of appropriate rhetorical strategies. The writer is clearly in control of the standard conventions of American prose. The paper clearly addresses all items contained in the week's question.

A B paper (8 points) is a very good essay that fulfills the assignment and shows evidence of clear thought and good planning. It is well organized with good supporting details. The writing is fluent, and there are only minor errors in the mechanics of writing which do not interfere with reading the essay.

A C paper (7 points) is a satisfactory essay which fulfills most of the assignment and is adequately developed. The writing is clear and coherent with relatively few errors in usage and mechanics, but the writer fails to demonstrate any particular strength which would distinguish the essay from an above-average one. Some points of the week's question may not be fully addressed.

A D paper (6 points) is a below-average essay which fulfills a portion of the assignment but exhibits major problems in writing. It may have difficulty with the presentation of ideas, weak organization, poor development of ideas, or inappropriate diction, poor spelling, or be marred by enough errors in the mechanics of writing to seriously distract the reader. In sum, the assignment does not adequately address the week's question.

An F paper (5 and below) is an essay that relates to the topic but is so poorly presented that it fails to fulfill the week's assignment. It fails to present its basic ideas, either because of poor organization and lack of clarity or because the writing reflects a lack of control over the basic conventions of standard American usage. Such an essay may have sentence boundary problems, poor use of idiom, inappropriate diction (words used incorrectly), agreement errors, or verb tense problems. In sum, the week's question is not addressed well at all.

Grades will be calculated based upon one's percentage of total points earned (total points = 200):

A = 90-100% (180 points and above) B = 80-89.9% (160-179 points)

C = 70-79.9% (140-159 points) D = 60-69.9% (120-139 points)

F = below 60% (under 120 points)

There is no grade curve nor are there any extra credit points.

Course Schedule and Readings:

UNIT 1: ROOTS OF WESTERN RELIGIONS

<u>WEEK 1</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>READINGS</u>
May 8-12	Course Introduction Roots of Western Religions Did ancient religions serve to influence later monotheistic faiths?	Kendall Hunt, Unit 1

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10-LAST DAY TO DROP THIS COURSE WITHOUT A "W"

NO QUIZ ON UNIT 1, BUT YOU WILL NEED TO STUDY IT FOR YOUR PAPERS

UNIT 2: JUDAISM

TOPIC

The History and Practice of Judaism

READINGS

Kendall Hunt, Unit 2

FRIDAY, MAY 12- 40 MINUTE UNIT 2 QUIZ WORTH 30 POINTS

FRIDAY, MAY 12-RESPONSE PAPER 1 DUE BY MIDNIGHT: 10 POINTS

Response question 1 (Units 1 and 2): Based upon the course readings so far, do you feel that ancient religions do indeed "borrow" from each other? Please explain your answer. In particular, do you feel Judaism has benefited at all from its exposure to many other foreign cultures (the Persians, Greeks, Romans, etc.)? In the course of your answer, please discuss at least 2 definitive concepts related to Judaism that you feel either did/did not come at least in part from another culture.

UNIT 3: CHRISTIANITY

WEEK 2

May 15-19

TOPIC

The History and Practice of Christianity

READINGS

Kendall Hunt, Unit 3

Response question 2 (Unit 3): First, what unique concept within Christianity do you find most appealing? How did Christianity distinguish itself from Judaism as time passed? Think of concepts discussed in the book like Original Sin, the divinity of Jesus, etc. Explain your answer. Also, explain which two Sacraments you find most interesting and why.

UNIT 4: ISLAM

TOPIC

The History and Practice of Islam

READINGS

Kendall Hunt, Unit 4

Response Question 3 (Unit 4): Now that you have read the course notes on Islam, do you feel that the religion is presented accurately in the media (radio, TV, internet, social media)? In other words, has the media presented a fair picture of Islam and Muslims? Explain your answers. What concepts related to Islam (the Five Pillars, ethics, God, Jesus, etc.) in particular are/are not presented fairly? Try to discuss at least two aspects of Islam in the course of your answers.

FRIDAY, MAY 19-40 MINUTE UNIT 3 AND 4 QUIZZES DUE- WORTH 30 POINTS EACH

FRIDAY, MAY 19-RESPONSE PAPERS 2 AND 3 (Units 3 and 4) DUE:10 POINTS

FRIDAY, MAY 19-LAST DAY TO DROP THE COURSE WITH A GRADE OF "W"

UNIT 5: HINDUISM

WEEK 3

May 22-26

TOPIC

The History and Practice of Hinduism
Changing gears: Asian Religions

READINGS

Kendall Hunt, Unit 5

Response Question 4 (Unit 5): Which two of the following Hindu concepts discussed in the textbook do you feel are the most different to understand? Choose from karma, samsara, Brahman, atman/jiva, and moksha. What makes the two concepts so different from what we studied so far? Do you feel Hinduism is the most difficult religion we've studied so far? Why? Explain your answer.

UNIT 6: BUDDHISM

TOPIC

The History and Practice of Buddhism
From India comes a different tradition

READINGS

Kendall Hunt, Unit 6

FRIDAY, MAY 26-40 MINUTE UNIT 5 AND 6 QUIZZES WORTH 30 POINTS

FRIDAY, MAY 26-RESPONSE PAPER 4 (Unit 5) DUE: 10 POINTS

END OF COURSE...