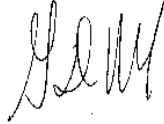


Recommendation 2013-4-10: UNIVERSITY SENATE RECOMMENDATION TO THE PROVOST
The University Senate recommends approval of RELS 102, as per the report from the Colonnade
Implementation Committee dated April 2013.

Approved 4/24/2013



Colonnade Program Course Proposal: Explorations Category

1. What course does the department plan to offer in Explorations? Which subcategory are you proposing for this course? (Arts and Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Natural and Physical Sciences)

- **Introduction to Religion** (RELS 102) to be offered under the **Arts and Humanities** subcategory.

2. How will this course meet the specific learning objectives of the appropriate subcategory. Please address **all** of the learning outcomes listed for the appropriate subcategory.

- **Use basic formal elements, techniques, concepts and vocabulary of specific disciplines within the Art and Humanities.** This course will introduce students to, and help them to understand and to utilize, the foundational terms, concepts, methods, and other formal elements of the academic study of religion. It will establish that Religious Studies is an interdisciplinary field that can be approached multiple ways: anthropologically, sociologically, historically, sociologically, and through the use of primary texts (among other approaches).
- **Distinguish between various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.** This course will distinguish between various kinds of evidence by utilizing primary and secondary sources, videos, and newspaper articles to introduce and discuss a variety of the world's religious traditions.
- **Demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression in the arts and humanities.** This course will demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression with the academic study of religion by discussing historical development as well as current understandings of how economic, cultural, and social contexts influence the development of religious traditions.
- **Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural and historical contexts.** This course will evaluate the significance of

human expression and experience in shaping these larger social, cultural, and historical contexts by demonstrating how religious traditions are lived out through ritual, practice, and the development of doctrine in both historical and contemporary periods.

- **Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience.** This course will evaluate enduring and contemporary issues in human experience by demonstrating the way that religious traditions have affected and continue to affect the lives of individuals and communities, especially in their focus on philosophical and pragmatic questions regarding the after life and every day behavior.

3. Syllabus statement of learning outcomes for course. NOTE: In multi-section courses, the same statement of learning outcomes must appear on every section's syllabus.

General Education Learning Outcomes in **bold**:

- **Use basic formal elements, techniques, concepts and vocabulary of specific disciplines within the Art and Humanities.** This course will introduce students to, and help them to understand and to utilize, the foundational terms, concepts, methods, and other formal elements of the academic study of religion.
- **Distinguish between various kinds of evidence by identifying reliable sources and valid arguments.** This course will distinguish between various kinds of evidence by utilizing primary and secondary sources, videos, and newspaper articles to introduce and discuss a variety of the world's religious traditions.
- **Demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence creative expression in the arts and humanities.** This course will demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts influence religious expression.
- **Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural and historical contexts.** This course will evaluate the significance of religious expression and experience in shaping the larger social, cultural, and historical contexts by demonstrating how religious traditions are lived out through ritual, practice, and the development of doctrine in both historical and contemporary periods.
- **Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience.** This course will evaluate enduring and contemporary issues in human experience by demonstrating the way that religious traditions raise and address such issues.

4. Brief description of how the department will assess the course for these learning objectives.

- A. An essay question will be added to the final exam in the course. The question will require students to
 1. Demonstrate familiarity with the basic formal elements, techniques, concepts, and vocabulary of Religious Studies.
 2. Demonstrate familiarity with multiple approaches to the study of religion and with multiple religious traditions.

3. Demonstrate how social, cultural, and historical contexts can shape or influence religious expression.
 4. Demonstrate how religious expression has served as an important factor in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts.
 5. Demonstrate how religious expression has served as an important factor in contributing to the understanding at least one enduring and contemporary issue of human experience.
- B. At the end of the semester to be assessed, the answers of 30% of the students in each section of the course will be selected at random for assessment.
 - C. At least two faculty members will assess each answer. The names of the students and of the instructors for the sections will be eliminated before the assessment takes place.
 - D. Answers will be given one of four designations.
 1. Excellent – The student has demonstrated proficiency in all outcomes.
 2. Good – The student has demonstrated proficiency in most outcomes.
 3. Fair – The students has demonstrated proficiency in some outcomes.
 4. Poor – The students has demonstrated proficiency in no outcomes.
 - E. The results will be tabulated and given to the Department Head.
 - F. The Department Head will convene the relevant faculty to review the results and to determine what steps, if any, need to be taken in order to improve the instruction in course.

5. How many sections of this course will your department offer each semester?

- The department will offer 2 sections of the course each semester.

6. Please attach sample syllabus for the course.

See below. When accepted into the Colonnade program, syllabi will include the learning outcomes stated above.

Approved by Colonnade Committee: 4/4/2013

RELS 102: INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Spring 2013: Tu/Tr 11:10-12:30

Professor: Dr. Nahed Artoul Zehr

Office: CH 314

E-mail: nahed.zehr@wku.edu

Office Hours: Mondays, 10:20-11:20 or by appointment (pending professor's availability)

T.A.: Ms. Deborah Sorrels

E-mail: Deborah.sorrels@topper.wku.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

1. Course Description****

This course investigates two primary questions in the study of religion: 1) what is religion; 2) and how is it experienced or lived out in the world today?

We'll begin by studying multiple dimensions of religious experience. For example we'll look at concepts like "the sacred," "theodicy," and "myth." And while we'll study these as broad categories, we'll also investigate how they are understood - or lived out - by different religious traditions. Our goal in this first unit is to develop the conceptual and methodological tools for informed analysis, understanding, and critique of the variety of religions that we will come across in this course.

With this foundation established, we'll apply these skills by reading four novels that will help us imagine the religious life of individuals and communities in the contemporary world. We'll investigate and reflect on how these individuals and communities incorporate the dimensions of religious experience (studied in the first part of the course) to speak to the moral and ethical questions that they are confronted with everyday. The goal for this second unit, then, is to understand the challenges and contributions of religion as it intersects with society in general, and the contemporary world in particular, as human beings attempt to answer the question of what it means to *be* religious – to adhere faithfully – in the contemporary world.

An important note: This is *not* a "world religions" course. We will *not* undertake an in-depth study of the world's major religious traditions. If you are interested in pursuing the study of any one specific tradition, the Department of Philosophy and Religion offers a wide range of courses

that will allow you to do so. I would be happy to direct you to the course that best suits your needs/interests.

II. Learning Goals:

- Develop the theoretical and methodological tools for thoughtful, patient, and critical study of religious traditions.
- Develop a sophisticated understanding of religion that recognizes the remarkable diversity both among religious traditions and within each tradition.
- Explore how religious traditions are shaped by social, cultural and historical forces, and how religious traditions in turn shape various aspects of culture and society.
- Try to gain an “imaginative insider’s perspective” of religious traditions; attempt to understand another tradition as the committed practitioner might in order to gain clarity on how religious commitments affect action and decision making in the contemporary world.

III. Course Requirements

a. Attendance, Discussion Groups, and Participation:

In addition to lecture, this course will have a very healthy amount of classroom discussion. To facilitate classroom discussion, you will be divided into assigned “discussion groups” for in-class assignments and activities. Your participation in these groups is vital to the success of this course. Therefore, you should:

1) Come to each session prepared to contribute. This entails a thorough and critical reading of the material **BEFORE** each class.

2) Attend every session of the course. You will be working in groups almost every single day, and you will turn in your group work (completed during class) **for points**. There will also be periodic and unannounced quizzes. If you are not in class the day of a group assignment or quiz, you will **not** receive the points. Make-ups for in-class assignments and quizzes are **not** offered.

3) Check your email regularly. You will be responsible for all information that your TA or I send to you via email.

4) Be on time to class. Punctuality is not only a virtue, but also an essential component to success in our society. I recognize that there may be occasional circumstances (beyond one’s control) that result in a late arrival. However, frequent tardiness will be treated in the same way as unexcused absences, resulting in a lowering of the final grade.

5) Reach out to me or to your TA when you need to. We want to do what we can to help you succeed in this course, but it is your responsibility to meet us halfway. Come to class, do your work, and reach out to us when you need help.

5) Evaluate and focus on your goals for your time at WKU, and for this course. The goal of a liberal arts education is to cultivate and hone the necessary reading, writing, and critical thinking skills you need to be a productive, contributing, and responsible member of society. Use your valuable and precious time at WKU to develop those skills and your intellect! Take advantage of your time at WKU by turning your attention to, and focusing on, the task at hand. Therefore, while you’re in class, **turn off your cell phones, and refrain from texting or from checking email, FB, Twitter, ESPN, or any other distraction during class.**

b. Discussion Questions: Each class session one student group will be responsible for writing and presenting a question for group discussion. **Each group must write one question and email it to the professor by 8AM on the same day that the class will meet. Please note that these questions are mandatory, and make up 10% of your overall grade.** Your discussion questions must meet the guidelines that we'll develop together in class.

c. Group Presentation

At the end of Unit I (**February 19th and 21st**) each group will have 15 minutes to make a presentation to the class. The goal of the presentation is for students (as a group) to apply the various concepts we studied in Unit I by finding a medium (text, video, movie clip, short story, poem, etc) that demonstrates at least TWO of the dimensions of religion that we studied. Students should feel at liberty to be creative as they research for the appropriate medium to share with the class. It could be just about anything that is appropriate to discuss in a university classroom. Students should only spend 3-5 minutes of their presentation time describing/showing the medium they chose, and the remainder of their presentation time (approximately 10 minutes) explaining to the class (through informed analysis) how various dimensions of religious experience are working/influencing/directing through their piece. **Note that make-up assignments are not offered for anyone who misses the group presentations.**

d. Exams

There will be one in-class mid-term (**February 26th**) and a final exam (**May 2nd during regular class time**) on the **last day of class**. Make-up exams are **not** offered. You *must* take the exams on the dates given in the syllabus.

e. Reading

A fundamental component of this course is the assigned readings. Thoughtful, appreciative, and critical reading of texts is one of the most important skills that we will develop in this course. I will expect that you will have completed all of the required reading, and that you will come to class prepared to enter into our class discussion. The following texts are required for the course:

- James C. Livingston, Anatomy of the Sacred: An Introduction to Religion
- Jack Kerouac, The Dharma Bums
- Michael Muhammed Knight, The Taqwa Cores
- Tracy Kidder, Mountains Beyond Mountains
- Chaim Potok, My Name is Asher Lev
- Materials on blackboard (as indicated in the syllabus)

****We will often be involved in a close reading of the texts. Please bring your assigned readings to every class.**

IV. Evaluation

Group Presentation	15%
Group Discussion Questions	10%

Class participation and assignments	15%
Midterm	30%
Final	30%
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Total	100%

The instructor will not calculate your grade for you during any part of the semester. If you're interested in knowing where you stand at any point, or what you need to get on any number of assignments in order to receive a certain grade, here is an online tool that will easily calculate those numbers:

<http://www.conquercollege.com/gradecalc/>

If the link is broken - Google "online grade calculator" to find another option.

****Grading Scale:**

A	100%-90%
B	89%-80%
C	79%-70%
D+	69%-60%
F	59% and below

****Percentages will be rounded up to the nearest integer.**

Accommodations Statement:

It is university policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students who have a documented disability. Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 651 523 2521, as soon as possible, or if they have an Accommodations letter from Disabilities Services, to provide it to the instructor, to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Tuesday January 22nd

Introduction and overview of course

Objectives: 1) To master the goals and requirements of this course; and 2) get acquainted with group members and classmates.

Thursday January 24th

Methods and Theories in the academic study of religion (Religious Studies)

Objective: To understand definitions and methods (ways to) in the study of religion.

- Livingston, Chapter 1
- Discussion questions: GROUP 1

Tuesday January 29th

The “So what?” Question

Objective: To formulate an initial (and working) response to the question: “Why study religion?”

- Livingston, chapter 2;
- Steven Prothero, *Religious Literacy*, 1-18, 132-137, 139-41 (141-8, optional), (Blackboard)
- Discussion questions: GROUP 2

Thursday January 31st

The “Sacred”

Objective: to understand the meaning and use of this term as it relates to the study of religion.

- Livingston, chapter 3.
- Discussion questions GROUP 3

Tuesday February 5th

“Ritual”

Objective: to understand the meaning and use of this term as it relates to the study of religion.

- Livingston, chapter 5.
- Discussion questions: GROUP 4

Thursday February 7th

“Scripture”

Objective: to understand the meaning and use of this term as it relates to the study of religion.

- Livingston, chapter 6.
- Discussion questions: GROUP 5

Tuesday February 12th

“Cosmogony” and the “Human Condition”

Objective: to understand the meaning and use of these terms as they relate to the study of religion.

- Livingston, chapter 9 and 10 (211-214, 215-231 recommended).
- Discussion questions: GROUPS 6

Thursday February 14th

“Theodicy” and the Problem of Evil

Objective: to understand the meaning and use of this term as it relates to the study of religion.

- Livingston, chapter 11.
- Discussion questions: GROUP 7

Tuesday February 19th

GROUP PRESENTATIONS!

Objective: Application of the categories of religion.

Thursday February 21st
GROUP PRESENTATIONS!

Objective: Application of the categories of religion.

Tuesday February 26th – EXAM 1

Thursday February 28th
Introduction to Buddhism

Objective: an introductory overview of foundational concepts within this religious tradition.

- Partridge, “Part 6: Buddhism” (Blackboard)
- Discussion questions: GROUP 8

Tuesday March 5th

The Dharma Bums

Objective: Examination of religion and cultural critique

- The Dharma Bums (pp.1-122)
- Discussion questions: GROUP ONE

Thursday, March 7th:

The Dharma Bums

Objective: Examination of “enlightenment”

- The Dharma Bums (pp. 122-187)
- Discussion questions: GROUP 2

Tuesday March 12th – NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

Thursday March 14th – NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

Tuesday March 19th

Introduction to Judaism

Objective: an introductory overview of foundational concepts within this religious tradition.

- Partridge, “Part 9: Judaism” (Blackboard)
- Discussion questions: GROUP 3

Thursday March 21st

- Class Cancelled

Tuesday March 26th

Objective:

- My Name is Asher Lev, chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4
- Discussion questions: GROUP 4

Thursday March 28th

Objective:

- My Name is Asher Lev, chapters 5, 6, 7, 8
- Discussion questions: GROUP 5

Tuesday April 2nd

Objective:

- My Name is Asher Lev, chapters 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
- Discussion questions: GROUP 6

Thursday April 4th

Introduction to Religious Ethics

Objective: an introductory overview of foundational concepts within the field.

- Cates, "Religious Ethics" (blackboard)
- Discussion questions: GROUP 7

Tuesday April 9th

Objective:

- Mountains Beyond Mountains, Parts 1 and 2
- Discussion questions: groups GROUP 8

Thursday April 11th

Objective:

- Mountains Beyond Mountains, Parts 3 and 4
- Discussion questions: GROUP 1

Tuesday April 16th

- Mountains Beyond Mountains, Part 5 (Discussion questions: groups 13, 1,2)
- Discussion Questions: GROUP 2

Thursday April 18th

Introduction to Islam

Objective: an introductory overview of foundational concepts within this religious tradition.

- Partridge, "Part 11: Islam"
- Discussion questions: GROUPS 3 AND 4

Tuesday April 23rd

Objective:

- Taqwacores, Chapters 1-5
- Discussion questions: GROUPS 5 AND 6

Thursday April 25th

Objective:

- Taqwacores, Chapters 6-10
- Discussion questions: GROUPS 7 AND 8

Tuesday April 30th

Capstone

Objective: Overall analysis of course focusing on student learning goals and outcomes.

Thursday May 2nd - FINAL EXAM DURING REGULAR CLASS TIME!

***Please note that all information in this syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.