Syllabus RELI 100
The Human Religious Experience
Fall 2015

Meeting place: Enterprise Hall 276
Weekly schedule: TR 3:00 pm–4:15 pm
Instructor: Prof. Susan E. Bond
Email: sbond@gmu.edu
Office Hours: by appointment, Tuesdays and Thursdays, Fenwick Library Study Rooms
Fulfills general education requirement in global understanding. 3 credits.

Course Description
According to a recent study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2012), approximately six of the seven billion people in the world identify themselves as members of a faith tradition. Religion is a powerful force in the world, for good and for ill, and religious literacy is (or should be) a requirement for every citizen of the world.
The course covers the beliefs, practices, festivals, and history of the major world religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Daoism and Confucianism.

Human persons answer the age-old question about the ultimate meaning of life in a variety of ways that academic religious study uses four categories to describe (1) worship the powerful forces of nature (the most primitive form of religion), (2) seek harmony (Daoism and Confucianism), (3) seek liberation (Hinduism and Buddhism), and (4) seek salvation with the expectation of encountering God both in history and at the end of history (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam).

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, with the pace increasing in the mid-twentieth century, world religious traditions have been impacted by modernity in a number of interesting ways: a rise in cults and new religious movements paired with an opposite pull towards fundamentalism and orthodoxy; an increasing interest in the West in Asian religious practice like yoga, meditation, and acupuncture; and the rise of women as religious authority.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course students will be able to
1. Categorize the major religious traditions by four conceptual approaches to ultimate meaning;

2. Interpret the symbolic language of the major religious traditions;
3. Compare and contrast the practical and active elements of religious ritual and worship that "tie and bind" individuals to community and divinity;
4. Describe and explain the originating history, beliefs, and festivals of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism;
5. Apply literal, moral, and allegorical interpretive approaches to reading sacred texts;
6. Explain the impact of modernity—for example, the rise of science, cults and orthodoxy, and women as authority—on religious traditions;
7. Articulate a worldview.

Global Understanding Learning Outcomes
1. Demonstrate understanding of global patterns and processes
2. Demonstrate understanding of the interconnectedness, difference, and diversity of a global society;
3. Explore individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to problems or issues, using resources appropriate to the field.

Required Textbook
John Esposito, et al., eds. *World Religions Today*. 5th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Course Logistics
Lecture, class projects, oral reports, and Blackboard are the primary means of instruction in the course. Class participation is important, which is reflected in the grading process.

Blackboard
We will use Blackboard 9.1 for discussion board assignments, tests/quizzes, and media (films and PowerPoint slides). Use the Blackboard assignment drop box to submit your work for grading. Please visit our Blackboard site regularly.

Access Blackboard 9.1 by following these steps:

1. Go to http://mymason.gmu.edu.
2. Login using your NETID and password,
3. Click on the "Courses" tab.
4. Click on RELI 100 under the "Blackboard 9.1 Course" heading.

Instructor-Student Communication
I will respond to your emails within 48 hours but usually sooner. If I will be away from email for more than one day, I will post an announcement in the Blackboard course folder. **Sign your emails** and do not use textese (LOL, u r, etc.). I will not respond to unsigned emails or emails written in Internet-speak.

Communication is important, you can make an appointment to meet with me on Tuesdays or Thursdays in the Fenwick Library Study Rooms, to be determined.

Please note that there are some requests that I do not honor: (1) requests to calculate hypothetical grades, for example, "if I get an A on this quiz and an A on that report, what will my final grade be?"; and (2) requests to accept work at the end of the course to "boost" the final grade. These emails usually come at the end of the course, but it is good to let you know now that the answer will be "No."

Before sending an email, please check the following (available on your Blackboard course menu) **unless the email is of a personal nature**:

- Syllabus
- Help forum (Feel free to respond to other students in the Help forum if you know the answer.)
- Blackboard videos on how to use Blackboard features
- Blackboard Q&A, and
- Technology Requirements.

Mason Email
- Mason requires that Mason email be used for all courses. I will be sending messages to your Mason email and you are responsible for making sure you have access to these messages.
- You may forward your Mason email to other accounts but always use your Mason e-mail when communicating with me to allow verification of your identity.
- You are required to check your Mason email account regularly and to keep your mailbox maintained so that messages are not rejected for being over quota.
- When you email me, you can expect a response within 48 hours. If I am going to be away from email for more than two days, I will send an announcement to the class.
- When you email me, be sure to include **RELI 100** at the beginning of the subject heading to alert me that I have received a message from one of my online students.

Class Participation

Class participation is an important component of the course, and since it stands to reason that you cannot participate in a class if you are not present, attendance is tracked by means of a sign-up sheet. Arriving late (15 minutes or more), leaving early (15 minutes or more), and "roaming" in and out of class constitute no class participation for the day.

Electronics: We will use cell phones and laptops for class projects but you will be asked to leave if you are on your cell phone/laptop during lectures, losing class participation for that day.

Class participation grades are calculated and entered at the end of the semester using the scale below.

28/28 A+   25/28 B
27/28 A   24/28 C
26/28 A-   23/28 D

Technology Requirements

Software

This course uses Blackboard as the learning management system. You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the myMason Portal. See supported browsers and operating systems. Log in to myMason to access your registered courses. Some courses may use other learning management systems. Check the syllabus or contact the instructor for details. Online courses typically use Acrobat Reader, Flash, Java (Windows), and Windows Media Player, QuickTime and/or Real Media Player. Your computer should be capable of running current versions of those applications. Also, make sure your computer is protected from viruses by downloading the latest version of Symantec Endpoint Protection/Anti-Virus software for free at http://antivirus.gmu.edu.

Students owning Macs or Linux should be aware that some courses may use software that only runs on Windows. You can set up a Mac computer with Boot Camp or virtualization software so Windows will also run on it. Watch http://support.apple.com/kb/VI54?viewlocale=en_US about using Windows on a Mac. Computers running Linux can also be configured with virtualization software or configured to dual boot with Windows.

Student Responsibilities

MasonLive/Email
Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. For accessibility and privacy, the university, school, and program will send communications to students solely through their Mason email account—students should respond accordingly (See https://thanatos.gmu.edu/masonlive/login)

Patriot Pass
Once you sign up for your Patriot Pass, your passwords will be synchronized, and you will use your Patriot Pass username and password to log in to the following systems: Blackboard, University Libraries, MasonLive, myMason, Patriot Web, Virtual Computing Lab, and WEMS. (See https://password.gmu.edu/index.jsp)

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester (See http://ods.gmu.edu/)

Academic Integrity
Students must be responsible for their own work, and students and faculty must take on the responsibility of dealing explicitly with violations. The tenet must be a foundation of our university culture. (See http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/distance)

Honor Code and Virtual Classroom Conduct:
Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code (See http://oai.gmu.edu/honorcode/)

We value critical thinking and therefore, it is imperative that students read the assigned books and articles prior to the class with a critical eye. Active thought, quality of inputs, and a conflict resolution attitude should be your guiding principles.

If you are absent for four (4) classes or more, I require that you meet with me to discuss Selective Withdrawal from the course.

University Policies

Students must follow the university policies. (See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu)

Responsible Use of Computing
Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. (See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing)

University Calendar
Details regarding the current Academic Calendar. (See http://calendar.gmu.edu)

Religious Holiday Calendar
George Mason University encourages student to participate in their respective religious holiday celebrations. (See http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/)

University Catalog
The current university catalog. (See http://catalog.gmu.edu)

Student Services

Writing Center
The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. (See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

ESL Help: Students whose first language is not English who feel they might benefit from additional, targeted support over the course of an entire semester. (See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/?page_id=10)

University Libraries
University Libraries provides resources for all students. (See http://library.gmu.edu/distance)

Counseling and Psychological Services
The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience

and academic performance. (See http://caps.gmu.edu)

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment," is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights. (See http://registrar.gmu.edu)

Course Overview and Policies
1. If you are absent for four (4) classes or more, I require that you meet with me to discuss Selective Withdrawal from the course.
2. I do not accept or grade work, including online work, from students who are not regularly attending the course.
3. It is important to complete all work on schedule, but if there are extenuating circumstances; such as sickness, family issues, or religious observances that conflict with our schedule, please let me know as soon as possible.
4. A doctor's note for illness or service leaflet for a death in the family is required for missed sanctuary reports and the final.
5. It is your responsibility to be sure you are using a stable Internet connection before the course begins (see "Best Practices for Online Tests" below).
6. If Blackboard shuts down while you are taking the test,
- **emai**l courses@gmu.edu (Blackboard help desk) **immediately and cc the professor;**
- **ask the help desk to use "reply all" when answering your query;**
- take a **screen shot of Blackboard** with a time stamp;
- Since "my computer crashed" cannot be documented or verified, I cannot accept this excuse for missing or not completing a test.

Best Practices for Online Tests [2]
- **Use only supported browser versions** when taking on-line tests. Supported browsers are listed on GMU's Blackboard login page.
- Before starting an on-line test, **close all other software programs on your computer**, including the browser that you plan to use to take the test. Re-start your browser and log in first to Blackboard without logging into any other GMU sites. This will help identify your test session in the system logs if you encounter technical issues.
- **Disable all pop-up blockers**. The steps for this will vary among browsers. If you have questions, ask the Support Center to look at your computer and browsers.

- **Use a hardwired connection** rather than your wireless connection to the internet to take an online test. Make sure that when you connect your network cable to your computer you also disable the wireless receiver so that it does not override or interfere with the wired connection.
- If your computer is connected to the Internet through an **ISP cable modem that is shared among a number of users** (such as at an apartment complex), you will likely experience problems with on-line tests. Questions may be slow to display and your connection may be lost briefly, which will cut off your test session. You should try to find a computer for your on-line tests that is on a more stable connection.
- Make sure you **do not have more than one browser window opened to Blackboard**; this can cause problems submitting your exam.
- Make sure your **computer is up-to-date on Windows patches and that it is virus and spyware free**.
- **Blackboard Outages**: Please be mindful (and wary) of taking the exams at times that are susceptible to Blackboard outages. Scheduled outages are posted on the Blackboard login page. Note that maintenance can be performed on Blackboard at the following times without prior notice: Monday through Friday, 3:00 am - 7:00 am; Friday evening 10:00 pm through Saturday morning 7:00 am. Also note that Blackboard servers restart daily at 4 am. While sometimes this outage may only last a few minutes, IT recommends not taking online exams or quizzes around 4 am. (All times are Eastern.)
- IT also recommends **clearing the cache on your computer** before starting a test to mitigate potential problems.

[2] Clemson University Computer and Information Technology, ithelp@clemson.edu. Adapted by Susan E. Bond, George Mason University (2014).

Tips for Reading Class E-Books
- When accessing the e-books, click on the "sign-in" option in the upper right hand corner to create a free account.
- Once you have created account, add your e-books to your Bookshelf.
- Saving your books to your bookshelf allows you to retain highlights and annotations that you have added. Each time you login, you may visit your bookshelf to locate your books.
- **DO NOT Download the book as this will make it unavailable to others in the class.**

Improving Your Grade
Opportunities to improve your grade are generously afforded by
- dropping the lowest score on quiz/tests
- dropping the lowest score in discussion boards

These paddings give you some room to maneuver—we all have bad days—BUT please note that **NO WORK is accepted at the end of the course to "boost" your grade**. Also note that **I do not calculate hypothetical grades** (for example, "if I get an A on this quiz, and an A on my last discussion board, what will my final grade be?")**.**

Late Work
All written reports like discussion boards and blogs (usually due on Thursdays) are graded down **one letter grade for each day late.** Quiz/tests are forfeited if not submitted by their Sunday due date.

Major Components
Quizzes (5 %)
Oral Sanctuary Reports (10%)
A-L last name students
    1. Synagogue
    2. Mosque
    3. Buddhist temple
M-Z   last name students
    1. Church
    2. Hindu temple
    3. Daoist/Confucian site
Blogs & Comments (3%)
    1. Myth, Symbol, Modernity
    2. Symbols and Rituals of Succoth
    3. The Hajj
    4. Dalai Lama and Lotus Sutra
Discussion Board Groups & Comments (3%)
    1. Writing and Citing
    2. The Global Religious Landscape
    3. Constructing Knowledge about Sunni and Shia Islam
    4. The Ramayana
    5. Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path
Class Participation (10%)
Final Essay (6%)

Activities/Assignments	Percent
Quizzes/tests (7)	30 (5 each) Drop lowest score
Oral Sanctuary Report (3)	30 (10 each)
Blogs & comments (4) discussions & comments (5)	24 (3 each) Drop lowest discussion score
Final Essay	6
Class Participation	10
Total	100

Grade Scale
97-100 A+
94–96 A
90–93 A-
87–89 B+
83–86 B
80–82 B-
77–79 C+
73–76 C
70–72 C-
60–69 D
< 59   F

Course Schedule

Weeks	Topics	Content (Readings/Video/Audio)	Activities	Assessments and Assignments
Week 1 Mon, Aug 1– Sun, Sept 6 Tues, Sept 1 Thurs, Sept 3	**Introduction to the Course and Religious Language**	Tuesday: Syllabus Review Reading: "The Global Religious Landscape," pages 9–15(8 pages) http://www.pewforum.org/files/2014/01/global-religion-full.pdf Thursday: Myth, Symbol, Ritual	Discussions: a. Writing and Citing b. The Global Religious Landscape Due Thurs, Sept 3; comments due Fri, Sept 4	
Week 2 Mon, Sept 7– Sun, Sept 13 Tues, Sept 8 Thurs, Sept 10	**The Impact of Modernity and Intro to Judaism**	Tuesday: Impact of Modernity Thursday: Intro to Judaism Reading: *WRT,* 3–37; 585–617 (66 pages)	Blog**:** Myth, Symbol, Modernity (a) religious symbols in ads; (b) 4 myths map (c) concept map premodern and postmodern Due Thurs, Sept 10; comments due Fri, Sept 11	Quiz, *WRT* chapter 1 Due Sun, Sept 13

Week 3 Mon, Sept 14– Sun, Sept 20 Tues, Sept 13 Thurs, Sept 17	**Judaism: Scripture, Symbols and Rituals**	Tuesday: Hebrew Bible Literal, Moral, Allegorical Link to Bible (NRSV) Genesis 21 NRSV - The Birth of Isaac - The LORD dealt - Bible Gateway.pdf Open this article by clicking on the object, click on "packager shell object" in the drop down box and choose "activate contents." Thursday: *Ushpizin* screening Video: *Ushpizin* (92 mins) Dar, G. and R. Bukai (Producers) & G. Dar (Director). (2004). *Ushpizin* [Motion picture]. Jerusalem, Israel: Warner Brothers/Picture House. Available to students using Swank Digital Campus within Blackboard from Aug 27–Dec 21, 2015. Reading: *WRT,* 77–145 (68 pages)	Blog: Symbols and Rituals of Succoth Due Thurs, Sept 17; comments due Fri, Sept 18	
Week 4 Mon, Sept 21– Sun, Sept 27 Tues, Sept 22 Thurs, Sept 24	**Synagogue Reports and Intro the Christianity**	Tuesday: Synagogue Reports Thursday: Intro to Christianity		Synagogue Reports (A-L), Tues, Sept 22 in class Quiz, *WRT* chapter 3 Due Sun, Sept 27

Week 5 Mon, Sept 28– Sun, Oct 4 Tues, Sept 29 Thurs, Oct 1	**Christianity: Scripture and Sacraments**	Tuesday: New Testament Literal, Moral, Allegorical Thursday: Sacraments and Church Year Video: *The Sacraments* (23 mins) http://mutex.gmu.edu/login?url=http://digital.films.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?aid=1844&xtid=49823 Reading: *WRT,* 147–217 (70 pages)		
Week 6 Mon, Oct 5– Sun, Oct 11 Tues, Oct 6 Thurs, Oct 8	**Church Reports and Intro to Islam**	Tuesday: Church Reports (M-Z) Thursday: Intro to Islam Video: Shia Imam Mustafa Akhound Islam (9 mins) http://vimeo.com/channels/religion100/110465372 Reading: *WRT,* 219–303 (84 pages)		Church Reports (M-Z), Due Tues, Oct 6 in class Quiz, *WRT* chapter 4 Due Sun, Oct 11
Week 7 Mon, Oct 12 (Columbus Day)– Sun, Oct 18 Tues, Oct 13 (no class) Thurs, Oct 15	**Islam: Five Pillars, the Hajj**	Thursday: Five Pillars Video: *Hajj:The Pilgrimage* (88 mins) http://mutex.gmu.edu/login?url=http://digital.films.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?aid=1844&xtid=11140&loid=48148	Blog: The Hajj Thurs, Oct 15; comments due Fri, Oct 16	

Week 8 Mon, Oct 19– Sun, Oct 25 Tues, Oct 20 Thurs, Oct 22	**Islam: Sunni/ Shia and Mosque Reports**	Tuesday: Sunni and Shia Sunni and Shia (10 mins) http://vimeo.com/channels/religion100/110465378 Eid al Fitr and Muharam (10 mins) http://vimeo.com/channels/religion100/110465481 Thursday: Mosque Reports	Discussion: Constructing Knowledge about Sunni and Shia Islam Initial posts due Weds, Oct 21; Final Edit due Thurs, Oct 22; comments due Fri, Oct 23	Mosque Reports (A-L), Oct 22 in class Quiz, *WRT* chapter 5 Due Sun, Oct 25
Week 9 Mon, Oct 26– Sun, Nov 1 Tues, Oct 27 Thurs, Oct 29	**Introduction to Hinduism**	Tuesday: Intro to Hinduism Thursday: Gods and Goddesses Reading: *WRT,* 307–395 (88 pages)		
Week 10 Mon, Nov 2– Sun, Nov 8 Tues, Nov 3 Thurs, Nov 5	**Hinduism: Famous Epic and Hindu Temple Reports**	Tuesday: The Ramayana Video: *Sita Sings the Blues* (82 mins) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8sUYHP-XmE Thursday: Hindu Temple Reports	Discussion: The Ramayana Due Thurs, Nov 5; comments due Fri, Nov 6	Hindu Temple Report (M-Z), Nov 5 in class Quiz, *WRT* chapter 6 Due Sun, Nov 8

Week 11 Mon, Nov 9– Sun, Nov 15 Tues, Nov 10 Thurs, Nov 12	**Introduction to Buddhism**	Tuesday: Intro to Buddhism Video Interview: Buddhist Nun, Venerable Losang Tendrol: The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path (17 mins) http://vimeo.com/channels/religion100/110465597 Thursday: Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana Reading: *WRT,* 399–485 (86 pages)	Discussion: Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path Due Thurs, Nov 12; comments due Fri, Nov 13	
Week 12 Mon, Nov 16– Sun, Nov 22 Tues, Nov 17 Thurs, Nov 19	**Buddhism: Scripture and the Dalai Lama**	Tuesday: Video: *10 Questions for the Dalai Lama* (87 mins) http://mutex.gmu.edu/login?url=http://digital.films.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?aid=1844&xtid=44799 Reading: Gene Reeves. *Lotus Sutra: A Contemporary Translation of a Buddhist Classic,* pages 68–73 (5 pages) http://site.ebrary.com/lib/georgemason/detail.action?docID=10408018 Thursday: Buddhist Temple Reports	Blog: Dalai Lama and Lotus Sutra Due Thurs, Nov 19; comments due Fri, Nov 20	Buddhist Temple Report (A-L) due Thurs, Nov 19 in class Quiz**,** *WRT* chapter 7 Due Sun, Nov 22

Week 13 Mon, Nov 23– Sun, Nov 29	**Introduction to Daoism and Thanksgiving Break**	Tuesday: Daoism Thursday: no class Weds, Nov 25-Sun, Nov 29, Thanksgiving Break Reading: *WRT,* 487–575 (88 pages)		
Week 14 Mon, Nov 30– Sun, Dec 6 Tues, Dec 1 Thurs, Dec 3	**Introduction to Confucianism**	Tuesday: Confucianism Video Interviews: Confucian Institute Director, Dr. Lihong Wang (1) Myths of Harmony (2 mins) http://vimeo.com/channels/religion100/110465477 (2) Confucianism (2 mins) http://vimeo.com/channels/religion100/110465476 (3) Daoism (5 mins) http://vimeo.com/channels/religion100/110465606 (4) Teachers' Day (3 mins) http://vimeo.com/channels/religion100/110465602 Thursday: I Ching and Tao Te Ching http://www.ichingonline.net/index.php		
Week 15 Mon, Dec 7– Sun, Dec 13 Tues, Dec 8 Thurs, Dec 10	**East Asian Traditions: Site Reports**	Tuesday: Daoist/Confucian site report Thursday: Wrap up and review for final		Daoist or Confucian site report (M-Z), Tues, Dec 8 Quiz, *WRT*, chapter 8 Due Sun, Dec 13

Thurs, Dec 17 Learning Outcome #7	**Final**	Class Participation tabulated		Final essay. 1200 word minimum. Submit via SafeAssign. Due Thurs, Dec 17