



SPRING 2013
RLST 075/175: WORLD WISDOM TRADITIONS

Holy Names University
Departments of Religious Studies and Philosophy
3500 Mountain Blvd., Oakland, CA

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Class Time: Fridays 12:30 – 3 pm

Room: Brennan 63

Office Hours: After class, Fridays

3:30-5 pm or by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore various wisdom traditions from around the world to understand their beliefs and cultural expressions as a way of enhancing cross-cultural dialogue within our emerging globalized community. We will focus on understanding major religious traditions on their own terms and in dialogue with other traditions.

For the study of traditional responses, our primary class focus will be on Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Our study will involve class discussion, guest speakers, group studies, class quizzes and a final project on a tradition of your choice.

We will do two types of reading. For background in each tradition, we will read the textbook, *Living Religions*. In class, we will do a line-by-line, close reading of primary texts that students will download and print from the course's Blackboard site. Students will have two writing projects, a spiritual autobiography and a final project, as well as keep your notes in journal form. Upper level students will make short oral presentations on a current issue involving a religion that interests them. For the final project, all students will visit a religious site from a tradition that is not your own, such as a Zen Buddhist temple, a mosque, a synagogue, Christian church, etc., observe the service and interview its leader. You can visit singly or in small groups of 2 or 3 but write up an independent paper describing and analyzing your experience. All written work must be submitted to the proper Submission Box on Blackboard for a scan and analysis by the TurnItIn software.

By the end of the course, students should have gained a deeper understanding of the origins and expressions of various religious traditions they have studied. All religions will be approached in a spirit of openness, respect and wonder in the belief that each has something important to teach us and can enhance any specific religious commitment of our own.



COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, students will have:

1. Deepened their understanding religious wisdom traditions by comprehending them openly, analyzing them critically. and understanding them on their own terms.
2. Reflected on how the wisdom tradition can inform an engagement in the world in daily life.
3. Gained greater appreciation for global religious and spiritual beliefs from a cross-cultural and intercultural perspective that fosters respect for the broad range of worldviews and faith practices within our human community.
4. Developed a greater ability to dialogue with people from different religious traditions, and to find transformative meaning in the dialogue.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Fisher, Mary Pat. *Living Religions, 8th or 7th Editions*, Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2011. *Please note:* A copy of your textbook should be on reserve in the library. The 8th edition may have extra web-based learning aids. *All page references in this syllabus will be to the 8th edition.*
- Handouts posted on Blackboard during the semester to be printed out, read before class and brought to class for discussion.

REFERENCE TEXTS (On Reserve in Cushing Library):

- Armstrong, Karen. *Buddha*. London: Penguin Books, 2004.
- Ram Dass and Gorman, Paul. *How Can I Help? Stories and Reflection on Service*. New York: Random House, 1985.



COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Each religious tradition that we will encounter takes a life-time of study to understand. We cannot do our subjects justice unless you do the assigned work outside of class faithfully and with concentration. Also, our primary readings can be difficult and interpreted in different ways. You will need to be patient with yourselves, keep trying with the writing and the reading, and when in doubt, ask!!

This is a large class and our progress will quickly become chaotic unless the following points are respected. The following are essential to your learning, and your grade:

- As discussed in HNU Policies at the end of this syllabus, you can expect 6 hours of work outside of class each week. For this class, you could spend 3 hours reading and taking notes on the assignment in the Fisher textbook, and 3 hours for reading the primary texts, writing, preparing for the essay tests or working on your final presentation later in the semester.
- Your learning, and grade, will suffer unless you arrive on time and participate fully to the end of the entire class. No class will be dismissed early. There will be an attendance sheet for you to sign at each class.
- Please eat lunch or snacks before you come to class or during our break. It's hard to think and talk during a serious discussion when we're eating!
- You are expected to turn all written assignments into the proper Submission Box on Blackboard by the deadline, usually Wednesday before class. Late submissions will be reduced by one grade level. No submissions are accepted after the Friday class. It is your responsibility to make sure you submit the correct document to the Submission Box before the electronic cut-off time. Computer problems should be resolved with helpdesk@hnu.edu before the assignment is due.
- Plagiarism, including copying ideas from other sources without proper citation, will result in severe reductions in your grades, including a possible F.
- You are expected to attend every class. If you must miss a class, please notify me *in advance*. You are responsible for finding out what happened and making arrangements to turn in any work due *in advance* of the missed class. Additional work may be assigned to compensate for the lost class time.
- You are expected to notify me in advance of any expected absences for emergencies or illnesses by email at sylvester@hnu.edu. Illnesses need medical documentation.
- As discussed in the HNU policies at the end of this syllabus, you may fail this course if you have more than three unexcused absences.
- If you are an HNU athlete and you will be missing class time because of HNU athletic requirements, such as games and/or tournaments, you must notify me *in advance* of your absence via email. In addition to your email notification, I will also need a form from your coach with *your* signature on it as to why you will be missing class.
- You must bring the Fisher book, your journal for reading and class notes and appropriate handouts printed out for each class.
- Students with ongoing emergencies should discuss their situation with the Student Success Center to evaluate and make a plan for their studies.
- *Please consult the addendum at the end of this syllabus for HNU policies.*



COURSE WORK:

Attendance and Participation:

Our weekly time together is valuable. Regular attendance at classes is essential for successful academic work. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of each class. You are expected to arrive on time and ready to learn at the start of *every* class session. The classroom is one of the most important ways for all students in this course to learn the material, discuss ideas, share experiences, and take a participatory approach to learning. When you share your thoughts and insights during classroom discussions, you learn and others learn from the things that you say. This is why your participation in class discussions and group activities is required and counts for part of your overall grade in this course. **(15 points)**

Journal: Each student will maintain a journal throughout the semester. Journal entries can include a combination of:

- (1) your critical and reflective response to assigned readings, classroom lectures, guest presentations, group activities, films, and/or related campus events;
- (2) your creative responses to the topics and themes of the class in the form of poetry, art, and/or short fiction, and/or YouTube clips;
- (3) your critique of news media analysis of current events related to course topics
- (4) whatever insights and reflections relevant to the course work that you care to share.

For the most part, students will be able to choose what they want to reflect and write about. On occasion, I may assign required journal topics. By the end of the semester, a minimum of twenty journal entries is expected. In addition, the journal will be handed in and checked four times during the semester. Additional guidelines regarding the journal will be discussed at the beginning of the semester. **(20 points)**

Two Tests: Students will take two tests during class at the end of major portions of the course with questions on facts, vocabulary and main ideas. Study guides will be provided as a framework for studying. **(10 points each, for total of 20 points)**

Ongoing Religious and/or Spiritual Autobiography: During the semester, students will write a 5- to 7-page spiritual/religious autobiography identifying how religious traditions of your own or from your family have or have not influenced your choices and direction in life, including rejection or re-definition of received traditions. **(15 points)**

Upper Division Presentation on Current Issues: Upper level students will lead one class discussion for 20 minutes on a contemporary aspect of a religious tradition. They will describe what the issue is, give some differing perspectives on it and pose three or four relevant questions to stimulate class discussion. **(Included in Final Project points)**

Final Project:

Your final work of the semester will be to visit, describe and analyze a religious service from a tradition that is not your own. You can go alone or in groups of two or three to places such as a Zen Buddhist temple, a mosque, a synagogue, Christian church from a different denomination, etc. As a group, you can contact the religious leader to arrange

your visit, witness the service and interview the leader for more understanding. You will present your project to the class as a group for a 5-10 minute presentation as well as hand in individual papers that reflect each student's independent experience and response. (5-7 pages for 075 students; 8-10 pages for 175 students) **(30 points)**

EVALUATION AND GRADING:

- Attendance , including final discussion class, and Participation: **15 points.**
- Two tests: **20 percent**
- Spiritual Religious autobiography, written to class standards and submitted by the deadline: **15 percent**
- Journal, at least 20 entries: **20 percent**
- Final Project, submitted on time as a paper written to class standards: **30 percent**

100 Total Points

SUMMARY OF DEADLINES:

Class 5: Friday, Feb. 15 in class: Submit Journal for first reading, 5 entries.
Feb. 15 in class: **Test 1.**

Class 6: Friday, Feb. 22 in class: One paragraph proposal for final project.

Class 7: Friday, March 1, in class: Oral current issues discussion (175 students.)

Class 9: Friday, March 22 in class: Mary boys Submit Journal for second reading, 10 entries

Wednesday, March 27, midnight in Blackboard: Spiritual Autobiography 5-7 pgs for 075; 8-10 for 175

Class 10: Friday, April 5 in class: Turn in printed originality report for yr Sp. Autobio.
Oral current issues discussion (175 students)

Class 11: Friday, April 12 in class: Submit Journal for third reading, 15 entries
Also: April 12 in class: **Test 2.**

Wednesday, May 1, midnight on Blackboard: Submit Final Project paper 5-7 pgs for 075, 8-10 pgs. for 175

Class 14: Friday, May 3 in class: Submit Journal for fourth reading, 20 entries.
Also: May 3 in class: Final Presentations

Class 15: Friday, May 10 in class: Final Class discussion. Attendance mandatory.

Course documents, assignments and this syllabus are posted on Blackboard:

<http://blackboard.hnu.edu>.

Look there for regular updates or changes.



**RLST 075/175 WORLD WISDOM TRADITIONS
COURSE SCHEDULE SPRING 2013**

- ▶ Before class, read Fisher, Chapter 1, “Religious Responses,” pages 1-32. (Posted on Blackboard)
- ▶ Print and read this Syllabus

Class 1. January 18: Introduction, Nature of Religious Response

Discussion focus: What are three perspectives on religious belief? What kind of language is used to describe religious responses? What is the source of this response? Does the scientific worldview conflict with a religious response?

- ▶ Class discussion: “Spiritual Awareness,” excerpt from Timothy Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits*. (Posted on Blackboard.)
- ▶ Class discussion on Plato’s Cave Analogy, Cave diagram and/or Socrates sense of mission. (Posted on Blackboard.)

Assignment for Class 2:

- ▶ Read Fisher, Chapter 2: “Indigenous Sacred Ways,” pages 33-72.
- ▶ Optional: Ninian Smart, <http://www.as.ua.edu/rel/aboutrelbiosmart.html>

Class 2. JANUARY 25: Indigenous Sacred Ways

Special Class Guest: HNU Alumna Robyn Mondy on HNU, Studying and Success

Discussion Focus: Introductions: Speed interviewing for 3 things you didn’t know about your fellow students! What are the challenges and opportunities for success at HNU? What is characteristic of indigenous ways? How do these differ from modern religions?

Assignment for Class 3:

- ▶ Read Fisher, Chapter 3, “Hinduism, pgs 73-120.
 - ▶ Read *Bhavagad Gita* excerpt, TBA (Posted on Blackboard)
- Online version: <http://www.interfaith.org/hinduism/bhagavad-gita/>

THEME: HINDUISM



These prayer flags represent the sacred symbols of the seven chakras or energy centers of the human body in Sanskrit from the Hindu tradition (see page 42 in Fisher)

Class 3. FEBRUARY 1: Hinduism

Discussion Focus: What are the origins of Hinduism and its spiritual practices? What explains the multiplicity of gods? What is the Hindu way of life? What is the meaning of the battle that Arjuna faces in the *Bhavad Gita*?

Assignment for Class 4:

- ▶ Read Fisher Chapter, 5 “Buddhism,” pgs 135-83.
- ▶ Read excerpt of Dhammapada TBA

THEME: BUDDHISM



Sacred Tibetan symbols shown here celebrate creation, the path to enlightenment, and invoke stability and protection.

Class 4. February 8: Buddhism and the Life of the Buddha

Discussion Focus: Why did the Buddha leave his father’s palace? Why did he return to the world after his enlightenment? What are the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-Fold Path?

Assignment for Class 5:

- ▶ Keep Journal updated.
 - ▶ Form study groups for Test 1.
 - ▶ Read Fisher, Chapter 8, “Judaism,” pages 239-268
 - ▶ Print and read Torah excerpts: Abraham’s call (Genesis 11:26-12:80; Ten Commandments (Exodus 19 and 20 entire); Shema (Deuteronomy 6:1-17)
- Feel free to bring your personal Bibles to class . Also posted on Blackboard.

THEMES: JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY



Class 5. February 15: Judaism and Beginnings of Israel, the Covenant, Mt. Sinai

Today: Submit Journals for first reading.

Today: Test 1 starts at 12:30 p.m.

Discussion Focus: What is the significance of the covenant? What was the experience on Mt. Sinai for the formation of the Jewish people? Early Israelite history and Torah.

Assignments for Class 6:

- ▶ Read Fisher, Chapter 8, "Judaism," 269-297.
- ▶ Read excerpt from Friedlander, Wiesel. *Jesús and Israel*, Jules Isaac TBA. (Posted on Blackboard.)
- ▶ Write a one paragraph proposal for final project.

Class 6. February 22: Rabbinic Judaism and the Holocaust, Israel

DUE: One paragraph proposal for final project.

Discussion focus: What is rabbinic Judaism? How did it develop in parallel to Christianity? What are the High Holy Days? Where was God during the Holocaust? What was the Christian role?

Assignment for Class 7:

- ▶ Read Gospel of John 1-11. Then, jot notes to yourself from memory on specific words or phrases that have special meaning for you.
- ▶ Read Fisher, Chapter 9, "Christianity," pgs. 298-318
- ▶ Upper division: Prepare oral current issues presentations, 10 minutes.

Class 7. March 1: Life of Jesus.

Today: Oral current issues presentations from upper division students, 10 minutes.

Discussion Focus: What passages indicate Jesus' motivation and self-understanding? Is the historical Jesus different from the faith-based Jesus as Christ?

Assignment for Class 8:

- ▶ Read John 12-21, Acts 1 and 2
- ▶ Read Fisher, Chapter 9, 318-346 on rise of the Church
- ▶ Read excerpt for Biblical Interpretation from Catholic Catechism (Posted on Blackboard)

Class 8. March 8: Death of Jesus, Emergence of Church, Biblical Interpretation.

Discussion Focus: Why was he crucified? What do Christians believe happened as a consequence? How did the Jesus movement transform into a worldwide church? What are basic principles of biblical interpretation? What is the relationship between the Jewish Passover and the events leading to Easter?

► In class reading and for study: Bible excerpts of Troubling Texts: Violence and Anti-Judaism. TBA

Assignment for Class 9:

► No assignments during Spring Break:

When you return on Monday, March 18:

► Read Troubling Texts: Violence and Anti-Judaism. TBA

► Update your journals on your response to the troubling texts.

March 15:

SPRING BREAK !

NO CLASS!

Class 9. March 22: Elder and Younger Brothers: Christian-Jewish Relationship Today

DUE: Submit Journals for second reading, 10 entries.

Discussion Focus: How do we approach Biblical texts that describe violence and New Testament texts that appear to preach anti-Judaism?

Special Guest Lecturer:

Dr. Mary C. Boys, noted scholar on interreligious relations between Christians and Jews:
Troubling Texts: Reading Difficult Biblical Passages

Assignment for Class 10:

► Before Easter: Finish your 5- to 7-page spiritual/religious autobiography identifying how religious traditions of your own or from your family have or have not influenced your choices and direction in life, including rejection or re-definition of received traditions. **Due to the Submission Box by Wednesday, March 27 at midnight. Print the originality report to hand to me at Class 10.**

► After Easter: Read Fisher, Chapter 6, "Daoism and Confucianism," pages 184-216.

► Research and schedule your visit, interview for your Final Project

► Upper division: Prepare oral current issues presentations, 10 minutes.

DUE: Wednesday, March 27, midnight: Submit Spiritual/Religious Autobiography on Blackboard.

March 29

GOOD FRIDAY!

NO CLASS!

Class 10. April 5: Daoism and Confucianism

Today: Turn in printed originality report for Spiritual/Religious autobiography.

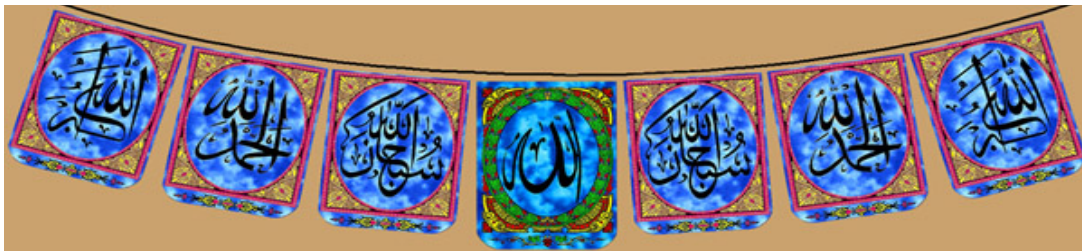
Today: Oral current issues presentations from upper division students, 10 minutes.

Discussion focus: How do we define the Dao? How is the path described in the Dao de-Jing? Who was (Laozi) Lao-Tzu? What are some key tenets of Confucius' teachings?

Assignment for Class 11:

- ▶ Read Fisher, Chapter 10, "Islam," pages 381-404
- ▶ Read excerpt of Qur'an TBA (Posted on Blackboard.)
- ▶ Form study groups for Test 2.
- ▶ Update journals.

THEMES: ISLAM AND SUFISM



This Sufi prayer flag is in praise of the Divine. From left to right, the flag translates as follows: (1) Allah is Great, (2) Praise to Allah, (3) Glory to Allah, (4) God/One, (5) Glory to Allah, (6) Praise to Allah, and (7) Allah is Great.

Class 11. April 12: Islam: Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an

DUE: Submit Journals for third reading, 15 entries.

DUE: Test 2 starts at 12:30 pm.

Discussion Focus: What were the major turning points in the life of the Prophet Muhammad? What are five central teachings in the Qur'an? What are the Five Pillars of Islam?

Assignment for Class 12:

- ▶ Read Fisher, Chapter 10, "Islam," pages 404-18
- ▶ Work on your Final Project, due May 1.

Class 12. April 19. Historical Development of Islam

Discussion Focus: How did the differences between Sunni and Shi'a Islam arise? What accounts for the rapid spread of Islam? What is Sufism?

Assignment for Class 13:

- ▶ Read Fisher, Chapter 10, "Islam," pages 418-39
- ▶ Read Essay excerpt from *Study of Human Nature*

Class 13. April 26. Modern Islam and the West

Discussion Focus: How has Islam responded to the challenge of modernity? Can we separate religious from political Islam? Who is Shirin Ebadi?

Assignment for Class 14:

- ▶ Update journals for submission.
- ▶ Finish Final Project, submit on Blackboard by Wednesday, May 1 at midnight. Print the originality report to class for me, and print 5 regular copies to bring to class to share with your small group.
- ▶ Plan your Final Project presentation with your group.

DUE: Wednesday, May 1, midnight: Final Project paper.

Class 14. May 3 (Last class): Final Project Presentations in Groups

DUE: Submit Journals for fourth reading, 20 entries.

Discussion Focus: Turn in originality reports and bring 5 regular copies of your final project to share with you small groups and discuss in the larger class.

Assignment for Final Class Discussion during Exam Week:

- ▶ Review your class notes and readings for what you have learned during the semester.

Mandatory Final Discussion during Exam Week. May 10: 4 to 7 pm:

Your Appropriation, Discernment and/or Internalization of Ideas

**NOTE EXAM TIME IS 4 to 7 pm,
DIFFERENT FROM CLASS TIME**

Discussion Focus: How do you decide what is true for you and how do you internalize these truth moments into your emerging understanding of life? What have you learned deeply, appropriated as your own, during the course? Are you challenged to change as a result?

This class is a free-form, open discussion. It will not be graded; It only requires your attendance and participation in place of a final exam

Go in Peace!



These prayer flags display symbols of Peace. The word Peace is inscribed in seven different languages: Italian, Arabic, Hebrew, English, Japanese, Hindi, and French.

**Original image of prayer flags shown here can be found at:
<http://www.decorativeprayerflags.com/flags.html>**



Have a Good Summer Vacation!

Syllabus Addendum

Definition of Grades:

“A” – Demonstrated exceptional effort in understanding and advancing the class discussion, superior writing, excellent attendance and extra effort on final project.

“B” – Good performance in class discussion, participation, writing assignments.

“C” – Present in body but less so in mind or spirit. Adequate work. Fulfilled basic requirements.

“D” – Inadequate effort in all areas, such as participating in class discussions, submitting written work on time and in proper form, and progressing in class requirements.

“F” – Unacceptable work; failure in basic class requirements.

University Requirements:

Attendance: The HNU Catalogue states that students who have excessive absences may receive a grade of F. Excessive absences occur when more than one-fifth of the scheduled class hours are missed. The instructor reserves the right to assign a grade of F to any student who misses more than 20% of class time.

Credit Hour Policy:

It is HNU policy that to receive academic credit for a course, the student is expected to do a minimum of two hours of work outside of class for every hour of direct instruction from the instructor. The amount and kind of work assigned and activities engaged in should be consonant with the stated learning outcomes/course objectives outlined above on the syllabus.

Disability policy and support services:

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations or support because of a documented disability, you should contact your instructor—and provide copies of your contract or accommodation letters—as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have questions about accessing Disability Support Services, documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, contact Laura Lydon, Director of Disability Support Services. DSS is located in Brennan 40, and can be reached by calling x1658 or emailing dss@hnu.edu.

No plagiarism policy:

The policies regarding academic honesty described in the *HNU Catalog* must be strictly followed. These include submission of work that is the student’s own, adequate and proper acknowledgement of sources used in preparation of assignments, and not accepting or providing answers on tests. As cheating undermines the learning process, the instructor reserves the right to assign a grade of *F* to any student who represents the work or ideas of another person as his/her own.

Note the following Academic Calendar dates:

Last date to add: Monday, Jan. 28, 2013.

Last date to drop: Mon. Jan. 28, for 100% refund and Mon. Feb. 4, for 50% refund.

Last date to withdraw: Monday, April 8, 2013.
Last day to file for incomplete: Tuesday, May 7, 2013.