

## Course Outline: 2022

**Religious Studies 2130: Living Religions of the World**

**Location:** Virtual

**Day(s):** Weekly zoom class Wed, 9am EST-11am EST and at other times by appointment, zoom lecture for each religion in syllabus (below) will be also posted in Resources on the OWL site.



**Instructor(s): Prof. William Acres**

**Contact info: bacres@gtn.net**

**Recording of Classes:** All of the remote learning sessions for this course will be recorded. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals participating in the course for their private or group study purposes. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings. Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

## Prerequisites Required for this Course: None

### Course Outcomes:

The purpose of the course is to develop students' understanding of the living religions of the world with a major emphasis on their origins, historical development, teachings and practices. The current practices of these religions, both within their region (country) of origin, and abroad, will be discussed. Religions are not "linear" or logical. Much of the material will be presented in a linear fashion, but there are thematic areas of some complexity—of special note are the concepts of Brahman-Atman in Hindu Upanishads; Anatta in Buddhism; Sacraments and the Trinity in Christianity; but, otherwise, the materials are accessible. There are great similarities between religions but in this course there is no attempt to homogenize them. Canada is a thriving multicultural society and the study of religions is a part of Canadian culture and society.

#### Course Content:

The course provides a detailed analysis of the major beliefs and practices of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Bahai.

### Course Syllabus: Course Delivery:

You are asked to attend all zoom sessions if possible. These sessions will be posted in a separate document. Each week on Wednesday there will be an 'open house' 9amEST to

10:30amEST. As well, each of the modules (e.g. Hindu, Zoroastrianism...) will be found in a separate zoom lecture of 30-40 minutes which will be posted under Resources 'audio only' file. There will be an introductory zoom class on May at 9amEST for orientation, questions, and further discussion relating to materials found here. The zoom links will be loaded into the OWL site by the 7<sup>th</sup> May.

We are entirely online for Intersession.

Course Schedule: The content is suggested for readings in Brodd and following course materials in Tests and Quizzes. The breakdown for readings/postings and test-quizzes will follow the zoom lecture content and the zoom sessions for each week—these are Wednesdays at 9am each week. See Resources for the zoom link.

May 2022

Week One: materials to be covered

16: Intro: Acres, zoom lecture and session online.

17: The Indian religions overview and Hindu I--Hindu and Buddhist lectures will be recorded and placed under Resources

18: Hinduism II Zoom 9-10

19: **Hinduism III and Buddhism (Discussion Questions Due by 11:55PM)**

Week Two

23: Jain Chapter: zoom lecture uploaded to Resources, Victoria Day holiday, no class

24: **Buddhism II (Discussion Questions Due by 11:55 PM)**

25: Sikh: Zoom lecture will be uploaded to Resources Zoom 9-10

26: *First Test: Indian Religions (Discussion Questions Due by 11:55PM)*

Week Three

30: Three Mountains: Religions or Philosophies, Confucius I (lecture on the Chinese religions will be uploaded to Resources)

31: Confucius II Zoom 9-10

June 2022

1: Tao I

2: **Tao II (Discussion Questions Due by 11:55PM)**

Week Four:

6: **Shinto II and Zoroastrianism (Discussion Questions Due by 11:55PM)**

7: *Test No. 2: Chinese, Japanese and Zoroastrianism*

8: Introduction to Monotheism

9: Judaism I Zoom 9-10

Week Five:

13: **Judaism II (Discussion Questions Due by 11:55PM)**

- 16: Christianity I
- 17: Christianity II (**Discussion Questions Due by 11:55PM**)
- 18: Christianity III

Week Six

- 20: Islam I (**Discussion Questions Due by 11:55PM**)

**22: Islam II and zoom review 9-10 am EDT.**

The above is the general pattern for the zoom discussions: much of the material will overlap into the following week. Each student must, therefore, read the appropriate required text in addition to the lecture material.

Religious Studies: Lecture materials covered in Zoom discussions weekly:

Introduction:

1. What is religion?
2. Importance of understanding the world religions.
3. Characteristics of religion

Hinduism:

1. Origins: Historical development
2. Scriptures: Vedas, Upanishad, Bhagwad Gita
3. Major beliefs and practices:
  - a) The Absolute (Brahman) and the soul (Atman)
  - b) Bondage and paths of liberation
  - c) The law of Karma
  - d) The four goals of life
  - e) The four stages of life
  - f) Hindu trinity, daily worship (puja)
4. Hinduism at present

Buddhism:

1. Life of Gautma Buddha
2. Scriptures of Buddhism
3. Four Noble Truths: Middle path, Nirvana
4. Rituals, Symbols (three refuges)
5. Concept of No-self
6. Sects of Buddhism
7. Buddhism outside India

Jainism:

1. Life of Mahavira
2. Jain writings
3. Basic concepts: living and non-living
4. The five great vows, non-violence
5. Types of Jain practices

Sikhism:

1. The life of the founder, Guru Nanak

2. Political history of Sikhism
3. Scripture of Sikhism
4. Basic teachings
5. Sikh symbols (5 k's)
6. Variations within Sikhism
7. Sikh ceremonies and observances

#### Introduction to Chinese and Japanese religions

##### Confucius: Qong Zi's teachings

1. Historical background to his writings
2. Life of Confucius: teacher
3. Literature of Confucianism: Analects
4. Teachings of Confucius: a) Ethical principles b) religious teachings
5. Confucianism and the modern world.

##### Taoism:

1. Origin and life of Lao Tzu
2. Scriptures of Taoism
3. Taoism as philosophy
4. Taoism as religion
5. Taoism today

##### Shinto:

1. Origin and historical development
2. Basic teachings: Kami, Nature, Human Beings
3. Forms of Shinto: Primitive, State (Tennoism) and Domestic (popular)
4. Religious festivals and observances
5. Shinto in present time

##### Zoroastrianism:

1. Life of Zoroaster
2. Zoroastrian Scriptures
3. Basic Teachings and Practices: a) Nature of God; b) Zoroastrian Ethics and Humans; c) Worship and Rituals; d) Tower of Silence

##### Judaism:

1. Historical background
2. Scripture: The Hebrew Bible
3. Basic Teachings and beliefs: The Absolute, the World, Humans
4. Jewish Observances and Festivals
5. Major groups of Judaism

##### Christianity:

1. Life of Jesus Christ
2. Scripture: The Bible
3. Major Teachings of Jesus: a) The Kingdom of God; b) Religious teachings; c) Ethical teachings; d) Trinity
4. Worship and Sacraments
5. Major groups of Christians

Islam:

1. Life of the Prophet Muhammed
2. Scripture: The Quran
3. Major beliefs and the five Pillars of Wisdom
4. Islamic Observations and Festivals'
5. Sects of Islam

## Course Materials:

### Required Text

1. An Invitation to World Religions eds. Jeffrey Brodd (Nystrom et. al.) New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. This text is available for purchase – the rental options available will be displayed at the hyperlink.
2. PDF readings located in resources folder and linked in their respective lesson categories in OWL

The course materials are the textbook, Invitation to World Religions, eds. Jeffrey Brodd et.al.; and all materials are available to students either through the Bookstore at Western, physical copy, or through the link provided below.

<https://www.vitalsource.com/en-ca/products/invitation-to-world-religions-jeffrey-brodd-layne-little-v9780190086343>

In Resources on OWL you will find for each module: Lecture notes, background notes, interviews with experts, review questions and answers, and other materials as needed are found under Resources. For each module of the course (see Syllabus below) there are questions based on chapter summaries and materials--these will be done under Tests and Quizzes, and are time-sensitive. All due dates for these as well forum discussion postings comprise 30% of the final grade. All tests will be administered through the OWL "Test and Quizzes" function and written at 9am EST on the day scheduled. There are three term tests, of 40-45 short questions to be written in 90 minutes. The top 2 of 3 grades will be taken in the calculation of the final grade. All tests must be written. Failure to take a test can be permitted with accommodation. As they are 40% of the final grade (i.e. 20% each) these are significant assignments. On the other hand the pace of the course suggests a steady reading of chapters and the relatively close proximity of the tests to the readings will provide a good pace.

### Assignments & Method of Evaluation of Assignments:

- Test and Quiz postings: (see timetable below) you will post 150-200 words of discussion on the questions provided at the conclusion of each chapter and section in our textbook.

The grade overall for postings will be 30%. How to do these answers and the substance of the materials will be addressed each week in the introductory zoom lecture posted before the course begins. Each of the Tests and Quizzes can be done asynchronously online. Questions will be posed from the Brodd textbook (conclusion of the chapters). Most of these are 3 questions with a unit value of 1.0 each. They are NOT directly linked to Gradebook, but your results will be available very quickly after submission. These grades remain in your portal. At the

end of the course the total of 30% will be calculated out of the top 8 of your submissions/of 10. You may miss one. The overall quality of the course for you will be enhanced greatly by reading Brodd regularly—entire chapters—using also the powerpoints under Resources, the basis for the zoom lectures—and following these questions as you read.

#### Tests:

- Test Number One: Religions of India and Introduction to “religion”, 20%, multiple choice or one word answer (True or False) or “a, b, c, d”
- Test Number Two: Religions/Philosophies of China, Zoroastrianism, Japan Multiple Choice or one-word answer (True or False) or “a, b, c, d”.

o Both tests will be administered through “Tests and Quizzes” on OWL, each test will contain 50 questions and last one hour. 20% each, added immediately to your Gradebook.

- Final Examination: Similar Format, Monotheistic Religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Baha'i. There will be a written essay based on material distributed prior to the final examination of 20% and there is a short essay worth 10% of the final grade in the course. The questions can be found from the beginning of the course as “Final Essay Questions” in the Resources tab. The final exam multiple choice section will be administered on Tests and Quizzes. The essay will be submitted on the same day as the final exam through the tab provided under Assignments.

#### **Additional Statements:**

1. Statement on Academic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[https://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page\\_20](https://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_20).

2. Plagiarism-detecting Software/Computer Marking:

A) All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ( <http://www.turnitin.com> ).

B) Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

4. Support Services:

- Huron’s Faculty of Theology, Office of the Dean: <http://www.huronuc.on.ca> > Theology
- Faculty of Theology office: [srice@uwo.ca](mailto:srice@uwo.ca)
- Bachelor’s Academic Advising at Huron: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/>

- Huron's Writing Skills Centre: <https://huronatwestern.ca/library/writing-services/>
- Mental Health@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to this website for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
- Student Accessibility Services:  
[http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)  
 Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS and their faculty (normally their Dean and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged.

- Services provided by Western University Student Council: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/>

#### 5. Academic Accommodation for Absences:

Types of Accommodation and how to use them:

[https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic\\_considerations/index.html](https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html)

Student Medical Certificate can be found here, if required:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

Students who experience an extenuating circumstance (illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstance) sufficiently significant to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes:

- Submitting a Self-Reported Absence form provided that the conditions for submission are Met (see below);
- For medical absences, submitting a Student Medical Certificate (SMC), signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner in order to be eligible for Academic Consideration (for instance, when a Self-Report is not possible: any assignment worth more than 30%, final exams, or December mid-terms during exam schedule); or
- For non-medical absences, submitting appropriate documentation (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) to Academic Counselling in their Faculty of registration in order to be eligible for academic consideration. Students are encouraged to contact their Academic Counselling unit to clarify what documentation is appropriate.

Any documentation required must be submitted by the student directly to your Faculty's Dean's office (or academic counselor), and not to the instructor. For students of the Faculty of Theology, all such documentation must be submitted to [theology@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:theology@huron.uwo.ca). It will be the Dean's office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

## Further Details about Requests for Academic Consideration Self-Reported Absence Form

Report through [student.uwo.ca](http://student.uwo.ca).

The full Policy on Academic Consideration for student absences is available at:  
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Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

- a. students will be allowed a maximum of two self-reported absences between September and April and one self-reported absence between May and August
- b. any absences in excess of the number designated in clause a above, regardless of duration, will require students to present a Student Medical Certificate (SMC), signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner, detailing the duration and severity of illness, or appropriate documentation supporting extenuating circumstances to the Academic Counselling unit in their Faculty of registration no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities.
- c. The duration of the excused absence will be for a maximum of 48 hours from the time the Self-Reported Absence form is completed through the online portal, or from 8:30 am the following morning if the form is submitted after 4:30 pm;
- d. The duration of the excused absence will terminate prior to the end of the 48-hour period should the student undertake significant academic responsibilities (write a test, submit a paper) during that time;
- e. The duration of an excused absence will terminate at 8:30 am on the day following the last day of classes each semester regardless of how many days of absence have elapsed;
- f. Self-reported absences will not be allowed for scheduled final examinations; for midterm examinations scheduled during the December examination period; or for final lab examinations scheduled during the final week of term;
- g. Self-reporting may not be used for assessments (e.g. midterm exams, tests, reports, presentations, or essays) worth more than 30% of any given course.



h. students must be in touch with their instructors no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by the Self-Reported Absence form, to clarify how they will be expected to fulfil the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence

## Additional Statements:

### 1. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices during Tests and Exams

It is not appropriate to use technology (such as, but not limited, to laptops, PDAs, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and is distracting to other students and to the instructor and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

2. **Statement on Academic Offences:** Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

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- Huron's Writing Skills Centre: <https://huronatwestern.ca/library/writing-services/>
- Mental Health@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to this website for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

- Academic Support & Engagement, UWO. Accessible Education. [academicsupport.uwo.ca](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca)  
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