

**THEO-393-M01**

**✘ STUDIES IN NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS ✘**

*At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, religion plays a central role in public life and has become a significant identity marker. In our increasingly pluralistic societies, more inter-religious dialogue and cooperation are needed if conflict fueled by religion is to be constructively addressed. Spiritual and religious traditions are a source of values that can defend dignified life for all; these traditions need to be explored. We need new ways to understand both particularity, universality and plurality; we must learn to live our faith with integrity while respecting and accepting each other.*  
(World Council of Churches Programme for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation)

**Professor:** Melanie Grace Mitchell, M.Div., Lic. T<sup>a</sup>  
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**Office:** PAH 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Humanities Division  
**Office Hours:** MF 10:50-11:50

**MWF 13-13:50, PRH 8**  
**Semester:** Spring 2011  
**Core requirement:** 3 Credits  
**Prerequisite:** THEO-100 and one 200-level course

**Course description:**

This course will examine the historic and contemporary roles of religion in human experience. It will serve as an introduction to the history, belief-systems, practices and divisions of the world's major religions and new religious movements, with the goals of appreciating diversity and promoting respect, critical analysis, and growth in our understanding of others and ourselves.

**Learning objectives:**

This course is designed to attend to the Five Dimensions of Saint Louis University's Mission:

1. Scholarship and Knowledge: Upon completion of this course, students...
  - a. ... will have built upon the foundation they constructed in their 100-level courses.
  - b. ...will have diversified their theological knowledge, exercised critical thinking and prepared themselves for further study.
  - c. ...will be able to articulate and explain the core beliefs and practices of the world's major religions.
  - d. ...will be particularly well versed in their topics of research.
2. Intellectual Inquiry and Communication: Through the lectures, class discussions, and student presentations, students will acquire tools for seeing and thinking about the world in theological terms, the ability to express their convictions, and the capacity to listen to and appreciate others.
3. Community Building: Upon completion of this course, students will be better equipped to engage in dialogue with those of different faiths in order to promote peace and understanding on campus and in the world.
4. Leadership and Service: In their current and future leadership roles, students will benefit from the knowledge of religion they have acquired in this course, as faith is a vital dimension of the lives of the majority of the world's population. (See opening quotation.)

5. Spirituality and Values: Over the course of the semester, students...
- ...will develop appreciation for the diverse ways in which people live out their spirituality.
  - ...will acquire critical insight into how people make ethical decisions in line, and at times in contradiction, with the faith that they profess.

Students are also encouraged to formulate their own objectives for this course:

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**Required texts:**

Fisher, Mary Pat, *Living Religions* (2009)  
 Selected readings from primary sources  
 One book related to students' research paper

**Required work and grading policy:**

The final grade is intended to reflect one's fulfillment of the course requirements, engagement with and comprehension of material studied, and ability to reflect this comprehension and engagement in the class assignments and discussion. The final grade will be determined in the following manner:

- \_\_\_\_\_: Current Event Presentation (CEP): 5%
- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Two worship site visits: 10%
- February 18: Midterm Examination: 20%
- April 11: Research Paper: 20%
- April 13-27: Research Paper Presentation: 20%
- May 4, 12-14:00: Final Examination: 25%

**Assignment Descriptions:**

- Current Event Presentation:**
  - Choose an article from the newspaper, a magazine, an academic journal, or the internet that is related to religion in the world today. Turn in a copy of the article.
  - Present the article in your own words, explain its relevance to our class and to the topic of the day, give a bit of your own analysis, and propose a question to generate 5-10 minutes of class discussion.
- Worship site visits:** Student will attend two places of worship and write a 1-2 page reflection paper on what he or she observed there.
- Examinations:** These will be of varied format and non-cumulative and may only be rescheduled in strict accordance with university policy.
- Research paper:**
  - Choose a topic of interest related to a particular religion or that is common to various religions.
  - Formulate your thesis and develop it throughout the paper.

- c. Cite your sources according to standard MLA format. These should include essays and articles from the library and available databases, as well as reliable internet sources (.edu, .org, etc...).
  - d. All quotations and paraphrased ideas should be cited, and quotations of three lines or more should be single-spaced and indented.
  - e. The paper is to be graded according to its coherence, depth and literary quality.
  - f. It must be 6-8 pages, typed, double-spaced, TNR 12 point font or similar and include page numbers and a bibliography.
  - g. The paper will be submitted electronically.
5. **Research paper presentation:**
- a. Each student will present his or her research to the class in a scholarly and engaging manner.
  - b. The use of visual aids is strongly encouraged (e.g., power point slides). A copy is to be submitted to the professor in advance or at the beginning of the presentation.
  - c. Each presentation should include a couple of questions to generate class discussion.

**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

**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 as soon as possible.
3. If you are unable to attend class, you may send assignments to the professor by e-mail, entrust them to a classmate, or leave them in the professor's box in the mail room/bookstore.

**Attendance policy:**

Regular, punctual, participatory attendance is expected and essential to everyone's learning process in this course. More than three absences will affect one's grade. It is always advisable to inform one's professor when one will be absent and crucial to recover any material missed. Active, relevant participation in class, while not a replacement for regular attendance and the completion of required assignments, may boost a student's grade.

**Academic integrity:**

Please note that, as a student in this course, you are required to adhere to the university's Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating, falsification, and plagiarism are strictly forbidden. Plagiarism is the intentional representation of someone else's thoughts or words as if they were one's own. Any violation of this policy will result in an 'F' for the pertinent academic exercise. A detailed statement of the policy may be found at:  
[http://spain.slu.edu/academics/policies\\_&\\_procedures/docs/Academic\\_integrity.pdf](http://spain.slu.edu/academics/policies_&_procedures/docs/Academic_integrity.pdf).

**Accommodations:** Any student who qualifies for special accommodations due to a learning disability or physical handicap should contact Counseling/Disability Services. Please phone the office at 91-554- 5858 (ext. 230), or send an e-mail to [vandrew1@slu.edu](mailto:vandrew1@slu.edu). Students may also stop by the Counseling/ Disability Services office in the Manresa building. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

## **SYLLABUS**

**Wednesday, January 12:** Introduction to course, instructor and participants.

**Friday, January 14:** Introduction, continued...

**Read:** Living Religions (LR) Chapter 1

**Monday, January 17:** Religious Responses

**Wednesday, January 19:** Religious Responses

**Friday, January 21:** Religious Responses

**Read:** LR Chapter 2

**Monday, January 24:** Indigenous Sacred Ways

**(Tuesday, Jan. 25: Last day to ADD a class or to DROP a class without a grade of "W")**

**Wednesday, January 26:** Indigenous Sacred Ways

**Read:** LR Chapter 3

**Friday, January 28: NO CLASS**

**Monday, January 31:** Hinduism

**Wednesday, February 2:** Hinduism

**Friday, February 4:** Hinduism

**Monday, February 7:** Hinduism

**Read:** LR Chapter 4

**Wednesday, February 9:** Buddhism

**Last day to choose AUDIT or Pass/No Pass status**

**Friday, February 11:** Buddhism

**Monday, February 14:** Buddhism. Midterm review to be distributed.

**Wednesday, February 16:** Buddhism. Midterm review.

**Friday, February 18:** MIDTERM EXAMINATION

**Read:** LR Chapter 5

**Monday, February 21: NO CLASS (Winter Break: February 21-22)**

**Wednesday, February 23:** Taoism

**Friday, February 25:** Taoism

**Monday, February 28:** Confucianism

**Wednesday, March 2:** Confucianism

**Read:** LR Chapter 6

**Friday, March 4:** Shinto

**Monday, March 7:** Shinto

**Read:** LR Chapter 7

**Wednesday, March 9:** Judaism

**Friday, March 11:** Judaism

**Last day to DROP a class and receive a grade of "W"**

**Monday, March 14:** Judaism

**Wednesday, March 16:** Judaism

**Read:** LR Chapter 9

**Friday, March 18: NO CLASS**

**Monday, March 21:** Islam

**Wednesday, March 23:** Islam

**Friday, March 25:** Islam

**Monday, March 28:** Islam

**Read:** LR Chapter 10

**Wednesday, March 30:** Sikhism

**Friday, April 1:** Sikhism

**Read:** LR Chapter 11

**Monday, April 4:** Religion in a New Era

**Wednesday, April 6:** Religion in a New Era

**Friday, April 8:** Religion in a New Era

**Monday, April 11:** Religion in a New Era

**Due:** RESEARCH PAPER

**Wednesday, April 13:** RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS

**Friday, April 15:** RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS

**HOLY WEEK HOLIDAYS: Saturday, April 16 – Sunday, April 24**

**Monday, April 25:** RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS

**Wednesday, April 27:** RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS. Final review to be distributed.

**Friday, April 29:** Last day of class. Review for final examination.

**Monday, May 2:** NO CLASS (*Fiesta de la Comunidad de Madrid*)

**Wednesday, May 4, 12-14:00:** FINAL EXAMINATION