

# Syllabus for Introduction to World Religions

[Institution]

[Semester]

[Class Times and Location]

[Instructor's name, contact information, and office hours]

## Course Goals

The purpose of this course is to give a broad overview of many of the major religions in the world. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, but it is intended to give the students basic familiarity with most major religions in today's world.

This fifteen-week course will introduce students to a variety of avenues to study religions: ancient religions and traditions that have laid foundations for today's religions, indigenous religions still practiced today, and the major religions of both Eastern and Western culture.

## Required Texts:

The required text is *Introduction to World Religions*, 2nd ed., Christopher Partridge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013). Students should plan to also have assignments that include additional readings and multimedia resources found on the internet.

Please consult the course website regularly [insert URL]

## Outline of Course Units

### Part 1: Understanding Religion

Goals: 1) Students should be able to identify and explain the various presented methods of looking at religion and ritual, including the use of the specialized vocabulary used. 2) Students should be able to articulate their own personal definition of religion

### Part 2: Religions of Antiquity

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate current understanding of religion before recorded history. 2) Students should be able to articulate the basic beliefs of the variety of ancient religions presented. 3) Students should be able to articulate similarities and differences among the presented religions. 4) Students should understand Zoroastrianism as a living religion, with ties to modern monotheistic religions.

### Part 3: Indigenous Religions

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate what an "indigenous religion" is and its relationship to the society/culture. 2) Students should be able to articulate basic beliefs and practices of the presented indigenous religions, recognizing that most of these are still living religions. 3) Students should be able to articulate some of the differences among the religions presented and how those differences show in the religious practices.

#### **Part 4: Hinduism**

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate the history of the development of Hinduism. 2) Students should be able to articulate the basic beliefs of Hinduism and how those beliefs may have changed over the centuries. 3) Students should be able to articulate how Hinduism is practiced both publically and in family units. 4) Students should be able to articulate an understanding of the content and sources of Hindu holy writings. 5) Students should be able to articulate the place of Hinduism in today's world. 6) Students should be able to articulate an understanding of the basic terms associated with Hinduism.

#### **Part 5: Buddhism**

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate the history of Buddhism and the life of its founder, Siddhartha Gautama. 2) Students should be able to articulate an understanding of the source and content of the sacred writing of Buddhism and their role in Buddhism today. 3) Students should be able to articulate an basic understanding that there are many varieties of Buddhism. 4) Students should be able to articulate how Buddhism is perceived and how it functions in today's world. 5) Students should be able to articulate an understanding of the basic terms associated with Buddhism.

#### **Part 6: Jainism**

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate an understanding of the historical development of Jainism. 2) Students should be able to articulate an understanding of the sacred writing and beliefs of Jainism. 3) Students should be able to articulate an understanding of worship practices of Jainism. 4) Students should be able to articulate an understanding of the basic terms associated with Jainism.

#### **Part 7: Chinese Religions**

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of native Chinese religions and their relationship to the culture. 2) Students should be able to articulate the impact of Christianity of Chinese native religion and Chinese culture.

#### **Part 8: Korean and Japanese Religions**

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of native Korean and Japanese religions and their relationship to the culture. 2) Students should be able to articulate the impact of Christianity of Korean and Japanese native religions and culture.

#### **Part 9: Judaism**

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of Jewish pre-history and history through modern times. 2) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of Jewish holy writings, beliefs, worship practices, and major festivals. 3) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the major branches of Judaism and their distinctive beliefs/practices. 4) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the Holocaust, its impact on Jewish culture and religion, and the role of other religions such as Christianity in the Holocaust.

### **Part 10: Christianity**

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the history of Christianity and its connection with Judaism. 2) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the figure of Jesus and his place in Christianity. 3) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the holy writings, beliefs, worship practices, and major festivals of Christianity. 4) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of some of the variety of Christian beliefs and practices in today's society.

### **Part 11: Islam**

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the historical development of Islam to modern times. 2) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the figure of Muhammed and his place in Islam. 3) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the various sects of Islam. 4) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the holy writings, beliefs, worship practices, and major celebrations of Islam. 5) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the Five Pillars of Islam and their role in Islamic practice. 6) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of Islamic law and the impact on society today.

### **Part 12: Sikhism**

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the historical development of Sikhism. 2) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the unique role of the holy writings in Sikhism. 3) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of Sikhism in today's world

### **Part 13: Religions in Today's World**

Goals: 1) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the reasons for new religious developments in the modern world. 2) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of existentialism and postmodernism and the relationship of these ideas to modern religious practice. 3) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the stated reasons for decline in religious participation. 4) Students should be able to articulate a basic understanding of the connections between religion and politics in today's world.

## **Course Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Part/Theme</b>	<b>Readings</b>
Week 1	Part 1—Understanding Religion	Chapters 1-8
Week 2	Part 2—Religions of Antiquity	Chapters 9-14
Week 3	Part 2—Religions of Antiquity; Part 3—Indigenous Religions	Chapters 15-18 Chapters 18-21
Week 4	Part 3—Indigenous Religions	Chapters 22-30

Week 5	Part 4—Hinduism	Chapters 31-37
Week 6	Part 5—Buddhism	Chapters 38-42
Week 7	Part 6—Jainism	Chapters 43-48
Week 8	Part 7—Chinese Religions Part 8—Korean and Japanese Religions	Chapters 49-50 Chapter 51-52
Week 9	Part 9—Judaism	Chapters 53-56
Week 10	Part 9—Judaism	Chapters 57-60
Week 11	Part 10—Christianity	Chapters 61-67
Week 12	Part 11—Islam	Chapters 68-72
Week 13	Part 11—Islam	Chapters 73-76
Week 14	Part 12—Sikhism	Chapters 77-82
Week 15	Part 13—Religion in Today's World	Chapters 83-88