Syllabus – Winter Session | 12/30/2024 - 01/17/2025

Excluding materials for purchase, syllabus information may be subject to change. The most up-to-date syllabus is located within the course in HuskyCT.

Course and Instructor Information

Course Title: World Religions
Credits: 3
Format: Online, asynchronous
Prerequisites: None

Professor: Katayoun Khorramzadeh (Prof. K)
Pronouns: she/her/hers
Email: Katayoun.Khorramzadeh@uconn.edu (preferred method of contact)
Office Hours/Availability: I will respond to your inquiries within 24 hours. For scheduled meetings, please enter my Webex room from the left side menu of HuskyCT.

Course Materials

Required course materials should be obtained before the first day of class.

Required textbooks are available for purchase through the UConn Bookstore (or use the Purchase Textbooks tool in HuskyCT). Textbooks can be shipped (fees apply).

Required Materials:

1. *Soul Rebels: the Rastafari*, William Lewis
2. *No god but God: the Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*, Reza Aslan
3. Films will also be treated as "texts" (*Baraka* & *Dreamtime* are available for rent on Amazon)
4. Additional course readings and media are available within HuskyCT, through either an Internet link or as PDFs.

Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize students with various religious belief systems, both polytheistic and monotheistic, from a cross-cultural and anthropological perspective. We will draw this material from ethnographies and articles, lectures and discussions, student presentations, and films. The course goal is to gain informed understanding of Western and non-Western religious institutions by examining both the diversities and similarities. Our survey of world religions will include, but is not limited to, an examination of the major religious institutions of Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Shinto, and Taoism, as well as Australian Aborigine, Native American, Rastafari and Vodou worldviews. A strong emphasis will be placed on critical thinking.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Investigate the defining characteristics of Abrahamic, Dharmic, Indigenous, African diaspora, Earth-centered, and Mystical religions, as well as Secular Humanism, by drawing on doctrine, scriptural text, and ritual.

2. Assess both the similarities and diversities of Western and non-Western religious institutions.

3. Express the central function of religion for communities and individuals from an anthropological perspective.

4. Critique commonly held misconceptions of various world religions.

5. Explain how knowledge gained from exposure to world religions will increase cultural competence and critical thinking skills outside the classroom.

Course Outline

Modules	Dates
Module 0 - Course Orientation/Anthropological Etiquette	December 30
Module 1 - The Anthropology of Religion: How Do We Examine Religion Using a Social Science Lens? The Basic Principles of Anthropology and the Anthropology of Religion	December 31
Module 2 - Religion and Social Movements: Rastas as a Case Study	January 2 – 4
Module 3 - Syncretism and the African Diaspora	January 5 – 7
Module 4 - Mysticism, Pilgrimages, and Rites of Passage	January 8 - 9
Module 5 - The Evolution of Islam	January 10 - 12
Module 6 - Paganism and Indigenous Traditions: Honoring the Earth and its Seasonal Cycles	January 13 – 14
Module 7 - Presentations and Conclusions	January 15 – 17

Course Requirements and Grading

Summary of Course Grading:

Course Components	Weight
Quizzes	30%
Discussions	20%
Annotated Sources for Presentation	10%
Detailed Presentation Outline	10%
Presentation Slides	15%
Final Exam Essay	15%

Description of Assignments

Quizzes

Quizzes gauge your reading comprehension, critical analysis of films and readings, and clear written expression. They are graded on a scale of 0-10 in a short essay format and are meant to engage you with learning materials. As you read and watch, ask yourself if you understand the argument presented by the writer(s) or filmmaker(s) and if you can illustrate the ideas with examples from the reading or film. Quiz responses should analyze world religions and their institutions through an anthropological and holistic lens. There are 6 quizzes. See the Course Schedule for due dates. Additional details are provided in HuskyCT.

Discussions

Several times during the course, you will complete and submit a discussion board activity that pertains to topics we've been examining, usually drawn from a film and/or readings. You are responsible for completing each activity or set of questions by the due date, posting your work in a discussion thread, and subsequently responding to your classmates' posts. Where appropriate, use your own experiences to discuss while engaging with the material. Discussion assignments challenge you to reflect on your perceptions, your opinions, your ideas of 'right' and 'wrong'. Are they organic, or are they prescribed and taught through a cultural lens? Are others wrong, or are they simply adhering to different cultural notions of right, wrong, and normal? Questioning what we believe to be 'normal' is an essential part of what we will do in this course through our examination of world religions. There are 7 discussion activities. In Module 7, I will share your religion presentations in a discussion board. Discussions should be thoughtful and well-considered. See the Course Schedule and the boards in HuskyCT for due dates. More details regarding discussion guidelines are provided in HuskyCT.

> **Note:** You will create a video with your Webcam in Module 0 and Module 5 Discussions. You can use any video software tool of your choice. If you want, you can use Kaltura which is free for UConn students. Visit: *Kaltura Video Tool* in HuskyCT.

Presentation

You will select a world religion in Module 1 and work methodically to create a presentation to share with the class in Module 7. Using an anthropological frame, your presentations will engage and educate the class with various world religions and the cultures that create them. How do people jell together using religion? How does religion serve individuals? Communities? How do religious institutions connect to culture? Part of the presentation will critically examine our implicit biases, stereotypes, and misconceptions of various world religions.

The presentation will come together in three parts:

Annotated Sources for Presentation

You must draw from a minimum of 3 scholarly books or articles and a minimum of 3 internet sources, which must be annotated to indicate relevance to your presentation. A 2-3 sentence annotation will suffice. Avoid sources like Wikipedia and similar sites. Choose your online sources wisely. Search your religious institution's website(s) when available, as well as other related sites, and draw from multiple sources. I'll provide additional information in your Presentation Guidelines in HuskyCT.

Detailed Presentation Outline

You will submit a detailed outline of your presentation, which must include sources. Think of your presentation like a paper; you'll need to research, assemble information, present it in your own words, and include references. The outline should be well-structured and fully fleshed out.

Presentation Slides

You will submit a PowerPoint (or comparable alternative) presentation on your selected religion. Your finished slides should coincide with your outline and be structured logically with an introduction, a middle, and a conclusion. Again, think of your presentation like a paper. It will require planning and preparation. I've shared Sample Presentations in Presentation Guidelines in HuskyCT.

Final Exam Essay
You will create a guided response demonstrating a cumulative understanding of course materials as you apply the skills and knowledge you've acquired throughout the course. Your final exam essay will examine why cultural relativism is such an important concept in the anthropology of religion and how knowledge gained from exposure to world religions will increase cultural competence and critical thinking skills outside the classroom.

Grading Scale:

Grade	Letter Grade	GPA
93-100	A	4.0
90-92	A-	3.7
87-89	B+	3.3
83-86	B	3.0
80-82	B-	2.7
77-79	C+	2.3
73-76	C	2.0
70-72	C-	1.7
67-69	D+	1.3
63-66	D	1.0
60-62	D-	0.7
<60	F	0.0

Due Dates and Late Policy
All course due dates are identified in HuskyCT and in the Course Schedule. Deadlines are based on Eastern Time; if you are in a different time zone, please adjust your submission times accordingly. *The instructor reserves the right to change dates accordingly as the course progresses. All changes will be communicated in an appropriate manner.*

Important policy on missed assessments: All work needs to be submitted by the due dates so that the class is actively working together and so that you're making continual progress on your presentations. You will receive a zero if you miss the deadlines. For extenuating circumstances, I will handle these on a case-by-case basis, and you must notify me by email ASAP. *These requests are meant for emergency circumstances only.* I will do my best to support you during the course, but please make every effort to manage your time and communicate with me if something comes up.

Feedback and Grades
I will make every effort to provide feedback and grades within 48 hours. To keep track of your performance in the course, refer to My Grades in HuskyCT.

Weekly Time Commitment
You should expect to dedicate **42 hours a week** to this 3-week course. This expectation is based on the various course activities, assignments, and assessments and the University of Connecticut's policy regarding credit hours. More information related to hours per week per credit can be accessed at the Online Student website.

How to succeed in the course
- Complete assigned readings, films, and learning materials.
- Display a depth of thought in your written work in quizzes and discussions, as well as in your class presentation and final exam essay. Integrate the ideas from across learning materials in your assignments. In other words, apply your new knowledge and connect the dots where appropriate.
- Complete all work by the assigned due dates.

By accomplishing these tasks, you will be on track to earn a good grade, learn a new approach to understanding world religions and the cultures that create them, and avoid undue stress!

Student Authentication and Verification

The University of Connecticut is required to verify the identity of students who participate in online courses and to establish that students who register in an online course are the same students who participate in and complete the course activities and assessments and receive academic credit. Verification and authentication of student identity in this course will include:

1. Method 1: Secure access to the learning management system using your unique UConn NetID and password.
2. Method 2: You will create a video w/ your Webcam in the Module 0 and Module 5 Discussions. You can use any video software tool of your choice. If you want, you can use Kaltura which is free for UConn students. Visit: Kaltura Video Tool on the course left-side menu in HuskyCT.

Student Responsibilities, Resources, and Policies

As a member of the University of Connecticut student community, you are held to certain standards and academic policies. In addition, there are numerous resources available to help you succeed in your academic work. Review these important standards, policies and resources, which include:

- The Student Code
    - Academic Integrity
    - Resources on Avoiding Cheating and Plagiarism
- Copyrighted Materials
- Credit Hours and Workload
- Netiquette and Communication
- Adding or Dropping a Course
- Academic Calendar
- Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships
- Sexual Assault Reporting Policy

Academic Integrity

- You are responsible for acting in accordance with the University of Connecticut's Student Code. Review and become familiar with the expectations. In particular, make sure you have read the section that applies to you on Academic Integrity. Students in this course are expected to maintain the highest standards of intellectual honesty. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty (cheating or plagiarism), you should review UConn's code of conduct at http://community.uconn.edu/the-student-code-appendix-a/ and consult with the instructor PRIOR to taking any questionable actions.
- Avoiding Plagiarism: As a student, it is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism and meet University expectations related to academic integrity. The University of Connecticut Library recommends the following resources for students to understand and avoid plagiarism:
- Understanding Plagiarism, a tutorial from UConn Library
- Citing Sources, a UConn guide to introduce citing MLA, APA styles and more
- Citation Machine, interactive citation tool for MLA and APA styles
- KnightCite, interactive citation tool for MLA, APA, and Chicago styles
- Assignment Calculator, interactive tool that provides a timeline for writing
- Research QuickStart, guidance on common questions and needs in the research process
- Research Now, guides to help you develop your research skills

Statement on Use of AI

All students are expected to act in accordance with the Guidelines for Academic Integrity at the University of Connecticut. If you have questions about academic integrity or intellectual property, you should consult with me or consult UConn's guidelines for academic integrity. Posting course material on student tutoring and course sharing websites (e.g. Chegg, Course Hero) may be a violation of my copyright and intellectual property and a violation of academic integrity. Many of you may also be aware of the recent release of ChatGPT3, a Large Language artificial intelligence (AI) model that has the capacity to quickly produce text on a range of topics. ChatGPT3 aggregates the ideas and insights of many researchers without giving them credit. Submitting ChatGPT-generated text as your own work would be an act of plagiarism insofar as it would involve passing off the work of others as your own. For these reasons, you are not allowed to use ChatGPT or other similar

tools to produce essays or other academic work for this class, unless otherwise explicitly permitted to do so. You should also know that the university has AI detection software that distinguishes between AI generated content and human generated content.

Copyright
Copyrighted materials within the course are only for the use of students enrolled in the course for purposes associated with this course and may not be retained or further disseminated.

Resources for Students Experiencing Distress
The University of Connecticut is committed to supporting students in their mental health, their psychological and social well-being, and their connection to their academic experience and overall wellness. The university believes that academic, personal, and professional development can flourish only when each member of our community is assured equitable access to mental health services. The university aims to make access to mental health attainable while fostering a community reflecting equity and diversity and understands that good mental health may lead to personal and professional growth, greater self-awareness, increased social engagement, enhanced academic success, and campus and community involvement.

Students who feel they may benefit from speaking with a mental health professional can find support and resources through the Student Health and Wellness-Mental Health (SHaW-MH) office. Through SHaW-MH, students can make an appointment with a mental health professional and engage in confidential conversations or seek recommendations or referrals for any mental health or psychological concern.

Mental health services are included as part of the university's student health insurance plan and also partially funded through university fees. If you do not have UConn's student health insurance plan, most major insurance plans are also accepted. Students can visit the Student Health and Wellness-Mental Health located in Storrs on the main campus in the Arjona Building, 4th Floor, or contact the office at (860) 486-4705, or https://studenthealth.uconn.edu/ for services or questions.

Accommodations for Illness or Extended Absences
If illness prevents you from participating in class, it is your responsibility to notify me as soon as possible. If life circumstances are affecting your ability to focus on courses and your UConn experience, students can email the Dean of Students at dos@uconn.edu to request support.

Students with Disabilities
The University of Connecticut is committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and assuring that the learning environment is accessible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with Disabilities, Wilbur Cross Building Room 204, (860) 486-2020 or http://csd.uconn.edu/.

Policy against Discrimination, Harassment, and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships
The University is committed to maintaining an environment free of discrimination or discriminatory harassment directed toward any person or group within its community – students, employees, or visitors. Academic and professional excellence can flourish only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. All members of the University community are responsible for the maintenance of an academic and work environment in which people are free to learn and work without fear of discrimination or discriminatory harassment. To that end, and in accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination and discriminatory harassment, as well as inappropriate Romantic relationships, and such behavior will be met with appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the University. Refer to the Policy against Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships for more information. To protect the campus community, all non-confidential University employees (including faculty) are required to report assaults they witness or are told about to the Office of Diversity & Equity under the Sexual Assault Response Policy. The University takes all reports with the utmost seriousness. Please be aware that while the information you provide will remain private, it will not be confidential and will be shared with University officials who can help. Refer to the Sexual Assault Reporting Policy for more information.

Software/Technical Requirements
(with Accessibility and Privacy Information)

The software/technical requirements for this course include:

- HuskyCT/Blackboard (HuskyCT/ Blackboard Accessibility Statement, HuskyCT/ Blackboard Privacy Policy)

- Adobe Acrobat Reader (Adobe Reader Accessibility Statement, Adobe Reader Privacy Policy)

- Google Apps (Google Apps Accessibility, Google for Education Privacy Policy)

- Microsoft Office (free to UConn students through uconn.onthehub.com) (Microsoft Accessibility Statement, Microsoft Privacy Statement)

- Kaltura or other video software of your choice for Video Discussions (Accessibility Statement, Privacy Policy)

- Dedicated access to high-speed internet with a minimum speed of 1.5 Mbps (4 Mbps or higher is recommended).

For information on managing your privacy at the University of Connecticut, visit the University's Privacy page.

NOTE: This course has NOT been designed for use with mobile devices.

Help

Technical and Academic Help provides a guide to technical and academic assistance.

This course is completely facilitated online using the learning management platform, HuskyCT. If you have difficulty accessing HuskyCT, you have access to the in person/live person support options available during regular business hours through the Help Center. You also have 24x7 Course Support including access to live chat, phone, and support documents.

Minimum Technical Skills

To be successful in this course, you will need the following technical skills:

- Use electronic mail with attachments.
- Save files in commonly used word processing program formats.
- Copy and paste text, graphics or hyperlinks.
- Work within two or more browser windows simultaneously.
- Open and access PDF files.
- Create slide presentations.
- Use a video software tool, such as Kaltura.
- Webcam use.

University students are expected to demonstrate competency in Computer Technology. Explore the Computer Technology Competencies page for more information.

Evaluation of the Course

Students will be provided an opportunity to evaluate instruction in this course using the University's standard procedures, which are administered by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE).

Additional informal formative surveys may also be administered within the course as an optional evaluation tool.