

# CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

## DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### COURSE OUTLINE 2003

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*“The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. . . Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” —Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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#### **RS 150: World Religions (Satisfies F2 Requirement for G.E.)**

Sierra Hall 390

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 am to 12:15 pm, Ticket No. 74039

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#### **Professor:**

Amir Hussain

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 to 10:30 am, and 6:30 to 7:00 pm

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#### **Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to the academic study of religion and of world religions, and to the religious traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Primal or “oral” religions will also be studied, and contrasted with “historical” religions. The course examines the historical evolution, the fundamental doctrines and beliefs, the practices, institutions and cultural expressions of these religious traditions. The course also deals with some of the essential differences and similarities which exist among each religious tradition, and points to the uniqueness of each of them. Goals for students enrolled in this course are 1) to develop the ability to think both empathetically and critically about conflicting religious claims, and 2) to gain knowledge of the history and culture of several major religious traditions. **This course satisfies the F-2 category of General Education requirements.**

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#### **Required Texts:**

Willard G. Oxtoby, Editor, *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, second edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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Both texts are on reserve in the Reserve Book Room of the Oviatt Library.

Lecture Outlines, available from QuickCopies in the Matador Bookstore.

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## **Evaluation:**

***It is important for each student to know at the outset that this course requires daily reading, journal writing, six written assignments and two essay exams. Moreover, regular class attendance and participation are required. Clear, grammatically correct composition and standard spelling are expected on all written assignments. Written assignments should be proofread and edited before being submitted for grading.***

Class discussion and assignments will focus on the textbooks. The mid-term and final exams will be based on these books. The exams will be graded on a) familiarity with the readings and b) independent questioning and reflection elicited by journal writing, written assignments and classroom discussions. Methodical reading, conscientious writing of the assignments, and participation in class discussion will prepare students for the exams.

Regular attendance and timely handing-in of the written assignments are mandatory. The dates for handing-in each assignment are given below. Active class participation will positively affect the student's final grade. More than two unexcused absences during the semester will negatively affect the student's grade. The University's grading policy, including the plus/minus system, will be used. The University's cheating policy will be followed in this course.

Grades will be determined as follows:

30% Written Assignments (6 assignments, worth 5% each)  
10% Class Participation  
30% Mid-Term Exam (On Eastern Traditions), October 14  
30% Final Exam (On Western Traditions), December 9

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## **Schedule of Lectures:**

Aug. 26 - 28: Introductory Meetings. Methodological Issues In This Course (Reading: *Eastern Traditions*, vi - 11)

Sept. 2 - 4: The Hindu Tradition (Reading: 12 - 50, 54 - 57)

Sept. 9 - 11: The Hindu Tradition (Reading: 71 - 104, 113 - 120)

Sept. 16 - 18: The Buddhist Tradition (Reading: 198 - 247)

Sept. 23 - 25: The Buddhist Tradition (Reading: 252 - 278, 288 - 310)

Sept. 30 - Oct. 2: East Asian Religions: Confucianism (Reading: 316 - 338, 352 - 368)

Oct. 7 - 9: East Asian Religions: Taoism (Reading: 382 - 398, 422 - 425)

Tuesday, Oct. 14: Mid-Term Exam, Based On Material Covered In The Course To This Point.

Oct. 16: The Jewish Tradition (Reading: *Western Traditions*, 1 - 9, 32 - 91)

Oct. 21 - 23: The Jewish Tradition (Reading: 100 - 153)

Oct. 28 - 30: The Christian Tradition (Reading: 200 - 238, 244 - 248)

Nov. 4 - 6: The Christian Tradition (Reading: 255 - 262, 269 - 289, 326 - 335)

Nov. 11 - 13: The Islamic Tradition (Reading: 340 - 368, 378 - 388)

Nov. 18 - 20: The Islamic Tradition (Reading: 404 - 437, 444 - 457)

Nov. 25: New Horizons: Primal Religions (Reading: 462 - 479)

Nov. 27: No class, campus closed for Thanksgiving Day Holiday

Dec. 2 - 4: The Academic Study of Religion. The Nature of Religion and Traditions in Contact. Review. (Reading: 494 - 507; *Eastern Traditions*, 448 - 455, 461 - 467)

Tuesday, Dec. 9: Final Exam (10:15 - 12:15). Final Exam Based On Material Covered Since The Mid-Term.

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### **Journal Writing and Dates for Handing in Written Assignments:**

For this course, you will be asked to keep a learning journal. This journal is intended to 1) improve your writing fluency, 2) increase your recall and comprehension of the readings, and 3) help you to articulate the ideas that you develop during the course. **How you keep this journal is up to you.** Many students prefer a spiral-bound notebook, others a looseleaf binder that they can divide into sections, and others an electronic journal. However you keep it, this journal is meant to be a personal record of your learning in this course. **As such, you are the only person that will ever read your journal.**

At times in the course, I will ask you to take out your journals and write in them. In addition to these opportunities to write in your journal during class time, you should write in your journal after you have done the reading for a particular section. You should write about 2 to 3 pages per week in your journal. Some topics you might address are:

1. What were the important points of this reading (or lecture, or class discussion)?
2. Do you agree or disagree with those points? Why?
3. What questions do you have about the reading (or lecture, or class discussion)?
4. How does the reading (or lecture, or class discussion) relate to your own experience, or to other outside reading/research that you have done?

For each religious tradition that we study, I will ask you to select from your journal the piece that you consider to be the most important to you, revise it, and submit it as a formal written assignment. This assignment should not be simply a summary of your notes, but your own reflection on what you have learned. Each assignment should be about two typed, double-spaced pages in length. These assignments will be graded on such things as spelling, punctuation, grammar, word precision and style, in addition to content. Journal assignments will be collected at the beginning of the classes indicated below.

**Turn in late assignments directly to me and *not* to the department office. The penalty for late assignments will be one letter grade per day late (with the “day” ending at 5:00 p.m.).** For example, if an assignment is due on Tuesday, it can earn a maximum grade of A. If it is turned in on Wednesday, it can earn

a maximum grade of B+. If it is turned in on Thursday, it can earn a maximum grade of C+, and if turned in on Friday, a maximum grade of D+. The assignments are due on the following dates:

Tuesday, September 9: Assignment on The Hindu Tradition

Tuesday, September 23: Assignment on The Buddhist Tradition

Thursday, October 2: Assignment on East Asian Religions

Tuesday, October 28: Assignment on The Jewish Tradition

Tuesday, November 11: Assignment on The Christian Tradition

Tuesday, December 2: Assignment on The Islamic Tradition

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[\*\*Return to Amir Hussain's Web Page\*\*](#)