

# RELG E101: Exploring Religion

Professor: Scott Sargent  
telephone: 777-4100  
email: [sargentm@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:sargentm@mailbox.sc.edu)  
office hours: by appointment

ACCELERATED COURSE

---

## Introduction to Religious Studies

The discipline of Religious Studies involves the study of religion as a phenomenon, as opposed to indoctrination into a specific religious tradition. Students will be introduced to the study of religion through lectures, films, readings from the textbook and relevant source materials, and interacting with guest speakers representing different faiths. Because the nature of the course is comparative, students will spend some time examining primal religion, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism; an effort will be made to present these traditions not only from the point of view of adherents, but also from other vantage points including historical, developmental, and literary.

Time will be spent, as applicable for each individual religion, considering their formative, classical, and modern eras. Unfortunately, because of the breadth of the material covered, depth must be sacrificed: students should expect to come away from this course with an appreciation of the diversity of religious expression from recorded history to the modern era, but time limits will prohibit a detailed exploration of any one tradition. Additionally, students should develop an understanding of different methods which have been applied towards an objective analysis of the phenomenon of religion. Extensive attention will be given to the vocabulary of religious studies, and of the various religious traditions studied.

## Required texts

Primary Text:

*World Religions Today*, Esposito, *et al.*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition

## **Course Requirements**

### **1. Attendance**

Attendance will be taken daily in keeping with the University's attendance policy ("absence from more than 10 percent of the scheduled class sessions, whether excused or unexcused, is excessive and the instructor may choose to exact a grade penalty for such absences.") Any absences beyond the fourth occurrence may result in the loss of one grade level, *i.e.* an "A" will be lowered to a "B+".

### **2. Preparation**

The preparation for most classes will consist of an assigned reading, typically from the textbook, although some additional readings will periodically be assigned from handouts or other material. Students should schedule enough time to read assigned material (*once is required, twice is recommended*) before class, noting that this material is often challenging and will therefore require more time to read than may be expected. It is strongly recommended that students not fall behind on reading assignments!

Additionally, specific study assignments will be made during class: vocabulary words, relevant names and dates, etc. Reading assignments on the syllabus are from the Esposito text unless otherwise specified.

### **3. Courtesy**

PLEASE:

- Mute cell phones and other noise-makers
- Raise your hand to be recognized before speaking
- Respect the beliefs and opinions of others

#### 4. Grading

**(25 points)** = 10 quizzes

**(25 points)** = Exam on Introduction, Indigenous Religions, and Judaism

**(25 points)** = Exam on Christianity and Islam

**(25 points)** = Final Exam on Hinduism, Buddhism, and Conclusion

Quizzes and exams will cover material presented in reading assignments and lectures; again, it is recommended that students not only attend class, but also arrive prepared. Most questions on quizzes and exams will be in the form of true/false, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, and short answers; an occasional essay question may appear.

An optional extra credit assignment will be offered.

Grading scale: 90-100 = A

87-89 = B+

80-86 = B

77-79 = C+

70-76 = C

67-69 = D+

60-66 = D

0-59 = F

The Academic Integrity policy will be strictly enforced.

## **CLASS #1**

1<sup>st</sup> half = syllabus review; extra credit assignment

2<sup>nd</sup> half = course overview and assignments for next class

## **CLASS #2**

1<sup>st</sup> half = introduction to Religious Studies (read: Esposito pp. 3-37; 607-616)

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Indigenous Religions (read: Esposito pp. 39-75)

## **CLASS #3**

1<sup>st</sup> half = Judaism

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Judaism

## **CLASS #4**

1<sup>st</sup> half = Judaism (read: Esposito pp. 77-100)

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Judaism (read: Esposito pp. 100-145) / review for exam #1

## **CLASS #5**

1<sup>st</sup> half = EXAM #1 (Indigenous Religions & Judaism)

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Christianity (read: Esposito pp. 147-169, 170-177, 179-189)

## **CLASS #6**

1<sup>st</sup> half = Christianity (read: Esposito pp. 169-170 “Jesus as Son of God”, 177-179 “Festivals”)

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Christianity

### **CLASS #7**

1<sup>st</sup> half = Islam (read: Esposito pp. 219-244, 254-262, 264-273)

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Islam (read: Esposito pp. 244-254)

### **CLASS #8**

1<sup>st</sup> half = Islam presentation/ Q&A

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Islam; review for exam #2 (Christianity and Islam)

### **CLASS #9**

1<sup>st</sup> half = EXAM #2 (Christianity and Islam)

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Hinduism (read: Esposito pp. 307-322, 357 “Cyclic Time”)

### **CLASS #10**

1<sup>st</sup> half = Hinduism (read: Esposito pp. 325-329, 353-370)

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Hinduism (read: Esposito pp. 329-333, 374 “Milk Miracle”)

### **CLASS #11**

1<sup>st</sup> half = Hinduism presentation / Q&A

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism (read: Esposito pp. 322-325 “Jainism”, 337-342 “Sikhism”, 342-353)

### **CLASS #12**

1<sup>st</sup> half = Buddhism (read: Esposito pp. 399-427)

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Buddhism (read: Esposito pp. 427-433)

## **CLASS #13**

1<sup>st</sup> half = Buddhism (read: Esposito pp. 433-434, 440-441, 458-459, 470-483)

2<sup>nd</sup> half = Skepticism and other alternatives; conclusion; (read: Esposito 603-616)

## **FINAL EXAM**