

CURE 1123/UGED 1400: World Religions, First Term, 2023-2024

Professor: James D. FRANKEL (jamesfrankel@cuhk.edu.hk)

Teaching Assistants: **TBA**

Lecture: Wednesdays 3:30 PM – 5:15 PM, LSK 302

Tutorials: (1) Wednesdays 3:30 PM – 5:15 PM, LSK 302

(2) Wednesdays 3:30 PM – 5:15 PM, LSK 204

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce you to the history, teachings and practice of some of the major religions of the world. We shall examine these traditions from a variety of perspectives, paying special attention to the issue of religious diversity, as well as universal ideas.

Considering both “insider” and “outsider” perspectives, we will critically examine the way the different religious traditions present themselves, while attempting to approach them from a nonpartisan phenomenological and historical point of view. The objective of this course is to increase the scope of students’ understanding of an array of religious traditions and to train them to recognize differences and similarities between and among various religious approaches. This may contribute to deepening the appreciation of one’s own religious background, if one has one, and to developing curiosity for various spiritual paths followed by people both historically and in the present-day. It also aims to prepare students to take more advanced course in all areas of Religious Studies. Readings, lectures, classroom presentations and personal initiative in investigating this topic should enhance awareness of the central role religions play in humanity’s quest for meaning and happiness.

I. Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Students will acquire basic knowledge and understanding of the historical foundations of major world religious traditions;
- 2) Students will acquire basic knowledge and understanding of the scriptures, doctrines, rituals and other practices of major world religious traditions;
- 3) Students will identify and understand major themes in the academic Study of Religion;
- 4) Students will engage in critical analysis of religions by the methods of the humanities and social sciences;
- 5) Students will read and analyze scholarly texts in the academic Study of Religion;
- 6) Students will perform research and write scholarly materials in genres appropriate to the field of the academic Study of Religion;
- 7) Students will cultivate cross-cultural understanding and intercultural literacy in the face of globalization and local multiculturalism.

II. Course Content:

Textbook:

Molloy, Michael. *Experiencing the World's Religions: Tradition, Challenge, and Change*. 6th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2013.

Term Schedule:

1. 6/9 **Course Introduction**
2. 13/9 **Understanding Religion: Definitions, Expectations, Methods**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 1
3. 20/9 **Understanding Religion (continued)**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 1
FIRST TUTORIAL MEETING
(EAC Reading Workshop, TBD)
4. 27/9 **Indigenous Religions**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 2
5. 4/10 **Hinduism**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 3
6. 11/10 **Hinduism (cont.); Buddhism**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 3; Ch. 4
7. 18/10 **Buddhism (cont.)**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 6
8. 25/10 **Judaism**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch.8

9. 1/11 **Judaism (cont.); Christianity**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 8; Ch. 9
10. 8/11 **Christianity (cont.); Islam**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 9; Ch.10
11. 15/11 **Islam (cont.); Alternative Paths**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 10; Ch. 11
12. 22/11 **Alternative Paths (cont.); Religion in the Modern World**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 11; Ch. 12
- * 25/11 **EAC Writing Workshop (Time and Place TBA)**
13. 29/11 **Religion in the Modern World (cont.)**
Readings:
Molloy, Ch. 12

III. Course Requirements:

10% Class/Tutorial participation

20% Quizzes

35% Group Presentation

35% Term paper (approximately 1,500 words in English), Due Date TBA (see paper topics on p.5).

Grade Descriptors:

A Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.

A- Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.

B Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.

C Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.

D Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes

F Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

Class Participation:

Students are expected to participate in class discussions, with thoughtful questions and responses. Students are required to attend lectures and tutorials, unless they have a justifiable reason (medical or some other emergency) for being absent. Absences will be counted against the final grade (good attendance will likewise be rewarded); students who miss more than 25% of the total number of class meetings cannot pass the course. Lateness and distractions during class (e.g., conversations, telephones) will also be counted against the participation grade.

Quizzes:

There will be a short quiz at the end of chapters/units based on the readings/lectures, to be taken during tutorial sessions. The average of all the quizzes will account for 20% of the final grade for the course.

Tutorials:

Tutorial sessions, led by the teaching assistant, will meet as scheduled beginning in Week 3 of the semester.

Group Presentations:

Students will work together in groups of 4-5 people. Each group will make a 30-minute presentation. The presentation may include PowerPoint, other audio-visual aids, and/or a written handout. Presentations will be assessed based on their clarity, content, and originality of their analysis.

There are two options for the presentation:

1. Group members should investigate a religious service or religious ritual or ceremony and give a report and analysis on it, citing both insider and outsider perspectives. Due to the pandemic, a field visit to an actual place of worship may not be possible. In this case, the investigation can include online sources, including conversation/interviews with religious followers if possible. The presentation should include background information about the chosen religious tradition, the venue, the community, the performance, and its significance.

2. The second option is creative. Group members should invent a religious ritual from their own imagination. It may be based on an existing religious practice, or may be completely independent and original. The presentation should outline the practical performance of the ritual and the meaning behind it. It should specifically address how practice and belief interact in the ritual.

Paper Guidelines:

Papers are to be based on the readings, classroom lectures and tutorial discussions. You may of course also do outside research. **All sources must be cited appropriately** (using either footnotes or MLA parenthetical citation). Each paper to be approximately 1,500 words in English, typed and double-spaced. Grammar, punctuation, style, and content will be factored in the grading of the essay. Papers must be submitted by email to Prof. FRANKEL and your tutor as a MS Word doc along with a copy of the signed VeriGuide receipt. Please put your surname on the file and make sure your paper has a title and your name on it. Unless a deadline extension is granted with prior permission from the professor, late submissions will be penalized. Essays more than one week late will not be accepted.

Paper Instructions:

In this course, we examine several recurring themes and patterns found in diverse religious traditions from around the world, both historically and nowadays. In this final paper, students are asked to choose a contemporary issue, often seen as controversial, and compare/contrast how **two (2) religions** we have studied this semester might approach it. Keep in mind that all religions are complex and dynamic, so a single tradition may have multiple, often competing perspectives on any issue. You should try to address these different perspectives and avoid oversimplifying viewpoints.

Term Paper Topics (choose one):

1. Religion and Environmental Issues
2. Religion and War/Peace
3. Religion and Science
4. Religion and Human Rights
5. Religion and Sexuality/Gender

Academic Honesty:

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating and plagiarism. Any related offence will lead to disciplinary action including termination of studies at the

University. All student assignments must be submitted to VeriGuide (<https://veriguide2.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/cuhk/>). The system will issue a receipt, which should be signed and submitted to the professor together with the assignment.

Professor's Contact Information:

Prof. Frankel's office is located at KKB 228. Appointments are welcome and should be made via email at: jamesfrankel@cuhk.edu.hk