Course Code: UNI 207
Course Name: UNDERSTANDING RELIGION
ISTANBUL SEHIR UNIVERSITY
Spring 2015

Instructor for the first part:
- Kasim Kopuz - 6 weeks (Course Coordinator)
  Room: 2021
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Instructors for the second part:
- Mehmet Akif Kayapınar – 3 weeks (8th, 9th, 11th weeks)
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- Nurullah Ardıç – 3 weeks (12th, 13th, 14th weeks)
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Lecture Schedule: Tuesday 10:00-11:00 and Wednesday 14:00-16:00
Classroom: Tuesday East Campus Conf. Hall, Wednesday West Campus Conf. Hall
Credit Hours: 3 hrs/week, 3 credits

OVERVIEW

The course will be on two parts. The first part is about history of world religions and the second one is about understanding religion within the context of state and society. After a general introduction to the historiography, methodologies and thematic issues of the History of World Religions, we will discuss the key concepts in the field such as “religion,” “spirituality,” the idea of “sacred,” “primitive religions,” “world religions,” etc. We will study the history of religions as faith traditions? This part of the course will have special attention paid to the historical development of early religious traditions and major world religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Students will be introduced to the belief systems, worldview, ideals, ethics and rituals of each tradition. We will compare certain aspects of religions but we won’t focus on theological comparisons, (this is not a course on comparative religions), rather the course will focus on understanding the origin, process of formation, historical development and spread or world religions. A special attention will be paid to religions’ responses to and/or interactions with the larger global changes in the world. Several contemporary issues will be discussed, such as including “fundamentalism,” “radicalism,” “response to modernity,” “women’s spirituality,” and “the future of religion,” and etc.

In the second part of the course, we will focus on the interactions between religion and state and between religion and society from the historical, political, and sociological perspectives. The course’s aim is to have students’ developed deeper understanding of various religions and to promote healthy relations amongst the people of the world traditions.
FORMAT AND PREREQUISITES
History of World Religions is a survey course in a lecture format. There will be discussions and presentations. Each student is responsible to complete all the required readings and attend the classes. The students are expected to ask intelligent questions and participate in class discussions. Besides the need to be open minded, have curiosity for world’s faith traditions, and be ready to engage with challenging questions there are no prerequisites for this class.

READING MATERIALS

[MAIN TEXTBOOK]
-Noss, David S. and Blake Grangaard. A History the World’s Religions (Pearson, 13th edn.)

SUPPORTIVE TEXTBOOKS
-Smart, Ninian and Hecht, Richard D.; Sacred Texts of the World.
- Esposito, John L., Darrell J. Fasching, Todd Lewis, edtr. World Religions Today, (Oxford University, 4th edn.)
-Matthews, Warren; World Religions, (7th Edn)

SELECTED CHAPTERS FROM FOLLOWING BOOKS
-Streng, Fredrick; Understanding Religious Life. (3rd ed)
-Uruchshurow, Vitoria Kennick; Introducing World Religions, (Routledge, 2008).

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICY

GENERAL: Attendance is mandatory and will be spot checked. Students should keep up with all the assigned readings. No extensions will be given on written work without cause and documentation. All tests will be given in class. University rules on academic honesty will be strictly enforced. Courteous behavior in class is expected both to the instructor (no cellphone reading/texting, no newspapers/magazines!) and to fellow students. Many different religious traditions as well as non-religious seculars will be present among us. Be sensitive to the deeply held worldviews, convictions, beliefs and traditions of others!

GRADES: Attendance and Homework 20 %, Midterm Exam 40 %, Final Exam 40 %.

PAPERS AND EXAMS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

ALL WRITTEN WORK SHOULD BE TYPED AND DOUBLE SPACED.

Paper: Review essay: Write a review book: Review of the book must be an academic book in one of the faith traditions within the syllabus. You must consult with the instructor before making final decision about the book to review

Mid Term Exam: 7th week

ANY CHANGE IN THE SYLLABUS WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN CLASS.
FIRST PART

KASIM KOPUZ

1st week: Overview/Historical Study of World Religions
   A-Historiography of the world religions.

   B-Approaching world religions: Theory and study of religions.


2nd week: Some Primal and Bygone Religions
   B: Religion in Prehistoric and Primal Cultures
      Required Reading: David S. Noss and Blake Grangaard. A History the World’s Religions, Pages: 2-31


   A: Bygone Religions: Sumero-Akkadian, Iranian, Greek and Roman, Celtic and Teutonic, and Classical Maya Religion
      Required Reading: Noss, Pages: 32-68


3rd week: Religions of South and East Asia-I
      Required Reading: Noss, 70-143.
      Esposito, Pages: 301-304

      Suggested Reading: Smart, Pages: 276-290
      For Hindu Worldview, Warren Matthews, World Religions, (7th Edtn), Page 95-104

   B: Buddhism: Diversity in Paths Toward Nirvana, and Buddhism Today, its encounter with modernity.
      Required Reading: Noss, Pages: 144-209
      Esposito: Pages: 393-397, 433-434, 441-447

      Suggested Reading: Smart, Pages: 164-209
      For Buddhist Worldview: Matthews, Pages: 138-146
4th week: Religions of South and East Asia-II
A: Daoism
Required Reading: Noss, Pages: 224-253
Suggested Reading: Smart, Pages: 290-303

B: Confucius and Confucianism’s Encounter with Modernity.
Required Reading: Noss, Pages: 254-287
Esposito, Pages: 484-488.
Suggested Reading: Smart, Pages: 290-303
For Confucian Worldview: Matthews, Pages: 198-202

5th week: Religions of the Family of Abraham I
A: 1-Judaism, Encounter with Modernity, and Changes within Judaism in Colonial and Postcolonial Era
Required Reading: Noss: 334-396
Esposito, Pages: 79-81, 128-142
Suggested Reading: Smart, Pages: 45-89;
For Jewish Worldview: Matthews, Pages: 273-284

B: 2-Christianity, Encounter with Modernity, Changes in Colonial and Postcolonial Era
Required Reading: Noss, Pages: 398-475
Esposito, Pages, 152-157, 199-208
Suggested Reading: Smart, Pages: 90-125
For Christian Worldview: Matthews, Pages: 322-331

6th week: Religions of the Family of Abraham: II
A: 3-Islam-I,
History, developments, and global spread
Required Reading: Noss, Pages: 478-534
Suggested Reading: Smart, Pages: 130-177;
Esposito, Pages: 221-2

B: 3-Islam-II
Encounter with Modernity and the trends that developed within Islam in Colonial and Post-Colonial Era
Required Reading Esposito: 221-223, 285-294
Suggested: For Islamic Worldview: Matthews, Pages: 361-372

7th week: Mid-Term Exam – April 2nd Thursday
SECOND PART

M.AKİF KAYAPINAR


8th week: Religion and Political Order in Judaism

9th week: Religion and Political Order in Christianity

10th week: Spring Break-No Class!

11th week: Religion and Political Order in Islam

NURULLAH ARDIÇ

12th week: The Functionalist View: “Religion is just society stretched ideally to the stars”


13th week: The Phenomenological View: “Religion as a Meaning System”


14th week (May 21st only) and 15th week (May 26th only): The Secularization Debate