PHIL 1304 • WORLD RELIGIONS SYLLABUS

Instructor: Jae Jerkins   **Course Syllabus**
University of Texas at Tyler   2025 Edition

INSTRUCTOR INFO

Email: jjerkins@uttyler.edu
Office: Online Only
Office Hours: Over Zoom only, Wednesdays (9-12pm), with 24 hrs advanced notice

COURSE OVERVIEW | PHIL 1304

- A survey of the social and historical phenomena (e.g., rituals, practices, power structures) that led to the development of the world's great religious traditions.
- Prerequisites: None

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES | PHIL 1304

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to…
1. Define the basic terms in the academic study of religion.
2. Communicate respectfully with people from other cultures.
3. Appreciate the philosophical questions each religion addresses.
4. Understand the different problems and solutions each religion raises.
5. Appreciate different religious ethical teachings.
6. Understand different religious accounts of the meaning of life.
7. Appreciate different religious teachings about the human condition.
8. Discuss the questions raised by the phenomenon of religious diversity.

REQUIRED TEXTS | PHIL 1304

Religion Matters (2nd Edition), by Stephen Prothero.

EVALUATION METHODS | PHIL 1304

- Our course contains 4 Modules. Each module will have quizzes, two discussion posts, and an exam
- Instructions for assignments can be found by clicking their respective links on the Modules page
- Due dates for all assignments can be found on the Course Homepage & Course Calendar
- There are 14 quizzes. Your 12 best will be graded — worth 12% of your overall course grade
    - Canvas will automatically drop your two lowest quiz grades
- There are 8 Discussion Posts. Your 6 best will be graded — worth 48% of your course grade
    - Canvas will automatically drop your two lowest Discussion Post grades
    - Each Discussion Post will require you to respond to two other students' posts
- Your 4 assigned Exams are open book and worth 40% of your course grade
    - Each Exam is therefore worth 10% of your overall course grade
    - Exam 1 covers Module 1. Exam 2 (Midterm) covers Mods 1 & 2.
    - Exam 3 covers Module 3. Exam 4 (Final Exam) covers all course material (Mods 1-4).

These policies are a guide for the course and are subject to change with advance notice.

- Your final course grade is the sum of the Quizzes (12%), Discussions (48%), and Exams (40%).
- As several grades are dropped from your course grade, **this course does not offer extra credit** and only offers assignment extensions for very rare, bonafide, valid emergencies

Grading Scale | A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: below 60.
No extra credit is offered, but a few assignment grades may be dropped.

GENERAL COMPUTER USE STANDARDS

- Students are responsible for maintaining access to all required tools, technology, and materials.
    - Deadline extensions will not be granted due to technical issues or loss of Internet access
    - See *Distance Education Standards* for details
- My Email Hours are 9am – 3pm, Monday through Friday (excluding holidays)
- Emails sent after 3pm or on weekends will not receive a response until the next business day.
    - Note: I will not be available at night (when assignments are due) to answer emails. Plan to work —*and ask questions* — well ahead of deadlines.
- Online correspondence must be respectful and professional, akin to a business or legal communication. Inappropriate behavior will result in immediate disciplinary action.
- Students must use their official UT Tyler email to verify their identity. Please include the course and section number in the subject line to indicate which grade book you're in.
- Students must maintain the necessary technical skills, equipment, and Internet access to complete this online course.
- Internet outages are a risk for anyone working online. *Plan to work well ahead of deadlines to mitigate this risk.*

DISTANCE EDUCATION STANDARDS

- UT Tyler requires daily access to a computer with high-speed Internet for online courses.
- Students are responsible for meeting all course requirements, including submitting assignments on time, *regardless of location*. No exceptions will be made due to travel, residence, or technical issues, as **daily Internet access is fundamental to this course.**
- If your location prevents you from meeting *all course expectations* due to limited Internet access, travel disruptions, paperwork delays, or technical problems such as power or Internet outages, I recommend withdrawing and retaking the course when you can offer the course your full participation. *Extensions will not be granted for these issues.*
- For technical concerns related to Canvas or other online issues, promptly contact the appropriate support service before assignment deadlines. You may **email** itsupport@uttyler.edu or go by the **University Service Center**, USC 118 (3410 Varsity Dr) for technical assistance.
- Enrollment in this course confirms your ability to meet all online requirements, including participating in scheduled Zoom meetings (which require high-speed Internet) if your instructor deems it necessary.

LATE GRADING POLICY

All assignment deadlines are listed on the Course Homepage and the Course Calendar. ***Due dates for all assignments are firm.*** Quizzes and Exams must be completed before their deadlines and are ineligible for credit after the deadline has passed. Discussion Posts *may be accepted late with a 10% grade reduction*

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per hour. That is, if an assignment is due before 11pm and it's turned in between 11pm and 11:59, it loses 10%. (Yes, submitting at **11:00:00 pm CST is late**.) Midnight to 12:59 is an additional 10%, and so on. Assignments turned in more than ten hours late (without a valid excuse) are not eligible for credit.

Be aware that successfully managing your time and digital life are significant parts of your grade. If you choose to wait until the last day to submit an assignment, then you risk something occurring that prevents you from submitting it successfully. *This is your choice and your risk to manage*. But please know when you're deciding how to spend your time that **a last-minute emergency will not grant you an extension.** Again, the due dates for all assignments are firm.

GRANTING LATE WORK EXTENSIONS

While rare, excused absences for an online course must be negotiated with the instructor the *first weekday* you are available. Valid reasons for excused absences include an **unscheduled emergency hospital visit** for you or a dependent, a documented **childcare emergency**, lifecycle events (eg. weddings and funerals), **a crime or vehicular collision** (eg. robbery, assault, car wreck), **jury duty**, or mandatory **military service.** *This is the level of emergency that will be excused for missing a deadline.*
- All absences require an official note of absence, if requested, to be excused
- Official college functions are excusable *before* due dates with a college sponsor's email
- Make-up work must be completed within 7 days of a student's absence
- Unexcused absences include traveling, vacations, business trips, mission trips, or extending your travel plans into the day of our Final Exam. You will also not be given an extension due to poor planning, general transportation issues (eg. missed ride/flat tire/dead battery/other non-emergency vehicle concerns), computer problems, legal action, an illness for which you don't have a doctor's note, or changes in responsibilities at home, work, or school.

GENERAL SCHEDULE
See the Course Homepage for an updated, detailed schedule, including the Final Exam deadline

Unit 1: Foundations
    Read Lecture Notes & Prothero's Religion Matters Ch 1 & Ch 10
Unit 2: The East
    Read Lecture Notes & Prothero's Religion Matters Ch 2, 3, 9, and 8
Unit 3: The MENA (Middle East, North Africa)
    Read Lecture Notes & Prothero's Religion Matters Ch 5, 6, and 7
Unit 4: The West
    Read Lecture Notes & Prothero's Religion Matters Ch 4

COURSE AI POLICY

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data,

or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

AI is permitted only for specific assignments or situations, and appropriate acknowledgment is required. This course has specific assignments where artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT or Copilot) are permitted and encouraged. When AI use is permissible, it will be clearly stated in the assignment directions, and all use of AI must be appropriately acknowledged and cited. *Otherwise, the default is that AI is not allowed during any stage of an assignment.*

RELIGION in PUBLIC SCHOOL

This course does not seek to establish, reproduce, or legitimize any particular sectarian view of religion (cf. *Abington v. Schempp*, 1963). Rather, **we will aim for an academically rich, religiously neutral, nonsectarian view of religion**. This course will explore religion broadly — for its historical and cultural value, not in a devotional, celebratory, or doctrinal manner (cf. *Doe v. Human*, 1989). Our course lectures aim for objective, non-sectarian, research-based analysis. *Your class comments and written assignments are expected to reflect these scholarly ideals*. Rest assured, I will not evaluate your work based on your personal beliefs or lack thereof.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

A first case of academic dishonesty (eg. plagiarism, group work, inappropriate use of AI) will earn you a zero for the assignment. A second case earns you an automatic "F" for the course.

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