

FOR THE STUDENT: HOW TO USE THE STUDY COMPANION

This study companion is intended to help you get the most out of *Introduction to World Religions*—to further your understanding of each of the faiths discussed in the textbook and to spark your critical thinking about a religion’s structures, values, and relationships with other social forces. The companion is organized like the textbook: each chapter corresponds to a part in the book and typically includes chapter summaries, key personalities, excerpts from related primary source material, key terms with definitions, questions for discussion and reflection, and selected online resources.

Following this introduction is the pre-test, which offers multiple choice questions for you to answer to assess your knowledge of world religions. Answers to the questions are printed on page XX.

Before you begin reading a section of the textbook, or after reading it to ensure you understood the main ideas, read the *Chapter Summaries*. You will notice that the chapters focusing on a single religion or closely related group of religious traditions (e.g., Indigenous Religions) have a fairly consistent structure, with some variations: typical subsections include a historical overview, beliefs, sacred writings, worship and festivals, and the religion in the modern world. The summaries feature a brief look at the principle beliefs and practices, history and development, and contemporary concerns of each religion.

Also before you read a section, it might be useful to note the *Key Personalities* and *Key Terms*. The Key Personalities list a selection of significant historical figures from the tradition, a brief biography for each, an excerpt from the person’s own work or a scholar’s insights into the figure’s significance, and in some cases related resources available online. Key Terms are a selected list of concepts particular to a religion or study of a religion, names of important institutions or movements, and so forth and their definitions. You will want to be at least familiar with these personalities and terms by the time you have finished reading the section.

(In chapter 3, “Indigenous Religions,” *A Brief Survey of Traditions* and an *Annotated Bibliography* replaces the Key Personalities section found in the other chapters. The information listed in these sections are related to the topics of the chapter’s case studies.)

The *Primary Source Readings* appearing in each part of this guide are intended to provide additional context for and insight into the faith tradition discussed in the textbook. After you read a section in the textbook, these materials can help further your understanding of the topic or act as touchstones for class discussion or essays.

Immediately after you have read a chapter in the book, you might wish to go through the related *Questions for Study and Discussion* and *Questions for Reflection*. On your own you can use these questions to test your

knowledge of the basic concepts and values of the religion, while also reflecting back on the text and thinking critically about the tradition. Some of the questions are intended to focus on reading comprehension—asking you to demonstrate your understanding by using your own words to define terms, describe ideas, and summarize key points. Other questions encourage you to make comparisons, analyze the deeper meanings of a text, and return to the book to consider the illustrations, personal essays (“I am . . .”), and sidebars and what they tell you about a religion’s core beliefs and values. The questions can also be used in a class discussion group or as the basis for essay or research paper topics.

A short list follows under the heading *Selected Online Resources*. The websites included in this guide are simply a sample of online resources related to world religions and the study of religion. Online museum exhibits, academic research sites, the texts of sacred writings, personal testimonies or perspectives on religion, and historical data are all available on the web. Use the sites offered here as a jumping-off point; when your interest is caught by a particular topic or individual mentioned in a section, you can do quick research on the web to learn more before heading to the library shelves.

Following the pre-test and the thirteen chapters corresponding to the textbook is a guide to writing research papers on topics in world religion. It includes bibliographies of reference works in print and electronic media, as well as online sources related to world religions. You can also learn useful research methods and tips on writing effective papers, as well as see examples of proper footnote and bibliographic citation form.

One final note: Many of the key terms and personalities listed in this guide, along with other vocabulary, are included in the “Rapid Fact-Finder” (located at the back of the book, before the index), a detailed, alphabetically organized glossary. Be sure to check out this additional resource to assist you in your understanding and further exploration of world religions.