

GLOBAL RELIGIONS



WHY STUDY RELIGION?

This course will introduce you to the academic study of religion — scholarly engagement with practices, communities, ways of telling time and making meaning, texts, beliefs, and commitments. We will focus on three course goals: understanding religion's multiple meanings, exploring how people live their religions, and analyzing how creativity and conflict help us better understand this phenomenon.

These discussions will help you to develop a nuanced understanding of the ways religion shapes and is shaped by culture(s); apply core concepts in humanities scholarship to the study of religion; and critically engage scholarly and confessional sources, including sermons, interviews, creative nonfiction, poetry, and sacred literature.



CLASS FORMAT

COVID19 + immunocompromised prof = we'll be doing this thing remotely and asynchronously. (NO ZOOM, I PROMISE.)

Each unit will include required reading and a narrated slideshow in mp4 format. Most will include a map and some multimedia elements (video or podcast).

I'll be live-tweeting a discussion of the assigned materials & available to answer questions on chat in Canvas during our scheduled class period (3:25-5:05PM EST). You're encouraged but not required to participate on either or both platforms.

EXPECTATIONS

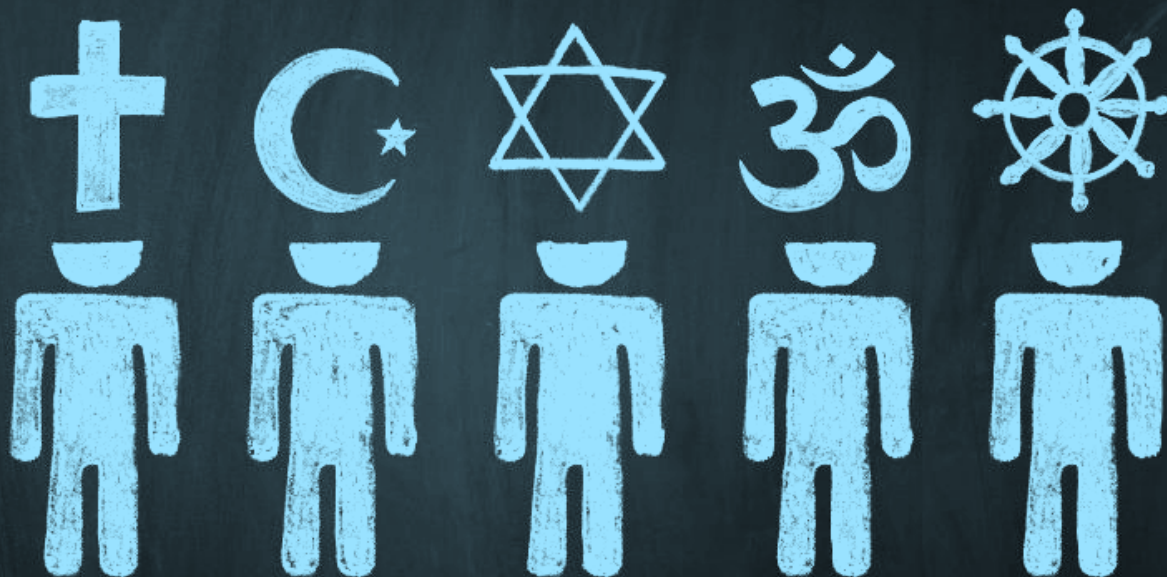
Let's be honest, folks: **none of us know what to expect this semester.** I'll do my best to provide clear, timely information as we continue to respond to a global crisis. In return, I ask that you try to be as patient as you can with yourself, your fellow classmates, and with me, with the understanding that we're all doing our best in an unprecedentedly difficult time.

That said: this is an intro-level course, which means **I don't expect you to know anything about religious studies.** If you find yourself struggling with concepts or assignments, please get in touch with me. The basics: as scholars of religion, **it is not our job to evaluate the truth or validity of any religious tradition.** We only examine the evidence we have, to position that tradition's beliefs, practices, teachings, and products in the broader context of religion(s) and culture(s).

We will be tackling provocative material this semester. If you are not outraged at least once, I will have failed you. I will help you put conflicts and concepts into historical and cultural context. But for this class to work, **you need to treat every student and every concept you encounter with scholarly respect.**

MATERIALS

There is no required textbook for this course. All readings, maps, podcasts, & videos will be available on our class Canvas site. If you don't have access to high-speed internet, get in touch ASAP for alternate assignments.



No. Zoom. Meetings. EVER.

But we *will* be using Canvas, Twitter, streaming video, podcasts, and other platforms and technologies this semester. You don't have to be a computer geek to do well in this class!

But if something is unclear or confusing, please contact me for help.

TECH

PARTICIPATION

During “normal” semesters, I have a whole chart about what you can do to earn full participation credit. **This semester, let’s all just do the best we can.** Any engagement beyond what is explicitly required = awesome. I hope you’ll want to talk about the material we’ll be covering beyond what’s explicitly required, but I won’t penalize you for being short on the ability to even right now.

If you’re having trouble keeping up with what *is* explicitly required, please let me know as soon as you can. **You do not have to have a registered disability to request accommodations** – but I won’t know you need help or more time unless you tell me so. You don’t have to tell me why you’re having a hard time, but getting in touch means I can come up with a plan to get you what you need.

It is 100% okay to be struggling to retain new information or keep up with schoolwork right now. We are living through a crisis, and that stress affects our moods, our energy, and our cognition. **I will never judge you for needing more time or an alternate assignment, but I can’t help you if you don’t tell me you need help.**



I AM COMMITTED TO MAKING
OUR CLASSROOM AND OUR
CAMPUS A SUPPORTIVE
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR
PEOPLE OF ALL RACES,
GENDERS, ETHNICITIES,
ABILITIES, CLASSES, AGES,
SEXUALITIES, & STATUSES
OF DOCUMENTATION.



Sex- and gender-based violence and harassment are Civil Rights offenses. Offenders are subject to the same kinds of penalties applied to offenses against other protected categories (such race, national origin, etc.). **Survivors are entitled to confidential support.**

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you're entitled to help.

[Here are our resources.](#)

GRADES

In this class, you earn grades based on HOW you think—not WHAT you think. In other words: **your beliefs, opinions, and positions don't affect your grade.**

Course materials should help you better understand core concepts in religious studies and the complexities of lived religion. You earn your course grade by demonstrating how well you've understood those materials and by applying and building upon concepts central to the study of religion(s) in a contemporary global context.

RUBRIC

Quizzes	10%
Religion News	15%
Exams	20%
Final Project	25%
Reading Notes	30%

n.b. all quizzes and exams are open-book. This means you'll need to be particularly careful about citations & plagiarism!

A-level work demonstrates effort and comprehension beyond what is asked for or required. **B-level** work meets expectations. **C-level** work shows an acceptable level of comprehension. **D-level** work demonstrates engagement but not comprehension.

ASSIGNMENTS

READING NOTES

For all assigned primary sources (in bold on this syllabus), you'll submit a short summary and analysis of how this source helps us better understand a key class concept and/or religious tradition. These notes will help you prepare for exams and play a key role in your final project.

Due dates for reading notes are all posted on Canvas. Please review the assignment sheet and rubric for further instructions.

RELIGION IN THE NEWS

Once we've completed the media literacy unit, you'll share a recent news item relevant to each religious tradition we're discussing in this class. Briefly summarize the story and tell us why it's pertinent to the tradition in question. Post these news items to our class hashtag ([#NUglobalrel](#)) before the unit deadline (available on Canvas).

Review the twitter tutorial video and the assignment sheet for further instructions.

FINAL PROJECT

Your final project should make an argument about why studying religion helps us better understand global conflicts, commitments, and/or systems. Support your argument with evidence from this class: primary sources, news items about religious traditions, pop culture examples, and scholarly analyses. Include material about at least three religious traditions we've covered this semester. Review the assignment sheet for further instructions.



CHEATING

Cheating = failing.
Please don't cheat.

Also? All the quizzes and exams are open book! As long as you paraphrase things in your own words, don't have other folks help you with your responses, and cite all your sources, you should have no trouble doing well in this course.

Complete the [plagiarism tutorial](#) by 15 September so I know you know what plagiarism is. For more info, check out the "What is Plagiarism?" handout on Canvas or Northeastern's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) for more info. "I didn't know" is not an excuse. Go know.

QUIZZES & EXAMS

Most units will have a 10 question, open-book quiz for you to complete. Due dates for these quizzes are posted on our Canvas calendar. Questions are in multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank format and draw on assigned materials.

We will have three open-book exams. Those dates are likewise posted to Canvas. Questions are multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and essays (including primary source identification). See sample exam response for more info.



CLASS SCHEDULE

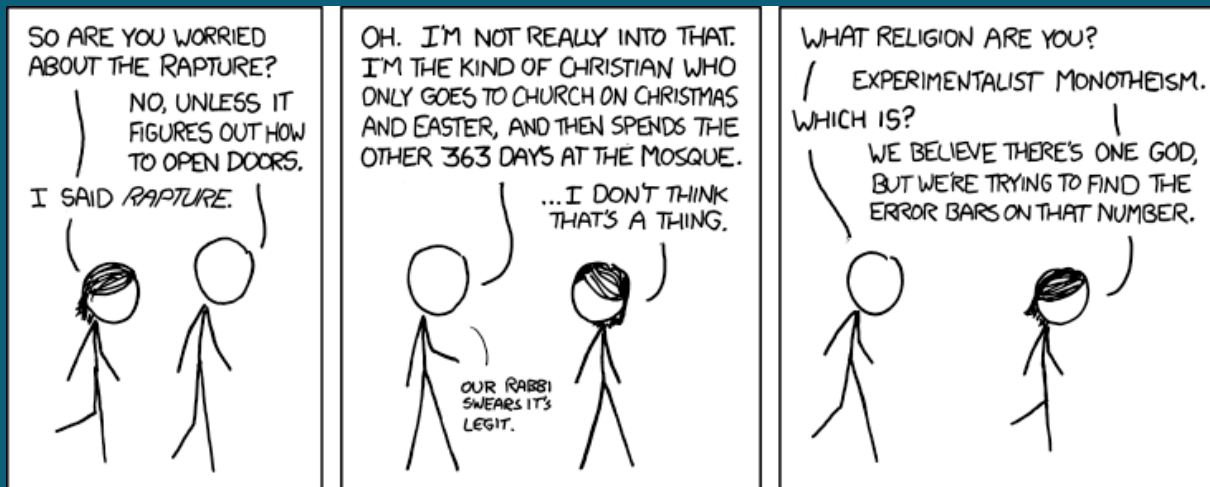
DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
11 September	What is religion?	Submit multimedia introduction (see assignment sheet) K1101, "What the Heck is Religion?" (podcast) Bellah, "Sheila-ism"
15 September	Religion: Why Should We Care?	K1101, "Religion is not done with you" (podcast)
18 September	Reading strategies & media literacy	NPR, "A Finder's Guide to Facts" HuffPo, "How to Recognize a Fake News Story" Vox, "How Search Engines Are Making Us More Racist"
22 September	What's wrong with "world religions?"	K1101, "Major religions? Minor religions? Must we?" (podcast) Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious"
25 September	Indigenous religions	K1101, "World religions – shall we not" (podcast) Zitkala-sa, "Why I am a Pagan" Wenger, "Religious Freedom Won't Protect Sacred Lands" Bailey, "It's About Religion"
29 September	Diasporic religions	Castor, "African Diasporic Religions" (podcast) "Black Is King" + "Lemonade" clips (video) Roberts, "What Beyonce Teaches Us" Grady, "Meet the African Goddess" Demby, "Finding a Way Home"
2 October	Exam 1	
6 October	Zoroastrianism	Amaria, "Being Zoroastrian" (video) "Judgment of the Soul on the Chinvat Bridge" DePaul, "Zoroastrianism Rises in North America" Walker, "The Last of the Zoroastrians"
9 October	Hinduism	K1101, "Religious Nationalism" "The Four Castes" Samuel, "India Just Redefined Its Citizenship Criteria" Jain, "Distinguish Hindu Nationalism from Hinduism" Vox, "The Conflict in Kashmir, Explained" (video)

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DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
13 October	Buddhism	"Diamond Sutra" PBS, "The Buddha" excerpts (video) RNS, "Hindus in India Are Converting to Buddhism" Wildman, "Fastest Growing Refugee Crisis"
16 October	Sikhi	BBC, "1984" (video) Guru Nanak Dev, Var Asa, Ang 473.8-9 Singh, "Why Sikhs Don't Throw Muslims under the Bus" SAALT, "Remember Oak Creek"
20 October	Shinto	Thomas, "What Is Shinto?" Thomas, "Religion Policy of the US Occupation of Japan" Thomas, "Tongue in Cheek, Just in Case" "Disestablishment of State Shinto"
23 October	Religions in/and China	Dao de Jing excerpts Analects, "On the Character of Confucius" Oliver, "China & Uighurs" (video) Berkley Forum, "Regulating Religion in China" Poon, "Controlling Religions with Chinese Characteristics" Ownby, "Religious Regulation in China"
27 October	Exam 2	
30 October	Final Project Workshop	Argument & outline (see assignment sheet for more info)
3 November	Screening: <i>Pray the Devil Back to Hell</i>	Live tweet session (see assignment sheet for more info) Berkley Center, "Religious Women as Peacemakers"
6 November	Religion & Pop Culture	KI 101, "Religion & Pop Culture" (podcast) Examples for final project (see assignment sheet)
10 November	Judaism 1	Shma Levitt, "The Twitter Rabbi" Velour, "A Highly Revisionist Prayer"

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DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
13 November	Judaism 2	Maltz, "Israel Rules Not to Recognize Ugandan Jews" Lubell, "Israel Adopts Divisive Nation-State Law" Horton, "Jews Are Supporting Muslims in New Zealand"
17 November	Christianity 1	The Beatitudes
20 November	Christianity 2	Killermann, "30+ Examples of Christian Privilege" Chavez, "The Mexican American and the Church" Kuruvilla, "Religious Liberty of Border Volunteers"
24 November	Islam 1	Shahada KI 101 – "What Does It Mean to Be Religious?" (podcast)
27 November	No class: Thanksgiving break	
1 December	Islam 2	Imani, "Nothing to Reconcile" (video) "Wrap My Hijab" (video) Syed, "What You Need to Know about Muslim Women" Mustafa, "My Body is My Own Business"
4 December	NRMs	KI 101 – "Cults" (podcast) KI 101 – "Who Gets Left Out of Religion?" (podcast) <i>Hail Satan?</i> excerpts (video)
8 December	Exam 3	
16 December	Final Project Due	





Prof. Megan Goodwin

me.goodwin@northeastern.edu
 @mpgPhD on twitter

Please note:
 I am NOT on campus
 this semester.

Office hours via Canvas livechat
 & lecture threads (#NUglobalrel)
 Tuesday & Friday 3:25-5:05 pm



Source: 2012 - Eric Foner, Former and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Ferris State University (Formerly Dean of Professional and Graduate Studies, University of Wisconsin - Green Bay) and John A. Vink, University of Northern Iowa, 2006; Retaining Racial-Caste Hierarchy of Modern Wisconsin, Unheard Voices: Celebrating Culture from the Developing World, 1992; Devella H. Alandese, The Global Citizen, May 31, 2002.

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