

# MAJOR RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD



PHI 203

# CLASS OVERVIEW

## INSTRUCTOR

Taylor R. Genovese, Ph.D.

(he/him/his)

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Office: Hudson Hall 408M

Office Hours: Mondays: 10:00am–12:00pm

Tuesdays: 9:00am–10:00am

Thursdays: 9:00am–10:00am

**Note on communication:** I will make every effort to respond to emails within 24 hours. However, please note that I only check and respond to email between 8am and 5pm, Monday through Friday.

## DETAILED COURSE INFORMATION

PHI 203 – Major Religions of the World

CRN #: 2183

3 credit hours / Hybrid

Instructional Hours: 2.5 per week

Minimum Expected Hours Out-of-Class: 5 per week

## MEETING INFORMATION

Spring 2025

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00pm–3:15pm

SUNY – Dutchess Community College

Hudson Hall 409



# COURSE INFORMATION

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

An exploration of the cultural expressions and spiritual values of the world's great religions. The course aims at extending and deepening the student's awareness of the doctrine, mythology, symbolism and ritual at the heart of each religion. Among those religions studied will be Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

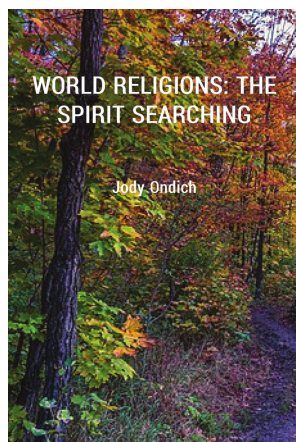
## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Identify and analyze the main elements of the origins and historical development of the major religions of the world.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of religious experience, the sacred, Ultimate/Absolute Reality, life after death, and the moral codes in the world's religious traditions.
3. Identify the rituals, myths, symbols, and sacred literature that both shape and inform the world's major religions.
4. Compare and contrast the doctrines of the major world religions, and the religions' relationship to each other.
5. Demonstrate active and critical reading skills through the analysis of various religious scriptures.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

We will be using a textbook from the Open Textbook Library, a free, open-source initiative. The textbook can be downloaded as an ebook, or read online [here](#). A PDF version is available on Brightspace. Along with the textbook, there will be several PDF readings (also available on Brightspace). Additionally, there are several films that must be watched in this course. You may have to rent them if you're unable to find them in the library or on a streaming service.



Title: World Religions: The Spirit Searching  
Year: 2021  
Author: Jody Ondich  
Publisher: Open Textbook Library  
Cost: Free; available on Brightspace and [here](#).

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Exams (30%) There will be a total of two exams: a midterm and a final. Exams are taken on Brightspace. Each exam is worth 15% of your grade and will mainly cover the material presented in each half of the semester, although students will be expected to remember some concepts and terms from all parts of the course for the final. If you miss an exam without it being an excused absence, you will receive a 0 for that exam.
2. Ethnography of a Religious Encounter (25%) This project has three purposes: (1) to expose you to a religion other than the one you may identify with; (2) to demonstrate your ability to apply principles learned in class to a specific situation; and (3) to give you some ethnographic field experience. You will choose a religion or spiritual movement to study, attend a ritual/service/meeting conducted by the religious community you have selected, and write a 1200–1500 word paper describing and interpreting specific aspects of what you witnessed. This project will be turned in incrementally throughout the semester and the specific requirements for this project will be explained in greater detail during class. You will also have the optional opportunity to give a 10–15 minute presentation of your ethnography for extra credit.
3. Film Responses (15%) Throughout the semester, instead of meeting face-to-face, you will have to watch a film outside of class. After watching the film, you will have to respond to a question on Brightspace that asks you to relate the plot of the film to religious ideas we are discussing in the class. Film responses will be due on Sundays at 11:59pm.

*For fellow Letterboxd users, the films are on this list: [https://boxd.it/BaFZo\\$UOCqVdeemke9VFwT](https://boxd.it/BaFZo$UOCqVdeemke9VFwT)*

4. Quizzes (10%) There will be several multiple-choice quizzes throughout the semester: a syllabus quiz and three content quizzes. All quizzes are taken on Brightspace. These will cover material from readings, lectures, and in-class discussions. If you do not take the quiz before the due date, you will receive a 0 on that quiz.
5. Participation (20%) All students are expected to arrive to class on time having read assigned readings ahead of our meeting and attend the entirety of class sessions. Each class (except for exam days), we'll do some kind of in-class assignment. This might come in the form of group activities, a pop quiz, free writing, or something else. The in-class assignment cannot be made up (except in the case of an excused absence). These participation assignments are given a point value of 10, 8, or 5 out of 10 depending on the quality of the answers.

# COURSE POLICIES

## GRADING POLICY

As a general rule, late assignments are not accepted. However, if an extenuating, documentable circumstance has prevented you from turning in an assignment on-time, you may lose up to a letter grade every 24 hours that the assignment is late. No late assignments will be accepted in the last two weeks of class meetings. Late assignments from the first half of the semester will only be accepted prior to the Midterm Exam.

Grading Scheme

Grade	Percentage	Rubric
A	(95–100)	Work exceeds expectations and exhibits exceptional clarity, insight, or brilliance.
A-	(90–94)	Work shows only the most minor errors or omissions.
B+	(87–89)	Work has a few but major flaws, such as a misinterpretation, failure to address an important issue, triviality, glossing over difficulties, weak argument(s), lack of clarity or coherence. Plus/minus grading will be used accordingly.
B	(83–86)	
B-	(80–82)	
C+	(77–79)	Work has a number of major flaws but still displays a broadly correct understanding of the material. Plus/minus grading will be used accordingly.
C	(73–76)	
C-	(70–72)	
D+	(67–69)	Work shows that the student has not understood a significant portion of the material (or is not able to convey such understanding), but is still more right than wrong. Plus grading will be used accordingly.
D	(60–66)	
F	(0–59)	Work exhibits poor structure, an entire lack of theme or focus, a wholly inadequate understanding of the material, or is plagiarized.

Once assignments are graded, you should promptly go over them to catch possible errors—in addition to incorrect point calculations or disputable evaluation of answers. **It is your responsibility to detect such errors and bring them to my attention within one week after they are graded.** Do not wait until the end of the term to address potential errors in grading as it may be too late to adjust the grade. Grades will be updated regularly on Brightspace.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Dutchess Community College is committed to the principles of honesty, integrity, and ethical behavior. It is expected that students will recognize these values and adhere to all aspects of student conduct and academic honesty inside and outside of the classroom.

Academic dishonesty in any form is regarded by the College as a breach of academic ethics and may result in disciplinary action.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Cheating on examinations
- Plagiarism, the representation of another's ideas or writing as one's own. Examples include:
  - presenting all or part of another person's published work as something one has written;
  - paraphrasing or summarizing another's writing without proper acknowledgement (citation);
  - representing another's artistic or technical work or creation as one's own.
- Willingly collaborating with others in any of the above actions which result(s) in work being submitted which is not the student's own.
- Submitting work containing any content that was generated by an Artificial Intelligence bot or website when not explicitly directed to do so by the instructor.
- Stealing examinations, taking electronic images, falsifying academic records and other such offenses.
- Knowingly permitting another student to use one's work or cheat from one's examination.
- Submitting work previously presented in another course without permission of instructor.
- Unauthorized duplication of computer software.
- Unauthorized use of copyrighted or published material.

If, based on substantial evidence, an instructor deems that a student is responsible for a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy, the instructor may take the following actions:

1. The instructor may require that the student repeat the assignment or examination, or
2. The instructor may give the student a failing grade for the assignment or examination, or
3. The instructor may give the student a failing grade for the course.

As an institution of higher education, it is incumbent on the College to ensure that students understand and uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and that there be accountability in cases where students repeatedly violate those principles. In order to build an intellectual culture of academic integrity and ensure that students learn appropriate behavior in their academic endeavors, faculty and staff who judge that a student intentionally violates the Academic Integrity Policy shall report said violation to the Office of Instruction and Learning.

Students' right to privacy will be upheld, and all students shall have the right to appeal any action that results from this process.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance and participation is required for this course. Students are responsible for managing the usual range of events that life throws at all of us. That said, I understand that some events are out of our control—especially in our era of multiple concurrent pandemics and anthropogenic climate catastrophes—so unless it becomes habitual, I will try and work with you to make up course requirements. That said, my policy for missed classes is that students who are absent are responsible for finding out **from their classmates** what they have missed. I do not post or share slides or notes. As a courtesy, if you know you have to miss a class period, please let me know as far ahead of time as possible.

# IN-CLASS POLICIES

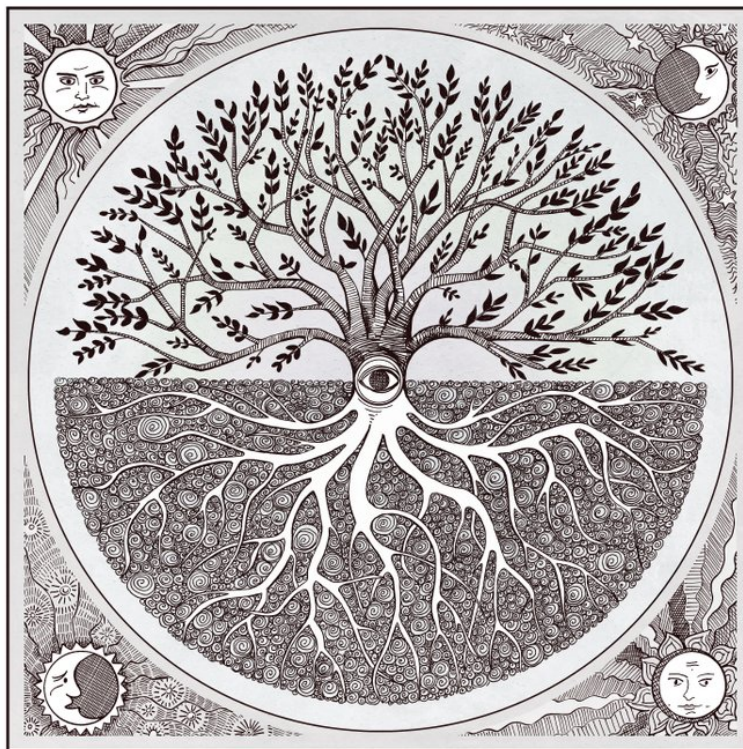
Please refrain from comments and side conversations during class time—even whispering in the back of the room can bother both myself and your fellow students. If you have a question or a comment, please direct it to me and we can either open a discussion or return to it at a later time.

Please silence all electronic devices while you are in class. I do allow computers **for note-taking purposes only**. If you begin using your computer/device for anything other than note-taking or in-class activities, you will be asked to put it away. Repeated violations may result in you being required to leave class and you will lose attendance/participation points for the day.

During class, please do not engage in any of the following (or similarly distracting) activities: sleeping, text messaging, tweeting, working on assignments for another class, putting on make-up, combing hair, making TikToks, or any other activities unrelated to the matter at hand in our classroom. If you must engage in any of these activities, please leave the classroom. However, if leaving the classroom becomes a disruptive pattern, you may lose your attendance points for the day.

# SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

I anticipate that we will follow the course outline as presented at the end of this syllabus, but I may make adjustments based on your interests and the interests of your fellow classmates. Be sure to check with a classmate after an absence to see if assignments have changed. I may also change the basis for the course grade; if I do so, I will inform you in-person and through Brightspace. Remaining in the course after reading this syllabus will signal that you accept the possibility of changes as well as the responsibility for making yourself aware of them.



# STUDENT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

## ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Dutchess Community College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must first register with the Office of Accommodative Services (OAS) to verify their eligibility. IEPs from high school do not carry over to college. After documentation review and meeting with the student, OAS staff will provide eligible students with accommodation letters for their professors. Students must obtain a new letter each semester and discuss their accommodation plan with their instructors as soon as possible to ensure timely accommodations. [The Office of Accommodative Services](#) is located in the Orcutt Student Services Building, Room 103, phone number (845) 431-8055.

## TITLE IX

Dutchess Community College is committed to maintaining a positive campus climate and will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment including sexual assault, sexual violence, and sexual misconduct. It is the responsibility and obligation of all members of the College community to report and/or to assist others in reporting incidents of sexual harassment.

Please direct all inquiries and reports related to sexual harassment and sexual violence to:

Title IX Coordinator: [TitleIX@sunydutchess.edu](mailto:TitleIX@sunydutchess.edu).

For information regarding the DCC sexual harassment and sexual violence policy and resources go to DCC's [Title IX page](#).

For anonymous reports go to [Share at DCC](#).

# COURSE OUTLINE

(Note: this outline may change as the semester progresses. I will announce all changes in class and on Brightspace.)

## Readings Key:

[WR] = *World Religions: The Spirit Searching*

[PDF] = PDF reading on Brightspace in the Readings folder under Content (by author's last name)

Black = Required reading

Red = Optional reading; skim at the very least

Class Meeting	Topic / Readings	What's Due?
<sup>T</sup> January 21	<u>Introduction to the Course</u> No Reading	
<sup>R</sup> January 23	<u>The Academic Study of Religion</u> [PDF] Laura Ammon, "The Reckoning of Religious Studies and Colonialism."	
<sup>T</sup> January 28	<u>Experimental Philosophy</u> [PDF] Walter Feinberg, "Philosophical Ethnography: or, How Philosophy and Ethnography Can Live Together in the World of Educational Research."	
<sup>R</sup> January 30	<u>Symbols and Symbolism</u> [PDF] Clifford Geertz, "Ethos, World-View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols." [PDF] Horace Miner, "Body Ritual among the Nacirema."	Syllabus Quiz due 2/2 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> February 4	<u>Ancient Mediterranean Religions</u> [PDF] Fritz Graf, "What Is Ancient Mediterranean Religion?" from <i>Ancient Religions</i> [PDF] Wallace Budge (translator), Chapters 17–63 from the <i>Egyptian Book of the Dead</i>	
<sup>R</sup> February 6	<u>Hinduism</u> [WR] Chapter 10: Hinduism p. 121–139 [PDF] Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya, "Īśā Vāsyopaniṣad."	
<sup>T</sup> February 11	<u>Buddhism</u> [WR] Chapter 8: Buddhism p. 100–112 [PDF] Bhikkhu Sujato (translator), "The Longer Discourse on Mindfulness Meditation."	
<sup>R</sup> February 13	<u>Jainism</u> [WR] Chapter 14: Jainism p. 164–182 [PDF] Ācārya Umāsvāmī, "The Five Vows."	Quiz #1 due 2/16 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> February 18	<b>NO CLASS — MONDAY MAKE-UP</b>	

Class Meeting	Topic / Readings	What's Due?
<sup>R</sup> February 20	<u>Sikhism</u> [WR] Chapter 12: Sikhism p. 144–159 [PDF] Teja Singh (translator), "Japji Sahib."	Field Site Proposal due 2/23 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> February 25	<u>Daoism</u> [WR] Chapter 4: Daoism p. 47–79 [PDF] Lao Tsu, <i>Tao Te Ching</i>	
<sup>R</sup> February 27	<b>NO CLASS MEETING</b> <b>Watch <i>The Fountain</i> (2006)</b>	Film Response #1 due 3/2 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> March 4	<u>Confucian Thought</u> [WR] Chapter 6: Confucian Thought p. 84–96 [PDF] Burton Watson (translator), Book 1, 4, and 5 from <i>The Analects of Confucius</i>	
<sup>R</sup> March 6	<u>Shintō</u> [PDF] Sokyo Ono, "The Kami Way" from <i>Shinto: The Kami Way</i> [PDF] Donald L. Philippi (translator), Preface and Book One from <i>Kojiki</i>	
<sup>T</sup> March 11	<u>Midterm Review</u> Catch up on readings	
<sup>R</sup> March 13	<b>Midterm Exam</b> Exam is taken on Brightspace and you must take it in a single 75-minute session. The exam will be available from Tuesday (3/11) at 5:00pm until Thursday (3/13) at 5:00pm.	
<sup>T</sup> March 18	<b>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</b>	
<sup>R</sup> March 20		
<sup>T</sup> March 25	<u>Zoroastrianism</u> [PDF] Jenny Rose, "Zoroastrians Present and Past" from <i>Zoroastrianism: An Introduction</i> [PDF] Irach Taraporewala (translator), <i>Gathas of Zarathushtra</i>	
<sup>R</sup> March 27	<u>Judaism</u> [WR] Chapter 16: Judaism p. 193–218 [PDF] Exodus 15-20	Field Site Paper due 3/30 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> April 1	<u>Christianity</u> [WR] Chapter 18: Christianity p. 222–248 [PDF] Matthew 5-7; 27-28	
<sup>R</sup> April 3	<u>Islam</u> [WR] Chapter 20: Islam p. 253–272 [PDF] Al-An'ām	Quiz #2 due 4/6 @ 11:59pm

Class Meeting	Topic / Readings	What's Due?
<sup>T</sup> April 8	<u>Bahá'í Faith</u> [WR] Chapter 22: Baha'i p. 277–296 [PDF] <i>Bahá'u'lláh, Kitáb-i-Íqán</i>	
<sup>R</sup> April 10	<u>African Traditional Religions</u> [PDF] Aloysius Muzzanganda Lugira, "Introduction: Africa and Its People" and "African Religion Past, Present, and Future" from <i>African Traditional Religion</i>	
<sup>T</sup> April 15	<u>Indigenous North American Religions</u> [PDF] Brennan Keegan, "Contemporary Native American and Indigenous Religions: State of the field."	
<sup>R</sup> April 17	<u>Indigenous South American Religions</u> [PDF] Esther Jean Langdon, "New Perspectives of Shamanism in Brazil: Shamanisms and Neo-Shamanisms as Dialogical Categories."	Field Notes Check due 4/20 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> April 22	<b>NO CLASS MEETING</b> <b>Watch <i>Embrace of the Serpent</i> (2015)</b>	Film Response #2 due 4/27 @ 11:59pm
<sup>R</sup> April 24	<u>Spiritualism, Neopaganism, and Syncretic Religions</u> [PDF] Michael F. Brown, "The New Age and Related Forms of Contemporary Spirituality" from <i>Religion and Culture</i>	Quiz #3 due 4/27 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> April 29	<u>New Religious Movements</u> [PDF] Joseph Laycock, "What Are New Religious Movements?" from <i>New Religious Movements: The Basics</i>	Last Day to Sign Up For Extra Credit Presentation
<sup>R</sup> May 1	<b>NO CLASS MEETING</b> <b>Watch <i>First Reformed</i> (2017)</b>	Film Response #3 due 5/4 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> May 6	<u>Final Exam Review</u> Catch up on readings & <u>Student Presentations</u> Optional extra-credit presentations of ethnographies.	Final Ethnography Paper due 5/11 @ 11:59pm
<sup>R</sup> May 8	<b>Final Exam</b> Exam is taken on Brightspace and you must take it in a single 2.5 hour session. The exam will be available from Wednesday (5/7) at noon until 5:00pm on Tuesday (5/13).	
<sup>T</sup> May 13		