WREL2001 World Religions in Context

Semester 1, 2014

Dr Alex Norman

Essay Plan Presentation and Research Essay Assessment Questions

Please note that this document relates to both the Essay Plan Presentation and the Research Essay assessments. It is one piece of work comprising two separate assessments.

Your task:

Pick one of the following questions before the classes in week 8 (30 April, 2014). Begin your research and develop a plan for ongoing research and for the argument you wish to craft.

In the classes in week 8 you will give a 5 minute presentation (no more, no less) on your Research Essay Plan to the class, after which there will be up to 5mins of questions from me and your classmates. The presentation should outline your research to-date, your plans for future research, and the current plan for your essay’s argument (if you have one at that stage). Remember; keep it to 5mins (+/- 30 seconds), explain your plan clearly and simply, refer to the relevant scholarship you have identified, use a visual aid (even if only a single page of notes on screen), and be prepared to expand/explain further if asked.

The resulting essay in response to your chosen question should take the feedback you receive following the Essay Plan Presentation assessment, and is to be 2,000 words in length (excluding bibliography but including in-text references), formatted and styled according to the WREL2001 style guides, and is due to be submitted on or before **4pm Friday 30 May, 2014**.

Your essay should be well researched, use primary sources where appropriate, contain adequate referencing, and a bibliography on a separate page. A piece of work which is not adequately researched and referenced is not an essay, and will be failed.

Questions:

1. Pick a religious group/movement (however you delimit that) that is both active in Sydney, Australia, and would broadly be considered to be part of a ‘world religion’ according to the relevant paradigm (e.g Islam). Discuss the group/movement in its socio-cultural context with the intention of demonstrating how it/they differ from, support, or complicate a generic ‘world religions’ description.

2. Defend the categorisation of religious phenomena (however you define that) into ‘world religions’ for the purposes of statistical meta-analysis, e.g. the Australian Census. Is it useful to have categories like ‘Christian’, ‘Buddhist’ etc. for such analyses? What are the purposes of such categories?

3. Critically assess the arguments against the world religions paradigm and discuss their relative merits. Develop an argument as to whether or not they succeed and how they could be improved and/or synthesised.

4. Choose a group/movement that would broadly be considered part of a world religion (e.g. Hinduism) that operates globally (e.g. the Catholic Church). Discuss the group as a whole and pick two specific ‘branches’ of it to contrast. Pick an analytic category and a theoretical system to carry your discussion and argument (e.g. gender and symbolic interactionism).

5. Craft your own question in collaboration with the Unit Coordinator. You MUST get permission from the unit coordinator before proceeding with your own question.