**Course Syllabus:** **Introduction to World Religions**

**Dr. Aaron M. Gale**

**Course Information:** **Instructor Information:**

RELG 102-002 Office: 250 Stansbury Hall

G24 Eiesland Hall Hours: T/R 11:30-12:30,

T/R 8:30-9:45 am W 10:30-11:30, and by appt.

Fall 2016 E-mail address:

NO Prerequisite Required [Aaron.Gale@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Aaron.Gale@mail.wvu.edu)

Phone: 304-293-7733

**Required Course Texts:**

1. Fisher, Mary Pat. *Living Religions: A Brief Introduction*. Boston: Pearson, 2012. ISBN 13: 978-0-205-22970-3
2. Assigned readings posted to eCampus or handed out in class.

**Course Objectives/Expected Learning Outcomes/GEC Goals:**

This course introduces students to five of the most widely recognized religions in the world today: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Despite some commonalities, each religion is unique regarding its history and practice. Therefore, the goals of this course are primarily twofold: 1. to provide students with an understanding of how each religion evolved historically and spiritually 2. to explore the contemporary practice of each religion. In addition, we will study some of the interactions that have taken place among the religions. This will allow students to place two or more religions side-by-side and examine their similarities/differences. Ultimately, then, students will learn the basic tenets of each faith in order that they may gain the ability to discuss each religion and its corresponding history, practice, and relationship to other faiths.

As a part of the WVU General Education Curriculum the course addresses the following objectives: objective 3, the past and its traditions and objective 9, non-Western traditions. Students will also be expected to demonstrate critical thinking and communicate effectively.

**Methodology/Format:**

This course will utilize many means of study including historical, sociological, and theological methodologies. In order to disseminate such a vast amount of information a lecture/discussion format will be the primary means of classroom study. This means that the instructor will rely upon the students to enhance unit lectures by contributing to class discussions (see section below). There may also be various group exercises. In addition, from time to time we may view slides and /or PowerPoint presentations, watch movies, and invite guest lecturers to speak on the various religions.

**Course Policies/Requirements:**

1. Attendance-Students are expected to attend all sessions of this course. Failure to do so will result in point deductions from one’s grade. Two points will be deducted for each missed class, up to 10 points. Excused absences will be determined on an individual basis. All other absences will be considered “unexcused.” **ANY STUDENT MISSING 6 OR MORE SESSIONS WILL AUTOMATICALLY RECEIVE A GRADE OF “F” FOR THE COURSE**. Attendance will be taken via ID scanners, so students MUST bring their WVU ID’s to class every day.
2. Assignments-Students are expected to complete ALL assignments. Exams will consist of multiple choice and true and false questions. There are no make-up exams under ordinary circumstances. If extraordinary circumstances allow for a make-up exam, its format may differ from the original.
3. Academic Integrity-The integrity of classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Dishonesty and/or plagiarism are serious offenses. Clear cases will result in appropriate academic discipline and an unforgivable “F” may be given for the entire course. I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing actions, please consult the WVU Academic Catalog at http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecreditstermsclassification/#academicintegritytext

Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me *before* the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

1. Conduct Policy-All students are expected to act responsively and respectfully in class. The use of cell phones, texting, talking in class, and/or disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. If a problem arises the Office of Student Conduct will be notified immediately, and a punishment of suspension or expulsion may be imposed.

NOTE: The instructor will contact the class via MIX e-mail and/or eCampus when needed. Please check it daily. Also, check the religious studies facebook page: WVU Religious Studies.

**Grades/Grading:**

1. Exams-There will be 6 unit exams worth 15, 35, 35, 40, 40, and 35 points, respectively. .

**ALL EXAMS THIS SEMESTER WILL BE TAKEN IN-CLASS.** Therefore, you will need to bring a clean, unfolded 882E scantron sheet to class for each exam.

Grades will be calculated based upon one’s percentage of total points (total points = 200):

A = 90-100% (180 points and above) B = 80-89.9% (160-179 points)

C = 70-79.9% (140-159 points) D = 60-69.9% (120-139 points)

F = below 60% (under 120 points)

There is no grade curve nor are there any extra credit points.

**Course Schedule and Readings:**

**UNIT 1: ROOTS OF RELIGIONS**

WEEK 1 TOPIC READINGS

Aug. 17-19 Course Introduction

What do we know about world religions?

WEEK 2 TOPIC READINGS

Aug. 22-26 Roots of Western Religions-Egyptians, etc. Fisher, 142-146

Roman Religion

WEEK 3

Aug. 29-Sep. 2 **TUESDAY, AUGUST 30-UNIT 1 EXAM: 15 POINTS**

**UNIT 2: JUDAISM**

Introduction to Judaism Fisher, pp 147-184

When did Judaism Begin?

Keys to Understanding Judaism

WEEK 4

Sep. 5-9 Jewish History Fisher, pp 147-184, cont

The Jewish Exile and its Impact

What is the Torah?

The Talmud, the Rabbis, and Ethics

WEEK 5 Judaism in the Middle Ages complete Fisher, week 3-4

Sep. 12-16 Judaism enters Modernity

Jewish Denominations

Jewish Life Today: Holidays and Rituals

**THURSDAY,**  **SEPTEMBER 15-UNIT 2 EXAM: 35 POINTS**

**UNIT 3: CHRISTIANITY**

WEEK 6

Sep. 19-23 Origins of Christianity Fisher, pp 185-238

Original Sin and Augustine

Objections to Christianity

St. Paul and the Church Fathers

Who was Jesus?

WEEK 7 Christianity in the Middle Ages Fisher, pp 185-238, cont

Sep. 26-30 Threats to the Faith

A Violent Time-The Crusades, Inquisition, etc.

WEEK 8 TOPIC READINGS

Oct. 3-7 The Christian Sacraments

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6-UNIT 3 EXAM: 35 POINTS**

**UNIT 4: ISLAM**

WEEK 9

Oct. 10-14Introduction to Islam complete Fisher, weeks 6-7

Origins of Islam/Arabia

Muhammad the Prophet

The Qur’an and Allah

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12-MID-TERM GRADES DUE**

WEEK 10

Oct. 17-21 Islam after Muhammad Fisher, pp 239-274

Islam Splits

Islam in the Middle Ages

WEEK 11

Oct. 24-28 The Five Pillars of Islam complete Fisher weeks 9-10

Islamic Denominations

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27-UNIT 3 EXAM: 40 POINTS**

**WENDESDAY, OCTOBER 26-LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS**

**UNIT 5: HINDUISM**

WEEK 12

Oct. 31-Nov. 4Begin Indian Philosophy Fisher, pp 41-70

Summary of Hindu Principles

Hindu Origins and History

WEEK 13

Nov. 7-11 The Social Caste System complete Fisher, weeks 11-12

Stages and Aims of Life

Hindu Rituals and Festivals; Women

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8-ELECTION DAY-NO CLASSES**

WEEK 14 TOPIC READINGS

Nov. 14-18 **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15-UNIT 5 EXAM: 40 POINTS**

**UNIT 6: BUDDHISM**

Introduction to Buddhism Fisher, pp 81-108

Basic Buddhist Buddhist Thought

The Four Noble Truths and *Nirvana*

**NO SCHOOL: THANKSGIVING BREAK FROM NOVEMBER 19-27**

WEEK 15

Nov. 28-Dec. 2 The Story of Buddha Fisher, pp 81-108, cont

Early Buddhism

The Rise of Buddhist Denominations

WEEK 15a

Dec. 5-6 Buddhist Denominations, cont.’ complete Fisher, weeks 14-15

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 5-LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM THE UNIVERSITY**

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9 FROM 8-10 AM: FINAL EXAMINATION OVER UNIT 6 ONLY-35 POINTS**

**Statement of Inclusivity**

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order

to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office

of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see: <http://diversity.wvu.edu>