

RELIGIONS IN CONTACT

ANS 340 / R S 373 · Spring 2019 · TTh 12:30–2pm · MEZ 2.118

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What happens when religions come in contact with each other? This course discusses the ways in which religious actors respond to challenges posed by the encounter with people, beliefs, or practices which, for them, do not belong to their own religion. Such responses range from curiosity, dialog, or acceptance to apologetics, hostile polemic, or persecution. Examining case studies from several geographical regions and time periods, we will discuss various forms of rhetorical and practical responses to the “religious other.” Part of this discussion is an analysis of the respective motives, which are sometimes related not only to religious conviction but also to competition over economic resources, social status, and political power.

The course will introduce students to relevant theories and scholarly categories, such as religious othering, conversion, reinterpretation, appropriation, subordination, eclecticism, syncretism, intersection, tolerance and intolerance, dialogue, inclusivism, pluralism, and more. These will be critically discussed and tested on the case studies. The goal of the course is to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which religious actors grapple with religious plurality, draw boundaries – or ignore them –, and form religious identities.

At the end of the semester, students (1) will have gained insights about important features of the religions discussed in the case studies (especially Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, Christianity, Greek and Roman religion); (2) will have learned to analyze various aspects and dimensions of religious encounter in a systematic way; and (3) will be able to suggest alternative perspectives that may help to resolve conflicts related to religious encounter.

Readings

Course packet, available at Paradigm Books: <https://squareup.com/store/paradigmbooks>. Order it online, and the course packet will be delivered to your postal address within 1–3 days. For questions contact Paradigm Books at info@paradigmbooks.com. The discussion in class will be based almost exclusively on the readings from this course packet. Optional readings for each week are provided in the Files folder on Canvas.

Grading

Attendance/participation: 25%

Reading journal: 20% (10 at 2% each)

Oral presentation and moderation of class discussion: 20%

Individual case analysis: 25% (essay 15%, presentation 10%)

Response to two case analyses: 10%

Writing Center

I strongly encourage you to use the University Writing Center (PCL 2.330; <http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/>). It offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Any undergraduate enrolled in a course at UT can visit the UWC for assistance with any writing project. The consultants there work with students from every department on campus. Their services are not just for writing that has “problems.” Getting feedback from an informed audience is a normal part of a successful writing project. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance they provide is intended to foster independence. Each student determines how to use the consultant's advice. The consultants are trained to help you work on your writing in ways that preserve the integrity of your work.

Scholastic dishonesty

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.

“Scholastic dishonesty” includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records,

and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act. For further information please visit the Student Judicial Services Web site: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>.

Students with disabilities

The Faculty Council's Educational Policy Committee states, "Providing a quality educational experience for all students includes adapting the instructional environment to accommodate the educational needs of students with information about Services for Students with Disabilities through the course syllabus." At the beginning of the semester, students should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Office (phone: 512-471-6259), which will prepare an appropriate letter to the instructor to guide you. See also the SSD website at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/>

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Religious Boundaries: From Individual to Global Dimensions

Week 3: Persecution and Polemics: Greek/Roman Religion and Christianity

Week 4: Conversion: Christianity and Roman Religion

Week 5: Cultic Practice and the State: Roman Religion and Christianity

Week 6: The Proximate Other: Buddhism and Other Ascetic Religions

Week 7: Reinterpretation and Appropriation: Buddhism and Brahmanism

Week 8: Mutual Subordination: Hinduism and Buddhism

— SPRING BREAK —

Week 9: Eclecticism: Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism

Week 10: Political Dimensions: Islam and Hinduism

Week 11: Syncretism: Hinduism and Christianity

Week 12: Intersections: Hinduism, Islam and Other Religions

Week 13: Tolerance and Intolerance: Buddhism and Hinduism

Week 14: Dialogue and Pluralism: Christianity and Other Religions

Week 15: Concluding Discussion