



Religions of the World



RELG 315; Sec. 1; Fall 2018

SYLLABUS

Meeting time: **Sec. 01:** Mondays: 14:00-16:30; Room: B207

Instructor: Dr. Andrei G. Zavaliy

Office: B 403; 224-8399, ext. 3604

Office Hours: I am usually in the office on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 till 9:30. At all other times an appointment needs to be arranged.

E-MAIL: azavaliy@auk.edu.kw (*emailing is the most convenient way to contact me*)

REQUIRED TEXTS (*available at the AUK bookstore*):

- ***RELG: World.*** Robert E. Van Voorst. Wadsworth, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-111-83278-0
- ***Anthology of World Scriptures.*** ed. by Robert E. Van Voorst, Thomson-Wadsworth, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-305-58449-5
- ***Assorted Handouts.*** Occasionally handouts with additional assignments will be distributed in class. You can access *most* (but not all) of the handouts, assignments as well as all the course documents (e.g. syllabus, power-point presentations, etc.) on the shared “Cloud” drive from any computer (under “AA.Humanities” folder find a folder named “Andrei Zavaliy”)

AUK ATTENDANCE POLICY:

“Students who, during a semester, miss more than 15% or 8 hours of the class sessions of any course, irrespective of the reasons, may be advised by the instructor to withdraw from the course. Students who do not withdraw should expect to fail the course” (*Academic Catalog*, p. 69)

Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. However, **2** absences for the semester will be allowed for this class pattern. Every additional absence will result in deducting 4% from your overall score. For instance, if you had 1 extra absence and received a score of 85% (B) for the course, it would be lowered to 81% (B-); etc. Simple math will tell you that skipping more than 5 classes over limit will earn you an **F** for the course *even if you have a 100% average on all your tests.*

Important: I **do not** distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences: an absence is an absence. Therefore, I do not accept doctor’s notes or hospital notes (medical emergencies MAY be excused only at my discretion). No changes can be made past the two weeks of the skipped class. It is YOUR responsibility to sign the attendance sheet at each session.

THE 8-MINUTE RULE: You will not be able to sign the attendance sheet if you are more than 8 minutes late, and you’ll have to take the absence. Leaving the class early will amount to an absence from the class as well even if you sign the attendance sheet.

PARTICIPATION

Participation in class will be based on the instructor’s assessment of your contribution to class discussion, being prepared for class (i.e., doing the reading, preparing for assignments), being on time, not continually leaving early, and giving thoughtful feedback to others.

AT MINIMUM, participation implies that a student brings textbooks and notes to class.

Disability Accommodation:

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, kindly arrange for an appointment with Dr. Huda Shaaban (hshaaban@auk.edu.kw) at the Counseling Center located in front of Gate 2 at the earliest with the understanding that all disability-related accommodations require registration with the Counseling Center and are not applied retroactively.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The American University of Kuwait regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values and standards of intellectual honesty. The guiding principle of academic integrity shall be that a student's submitted work, examinations, and projects must be that of the student's own work. Anyone caught plagiarizing will be given a grade ‘F’ for the class. It is strongly suggested that you educate yourself about what constitutes plagiarism by visiting www.plagiarism.org.

- **Falsifying your attendance record or signing for another student not present in class is a case of academic dishonesty.**

COURSE ETIQUETTE

All cell phones, ipods, and mp3-players are to be turned off as soon as the student enters the classroom. Absolutely NO FOOD allowed in the classroom except for water bottles. Students using the cell-phones for messaging will be asked to leave the classroom.



GRADING CRITERIA

- Quizzes (4 in total) - 25%
- Midterm Exam – 25%
- Short Response papers 25%
- Final Exam – 25%

(There is no extra credit work for this class.)

NEW Grading Scale:

A	=	94 - 100%	(GPA: 4)	C-	=	70-73%	(GPA: 1.7)
A-	=	90 – 93%	(GPA: 3.7)	D+	=	67-69%	(GPA: 1.3)
B+	=	87 - 89%	(GPA: 3.3)	D	=	64 - 66%	(GPA: 1.0)
B	=	84 – 86%	(GPA: 3.0)	D-	=	60-63%	(GPA: 0.7)
B-	=	80 – 83%	(GPA: 2.7)	F	=	<60%	(GPA: 0.0)
C+	=	77 - 79%	(GPA: 2.3)	I	=	Incomplete	
C	=	74 – 76%	(GPA: 2.0)	WF	=	Withdrawal with Failure	

QUIZZES

There will be 4 quizzes during the semester. All quizzes will be announced in advance. The quizzes will cover the reading assignments as well as the class discussions. If you miss a quiz – IT CANNOT BE MADE UP. However, at the end of the semester I will only average the 3 best quizzes. The lowest 4th grade for the quiz will be dropped. Thus, if you miss one quiz you lose the privilege of having the lowest grade dropped.

The numerical grading system for the assignments graded on a 30-point scale (Quizzes):

A	=	29-30	C	=	18-19
A-	=	28	C-	=	17
B+	=	26-27	D+	=	16
B	=	24-25	D	=	15
B-	=	22-23	D-	=	14
C+	=	20-21	F	=	less than 13 points

SHORT PAPERS

There will be 4 short response papers (2.5 pages each; at least 700 words) assigned during the semester. All papers are due in class as a hard copy (no emails). Each paper grade is worth 6.25% of the final grade (25% in total) – graded on 25 point scale. **Late papers will get 3 points off for each missed class.** Plagiarized papers will get 0 points.

COURSE DESCRIPTION and OBJECTIVES

You have chosen an exciting field for exploration. The wisdom traditions we will study are very ancient and profound. It seems that every society has had some type of religious life; thus our inquiry can enable the student to understand people more easily and perhaps even appreciate the diverse beliefs of our increasingly global world. This course is designed to facilitate this process by introducing students to the world's major religions as they are practiced globally. The origins and development, central teachings, devotional practices, institutions and cultural expressions of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Judaism, Christianity, and (to some extent) Islam will be considered in relation to common themes of human experience: the holy or sacred, evil and suffering, love and compassion, wisdom and justice, death and deliverance.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon successful completion of the course students will be able....

1. To explain the essential beliefs, practices, rituals and institutions of each major religious tradition with emphasis on its dogmatic and normative principles.
2. To identify the cultural and historical significance of these religions for particular regions of the world.
3. To discern similarities and differences of thought and practice among various religious traditions.
4. To critically discuss and evaluate various religious views.
5. To compare and examine the influences of these religions in our world today.
6. To identify and rationally defend one's own attitude towards various religions and their practitioners.
7. To demonstrate skills necessary to engage in respectful and fruitful dialogue with other religions.

AUK MISSION STATEMENT

The American University of Kuwait is a liberal arts institution dedicated to teaching, learning, and scholarship. The university offers programs that provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong learning and professional success. AUK enriches society by fostering an environment encouraging critical thinking, effective communication, personal growth, service, and leadership.

Important Dates to Remember:

- Monday, September 10th – First Class
- Monday, October 29th – Midterm Exam
- Monday, December 16th – Last class
- Tuesday, January 8th – Sunday, January 13th – Final Exam Week

Below is the list of topics and associated reading assignments, each of which must be done *before* it is discussed in class.

WEEK 1: Introduction to the Subject

- An overview of the course syllabus
- Defining Religion; Key Characteristics of Religion
- The Sources of Religion
- Nature and Use of Scriptures
- Methodology

READING:

- Van Voorst, Chapter 1
- *Anthology*, Chapter 1

INDIAN RELIGIONS

WEEKS 2-3: Hinduism

- Origins of Hinduism (Movie)
- Vedic Religion (Brahmanism) and Devotional Hinduism
- Beliefs and Practices of Hindus
- Meaning and Varieties of Yoga

READING:

- Van Voorst, Chapter 3
- *Anthology*, Chapter 2

WEEKS 4-5: Buddhism

- Life of Buddha Shakyamuni
- Origins and Beliefs of Buddhism (Movie)
- Historical development of later Buddhism
- Branches of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana

READING:

- Van Voorst, Chapter 5
- *Anthology*, Chapter 3.

WEEKS 6-7: Jainism and Sikhism

- History and Divisions of Jainism
- Project at Syncretism: Origin and Development of Sikhism
- The Ten Gurus of Sikhism and *Adi Granth*

READING:

- Van Voorst, Chapters 4, 6.
- *Anthology*, Chapters 4, 5.

Midterm Exam

CHINESE and JAPANESE RELIGIONS

WEEKS 8-9: Daoism (Taoism) and Confucianism

- The concept of Dao in the *Dao De Jing*
- Life and teachings of Confucius
- Ancestor's Worship

READING:

- Van Voorst, Chapter 7
- *Anthology*, Chapters 6, 7.

WEEK 10: Shinto

- Mythology of early Japan
- *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*
- *Kami* – gods of the Japanese tradition
- Shinto in Modern Japan

READING:

- Van Voorst, Chapter 8
- *Anthology*, Chapter 8

MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS

WEEKS 11-12: Judaism

- Origin and basic beliefs of Judaism (Movie)

READING:

- Van Voorst, Chapter 10
- *Anthology*, Chapter 10

WEEKS 13-15: Christianity and Islam

- History of the Early Christianity (Movie)
- The three branches of Christianity: Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants

READING:

- Van Voorst, Chapters 11, 12.
- *Anthology*, Chapter 11.

Final Exam

THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION AS THE SEMESTER PROGRESSES.

(Very) IMPORTANT POINTS

- **No make-ups for Quizzes**
- **The 8-Minutes Rule** - come 8 minutes late or leave early – take an absence.
- **Only 2 absences allowed** – penalties mercilessly applied if exceeded.
- **NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**
- **No Extra-Credit work available for this class (don't ask for exceptions)**
- **Zero tolerance for Plagiarism** – immediate 'F' for the course
- **Zero tolerance for other forms of Academic Dishonesty (e.g., falsifying your attendance records)**
- **Zero tolerance for cheating during tests** – immediate 'F' for the test.
- **THE GOLDEN RULE: Students don't get what they "need", or "really-really-really want", or feel like they "deserve" – students get exactly what their score shows at the end.**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Helpful secondary texts for preparing papers– all available at the AUK library)

- *Milestone Documents of World Religions: Exploring Traditions of Faith through Primary Sources*, Schlager Group, 2010 (3 volumes).
- *Sacred Mountains of the World*, Edwin Bernbaum, Univ. of California Press, 1998.
- *World Religions*, Warren Mathews. Wadsworth, 2006.
- *Asian Philosophies*. John M. Kohler, Pearson, 2012.
- *Islam, Christianity and Tradition*, Ian Netton.
- *A History of God*, Karen Armstrong.
- *Introducing Daoism*. Livia Kohn, Routledge, 2009.
- *Unmasking Buddhism*, Bernard Faure.
- *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edward Craig. Routledge, 2005.
- *Seven Theories of Religion*. Daniel L. Pals, 1996
- *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*. Ninian Smart, 1996.
- *Enduring Issues in Religion*. John Lyden, 1995.
- *The Advaita Worldview [Hinduism]*. Anantanand Rambachan, 2006.
- *An Autobiography of a Yogi*, Paramhansa Yogananda.
- *The Orthodox Way*, Kallistos Ware, 1995.
- *Meditation from Buddhist, Hindu, and Taoist Perspectives*, Robert Altobello, 2009.
- *Hinduism Today*, Jacobs, Stephen, 2010.
- *Sikhism Today*, Jhutti-Johal, Jagbir, 2011.