



**THEO-3795-M01
STUDIES IN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS**

“If, then, we are to be true to these religions, we must attend to others as deeply and as alertly as we hope that they will attend to us; Thomas Merton made this point by saying that God speaks to us in three places: in scripture, in our deepest selves, and in the voice of the stranger”
(Huston Smith, *The World’s Religions*, p390).

Professor:	Melanie Grace Mitchell, M.Div., Lic. T^a	MWF 13:00-13:50, SIH B
E-mail:	mmitche8@slu.edu	Semester: Spring 2017
Office:	SIH 315	Core requirement: 3 Credits
Office Hours:	MWF 12:00-12:50 and by appointment	Prerequisites: THEO-100 and one 200-level theology course

Course description:

Religion is a vital dimension of life for the majority of the world’s population, for good and for ill. This course will serve as an introduction to the origins, development, beliefs, practices, divisions, connections, and social and political contexts of the world's major religions and new religious movements. Over the course of the semester, you will be exposed to the diverse ways in which people live out their spirituality, and you will acquire critical insight into how people make decisions in line, and at times in contradiction, with the faith that they profess. Through exploring religious teachings about how to live ethically and responsibly, my hope is that you will grow in understanding of your own calling to be “men and women for others.” Through learning more about the role of religion in people’s lives, you will become better equipped to engage in dialogue and work for peace on campus and around the world. Furthermore, if you apply both mind and heart to your studies, you may grow and deepen both intellectually and spiritually through your exposure to ancient wisdom and to modern journeys of faith. To again quote the late Huston Smith: “The human opportunity, the religions tell us, is to transform our flashes of insight into abiding light” (Ibid. 389).

You are also encouraged to formulate your own objectives for this course and to share them with me if you like: _____

Required texts:

Selected readings from primary sources (to be distributed and/or posted on Blackboard)

Textbook: Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions: A Brief Introduction*, 3rd Edition (Pearson: 2012).

Online textbook and supplementary study and research resources available for purchase at www.pearsonmylabandmastering.com (Information forthcoming)

Texts on reserve:

Sacred Texts of the World: A Universal Anthology, Smart and Hecht, ed.s (NY: Crossroad, 1998).
 Smith, Huston, *The World's Religions: Our Great Wisdom Traditions* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).
The Ways of Religion: An Introduction to the Major Traditions, Roger Eastman, ed. (NY: Oxford, 1993).
World Religions: The Illustrated Guide, Michael D. Coogan, ed. (London: DBP, 2003).

Supplementary resources:

The SLU Madrid Library offers you free access to many academic databases, plus theology, philosophy and ethics sections in the library. These will all be helpful for your research.

Assignment Descriptions:

1. **Written assignments** will accompany each chapter. Some will be for class discussion. Some will involve defining key terms and concepts. Others will be responses to larger questions raised in the chapter or in the progression of the course. Together, these will constitute 50% of your grade. Remember to inform me if you are to be absent so that I can give you the relevant assignment to do.
2. **Research Topic:**
 - a. You may choose a topic individually or as a group of 2-4. You may choose to research a particular practice within a religion or across religions (e.g., meditation), an ethical question as it is addressed by two or more religions (e.g., cremation), a new religious movement not included (or not extensively discussed) in our textbook, the practice of a religion in a particular place or in interaction with a particular reality (politics, economics, healthcare, education, the environment, the role of women in society...), a symbol, myth, or art form... Choose a topic that will interest you, that you will enjoy researching, and that will capture the interest of your classmates. Perhaps there is an issue that relates to this course and to your major. Perhaps there is an issue about which your background gives you particular insight. Perhaps there is an ethical question that intrigues you or a current situation of injustice that disturbs you. This is an opportunity to explore it!
 - b. In addition to your research, you will do various preliminary assignments to familiarize you and the class with your topic:
 - i. **Experiential learning:** On your own or with a group, visit a site or event associated with your topic. You may examine the architecture, layout, art, reading material, people present, rituals observed, technology used, etc. As you are able, observe and interact with the people present. How can you connect what you see with what you have learned about the religion practiced at the site? What questions are raised and need further exploration? If you are not able to make a visit, you may watch a film which focuses on a particular religion and write about what you learn, etc. You may also do interviews with one or

more practitioners of the religion you are researching, or do a combination of two or three of these activities, as more experience will lead to more understanding. Your 4-5pp report on your experiential learning will constitute 10% of your grade.

- ii. **Current Event Presentation (CEP):** Choose an article that talks about the contemporary practice of your chosen religion. Major newspapers such as the *NY Times* and *The Guardian* have articles about religion, as do *The Economist*, the Religion section of the US edition of the *Huffington Post*, and the website of the BBC. Another interesting source for global studies and statistics is the Religion and Public Life project at: www.pewforum.org. Turn in an electronic copy of the article to me at least one day in advance. Orally present the article in your own words to the class, explaining its relevance, giving a bit of your own analysis, and proposing two or three questions for 5-10 minutes of class discussion. This presentation will be done individually and will constitute 5% of your grade.
- iii. **Research paper:** Your research paper will be done in light of the above, but will rely most heavily on academic sources and be 10-12 pages long, plus a bibliography. See more extensive guidelines at end of this syllabus. The paper is to be submitted electronically as your final exam and will constitute 20% of your grade.
- iv. **Research paper presentation:** Each presentation will be 10-15 minutes long. Students will present their research to the class in a scholarly and engaging manner and be prepared to lead a brief discussion at the end. The use of visual aids is strongly encouraged, an electronic copy of which should be submitted to the professor at least a day in advance. This will constitute 15% of your grade.

Grade scale:

A	94-100	B+	87-89	B-	80-82	C	73-76	D	60-69
A-	90-93	B	83-86	C+	77-79	C-	70-72	F	0-59

Criteria for grading:

A range = *Superior, exceptional, outstanding*. The assignment demonstrates critical, informed, and creative theological inquiry that reflects superior understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. This means the student demonstrates depth of insight beyond what is normally expected. Carefully nuanced reasoning and writing, free from material, structural and grammatical error are presupposed in this grade.

B range = *Good*. The assignment demonstrates ready command of full range of concepts and shows some critical, informed, and creative inquiry that reflects above average understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. This means the student has produced an assignment that is free from material, structural and grammatical errors.

C range = *Acceptable*. The assignment demonstrates satisfactory ability to describe overall picture and essential concepts. This means the student has completed the assignment in a

manner involving no significant errors. Material may not be free from structural and grammatical errors. Nuanced reasoning is not demonstrated.

D range = *Below average*. The assignment demonstrates reasoning that is neither carefully nuanced nor coherently presented; writing is insufficient in depth of insight and/or use of texts; presentation is not free from material error in structure, spelling and grammar. This means that the student failed to respond adequately to the assignment and its intentions.

F = *Unsatisfactory*. In one or more of the following ways the student: 1) failed to turn in the assignment; 2) did not respond to the assignment as given; 3) submitted work so thoroughly flawed as to indicate that the student did not make a serious effort, 4) was involved in plagiarism or cheating.

Policy on late-work:

1. For every day a paper is late, five points will be subtracted from the grade.
2. If you are to present in class and are unable to do so, you must request a date change at least a day in advance, unless an emergency arises.
3. If you are unable to attend class, you may send assignments by e-mail, entrust them to a classmate, or leave them in my box in SIH.

Attendance and participation policy:

It will be impossible to adequately master the material presented in this course without regular attendance and participation. Illness, personal and family emergencies constitute excused absences. It is your responsibility to inform me of any absence in a timely fashion and it will be crucial to recover any material missed. More than 10 unexcused absences will lead to automatic failure of the course.

Excessive talking and/or disengaging from class through the use of personal technology for matters unrelated to our class discussions will reduce your learning and be detrimental to the classroom environment as a whole, as they will be seen as signs of disrespect towards your professor and classmates. Let's value each other's voices and experiences and seek to learn as much as possible from one another this term. Towards this end, cell phones are to be turned off and put away during class, except when I request their use for our class discussion. Emergencies and exceptions must be discussed in advance.

Academic integrity:

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at: http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/University-

[wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf](#). Additionally, SLU-Madrid has posted its academic integrity policy online: <http://www.slu.edu/madrid/academics>. As a member of the University community, you are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions and appeals. The professor will review these matters during the first weeks of the term. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program or the Academic Dean of the Madrid Campus.

If a case of academic dishonesty is detected in this course (e.g., cheating, plagiarism...), you will receive an F for the assignment and be reported to the Chair of Humanities. He will write a report to be sent to the Madrid Campus Committee on Academic Honesty. Repeated violations will lead to failure of the course and can lead to suspension from the university.

Academic Accommodations and Learning Resources:

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- *Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.*
- *University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Academic Dean's Office (San Ignacio Hall) or by going to <http://www.slu.edu/madrid/learning-resources>.*

*Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations **must** contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also **must** notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course. Please contact Disability Services at disabilityservices-madrid@slu.edu or +915 54 58 58, ext. 230 for an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services. For more information about academic accommodations, see "Student Resources" on the SLU-Madrid webpage. (Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact Disability Services.)*

Assessment:

In order to maintain quality academic offerings and to conform to accreditation requirements, SLU-Madrid regularly assesses its teaching, services and programs for evidence of student learning. For this purpose, SLU-Madrid keeps representative examples of student work from all courses and programs on file, including assignments, papers, exams, portfolios and results from student surveys, focus groups and reflective exercises. Copies of your work for this course may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes. If you prefer SLU-Madrid not to retain your work for this purpose, you must communicate this decision in writing to your professor.

Title IX Sexual Misconduct Policy:

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX deputy coordinator, Marta Maruri, whose office is located on the ground floor of Padre Rubio Hall, Avenida del Valle, 28 (mmaruri@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 213) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX deputy coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus. If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the SLU-Madrid's Counseling Services on the third floor of San Ignacio Hall (counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 230) or Sinews Multipletherapy Institute, the off-campus provider of counseling services for SLU-Madrid (www.sinews.es; 917-00-1979). To view SLU-Madrid's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address: <http://www.slu.edu/Documents/Madrid/campus-life/SLUMadridSexualMisconductPolicy.pdf>.

CALENDAR

Note: The class schedule may be altered as needed, and changes will be announced in class. It is your responsibility to track not only scheduled assignments but also any changes.

Wednesday, January 11: Introduction to course and participants
Read: Living Religions (LR) Chapter 1: Religious Responses

Friday, January 13: Religious Responses
Assignment: T.B.A.

Monday, January 16: Religious Responses

Wednesday, January 18: Religious Responses

Friday, January 20: Religious Responses
Due: Written assignment
Assignment: Write a paragraph stating your research topic, tentative thesis statement or main questions to explore, and three sources consulted to date. Due electronically by: Friday, Jan. 27.

Monday, January 23: Film: *Oh My God*; Discussion

Tuesday, January 24: Last day to drop a class without a grade W and/or add a class
 Last day to choose Audit (AU) or Pass/No Pass (P/NP) options

Wednesday, January 25: Film: *Oh My God*; Discussion

Read: LR Chapter 2: Indigenous Sacred Ways

Reminder: Your research paper topic is due electronically by Friday.

Friday, January 27: NO CLASSES

Due: Research topic

Application Deadline for Spring Semester Degree Candidates

Monday, January 30: Indigenous Sacred Ways. CEP.

Written assignment: T.B.A.

Wednesday, February 1: Indigenous Sacred Ways. CEP.

Friday, February 3: Indigenous Sacred Ways. CEP.

Monday, February 6: Indigenous Sacred Ways: Research Presentations

Due: Written assignment

Read: LR Chapter 3: Hinduism

Wednesday, February 8: Hinduism. CEP.

Written assignment: T.B.A.

Friday, February 10: Hinduism. CEP.

Monday, February 13: Hinduism. CEP.

Wednesday, February 15: Hinduism. CEP.

Registration for Summer 2017 sessions begins

Friday, February 17: Hinduism: Research Presentations

Due: Written assignment

Read: LR Chapter 4: Jainism

Monday, February 20: Jainism. CEP.

Written assignment: T.B.A.

Wednesday, February 22: Jainism. CEP.

Thursday, February 23 - Sunday, February 26: WINTER BREAK (NO CLASSES)

Monday, February 27: Jainism: Research Presentations

Due: Written assignment

Read: LR Chapter 5: Buddhism

Wednesday, March 1: Buddhism. CEP

Written assignment: T.B.A.

Friday, March 3: Buddhism. CEP

Monday, March 6: Buddhism. CEP

Wednesday, March 8: Buddhism. CEP

Friday, March 10: Buddhism: Research Presentations

Due: Written assignment

Read: LR Chapter 6: Daoism and Confucianism

Last day to drop a class and receive a grade of W

Monday, March 13: Daoism and Confucianism. CEP.

Written assignment: T.B.A.

Wednesday, March 15: Daoism and Confucianism. CEP.

Last day to submit Transfer Application for fall semester

Friday, March 17: Daoism and Confucianism. CEP.

Monday, March 20: *San José* Holiday (University closed)

Wednesday, March 22: Daoism and Confucianism. CEP.

Friday, March 24: Daoism and Confucianism: Research Presentations

Due: Written assignment

Read: LR Chapter 7: Shinto

Monday, March 27: Shinto. CEP.

Written assignment: T.B.A.

Wednesday, March 29: Shinto. CEP.

Registration for Fall 2017 semester begins

Friday, March 31: Shinto: Research Presentations

Due: Written assignment

Read: LR 142-146: Zoroastrianism

Assignment: Prepare an abstract and/or outline of your research paper with a tentative Bibliography (See paper guidelines) to be turned in by Friday, April 7.

Monday, April 3: Zoroastrianism. CEP.

Wednesday, April 5: Zoroastrianism. CEP.

Reminder: Your research paper abstract/outline is due electronically by Friday.

Friday, April 7: Zoroastrianism: Research Presentations

Due: Research paper abstract and bibliography

Read: LR Chapter 11: Sikhism

Saturday, April 8 - Sunday, April 16: *Semana Santa* - [Easter Week] (University closed)

Monday, April 17: Sikhism. CEP.

Written assignment: T.B.A.

Wednesday, April 19: Sikhism. CEP.

Friday, April 21: Sikhism: Research Presentations

Due: Written assignment

Read: LR Chapter 11: Religion in a New Era

Monday, April 24: New Religious Movements. CEP.

Written assignment: T.B.A.

Wednesday, April 26: New Religious Movements. CEP.

Friday, April 28: New Religious Movements. CEP.

Monday, May 1: Día del Trabajo - [Labor Day] Holiday (University closed)

Tuesday, May 2: Día de la Comunidad de Madrid [Holiday] (University closed)

Wednesday, May 3: New Religious Movements: Research Presentations

Due: Written assignment

Monday, May 8, 12-15:00: Final research presentations or exit interviews

Due electronically by 12:00: Research papers

Research Paper Guidelines

The research paper is an important part of this course and constitutes 20% of your grade. The paper should be 10-12 pp, typed, numbered and double-spaced, and shall be submitted to me by e-mail: mmitch8@slu.edu

A successful paper will include an introduction that sets out the goal(s) of your research paper and explains how and why the project is important, as well as a conclusion. Other sections are also appreciated, as they help you to stay organized and help your reader to follow your

arguments.

In addition to clarity with respect to clearly articulating the goals of your project, I shall also be looking for correct grammar and spelling, proper attribution of source material, and original thought as opposed to mere citation of material. I expect you to engage the material you include from secondary sources rather than merely quote it.

You must utilize at least three print sources and at least five written sources overall. Consult the library books (on the shelves and on reserve) and the library databases. Our textbook may constitute one written source. If you utilize internet material, be careful to distinguish scholarly works from those which seek to preach elements of a particular religion. The latter, plus personal experience, interviews, etc. may be used to supplement your sources, but you must discern and make note of the difference in drawing your conclusions.

Make sure quotations and paraphrases are relevant, well-selected and cited. Quotations of three lines or more should be single-spaced and indented. You will be required to provide notes for any material used in your paper. Any standard style of notes may be used (endnotes, footnotes or in-text notes) but you must be consistent.

Failing to provide citation for material or ideas taken from another source constitutes plagiarism and will result in a 0 for the term paper. For ways to avoid plagiarism, see: http://spain.slu.edu/academics/academic_advising/docs/Academic_integrity.pdf

In addition to the notes, a bibliography of all cited works must be included.

Make sure to proofread for grammar, spelling, homonyms and typographic errors. The English Writing Center is available to help you if you help yourself first.

If you use graphics, make sure they are relevant, well-placed and clearly and accurately captioned—not merely decorative nor to fill up space.

Various deadlines will be observed, but students are also encouraged to consult regularly with the instructor during both the research and writing phases of the project.

Deadlines

Friday, January 27: Proposal of theme and sources

Friday, April 7: Turn in a brief outline or abstract of your project that describes the content of the paper as well as your intent (i.e., what would you want a reader to understand and why). A bibliography should be included in this as well. While this bibliography may not be the same as in the final version of your paper, it should be close to it.

Monday, May 8: Turn your paper in electronically by 12:00 p.m.