

GRST 200: INTRODUCTION TO GLOBAL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Bridgewater State University

(Online - Summer 2020)

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Duration: May 25- June 26

Class Credits: 3

Course Description:

Religious expression has been an essential part of the human experience throughout recorded history. Among other things, religion has been a catalyst for social change and conflict, a means of expressing social and personal identity, a tool of political control and of revolution, and a statement of the way people and cultures understand their purpose and place in the world. Studying the way religion has influenced historical events, cultural frameworks, and personal experiences is an important avenue for understanding human society and interaction. A basic level of global religious literacy is therefore essential if one wishes to be a global citizen.

This course is an introduction to global religious studies, a field of study that draws from many different academic disciplines such as anthropology, history, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. We will be taking a multimedia approach to the material, using text, lecture, and film to enable students to recognize, understand, and appreciate the diversity of the world's religious traditions.

Please note: This class emphasizes the exploration of religious diversity and does not endorse or advocate for any single religion's beliefs, traditions, or worldviews.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of religious identities, how they come about, and how they are expressed;
 - Identify key differences and similarities between worldviews, practices, ideas, and rituals across major global religions;
 - Explain how major religious traditions have evolved and adapted across time (history) and space (geography);
 - Recognize the internal diversity and complexity of individual religions;
 - Develop an appreciative knowledge of different worldviews and faith traditions.
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Grading Breakdown:

Video Lecture Journal Responses: 30%

Each week, you will be asked to watch video lectures – approximately two hours per lecture, broken into smaller segments. At the end of each lecture, you will write a short **journal response**

(about 250 words) in the prompt provided on Blackboard. Unlike a discussion board, journal entries are private: *only you and I will be able to see your responses*.

These responses are your opportunity to reflect on and continue your engagement with the material. As you write, consider the following questions: what were the most important things you learned from the lecture, and why? What insights did you have? What information surprised you? What questions do you have what?

Each journal response will be graded on a 0-2 point scale:

- 0 points: Response does not demonstrate engagement with lecture content.
- 1 point: Response demonstrates some engagement with lecture content.
- 2 points: Response demonstrates active engagement with lecture content.

You must put thought and effort into your journal entries if you want full credit.

Weekly Topical Papers: 50% (5 x 10% each)

Each week, you will write a short **topical paper** (between 500-750 words) based on a specific question that will be posted to Blackboard.

While you should incorporate information from the readings, lectures, and videos into your response, outside sources are considered *secondary*, and will not count toward your point total. Papers that are primarily based on unsubstantiated opinion will not get credit for the assignment.

Final Exam: 20%

The final exam will be due on **Monday, June 29**. More information will be provided during the second week of the semester.

Course Schedule: (all lectures, readings, and films will be available electronically)

Week 1 (May 26 – May 29)

Read: “What Is Religious Literacy?”

Video Lecture: “Course Introduction – Understanding Religion”

Film: “Sacred”

FIRST TOPICAL PAPER DUE MAY 29

Week 2 (June 1 – June 5)

Read: “Hinduism”

Video Lecture: “Understanding Hinduism”

Film: Sita Sings the Blues”

SECOND TOPICAL PAPER DUE JUNE 5

Week 3 (June 8 – June 12)

Read: “Judaism”

Video Lecture: “Understanding Judaism”

Read: “Christianity”

Video Lecture: “Understanding Christianity”

THIRD TOPICAL PAPER DUE JUNE 12

Week 4 (June 15- June 19)

Read: “Buddhism”

Video Lecture: “Understanding Buddhism”

Film: “The Buddha: The Story of Siddhartha”

FOURTH TOPICAL PAPER DUE JUNE 19

Week 5 (June 22 – June 26)

Read: “Islam”

Video Lecture: “Understanding Islam”

Film: “Inside Mecca”

FIFTH TOPICAL PAPER DUE JUNE 26

FINAL EXAM DUE Monday, June 29