

# Introduction to World Religions

**PHIL 1304**  
**Fall 2026**  
**Online**

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## **Instructor**

Wes Crawford, Ph.D.

## **Contact Information**

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## **Course Description**

A comparative and philosophical introduction to the religions of the world including but not limited to Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism

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## **Learning Outcomes**

- Students will demonstrate their comprehension of the basic tenants of major world religions through examinations.
- Students will identify and analyze key persons and events in world religions through their development of a PowerPoint presentation.
- Students will assess the value of historical knowledge for world religions through a comprehensive final examination essay.

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## **Required Text**

- Esposito, John L., Darrell J. Fasching, Todd T. Lewis, and Peter Feldmeier. *World Religions Today*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Oxford Press, 2021.

## Course Policies

- This course will be offered online, which means students will not be required to come to a brick and mortar classroom on a weekly basis; nevertheless, regular “attendance” is required. Each student is required to visit the course Canvas site on a weekly basis to complete his/her assignments.
- **Late work will not be accepted**, except in the case of highly unusual and/or tragic circumstances. If a student is unable to turn in an assignment by its due date, he/she should consult with the professor as soon as possible to discuss special arrangements.
- 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.

For this course, **AI is not permitted at all**. The work submitted by students in this course will be generated by themselves. This includes all process work, drafts, brainstorming artifacts, editing, and final products. This extends to group assignments where students must create collaboratively create the project. Any instance of the following constitutes a violation of UT Tyler’s Honor Code: a student has another person/entity do any portion of a graded assignment, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, using a previously submitted assignment and/or using AI tools (such as ChatGPT).

## Assessment

1. Students will take two exams throughout the course of the semester, a mid-term and a final. For each exam, students will be asked to recall key events, persons, and ideas from their readings and class lectures. **YOU MAY NOT CONSULT YOUR NOTES WHILE TAKING THE EXAMS.** Both exams will consist of multiple choice, true false, and essay questions, and will be due no later than the following dates:

**Posted October 21; Due October 23**  
**Posted December 7; Due December 9**

**Mid Term Examination**  
**Final Examination**

2. Students will submit Reading Response Essays on a weekly basis. These 250-word essays should both summarize the reading assignment for that week and provide questions or reflections that arise from the reading. Students should work to balance their summary and reflection. Reading Response Essays are due no later than Friday at 5:00 p.m. (CST) of each week.
3. Students will attend a worship service from a world religion with which they are not familiar. They will pay attention to the various rituals practiced during the time of worship as well as any other important aspects of their experience (architecture of the space, wardrobe of the worship leader(s), theological commitments). Upon completing this visit, students will write a 250-500 word reflection about their experience. In their reflection, students should consider the following questions:
  - a. How did my own biases and cultural rules shape my experience?
  - b. What elements of the worship seemed particularly important to the worshippers? Why?
  - c. In what way(s) did you empathize with the worshipping community?
  - d. How did the worshippers use verbal and non-verbal communication to mediate their worship?
  - e. What questions did this experience surface about new cultures for you?
  - f. What did you most appreciate about your experience with this worshipping community?

Students should turn in their World Religions Experience assignment no later than **Friday, October 30.**

4. Toward the beginning of the semester, students will choose an important person or event from any world religion, which will serve as the basis for a 15-20 slide PowerPoint Presentation. Each slide should include detailed notes in the “note section” as well as a final slide showing the sources consulted for the project. Students should create the slide show as if they are preparing to introduce the topic to a college level class. Students should turn in these projects no later than **Friday, November 13.**

## Grading Scale/Policy

- Class participation and assignments will be weighted as follows:

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Reading Response Essays          | 20% |
| Mid-Term Exam                    | 20% |
| World Religions Experience Paper | 20% |
| PowerPoint Presentation          | 20% |
| Final Exam                       | 20% |

- The following grading scale will be followed for the course:

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|---------------|
| A: 90-100     |
| B: 80-89      |
| C: 70-79      |
| D: 65-69      |
| F: 64 & Below |

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## Important Information

Disability/Accessibility Services: In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible a diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The **Student Accessibility and Resources** (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Social Security Statement: It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number.

Note regarding Student Absence due to Religious Observance: Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor by the second class meeting of such absences.

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University: All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including

students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit [www.utt Tyler.edu/tobacco-free](http://www.utt Tyler.edu/tobacco-free).

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### **Tentative Schedule and/or Due Dates**

August 24-28                      Religion in Our World

- Watch Lecture: “Religion in Our World”
- Read *World Religions Today*, 3-23
- Week #1 Essay

August 31-September 4              Historical Overview of Religion in Our World

- Watch Lecture: “Historical Overview of Religion in Our World”
- Read *World Religions Today*, 23-33
- Week #2 Essay

September 7-11                      Indigenous Religions

- Watch Lecture: “Indigenous Religions”
- Read *World Religions Today*, 35-65
- Week #3 Essay

September 14-18                      Judaism

- Watch Lecture: “Judaism”
- Read *World Religions Today*, 67-103
- Week #4 Essay

September 21-25                      Judaism

- Read *World Religions Today*, 103-113
- Week #5 Essay

September 28-October 2              Christianity

- Watch Lecture: “Christianity”
- Read *World Religions Today*, 113-130
- Week #6 Essay

October 5-9                      Christianity

- Read *World Religions Today*, 130-153
- Week #7 Essay

October 12-16                  Christianity

- Read *World Religions Today*, 153-172
- Week #8 Essay
- Mid-Term Review Posted

October 19-23                  **Mid-Term Examination**

- No Reading or Essays!
- **Mid-Term Exam due no later than October 23**

October 26-30                  Islam

- Watch Lecture: “Islam”
- Read *World Religions Today*, 173-219
- Week #10 Essay
- **World Religions Experience Paper due no later than October 30**

November 2-6                  Islam

- Read *World Religions Today*, 219-261
- Week #11 Essay

November 9-13                South Asian Religions

- Watch Lecture: “Hinduism”
- Read *World Religions Today*, 263-294
- Week #12 Essay
- **PowerPoint Presentations due no later than November 13**

November 16-20              South Asian Religions

- Read *World Religions Today*, 295-337
- Week #13 Essay

November 23-27              **Thanksgiving Holiday**

November 30-December 4    Buddhism

- Watch Lecture: “Buddhism”
- Read World Religions Today, 339-413
- Week #14 Essay
- Final Exam Review Posted

December 7-11

**FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD**

- **Final Exam due no later than Wednesday, December 9!**