

Religion in Asia

Dr. Daniel Heifetz, Lecturer I

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Student Hours: T 4-5 & F 10-11

Location: Zoom (339 134 7244)

RELGST 0505/HIST 0755

Spring 2021

MWF 10-10:50

216 CL (capacity: 20)

Description

Over the past century or so, Asian religions have had a deep effect on American society. Immigrants for whom these traditions are heritage are making our communities more diverse while dealing with intolerance from their new neighbors. Some of us engage in forms of spirituality that draw upon practices like Buddhist mindfulness or Hindu forms of yoga, even if these are not part of our own religious background. Technology has shrunk our world in ways that make direct personal encounters with Asian religions virtually inevitable. This course aims to give students the knowledge and skills to negotiate these aspects of our society responsibly through a survey of a wide variety of Asian religious traditions – Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, Sikh, Confucian, Daoist, and Shinto. We will consider the development of these traditions from a variety of academic perspectives, examining them as aspects of human culture and history. Most weeks, we will start with a broad discussion of a particular tradition or set of traditions in a particular context before delving deeper into more specific cases.

About this Class

The pandemic has changed the way many of your instructors think about teaching. For me, it has made some of my long-standing concerns about conventional models of teaching and grading impossible to ignore. It has made me less interested in rule enforcement, more concerned that grading stifles creativity and risk-taking, and better attuned to how stress from classes contributes to increasingly widespread mental health struggles among undergrads. This syllabus tries to address some of these problems through a little bit of “gamification.” This involves building more choices into the course and using a grading system based on steadily accumulating “completion points” (or CP) rather than having a final average that goes up and down over the semester. This probably seems pretty hokey to those of you who don’t share my nerdy hobbies, but my goal here is to encourage the mindset that we’re participating in a form of play that can be both enjoyable and challenging and not just jumping through hoops with minimal effort.

Course Objectives

This class is like an open-world game focused on collaboration, exploration, and creativity. There is no way to win or lose, but there are some objectives you are encouraged to pursue:

- You can develop new ways to interpret information about Asian religions and religious and cultural traditions more broadly.
- You can better understand how to conduct yourself as a global citizen by becoming aware of your location in a web of intercultural connections that exist in the contemporary world and have old historical roots.
- You can improve your ability to think critically and express your thoughts in an articulate way. In particular, you can learn to express your own ideas about Asian religions confidently but sensitively.

You are also encouraged to change or add to these goals or to set your own goals. Some assignments are designed to facilitate this process.

Overview of a Typical Week

Every week is like one round of a game. Most weeks are divided into two phases (with the exceptions of Weeks 1 and 10): a solo phase and a cooperative phase. Each of these phases has three steps, one of which allows you to earn completion points (CP) toward your grade. At the end of each of this course's three units, there will be additional opportunities to earn CP.

- *Solo Phase* (due Sunday at noon): to get ready for the co-op phase, you should take some time on your own to gather knowledge through a general overview of the week's topic. The three steps in this phase should be done in order, if possible.
 1. **General reading:** this will typically be from a textbook and will provide important background information on this week's topic.
 2. **Lecture video:** on Panopto, you will find lecture videos that I have recorded. These will expand upon the general reading in order to prepare you for the case study we will discuss during the cohort phase.
 3. **Reflection (for CP):** by noon on Sunday, you may post a reflection to Canvas using the knowledge you have gathered in this phase.
- *Co-op Phase* (Mon-Wed): in this phase, you choose to join one of three different cohorts and complete the three steps for that one cohort only. Because different students adapt to the pandemic differently, each cohort meets differently. Typically, each cohort has a different reading, too. Because your circumstances may change from one week to the next, you are free to pick a new cohort every week; no need to let me know.

- The **Monday Cohort** is mostly for students who want an in-person experience, if/when possible.
 4. **Cohort reading:** a case study specific to your cohort that you should read before our scheduled meeting at 10am on Monday.
 5. **Cohort discussion (for CP):** this cohort will meet to discuss the case study at 10am on Monday.
 - If Pitt's operational posture is "guarded" or better, this will be in person.
 - If Pitt's operational posture is "elevated" or "high," we will meet on Zoom.
 6. **Check other cohorts:** read the Async Cohort's text-based discussion and watch the Wed Cohort's discussion on video on your own time.
- The **Asynchronous Cohort** is mostly for students who can't make synchronous sessions due to logistical hurdles or prefer self-directed learning.
 4. **Cohort reading:** a case study specific to your cohort that you should read before participating in your asynchronous discussion.
 5. **Cohort discussion (for CP):** participate in a text-based discussion on Canvas anytime between Monday at 10 AM and Wednesday at 11 AM.
 6. **Check other cohorts:** Watch discussion videos from the other two cohorts on your own time.
- The **Wednesday Cohort** is mostly for students who want to be remote all semester.
 4. **Cohort reading:** a case study specific to your cohort that you should read before our scheduled class at 10am on Wednesday.
 5. **Cohort discussion (for CP):** this cohort will meet on Zoom to discuss the case study at 10am on Wednesday.
 6. **Check other cohorts:** read the Async Cohort's text-based discussion and watch the Mon Cohort's discussion on video on your own time.

Although you are only expected to read for and participate in one cohort, watching and/or reading the other cohorts' discussions will allow you to learn their material and improve your performance on review sheets and culminating reflections.

- **Student hours:** regardless of Pitt's operational posture, I will be available to meet on Zoom with no appointment needed on Tuesday from 4-5 and Friday from 10-11. This is a good time to ask me questions about the material or show me take-home essay drafts, for example. If Zoom doesn't work for you or text-based communication is preferable, please e-mail me and we will make appropriate arrangements.

Assignments and Grading

All students start the game with 0 CP. You have opportunities to earn CP by completing assignments throughout the course. Any new CP you earn is added to your running total. The only way to lose earned CP is through academic dishonesty. Note also that new CP is not averaged with previous amounts of CP you've earned; it's added. That means that if you have 36 CP at the end of the first unit, then do nothing in the second and third units, you'll still have 36 CP at the end of the game (and would just barely pass the class).

Students will be placed into completion tiers based on how many CP they earned at the end of the game. Completion tiers signify how much of the game you've completed and nothing more. They are not a measure of your personal worth or academic ability. Some students are completionists and will want to invest more time and energy into this class to earn every CP possible. Other students might prefer to just do some of the easier assignments, and that's ok: this game is casual friendly.

When you attempt an assignment, you will either immediately succeed and receive the full amount of CP or receive feedback letting you know that you have not succeeded yet. If you have not succeeded yet, my feedback will specify what you need to do in order to succeed (e.g., revise and resubmit or answer a question or two from me). To be clear, there is no partial credit, but assignments cannot be "failed" permanently, and it is always possible to receive full CP for them (including in the case of missed deadlines).

Additionally, some assignments are easier to complete than others, and they are arranged into difficulty tiers D, C, B, and A. These difficulty tiers correlate with the completion tiers. D-tier assignments are very easy and completing most of them will allow you to get a D- in the class. It is much harder to succeed at A-tier assignments, and you will have to successfully complete most of the assignments from every tier to get an A in the class. In general, if you want to be placed in a particular completion tier, the easiest way is to complete most of the weekly assignments and all of the end-of-unit assignments at the corresponding difficulty tier *and below*.

Weekly Cohort Discussions (D Tier, 4 CP x12)

All students may receive CP for one cohort discussion per week. The only requirement is some participation. For synchronous cohorts, this will usually require showing up and contributing a bit by speaking or typing in the chat. For the Asynchronous Cohort, this will usually require making about two or three 50+word posts to a discussion board. If you miss a cohort discussion for any reason, you should just participate in the Asynchronous Cohort late and message me letting me know.

Unit Review Sheets (C Tier, 15 CPx3)

At the end of every unit, you will have an opportunity to fill out a review sheet that allows you to consolidate your knowledge of key vocabulary and fundamental concepts from the unit. Success on this assignment requires that you provide thorough and accurate definitions and explanations of concepts based on what we've learned in class. These review sheets will become available on Canvas on the Thursday morning following the end of each unit and should be submitted by the following Thursday morning. If you need to submit late, just let me know.

- *First Unit* – Feb 25-Mar 4
- *Second Unit* – Mar 25-Apr 1
- *Third Unit* – Apr 22-TBD (set by registrar)

Weekly Solo Phase Reflections (C and B Tiers)

For weeks 2-13, you can make a post to Canvas by Sunday at noon. Your post should engage substantively with the lecture video and/or reading that is due the same day. This assignment will allow you to collect your thoughts about the material from solo phase and feel better prepared to discuss it. On alternating weeks, you can submit one of the following:

- 1) *Public Reflections (C-Tier, 5 CPx6)*: a post about the reading and/or lecture video from the current solo phase on a shared discussion board that everyone in class can see. This can be a reflection paragraph of at least 100 words about the reading, but it could also be video, audio, an image (even a meme), or anything else you want. If the relevance of your post to the current week's solo phase material is not self-explanatory, offer a brief explanation. To successfully complete this assignment, you just need to demonstrate that you've done the reading and/or watched the lecture video.
- 2) *Private Reflections (B-Tier, 6 CPx6)*: a written reflection of at least 150 words shared only with the instructor (unless you want to share it with others). Each entry should consist of at least one paragraph of critical analysis about the reading and/or lecture video from the current solo phase and at least one paragraph about your goals in the course, whether or not you are meeting them, and how you and I might meet them more effectively. In addition to showing me you've done the reading and watched the lecture, this reflection needs to demonstrate significant critical thought and reflection about the course and your place in it.

Unit Culminating Reflections (B or A Tiers)

One week after the end of each unit, students may submit a culminating reflection. There are two versions of this assignment: an A-tier version that is longer and requires additional reading or research and a B-tier version that is shorter and does not require additional reading or research. You may only do **one** of these per unit, B or A.

- B-Tier (20 CP x3): By default, these will be essays written in response to recommended prompts that I distribute at the *beginning* of each unit. If you want to write about a topic from the unit not covered by these prompts or use an alternative format that better reflects your learning goals like painting, a song, a film, a podcast episode, etc. (but not a meme for this one), let me know in your private reflections and we can work out the details together. To successfully complete these assignments, you must demonstrate your familiarity with the unit's material, your ability to make connections between the various topics we have discussed, and your ability to think analytically about the material. If you need to submit late, just let me know.
- A-Tier (25 CP x3): If you wish to earn enough CP to reach A-tier completion, you should expand upon what they learned in class by finding and consulting an outside source that expands on what you have learned in the current unit. This source should usually be an academic article or chapter but can also be a religious text or even an interview. This source should then be integrated with what you've learned in the current unit and presented in the form of an essay or alternate format that better reflects your goals. If you are writing an essay, you may use the distributed prompts, but you are free to pitch other ideas in your private reflections.
 - *First Unit*: 800 words for B Tier or 1000 words for A Tier, due Mar 4
 - *Second Unit*: 1000 words for B Tier or 1250 words for A Tier, due Apr 1
 - *Third Unit*: 1200 words for B Tier or 1500 words for A Tier, deadline set by registrar

Completion Tiers

A+	231-234 CP	C+	159-204 CP
A	228-230 CP	C	123-158 CP
A-	223-227 CP	C-	110-122 CP
B+	219-222 CP	D+	91-109 CP
B	209-218 CP	D	48-90 CP
B-	205-208 CP	D-	36-47 CP
		F	0-35 CP

Required Texts

Clothey, Fred W. 2006. *Religion in India: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

https://pitt.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01PITT_INST/e8h8hp/alma9998620242506236

Poceski, Mario. 2009. *Introducing Chinese Religions*. New York: Routledge.

https://pitt.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01PITT_INST/e8h8hp/alma9998620023306236

All other readings will be available on Canvas.

First Unit: “Religion,” Text, and Ritual

- *Week 1—Getting Started*
 - Wed, Jan 20
 - No assignment; join Zoom session to discuss syllabus
- *Week 2—East Asia: Early Confucianism*
 - Preparation: due Sun, Jan 24
 1. Everyone: Read Poceski Ch 2
 2. Everyone: Watch “Early Confucianism” lecture video
 3. HIST: private reflection, RELGST: public reflection
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Jan 25
 4. Read Confucius, *The Analects*, excerpts
 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Async Cohort, Jan 25-27
 4. Read Mengzi, Book VI A, 122-132
 5. Discuss on Canvas
 6. Watch other cohort discussions
 - Wed Cohort, Jan 27
 4. Read Xunzi, “Man’s Nature is Evil,” 79-85
 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
- *Week 3—East Asia: Early Daoism and Mohism*
 - Preparation: due Sun, Jan 31
 1. Everyone: Read Poceski Chs 3-4
 2. Everyone: Watch “Early Daoism and Mohism” lecture video
 3. RELGST: private reflection, HIST: public reflection
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Feb 1
 4. Read Laozi, *Dao De Jing*, excerpts
 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Async Cohort, Feb 1-3
 4. Read Zhuangzi, excerpts
 5. Discuss on Canvas
 6. Watch other cohort discussions
 - Wed Cohort, Feb 3
 4. Read Mozi, “Universal Love II,” 136-146
 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions

- **Week 4—South Asia: Critics and Reformers of Vedic Religion**
 - Preparation: due Sun, Feb 7
 1. Everyone: Read Clothey Chs 2-3
 2. Everyone: Watch “Critics and Reformers of Vedic Religion” lecture video
 3. HIST: private reflection, RELGST: public reflection
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Feb 8
 4. Read *Upanisads*, excerpts
 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Async Cohort, Feb 8-10
 4. Read Strong, “The Life Story of the Buddha,” 9-34
 5. Discuss on Canvas
 6. Watch other cohort discussions
 - Wed Cohort, Feb 10
 4. Read Babb, *Understanding Jainism*, 1-7 and 41-53
 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
- **Week 5—South Asia: Religion and Urbanization**
 - Preparation: due Sun, Feb 14
 1. Everyone: Read Clothey Ch 4
 2. Everyone: Watch “Religion and Urbanization” lecture video
 3. RELGST: private reflection, HIST: public reflection
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Feb 15
 4. Read *Ramayana*, “Two Promises Revived,” 33-61
 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Async Cohort, Feb 15-17
 4. Read *Bhagavad Gita* 3-5
 5. Discuss on Canvas
 6. Watch other cohort discussions
 - Wed Cohort, Feb 3
 4. Read *Yoga Sutras*, excerpts
 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions

- **Week 6—South Asia: The Postclassical Period**
 - Preparation: due Sun, Feb 21
 1. Everyone: Read Clothey Ch 5
 2. Everyone: Watch “The Postclassical Period” lecture video
 3. HIST: private reflection, RELGST: public reflection
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Feb 22
 4. Read *Bhagavata Purana*, 10.23-25, 29-33
 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Async Cohort, Feb 22-24
 4. Read Coburn, *Devi Mahatmya*, 52-84
 5. Discuss on Canvas
 6. Watch other cohort discussions
 - Wed Cohort, Feb 24
 4. Read Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva*, excerpts
 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Thu, Feb 25: First Unit Review Sheet available

Second Unit: “Origins,” Culture, and Boundaries

- **Week 7—East Asia: The Reception of Buddhism in China and Japan**
 - Preparation: due Sun, Feb 28
 1. Everyone: Read Poceski, Chs 5 & 8
 2. Everyone: Watch “The Reception of Buddhism...” lecture video
 3. RELGST: private reflection, HIST: public reflection
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Mar 1
 4. Read Sommer, *Chinese Religion*, 119-132 and 137-144
 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Async Cohort, Mar 1-3
 4. Read Sommer, *Chinese Religion*, 169-175 and 189-196
 5. Discuss on Canvas
 6. Watch other cohort discussions
 - Wed Cohort, Mar 3
 4. Read Sommer, *Chinese Religion*, 145-148 and 199-210
 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Thu, Mar 4: First Unit Review Sheet and Culminating Reflection Due

- *Week 8—East Asia: Tibetan Buddhism*
 - Preparation: due Sun, Mar 7
 1. Everyone: Read Williams, 185-214
 2. Everyone: Watch “Tibetan Buddhism” lecture video
 3. HIST: private reflection, RELGST: public reflection
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Mar 8
 4. Watch *Kundun* (<https://youtu.be/43nxsDxQprQ>)
 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 - Async Cohort, Mar 8-10
 4. Watch *Kundun* (<https://youtu.be/43nxsDxQprQ>)
 5. Discuss on Canvas
 - Wed Cohort, Mar 10
 4. Watch *Kundun* (<https://youtu.be/43nxsDxQprQ>)
 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
- *Week 9—South Asia: North Indian Vernacular Devotion*
 - Preparation: due Sun, Mar 14
 1. Everyone: Read Clothey, Chs 6-7
 2. Everyone: Watch “North Indian Vernacular Devotion” lecture video
 3. RELGST: private reflection, HIST: public reflection
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Mar 15
 4. Read Hawley and Juergensmeyer, “Kabir,” 35-62
 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Async Cohort, Mar 15-17
 4. Read H&J, “Nanak,” 63-88
 5. Discuss on Canvas
 6. Watch other cohort discussions
 - Wed Cohort, Mar 17
 4. Read H&J, “Mirabai,” 119-140
 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
- *Week 10—Southeast Asia: Crossing the Indian Ocean*
 - Preparation: due Sun, Mar 21 (no case studies—Student Self-Care Day)
 1. Everyone: Read De Casparis and Mabbet, 276-329
 2. Everyone: Watch “Crossing the Indian Ocean” lecture video
 3. HIST: private reflection, RELGST: public reflection
 - Thu, Mar 25: Second Unit Review Sheet available

Third Unit: “Modernity,” Colonialism and Globalization

- *Week 11—South Asia: Religion and Empire*
 - Preparation: due Sun, Mar 28
 1. Everyone: Read Clothey, Ch 8
 2. Everyone: Watch “Religion and Empire” lecture video
 3. RELGST: private reflection, HIST: public reflection
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Mar 29
 4. Read Gleig and Flores, “Remembering Sri Aurobindo and the Mother,” 38-59
 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Async Cohort, Mar 29-31
 4. Read Alter, “Shri Yogendra,” 60-79
 5. Discuss on Canvas
 6. Watch other cohort discussions
 - Wed Cohort, Mar 31
 4. Read Singleton and Fraser, “T. Krishnamacharya,” 83-106
 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Thu, Apr 1: Second Unit Review Sheet and Culminating Reflection Due
- *Week 12—South Asia: Postcolonial Hinduisms*
 - Preparation: due Sun, Apr 4
 1. Everyone: Read Clothey, Chs 9-10
 2. Everyone: Watch “Postcolonial Hinduisms” lecture video
 3. HIST: private reflection, RELGST: public reflection
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Apr 5
 4. Read Kurien, “Multiculturalism ... Diasporic Nationalism,” 362-385
 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Async Cohort, Apr 5-7
 4. Read Waghorne, “Hindu Gods in a Split-Level World,” 103-130
 5. Discuss on Canvas
 6. Watch other cohort discussions
 - Wed Cohort, Apr 7
 4. Narayanan, “Sacred Land, Sacred Service,” 139-159
 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions

Week 13—East Asia: Religion and Ideology

- Preparation: due Sun, Apr 11
 - 1. Everyone: Read Sharf, 1-43
 - 2. Everyone: Watch “Religion and Ideology” lecture video
 - 3. RELGST: private reflection, HIST: public reflection
- Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Apr 12
 - 4. Watch *Morning Sun*
 - 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 - Async Cohort, Apr 12-14
 - 4. Watch *Morning Sun*
 - 5. Discuss on Canvas
 - Wed Cohort, Apr 14
 - 4. Watch *Morning Sun*
 - 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
- *Week 14—Southeast Asia: Engaged Buddhism*
 - Preparation: due Sun, Apr 18
 - 1. Everyone: Read DeVido, 413-458
 - 2. Everyone: Watch “Engaged Buddhism” lecture video
 - 3. No reflection due
 - Case Studies (choose Mon, Async, or Wed Cohort):
 - Mon Cohort, Apr 19
 - 4. Read Easton Waller, “Mean Street Monks”
 - 5. Discuss on Zoom/in-person during class time
 - 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Async Cohort, Apr 19-21
 - 4. Read Steinberg, “Globalization, Dissent, and Orthodoxy,” 51-58
 - 5. Discuss on Canvas
 - 6. Watch other cohort discussions
 - Wed Cohort, Apr 21
 - 4. Read Darlington, “The Ordination of a Tree,” 1-15
 - 5. Discuss on Zoom during class time
 - 6. Read/Watch other cohort discussions
 - Thu, Apr 22: Third Unit Review Sheet available
 - TBD: Third Unit Review Sheet and Culminating Reflection will be due at the end of the period specified by the registrar for our final exam.

Policies

Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators. To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic. For hands-on practice, complete the [Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial](#).

Disability Services

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services \(DRS\)](#), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use. With permission of all students, the instructor will record class discussions for the benefit of classmates who cannot be present. If you do not wish to be recorded, please notify the instructor and you will be accommodated.

Gender Inclusive Language (from Pitt GSWS)

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women's experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

Content Warnings and Class Climate (adapted from Pitt GSWS)

Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. As with any course in the Religious Studies Department, course topics are often political and personal. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

I expect everyone to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in a mature and respectful way. If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read the syllabus so that you are prepared in advance. You can approach your instructor ahead of time if you'd like more information about a topic or reading. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed. If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss. If you are struggling to keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with me and/or seek help from the counseling center.

Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, see: <http://diversity.pitt.edu/affirmativeaction/policies-procedures-and-practices>.

I ask that everyone in the class strive to help ensure that other members of this class can learn in a supportive and respectful environment. If there are instances of the aforementioned issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or e-mailing

titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be filed online:

<https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/make-report/report-form>. You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Health and Safety

In the midst of this pandemic, it is extremely important that you abide by public health regulations and University of Pittsburgh health standards and guidelines. While in class, at a minimum this means that you must wear a face covering and comply with physical distancing requirements; other requirements may be added by the University during the semester. These rules have been developed to protect the health and safety of all community members. Failure

to comply with these requirements will result in you not being permitted to attend class in person and could result in a Student Conduct violation. For the most up-to-date information and guidance, please visit coronavirus.pitt.edu and check your Pitt email for updates before each class.

Take Care of Yourself!

As I have indicated elsewhere on this syllabus, I am extending significant flexibility on all graded work in this class. I understand that many of us are experiencing serious hardships, and that even the most fortunate among us are feeling the effects of long-term stress. As you ask for flexibility (or make use of forms of flexibility that is available to you by default), please understand that I do not expect you to disclose details about your situation that you are not comfortable sharing. Just tell me what you need and I will assume you are making the request in good faith. If you wish to talk to me, I am here to listen, commiserate, offer what help I can, and direct you to others who may be more qualified to help.

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax. Despite what you might hear, using your time to take care of yourself will actually help you achieve your academic goals more than spending too much time studying. All of us benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available at Pitt. An important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Take the time to learn about all that's available and take advantage of it. Ask for support sooner rather than later – this always helps. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or difficult feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for assistance connecting to the support that can help.

The University Counseling Center is here for you: call 412-648-7930 and visit their website.

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, call someone immediately, day or night:

University Counseling Center (UCC): 412 648-7930

University Counseling Center Mental Health Crisis Response: 412-

648-7930 x1 Resolve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226 (888-7-YOU-CAN)