



## Shanghai University of Finance & Economics

### 2019 Summer Program

### RELG 101 Introduction to Religion

#### Course Outline

**Term: June 3 – June 28, 2019**

**Class Hours: 16:00-17:50 (Monday through Friday)**

**Course Code: RELG 101**

**Instructor: Dr. Job Chen**

**Home Institution: Clemson University**

**Office Hours: TBA and by appointment**

**Email: [zhuoc@clemson.edu](mailto:zhuoc@clemson.edu)**

**Credit: 4**

**Class Hours:** This course will have 52 class hours, including 32 lecture hours, professor 8 office hours, 8-hour TA discussion sessions, 4-hour review sessions.

#### **Course Description:**

Introduction to Religion will provide students with an overview of major world religious traditions with a focus on Christianity and Hinduism. The course will engage student in discussing themes on creation, evil, and mystical experiences.

#### **Course Objectives:**

In this course, we seek to gain an understanding of two of the major world religions, Christianity and Hinduism, through a comparative and dialogical approach of the ways in which these traditions have come to terms with some of the basic existential questions and religious aspirations of humanity. Following introductory lectures on the nature of religion and the challenges of religious pluralism, we will compare the Hindu and the Christian conceptions of creation, evil and salvation and of the path to salvation through a study of their respective sacred scriptures and doctrines. The last part of the course focuses on the mystical traditions of Christianity and Hinduism and the question of the unity or diversity of mystical experiences. The purpose of this course is not only to come to a better



understanding of each of these traditions in light of the other, but also to reflect on possibilities for mutual enrichment and growth through a dialogue between them.

## **Required Textbooks:**

The Bible

Alister McGrath, *Theology: The Basics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

The Bhagavadgita (B. Miller, trans.) New York: Bentam Books, 1986.

Frank Clooney, *Hindu Wisdom for All God's Children*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998 or Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006.

Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Saint Augustine, *Confessions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, (trans. Henry Chadwick, 1991)

Teresa of Avila, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself* (J.M. Cohen, trans.) London: Penguin Books, 1957.

## **Grading & Evaluation:**

Attendance (30%) – Midterm exam (35%) – Final exam (35%)

Class attendance and active participation (30 %)

Class attendance is required. Students are allowed at most two excused absences. Beyond that and short of very serious circumstances, each absence will have an effect on your grade.

Come to class prepared with two or three questions from the readings. I will randomly ask a few students each class to share a question or comment with the other students.

Midterm exam (35%)

The midterm will be a written exam with two essay questions and two short questions.

Final exam (35%)

The midterm will be a written exam with two essay questions and two short questions.



## Course Schedule

### Week1 Creation

Session 1: Introduction: What is religion?

Douglas Pratt, “Fundamentalism, Exclusivism and Religious Extremism” in Understanding Interreligious Relations, pp. 241-261

Session 2: Creation stories

M. Eliade, Cosmogonic Myth and Sacred History

Session 3: Creation in the Bible

Genesis, 1-3, McGrath, Theology the Basics, pp. 35-57

Session 4: Creation in the Hindu scriptures

Background on Hindu scriptures, Read Flood, pp. 35-40

Purusha Sukta, Nasadiya Sukta

Francis Clooney, Hindu Wisdom for All Gods People, pp. 1-16

### Week2 Evil and Salvation

Session 1: Evil in Christian scriptures

Matthew 5-7, Letter of Paul to the Romans 1

Confessions I-IV, VII

Session 2: Concept of and means to salvation in Christianity

Matthew 13, 22, 24, 25

Theology. The Basics, pp. 77-96.

Session 3: Evil in Hindu Scriptures<sup>[1]</sup>

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, book IV

Hindu Wisdom for all God’s Children, pp. 17-34

Bhagavadgita, chapters 1-3

Session 4: Concept and means of salvation in the Hindu tradition

Chandogya Upanishad, book VI

Bhagavad Gita, chapters 5-9

Gavin Flood, pp. 94-102, 239-247



## **Week3 Mediators of Salvation**

Session 1: Jesus of Nazareth

Read Theology, the Basics, pp. 58-76.

Session 2: Jesus, the Christ

[www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/)

Session 3: Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita and the Puranas

Bhagavadgita, chapter XI

Session 4: Krishna in the Hindu tradition

Read Hindu Wisdom for all God's Children, pp. 50-71

## **Week4 Mystical Experiences**

Session 1: Mysticism

Session 2: Christian mystics: Theresa of Avila

Read The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself, XIII-XX

Session 3: The Hindu Gods

Read Hindu Wisdom for all God's Children, pp. 72-102. Flood, pp. 128-194

Session 4: Hindu mystics: Ramana Maharshi

Ramana Maharshi - Chapter 2-3

Ramana Maharshi - Chapters 5-10