

## ***Religion 104 010 MC Introduction to Religion***

**Three credit hours: Spring Semester, 2024**  
**TR 3:30 PM-4:45 PM (1/8/2024 - 5/5/2024)**  
**Location: Main Campus, Tarpley 213**

### **Instructor Information:**

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### **Course Description:**

This course introduces the critical study of religion. It is about looking closely at religion. We explore how people think about it, what they do as part of it, and how it connects to society. We also compare different cultures to understand their religious beliefs and practices.

### **How Much Time Will I Spend on This Course?**

For this 3-credit hour course, expect to spend a minimum of 150 minutes per week in lectures, class discussions, and examinations (37.5 hours for the semester). Instructional time includes a 3-hour final exam. Out-of-class work includes writing papers, posting on our discussion page, and preparation for exams and is estimated at around 300 minutes per week.

### **Textbook and Other Materials Needed:**

There is no textbook for this class. However, I will be basing much of the material on *Religion Matters: An Introduction to the World's Religions* by Stephen Prothero.

I will post handouts, articles, videos, and papers on Canvas.

***You must read all assigned material before the class in which we will discuss that topic.***

There may be multiple readings, videos, and handouts each week.

## Electronics Policy:

***Devices will be used entirely at my discretion. If you use your device to take notes I will check your screens. AND ABSOLUTELY NO EAR THINGIES.*** If you listen to music, surf, do work for other classes, or text, I will ask you to leave the classroom. ***No devices will be allowed on your desk or in view during exams.***

## Attendance Policy:

Your complete attention is required in this class. I expect you to attend and be prepared for each class period. ***More than four absences will cause a reduction in your final course grade.***

## Evaluation of Learning Outcomes and Grade Computation:

Grading is based on an 800-point scale. Your grade is the ***accumulation*** of points throughout the semester.

## Points and Assignments:

<b>900-1000</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>800-899</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>700-799</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>600-699</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>Below 599</b>	<b>F</b>

**The best possible score for the class is 800 points distributed as follows:**

1. There will be **six exams** for 600 total points. These exams will cover information from the current topic and may consist of multiple choices, true/false, and short answers of one to two sentences. Essay questions will be included that will require you to write at least a page. ***Make-up exams will be given only in cases of illness – with documentation, or approved sports absence.*** If you are traveling for school activities, I will ask that you take the exam before the scheduled date. Makeup exams will be substantively different from exams taken in class.
2. ***Attendance and participation in class discussions are a critical part of your grade and will be worth 200 total points.***
3. **Presentation Project** - (200 points.) I will assign groups and leaders and supply you with a rubric in the second week of the course. Group leaders will turn in a rough draft of your project ideas on 2/15/24. ***Presentations will be given on Tuesday, April 20, 2024, during our scheduled final examination time.***

## Discussion Guidelines:

Part of your grade in this course comes from participating in discussions. Share your thoughts, observations, and questions with everyone. Follow these guidelines, and we can freely express our ideas without concerns. By the end of the course, you might find yourself thinking about religion in a new way. This could boost your confidence in expressing your thoughts and make you more interested in how religions matter to university students today. So please:

Participate and stay on track with the topic.  
Politely challenge the ideas of others without becoming personal.  
Respect one another's ideas.

Our discussions need to be built on our interpretation of the readings, videos, and lectures, which means that we must be knowledgeable of that evidence; be able to support our opinions with facts, which means **diligently reading and engaging in the discussions**.

## **The Center for Student Success (CSS):**

If you need extra help with composing your discussions or papers, please use the available assistance offered in The Center for Student Success (CSS) located in the library room 313. **CSS provides free peer and faculty tutoring for all subjects**. Go to the Reinhardt web page and click Center for Student Success for appointments.

## **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. This legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that reasonably accommodates their disabilities. Reinhardt University is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for all persons with disabilities. Therefore, if you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with the **Academic Support Office (ASO)**. ASO is located in the basement of the Lawson Building. Please obtain the proper ASO letters to receive academic accommodations for this class.

## ***General Education Learning Outcomes:<sup>1</sup>***

For this course, we focus on certain learning goals that every Reinhardt University graduate is expected to achieve:

### A. Effective Communication:

Show that you can express your ideas well in writing through discussion posts, reading responses, papers, and essays on tests.

### B. Critical Thinking:

Use evidence, logic, and reasoning to think critically and solve problems. Show this in discussions, reading responses, papers, and tests.

### C. Research Skills:

Demonstrate knowledge of different research methods through the research you do for the final project.

### D. Independent Thought:

Show that you can think on your own and be creative in discussions, reading responses, essays on tests, and the final project.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information see pages 3 & 4 in the Undergraduate Catalog  
<https://www.reinhardt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-19-Undergraduate-Catalog-10032018-update-2.pdf>

### E. Integrity and Ethics:

Be honest and responsible in how you use and credit your sources. All your work must be your own.

These goals are designed to help you succeed not only in this course but also in your broader education at Reinhardt University.

## **Religion Program Learning Outcomes<sup>2</sup>**

To enable students to understand the five major religions of the world (Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam)

To assist students in understanding religious traditions.

To enable students to think critically and express those ideas in writing and speech.

To help students become familiar with a variety of research methods appropriate to the field of religion, particularly those relevant to the study of primary sources – the New Testament, Pali Canon, Tanakh, Quran, etc.

To help students develop their understanding of moral and spiritual issues.

## ***Course Learning Outcomes:***

This course serves as an exploration of the fundamental characteristics that distinguish many of our world religions. Students will delve into the beliefs, practices, and cultural-historical developments that shape these diverse religious traditions. By the conclusion of this course, participants will be equipped to:

Demonstrate knowledge of world religions by understanding rituals, literary texts, beliefs, practices, and their historical background.

Showcase comprehension through various mediums such as discussions, reading responses, essays, tests, a paper, and a final project.

Analyze the role of religion in modern life with a focus on the human condition and aspirations as depicted in literary works.

Engage in reading responses, papers, tests, analysis, and forum discussions to deepen understanding. Connect religious concepts to contemporary lives, fostering an awareness of the foundation literature of different traditions.

Explore the historical roots and evolutionary trajectories of various world religions. Develop insights into the historical contexts that have shaped the diverse religious landscapes.

Analyze the foundational philosophies of a spectrum of world religions. Engage in discussions that delve into the core tenets and principles guiding diverse religious traditions.

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<sup>2</sup> See page 106 for further information on the Religion Program Outcomes in the Undergraduate Catalog  
<https://www.reinhardt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-19-Undergraduate-Catalog-10032018-update-2.pdf>

Understand the religious diversity within societies and cultures.  
View yourself and others through different cultural and historical lenses.  
Demonstrate understanding through literary texts, and their cultural and historical contexts in reading responses, papers, tests, analysis, and discussions.

## **The Need for Academic Honesty:**

Education thrives in an atmosphere of honesty and trust. *Students who do not do their own work degrade education, demonstrate a lack of respect for themselves and the college, and rob themselves of the opportunity to improve their thinking and writing.* In this course, all work must be your own. **Cheating will not be tolerated.** Plagiarism, the use of someone else's ideas or words without acknowledging them as such, is a serious academic offense. Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be dealt with severely, *usually resulting in a failing grade in the course.* **If you are ever uncertain about whether or not your actions are academically honest, please consult your instructor, who will be glad to advise you.**

The ***Academic Catalog of Reinhardt University*** details what constitutes academic dishonesty. All students are expected to adhere to the highest academic integrity standards and abide by the ***Reinhardt Honor Code***. Also, all students are expected to be familiar with the Reinhardt policy on academic dishonesty stated in the University Catalog and the Student Handbook. Plagiarism (using the ideas and phrases of others without crediting them, therefore claiming those ideas and expressions as your own) will not be tolerated in this course or on this campus. To avoid such academic dishonesty, you must use a citation (footnote or in-text) for all ideas drawn from your reading and research, including research in encyclopedias and online, even when you have restated those ideas in your own words.

***Consequences for cheating or plagiarizing are stiff, and the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs will be notified of actions taken against students who violate the academic integrity policy, which may result in further consequences, including the designation of "academic warning" on your official transcript, academic suspension, or expulsion for academic reasons.***

## **Tentative Topic Schedule**

### **Week 1**

Course Introduction  
What is Religion?

### **Week 2**

In the Beginning – Polytheism and Animism

### **Week 3**

Native American, Wicca, and Druids

### **Week 4**

Zoroastrianism and the Cult of Mithra

### **Week 5**

Greek and Roman Religions

### **Week 6**

Greek and Roman Religions cont'd

### **Week 7**

Hinduism

### **Week 8**

Hinduism continued

### **Week 9**

Buddhism

### **Week 10**

Jainism, Sikhism

### **Week 11**

Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto

### **Week 12**

Christianity

### **Week 13**

Christianity continued

### **Week 14**

Islam

### **Week 15**

**Summing Up – What Does It All Mean?**

**Week 16 – Religion Presentations during  
final exam period**

## ***Addendum: Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidelines***

As we embark on this academic journey together, it is essential to address the role of technology, specifically Artificial Intelligence (AI), in our coursework. The use of AI tools can be beneficial when employed constructively to enhance learning experiences, promote critical thinking, and facilitate research. This addendum outlines guidelines for the acceptable use of AI in our academic endeavors.

### ***Acceptable Uses of AI:***

1. AI tools can be utilized to streamline research processes, gather information, and generate insights related to course topics.
2. AI-based tools for language improvement, grammar checking, and writing refinement are permitted to enhance the clarity and effectiveness of written assignments.
3. Collaborative AI platforms that facilitate group work and discussions are encouraged, fostering a dynamic and inclusive learning environment.

### ***Unacceptable Uses of AI:***

1. It is strictly prohibited to use AI tools to generate essays or written assignments on behalf of the student. All submitted work must be the result of the individual student's efforts.
2. Any use of AI or other tools to engage in plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is strictly prohibited. ***Proper citation and acknowledgment of sources are paramount.*** Students are expected to uphold the principles of academic integrity and honesty.

### ***Guidance for Responsible AI Use:***

1. While using AI tools, students are encouraged to critically engage with the generated content, ensuring a thorough understanding of the material.
2. AI tools should be viewed as aids to self-expression, allowing students to communicate their thoughts and ideas more effectively rather than replacing their unique voice.

### ***Consultation with Your Instructor:***

If you are uncertain about the appropriateness of using a specific AI tool, you are encouraged to consult with me for guidance and clarification.

By adhering to these guidelines, we aim to create an academic environment that leverages the benefits of technology while upholding the principles of academic integrity and personal growth. The use of AI is welcomed as a constructive tool to enhance the learning experience, provided it aligns with the outlined principles and ethical standards.