



# EXTENDED CAMPUS

COLLEGE of PROFESSIONAL  
and CONTINUING STUDIES

## SOC 5970-222: Special Topics Seminar: Religion and Society

### Course Description:

The course will serve as an introduction to the major religions of the world, giving a sense of their histories, the societies of which they are part, and the institutions with which they interface, such as the economy, the polity, family and the law. Religious traditions considered include: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and indigenous traditions

### Class Dates, Location and Hours:

Dates: January 29- February 3, 2019  
Location: SHAPE, Belgium. See Site Director for classroom location.  
Hours: Tuesday - Friday 6:00-9:30 pm; Saturday and Sunday 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
Last day to enroll or drop without penalty: December 31, 2018

### Site Director:

Email: [apshape@ou.edu](mailto:apshape@ou.edu). Phone: 065-44-3654; DSN 423-3654.

### Professor Contact Information:

Course Professor: Thomas J. Burns, Ph.D.  
Mailing Address: OU Dept. of Sociology  
331 KH  
Norman, OK 73019  
Telephone Number: (405) 325-1751  
E-mail Address: [tburns@ou.edu](mailto:tburns@ou.edu)  
Professor availability: The professor will be available via email to students before and after the class sessions. On-site office hours are half an hour before and after each class session, by appointment.

### Textbook(s) and Instructional Materials:

Student materials are available at the OU Bookstore Website at <https://ou.textbookx.com/institutional/index.php>. There is no longer a physical bookstore, the store will remain, but textbooks will not be stocked. The website has book selling, renting, buying, returning, and order tracking capabilities. If you need help with an order, or if you have any questions contact the toll-free phone at 1-(855)-790-6637, agents are available from 9a – 5p (EST) Monday – Friday. For more information or questions about textbooks, feel free to contact [apsyllabi@ou.edu](mailto:apsyllabi@ou.edu). Text prices are available online.

1. Burns, T. J. (Ed.) (2011) *Canonical texts: Selections from religious wisdom traditions*. San Diego, CA: Cognella. ISBN 9781609270537.
2. Smith, H. (1995) *The illustrated world's religions: A guide to our wisdom traditions*. San Francisco: Harper Collins. ISBN 9780060674403.
3. Materials posted on the OU Canvas learning management system: Access Canvas at <https://canvas.ou.edu>, enter your OU NetID and password, and select course to access material. If you require assistance with Canvas, please click on the Help icon. You can search the Canvas

guides, chat with Canvas support, or contact OU IT.

### **Course Objectives:**

The goals of the course are:

- To develop an understanding and appreciation of the major religions of the world
- To understand how religious institutions, develop historically
- To develop a sense of how social science can study religion
- To see how religious institutions are influenced by, and have an influence on, societies and the people in them

### **Course Outline:**

1. General Introduction and Orientation a. Go over the syllabus and discuss general ideas in the discipline
  - a. Read Smith Chapter 1 (pp. 8-15)
2. Hinduism a. Read Smith Chapter on Hinduism (pp. 17-57)
  - a. Read from Burns Volume on Hinduism (pp. 1-26)
3. Buddhism a. Read Smith Chapter on Buddhism (pp. 58-97)
  - b. Read from Burns Volume on Buddhism (pp. 27-57)
4. Confucianism a. Read Smith Chapter on Confucianism (pp. 98-121)
  - c. Read from Burns Volume on Confucianism (pp. 59-82)
5. Taoism a. Read Smith Chapter on Taoism (pp. 122-143)
  - d. Read from Burns Volume on Taoism (pp. 83-112)
6. Judaism a. Read Smith Chapter on Judaism (pp. 178-203)
  - e. Read from Burns Volume on Judaism (pp. 113-140)
7. Christianity a. Read Smith Chapter on Christianity (pp. 204-229)
  - f. Read Selection from Burns Volume on Christianity (pp. 141-166)
8. Islam a. Read Smith Chapter on Islam (pp. 144-177)
  - g. Read from Burns Volume on Islam (pp. 167-192)
9. Native Traditions a. Read Smith Chapter on Native Traditions (pp. 230-243)
  - h. Read from Burns Volume on Native Traditions (pp. 193-219)
10. Course Conclusion and Wrap-up a. Read Smith Concluding Chapter (pp. 244-251)

### **Assignments, Grading and Due Dates:**

Welcome to the course. I am committed to making your learning experience here a highly positive one. Enjoy your study of one of the world's endlessly fascinating subjects—the study of the world's religions and the societies of which they are part!

The course is designed so that students who pay close attention to the lectures and who grasp the reading can have a reasonable expectation of doing well in the course.

While doing well on the tests is certainly a large component of a person's grade, that alone is insufficient in terms of the overall expectations. The course is designed to encourage class participation. It is expected that with few exceptions (see the university website for bona fide reasons for missing), students will be in class each time, will have read the assigned material in advance, and be ready to discuss it.

Class participation, quizzes and discussion are integral aspects of the course. It is important to be here, to do the reading in advance, and to be engaged in the lecture and discussion. This will help you and will also, by extension, help to foster a highly positive learning environment, from which we all benefit.

### **Some useful things to look for in seeking to understand a religion and the society(ies) of which it is part (note: these are also questions around which you may organize your final paper):**

1. Demographic characteristics  
Estimates of numbers of people and their distribution (e.g. age, sex ratio, urban/rural, developed/developing countries, geography and history of parts of the world where it is most predominant.

2. Key beliefs  
e.g. monotheistic/polytheistic/animistic, afterlife, approaches to God
3. Orientation to the world  
inner-worldly/other-worldly, ascetic/mystical
4. Sacred objects and people  
e.g. Bible, Bhagavad Gita, Priests, Communion, Prasadam
5. Rituals and other practices  
Routinized action with others, promoting commonality of focus and perceptions) e.g. sacraments, dietary prescriptions, daily prayer, proselytization practices. How do these relate to key beliefs?
6. Interface with other societal institutions  
Promotion of social solidarity and other functions in economy, polity, family. How separate are the other major institutions (e.g polity) from religion?
7. Religion as an ethical guide to everyday life  
Given our discussion of religion and ethics, much as Max Weber has discussed a Protestant Ethic, what are some characteristics of the ethics of the religions we are studying (e.g. Confucian Ethic, or the Taoist Ethic?) What effects have these had on individuals and institutions in society?
8. Explication of Sacred Texts  
Based on your reading and discussion how would you explain the meaning in a passage from a tradition's scripture?
9. Generally  
In general, when studying about a religion, to the extent possible, try to consider it from the standpoint of the people practicing that religion. In all cases, understanding is more important than judgment.

Methodologically, an important concept here is Max Weber's idea of *Verstehen*.

In addition to any specifics about a religion, you should generally be able to give the central ideas of the religion in a few paragraphs. You should then be able to expand on those central ideas with meaningful detail.

Also, attend to the considerations in the study guides available on the class Canvas site about the specifics in a given religion. Class participation is important. Ideas that are stressed in lecture and discussion in class very often wind up on the test.

One sign of intellectual maturity is the ability to think about ideas in more than one way. In general, rather than memorizing lists of things from the books or lectures, try to integrate them into your thinking, come up with examples, and discuss them.

### **Post Seminar Assignment:**

A brief paper (approximately 12 pages) on one of the religious traditions covered in the course, is required. A number of guidelines are in the syllabus. Also, the professor will provide additional details when the class meets.

### **Due date is February 24, 2019.**

The class paper accounts for 30% of the grade. You will write a paper (in standard American Sociological Association format, a handbook for which is posted on our class site) discussing one of the major world's religions covered in the *Canonical Texts* Reader. The target length is 12 pages, typed, double-spaced. While there is some flexibility here, I have included some guidelines in this syllabus for the study of religions in general, and for how they are situated within their respective societies. These guidelines are also quite useful in terms of organizing your thinking for when you write your paper. There are numerous references generally available for virtually all of the major world's religions. As a target, you should plan on having about 8-10 references for your paper's bibliography. While it is OK to get a few of those from the internet, most should be from books or scholarly papers. Each reference should be properly cited. You can write your course paper on any of the traditions covered during the semester.

**Grading:**

This is a letter-graded course: A, B, C, D, or F.

<b>Assignment:</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Class Participation & Presentations	15%
Quizzes	15%
Exams	40%
Post Seminar Assignment	30%

**Course Policies:**

Attendance and full attention are **strongly** recommended. If you must miss a class, be sure to get the day's notes from a classmate. Also, you are responsible for any announcements made in class. As a general rule, assume that if you miss or come late to a class, you missed something important!

Particularly in a class such as this, in which we seek to understand a diverse array of religious institutions and practices, each member of the class has a responsibility to maintain decorum and a right to expect that of other class members.

Academic Integrity is taken seriously by Dr. Burns and by the University of Oklahoma. Please see the Official OU website containing the most current University Policies and information regarding Academic Integrity, which are given in detail at the following web address:  
([http://integrity.ou.edu/students\\_guide.html](http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html)).

**Notice:** Failure to meet assignment due dates could result in a grade of I (Incomplete) and may adversely impact Tuition Assistance and/or Financial Aid.

## POLICIES AND NOTICES

### **Attendance/Grade Policy**

Attendance and participation in interaction, individual assignments, group exercises, simulations, role playing, etc. are valuable aspects of any course because much of the learning comes from discussions in class with other students. It is expected that you attend all classes and be on time except for excused emergencies.

Excused absences are given for professor mandated activities or legally required activities such as emergencies or military assignments. It is the policy of the University to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. Unavoidable personal emergencies, including (but not limited to) serious illness; delays in getting to class because of accidents, etc.; deaths and funerals, and hazardous road conditions will be excused.

If you are obtaining financial assistance (TA, STAP, FA, VA, Scholarship, etc.) to pay all or part of your tuition cost, you must follow your funding agency/institution's policy regarding "I" (Incomplete) grades unless the timeline is longer than what the University policy allows then you must adhere to the University policy. Students who receive Financial Aid must resolve/complete any "I" (Incomplete) grades by the end of the term or he/she may be placed on "financial aid probation." If the "I" grade is not resolved/completed by the end of the following term, the student's Financial Aid may be suspended making the student ineligible for further Financial Aid.

Students are responsible for meeting the guidelines of Tuition Assistance and Veterans Assistance. See the education counselor at your local education center for a complete description of your TA or VA requirements.

### **Academic Integrity and Student Conduct**

Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Academic assignments exist to help students learn; grades exist to show how fully this goal is attained. Therefore all work and all grades should result from the student's own understanding and effort.

Academic misconduct is any act which improperly affects the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement. Misconduct occurs when the student either knows or reasonably should know that the act constitutes misconduct. Academic misconduct includes: cheating and using unauthorized materials on examinations and other assignments; improper collaboration, submitting the same assignment for different classes (self-plagiarism); fabrication, forgery, alteration of documents, lying, etc...in order to obtain an academic advantage; assisting others in academic misconduct; attempting to commit academic misconduct; destruction of property, hacking, etc...; intimidation and interference with integrity process; and plagiarism. All students should review the Student's Guide to Academic Integrity at [http://integrity.ou.edu/students\\_guide.html](http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html)

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. All students should review policies regarding student conduct at <http://studentconduct.ou.edu/>

### **Accommodation Statement**

The University of Oklahoma is committed to making its activities as accessible as possible. For accommodations on the basis of disability, please contact your local OU Site Director.

### **Adjustment for Pregnancy/Childbirth-Related Issues**

Should you need modifications or adjustments to your course requirements because of documented pregnancy-related or childbirth-related issues, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss. Generally, modifications will be made where medically necessary and similar in scope to accommodations based on temporary disability. Please see <http://www.ou.edu/content/eoo/faqs/pregnancy-faqs.html>.

### **Title IX Resources**

For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, or intimate partner violence, the University offers a variety of resources, including advocates on-call 24/7, counseling services, mutual no-contact orders, scheduling adjustments, and disciplinary sanctions against the perpetrator. Please contact the Sexual Misconduct Office at [smo@ou.edu](mailto:smo@ou.edu) or (405) 325-2215 (8-5), or the Sexual Assault Response Team at (405) 615 -0013 (24/7) to report an incident. To learn more about Title IX, please visit the Institutional Equity Office's website at <http://www.ou.edu/content/eoo.html>

### **Course Policies**

Advanced Programs policy is to order books in paperback if available. Courses, dates, and professors are subject to change. Please check with your OU Site Director. Students should retain a copy of any assignments that are mailed to the professor for the course. Advanced Programs does not provide duplicating services or office supplies.

Any and all course materials, syllabus, lessons, lectures, etc. are the property of professor teaching the course and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma and are protected under applicable copyright.

For more information about Advanced Programs, visit our website at: <http://www.goou.ou.edu/>

**Education**

1990 Ph.D., University of Maryland

**Current Positions**

Professor of Sociology at the University of Oklahoma, and is active in the Religious Studies and Environmental Studies programs.

**Frequently Taught Advanced Programs Courses**

SOC 5970 Religion and Society; SOC 5790 Environment and Society

**Major Areas of Teaching and Research Interest**

Dr. Burns's research focuses on the outcomes, evolution and emergence of social institutions from a comparative and historical perspective, particularly as they pertain to issues of religion and the environment.

**Representative Publications and Presentations**

- Burns, T.J., and B.S. Caniglia. 2017. *Environmental Sociology: The Ecology of Late Modernity*, 2e. Norman, OK: Mercury Academic.
- Burns, T.J., and T.K. Rudel. 2015. Metatheorizing Structural Human Ecology at the Dawn of the Third Millennium. *Human Ecology Review*, 22(1):13-33.
- Burns, T.J. (ed.). 2012. *Canonical Texts: Selections from Religious Wisdom Traditions*. San Diego: Cognella;
- Burns, T.J. 2012. What Is Old and What Is New? Considering World-Systems in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Beyond. In C. Chase-Dunn and S. Babones (eds.), *Handbook of World-Systems Analysis*. London: Routledge;
- Burns, T.J. 2012. Marine Pollution. In G. Ritzer (ed.), *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization*. London: Blackwell;
- Burns, T.J. 2009. Culture and the Natural Environment. In A. Begossi and P.F. Lopes (eds.), *Current Trends in Human Ecology*, Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.: Cambridge Scholars;
- Burns, T.J., E.L. Kick, and B.L. Davis. 2006. A Quantitative, Cross-National Study of Deforestation in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century: A Case of Recursive Exploitation. In A.K. Jorgenson and E.L. Kick (eds.), *Globalization and the Environment*, Leiden: Brill;
- Burns, T.J., and T. LeMoyné. 2001. How Environmental Movements Can Be More Effective: Prioritizing Environmental Themes in Political Discourse. *Human Ecology Review*, 8(1):26-38.

**Representative Honors and Awards Received**

- University of Utah, College of Behavioral and Social Science Superior Teaching Award
- University of Oklahoma, Good Teaching Award
- Society for Human Ecology, Gerald L. Young Book Award
- Society for Human Ecology, Distinguished Leadership Award

**Representative Professional Affiliations**

- Book Review Editor, *Human Ecology Review*
- Editorial Board, *Journal of World-Systems Research*