

# Introduction to World Religions

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(please email to schedule)

## Course Description:

This course is both an introduction to World Religions and an introduction to the academic study of those religions. We will explore the history and development of religions around the world, and examine how those traditions are practiced today in a variety of contexts.

## Course Objectives:

- Gain a basic understanding of the major world religions.
- Explore how different situations, times, and places impact the development and practice of religion.
- Examine themes and ideas which may impact the practice of religions worldwide.
- Become aware of the diversity of religious ideas and practices in the world today.
- Engage critically with the ideas and issues in Religious Studies as a discipline.

## Required Texts:

- Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions* (10th ed [eText](#))
- Cunningham & Kelsey, *The Sacred Quest* (6th ed [eText](#))
- Articles/websites as assigned.
- Streaming videos as assigned. You will need a computer and Internet connection capable of streaming.

## Evaluation:

### Syllabus Quiz

Found directly below requirements and in the first "content" folder, this MUST be completed before you submit any other work.

### Discussion Board Papers and Responses

30% of overall grade: graded credit/no credit: 300 points possible

For each section of reading in the course, there is a prompt to answer. **You must complete three of the six discussion boards this semester**; there is no extra credit or makeup credit for submitting additional papers or responses. Because you only need to complete three of the six DBs, any late posts incur a 20%/day penalty.

Your two-paragraph (300-400 words, total) answers will be due on the discussion board no later than the date listed in the schedule. I am referring to these as short papers to distinguish them from your responses, below.

You must also respond to two other papers in that section, at one paragraph per response (two paragraphs total; 150-200 words each).

You should complete the DB and responses for the same section, or things get really, really messy with this many people!!

### **Expectations and Grading: Chapter Papers (50 points per section)**

- These should be two well-developed paragraphs, with clear points (and examples, where appropriate). See the OWL link (below) for additional tips on paragraph writing.
- Use appropriate language, spelling, and grammar. Discussion board posts are likely to be less structured in language than a traditional paper, but need to be clearly written. Text abbreviations are not acceptable.
- Some general things to consider when creating a response:
  - Why is this question important for understanding the ideas in the section?
  - How do you think this question or concept is understood (or misunderstood) in daily life?
  - What still needs clarification, and why?
- Papers should draw directly on the material for the section, including readings and videos.
- Your answer to the prompt question is your thesis (or argument) for the paper. After stating your thesis, you need to provide support for that answer.
  - Direct quotes should use both quotations and page numbers.
    - “Christianity is important (55).”
  - If you are summarizing ideas from the text you should still use page number/s at the end of your summary.
    - On pages 55-59, Fisher argues that Christianity is important.
    - Fisher argues that Christianity is important (55-59).
  - When using material from the videos, you can use the name of the person/people speaking as citation.
- Also, remember the Theology/Religious Studies distinction: we are in a Religious Studies course, and thinking about things from an historical perspective, rather than a faith-based lens, will definitely help you answer the questions!

**Accurately citing the material is absolutely key, here. Why? Because you're trying to support your answer to the question using our material, and very, very little of this would be considered "common knowledge."**

### **Expectations for Responses (25 points each; 50 points per section total)**

- Show critical engagement, but not criticism. This is not intended as a place for you to critique or grade each others' responses. If you don't feel a point is clear, focus on adding to the point to make it clearer. (For example: If you were having a discussion with someone, would you say "you could use an example for that point"? Likely not: you'd probably say "oh, do you mean like..." and give one of your own.
- "No credit" responses generally fall into one of these categories:
  - Response is too short, underdeveloped, or off-topic.
  - Response levels criticism at the question (or at another post) rather than engaging in discussion. Please note: personal attacks of any kind will result in a zero for the discussion, regardless of any other/additional posts. You will not be able to replace the zero with additional credit.
  - Response "grades" or evaluates another student, rather than adding to discussion.
  - Response proselytizes, or otherwise shuts down discussion.
  - Response repeats or rehashes a previous answer.

Purdue's OWL website is very useful for all types of writing assignments. Their "paragraph" page is at: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/academic\\_writing/paragraphs\\_and\\_paragraphing/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/paragraphs_and_paragraphing/index.html) (Links to an external site.).

## Section Tests

70% of grade: graded on a standard percentage scale: 700 points possible

In each section, you will have a multiple choice test. The number of questions per section may vary, but the tests are *always* worth the same, percentage-wise.

I will drop your lowest grade on the tests. This does mean that make-up tests will rarely be allowed, and only under extreme circumstances and may incur a 20%/day penalty. If you miss a test, it will count as a zero but will automatically drop (so long as you don't have more than one zero on a test!)

## Wrap-up Assignment

Extra Credit Option: up to 2% added to your final grade.

Find at least one recent news article (within the last year) related to one of the *Sacred Quest* topics (Appearance of the Sacred, Ritual, etc.), post the link, and write a two-paragraph response addressing the connections you see between the article and the chapter topic. You might not find something that perfectly fits the topic for section, but it should somehow develop or reflect a key point.

**Grading Scale:** Please note, professors at WVU are free to assign + and - grades on STAR, even though the standard system calculates those grades simply as 4.0, 3.0, 2.0, etc. Other systems (for example, graduate schools) may calculate grades differently than WVU.

93 - 100	930 - 1000 points	A
90 - 92.9	900 - 929 points	A-
87 - 89.9	870 - 899 points	B+
83 - 86.9	830 - 869 points	B
80 - 82.9	800 - 829 points	B-
77 - 79.9	770 - 799 points	C+
73 - 76.9	730 - 769 points	C
70 - 72.9	700 - 729 points	C-
67 - 69.9	670 - 699 points	D+
60 - 66.9	600 - 669 points	D
59.9 and below	0 - 599 points	F

### Weight/Distribution of Course Points:

Exams: 700 points (70% of grade)

Discussions: 300 points (30% of grade)

University Policies can be found here: <https://tlcommons.wvu.edu/syllabus-policies-and-statements>

## Schedule:

To make everything both easier to remember *and* somewhat flexible, all requirements for the sections will be due at **11:59pm** (Morgantown Time) on the dates given.

This class has a few different versions, so in the event of any conflicting information, the due dates below are the accurate dates.

In Readings:

- LV = Fisher, Living Religions A Brief Introduction
- SQ = Sacred Quest

Section	Readings	Requirements
Welcome	Syllabus	Syllabus Quiz
One: Studying Religions	SQ Ch. 1 - Toward a Definition of Religion LV - Ch.1 "Religious Responses"	Discussion Board Post Discussion Board Responses Section Test
Two: Judaism	SQ Ch. 2 - Nature of the Sacred LV - Judaism	Discussion Board Post Discussion Board Responses Section Test
Three: Christianity	SQ Ch. 3 - Appearance of the Sacred LV - Christianity	Discussion Board Post Discussion Board Responses Section Test
Four: Islam	SQ Ch. 4 - Language of the Sacred LV - Islam	Discussion Board Post Discussion Board Responses Section Test
Five: Hinduism	SQ Ch. 5 - Ritual LV - Hinduism	Discussion Board Post Discussion Board Responses Section Test
Six: Buddhism	(no SQ reading) LV - Buddhism	Discussion Board Post Discussion Board Responses Section Test Extra Credit (wrap up assignment)