



EXTENDED CAMPUS

COLLEGE *of* PROFESSIONAL
and CONTINUING STUDIES

RELS 5970-105: Special Topics/Seminar – Comparative Religion

Course Description:

This course introduces the student to the variety, the continuity and, so far as feasible, the meaning of humankind's religious life. The focus of our inquiry will center on the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Through lectures, reading assignments, videos and discussion we will survey the historical development of these traditions and explore their major tenets, forms of worship, and ritual patterns as well as their various orientations to this world and the next. At points, we will explore other thematic comparisons (e.g., on the role and approach to sacred texts, understandings of God, gods, and Ultimate Reality, the "ideal" manifestations of piety, contemporary issues of religion and politics, etc.) among the various forms of religious expression.

Class Dates, Location and Hours:

Please see note in Method of Instruction and Discussion section below

Dates: July 27 – August 2, 2020

Revised: **Location and Hours listed here are for site information purposes only, this course will be held remotely based on information provided in the Method of Instruction section below.**

Location: Washington, D.C. Liaison Office - 2189 Crystal Plaza Arcade, Arlington, VA, 22202.

Hours: Monday - Friday 6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m.; Saturday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sunday 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Last day to enroll or drop without penalty: June 28, 2020

Site Director:

Email: apwashington@ou.edu. Phone: 703-418-4800.

Professor Contact Information:

Course Professor: Dr. Charles Kimball

Mailing Address: OU Religious Studies
731 Elm Avenue, Rm. 140
Norman, OK 73019-2130

Telephone Number: (405) 325-5015

E-mail Address: kimball@ou.edu

Website: <http://charles-kimball.com>

Professor availability: The professor will be available via e-mail 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. Text prices are available online

1. Smith, H. (2009). *The World's Religions (Plus)* (50th ann. ed.). New York: HarperOne. ISBN 9780061660184.
2. Bowker, J. (2013). *The Message and the Book: Sacred Texts of the World's Religions*. New York: Yale. ISBN 9780300192339.
3. Materials posted on the OU Canvas system: Reading Packet (including primary sources and selected articles). Access Canvas at <http://learn.ou.edu>; enter your OU NetID and password, and select course to access material. Please contact your local Site Director if you require assistance.

Additional text:

Each student will read **one** additional book from the following:

Feiler, B. (2005). *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*. New York: HarperCollins. ISBN 9780060838669.

Kimball, C (2019). *Truth over Fear: Combating the Lies about Islam*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. ISBN 978-0664264628

Weddle, D. (2010). *Miracles: Wonder and Meaning in World Religions*. New York University Press. ISBN 9780814794166.

Rahula, W. (1974). *What Buddha Taught*. New York: Grove. ISBN 9780802130310.

On the final day of class, students will make group presentations on these four books.

Method of Instruction and Discussion:

Because of the Covid-19 restrictions, the course will not be conducted in-person but we will adhere generally to the times established for meeting, lectures, and discussion. We will employ Zoom meetings where we can all be “present” from our respective locations. I will also assign videos and pre-recorded lectures for you to watch and be ready to discuss. The videos on different religious traditions are normally incorporated into class meetings so we don’t have 3 hours of lectures/discussion. On many evenings, I will have you watch a video and one or two 30 minute lectures after which we’ll meet by Zoom for discussion, Q & A, etc. The links for these various materials will be available via CANVAS so you can experience the lectures and videos prior to the time for discussion/Q&A if you wish. You will know each day what time we will be meeting on Zoom so you can be prepared. I’ll review, lay out the schedule, and respond to questions or concerns when we first gather for the class.

Course Outline:

Topics to be covered in this order Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism.

Days 1-5

Lectures, discussion, and videos on the Abrahamic Religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Videos include “Islam” (The History Channel) and “The Sword of Islam” (BBC))

Days 5-6

Lectures, discussion and videos on Hinduism and Buddhism (videos include “Hinduism: 330 Million Gods” and “The Footprint of the Buddha”)

Day 7

Student presentations and Reflecting on the Comparative Study of Religion

Assignments, Grading and Due Dates:

Course Requirements:

Prepared attendance is crucial to the success of the course, and you should come to class each day ready to analyze the material, pose questions, try out new ideas, and listen to and challenge the ideas of your classmates and the professor.

Readings:

Read all the course materials before the course begins.

Pre-Seminar Assignment:

Choose one of the religious traditions covered in the various course readings as the focus for your pre-seminar essay. What intrigues you most about that tradition? What questions do you have about that tradition? How do the different portrayals of that tradition in the various readings compare? The essays should be 8-10 pages in length (2000-2500 words). This essay should be submitted four (4) days before the beginning of the seminar, **July 23, 2020**.

Presentation and Class Discussion:

Each student will select one of four additional course books listed above. Students will make a brief presentation on that additional book highlighting key insights, challenging or provocative issues, etc., then lead the class discussion on how their more in-depth exploration on a particular set of issues supplemented what they have discovered in the seminar.

Post-seminar assignment:

After the seminar, each student will submit a reflective essay synthesizing the readings, videos, discussions, and their experiences in the seminar. In particular, each student should address how their view of particular religious traditions (and/or religion in general) has changed during the seminar. The reflective essay should also address the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of studying religion (through primary sources, secondary studies, first-hand accounts, field study, etc.). This essay, which is **due two weeks after the end of the class, August 16, 2020**, should be 10-15 pages in length.

Grading:

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

Your grade in the class will be based on your preparation for the class, your participation in the discussions (both quality and quantity), your written work both before and after the class meetings, and your participation in all class activities. Active contributions by students are essential to the success of the seminar.

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

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 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/>

INSTRUCTOR VITA

Charles Kimball, Th.D.

Education

- M. Div. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Th.D. Harvard University

Current Positions

Presidential Professor and Chair, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Oklahoma

Frequently Taught Advanced Programs Courses

RELS 5970 Comparative Religions

Major Areas of Teaching and Research Interest

- Introduction to Religious Studies
- Comparative Religion
- World Religions in America
- Conceptions of the Afterlife
- Religion and Politics in the Middle East
- Islam

Representative Publications and Presentations

Dr. Kimball's articles have appeared in a number of publications, including *Sojourners*, *The Christian Century*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Boston Globe*. He is the author of six books, including *Truth over Fear: Combating the Lies about Islam* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), and *When Religion Becomes Lethal: The Explosive Mix of Politics and Religion in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Jossey-Bass/Wiley, 2011). His previous book, *When Religion Becomes Evil* (HarperOne, rev. ed. 2008), was named one of the "Top 15 Books on Religion" by *Publishers Weekly* and one of the top ten books of the year by the Association of Parish clergy. It has been published in Swedish, Indonesian, Korean, and Danish translations. His three other books are: *Striving Together: A Way Forward in Christian-Muslim Relations* (Orbis Books), *Religion, Politics and Oil: The Volatile Mix in the Middle East* (Abingdon Press), and *Angle of Vision: Christians and the Middle East* (Friendship Press).