

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

Course Number: SW 311

Instructor's Name: Farnaz Masumian

Unique Number: WB (63420)

Office Number: Social Work Bldg; Room
3.104 A

Semester: Fall 2009

Phone: 899-8491

Meeting Time/Place: Web-based
(Blackboard)

Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-2:30

Web Site: <http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/>

FULL COURSE TITLE

World Religions

I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

The primary purpose of this course is to promote awareness and appreciation of the diversity of religious thought in the modern world and help students of social work develop spiritual sensitivity in their professional practice. Religious responses to significant spiritual questions such as the nature of humankind, the purpose of life, and the existence of an afterlife will be examined in a comparative religious context to enable students to see how their own spiritual views can strengthen or weaken practitioner-client relationships at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of practice.

II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- Demonstrate understanding of the central teachings and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam and the Bahá'í Faith, as these faiths relate to social justice.
- Identify and comparatively reflect on religious responses to central questions of humankind such as who are we, why are we here, and where are we going?
- Identify the impact and implications of religious or spiritual perspectives on social justice and social work practice.
- Demonstrate increased self-awareness of how personal value systems can impact one's behavior towards clients of different religious or spiritual backgrounds.

III. TEACHING METHODS

This course is entirely web-based. **Instructor lectures** are in the form of **web lessons**. You will find these web lessons on the Blackboard online system under **Course Documents**.

IV. REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS, AND MATERIALS

Required Textbooks:

Hopfe, Lewis M., and Mark R. Woodward. **Religions of the World** (Eleventh Edition). New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2009.

Masumian Farnaz. **Life After Death: A Study of the Afterlife in World Religions.**

Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2002.

Recommended Textbooks:

Van Hook, M., Hugen, B., & Aguilar, M. (Eds.). *Spirituality within religious traditions in social work practice.* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2001.

Masumian, Farnaz & Bijan. *Divine Educators.* Oxford: George Ronald Publishers. 2005.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be required to

1. Take **four multiple-choice tests** throughout the semester. These tests will be based on the two required textbooks as well as the **web Lessons that are in lieu** of instructor lectures. These tests will be online and administered via the **UT Blackboard** system under **Course Documents**.
2. Take **seven short multiple-choice website quizzes** (one for each religion covered in the course). These 10-items quizzes will also be online and administered via the **UT Blackboard** system under **Course Documents**. **Here is the list of the websites:**
 - Hinduism: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/index.shtml>
 - Buddhism: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/index.shtml>
 - Zoroastrianism: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian/index.shtml>
 - Judaism: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/index.shtml>
 - Christianity: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/index.shtml>
 - Islám: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/index.shtml>
 - Bahá'í Faith: <http://www.bahai.org/>
3. Take **seven short True/False videotape quizzes** (one for each religion). Both the videos and the 5-item video quizzes will be online and administered via the **UT Blackboard** system under **Course Documents**

VI. CLASS POLICIES

The University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Withdrawal

If a student decides to withdraw from this course, it is their responsibility to start and finish the process with the School. Students who remain enrolled in the course will receive a grade based on their work and grades set for in the syllabus. For withdrawal dates, refer to the University's calendar.

Incomplete and Q-Drops

Incompletes and Q-drops are given under very special documented circumstances and will be decided by the instructor on a case-by-base basis. To apply for an incomplete or Q-drop, first arrange a meeting with me and get approval for filling out an "Incomplete" form and also present a documented plan on how you intend to finish the course. I do not grant "incompletes" or Q-drops easily. A substantial amount of the course work must already be completed before I consider giving an incomplete. The vast majority of my students WILL receive a grade from me based on performance criteria stipulated in the syllabus.

Academic Freedom

Students taking this class are free to believe in any religion(s) or no religion at all. I do expect all to respect the beliefs of others in the class, even if they completely disagree with them. I will not base grades on a student's belief system but rather on the quality of the work they perform for this course.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).

Documented Disability Statement

Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Use of Blackboard

In this class the professor uses Blackboard—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://courses.utexas.edu>—to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to give students online quizzes and surveys. Students can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk by calling 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please plan accordingly.

FEEDBACK STATEMENT

(Sample) During this course the professor will ask students to provide feedback on their learning in informal as well as formal ways, including through anonymous surveys about how the professor’s teaching strategies are helping or hindering student learning. It is very important for the professor to know the students’ reactions to what is taking place in class, so students are encouraged to respond to these surveys, ensuring that together the professor and students can create an environment effective for teaching and learning.

VII. Grading

- 4 Exams (50%)
- 7 Website quizzes (30%)
- 7 Videotape quizzes (20%)

Grading Scale

100 - 94 = A
93 - 90 = A-
89 - 87 = B+
86 - 84 = B
83 - 80 = B-

79 - 77 = C+
76 - 74 = C
73 - 70 = C- (Class failed/no credit: 73 and below)
69 - 67 = D+
66 - 64 = D
63 - 60 = D-
59 and below = F

VIII. COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: The dates for tests and quizzes on your syllabus are **ONLY suggested**. In other words, you can take all of them at your own pace as long as you **complete all your work by Friday December 4th, 2009**.

August 26

- Hinduism:
- Religions of the World
- Hinduism Web Lessons

September 9

- Hinduism:
- Religions of the World
- Hinduism Web Lessons

September 16

- Buddhism:
- Religions of the World
- Buddhism Web Lessons

September 30

- ***EXAM # I: Hinduism & Buddhism***
- ***Hinduism & Buddhism website quizzes***
- ***Hinduism & Buddhism videotape quizzes***

October 1

Zoroastrianism:

- Religions of the World
- Zoroastrianism Web Lessons
- Judaism:
- Religions of the World

October 15

- Judaism:
- Religions of the World
- Judaism Web Lessons

October 20

- ***EXAM # II: Judaism & Zoroastrianism***
- ***Zoroastrianism & Judaism website quizzes***
- ***Zoroastrianism & Judaism videotape quizzes***

October 21

Christianity:

- Religions of the World
- Christianity Web Lessons

October 28

Christianity:

- Religions of the World
- Christianity Web Lessons

November 4

Islam:

- Religions of the World
- Islam Web Lessons

November 10

Islam:

- Religions of the World
- Islam Web Lessons

November 15

- ***EXAM # III: Christianity & Islam***
- ***Christianity & Islam website quizzes***
- ***Christianity & Islam videotape quizzes***

November 16

Bahá'í Faith:

- Religions of the World (**Web Bonus Chapter in some editions**)
- Bahá'í Faith Web Lessons

November 20

- Afterlife in World Religions:
- Life After Death, Chapters 1-5

November 27

- Afterlife in World Religions:
- Life After Death, Chapters 6-10

December 4

- ***EXAM # IV: Bahá'í Faith & the entire "Life After Death" book***
- ***Bahá'í website quiz***
- ***Bahá'í video quiz***