

**University of California, Riverside
Department of Religious Studies**

RLST 002

Introduction to Comparative Scripture

4 units, Lecture, 3 hours; discussion, 1 hour.

Winter 2017

Lectures: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 01:10 p.m.– 02:00 p.m.

Room: INTN 1020

Discussion Sections: see times and rooms separately

Instructor:

Dr. Muhamad Ali

Office Hours: Monday, 02:15-04:00 p.m.

Teaching Assistants:

Course Description

This course examines the main texts of religious traditions in comparative perspective. Scripture is a Western term, used in Jewish and Christian traditions, and today it is a generic term for any holy or sacred books, holy or sacred texts, holy or sacred writings, or any religious texts.

The course covers the main religious texts of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism (originating from South Asia), Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto (East Asia), Zoroastrianism and Baha'ism (Central Asia), Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (the Middle East), and Indigenous Religions (Africa, the Americas, and Australia). It consists of lectures, which contain clicker questions and are complemented with documentary films; discussion sessions with teaching assistants; exams; and writing assignments.

Learning Objectives

The course has the following learning objectives:

- 1) Developing academic skills: A. Thinking and understanding critically of religious doctrines and practices through their scriptures; B. Reading texts in translation and understanding religions' founders and figures, doctrines, and historical development; C. speaking critically; and D. Writing academically about scriptures, their revelation, reception, and transmission, as well as their interpretations and applications and their role in human life.
- 2) Understanding that religions are externally and internally diverse and that they evolve and change as living traditions that impact, and are impacted, by historical, cultural, and political contexts. This comparative understanding of religions and their scriptures assists students to increase religious literacy, to appreciate religious diversity, and to learn to coexist in a multi-religious environment in the United States and around the world.

More specifically, lectures will introduce students with historical background, religions' founders and early figures, basic texts, doctrines, and practices, and historical and contemporary developments. Discussion sessions will provide them with an open and healthy forum to ask and to respond to questions and discuss topics covered and not covered during lectures and in the reading materials and to engage with teaching assistants and with each other. Exams and assignments will evaluate students' levels of comprehension and writing skill. Students are encouraged to learn about religions through texts and context and continue learning about religions, scriptures, and their role in shaping human societies.

Course Requirements and Grading

- **Lecture Attendance and Clicker Responses** account for 10 % of the total grade. If you don't have a clicker, you may purchase it from the UCR Campus Store. Please register it each quarter through the website (<https://clickers.ucr.edu/clicker/login>).
- **Discussion participation** accounts for 20 % of the total grade. Your TA will clarify your questions that you might have about the issues raised in the lecture. Your TA will make their requirements and assignments that you will need to follow.
- **Exam 1 (Pre-Midterm)** takes place in classroom on [Friday, February 3, 2017](#). The exam accounts for 12.50 % of the total grade. It covers Introduction, Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist Scriptures.
- **Exam 2 (Midterm)** takes place in classroom on [Friday, February 17, 2017](#). It accounts for 12.50 % of the total grade. It covers Sikh, Confucian, Tao, and Shinto Scriptures.
- **A Term Essay** of 5 (five) pages long with double spacing is due on [Friday, March 10, 2017](#) in classroom & SafeAssign on iLearn. No email or proxy is allowed. It accounts for 20 % of the total grade.
- **Exam 3 (Final Exam)** takes place in classroom on [Thursday, March 23rd, 2017, 08:00- 11:00 a.m.](#) The final exam accounts for 25 % of the total grade. It covers Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Baha'i, Indigenous Scriptures, and Conclusion.

Please Note:

- There will be no extensions, no incompletes, and no late work.
- No essay assignment will be accepted late without prior approval which will only be given in cases of medical or family emergency (with written proofs submitted to instructor or TAs)
- Each student should attend all the lectures unless there is a medical or family emergency. For discussion sessions, TAs have their own attendance policies, so please follow them.

Required Reading:

James Fieser and John Powers, eds., *Scriptures of the World Religions*, Fifth Edition (New York: McGraw- Hill Education, 2015). Note that SWR below refers to this book. Note that the page numbers of readings are given from the fifth edition. Students should use the page numbers according to the edition they have bought from the UCR Bookstore and others.

The textbook is also available on Reserve at Rivera Library.

Useful Online Sources

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>

<http://online-learning.harvard.edu/course/world-religions-through-their-scriptures>

<https://www.unification.net/ws/>

Students with disabilities: “Any student who feels that he or she may need an accommodation for any sort of disability, please make an appointment to see me during my office hours.” Please also read <http://www.specialservices.ucr.edu/disabilities/index.html>

LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Monday, January 9: Introduction to the course and Scripture

Wednesday, January 11: Scripture as a comparative category, study of scripture
Robert E. Van Voorst, “Scripture among the World’s Religions”, 1-15 (iLearn)

Friday, January 13: Hinduism

Vedas and Upanishads, SWR, pp. 1-31

Film: Hymns of Creation

Monday, January 16: No Class, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Wednesday, January 18: Hinduism

Yoga, Puranas, and Epics, SWR, pp. 31-59

Friday, January 20: Hinduism, + Jainism

Monday, January 23: Jainism

SWR, pp. 61-76

Wednesday, January 25: Buddhism

Pali Canon, SWR, pp. 77-106

Friday, January 27: Buddhism

Mahayana Scriptures, SWR, 106-122

Monday, January 30: Buddhism + Sikhism

Tibetan Buddhist Texts, Chinese and Japanese Buddhist Texts, SWR, pp. 123-135

Film: A Bill Moyer's Special the Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith: Hinduism & Buddhism (DVD # 4124 Disc 1) or Religions of the World

Sikhism

The Adi Granth, SWR, pp. 137-149

Film: Guru Granth Sahib: The Sikh Scripture

Wednesday, February 1: Sikhism

Sikh texts, SWR, 149-155.

Friday, February 3: Exam 1 in Classroom

Monday, February 6: Confucianism

Five Classics and the Four Books, SWR, pp. 157-166

Film: Confucianism (DVD # 4124 Disc 1) or Religions of the World

Wednesday, February 8: Confucianism+ Taoism/Daoism

The Four Books, SWR, pp. 167-184;

Laozi, SWR, pp. 185-193

Film: A Bill Moyer's Special the Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith (Confucianism & Taoism DVD # 4124 Disc 1) or Religions of the World

Friday, February 10: Taoism/Daoism

Taoist Scriptures, SWR, pp. 193-219

Monday, February 13: Shinto

SWR, pp.221-236.

Wednesday, February 15: Zoroastrianism

The Avesta, Pahlavi, and Zulu Writings, SWR, pp. 245-269.

Friday, February 17: Exam 2 in Classroom

Monday, February 20: NO CLASS, Presidents' Day

Wednesday, February 22: Judaism

Books of Moses, Conquest, and United Kingdom, SWR, pp. 271-305

Friday, February 24: Judaism

Divided Kingdom and Exile, Rabbinic Writings, Medieval, Modern, SWR, pp. 306-343

Monday, February 27: Christianity

Birth and Resurrection, Gospels, SWR, pp. 345-376

Film: A Bill Moyer's Special the Wisdom of Faith with Huston Smith: Christianity and Judaism (DVD # 4124) or Religions of the World

Wednesday, March 1: Christianity

Noncanonical Gospels and other texts, SWR, pp. 376-428

Friday, March 3: Christianity + Islam

Prof. Ali will be delivering a talk at the University of Washington, Seattle.

Film: The Secrets of the Koran (the History Channel) or **Christopher Hayes** will serve as a guest lecturer on the Qur'an, SWR, pp.429-463.

Protestant Statements of Faith and Recent Movements, SWR, 413-427

Monday, March 6: Islam

The Hadith, SWR, pp. 464-74.

Wednesday, March 8: Islam

Sunni and Shi'i Writings, Sufi Writings, SWR, 475-491.

Term Paper due on Friday, March 10 in classroom

Friday, March 10: Baha'ism

The Bab, the Qayyumu'l-Asma, the Bayan, Baha'ullah, SWR, 493-516

Monday, March 13: Baha'ism + Indigenous Religions

Baha'ullah Teachings, SWR, 516-525

Indigenous Religions of Africa and the Americas, SWR, 527-531

Wednesday, March 15: Indigenous Religions of Africa and the Americas

SWR, 531-551.

Friday, March 17: Final Review and Conclusion

Thursday, March 23: Exam 3 (Final Exam) in classroom, from 08:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

(It covers Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Baha'i, Indigenous Scriptures, and Conclusion)