Course Description: This class is a comparative inquiry into the nature of global religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Material and social aspects of these religions will be considered along with primary beliefs and practices. The common yearning to experience the divine and the numinous will be emphasized.

Specific Focus of This Section: Particular attention will be paid to each tradition’s sacred mythology, seminal figures, foundational texts, rituals/practices and historical interactions with others. Achieving these emphases will mean looking at world religions from a variety of perspectives: historical, textual and comparative approaches together showcase the richness of these sacred traditions.

These religious movements do not exist ahistorically, but are dynamic traditions that continue to constitute powerful, global cultural and religious forces. My hope for our summer together is to engage these traditions critically, examine their beliefs and practices, and explore the various ways in which they have been influential on one another. Doing so while maintaining respect for one another and those we study is both crucial and much appreciated.

This class is also writing intensive and requires a minimum of 5000 written words to be produced during the semester. To this end, we will write three essays, rather than take traditional exams. To introduce you to a variety of writing styles in the humanities, we will have one research essay, one ethnographic essay and one concept essay. You will receive instruction in writing and detailed prompts in advance of due dates.

Learning Objectives:
- To develop an understanding of and appreciation for the diversity of the religious experience
- To identify the principal values and precepts of various religious traditions, as they are expressed in texts and in the arts
- To present the contributions and perspectives of various ethnic and religious groups as they experience the sacred

Required Texts:
- Oxtoby and Hussein, World Religions: Western Traditions (3rd edition)
- Oxtoby and Hussein, World Religions: Eastern Traditions (3rd edition)
*Primary source readings will be made available either on SacCT or are to be accessed by you online

**Assignments:**

*Essay #1 Research Essay (150 points)*
Your first essay will explore in further detail a concept introduced in class from our units on Hinduism, Buddhism or Confucianism. You are free to choose any concept you find interesting or intriguing and spend a five page essay explaining it in deeper detail. This will require you to consult at least two outside resources, aside from our lectures and textbooks. The nature of our course requires us to move through these traditions rather quickly, and this paper is intended to allow you to linger over an idea, a theory, a concept or a novel idea that you find compelling.

*Essay #2 Ethnographic Essay (200 points)*
Before the essay due date, I would like you to attend a meeting, worship service, or event hosted by members of a religious tradition with which you are unfamiliar. This can mean going to a youth group, attending a concert, talking to someone who knocks on your door, going to a bookstore, participating in/observing a ritual—this is really up to you. You will be required to turn in a four page paper on your observations and findings, including a summary of your experiences and how your experiences related to what we have learned in class. This is intended to be fun and informative. If you have questions regarding proper dress, decorum, behavior, etc. in the environments you will step into, please raise your questions in class or see me in office hours.

*Essay #3 Concept Essay (200 points)*
Your final essay will ask you to define and explain in detail the concept of “syncretism” and, using what knowledge you have gleaned over the course of the semester, demonstrate syncretism at work in at least one religious tradition we have studied this semester. This may lead you to explore outside sources, though research is not required for this paper. Rather, this is your opportunity to provide me with your own thoughts, insights and reflections. Ideally, you will make use of much of the course content, especially from weeks 1-3 and week 15-16.

Before each essay is due, you will receive detailed prompts and grading rubrics for each of these essays.

*Attendance, quizzes and discussion (200 points)*
Quizzes are unannounced and based on the readings for the week as well as your personal reflections on course content

**Grading Scale:**
A= 100%-93%
A=92-90%
B+= 89%-87%
B= 86%-83%
B-= 82%-80%
C+= 79%-77%
C= 76%-73%
C-= 72%-70%
D= 69%-60%
F= 59% and below

**Attendance**: Students are expected to attend all sessions of the class, prepared to discuss the reading assignment for the day. It is necessary, both for your own education and as a courtesy to the other members of the class, to attend class regularly and punctually. An attendance sheet will be distributed for your signature at each class meeting. It is your responsibility to sign this sheet. Numerous absences and/or chronic tardiness will adversely affect your participation grade.

**Classroom Behavior and Expectations**: Helping one another create and maintain an environment of respect and collegiality is always expected of you. In this class, we will engage some topics that are controversial and arouse strong opinions. I encourage you to feel comfortable voicing your thoughts, but please do so with care. Your tolerance and patience, especially given our diversity, is much appreciated. Before you enter the classroom, please turn off all electronic devices, and refrain from using them during class. Laptop computers and tablets are NOT to be used in class except with the explicit consent of the instructor. I have a zero tolerance for technology abuse, so if they are tempting for you, just leave them at home. Know thyself.

**Academic Integrity**: If you cheat, engage in unauthorized collaboration, plagiarize your own or someone else’s writing, or otherwise engage in academic misconduct, you will fail the assignment in question and possibly the course. Please don’t cheat. You are very likely to get caught with all the safeguards in place in the digital age. It’s not worth it. Seriously, just don’t do it. Please. Oh, and it’s a huge headache for me too. For further info on academic misconduct of all sorts, please consult Sac State’s policy at: [http://www.csus.edu/umanual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm](http://www.csus.edu/umanual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm)

**Schedule**
Week 1: Intro
January 27: Syllabus review
January 29: Intro to the Academic Study of Religion; “Podium and Pulpit” (June O’Connor)

Week 2: Critical Terminology
February 3: Myth; “Snakes Alive” (Robert Orsi)
February 5: Ritual and Material Culture
Week 3: Aryan Culture and Early Hinduism
February 10: Indus Valley; Eastern 30-42
February 12: Vedism; Eastern 43-105

Week 4: Upanishadic Traditions
February 17: The life of the Buddha; Eastern 146-157
February 19: Film Screening: Siddhartha; Eastern 178-194

Week 5: Buddhism
February 24: Theravada; Eastern 194-252
February 26: Mahayana; Finish up to 252

Week 6: Confucianism
March 3: Ancient China; Eastern 4-26, 256-274
March 5: Modern legacies; Eastern 294-303

Week 7: Writing in the Humanities
March 10: Writing Workshop
March 12: Peer review; rough draft of paper #1

Week 8: Daoism
March 17: Lao Tzu’s Philosophy; Eastern 274-294; Essay #1 Due
March 19: Visual and martial arts; Eastern 303-313

Week 9
March 24- Spring Break
March 26- Spring Break

Week 10: Zoroastrianism
March 31: The prophet Zoroaster; SacCT “Gatha of Choice”
April 2: The development of Hell; SacCT “The Crossing of the Cinvat Bridge”

Week 11: Abrahamic Traditions
April 7: Abraham and the Patriarchs; Western 68-86
April 9: The prophets; Western 86-113

Week 12: Judaism
April 14: Ancient Judaism; Western 125-157
April 16: Modern Judaism; Finish up to 157; Exploratory Paper Due

Week 13: Christianity
April 21: The early and medieval church; Western 175-193
April 23: The Reformation and denominationalism; Western 193-233

Week 14: Islam
April 28: Muhammad’s prophecy; Western 268-283
April 30: The global spread of Islam; Finish up to 317

Week 15: Sikhism
May 5: The Guru; Eastern108-142
May 7: Syncretism; Finish up to 142

Week 16
May 12:
May 14: *Paper #3 Due*