Course Syllabus, Summer 2014

REL 2300  Section 521 World Religions (Online Course Delivery)

Instructor: Ms. Teryn Gilbertson
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Course Description: World Religions explores the myths, rituals, history and other features of the major religions in the world, both past and present. Emphasis will be placed on both diversity and unity. Students will each be involved in research throughout the semester, culminating in research papers and media presentations. This course fulfills the requirement for Human Diversity and Global Perspectives OR Historical Perspectives OR Social Sciences OR Historical Context and Process. It will focus on major issues, documents, and works, and will allow students to read portions of several primary texts. There is room in the curriculum to allow students to delve into topics on an interdisciplinary basis.

Texts Required: We are using an interactive text from Thinking Strings called Revealing World Religions. Contact the USF Sarasota-Manatee bookstore to order yours today or contact Thinking Strings. Since it is interactive through the publisher, this is not something that you can get used from a reseller and make work. Sorry.

You will also be using Blackboard, an on-line course access program, accessed through https://my.usf.edu

Course Requirements: Your effort required for this course will consist of successfully completing 6 segments as follows:

1. Weekly response (7 wks X 20pts) 140
2. "Research paper" Media Presentation 50
3. Research/Analytical Paper 150
4. Essays (59 short essays in the modules) 300
5. Bb Participation discussion threads 60
   700

Unit Tests: There are short essays in the Thinking Strings courseware. They reviews no longer are sent to the grade area for me to see, so that had to be changed and the essays do come to me… so there you have it. Make each of the essays just a simple five (5) sentence response. I will know from your five sentences if you have learned from that section of the “text” or not! Each of the essays is 5 points. If you do all of the essays, there will be a 5 point bonus which makes the perfect score 300 points for this section of the assignments.

Weekly Response Papers and Exercises: There are seven weeks that you do an on-line exercise that will combine the weekly assignment with a specific goal and criteria, which may also help with the future research paper and presentation.
Presentations: You will be responsible for ONE in-class (live virtual) media-supported presentation (about 10-12 minutes in length). Topics will be collaborated with the instructor early in the semester. Presentations lasting less than the minimum 10 minutes or more than the maximum 12 minutes will find their grades substantially lowered for failure to comply with assignment specifications.

Analytical/ Research Paper:
You will write one 1,500-to-2,000 word research paper. Focus for each paper must be approved by the instructor by Monday of the second week of class and will not duplicate research areas chosen by others in the class. All research papers require scholarly sources; no websites allowed! This focus area will also be the content for your presentation and should substantially reflect subject matter dealt with in the readings, videos, and my online lectures. There will be a special discussion thread for you to posts your topics of interest and I will approve or modify your choices there.

Grading:
All assignments will receive a numerical grade. Final letter grades will be determined on an accumulated percentile basis, in accordance with the customary scale used in university courses: (think 700 = 100%) A+ (686-700) A (658-685) A- (630-657) B+ (616-629) B (588-615) B- (560-587) C+ (546-559) C (518-545) C- (490-517) D+ (476-489) D (448-475) D- (420-447) F anything under 420!

Last day to drop without penalty: May 16th! Last day to drop with a “W” is June 28th.

Make-up tests, Late Submissions, and Incompletes: You are expected to complete all assignments on time. Falling behind hinders the process of learning. For this reason, I have instituted certain policies designed to encourage the timely completion of assignments, and to discourage the taking of makeups for inappropriate reasons. The in-class presentations will be an integral component of class activities. Therefore, if you cannot deliver a presentation on the assigned date, the grade for your makeup presentation will be penalized by one letter grade, regardless of reason. Papers must be submitted by the due date indicated in the syllabus. Research Papers that are submitted late will be penalized one letter grade per day, regardless of reason. Weekly assignments are due via link in Canvas Assignments no later than midnight each Monday. Late weekly submissions get a zero (0) grade, regardless of reason for their latency.

A grade of Incomplete (I) will be awarded only if at least one-half of your required work has been completed with a cumulative passing grade.

Attendance: Attendance in class is mandatory for weeks two and nine. In enrolling in this class, you are making a commitment to be in class during the scheduled time. Late arrivals will be penalized by equivalent point loss to time missed.

Important note on electronic submissions: I do not have the means to open Word Perfect or Microsoft Works documents. Please submit either Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or text (.txt or .rtf) only documents electronically.
USF Sarasota-Manatee Policies and Procedures

Religious Observances
The University recognizes the right of students and faculty to observe major religious holidays. Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class for a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second week of classes.

Disabilities Accommodation
Students are responsible for registering with the Office of Students with Disabilities Services (SDS) in order to receive academic accommodations. Reasonable notice must be given to the SDS office (typically 5 working days) for accommodations to be arranged. It is the responsibility of the student to provide each instructor with a copy of the official Memo of Accommodation. www.sarasota.usf.edu/Students/Disability/
Contact Information: Pat Lakey, Coordinator 941-359-4714 plakey@sar.usf.edu

Academic Dishonesty
The University considers any form of plagiarism or cheating on exams, projects, or papers to be unacceptable behavior. Please be sure to review the university’s policy in the catalog, USFSM Undergraduate Catalog and the USF Student Code of Conduct.
Undergraduate: http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/
USF Student Code of Conduct: http://www.sa.usf.edu/srr/page.asp?id=88

Academic Disruption
The University does not tolerate behavior that disrupts the learning process. The policy for addressing academic disruption is included with Academic Dishonesty in the catalog, USFSM Undergraduate Catalog and the USF Student Code of Conduct.
Undergraduate: http://www.sarasota.usf.edu/Academics/Catalogs/
USF Student Code of Conduct: http://www.sa.usf.edu/srr/page.asp?id=88

Contingency Plans
In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USFSM to suspend normal operations. During this time, USFSM may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not limited to: Blackboard, Blackboard Collaborate, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It’s the responsibility of the student to monitor Blackboard site for each class for course specific communication, and the main USFSM and College websites, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information. The USF hotline at 1 (800) 992-4231 is updated with pre-recorded information during an emergency.

Emergency Preparedness
It is strongly recommended that you become familiar with the USF Sarasota-Manatee Emergency Action Plan on the Safety Preparedness site

Fire Alarm Instructions
At the beginning of each semester please note the emergency exit maps posted in each classroom. These signs are marked with the primary evacuation route (red) and secondary evacuation route (orange) in case the building needs to be evacuated.
The schedule given in this syllabus is subject to change. In particular, the instructor may announce additional off-campus locations for class meetings.

May 12: Get your courseware from either the USF Sarasota-Manatee bookstore or directly from thinkingstrings.com. Also, read the syllabus and read the honor pledge, download and sign the honor pledge, and return it by noon on Friday, May 16th, in order to be retained (not dropped) for the first week’s attendance. There will be a brief mandatory attendance to an online session next week and several sessions are pre-planned, while others may be added at your discretion. **Homework:** Access the first and second lessons in the Thinking Strings CD, Exploring Religion and Indigenous Religions. Be sure to listen/watch What is religion and the nine subsections there, types of religions and its nine subsections, and studying religion and its ten subsections. Watch all of the subsections of the second lesson on Indigenous Religions, too. It sounds like a lot of information, but the interactive video quickly takes you through the readings, and you do not even have to read unless you want to read along with the narrator! **Using the guide to the week one assignment in the Canvas section called Files, write a 300-500 word essay and attach it the appropriate assignment link in Canvas by midnight Monday, May 19.** Also, post a critical reading question (CRQ) in the discussion board and respond to two of your peers’ discussion threads seeking responses. Do the little essay questions as they come up in the sections of the courseware. Don’t make them any harder than they are!

May 19: I will launch your choice of any **one mandatory Blackboard Collaborate session** on Monday at 9 am, Tuesday at 5 pm, and Wednesday at noon. If you need to meet with me during a different time, send me an e-mail so we can try to see where our schedules can easily come together. Remember, I am teaching two other online classes, so there will be some times and days that simply will not work for me because of other obligations. Other days and times are available and the meetings will be short, but **you have to have a session with me sometime this week.** **Homework:** Access the third and fourth lessons in the Thinking Strings CD, Hinduism and Buddhism. Be sure to listen/watch all of the subsections of this section of the CD. It sounds like a lot of information, but, again, the interactive video quickly takes you through the readings, and you do not even have to read unless you want to read along with the narrator! **Using the guide to the week two assignment in the Canvas section called Files, write a 300-500 word essay and attach it the appropriate assignment link in Canvas by midnight Monday, May 26.** Also, post a critical reading question (CRQ) in the discussion board and respond to two of your peers’ threads seeking responses. Everyone should have a research topic by now! Do the little essay questions as they come up in the sections of the courseware.

May 26: I will launch a non-mandatory Blackboard Collaborate session on Monday at 8:30 pm. If you are having questions about the material from Thinking Strings OR questions about your research topic and sources, try to come to my session. If you need to meet with me during a different time, send me an e-mail so we can try to see where our schedules can easily come together. **Homework:** If you did not finish Buddhism, no fear. Finish it first. There is no Buddhism option for the short essay this week, only Sikhism. Access the fifth lesson in the Thinking Strings CD, Sikhism. Be sure to listen/watch all of the subsections of this section of the CD. The interactive video quickly
Using the guide to the week three assignment in the Canvas section called Files, write a 300-500 word essay and attach it the appropriate assignment link in Canvas by midnight Monday, June 2. Also, post a critical reading question (CRQ) in the discussion board and respond to two of your peers’ threads seeking responses. Do the little essay questions as they come up in the sections of the courseware.

**June 2:** I will launch a non-mandatory Blackboard Collaborate session on Monday at 7pm. If you are having questions about the material from Thinking Strings OR questions about your research topic or finding sources, try to come to my session. If you need to meet with me during a different time, send me an e-mail so we can try to see where our schedules can easily come together. **Homework:** Access the sixth, seventh, and eighth lessons in the Thinking Strings CD, Daoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. Be sure to listen/watch all of the subsections of these three sections of the CD. This, again, is a lot of information, but, again, the interactive video quickly takes you through the readings! Using the guide to the week four assignment in the Canvas section called Files, write a 300-500 word essay and attach it the appropriate assignment link in Canvas by midnight Monday, June 9. Also, post a critical reading question (CRQ) in the discussion board and respond to two of your peers’ threads seeking responses. Do the little essay questions as they come up in the sections of the courseware.

**June 9:** I will launch a non-mandatory Blackboard Collaborate session on Monday at 8:30 pm. If you are having questions about the material from Thinking Strings OR questions about your research topic or finding sources, try to come to my session. If you need to meet with me during a different time, send me an e-mail so we can try to see where our schedules can easily come together. **Homework:** Access the ninth lesson in the Thinking Strings CD, Judaism. Be sure to listen/watch all of the subsections of this section of the CD. This will feel like a break after the last two weeks of intense lessons on multiple religions, but you should be working on your research paper by now, too. Also, the interactive video quickly takes you through the readings! Using the guide to the week five assignment in the Canvas section called Files, write a 300-500 word essay and attach it the appropriate assignment link in Canvas by midnight Monday, June 16. Also, post a critical reading question (CRQ) in the discussion board and respond to two of your peers’ threads seeking responses and do the little essay questions as they come up in the sections of the courseware.

**June 16:** I will launch a non-mandatory Blackboard Collaborate session on Monday at 7pm. If you are having questions about the material from Thinking Strings OR questions about your research topic or finding sources, try to come to my session. If you need to meet with me during a different time, send me an e-mail so we can try to see where our schedules can easily come together. **Homework:** Access the tenth lesson in the Thinking Strings CD, Christianity. Be sure to listen/watch all of the subsections of this section of the CD. This will feel like a break after the last two weeks of intense lessons on multiple religions, but you should be working on your research paper by now, too. Also, the interactive video quickly takes you through the readings! Using the guide to the week six assignment in the Canvas section called Files, write a 300-500 word essay and attach it
the appropriate assignment link in Canvas by midnight Monday, June 23. Also, post a critical reading question (CRQ) in the discussion board and respond to two of your peers’ threads seeking responses. Do the little essay questions as they come up in the sections of the courseware.

June 23: I will launch a non-mandatory Blackboard Collaborate session on Monday at 8:30 pm. If you are having questions about the material from Thinking Strings OR questions about your research topic or finding sources, try to come to my session. If you need to meet with me during a different time, send me an e-mail so we can try to see where our schedules can easily come together. **Homework:** Access the eleventh lesson in the Thinking Strings CD, Islam. Be sure to listen/watch all of the subsections of this section of the CD. This will feel like a break after the last two weeks of intense lessons on multiple religions, but you should be working on your research paper by now, too. Also, the interactive video quickly takes you through the readings! **Using the guide to the week seven assignment in the Canvas section called Files, write a 300-500 word essay and attach it the appropriate assignment link in Canvas by midnight Monday, June 30.** Also, post a critical reading question (CRQ) in the discussion board and respond to two of your peers’ threads seeking responses. Do the little essay questions as they come up in the sections of the courseware.

June 30: I will launch a non-mandatory Blackboard Collaborate session on Monday at 7pm. If you are having questions about the material from Thinking Strings OR questions about your research topic or finding sources, try to come to my session. If you need to meet with me during a different time, send me an e-mail so we can try to see where our schedules can easily come together. **Homework:** Access the twelfth lesson in the Thinking Strings CD, Religious Pluralism. Be sure to listen/watch all of the subsections of this section of the CD. This will feel like a break after the last two weeks of intense lessons on multiple religions, but you should be working on your research paper by now, too. Also, the interactive video quickly takes you through the readings! If you missed one of the 300-500 word essays, this is a chance to make-up that missed assignment. Look for the criteria for the assignment link in Canvas and remember that the paper is due by midnight Monday, July 8. Also, post a critical reading question (CRQ) in the discussion board and respond to two of your peers’ threads seeking responses. Be sure and do the little 5 sentence essays in this section, too, if you want to earn all of those easy points!

**July 7: Mandatory week of online attendance for Student presentations!** There will be five opportunities to attend this week. See the announcement in Canvas for times each day. **Homework:** Work on your research papers. **They are due by midnight on Friday of this week, July 11.** Also, post a CRQ based on your presentation or that on one of your peer’s presentations and check the discussion board for two threads seeking a response.

**July 14:** I will launch a non-mandatory Blackboard Collaborate session in Canvas on Monday at 8:30 pm to field any questions. **Homework:** Study for your final exams in other classes. I will get your graded papers back as quickly as possible!